Modernist literature as Victorian sexology | Joyce's treatment of sexual aberration and female sexuality in "Ulysses"

Chris Mathers
The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/2998

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
The University of
Montana

Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety, provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in published works and reports.

**Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature**

Yes, I grant permission

No, I do not grant permission

Author's Signature: [Signature]

Date: 03.30.05

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with the author's explicit consent.
Modernist Literature as Victorian Sexology: Joyce’s Treatment of Sexual Aberration and Female Sexuality in *Ulysses*

Chairperson: John Hunt

Drawing upon the work of thousands of years of the Western canon, James Joyce builds his characters in *Ulysses* according to prior literary ones (Homer’s Odysseus, Penelope, and Calypso, Dante’s Beatrice, Shakespeare’s Hamlet, etc.). Therefore, Joyce’s main male and female characters—Leopold and Molly Bloom—emerge from the novel’s inception informed by the literary tropes of Western civilization’s canon. Joyceans world-wide accept and (for nearly the past one hundred years) have studied various comparative literary models, as a result of Joyce’s frequent borrowings from his literary fathers. This project explores an alternative “comparative” literature approach to *Ulysses* as I examine Victorian notions of sexuality and specifically three key figures in the Victorian sexological movement and compare these cultural texts to Joyce’s. The Victorian period witnessed the rise of many social sciences—sociology, psychiatry, anthropology, criminology—and among them emerged the discipline of sexology, which is related to psychiatry, anthropology, and gynecology at various levels. This study specifically focuses upon what I consider three generations of sexologists: Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. Chapter one outlines their primary sexological works (Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* [1886], Ellis’s *Man and Woman* [1894], and Freud’s *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* [1905]) so that chapters two and three may explore the sexological parallels in Joyce’s construction of Leopold and Molly Bloom’s sexuality. Sexology tended to focus upon two main themes within adult sexuality: sexual aberrations (which according to Victorian sensitivities tended to be overwhelmingly male) and female sexuality. As this study demonstrates, Joyce, a medical student in his early years, participates in a direct conversation with sexology as he characterizes Molly and Leopold Bloom. His references to sexological ideas and treatments of sexuality are by no means coincidental. In concluding this study, Joyce actually seems to be crafting *Ulysses* as an alternative sexological writing which allows for a broader conception of “normal” human sexuality, though one still bound to heterosexuality and inevitably marriage. In other words, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as this study shows, is, on at least one level, modernist literature written as Victorian sexology.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One:</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Notions of Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Three Generations of Sexology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopold Bloom’s Sexuality Constructed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly and her Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The poet is the better psychologist [of sex], for he is swayed rather by sentiment than by reason . . . Nevertheless the poet will not discharge his arduous task without the active cooperation of natural philosophy and, above all, that of medicine, a science which ever seeks to trace all psychological manifestations to their anatomical and physiological sources.

-Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis

In the above passage, which appears in the preface to the first edition of Psychopathia Sexualis, Victorian sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing seems to recognize human love, which poets have for centuries attempted to define, as a mystified version of human sexuality. As a result, he and later sexologists like Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud use literary references to love (Freud’s Oedipal Complex, for example) in order to discuss human sexuality. Likewise, James Joyce, whose sponge-like mind squeezed much into Ulysses that it had absorbed from experience and education, plays with love and sex as defined by various past literary giants. As a result, the work overflows with literary allusions to these subjects. Ulysses is Joyce’s revision of the love story and conflict in Homer’s Odyssey, Dante’s Divine Comedy, Shakespeare’s Hamlet (or Shakespeare’s oeuvre, as the allusions and references—as Gifford assigns them—suggest), and William Blake’s poetry, among others.¹ His hero, Leopold Bloom, is a reconsideration of Odysseus, Moses, Hamlet’s father, and even Christ. His heroine, Molly Bloom, then, is logically Joyce’s modification of Penelope; yet she is also

¹ Simply the text of Ulysses demonstrates this, as Joyce includes references, in the episode titles he assigned following its publication and in the language of the work itself, to much of Homer’s Odyssey. The text also references and borrows from Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso, appropriating much of Dante’s Divine Comedy. Furthermore, Joyce references or alludes to thirty-five of Shakespeare’s plays, all of his major poems, and many sonnets throughout Ulysses. Finally, Joyce included allusions to five of Blake’s major poems as well as several less known ones also. (These allusions and references are according to those revealed in Don Gifford’s Ulysses).
Homer’s Calypso, Dante’s Beatrice, and Hamlet’s mother. Through his literary allusions Joyce creates a complex system of identification and calls into question the more stereotypical visions of, for example, Homer’s women—Calypso the seductress and Penelope the chaste wife—by combining their identities into a single character. Therefore, in order to study *Ulysses*, one must first know its sources and analogues, which when decoded begin to take the shape of western civilization’s canon.

For nearly a century, scholars of Joyce have engaged in the necessary comparative literary studies of *Ulysses*, but their studies are not enough. Just as Joyce consumes and excretes in new forms the works and ideologies of these literary fathers (Joyce alludes to no female literary figures, with the exception of several female writers of the Irish Literary Revival), he similarly revises of the philosophies of Bruno, Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, to name only a few. Yet his allusions to the world outside his fiction do not end with literary and philosophical writings of the past; in constructing the identities of his characters, Joyce cites various cultural realities from advertisements and popular fiction to political and religious scandals. As Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman’s nearly six-hundred-and-fifty-page *Ulysses Annotated* demonstrates, Joyce’s *Ulysses* embodies a multi-disciplined approach to character construction which realistically reflects the complexities of the human psyche. Therefore, in order to interpret the sexual construction of Joyce’s Molly and Leopold Bloom, it is necessary to investigate the socio-cultural contexts in which he composed *Ulysses*. This study will focus broadly upon Victorian notions of sexuality (as *Ulysses* takes place in 1904 Dublin and therefore is greatly influenced by Victorian ideals), specifically upon several key
figures in the sexological movement of the period, and map the cultural debate at the heart of Leopold and Molly Bloom’s sexualities.\(^2\)

When dealing with sexuality in literary texts, one must recognize the various theoretical frameworks available for such work. In any description of female sexuality as it is portrayed in a literary text, feminist criticism is a necessary avenue to explore. Within *Ulysses* criticism, the work of feminist critics tends to separate into two main camps. The first derives from the French feminist mode of *écriture feminine* made famous by Hélène Cixous. Cixous calls for a “writing that inscribes femininity” ("Medusa" 349) which she argues is present in the affirmation of “Penelope.”\(^3\) Yet Cixous’s claim problematically includes all women under the universal and essential image of feminine flux, flow, and circularity. Breaking from Cixous's essentialism, the second and louder feminist reading condemns Joyce as reifying patriarchy in more or less misogynistic terms. These critics often focus on Joyce’s portrayal of Molly as either the over-sexed, cuckolding woman or the object of masculine Dublin’s gaze.\(^4\) Furthermore, some point out, there is a distinct lack of live women in the novel, of whom only three play any sort of significant role in the fiction, when compared to the many men whose day intersects

\(^2\) Some *Ulysses* critics, whose work I will be building upon and departing from, have incorporated socio-historical analysis into their readings of *Ulysses*. See, for example, Vincent J. Cheng’s *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (1995), several of the essays in *Ulysses—En-Gendered Perspectives: Eighteen New Essays on the Episodes* edited by Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum (1999), Mary Lowe-Evan’s *Crimes Against Fecundity: Joyce and Population Control* (1989), Bonnie Kime Scott’s *Joyce and Feminism*, particularly chapter three, “Early Encounters with Feminism: The Irish Feminist Movement and the Literary Feminism of Moore, Shaw, Hauptmann, and Ibsen” (1984), Richard Brown’s *James Joyce and Sexuality* (1985), and certain essays in *Women in Joyce* edited by Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (1982).

\(^3\) In “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), Cixous writes: “The feminine (as the poet suspected) affirms: ‘And yes,’ says Molly, carrying *Ulysses* off and beyond any book and toward the new writing [of *écriture feminine*]: ‘I said yes, I will Yes’” (354).

\(^4\) See for example the hostility demonstrated in Cheryl Herr’s “Penelope as Period Piece” (1989), Christine von Bohemen-Saaf’s “Joyce, Derrida, and the Discourse of ‘the Other’” (1988), Diana Henderson’s “Joyce’s Modernist Woman: Whose Last Word?” (1989), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The War of the Words* (1988) to name a few.
with the novel’s action. While there is, no doubt, validity to some of this criticism, to label Joyce a misogynist is unwarranted. What goes on in the fiction of the novel, which notably exists within the mind of one or the other of Joyce’s two male heroes, is not necessarily Joyce’s voice; therefore such a label is naïve at worst and incautiously worded at best. Furthermore, Joyce conceived and published *Ulysses* half a century before the feminist second wave, and therefore to read it expecting the explicit presence of certain second wave concepts risks anachronistic interpretation. Finally and most importantly, Joyce wrote *Ulysses* in a specific context, which he carefully, if not obsessively, documents within its fiction. Therefore the novel involves socially relative queries and reactions to various cultural voices. Yet, these varied strands of cultural ideology are often overlooked, especially by feminist critics who see only the essentialized aspects of Joyce’s women, whether read as positive or negative. By putting Joyce’s great novel in its socio-historic context, the work makes many complex and socially progressive claims about female, and, of equal importance, male sexuality.

In addition to feminist criticism of *Ulysses*, it is also necessary to recognize the work of gender studies in transforming a conversation about sexuality from a concentration upon female sexuality to one of human sexuality. Within gender studies, criticism tends to focus upon the works of writers like Judith Butler who emphasize the performativity of gender. By keeping this theoretical lens in mind, a reader is more apt to see the many under-cuttings of strict gender difference that go on in many literary texts like *Ulysses*. Gender studies criticism, especially that of Judith Butler, relies heavily

---

5 Molly, Gerty MacDowell, Cissy Caffrey, Edy Boardman, Miss Douce, Miss Kennedy, Josie Breen, Nurse Callan, the four Dedalus girls, Bella Cohen and her brothel crew, and the not present though discussed Milly, Martha, and Mrs. Purefoy. The only women of any real significance to the novel are Molly Bloom, Gerty MacDowell, and Bella Cohen.
upon psychoanalytic readings of texts. Many scholars of Joyce, whether investigating questions of gender or not, have used psychoanalysis as a lens to read *Ulysses*. Yet, these psychoanalytic—as well as gender-studies-based readings—tend to veer into the problematic realm of the overly simplistic. Just as feminist criticism easily becomes anachronistic, gender studies criticism may as well. As Jean Kimball’s work demonstrates, “Joyce’s development as an artist between the years of 1900 and 1922 thus coincided with the origins and early development of the psychoanalytic movement” (27). Therefore, to read *Ulysses* through a psychoanalytic lens without recognizing their concurrent creation would fail to notice much of Joyce’s playfulness as he seems to respond to the genesis of this new discipline. All of these theoretical lenses, however, are important and very applicable if paired with a careful historicism. It is, then, through a gender studies and feminist slant that I will offer a new-historicist reading of Leopold and Molly Bloom’s sexualities as constructed in *Ulysses*.

Joyce grew up in the heart of British Ireland during the Victorian period (1837-1901). Victoria’s governance of Ireland characterized the time leading up to Bloomsday (June 16, 1904, the day of the *Ulysses*’s drama). This period, both in Ireland specifically and in the greater United Kingdom, witnessed certain changes that influenced moral concerns, especially over sexual issues. In Ireland, conflicts over Home Rule climaxed with Charles Stewart Parnell through the 1880s, and then dissipated with his moral condemnation by the Catholic Church following the public realization of his illicit affair with the married woman, Katherine O’Shea. The Irish people divided passionately,

---

6 The historicism that I have in mind is known to literary critics as new historicism and has been made famous by critics like Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose. New historicism seeks to examine the symbiotic relationship between cultural (economic, political and social) histories and literature. New-historicists tend to argue that literature influences, as well as gains influence from, the culture in which its author lived.
either on the side of the moralizing priests or on the side of Parnell, over the issue of their
"Uncrowned King's" sexual indiscretions. In addition to political change during this period, world-changing theories emerged in the scientific world with the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin's theories of evolution and his theories on mating rituals came to greatly affect the changing vision of human sexuality. The medical world transformed as psychiatry emerged as a professional discipline and scientific investigations delved into questions of male and female minds (which according to the period are vastly different, suffering from entirely different maladies). It also assumed control of female illness as anesthesia became more common, especially in childbirth, and male gynecologists replaced female midwives almost entirely (particularly for the upper and middle classes). Furthermore, in Britain and Ireland the independent and self-made 'New Woman' became visible as the century approached its end, and the 'Woman Question' was frequently raised. Joyce notes the New Woman, whose famous sidekick was her bicycle, and her refusal to conform to Victorian modesty in "Penelope" as Molly recalls Bloom goggling "those brazenfaced things on the bicycles with their skirts blowing up to their navels" (18.290-91). The first decade of the twentieth century often perpetuated Victorian values, and it is in this period that *Ulysses* takes place. Therefore these socio-historical contexts of the novel play a necessary role in its creation

---

7 Any reader of *Portrait* recalls the Christmas dinner outburst, in which Stephen's father, who has remained loyal to Parnell, declared: "We are an unfortunate priestridden race... a priestridden and Godforsaken race!" (37). Dante Riordan, whom Bloom and Molly separately recall in *Ulysses*, and who sides with the moralism of the Church, replies: "Blasphemer! Devil! . . . Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend!" (39).
and criticism (as well as in the formulation of Joyce’s own perspectives), as Joyce makes a point of localizing *Ulysses* in Dublin as it was in 1904.8

As a writer who includes creative autobiography in his fiction, Joyce’s experience of the world is more important for scholarship of his texts than that of other less self-reflexive authors.9 James Joyce experienced several diverse, contradictory perspectives on sexuality in his youth. Joyce grew up hearing the particularly body-hating, Irish Catholic condemnation of sex and sexuality. The images of a fiery hell for the lustful were unarguably impressed upon the young Joyce, a memory he recreates in the long sermon his readers experience in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Young Joyce, however, also knew the world of the red light district, which he includes in both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and active sexuality, having experienced his first sex (“awakened from a slumber of centuries” [*Portrait* 107]) in a whore’s arms. As he grew and entered the university Joyce read, criticized, and loved William Blake, who created a mythos based loosely on Christian and gnostic thought in which explicit sexuality was among the positive energies of creativity, the highest of which was poetic genius. Years later, in March of 1912, Joyce gave a speech on Blake’s theory of poetry, and although he did not discuss the sexuality at the heart of Blake’s works, he undoubtedly knew it.10 Poetic, religious, and carnal sexuality, then, all had influenced young Joyce by the time he was twenty-one.

---

8 Gifford often turns to *Thom’s Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for the Year 1904* (Dublin, 1904) in his annotations, thus demonstrating the meticulousness of Joyce’s grounding *Ulysses* in the real life, geography and people of Dublin in 1904.

9 This sort of Joycean criticism is done in books like Brenda Maddox’s *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom* (1988).

10 For a full discussion see Gregg A. Hecimovich’s “‘With Pale Blake I Write Tintingface’: The Bounding Line of James Joyce’s Aesthetic” (1999).
These coming-of-age experiences, which he rearticulates in his fiction, were no doubt complicated by the addition of science to the list of influences. Following graduation from university, Joyce attempted medical school three times.\textsuperscript{11} His first and last attempts were in Dublin at the Royal University Medical School and occurred in October of 1902 and 1903, following his mother’s death. For his second attempt Joyce fled Ireland and enrolled in Paris’s “Sorbonne’s Ecole or Collège de Médecine in December 1902” (Downing 184). Joyce, in a letter to his patroness Harriet Shaw Weaver, just after beginning episode fourteen, “Oxen of the Sun,” wrote: “I myself started to study medicine three times, in Dublin, Paris and again in Dublin. […] Perhaps I should have continued in spite of certain very adverse circumstances but for the fact that both in Ireland and in France chemistry is in the first year’s course. I could never learn it or understand in the least what it is about” (qtd. on 184). None of these attempts amounted to much in the way of actual time spent in medical school, yet they demonstrate the interest that young Joyce had in the human body and, as any reader of his writing would undoubtedly argue, human sexuality. On October 8, 1904, he and Nora Barnacle, his to-be life partner, embarked for the continent, leaving Dublin and Joyce’s final attempt to become a doctor. In the end, he chose the experience of active sexuality and the chemistry he did understand over the textbook versions.

It was, in part, out of the late Victorian medical schools, like those Joyce briefly attended, that much of the sexological writings came. Sexology, the supposedly objective, scientific study of human sexuality, built upon studies and writings of doctors from the early and mid-nineteenth century. Physicians, along with anthropologists and

\textsuperscript{11} See also Ellmann’s \textit{James Joyce} (1959) chapters VII-X for a sprinkling of discussion concerning Joyce’s medical school trials and tribulations.
psychiatrists, investigated the physical and emotional aspects of human sexuality. Just as the late nineteenth century witnessed scientific investigation into race, which led to the theory of degeneration, sex became something to explain. In judging Joyce's familiarity with sexological questions, perhaps even more important than his short-lived attempts at medical school were his friends from 1902-1904 who were demographically what biographer Peter Costello terms "the medical set" (qtd. on 185). The young medicals with whom young Joyce associated "discussed medical, sexual, reproductive, social, and related issues" (187). As readers of Ulysses see in "Oxen of the Sun," "[t]he Joyce of 1903-04 preferred the occasionally carousing company of medical students and young doctors, with their practical interests, to the self-important, morally and intellectually sober ways of Dublin literary circles" (187). If any doubt remains of Joyce's interests in medicine and human biology, specifically human sexuality, one need only observe the many references to medicine, medical practices or human anatomy in Ulysses. Episode fourteen, for example, takes place in the National Maternity Hospital, and it is at this point that Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus finally come together for the night. In the company of six medicals (Stephen and Lynch, both teetering on the fringe of medicine), Bloom participates in a discussion about reproduction and medicine—a discussion fraught with questions of human sexuality.

Like the medicals in the National Maternity Hospital who denounce the Church doctrine of saving the infant (who if dead would be doomed to Limbo until the second coming) over the mother (who would, if faithful, go to Purgatory to work off her sin and

---

12 In addition, Joyce, in his schemes of Ulysses, gave each episode an anatomical theme (for example, "Calypso" is kidney, "Cyclops" is muscle, and "Penelope" is flesh). Therefore, the work itself is embodied through Joyce's symbolism and demonstrates Joyce's fascination with the human body and the many symbolic, as well as real, manifestations of physicality.
eventually end up in heaven) in a dangerous labor situation (14.202-259), Joyce does not embrace the traditional Catholic attitudes concerning sexuality. With irreverence, Joyce wittily includes, in Bloom’s mouth, a jibe at this religious belief: “[I]t was good for that mother Church belike at one blow had birth and death pence” (14.257-58). While *Ulysses* reduces Church principles to the secular world of economics, as Bloom in other places perceives them, Joyce’s work deals with the Church’s stance on human sexuality and perversity in complex ways. Richard Brown points out that Joyce owned a number of books, like Paul Garnier’s *Onanisme seul et à deux sous teoutes ses dormes et leurs consequences* (no date in Joyce’s copy, Brown used one dated 1885) about the Catholic orthodoxy of condemning all kinds of non-reproductive sexuality. Garnier focuses upon the definition of “the onastic act as ‘effusio seminis extra vas per voluntarium et violentam copulae interruptionem ad generationem impediendam’ (the ejaculation of the semen outside the vagina by the voluntary and violent interruption of copulation to impede reproduction)” (Brown 56). While Joyce rejects most of the Irish Catholic Church, as does his hero, Bloom, he retains an interest in the orthodox vision of natural sex and by extension the Church’s definition of sexual perversity. Joyce seems to privilege procreation, or potential procreation, as the most “normal” of sexualities; as his novel explores a married couple’s inability to come together for “natural” sex and ends with an optimistic suggestion that may indeed return to that norm.

My interest in this study is to investigate where Joyce’s *Ulysses*, in its portrayal of Molly and Leopold Bloom’s sexuality, is in conversation with contemporary scientific explorations of human sexuality, however distantly. Joyce’s novel probes everyday

\[13\] I also do not mean that he totally rejected Catholicism, its dogma and theology. Rather, when it comes to human sexuality (though he plays, however irreverently, with images of the Blessed Virgin Mary in “Nausicaa”) Joyce does not stand on the same side as the Church.
human experience down to that of the outhouse; unsurprisingly, then, it also examines the thoughts and experiences of male and female sexuality in the intimacy of the novel’s narrative. Joyce’s project, the day-in-the-life novel, honestly explores the questions of what makes men and women human, and Bloom answers: “That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is really life. . . . Love” (12. 1481-83, 1485). Ulysses is a novel that investigates love of all kinds, of which sex and sexuality are inevitably a part.

The Woman Question and the heightened scientism of the nineteenth century conflate in the sexological writings by anthropologists, physicians (gynecologists), and psychiatrists. Writers like Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and the early Sigmund Freud explored questions of what makes men men and women women sexually. These writers removed the discussion of sexuality from its traditional place in the works of philosophers, social critics, moralists, and poets (though often citing the older discussions), privileging a scientifically-based discourse to reveal the facts. Like nineteenth-century medical and early psychiatric writings on gender or gendered disorders (hysteria, for example) sexology is less of a hard science than its writers pretend as it often mixes social ideas about sexual differences with “scientific fact.” Yet, the sexologists also questioned certain cultural attitudes and contributed greatly to the study of sexuality and gender. Nineteenth-century ideology concerning women’s sexuality informed some of the sexologists’ theories, while others set it aside as ridiculous: “In ancient times men blamed women for concupiscence or praised them for chastity, but it seems to have been reserved for the nineteenth century to state that women are apt to be congenitally incapable of experiencing complete sexual satisfaction, and
peculiarly liable to sexual anaesthia [or frigidity]” (SIW 156-57). The sexologists, as Ellis’s comment implies, meant to demystify cultural ideas concerning sex and sexuality in the name of science. Yet, as Ellis also admits, “Statements about the sexual impulses of women [and I would add, men] often tell us less about women [or men] than about the persons who make them” (SIW 156). Culture, clinging to the vestiges of Victorian modesty, permitted sexology to explore sexual taboos that it disallowed, and often censured, in other disciplines, namely poetry and fiction. Krafft-Ebing, for example, examines hundreds of cases of actual sexual perversion (from “fetichism” to “rape and violent murder”), yet when a writer like Joyce captures sexual practices and thoughts of Molly and Leopold Bloom on June 16, 1904 his book is censored as obscene. One of the contradictions with the sexology movement, then, lies in its willingness to explain sexuality, both normal and perverse, in an attempt to contain it, but knowledge is not easily confined; Joyce had myriad interests, and in Ulysses, he refused to leave out what science could contribute.15

In endeavoring to compare Joyce’s work to that of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud, questions always arise concerning Joyce’s specific knowledge of their works. While no one can be certain of Joyce’s reading, it is probable that Joyce knew of each of these writers even if he was not directly acquainted with their works. Richard Brown, whose ground-breaking work, Joyce and Sexuality, challenged Joyceans to explore issues of sexuality and as a result is greatly influential to my project, compiles a list of books

---

14 For clarity purposes, I will cite the Ellis texts with abbreviations. SIW is Studies in the Psychology of Sex: The Sexual Impulse in Women. ASI is Analysis of the Sexual Impulse. M&W is Man and Woman.

15 Krafft-Ebing means to contain the information in his book within the medical community. He describes his book accordingly, in his Preface to the first edition of Psychopathia Sexualis: “A scientific title has been chosen, and technical terms are used throughout the book in order to exclude the lay reader. For this same reason certain portions will be written in Latin” (vii, emphasis mine).
which Joyce read. This list includes titles by all three of the sexologists included in this study.\textsuperscript{16} Joyceans all agree that Joyce owned the two works by Freud that Brown names.\textsuperscript{17} Havelock Ellis, who translated several plays by Ibsen—one of Joyce’s favorite writers—into English, was undoubtedly known to Joyce as well. Brown argues that of all the sexologists, Havelock Ellis’s project is closest to Joyce’s. While Brown thinks that “critics have been quick to use Krafft-Ebing in their attempts to gloss, for instance, those passages in ‘Circe’ where sexual perversity is most apparent,” he recognizes that James S. Atherton argues that Joyce was given a copy of \textit{Psychopathia Sexualis} while living in Zurich and lost it shortly thereafter. Hence, in addition to Joyce’s medical school experiences, most Joyceans agree that he knew of and probably read works by all three of these sexologists. Though Joyce’s reading list will never be fully known to scholars, \textit{Ulysses} tells its readers that Joyce observed the sexological movement enough to mock it. For example, the most direct reference to sexology occurs in “Circe” as Virag Bloom says, “For all these knotty points see the seventeenth book of my Fundamentals of Sexology or the Love Passion which Doctor L. B. says is the book sensation of the year” (15.2422-2424). Joyce mocks the sensationalism which he recognizes in sexology, but above all he reveals his awareness of sexology and a deep enough understanding of it that he can poke fun at the movement and the presumptuousness of sexologists.

\textsuperscript{16} Brown lists Krafft-Ebing’s \textit{Psychopathia Sexualis}, Havelock Ellis’s \textit{The New Spirit and Studies in the Psychology of Sex} (all 7 volumes, except vol. 7), and Sigmund Freud’s \textit{Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci} and \textit{Zur Psychopathologie des Alltaglebens}.

\textsuperscript{17} For this study I have chosen to explore Freud’s early work \textit{Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex} although it is not one of the works that Joyce owned. It is important to recognize that “[d]espite serious essays and myriad sweeping statements on the question, the precise extent of Joyce’s acquaintance with Freud and psychoanalysis remains unknown” (Ferrer 367). And since “it seems likely that Joyce first heard of Freud in conversations with the medical students whom he hung around from April 1903 till October 1904 in Dublin,” it is certainly not out of the question that Joyce knew of Freud’s ground-breaking \textit{Three Contributions} (Anderson 370). In addition, it should be noted that Leonard Albert in his 1957 unpublished dissertation from Columbia makes “a case as strong as the scant evidence permits for Joyce’s having read Freud’s \textit{Die Traumdeutung} (1899; dated 1900) in the \textit{Bibliothèque Nationale} in Paris during the winter of 1902-1903” when he was in medical school (24).
My project is to compare the writings of three specific sexologists (set in Victorian notions of sexuality) with the sexuality of Molly and Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*. Richard Brown in his work suggests the need for such a comparison: “In its investigation of sexual perversity the fiction is significantly contemporary with the scientific ‘discovery’ and classification of sexual experience” (78). My assumption in this approach is that texts like *Ulysses* are “historically determined and determining modes of cultural work” (Montrose 777). In other words, *Ulysses* was both influenced by and influenced the cultural milieu of the time, of which the sexology movement was a part. Chapter one will present an analysis of the late Victorian notions of sexuality and the writings of a few sexologists. Chapter two will offer close textual analysis of the male sexuality which Joyce portrays in the character of Leopold Bloom in comparison with contemporaneous sexological findings. The third chapter will similarly approach the issue of Molly Bloom’s sexuality in comparison to the sexology of the time. Finally, the conclusion will synthesize these issues and determine Joyce’s place in the fluid, cross-disciplinary conversation about human sexuality that began in the nineteenth century and continues today.
Chapter One: Victorian Notions of Sexuality and Sexology

For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality.

What needs to be situated, therefore, is not the threshold of a new rationality whose discovery was marked by Freud—or someone else—but the progressive formation (and also transformations) of that ‘interplay of truth and sex’ . . .

-Michel Foucault *The History of Sexuality volume I*

Few have made as large of a splash in the puddle of socio-historic studies that center particularly upon sexuality as Michel Foucault with his *History of Sexuality*. Foucault was among the first to propose that Victorian sexual culture was as diverse as ours is today; thus to summarize Victorian notions of sexuality is as difficult a task as to describe the sexuality of today. While many thinkers of the twentieth century oversimplified the Victorian period, its mores and values, the period is diverse in both its behavioral realities and its ideals. In setting forth a very broad examination of Victorian sexuality, both real and ideal, it is necessary to recognize the multiplicity of Victorian sexualities present in the nineteenth century: beside the morality of instruction manuals, for example, stands the scandal of Oscar Wilde’s trial (1895). Though many twentieth-century (and now twenty-first-century) critics of the Victorians are all too aware of the nineteenth-century intrigue over and condemnation of sexuality, these critics often overlook the fact that Victorians discussed sex and gender in several forums. Regardless of what the voices in the debate had to say, and despite limitations on what main-stream publications could say on these subjects, the Victorians initiated a public multi-
disciplinary examination of sexuality and gender that continued through the twentieth
century and remains at the center of many heated discussions today.

Contrasted to twentieth- and twenty-first-century sexual liberation and progress,
the Victorian period often connotes, to the modern and post-modern scholar, notions of
heightened moralism, prudery, and a distinct distrust of sensuality. Yet, these concepts of
the Victorian do not offer an honest portrayal of that period. The notion of a specifically
“Victorian” attitude, expression, and way of life did not come about until the decade
following Victoria’s death (prior to World War I any discussion of such ideas were
generally referred to as specifically “nineteenth-century”; recall, for example, Ellis’s
critique of “the nineteenth century” as cited in the introduction of this thesis). The
reaction to the nineteenth century and what emerged as “Victorian” tended to emphasize
the repressive morality of the period and therefore ignored the complexities, even
contradictions, to such. As historians like Peter Gay, Michael Mason, Patricia Anderson,
Wendell Stacy Johnson and Ellen Bayuk Rosenman have pointed out, the Victorian
period, amidst many moralizing efforts, was by no means without passion and overt
sexuality. The old adage that laws only exist because people violate them is also true for
morality: cultural didacticism concerning human sexuality only exists in reaction to
moral transgression; and conversely cultural repression breeds such contravention. Thus
the heightened morality of the Victorian period tells of the simultaneous infringement of
such moral ideals; it is precisely this complexity that Joyce seeks to demonstrate in his
characterizations of Molly and Leopold Bloom’s sexualities.

---

18 For a longer discussion of the inception of the term “Victorian” and the negative stigma it
quickly received see Michael Mason’s The Making of Victorian Sexuality (1994).
During the twentieth century, a trend in Victorian studies arose which emphasized the repressive morality of the period, but did so by also stressing the hypocrisy of such morality (as many Victorians accepted and even reiterated sexual reticence, yet participated in various activities that such ideals would deny). Studies like Fraser Harrion’s *The Dark Angel* and Steven Marcus’s *The Other Victorians* trace the counter-culture present during Victoria’s reign. These books tend to focus upon the “other,” like the prostitute, who stands outside of the Victorian codes of morality. While these studies supply a great deal of information about the Victorian notions of sexuality, the period was more complex than simply a gulf between the moralists and the “others.” More current historical analyses address these complexities, arguing that the nineteenth century was a time “when passion reigned.”

Various Victorian theories about sexuality seem to have arisen for a number of reasons. The Victorian Enlightenment enthusiasm to scientifically categorize and classify all elements of life propelled scientific sexual investigation. Also, as women during the nineteenth century began to resist the roles culture assigned them, a crisis of masculinity ensued which engendered further the social and scientific discussions of sexuality. Finally, many moralists, perhaps in order to retain a mystified discussion of sex and gender in the face of an onslaught of scientific examination, wrote instruction manuals to young men and women, circulated social pamphlets concerning appropriate sexuality and gender roles, and published books with similar didactic messages. These didactic messages tended to focus upon the icon of the angel in the house and emphasized the essential purity of women. As a result, women were to remain in the house (for the public sphere was thought of as sinful and too based upon action for the passive woman’s sentiments) and ensure the morality of their husbands and sons when they returned to the hearth after a day outside it. Hence, these moralists...
moralists responded to the growing comfort with which, especially in large cities, men and women engaged in overt sexual activity (whether as prostitutes and clients or in adulterous liaisons) and the appearance later in the century of various contraceptives. Thus in response to the realities of Victorian sexuality and gender roles, Victorian ideological voices—scientific, didactic, early feminist and subsequent male reactionary—became louder as society ignored their messages. Yet, without a doubt, the Victorian ideals of sexuality were "a set of sincerely held values which," according to historian Michael Mason, "commanded wide assent" (45). Mason qualifies his argument, and I concur, that while Victorian morality may have been widely accepted, it was not necessarily acted out.

Much of the sexual debate of the nineteenth century consisted of an attempt to define the psycho-sexual difference between male and female. To a great extent, the need to define sexuality was an extension of the need to define gender roles. Following Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), the nineteenth century witnessed a growing number of women who slowly began to denounce the limitations society placed upon them as a result of their gender. These non-conformist women challenged the underlying grounds of Victorian masculinity, which rested primarily on the negative definition of not being feminine. The culture's ideological centers, which were unarguably patriarchal, reacted by trying to naturalize arguments concerning female sexuality. As historian Peter Gay explains, this war of the sexes was a reaction to a historical continuum:

(who tended to also be Christian laypeople) denounced women's independence as detrimental to her natural role as moralist.

These categories are not mutually exclusive ones. Many overlap and interweave popular and religious ideas and attitudes about sex and gender with scientific "proof", as we shall see.
Men’s defensiveness in the bourgeois century was so acute because the advance of women all around them was an attempt to recover ground they had lost. In earlier centuries, women had participated in running small family shops, helped to direct craftsmen’s enterprises, and played highly visible roles as midwives. Then came, gradually but irresistibly, the modern professions and large-scale manufacturing and merchandising, in which women were denied any posts of command; and the diffusion of prosperity allowed many respectable couples to exempt women from the workplace. (*Education* 169)

In part, the cultural examination of sexuality was itself reactionary. Many of the social critics, doctors, and concerned citizens who weighed in on the reactionary side of the sexual debate said more about a nostalgia for what supposedly once was than about actual sexuality.

These falsely nostalgic voices—as Gay characterizes them—tended to rely upon the “Victorian ideal,” as Wendell Stacy Johnson puts it, of “not talking about sex and limiting, or pretending to limit, it to normal intercourse between husband and wife. The sanctity of marriage and the home!” (13). Though the Victorian period witnessed the first public conversations about sex, these conversations ideally occurred among men of science or conventional morality—not among women, friends or couples. When critics evoke Victorian social history, the cult of domesticity and the angel in the house tend to dominate conversations. Conceptions of Victorian sexuality and gender roles generally defined femininity in terms of domesticity and passivity; therefore masculinity was the negation of such. If the woman’s place was the home, the man’s place was the public sphere, and it was through his relationship with his domestic female that he was softened and (re)moralized (as participation in the public sphere would perpetually brutalize him).

Since the voices participating in Victorian debates about sexuality were all male (and

---

A phrase which Gilbert and Gubar play with in *Madwoman in the Attic* which originates from several Victorian poems: Leigh Hunt’s “An Angel in the House” (1860), Gerald Massey’s “An Angel in the House” (1889), and most famously Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore’s “The Angel in the House” (1854).
thereby assumed to know—from self-knowledge—what comprised masculinity), these examinations tended to center upon questions of femininity. Though certainly not all Victorians believed it, many advocated for the idea(l) of feminine passivity, contrasted, of course, by masculine agency. One man who contributed to the Victorian discussion of sexuality, W. R. Greg, argued in an essay, “Prostitution,” published in 1850:

Women’s *desires* scarcely ever lead to their fall . . . for . . . the desire scarcely exists in a definite and conscious form, till thy *have* fallen. In this point there is a radical and essential difference between the sexes. . . In men, in general, the sexual desire is inherent and spontaneous, and belongs to the condition of puberty. In the other sex, the desire is dormant, if not non-existent, till excited; always till excited by undue familiarities; almost always till excited by actual intercourse. (qtd. in Poovey 5)

Greg was almost oxymoronic with a sense of “commoner;” he was not trained in the sciences, therefore he simply based his assertions upon observation and personal morality. Greg’s argument was fairly commonplace for the time; “it was an idea cherished by many, an idea given almost universal lip service” (Johnson 13). Yet this ideal by no means characterized all Victorian notions of sexuality. It simply characterized what the culture would publicly attest to believing regardless of what Victorian women did privately.

Within the artistic realms of public life, Victorians were anything but puritanical. Libraries and galleries overflowed with nude portraits and sculptures of “sometimes male though far more often female” bodies (Gay, *Education* 380). These nudes were usually not physiologically correct, as many appear devoid of pubic hair and some lack genitals altogether. Yet as Peter Gay points out, “[I]t is not farfetched to suppose that such genteel distortions awakened heated fantasies in whose who saw them when they were first exhibited,” especially for a culture in which many “appear to have been inflamed by
the glimpse of a trim ankle” (381, 382). It was, however, permissible to explore nudity only if it was obviously distant (illustrating, for example, a nymph or a scene from classical literature). As Gay explains, “A provocative, barely clothed girl lounging in an Algerian doorway was exotic; the same girl in the same attitude in a Parisian doorway would have been obscene” (Education 392). As a result, Edward Manet was criticized for the recognizably real and contemporary figures in his Déjeuner sur l'herbe, which reviews characterized as “a commonplace woman of the demimonde, as naked as can be, [who] shamelessly lolls between two dandies dressed to the teeth” (qtd. in Education 393). While Manet, no doubt, intended to ruffle the sentiments of his society, its reaction demonstrates the strictness of these cultural attitudes—the same naked woman, if surrounded by Greco-Roman architecture would have been praised as Venus or Mary Magdalene. Thus the Victorians balanced vicariously on an ideology which encouraged artistic nudity so long as it was not “real” and balked at the obscenity of nudity that was obviously based in a realistic, domestic setting. While Victorian notions of acceptable nudity and the nude art of the nineteenth century may seem overly based upon repressive morality to twenty-first century standards, they undoubtedly played a role in the carnal knowledge of the period and point to the paradox of Victorian notions of sexuality.

While nude art, undoubtedly modeled after various prostitutes, acceptably lined gallery walls, nineteenth-century cities abounded with less than acceptable red light districts. There were “figures ranging anywhere from 6,000 to 80,000” concerning the number of prostitutes in London during the late nineteenth century (Marcus, Victorians 8). According to Maria Luddy, it is difficult to guess the number of prostitutes in

---

23 Manet’s Déjeuner sur l'herbe shows two young men fully dressed and engaged in conversation while a fully nude female looks out at the viewer. Other critics wrote things like, “This is a young man's practical joke, a shameful open sore not worth exhibiting this way” (qtd. in Education 393).
Victorian Dublin: "[I]n 1871 the police [in all of Ireland] instigated proceedings against 17,153 women whom they deemed 'bad characters' . . . 10,456 or 61% were labelled prostitutes" (486). These prostitutes were not confined to dark brothels; they were undoubtedly noticeable on the streets of London and Dublin. In the Dublin of 1904 that Joyce describes, readers observe a great number of prostitutes throughout the day. Furthermore, Joyce’s Leopold Bloom thinks about prostitution reform several times on June sixteenth. The Victorian reactions to prostitution were multivocal: liberals, like John Stuart Mill, derided the system that forced women into such labor; conservatives emphasized the moral decline of the age as exemplified by the many brothels and street prostitutes; (pseudo)scientific writing argued that prostitutes were physiologically degenerate and therefore distant from normality. The prostitute for Victorians was the inescapable female other; she was the epitome of the fallen woman and "the dark angel" that Fraser Harrison describes. The Jack the Ripper sensation and the many street women of Victorian novels, as well as the sheer numbers recorded in police records, document the prevalence of prostitution regardless of the many moralistic messages present during the Victorian period.

Along with brothels and street prostitutes, the nineteenth century witnessed the inception of a large pornography industry, which on March 30, 1877, was for the first time catalogued in a bibliography of erotica, *Index Librorum Prohibitorium: being Notes Bio-Biblio-Icono-graphical and Critical, on Curious and Uncommon Books* by Pisanus

---

24 Interestingly, the number of prostitute arrests in Ireland declined significantly by 1900, according to Luddy’s analysis.
26 See for an example of such “pseudo science,” Lombroso and Ferro’s *La donna delinquente* (1893).
Fraxi (pseudonym of Henry Spencer Ashbee). Ashbee produced two other volumes, *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum* of 1879 and *Catena Librorum Tacendorum* of 1885. This trilogy, as Ashbee explains, "is to collect into a common fold the stray sheep, to find home for the pariahs of every nation. I do not hesitate to notice the catchpennies hawked in the public streets, as well as the sumptuous volumes got up for the select few" (qtd. in *Other Victorians* 38). The pornography industry, "everything connected with it being involved in obscurity, and surrounded with deception" (qtd. in *Other Victorians* 38), finds an immortal place in Ashbee’s catalogue. Joyce’s *Ulysses* also serves to catalogue, however fictitiously, the pervasiveness of pornography. Aside from the soft pornography of Bloom’s *Photo Bits*, *Ulysses* refers to pornography several other times. In “Cyclops” several of the men ogle a bit of porn: "And here she is,” says Alf, that was giggling over the *Police Gazette* with Terry on the counter, ‘in all her warpaint.’ ‘Give us a squint at her,’ says I. And what was it only one of the smutty yankee pictures Terry borrows off of Corny Kelleher. Secrets for enlarging your private parts. Misconduct of society belle” (12.1165-1170). As Ashbee’s chosen titles suggest, the pornography of the age was “anti-institutional” as “Victorian dirty pictures . . . reveal not just a lusty interest in sex of all kinds, but an artist’s desire to thumb his nose at the sacred cows of his society” (Johnson 5). In the same vein, Joyce’s Molly refers to “the smutty photo he [Bloom] has [. . . of a] nun” (18.22). Victorian pornography also investigated “such taboo aspects as incest, sadism, and masochism, as well as several varieties of homosexuality” (4). Thus contrasted to the Victorian ideals of love and sex within marriage, pornography demonstrated and sold alternative sexualities to every class of society and undoubtedly influenced the social milieu.
While pornography advanced the Victorian world of sexual fantasy, the increased circulation of contraception by the end of the nineteenth century made the implementation of those sexual fantasies less dangerous. Euphemisms like “French love letters” described condoms, which were steadily more available in the late nineteenth century. Again Joyce incorporates this into *Ulysses* in “Oxen of the Sun” when he puns upon condoms, “as snug a clock of French fashion as ever kept a lady from wetting” (14.777-778) and again in “Penelope,” when Molly refers to a “French Letter” which she hopes to find in Bloom’s pocket the next day (18.1235). She believes the orgasm she knows he had the day before resulted from sexual intercourse with a prostitute, perhaps. Evidence of condoms remains in advertisements of the time: “‘RUBBER GOODS,’ proclaimed a typical advertisement in an 1898 issue of *Photo Bits*, a slightly naughty gentlemen’s magazine, ‘*Men, be careful! Prevention is better than Cure!*’” (Anderson 114). Joyce even includes the popular *Photo Bits* in *Ulysses*: Bloom and Molly have a picture of a nymph above their bed which Bloom tore out from *Photo Bits*. In addition, Molly, in “Penelope,” also refers to having burnt *Photo Bits* as she is embarrassed that Bloom leaves “things like that lying about he’s getting very careless” (18.601).

Pornography documented the growing circulation of condoms; in the novel *Rosa Fielding*, the heroine tells her lover, “‘You must really cover your beautiful instrument with that sheath, or condom, or whatever you call it. I have no notion of having a pretty white belly bow-windowed before marriage!’” (qtd. in *Other Victorians* 234). The diaphragm, “available since mid-century, was principally for middle-class wives who could afford both the device and the doctor’s fee for fitting it” (Anderson 120). But the

---

27 Bloom and Molly have a picture of a nymph above their bed which Bloom tore out from *Photo Bits*. In addition, Molly, in “Penelope,” also refers to having burnt *Photo Bits* as she is embarrassed that Bloom leaves “things like that lying about he’s getting very careless” (18.601).
most frequently used method of contraception “was probably coitus interruptus” (120).
Michael Mason argues that various methods of birth control, both barrier (condoms and diaphragms) and non-barrier (coitus interruptus, rhythm, prolonged nursing, and douching for example), were used in every class and among both marital and extramarital couples. With increased contraception came a greater ability to control procreation, thereby demystifying the process of impregnation. Furthermore, because contraception removed the dangers of pregnancy and venereal disease from sex, it allowed sex to become more freely accessible and enjoyable for both parties; contraception suggested, contrary to many popular beliefs, that both men and women obtain pleasure from sex.

The dichotomy between ideal and real sex complicated Victorian sexuality. Prostitution, pornography, and contraception exploded in Victoria’s Britain at the same time that many publicly denounced all but a narrow definition of marital sexuality. In the midst of such seeming contradictions and complexities, Victorian men of science entered the equation in order to offer “objective” explanations of the psycho-sexuality of humans. As Wendell Stacy Johnson explains, “Victorians had . . . a compulsion to define themselves” (177), and science offered them such categories of definition; for the first time, scientists began to investigate social queries as disciplines like criminology, sociology, anthropology and sexology emerged. This drive to empirically understand and explain the world at large produced Victorian social theories like degeneration. The Victorians, anxious to naturalize the ‘norm’ and demonize all that deviated from it, looked to scientific categorization of criminals as congenitally degenerate, women who over-stepped certain social boundaries as hysterical, and darker races as physiologically
Inquiries into sexuality shared the same reasoning; anxious to qualify and naturalize particular sexual practices as normative, and consequently to scientifically jeer at sexual “maladies,” physicians, psychiatrists, and anthropologists offered scientific or pseudo-scientific evaluation of human sexuality; it was these men (there were no women in the field early on, and few later) who came to be known as the sexologists.

In the late nineteenth century a group of physicians, psychiatrists, and anthropologists entered the ongoing cultural debate about the essence of man and woman with the end of grounding sex and sexuality in the truth of scientific inquiry. These men dealt with religious and moral concerns of human sexuality, often “proving” their validity through scientific findings, and paved the way for twentieth-century investigations of human sexuality. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on three voices, which I see as representing three generations of sexology. These men—Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud—also were the most influential and infamous of Victorian and early Edwardian sexologists. Furthermore they are three sexological voices that Joyce undoubtedly knew. I will present them chronologically and

---

28 Here I refer to studies of degeneration like Havelock Ellis’s The Criminal published in 1890; Max Nordau’s Degeneration published in 1893; Cesare Lombroso’s L’uomo delinquente (Criminal Man) published in 1875. All three deal with issues of criminology and degeneration in a (pseudo)scientific manner. In reference to hysteria, obstetrician Samuel Ashwell, in 1845, described female hysterics as women who rebel from the model of Victorian femininity: “women married late, or after great delay, and who, from disparity of age or mutual dislike, bear children at long intervals; and those who, either from the claims of fashionable life, or other insufficient reasons, do not suckle; young widows and the single; in all of whom some uterine derangement may be suspected, and in many ascertained to exist: such individuals are the common subjects of the disease” (qtd. in Nead 25-26).

29 It should be noted that at this time these, now very distinct, professions often overlapped and blurred into one another. Yet, various individuals emphasized their interest in their own studies by calling themselves psychiatrists or anthropologists. For example, Krafft-Ebing calls himself a psychiatrist in the preface to Psychopathia Sexualis, while Havelock Ellis prefers the term anthropologist; unsurprisingly Krafft-Ebing’s interests lie more in laying out examples of psychological sexual deviance, while Ellis prefers to explore biological and social aspects of human sexual evolution.
offer a cursory view of their writing and what they contributed to burgeoning debates over sexuality.

The first of these sexologists, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), published his *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886 in German.\(^\text{30}\) Krafft-Ebing’s book compiles hundreds of case studies of the sexually aberrant and offers a psychiatric/scientific reading of these patients’ maladies. Although Krafft-Ebing, in the preface to the first edition, emphasizes that his aim is to contain the discussion of sexuality within the medical field (hence the use of Latin in the title and in particularly steamy sections),\(^\text{31}\) the preface to the twelfth edition (1903) demonstrates the widespread consumption of his work: “Its [*Psychopathia Sexualis*’s] commercial success is the best proof that large numbers of unfortunate people find in its pages instruction and relief in the frequently enigmatical manifestations of sexual life” (viii). The progression from the first edition’s hopes to the twelfth edition’s acknowledgement of widespread popularity demonstrates that while the work of sexology (especially that of Krafft-Ebing) may have been meant for a restricted community it was consumed by lay people as well as professionals.

Krafft-Ebing followed in a line of physicians who played a part in the cultural interest in sexuality, yet unlike many of his medical predecessors Krafft-Ebing emphasized the pathological side of sexual aberrance. Furthermore, Krafft-Ebing’s approach was altogether different from most of his forerunners as he catalogued examples of such disparate sexualities through anecdotes about patients K. or N., for example. His *Psychopathia Sexualis* first sets forth, in the initial three chapters, general comments on sexuality, from love in the western world to the differences between men

\(^\text{30}\) The first English translation followed soon after in 1892. The version I am using is the second English translation from 1928.

\(^\text{31}\) See footnote 15 of the introduction.
and women. The final three sections of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and the bulk of the more
than six hundred pages, index various forms of what he argued were pathological
sexuality and exemplary narratives.32

Krafft-Ebing’s opening chapter, “Fragments of a system of psychology of sexual
life,” traces the western European history of sexuality and contrasts it to the sexual
practices of “savage races,” who engage in a sort of pre-Edenic public sexuality and hold
women as chattel (2). This chapter openly celebrates the status quo of Europe at the time
by embracing Christianity and its role in civilizing European sexuality. While relegateing
all the anti-feminist clerical writings (which seem to contradict his assertion) to a
footnote, Krafft-Ebing writes, “Christianity raised the union of the sexes to a sublime
position by making woman socially the equal of man and by elevating the bond of love to
a moral and religious institution” (3-4). “[T]he ethic of marriage and procreation was left
largely intact” in Krafft-Ebing’s work perhaps as an apology for any moral condemnation
that *Psychopathia Sexualis* potential might excite even though the text was supposedly
secular and scientific (Oosterhuis 23). At the same time, “the traditional Christian
condemnation of sexual aberration in terms of sin and guilt was [supposedly] replaced”
by secular investigation centering on public concerns in which “sexual aberration began
to be conceived in a medical light” (23). Krafft-Ebing’s first chapter quickly assumes the
tone of sermon as it condemns “the Mohammedan [for whom] woman is simply a means
for sensual gratification and the propagation of the species” and celebrates “the sunny

---

32 These narratives offer an example of the confessional as a means to truth that Foucault
characterizes as a specifically Euro-American idea in his *The History of Sexuality, vol. I*. Foucault calls
this method of sexology “a confessional science, a science which relied on a many-sided extortion, and
took for its subject what was unmentionable but admitted to nonetheless” (64).
balm of Christian doctrine, [in which] blossom forth her divine virtues” (5). Moreover, *Psychopathia Sexualis* opens with a scientific investigation of sexuality which centers upon morality: “Life is a never-ceasing duel between the animal instinct and morality” (5). Out of this moralizing introduction comes *Psychopathia Sexualis*’s “study of sexual life in the individual” (7). After emphasizing the momentousness of puberty, Krafft-Ebing compares religion and love, initiating his discussion of sexuality with its socially-accepted outlets. He argues, “Religious and sexual hyperaesthesia at the acme of development show the same volume of intensity and the same quality of excitement, and may therefore under given circumstances interchange” (11). Here Krafft-Ebing defines “true love” or acceptable sexuality: “Since love implies the presence of sexual desire it can only exist between persons of different sex capable of sexual intercourse” (13). His entire work revolves around the hetero-normative, traditionally Christian assumption that the only non-aberrant sexual end is that of potentially procreative coitus.

Krafft-Ebing identifies himself in the introductory chapter as one of the sexologists who believe men to be more sexual than women. He confidently asserts, although without any scientific evidence, “Man has beyond a doubt the stronger sexual appetite of the two” (14). However, he admits, “woman [. . .] if physically and mentally normal, and properly educated, has but little sensual desire” (14, emphasis mine). Why, one might ask, would woman need be educated to her natural condition? Krafft-Ebing’s assertions, however forcefully made, seem to lose their potency with this qualification.

---

33 He goes on to state, “In comparing the various stages of civilisation it becomes evident that, despite periodic relapses, public morality has made steady progress, and that Christianity is the chief factor in this advance” (6).

34 Krafft-Ebing finds “the material and moral ruin of the community [which] is readily brought about by debauchery, adultery, and luxury” particularly present in “large cities [which] are hotbeds in which neuroses and low morality are bred” (6, 7).

35 According to Krafft-Ebing, religion and love are higher forms of sexual desire.
Further complicating his argument, Krafft-Ebing declares, “Woman [. . .] remains passive. Her sexual organisation demands it, and the dictates of good breeding come to her aid. [. . .] Nevertheless, sexual consciousness is stronger in woman than man [. . .] but her love is more spiritual than sensual” (14). Krafft-Ebing lumps all women under the title of the woman who is well-educated and well-bred; it seems that it is only under such socialized conditions that woman is as Krafft-Ebing argues her to be. Thus, he paradoxically concludes that this socially-constructed woman essentially desires monogamous marriage and that to her “love is life, [while] to man it is the joy of life” (14-15).36

Krafft-Ebing’s introductory chapter concludes with a conservative condemnation of his society’s treatment of the female body and love. He first attacks fashion, through which “even the most discreet maiden will indulge [exposure of physical charms] when robed for the ball-room, theatre, or similar social function” (16). Krafft-Ebing continues by subtly deriding women for their ignorant adoption of such fashion: “Although the reasons for such a display are obvious [though not explicitly mentioned here], the modest woman is fortunately no more conscious of them, than of the motives which underlie periodical fashions that bring certain forms of the body into undue prominence, to say nothing of corsets, etc.” (16). Yet once again confusing his message, Krafft-Ebing seems to okay such displays: “So long as woman seeks only self-gratification in personal adornment, and so long as she remains unconscious of the psychological reasons for thus making herself attractive, no objection can be raised against it; but when done with the

36 Krafft-Ebing’s treatment of woman’s nature continues as he emphasizes, “Woman, as Mantegazza properly observes, seeks not only gratification of sensual desires but also protection and support for herself and her offspring” (16). Yet in the preface to the first edition, he writes, “Michelet’s ‘L’amour’ and Mantegazza’s ‘Physiology of Love’ are merely clever causeries, and cannot be considered in the light of scientific research” (v). He, however, does not seem to recognize the contradiction.
fixed purpose to please men it degrades into coquetry” (16-17). Aside from sounding like the contemporary instructional literature, Krafft-Ebing draws an ambiguous and subjective line between the “discreet maiden” and the coquette.

Out of this social commentary, Krafft-Ebing delves into a discussion of fetichism\(^\text{37}\) which initiates his differentiation between normal and pathological sexuality.\(^\text{38}\) Erotic fetichism “makes an idol of physical or mental qualities of a person or even merely of objects used by that person, etc., because they awaken mighty associations with the beloved person, thus originating strong emotions of sexual pleasure” (18). In true love, (once again Krafft-Ebing’s naturalizing term for socially-accepted sexuality) the beloved’s entire person becomes the revered object and “the desire to enjoy the full possession of the beloved […] and to fulfill the laws of nature” exist (20). With his description of pathological fetichism it becomes clear that the beloved in Krafft-Ebing’s account is always female (unless otherwise stated).\(^\text{39}\) Fetichism becomes pathological, according to Krafft-Ebing, when the fetich becomes the sexual end and interrupts the natural sexual end of coitus.\(^\text{40}\) Out of this cursory introduction to fetichism, Krafft-Ebing naturalizes what happens to be fashionable in his culture regarding female desire, with what seems to be little to no factual backing, in

\(^{37}\) All three of the sexologists in question use this spelling, therefore I will as well.

\(^{38}\) Krafft-Ebing clearly defines fetich as anything which “signifies an object, or parts or attributes, which by virtue of association to sentiment, personality or absorbing ideas, exert a charm (the Portugese ‘fetisso’) or at least produce a peculiar individual impression which is in no wise connected with the external appearance of the sign, symbol or fetich” (17-18).

\(^{39}\) He writes, “With regards to fetichism in women, science must at least for present time be content with mere conjectures. This much seems to be certain, that being a physiological factor, its effects are analogous to those in men, i.e., producing sexual sympathies towards persons of the same sex” (23). Thus it seems that Krafft-Ebing can only imagine female fetichists to be also lesbians. To explain this bizarre assertion is to merely conjecture his meaning; it seems, however, that Krafft-Ebing cannot imagine a fetich taking the place of a man in a woman’s desire. Yet later he writes, “The author has thus far not succeeded in obtaining facts with regard to pathological fetichism in woman” (24).

\(^{40}\) Krafft-Ebing sees potentially-procreative coitus as the natural sexual end, but he does not define it only as coitus from which conception occurs.
order to investigate potential fetiches in women (though here he seems to mean nothing more than what attracts a woman to a man); for example, a beard attracts women as “the emblem of virility, the secondary simply of generative power” (24). Thus Krafft-Ebing sets the tone for his investigation of sexuality by borrowing from contemporary social assumptions and fashions, and in turn naturalizing such culturally specific patterns.

The second chapter of *Psychopathia Sexualis* deals with the “physiological facts” or anatomical descriptions of male and female sexual arousal and intercourse. Male sexual instinct, according to Krafft-Ebing, “manifests an organic variation of intensity in consonance with the collection and expenditure of semen. In women the degree of sexual desire coincides with the process of ovulation in such a way that *libido sexualis* is intensified after the menstrual period” (26). Here Krafft-Ebing argues “sexual instinct—as emotion, idea and impulse—is a function of the cerebral cortex” (26). Also presumably located in the cerebral cortex are olfactory machinations, thus “the clearly defined relation of the olfactory and sexual senses in mental diseases is worthy of notice” (32). Thus it seems perhaps more than coincidental that “there exists a certain histological conformity between the nose and the genitals, for both have ERECTILE tissue (likewise the nipple)” (33). Aside from “direct irritation of the nerve-tract in” the brain or “peripheral irritation of the sensory nerves (penis, clitoris),” Krafft-Ebing argues that “*libido sexualis* may also be induced by stimulation of the gluteal region (castigation, whipping)” (27, 27-28, 34). He follows this assertion with a history of flagellation. The anatomical descriptions of this chapter then describe the arousal resulting from “irritation of various regions of the skin and mucous membrane” (38). Such “hyperaesthetic zones in woman are, while she is a virgin, the clitoris, and after defloration, the vagina and
cervix uteri" as well as the nipple (38). In men "the only 'hyperaesthetic' zone is the glans penis and perhaps the skin of the external genitals" (39); it is only "under pathological conditions," Krafft-Ebing argues, that "the anus may become a 'hyperaesthetic' area" (39). He concludes this chapter with an anatomical description, via medical terminology, of coitus of which "the distinctive event [. . .] is ejaculation" (41). In chapter one he asserts that men are more sexual; here he explains that both genders experience pleasure from sexual intercourse (the implication being that while women do not initiate sex, they do enjoy it):

The sexual act is accompanied by a pleasurable feeling, which, in the male, is evoked by the passage of semen through the ductus ejaulatorii to the urethra [. . .] This pleasurable sensation occurs earlier in the male than in the female, grows rapidly in intensity up to the moment of commencing ejaculation, reaches its acme in the instant of free emission, and disappears quickly post ejaculationem.

In the female the pleasurable feeling occurs later and comes on more slowly, and generally outlasts the act of ejaculation. (41)  

Thus Krafft-Ebing breaks with other nineteenth-century physicians who argued the passionlessness of women as he scientifically describes the pleasure and consequent ejaculation of both genders during coitus.

From here Krafft-Ebing deals with "anthropological facts" and with questions of secondary sexual characteristics. These "secondary sexual characteristics differentiate the two sexes; they present the specific male and female types" (42). They include somatic characteristics (skeleton, pelvis, hair, larynx, thigh, breast, etc.) and psychical ones, what Krafft-Ebing essentializes as "the knowledge of a special sexual individuality

---

41 Krafft-Ebing describes female ejaculation: "In the female as well, at the height of sexual and pleasurable excitement, a reflex movement occurs. It is induced by stimulation of the sensory genital nerves and consists of a peristaltic movement [contraction of muscles to push contents in hollow structure onward] in the tubes and uterus as far down as the portio vaginalis, which presses out the mucous secretions of the tubes and uterus" (41). Of course this does not always occur; Krafft-Ebing lists "want of desire in coitus, emotions in general, [and] influence of the will" as potential reasons for un-ejaculatory coitus (41).
as man or woman” (42). In this chapter he defines gynecomasty as physically effeminate men; such “only occurs in neurotically degenerate families, and must be looked upon as a manifestation of an anatomical and functional degeneration” (43). Here Krafft-Ebing establishes his reading of pathological sexuality as deriving from familial degeneracy; in most of the case studies he describes the patient’s family history. Yet, as chapter one’s analysis of the well-educated “normally” passive woman demonstrates, Krafft-Ebing seems to recognize a cultural constructedness of character but fails to investigate it here; rather he uses familial illness to trace sanguineous pathology.

Following these chapters, Krafft-Ebing spends the majority of his time describing various sexual pathologies. He places particular emphasis upon masochism (and some on sadism), fetichism, and homosexual feelings in both sexes (which he argues are caused chiefly by masturbation or fear of coitus). Psychopathia Sexualis, however, includes cases of public masturbators, bestiality, necrophilia, pederasty, bisexuality, and nymphomania, to name only a few. Krafft-Ebing is perhaps most famous for his work on masochism, which he defines as “the wish to suffer pain and be subjected to force [. . .] being treated by [the beloved . . .] as by a master, humiliated and abused” (131). This becomes pathological, according to Krafft-Ebing, when “the sexual instinct is directed to ideas of subjugation and abuse by the opposite sex” rather than coitus (133, emphasis in original). He breaks the case studies on masochism into four major groups: one, desire for abuse and humiliation as a means of sexual satisfaction; two, latent masochism which

---

42 For instance, “of a family having bad nervous taint. Father was a drinker and died by suicide, as also did the patient’s brother and sister. A sister suffered with convulsive hysteria. Mother’s father shot himself while insane. Mother was sickly, and paralysed after apoplexy [stroke]” (294) or “Mother constitutionally and heavily hysteropathic. Mother’s father insane. Father’s family untainted” (423).

43 It is important to note, “In the fourth edition to Psychopathia Sexualis, Krafft-Ebing introduced fetishism. He referred to Lombroso, who had used fetishism as an explanatory model in his introduction to the Italian translation of the book, and in later editions to Binet, who actually had been the first to give fetish a sexual meaning” (Oosterhuis 49, italics in original).
embodies itself as foot and shoe fetichism; three, disgusting acts for the purpose of self-
humiliation and sexual gratification (for example, the eroticisation of feces); and four, masochism in women (there are only two scientific cases of such). Most masochistic behavior falls into the first category and as a result Krafft-Ebing creates two subcategories with which to further classify masochists: ideal and symbolic masochism. In the later, men “satisfy themselves with the symbolic representations of situations corresponding with their perversion” (159-60). For example, a symbolic masochist might satisfy himself by masturbating while reading Sacher-Masoch’s novel *Venus in Furs*. In the ideal masochist, “the psychical perversion remains entirely within the spheres of imagination and fancy, no attempt at realisation is made” (161). Krafft-Ebing states, “that masochism is a perversion of uncommonly frequent occurrence is sufficiently shown by the relatively large number of cases that have thus far been studied scientifically” (166). The perversion of the male masochist is a gender-bending act, according to Krafft-Ebing’s essentialist vision of woman as the “weaker sex,” as the males masochist “represents a pathological degeneration of the distinctive psychical peculiarities of woman” (201). In other words, the male masochist, according to Krafft-Ebing, actually degenerates to the physicality of a woman. Thus, Krafft-Ebing finds that “masochism [which apparently only affects men] is, properly speaking, only a rudimentary form of antipathic sexual instinct. It is a partial effemination” (211, italics in original). Again playing upon social assumptions, Krafft-Ebing argues that “among

---

Krafft-Ebing’s treatment of masochism in women once again essentializes women as passive and subservient according to a classical treatment of woman as the receptacle in procreation: “In woman voluntary subjection to the opposite sex is a physiological phenomenon. Owing to her passive rôle in procreation and long existent social conditions, ideas of subjections are, in woman, normally connected with the idea of sexual relations. They form, so to speak, the harmonics which determine the tone-quality of feminine feeling” (195). He continues, “[T]he custom of unnumbered generations, in connection with the passive rôle with which woman has been endowed by Nature, has given her an instinctive inclination to voluntary subordination to man” (196).
married men, hen-pecked husbands belong to this category” (203-204); thus Krafft-Ebing places men who are dominated in one way or another by their wives in the category of actual masochists. Moreover, while masochism may be cultivated for various reasons, “genuine, complete, deep-rooted masochism [. . .] is congenital” (207). This finding is common among all of the pathologies that Krafft-Ebing investigates; the worst, most deeply-rooted cases are almost always determined to be naturally caused by bloodline.

Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, then, sets forth an investigation into sexuality by listing and categorizing sexual aberrance. His way of scientifically pathologizing alternative sexualities has caused him to be a nemesis of many twentieth-century gender studies critics—Michel Foucault, for example. Yet, as critic Harry Oosterhuis points out, “Krafft-Ebing’s sexual pathology played a key role in the historical construction of the modern concept of sexuality” (9). Krafft-Ebing certainly was not the only medical man to catalogue sexual deviance, but he was undoubtedly one of the most influential. He offered a voluminous manuscript indexing many of the sexual cases under scientific investigation during his time, and future generations would look to his work for evidence and argument; Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud both reference *Psychopathia Sexualis* in their works. Furthermore, Krafft-Ebing’s composition embodies the movement from Christian morality to scientific inquiry as it juggles dogma and objective observation and attempts to create a system through which to think about sexuality in secular, modern society.

Like Krafft-Ebing, Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) was a trained physician who sought to investigate questions of human sexuality, though his manner of investigation was less clinical and more anthropological than that of Krafft-Ebing.
Furthermore, Ellis’s personal life differed greatly from Krafft-Ebing’s. As we have seen, the honorable and respected Krafft-Ebing offers the initial pages of his *Psychopathia Sexualis* to a celebration of Christianity’s civilizing process and the beneficial aspects of marriage. Ellis was “a radical among radicals [. . .] and a passionate advocate of free love” (Harrison 98-99). As a teenager Ellis traveled as a teacher to Australia, where he “experienced a revelation of his destiny: that he should become a doctor in order to prepare himself for his lifework, the study of sex” (98). He worked on his six-volume work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* for several decades and published them between 1897 and 1910. As an introduction to his *Studies*,

Ellis composed *Man and Woman* (1894) which, in the preface to the first edition, he calls “an anthropological and psychological study of those secondary sexual differences which recent investigation has shown to exist among civilised human races” (xi-xii). In the preface to the fourth edition, Ellis explains that “a leading aim in this book [. . .] was the consideration of the question how far sexual differences are artificial, the result of tradition and environment, and how far they are really rooted in the actual constitution of the male and female organisms” (vii-viii). Thus, as early as the prefaces of *Man and Woman*, Ellis’s work clearly means to anthropologically investigate the cultural constructedness of gender as well as the biology of the sexes, departing from the work of physicians like Richard von Krafft-Ebing that only dealt with anatomy and sexual illness in scientific (“congenital”) terms less than a decade before. Ellis’s *Man and Woman* assumes an objective tone, quite aware of the propensity to fall into subjectivity, especially when dealing with questions of sexuality. He proposes to create “real progress” in *Man and Woman*, by

---

45 The postscript to Ellis’s final volume of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* describes *Man and Woman* as “put forward as a prolegomenon to the main work” (Studies vol. II 639).
46 I am using the fourth edition of *Man and Woman* published in 1911.
arguing for “opinions” that are “more and more according to knowledge and less rooted in prejudice” (viii). Ellis at once recognizes and discredits many of the findings of earlier sexological studies by asserting that they are based upon “prejudice,” while vowing to participate in a more careful scholarship in his own studies. For the purposes of this study, I will deal primarily with *Man and Woman*.\(^47\)

Like Krafft-Ebing’s opening chapter, the introduction to *Man and Woman* assumes a progression to history and investigates the development of people in terms of their gender roles and sexuality.\(^48\) In the midst of his discussion of primitive man vs. European, Ellis undertakes a long digression about female menstruation—“an everlasting source of marvel and profound repugnance among all primitive races” (14). The topic of menstruation brings forth Ellis’s typically progressive (even radical) social criticism; even contemporary England, he points out disparagingly, retains the belief that menstruating women are unclean.\(^49\) Ellis does not hesitate to criticize medical and bourgeois mentality alike by comparing them to primitive superstition. Continuing to focus upon the historical perception of female sexuality, Ellis returns to the medieval period’s dichotomization of woman as angel or whore. Perhaps letting his objectivity slide, he concludes with a theory of the social constructedness of femininity: “In the great centres of European life, during the mediaeval and later times, these conflicting ideals have produced very complex and attractive feminine personalities, often much more

---

\(^47\) I will also use various portions of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* published before 1922 in my upcoming chapters.

\(^48\) It is necessary to note that like most western Europeans, Ellis assumes that various races exist at different points in this progressive history; he places the modern European at the highest point of this developmental model.

\(^49\) Ellis criticizes: “Among a very large section of women of the middle or lower classes in England and other countries it is firmly believed the touch of a menstruating woman will contaminate food; only a few years since, in the course of a correspondence on the subject in the *British Medical Journal* (1878), even medical men were found to state from personal observation that they had no doubt whatever on this point” (15).
delightful and even more wholesome than the influences which moulded them would lead us to expect” (16). Ellis departs from earlier sexologists by concluding with such constructivist tone in the introduction to a book dedicated to revealing the biological truths of sexuality. Unlike his predecessors, Ellis attempts to progressively balance the construction of gender identity with the biological realities of sex.

However, he usually fails to hold that balance; for example, Ellis concludes his introduction by retreating to a discourse on human biology with the assertion that the enlightenment, industrial revolution and mutual education of the sexes “have tended to remove artificial sexual differences, and have largely obliterated the coarser signs of superiority which may before have been possessed by one sex over another” (17). Ellis mistakenly assumes that the Enlightenment did, in fact, ensure mutual education, and furthermore naively assumes that such education removes all “artificial” or constructed gendering. Finally, Ellis comes, in the final lines of his introduction, to the question of psychology as he suggests (not by way of any particular study, but through hasty comparison that recalls Krafft-Ebing’s assertion of women’s biological passivity as evident in their passive role in sex) that “so long as women are unlike [men] in the primary sexual characters and in reproductive function they can never be absolutely alike even in the highest psychic process” (17). With this Ellis lays the groundwork for his entire work—women and men are different, he will argue, but not necessarily hierarchically.

Quickly forgetting the constructivism that he inferred in the introduction, Ellis affirms an essentialism which seems more based in his opinion than any scientific study: “The sexes are not greatly attracted by any purely aesthetic qualities; it is the womanly
qualities of the woman which are attractive to the man, the manly qualities of the man which are attractive to the woman” (19). Ellis, building upon Darwin’s theory of sexual selection, assumes his audience to share a particular definition of “womanly” or “manly” qualities; he also assumes a hetero-normativity that contradicts his personal experiences.50 Following this problematic assertion, Ellis describes the process through which Man and Woman will operate. First he defines “secondary sexual characters,” just as Krafft-Ebing did in Psychopathia Sexualis, as anatomical differences between the sexes (i.e. the skull, the thyroid gland, proportions of red blood cells, relationships between parts of brain). Yet, unlike Krafft-Ebing, he offers another category, which is “of great interest from the social point of view” (20); these psychological and more generally personality-building characters Ellis suggests calling “tertiary sexual characters” (20). Furthermore, building upon Darwin’s theory of evolution, he proposes to compare adults to children (the infantile) and to “simian, savage, and senile characters” (23).51 These categories offer Ellis a discursive framework through which he will make claims for the remainder of Man and Woman.

After laying out this mechanism for his inquiry, Ellis proceeds with several chapters on secondary sexual characters: growth and proportions of the body, the pelvis, the head (comparing male and female brain size among other things), the senses, motion (muscular differences of sexes), metabolism, the viscera, periodicity (female menstruation), and fatality and mortality differences. His work on what he categorizes as

---

50 Here, I refer to Ellis’s marriage to Edith Lees, who openly engaged in lesbian relations prior to and throughout their marriage. Furthermore, several of Ellis’s friends were homosexual (John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter, for example). See Fraser Harrison’s and Vern L. Bullough’s works on Ellis.

51 Continuing to naturalize his racial assumptions, Ellis finds (with the support of a great deal of other research) that “yellow races” are close to infantile, blacks and Australians are close to apes, and “the white races occupy an intermediate position” (25-26).
the tertiary sexual categories is, however, more interesting to this study; it includes chapters on “the intellectual impulse,” “hypnotic phenomena,” “the affectability of women,” “the artistic impulse,” “morbid psychic phenomena” (including suicide, insanity and criminality), and “the variational tendency in men.” It is in these chapters that Ellis tends to mix science with social ideas. While he genuinely seeks to revise unfounded or misconceived superstition, he naturalizes through scientific studies the gender differences (and consequently gender roles) his society insisted upon, and in turn, reifies the cultural assumptions he initially sought to overturn.52

In the chapter entitled “Intellectual Impulse,” for example, Ellis completely ignores the potential for the cultural construction of gender identity which he references in his introduction. While he admits that “at present [. . .] our knowledge of sexual differences in the manipulation of the intellectual impulse is fragmentary and incomplete,” he concludes from several studies53 that women and men differ in intellectual impulse (188): “The masculine method of thought is massive and deliberate, while the feminine method is quick to perceive and nimble to act” (196).54 Not only do

---

52 I am not attempting to refute his findings (as I am not trained to do so), I am simply pointing out that the gender roles Ellis claims to be natural are the very ones his culture upholds.

53 These studies, carried out by Prof. Jastron (1891) on fifty university students (25 of each sex), investigated word association and recall (memory). Jastron, Ellis cites, finds, “In general [. . .] the feminine traits revealed by this study are an attention to the immediate surroundings, to the finished product, to the ornamental, the individual, and the concrete; while the masculine preference is for the more remote, the constructive, the useful, the general and the abstract” (qtd. on 190). In another recall study in which students were asked to read as fast as possible and recall all that was read (done by G. F. Romanes in 1887) when women recalled more and were faster readers, Ellis concludes: “But it was found that this rapidity was no proof of intellectual power, and some of the slowest readers were highly distinguished men” (195).

54 Not surprisingly, Ellis finds the same trend in his chapter on “Artistic Impulse”: “If we turn to the pure artistic impulse, as manifested in the higher stages of culture, we find that the supremacy of men in painting is unquestionable” (366). He finds the same true of musical composers. In artistic genres populated by women, like literature, Ellis writes, “It cannot be said that literature is an art. It is merely a method of recording very diverse manifestations of psychic aptitude and artistic impulse” (369). Women, in order to succeed in poetry, however, “must be brief, personal, and concentrated” (Edmund Gosse qtd. in Ellis 371). Women are also successful as actors and singers because of their natural tendencies, which are, of course, not artistic in themselves: “It is probable also that women are more susceptible than men to the immediate stimulus of admiration and applause supplied by contact with an audience” (374).
these studies demonstrate the intellectual differences, they are proof, according to Ellis, of the long-held image of the “quick and cunning” female (196). He argues that the female method of thought “is apt to fall into error, but is agile in retrieving an error [. . .] Whenever a man and a woman are found under compromising circumstances it is nearly always the woman who with ready wit audaciously retrieves the situation” (196). Ellis, again attempting to be progressive while continuing to fall into the assumptions of masculinist culture, writes, “in women deception is [according to Lombroso and Ferrero ‘almost physiological’]” (196). He tempers this “almost physiological” naturalization of women’s deceptiveness by saying, “But to regard the caution and indirectness of women as due to innate wickedness, it need scarcely be said, would be utterly irrational. It is inevitable, and results from the constitution of women” (196). Ellis demystifies the cultural assumption that women are deceptive, Evesque creatures while naturalizing their position as such; rather than a metaphysical assumption that women’s characterization arises from “innate wickedness,” Ellis grounds his conclusion (even more convincingly for the late Victorian man of science) in her physiology. Furthermore, Ellis naturalizes woman’s position as the follower of man, due to her “suggestibility,” and as logically his inferior (though Ellis does not put it in that language): “Even in trivial matters the average woman more easily accepts statements and opinions than a man, and in more serious matters she is prepared to die for a statement or an opinion, provided it is uttered with such authority and unction that her emotional nature is sufficiently thrilled” (210).55

55 At this point in the chapter, Ellis explains in a footnote that “the influence of education must be taken into account; women are trained to accept conventional standards” (note 1 on 211). Yet, his recognition of the social construction of gender identity, including thought processes, does not keep him from making drastic statements which place women as naturally below men intellectually. He continues his description of female intellectual impulse by pointing to the difficulty in “recall[ing] a woman who for any abstract and intellectual end has fought her way to success through obloquy and contempt, or without reaching success, like a Roger Bacon or a Galileo, a Wagner or an Ibsen [. . .] she has not the same sturdy
He finds proof for this “natural” condition of women anthropologically in a section full of generalizations about religion and religious followers. He writes,

[T]he curious fact emerges that [. . .] women usually form the larger body of followers in a religious movement, as well as the most reckless and devoted. They have initiated but few religious sects, and these have had little or no stability. Women have usually been content to accept whatever religion came to hand, and in their fervour they have lost the capacity for cold, clear-sighted organisation and attention to details. (216)

Though he does not mention men at all in this section, Ellis suggests that women, because they do not initiate or lead religious sects (positions of authority that their culture often refused them), they also lack the organizational skills that are essentially masculine. Ellis’s chapter on intellectual impulse, as with most of the others, deals more with the cultural portrayal of women than scientific studies. Therefore, while he seems concerned with the inequities caused by cultural assumptions about gender difference, Ellis reinforces in scientific, and therefore respected and unquestionable, terms precisely those assumptions.

Continuing with the trend in which the supposed discussion of sex differences is nothing more than a discussion of femininity, Ellis writes chapters on the “Viscera” (which deals with menstruation and the psychic state of women during menstruation) and the “Affectability of Women” (which corresponds to his chapter on the “Variational independence” (211). And finally, “In the first rank of those who have devoted themselves to metaphysics there is not one woman” (212). Once again, just as quickly as Ellis recognizes an element of cultural influence on the question at issue, he makes bold and conclusive statements that ignore the very constructedness he previously mentions.

Paradoxically, Ellis concludes this chapter with a discussion of women’s historical success in politics. Apparently, since men take so “natural” a role in Ellis’s contemporary politics, he finds it unnecessary to discuss men and politics; rather, he spends this section describing women’s role in politics. He writes, “Among all races and in all parts of the world women have ruled brilliantly and with perfect control over even the most fierce and turbulent hordes” (217-218). For support of this claim he references J. S. Mill’s Subjection of Women and Burdach’s work on queens.
Tendencies in Men”). In these chapters, Ellis continues to naturalize the cultural assumptions about women through scientific inquiry. Though in his introduction he refutes common superstitions concerning menstruating women, in “the Viscera” chapter he pathologizes menstruation which, as Dr. Clouston explains, “has a psychology of its own” (qtd. on 291). Clouston, as Ellis cites him, continues:

[T]he main features [of menstrual psychology] generally are a slight irritability or tendency toward lack of mental inhibition just before the process commences each month, a slight diminution of energy or tendency to mental paralysis and depression during the first day or two of its continuance, and a very considerable excess of energising power and excitation of feeling during the first week or ten days after it has entirely ceased, the last phase being coincident with woman’s period of highest conception power and keenest generative nisus. (qtd. on 291)

Dr. Clouston, whom Ellis affirms, describes reproductively-mature woman as a patient whose medical needs are always changing but never cease—be she depressed or suffering from “excitation of feeling.” In the later chapter on the “affectability of women” (which he defines as “the greater emotionality of women” [342]), Ellis proves the greater muscular affectability of women (in their potential epileptic response to coitus, their propensity to blush and be expressive, and the excitability of their organs). Resulting from the fact that women’s bladders, for example, contract with minimal excitement, Ellis makes general claims about their personalities and psyches, as well as applauding societal gender roles that categorize potential male or female practices. “Affectability,” Ellis contends, “protects women from the serious excesses of work or of play to which

---

57 This is an interesting parallel in form to Joyce’s Ulysses. Just as Ellis offers two chapters on the affectability of the genders, Joyce writes two episodes of interior monologue: one male monologue, “Proteus,” and one female monologue, “Penelope.”

58 Ellis concludes from Clouston’s long description, “[M]enstruation is a continuous process, and one which permeates the whole of woman’s physical and psychic organism” (293-94).

59 In a passage that would, no doubt, have entertained Joyce (as well as offered scientific mandate to a portion of his project), Ellis writes, “The bladder, as Born puts it, is the mirror of the soul; it would be equally correct to say that to some extent the soul is the mirror of the bladder” (351).
men are liable” (360); yet, more realistically it is not woman’s affectability, but society’s perception and reaction to it, that “protects” her. The physiological fact of affectability, Ellis argues, “is also a source of very much of what is most angelic in women—their impulses of tenderness, their compassion, their moods of divine childhood” (363). It is in passages such as these, when Ellis allows his poetic celebration of women to confuse the biological with the cultural, that his theory becomes most open to criticism.

Furthermore, the very nature of Ellis’s approach to the “scientific” differentiation of men and women in *Man and Woman* assumes that the nature of male sexuality and personality is understood, since it constantly returns to the subject of women’s character and biology. While Ellis does not base his conclusions, as Krafft-Ebing does, upon the passivity with which women engage in coitus, his deductions are based on more subtle and particular assumptions that come to the same end. His work deals little with man, except to use the cultural preference he has been given for centuries to prove his intellectual and artistic superiority; rather his project seems more realistically to be a definition of female physiology and what he argues are the natural ends to such physiology in her personality and in her social roles. As Harrison suggests, “Ellis’s prejudice in favor of his own sex seems to have forced itself upon him in direct opposition to his stated and no doubt sincerely held intentions” (106). Yet, Ellis’s intentions are not all in vain as Harrison argues; rather, Ellis’s project, by introducing anthropological aspects to his study, recognizes a degree of social construction at work in human sexuality and gender identity even as it fails to incorporate such realization into its conclusions. For this, Ellis should be acknowledged as taking a step in sexology that his
forerunners had resisted, although such a step did not liberate him entirely from the
cultural reality in which he lived and wrote.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) took Ellis's realization and implemented it into a
larger scientific theory. Freud began his career, in the 1880s, working with hystéric
under the tutelage of Parisian Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) who ran the Salpêtrière
asylum and advocated hypnotism as a cure for hystería. Freud's early interest in hystería
culminated in his well-known publication, Studies in Hysteria (1895). Within six years,
he had published The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) and The Pyschopathology of
Everyday Life (1901), which built up his theory of the human psyche as molded by
experiences and culture (what Ellis recognized but could not theorize). In 1905 Freud
published his Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex (also translated Three Essays on
the Theory of Sex) and began to directly participate in the sexological search for scientific
answers to the enigmas of human sexuality. Here Freud begins to explain his theory of
sexuality by examining sexual aberration, infantile sexuality and the transformation of
puberty. Freud's Three Contributions built upon the work of previous sexologists, but as
it progressed it departed from many of their claims. It was slow to gain praise and
attention, but quickly assumed its position in the theory of sexuality. As Steven Marcus
points out, “Although it took more than four years to sell the thousand copies that were
printed of the first edition, it was not very long before the exceptional importance of the
Three Essays began to be recognized” (Freud 22). Following the publication of Three
Contributions, Freud delved deeply into the questions of human sexuality and their
psychological bases, publishing a great number of essays and longer works dealing with

---

60 Freud asserts in a footnote, “The facts contained in the first ‘contribution’ have been gathered
from the familiar publications of Krafft-Ebing, Moll, Moebis, Havelock Ellis, Schrenk-Notzing,
Löwenfeld, Eulenberg, L. Bloch, and M. Hirschfeld” (553).
such questions. For the purposes of this study, I will deal primarily with *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* because it was the first of Freud's major works on sexuality and therefore like Ellis's *Man and Woman* acts as an introduction to later texts.

Rather than a socio-historic explanation of human sexuality, like Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, from primitive culture to modern Europe, Freud begins the first essay of *Three Contributions*, "The Sexual Aberrations" (in adults), with a discussion of sexual instinct and libido, "the motor force of sexual life" (553). As Marcus points out, "In starting out with the sexual aberrations he [Freud] was seeking to deal in the first place with certain forms of adult sexual behavior; in addition, the sexual practices in question were familiar and recognizable to whatever limited audience he might in 1905 think he was addressing" (*Freud* 24). While Marcus is, no doubt, correct to a degree, it seems that Freud begins with adult aberrations because this is the subject of prior sexological writings. However, unlike Ellis or Krafft-Ebing, Freud delves directly into the topic of sexual aberrations in adulthood without pausing to offer any mystified or anthropological reasoning for studying the individual and his or her aberrations. Freud claims that all sexual aberration deals with differentiation in one of two ways: sexual object and sexual aim. In the former, Freud classifies "inversion" or homosexuality. Among inverts he makes further distinctions between the always inverted, bisexual or "psychosexually hermaphroditic," and temporary inversion that occurs "[u]nder certain conditions, chiefly if the normal sex object is inaccessible" (554). Freud refutes the major justifications—the degeneration theory and congenital theory—for homosexuality provided by earlier sexologists and physicians. The first assumes that inversion is "a sign of innate nervous

---

61 I am working with Dr. A. A. Brill's translation and edition of *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* published in 1938.
degeneration” (55). Freud argues that degeneration theory concerning inverts is problematic because one is not degenerate “where there are not many marked deviations from the norm” and “where the capacity for working and living does not in general appear markedly impaired” (555). Freud’s rebuttal to this older theory begins to shed light on his overall approach to “sexual aberrations”; he spends a good deal of time demonstrating the proximity between any aberrant sexuality and the norm. He also opposes the congenital theory, which (like Krafft-Ebing’s case studies) states that inverts suffer from a congenital or inherited pathology. Here again he not only refutes prior sexological claims, but does so in somewhat radical terms for the early twentieth century. Freud sets aside congenital theory by arguing the constructed nature of sexuality. He points out that “an early affective sexual impression can be demonstrated,” “external influences of life of a promoting or inhibiting nature can be demonstrated,” and “hypnotic suggestion may remove inversion” (556, 556, 557). He goes on to offer his theory that “contain[s] a new contradiction to the popular belief which assumes that a human being is either a man or a woman” (557). He points out that scientific inquiry comes upon “cases in which the sexual characteristics appear blurred” (557). Out of his discussion of homosexuality and the older sexological treatment of it, Freud enters a discussion of bisexuality and hermaphroditism (which he eventually argues are fundamental aspects of inversion) grounded in a mixture of biological and constructivist discourse.

Freud continues his discussion of inversion by returning to his criticisms of older sexologists. He refutes Krafft-Ebing’s claim that inversion occurs when female brain centers replace male brain centers: “The substitution of the anatomical for the psychological is as frivolous as it is unjustified” (559). He also discusses the differences
between gender and sex by investigating virile male inverts who "look for the real feminine psychic features in their sexual object" (560). While Freud offers many insightful and non-stereotypical readings of sexuality in this first essay, here he falls back onto cultural assumptions of the "feminine psychic features." Later, in describing ancient Greek love between man and boy, he writes: "it is quite obvious it was not the masculine character of the boy, which kindled the love of man, but it was his physical resemblance to woman as well as his feminine psychic qualities, such as shyness, demureness, and need of instruction and help" (560). As with Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, when it comes to woman Freud essentializes her nature as weak and coy.  

After his discussion of homosexuality, bestiality and pedophilia (all of which are inversions of the normal sexual object—a person of the opposite sex with whom potentially-procreative copulation might occur—Freud moves on to aberrations dealing with the sexual aim. He reveals exactly what he refers to with the title "normal" sexual aim: "The union of the genitals in the characteristic act of copulation is taken as the normal sexual aim" (563). He goes on to argue that the normal is almost always tinged with elements of "certain addendas [. . .] the development of which may lead to aberrations described as perversions" (564). Here he defines perversion as one of two things: one, anatomical transgressions, and two, lingering at intermediary relations (and not progressing to the normal sexual aim of copulation). In this section, Freud reveals

---

62 Here Freud gives several examples of this claim. He describes the cross-dressed male homosexual prostitutes and the ancient Greek love between man and feminine boy: "masculine prostitution, in offering itself to inverts, copies in all its exterior, today as in antiquity, the female dress and female behavior" (560).

63 Following his lengthy discussion of inversion, Freud's "Sexual Aberrations" essay deals more with perversion in terms of other sexual objects (bestiality and pedophilia). Once again he pauses in order to assert that sexual aberration does not equal insanity: "[M]any are abnormal in their sexual life who in every other respect correspond to the average, they have kept abreast of the human cultural development" (563).
many cultural assumptions concerning female sexuality by arguing that anatomical transgression “can best be studied in the male, in whom alone the sexual life is accessible to investigation, whereas in the woman it is veiled in impenetrable darkness, partly because of cultural stunting and partly on account of the conventional reticence and insincerity of women” (565). Freud recognizes the “cultural stunting” and the “conventional[ity]” of femininity; yet in his repetitive description of it (in which woman is both stunted and taught to be reticent and insincere) he comes close to reifying it. Within this subsection of sexual aim perversions, Freud discusses the mouth and the anus as sexual organs. He also investigates fetishism in which, as he writes, “the normal sexual object is substituted for another, which, though related to it, is totally unfit for the normal sexual aim” (566). Here, as earlier, Freud argues, “A certain degree of such fetishism [for fragments of clothing or underwear] is, therefore, regularly found in the normal, especially during those stages of wooing when the normal sexual aim seems inaccessible or when its realization is unduly deferred” (567). Freud, then, differentiates the pathological from the normal “only when the striving for the fetish fixes itself beyond such determinations and takes the place of the normal sexual aim” (567). Freud’s essay performs two main tasks: first, it asserts the normality (to a degree) of all sexual aberrations, and second, it makes more and more problematic (though scientifically naturalized) claims about the nature of women.

The final section of “Sexual Aberrations” continues to deal with the subject of perverse sexual aims in terms of “lingering.” First under this title is the lingering upon touching and looking. Freud argues that such behavior is normal when it is aesthetic (one might recall the many Victorian nude statues and paintings). He also argues that such
perversion is socially constructed, at least to a degree: “Covering the body, which keeps abreast with civilization, continuously arouses sexual curiosity and serves to supplement the sexual object by uncovering the hidden parts” (568). He argues that looking becomes perverse as it suppresses the normal sexual aim, as it is limited to the genitals, and as it becomes “connected with the overcoming of loathing (voyeurs and onlookers at the functions of excretion)” (569). Just as loathing abolishes inverted sexual objects (as in bestiality or sexualization of the anus), Freud argues that shame prevents perverse lingering in the form of looking. In a subsection of the lingering perversions (which linger before fulfilling the normal sexual aim of intercourse), Freud investigates sadism and masochism. Freud subtly transforms prior discussions of sadism and masochism to arrive at the conclusion that “masochism is nothing but a continuation of sadism directed against one’s own” self; hence the term sado-masochism which the twentieth century so frequently used.64

Freud concludes the first essay by returning to his earlier emphases upon the generality of all sexual aberration. He argues, “[T]here is indeed something congenital at the basis of perversions but it is something which is congenital in all persons; which as a predisposition may fluctuate in intensity, and that is brought into prominence by influence of life” (578). He reminds his reader of the socially-influenced elements of sexuality:

The fact of the matter is that sexual repression has to be added as an inner factor to such external ones as restriction of freedom, inaccessibility to normal sexual object, dangers of the normal sexual aim, etc., which cause the origin of perversions in individuals who might have otherwise remained normal. (578)

---

64 Freud argues that “active [sadist] and passive [masochist] forms are regularly encountered together in the same person [. . .] a sadist is simultaneously a masochist” (570).
Freud completes his essay on adult sexuality with an emphasis upon the development of
the human psyche and its close tie to the sexual preferences expressed by each person.
He lays “[a] groundwork in the familiar and paradoxically less inflammatory subject of
the sexual aberrations” in order to “proceed to the unsettling question of infantile
sexuality” (Marcus, *Freud* 24). By beginning his discussion of sexuality with adult
perversions, Freud attempts to prove the constructed nature of individual sexuality; in
turn, he justifies the second and third essays in *Three Essays*, which explode antiquated
beliefs concerning sexuality and children.

In the two essays that follow “Sexual Aberrations”—“Infantile Sexuality” and
“The Transformations of Puberty”—Freud seeks to prove the construction of each
individual’s sexuality which begins with birth and continues through adolescence. Just as
Krafft-Ebing and Ellis describe a colorful evolution from the primitive to the civilized
human sexuality, “Freud regards the childhood of each person as a ‘primeval period,
which falls within the lifetime of the individual himself;’ he remarks of infantile amnesia,
according to Marcus, that it ‘turns everyone’s childhood into something like a prehistoric
epoch and conceals from him the beginnings of his own sexual life’” (*Freud* 26). He, in
fact, criticizes many “writers [like Krafft-Ebing and Ellis] who endeavor to explain the
qualities and reactions of the adult individual” by paying “so much more attention to the
ancestral period than to the period of the individual’s own existence—that is they have
attributed more to heredity than to childhood” (580). He does, however, attribute this
preoccupation generally to “infantile amnesia” or the inability to remember early
childhood. According to Freud childhood forms or initiates inhibitions, sublimation

---

65 Freud recognizes that he is alone in this reading of human sexuality: “No author has, to my
knowledge, recognized the normality of the sexual instinct in childhood, and in the numerous writings on
the development of the child the chapter on ‘Sexual Development’ is usually passed over” (580).
("deflection of sexual motive powers from sexual aims to new aims" [584]) and reaction ("which builds up the already mentioned psychical dams of disgust, shame and morality" [584]). From there Freud suggests that thumbsucking\(^{66}\) and many other seemingly benign forms of physical gratification are manifestations of infantile sexuality.\(^{67}\)

Freud also coins the term "polymorphous-perversion disposition" that characterizes the innate potentiality of overt sexuality but not the active expression of it (592). Freud argues that children under the influence of a seducer will become polymorphously-perversion in act. Returning with comfort to his essentialisms concerning femininity, Freud likens the naïvety of the child to that of a woman: "[T]he child perhaps does not behave differently from the average uncultured woman in whom the same polymorphous-perversion disposition exists" (592). In fact, Freud is so interested in this comparison that he leaves the infantile manifestation of this in order to further investigate its feminine counterpart: "Such a woman may remain sexually normal under usual conditions, but under the guidance of a clever seducer, she will find pleasure in every perversion and will retain it as her sexual activity" (592).\(^{68}\) By the end of this tangential discussion Freud backs out of his claim to a certain extent, saying: "still it is absolutely impossible not to recognize in the uniform disposition to all perversions, as shown by an enormous number of prostitutes and by many women who do not necessarily follow this calling, a universal and primitive human tendency" (592-93). Among the infantile manifestations of

---

\(^{66}\) Freud's argument concerning the sexuality of thumbsucking goes as follows. He argues that the first pleasure for the infant comes from breast feeding and that sucking one's thumb is an attempt to recapture that pleasure.

\(^{67}\) Thumbsucking is the primary autoerotic behavior that Freud investigates in children, but he also mentions the enjoyment a child gains from a large bowel movement (which the child may purposefully retain for as long as possible) among autoerotic behaviors.

\(^{68}\) He continues this discussion of feminine polymorphous-perversity with prostitutes: "The same polymorphous or infantile disposition fits the prostitute for her professional activity" (592).
sexuality Freud lists partial impulses (cruelty to other children), inquisitiveness, the “riddle of the sphinx” (origination of babies), castration complex and penis envy, birth theories (such as the Stork), and sadistic conception of the sexual act. Freud ends this essay by emphasizing the transition from the infantile autoerotic sexuality to the exoerotic sexuality brought about with puberty; this brings him to the last of the Three Essays.

It is puberty, Freud’s third essay argues, that brings about the primacy of the genitals and the sexual object. In this essay he plays with the paradoxes implicit in human sexuality. For example, “a feeling of tension must carry with it the character of displeasure,” Freud writes, yet sexual tension is pleasurable to a point (605). “Fore-pleasure” is Freud’s term for foreplay and he argues that it is necessary to carry out the sexual aim (yet, as his first essay points out, there is the danger of lingering in fore-pleasure). It is also this essay in which Freud develops his libido theory (here again he further breaks this classification down to object-libido and narcissistic-libido). Freud continues to battle with the confusions and complexities of this theory when he initiates a discussion of the libido as masculine or feminine: “[I]t may be asserted that the sexuality of the little girl has altogether male character” (612). However, he finally seems to recognize the difficulty of using such a term and steps back to a fuller definition: “Indeed, if one could give a more definite content to the terms, ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ one might advance the opinion that the libido is regularly and lawfully of a masculine nature, whether in the man or in the woman” (612). Freud asserts that the libido of all people is “regularly and lawfully” masculine, playing on the essential cultural notions that

---

69 Freud argues, “curiosity may perhaps first be awakened by sexual problems” (595).
70 Here Freud refers to the reaction a child may have if he or she witnesses coitus, in which the child may see it as “maltreating or overpowering” (596).
masculinity denotes agency. By gendering all people's libido male, Freud is able to conceive of a woman (essentially passive) with an aggressive sexual drive. It is also in this chapter that Freud begins to develop what he will later title the oedipal complex. In "The Transformations of Puberty," as in "Infantile Sexuality," the reader observes Freud's initiation of theories he will later deal with (in various essays) in a more detailed manner. Here he sets out, at times incompletely, his observations concerning the influence which childhood sexuality has on each individual's adult manifestations of sexual object and sexual aim.

Freud concludes the Three Essays with a summary in which he recognizes the limits of his theories. The final sentence seems to anticipate the many criticisms that Freud's Three Essays received: "The unsatisfactory conclusions which have resulted from this investigation of the disturbances of the sexual life are due to the fact that as yet we know too little concerning the biological processes of which the nature of sexuality consists, to form from our desultory views a satisfactory theory for the explanation of what is normal or pathological" (629). Thus, Freud concludes in uncertainty the findings of his essays, not because of his personal indecision but because of his hesitation to make such demystifying claims in light of so little empirical knowledge concerning the biology of the sexes.

It is important to note Freud's footnote to this discussion in which he differentiates various conceptions of masculine and feminine in order to try to clarify "the most confused terms in science": "One uses masculine and feminine at times in the sense of activity and passivity, again, in the biological sense, and then also in the sociological sense" (612). It is this "essential" distinction between active and passive that Freud claims is "the only one utilizable in psychoanalysis" (612). Yet, at the end of this footnote, he recognizes the naivety of such essentialism: "Every individual person shows a mixture of his own biological sex characteristics with the biological traits of the other sex and a union of activity and passivity" (612).

Here, he spends more time describing the female response to transformation from infantile to pubescent sexuality: "Girls with an excessive need for affection and an equal horror for the real demands of the sexual life experience an uncontrollable temptation [... ] to conceal their libido under an affection which they may manifest with self-reproach; this they do by clinging for life to that infantile attraction for their parents or brothers or sisters, which has been repressed in puberty" (618).

Freud recognizes the crudity of parts of his study. He repeatedly interjects phrases like, "the incompleteness of our examinations of the infantile sexual life" (622), into his writing.
of sexuality. As Freud’s writings progressed in the following years, it seems it was precisely this lack of scientific fact that enticed him to develop an abstract theory of psychoanalysis and leave behind the biological interest of sexology. As Steven Marcus points out in his *Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis*, “In the name of truth and reality, he [Freud] undertook to deprive Western culture of one its sanctified myths” that children were not sexual beings (23). Since “[c]ultures do not as a rule take kindly to such demythologizings, it should come as no surprise that of all of Freud’s findings those that have to do with infantile and childhood sexuality were resisted with the most persistency” (Freud 23). The reaction to *Three Essays*, and later essays in which Freud continued to investigate human sexuality, demonstrates the manner in which Freud exploded sexology as it was known to the turn-of-the-century physician. Freud’s *Three Essays* turned Krafft-Ebing on his head and criticized Ellis for similar problems. While Ellis recognized a social influence in sexuality, Freud developed a theory (of infantile to childhood to pubescent to adult sexuality) based upon those principles. Interestingly, even in the progress Freud made in his *Three Essays*, when it came to the Woman Question, he fell back into the comfort of naturalizing cultural attitudes in order to justify some of his claims. Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Freud all approached female sexuality with fear and reserve, reaffirming the cultural attitudes that female sexuality, in particular (the unimaginable) active female sexuality, was obscene and necessitated a censorship even in the supposedly objective science of sexology. The careful reader observes the ease with which Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud slip into digressions in which they characterize women as naturally deceptive and passive. While Freud brought sexology into twentieth-century terms, it would take further experimentation with female and male
sexuality in order to come closer to demystifying certain cultural assumptions; this is precisely what Joyce did, to the horror of many, in his *Ulysses*. 
Chapter Two: Leopold Bloom’s Sexuality Constructed

The man’s form is erect and closely knit; the woman’s is more uneven, with large hips and flowing protuberant curves of breasts and abdomen and flanks. While the man’s form seems to be instinctively seeking action, the woman’s falls naturally into a state of comparative repose, and seems to find satisfaction in an attitude of overthrow.

-Havelock Ellis *Man and Woman*

James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom has grown up in Victorian Dublin, a colonial outpost of the British crown. Joyce continually refers to the British influence in turn-of-the-century Dublin. *Ulysses* begins with Stephen Dedalus, Buck Mulligan and the British Haines living in the “Martello tower in Sandycove, on Dublin Bay seven miles southeast of the center of Dublin” (Gifford 12). “Stately, plump Buck Mulligan” offers a black mass at the top of a tower which the British constructed, along with seventy-three others, on the shores of Ireland in order to protect the British colony from Napoleon’s potential invasion in 1804 (1.1). What’s more, Stephen refers to his three masters: “I am a servant of two masters [. . .] an English and an Italian. [. . .] And a third [. . .] one who wants me for odd jobs” (1.638, 640-41). Haines, Stephen’s audience, struggles to grasp the reference to the English and the Italian master, to which Stephen responds, “The imperial British state [. . .] and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church” (1.643-44). Joyce makes certain that his reader recognizes the Victorian British influence upon his Dublin as he irreverently refers to the late Victoria as “a crazy queen, old and jealous” (1.640). In case his readers fail to notice the colonial nature of Dublin, Joyce reminds

---

74 According to Ellmann’s *Ulysses on the Liffey*, the Sandycove Tower had been only recently “evacuated by the army” when Joyce actually lived there with Oliver St. John Gogarty (on whose person Joyce based the fictional Buck Mulligan) in 1904 (xiv).

75 Gifford offers twenty-two annotations referring to Queen Victoria spanning from episode one to episode seventeen. He flags references to Edward VII, who ruled from 1901-1910 following his mother’s death, twenty-three times from episode two through the final episode. Combined, these exceed the number
them throughout the novel with images such as the Nelson monument and the viceregal
cavalcade. Thus Joyce’s (and by extension Leopold Bloom’s) Dublin was a colonial one
which British culture and British politics influenced and even controlled.

Since *Ulysses* is immersed within Victorian Dublin, the fact that from the
beginning, Joyce’s inception of Bloom parallels the body-based man described by
Victorian men of science is telling. Just as the sexologists framed men and women in
their fleshy selves,\(^76\) Joyce insists upon the physicality of Leopold Bloom, his twentieth-
century Ulysses, from the moment he enters the novel. Joyce writes, “Mr Leopold
Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls” (4:1-2). Not only does
Joyce’s introductory description deal with Bloom’s bodily activity of ingestion, it also
emphasizes the pleasure with which Bloom participates in this activity. Furthermore, it is
a particular body part of his prey that Bloom finds most satisfactory—the inner organ.
While many may be disgusted by “tang of faintly scented urine” which “grilled mutton
kidneys gave to his palate,” Bloom finds it pleasant; this sensual detail is what he liked
“most of all” (4.4-5, 4.3). Thus, Bloom’s initial action in the novel establishes him as
comfortable with physicality to the point of identifying with it.

Nonetheless, even in his first exploits Bloom distances himself from certain forms
of masculinity assumed to be natural by Victorian science. Bloom, assuming the
traditionally female role, parades about his kitchen on the morning of June sixteenth
preparing his and his wife’s breakfast. Contrasting Bloom’s morning, Joyce offers the
more traditional vision of the familial breakfast experience of 1904 Dublin through the

\(^76\) Krafft-Ebing argues the corporeal-base for humans and by extension culture in the introduction
to *Psychopathia Sexualis*: “Sexual feeling is really the root of all ethics, and no doubt of asceticism and
religion” (2).
imagination of young Gerty MacDowell later in *Ulysses*: “She would care for him [her imagined husband] with creature comforts too for Gerty was womanly wise and knew that a mere man liked that feeling of hominess. [. . .] then, when they settled down in a nice snug cosy little homely house, every morning they would both have brekky, simple but perfectly served. for their own two selves” (13.222-24, 13.238-241). Gerty would cook and serve this fantasized “brekky” with “[h]er griddlecakes done to a goldenbrown hue” (13.224) just as society would have her. Yet Molly Bloom, Leopold’s wife, is absent from the domesticity of the morning kitchen; it is Leopold who cooks and serves her breakfast in bed (an event which seems to be an everyday occurrence in the Bloom household). In Bloom’s first episode of the novel, then, he breaks the stereotype, especially for 1904 Dublin, of masculinity while being solidly composed within his corporeal self. After Stephen Dedalus’s adamant refusal not to serve (his mother’s dying wish, his Church, his country, history, etc.), the reader meets Leopold Bloom as he cheerfully makes breakfast and attends to domestic matters while his wife, Molly, still slumbers (4.11-14, 49-59, 263-270, 300-301).

Amidst an atmosphere of Victorian and post-Victorian sexual debates, Joyce constructs his hero as an overtly sexual being; in fact, his physicality is his primary character trait. As a former medical student, Joyce undoubtedly knew, at least to a degree, about the Victorian medical community’s interest in and many commentaries on human sexuality. This interest principally assumed that humans are sexual creatures, even though many of the sexological writings, from a twenty-first-century perspective, seem to simply contain normal sexuality within a narrowly-defined, phallocentric heterosexuality. Thus Joyce’s construction of the middle-aged Leopold Bloom accords
with the sexologist’s corporeal naturalization of humanity; Joyce retains the masculinism of the Victorian man of science, as well as their heteronormativity in his depiction of turn-of-the-century everyday Dublin sexuality. Bonnie Kime Scott writes, “James Joyce’s intellectual, social, and religious contexts [. . .] seem to have been overwhelmingly anti-feminist, and even anti-female” (9). In order to accurately read Joyce’s depiction of Leopold and Molly Bloom’s sexuality, the contemporary reader must remember the historical context of *Ulysses* and recall the great lengths to which Joyce strove to incorporate Dubliners’ daily experiences. Therefore, notwithstanding many critics, especially of Molly Bloom’s sexual construction (who seek to demonize Joyce for his misogyny and stereotyping), it is necessary to remember that Joyce worked within his culture’s debates concerning sexuality.\(^77\) By reacting to the current debates, Joyce’s *Ulysses* contributes to them by offering intimate, though fictional, accounts of individual sexuality and allowing the reader to judge the pathology of everyday life.\(^78\)

Yet, Joyce departs from older sexologists in his honest demonstration of male, and, as the succeeding chapter will show, female, sexuality. Unlike the moral didacticism inherent in Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Joyce seeks to de-pathologize perverse sexuality through the character of Leopold Bloom. In fact, Joyce’s depiction of Bloom’s complex sexuality echoes Freud’s assertion that everyone is perverse to one degree or another. Joyce seems, much like Freud, to remind his contemporaries that sexuality is a natural and compulsory aspect of humanity. What’s

\(^77\) I am certainly not advocating for a complete defense of Joyce’s sexual politics. Yet, in order to do justice to the craft of *Ulysses* and Joyce’s character construction, one must place it within its historical period. In order to offer the necessary context, then, the reader of Joyce must interrogate the public and private debates on sexuality that proliferated in the late Victorian period.

\(^78\) In this sense, Joyce’s project in *Ulysses* parallels to a great extent Freud’s early work *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (published in 1901 as *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* and translated into English in 1914). For a further discussion of this parallel see Chester G. Anderson’s “Leopold Bloom as Dr. Sigmund Freud” (1972).
more, Joyce demonstrates the constructedness of sexuality and identity; he collages his characters from bits of cultural matter, revealing the intensity of cultural influence upon any given subject. Just as Ellis recognized and Freud theorized, Joyce’s characters make the culture industry’s effects transparent. Leopold and Molly Bloom’s sexualities are continually constructed and identified through the mechanisms of their socio-historic period. By guiding his reader through the perverse thoughts of Leopold Bloom, Joyce implicates all in Bloom’s perversity, therefore naturalizing it for the great majority of readers. Few readers leave the pages of *Ulysses* utterly disgusted by Bloom’s actions, as they do the case studies that fill the pages of *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Rather, the typical reader departs with a vision of Leopold Bloom as Everyman (and Joyce’s Odysseus), though he proves throughout the day of June 16, 1904 that he very well could appear as an exemplary patient of any number of pathological sexualities.

**Bloomean Gender Complexity**

Joyce constructs Bloom as curious and protean; his sexuality is anything but the norm assumed by early twentieth-century Dublin or Victorian Britain. Yet, the paradox swiftly arises that Leopold Bloom in his difference is Everyman. In “Calypso,” Bloom establishes himself as docile to his amorous wife, who the reader discovers hides a letter from the “bold hand[ed]” Boylan, her soon-to-be lover (4.242). Blazes Boylan, the penetrative phallus of the novel, usurps Bloom in addressing his letter to “Mrs. Marion Bloom” rather than Mrs. Leopold Bloom as masculinist society would have it (4.242); yet, Bloom fails to correct the slight by silencing his frustration and sorrow. Bloom, unlike other Dublin husbands in 1904, fails to claim his marital right to Molly’s “ample
bedwarmed flesh” (4.239). However, even in his inability to reconsummate his marriage bed, Bloom retains desire for women. On his morning trip to the butcher’s, Bloom ogles the “nextdoor girl[’s . . .] vigorous hips,” suggestively thinking of how she “does whack it, by George” (4.146, 148, 152). Though referring to a carpet hanging on a clothesline, Bloom’s thoughts imply a masturbatory and masochistic tendency that his action throughout the novel affirms. Bloom concludes “Calypso” with another form of release—a bowel movement. In his discussion of the sexual impulse, Ellis cites Montaigne: “‘I find,’ he said, ‘that Venus, after all, is nothing more than the pleasure of discharging our [the ever-masculine subject] vessels [into the ever-female object], just as Nature renders pleasurable the discharges from other parts’” (qtd. in ASI 3). Ellis, among other sexologists, links excretion with sexual release and undoubtedly the gutter-minded Joyce reveled in this proximity. Thus after an episode of utter “Desolation,” Bloom finds pleasure in excretion (4.229). Bloom, then, though separated from his wife, replaces their intimacy with alternative forms of (hetero)sexuality.

Bloom assumes a fluid gender as he occupies both traditional male and female positions. Joyce’s Bloom bends traditional gender roles, as well as traditionally gendered tropes, creating a complex conglomeration of Bloom’s gendered self. At the end of “Lotus Eaters,” the reader takes a bath with Bloom, viewing his anatomy, and subsequently his genitalia, through his eyes:

He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh: and saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating,
floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower. (5.567-72)

“This is my body,” Bloom affirms, seeming to have no discomfort in the lotus of his genitals (5.566). Yet such a self-perceived image demonstrates the fluidity of Bloom’s actual sexuality; rather than seeing a phallus, Bloom observes “a languid floating flower,” which traditionally, according to earlier literary conceits, symbolizes female genitalia, the garden of life as it were. From this early point in Bloom’s character development it is clear that he occupies an alterity in post-Victorian Dublin. Bloom’s flower not only reflects his pseudonym Henry Flower, which he deploys in his epistolary, anti-climactic, and certainly non-evacuative romance with Martha, but also his inability to sexually penetrate his wife. In addition, the yonic vision of Bloom’s genitals complicates the social assumption that the sexual impulse is masculine and derives from a phallic “impulse of evacuation” (ASI 3). 79

Both Bloom (via interior monologues) and the narrator perpetuate this feminized vision of Joyce’s twentieth-century Odysseus. When Bloom recognizes that Molly’s affair with Boylan “Will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can’t move” and that his daughter’s impending womanhood and loss of virginal innocence “Will happen too,” the narrator’s diction effeminizes him (4.447-49): “A soft qualm” “flowed down his backbone” and “spread over him” (4 447, 449). This softness, like the lotus of his genitals, is non-phallic and reminds the reader of Bloom’s inability to penetrate his wife and his fear; he is inactive, being unable to move. Krafft-Ebing’s introduction to Psychopathia Sexualis naturalizes the Victorian notion of female passivity and masculine

79 In Analysis of the Sexual Impulse, Ellis cites numerous European thinkers concerning the release enjoyed through orgasm.
activity, arguing that any variation denotes the individual’s aberration: “[Dependence] certainly exists in a stronger measure in woman, on account of her social position, and the passive part which she takes in the act of procreation; but at times it is also found in men who are of a feminized type” (9). In his inability to (re)act, particularly in response to Molly’s affair, Bloom assumes the effeminizing “soft”ness of passivity. The most stereotypical of manly men, the Citizen, in the “Cyclops” episode, questions Bloom’s masculinity: “Do you call that a man?” (12.1654). As Joseph Ronsley points out, “‘Cyclops’ narrator reflects on his own that Bloom is ‘One of those mixed middlings’ [12.1658-59]” (99). Ultimately, the confusion over Bloom’s gendering enters his own hallucinatory nightmare of “Circe” where he transforms into a woman while the masculine Bella/o Cohen abuses him/her. Bloom, described as “her” in the stage notes of the episode’s drama, faces the dread of rape (15.2881-2889) and forced de-flowering (as s/he leaves behind the smugly nonvirile Henry Flower and her hymen). Bloom, then, not only journeys home on June 16, 1904 to number seven Eccles Street; he also journeys through gender ambiguity and becomes the derided sex object, in order to return to masculinity. Finally, in “Penelope,” Molly weighs in on the conversation concerning Bloom’s gender. Despite their difficulties, Molly never directly questions Bloom’s masculinity; yet, she too recognizes that his gender is nontraditional. She thinks, “he was very handsome at that time [in their courtship] trying to look like Lord Byron I said I liked though he was too beautiful for a man” (18.208-210). Hence, throughout Ulysses Bloom occupies feminine, masculine and “mixed middling” gender as explained by the narrator, his wife, various Dubliners and himself; he departs from the traditional,

---

80 For a historical study of this episode and Bloom’s masculinity, see Tracey Teets Schwartz’s Joyce and the Victorians, chapter three, “Do you call that a man?” (2002).
Victorian portrayal of gender as a strictly divided plane with masculine on the one side and feminine on the other.

Nevertheless, amidst the many complexities of Bloom’s gendering, Joyce makes it clear that Bloom is heterosexual; therefore, Bloom remains fundamentally “normal” according to all the sexological writings. Bloom always directs his desire toward an object of the opposite sex. Throughout the novel, he watches and fantasizes about women all over Dublin, from the women taking communion in All Hallows (in “Lotus Eaters”) to the naively exhibitionist Gerty (in “Nausicaa”). In his constant heterosexual desire, Bloom retains an element of the typical Dublin man. Blazes Boylan, for example, eyes the girl in the flower shop (“Blazes Boylan looked into the cut of her blouse. A young pullet’ [10.327]) just as Bloom lusts after the neighbor girl in the butcher shop. Bloom’s heterosexual desire for women climaxes in the fireworks and orgasm of “Nausicaa” in which he voyeuristically masturbates to the young Gerty. Bloom is the only character whom the novel’s readers witness in the actual (as opposed to the reminiscent) state of orgasm and it characterizes his perverse though heterosexual desire. Thus, while Bloom fails to occupy the penetrative masculine role and instead embodies a softer, traditionally female character, he retains the heterosexual, masculinist norm throughout the novel as he ogles and fantasizes about much of female Dublin.

The Sex of Fatherdom, the Gender of Motherdom

Bloom is not only heterosexual, but his sexuality has resulted in procreation (notably the only acceptable reason for coitus according to the Irish Catholic Church); he has fathered two children, one of whom died in infancy. Rudy, Leopold’s dead son,
occupies his thoughts and fantasies throughout the day of June 16, 1904. Bloom thinks about Rudy from the novel’s beginning: “She [the midwife] knew from the first poor little Rudy wouldn’t live. [. . .] He would have been eleven now if he had lived” (4.418-20). According to Ellis, “Still-born children are much more frequently boys than girls” (M&W 412); therefore, while necessary for the plot progression (as Stephen replaces the dead son of wandering Bloom), Joyce’s creation of the dead Rudy aligns itself with the demographics concluded by contemporary sexological studies. Bloom’s distance from his wife, the reader gradually recognizes, derives from his fear of failed paternity following the infantile death of their son Rudy. In “Lestrygonians,” Bloom thinks of Molly and his sex life in terms of the euphemistic “it”: “Could never like it again after Rudy. Can’t bring back time” (8.610). This detail also aligns with sexological findings; Freud especially emphasizes that perverse sexuality often stems from a fear of sex and its consequences—in this case a fear of fathering other feeble, male children. Bloom faces his fantastic vision of his son throughout the novel, culminating with the hallucinations of “Circe” where Rudy stands before Bloom bizarrely in an Eton suit. Rudy, who would be eleven if he had not died, haunts Bloom, just as Hamlet’s father haunts Hamlet, yet, as Freud taught the twentieth-century, the ghost exists only in the mind of him whom he

---

82 It should be noted that Blamires reads this as Bloom thinking about Molly’s thoughts. Therefore, Blamires concludes: “Molly ended their full marital relationship with the plea that she ‘could never like it again’ after their son Rudy’s death” (69). While Blamires reading is possible, Molly does not think in this line of thought in her interior monologue of “Penelope”. Rather, she places the responsibility and consequential sundering between them on Bloom: “was he not able to make one it wasn’t my fault [. . .] our r’ death too it was we were never same since” (18. 1445-46, 1450). Contrary to Blamires’ reading, I suggest that Bloom “could never like it again” after Rudy’s death and is haunted by a double guilt: first, that his virility (or lack thereof) may have been responsible for Rudy’s death and second, that he allowed the first guilt to disrupt his marriage bed with the obviously sex-embracing Molly.

83 I call this uniform bizarre for Rudy because as an Irish Jew, Rudy would not have been included in the elite circle of Anglican, British school boys for whom Eton is restricted. Though the suit is appropriate for a young boy, it is also bizarre that Bloom would conjure such a fantasy; he undoubtedly knew that Irish Catholics like Joyce were not only excluded from Trinity College in Dublin, but that they were barred from the entire elite, British education system of which Eton plays a major part (and Jews would have had the same treatment).
haunts. In other words, Rudy’s constant presence in the novel demonstrates the severity of Bloom’s reaction to the loss of his son and his consequential fear of paternity and hence of marital sex.

Bloom is also weirdly aroused and disturbed by his daughter Milly’s upcoming sexuality. The reader knows that Milly, now independent of her father’s protective watch, dates a friend of Buck Mulligan’s, and is therefore sexually active to at least a degree. Bloom is aware of his daughter’s imminent womanhood as he recalls, throughout the day, her first period and fears her becoming her mother. Yet, he also lusts after Gerty MacDowell, who is Milly’s age. Brenda Maddox also recognizes the proximity between Gerty and Milly; Maddox interprits the situation as “Bloom’s guilty, incestuous impulses toward his adolescent daughter, Milly (deflected onto the figure of Gerty MacDowell)” (170-71).

Not only does Bloom occupy a confused position in his paternity, he also fantasizes the experience of maternity. Throughout the novel Bloom assumes a complex manner of generalizing women, yet also empathizing with them. While following his masturbatory orgasm in “Nausicaa,” Bloom refers to women as “devils” four times (13.851-52, 822, 929); nonetheless, he is the first to sentimentally recognize “the brevity of a young(121,216),(895,961) girl’s flowering and [. . .] how quickly women must settle down to the female role of washing children, potting babies, laying out corpses, giving birth” (Blamires 141). Bloom seems to agree with Cranly’s assertion in Portrait that “whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother’s love is not” (263). He elevates maternity, though he does not always treat the female sex as kindly. Within the internal horror of “Circe,” Bloom admits, “O, I so want to be a mother” (15.1817). Thus, Bloom’s fear of
his inadequacies as a father warps, in hallucinatory “Circe,” into joy as he embraces the possibility of assuming a less dangerous procreation. Bloom makes up for his fears of paternity by idealizing maternity and imagining an alternative sexuality in which he might be a mother.

Nevertheless, though many have pointed to Bloom’s maternal nature, Bloom’s sexual identity is informed by his position as a father. As one of the patrons of The Tavern bigotedly suggests, “Every jew is in a tall state of excitement, I believe, till he knows if he’s a father or a mother” (12.1647-48). To which Jack Power mediates, “Well, there were two children born anyhow,” reminding the reader of Bloom’s paternity (12.1656). In the eyes of the most masculinist group in Dublin, Bloom’s identity, though fraught with ethnic and gender confusion, arrives at a question of his fatherhood. In a revision of The Odyssey, Bloom, the modern Ulysses, must assume the role of father, regardless of how lost that paternity may seem at any given moment in the novel. Just as his gender is non-normative according to the simplistic vision of Victorian sexology, Bloom’s procreative role as a father is continually decentered through his curiosity about and praise of maternity.

Polymorphously Perverse

Bloom’s sexuality is fluid not only because it contains both masculine and feminine aspects but also because it enters the domain of perversion (as titled by Krafft-
Ebing) many times in the single day of June 16, 1904. Such perversions include:
masturbation, masochism, fetishism, voyeurism, and anal eroticism. Joyce’s
generation of Bloom follows a pattern of pathological sexuality similar to that the
sexologists relied upon in order to define (by contrast) normal sexuality. Yet Joyce
departs from the sexologists as he portrays Bloom’s perversity as normal. In fact, it
appears that through Bloom’s character Joyce sketches his own sexological manifesto,
full of the many perversities other sexologists studied, but devoid of the sexological
assumption that perversion is pathological. Bloom, Joyce’s Everyman, acts as the
delinquent patient for the artist or sexologist to capture in the form of case studies or
anecdotal narratives; it would seem that Bloom consumes many of the perverse sexual
identities listed and described in Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis’s many case studies.

I. “Damned glad I didn’t do it in the bath this morning”: Nonconfessional Masturbation

The most directly explicit of Bloom’s “perversities” is his public masturbation on
the Strand in the “Nausicaa” episode of Ulysses. Joyce contrasts the patient’s
confessional to his doctor (sexologist) with the irreverent Bloom whose masturbation
seems as divinely ordained (as the cosmos synchronously parallel Bloom’s explosion
with fireworks that light up the sky) as Odysseus’s seven-year stay with Calypso.85
Bloom’s interior monologue narration refuses the contrition necessary for confession that
the sexologists never failed to emphasize in their case studies.86 In a typical case study of
masturbators, for example, Krafft-Ebing captures his patient’s shame and consequent

85 Or for that matter, Bloom’s “emission” (as Blamires coyly describes it) seems as divinely
mandated as the young Nausicaa, no doubt, saw the nude Odysseus who washed up on her beach.
86 For a greater discussion of the confessional mode of modern sexology, see Part III, “Scientia
Sexualis,” of The History of Sexuality, vol. I. (See also footnote 32 on page 24 of chapter 1).
contrition: “He [the patient] gave assurance that, as a young man, he never masturbated, and that in the intervals between his attacks [in which he could not contain himself and always masturbated], he had never thought of satisfying himself sexually in this way” (513). By contrast, after the universe validates Bloom’s masturbatory orgasm (as the fireworks in the sky explode at the same moment that Bloom’s orgasm explodes), Bloom recognizes Gerty’s handicap, “She’s lame! O!” and thinks, “Glad I didn’t know it when she was on show” (13.771, 775-76). Furthermore, Bloom’s lack of contrition continues as he thinks, “Glad I didn’t do it [masturbate] in the bath this morning over her [Martha’s] silly I will punish you letter” (13.786-787). Not only does Bloom fail to recognize, as sexologists and society at large would, the perversity of masturbation, he naturalizes it to a great extent by making it seem a daily occurrence whether in the bath or on the Strand.

As his reflection in “Nausicaa” reminds readers, Bloom pondered masturbating in his bath earlier in “Lotus Eaters.” While buying Molly her lotion, Bloom plans out the next hour of his day: “Time to get a bath round the corner. Hammam. Turkish. Massage. Dirt gets rolled up in your navel. Nicer if a girl did it. Also I think I. Yes I. Do it in the bath. Curious longing I. Water to water. Combine business with pleasure” (5.502-505). Bloom matter-of-factly decides on a bath. Unashamed (though it is a “[c]urious longing”), Bloom also contemplates masturbating—“[w]ater to water”—thus combining “business with pleasure.” Bloom undoubtedly considers the bath the “business” and masturbating the “pleasure” and finds nothing shameful about it. Though he resolves not to masturbate in the bath, the thought itself is evidence of Bloom’s comfort with pleasuring himself.
II. "Enormously I desiderate your domination": Hallucinatory Masochism

In the hallucinations of "Circe," Joyce creates a fantasy world in the mind of Leopold Bloom as he wanders (in real life) through the brothel district of Dublin in search of drunken Stephen. Upon finding Stephen at Madam Bella Cohen's establishment, Bloom descends into hallucination for a second time in the episode. In this hallucination, Bloom becomes a virgin and Bella morphs into Bello, as we have seen earlier in this chapter. In the subsequent exchange, Bloom and Bello engage in sado-masochistic eroticism (15.2776-3227). Havelock Ellis defines masochism in *Love and Pain*: "Masochism is commonly regarded as the peculiarly feminine sexual perversion, in women, indeed as normal in some degree, and in men as a sort of inversion of the normal masculine emotional attitude" (92). He then turns to the definition furnished by Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis*.\(^87\) Joyce makes fairly obvious his reference to sado-masochism in the altercation between Bloom and Bello. Bloom begins by emphasizing his position as inferior and derided: "Exuberant Female. Enormously I desiderate your domination. I am exhausted, abandoned, no more young" (15.2777-2778). Then later, Bloom and Bello exchange a typical sado-masochistic banter: Bello says, "Hound of dishonour!" to which Bloom replies "Empress!"—again stressing his/her subservient position (15.2835-2837). This scene is the only place in *Ulysses* where Gifford’s annotations note Joyce’s debate with sexology, and the annotations limit that debate by only naming Krafft-Ebing. Krafft-Ebing was the first to delve into a scientific description of sado-masochism (as described in Rousseau’s autobiographical *Confessions* and Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs* and the Marquis de Sade’s writings); however, he

\(^{87}\) See page 34 of chapter one.
was not the last. Havelock Ellis's *Love and Pain*, part of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, and Freud's early writings deal greatly with the subject. In fact, it seems that Joyce may have known Ellis's *Love and Pain*. By the logic of Ellis' differentiation of abnormal and normal sado-masochism, the hallucinatory scene, in which Bloom is female and shamed by the act, is the only "abnormal sadism" in the novel.\(^8\) Thus, Joyce seems to be knowledgeable of the slight distinctions between normality and aberration that Ellis and others proposed. Yet he seems to mock Ellis by revealing the supposedly pathologized form of sadism as nothing more than hallucination in the novel.\(^9\) Furthermore, it is important that this is the only time when Bloom is shamed by his/her masochism, but this shame is of little consequence since it only exists within the fantasy of Bloom's mind. Therefore, Joyce uses Bloom in "Circe" to rearticulate sexological findings on masochism.

III. "of course hes mad on the subject of drawers": Obvious Fetichism

Molly's internal ramblings in "Penelope" reveal Bloom's fetichism. She plainly states, "of course hes mad on the subject of drawers," and goes on to offer several examples: New Women on bicycles and a memory from their courtship. Molly remembers Bloom threatening to kneel in the rain if she didn't "lift the orange petticoat I had on with the sunray pleats" (18.3308-309). But rather than shaming or pathologizing

---

\(^8\) Ellis explains, "In [. . .] abnormal sadism which appears from time to time among civilized human beings it is nearly always the female who becomes the victim of the male. But in the normal sadism which occurs throughout a large part of nature it is nearly always the male who is victim of the female" (104). Therefore, Bello's sadism, which victimizes female Bloom, is the only "abnormal sadism" in *Ulysses*.

\(^9\) I am certainly not trivializing what goes on in the human psyche, though as Freud points out we are all perverse within the interiority of our minds, as a result Ellis's "pathological" form of sado-masochism fails to become actual experience. Bloom creates a fantastic situation in the depths of his mind, perhaps to relieve him of his sado-masochistic tendencies, but this relief occurs only within the confines of his mind. Bloom never treads into the realm of physically aberrant sado-masochism.
Bloom, Molly generalizes Bloom’s perversity to all men and naturalizes it: “theyre so savage for it” (18.311-312). Therefore, the pathologized fetish which Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud spend a good deal of time discussing becomes nothing out of the ordinary. Molly’s reaction to Bloom’s love of women’s underwear, then, rebuts the scientific findings of the sexologists. She simply observes that Bloom would do “anything for an excuse to put his hand anear me drawers,” as she seems to think all men would (18.304-305). Therefore, yet again Bloom’s character and Molly’s reaction to his sexuality calls into question the findings of the sexologists and offers an alternative “sexological” approach to the multiplicity of human sexuality.

IV. “Show! Hide! Show!”: Bloom’s Voyeurism

Throughout the day of June sixteenth, Bloom finds pleasure obsessively watching many a Dublin female. His voyeurism, like his tendency to masturbate, is most directly visible in “Nausicaa” as he “was eying her [Gerty] as a snake eyes its prey” with his hand slyly in his pocket (13.517). In addition to being an example of pathological masturbation, Bloom’s explosive experience on the Strand might act as a case study in Krafft-Ebing’s discussion of voyeurism, which he categorizes under offences against morality: “[voyeurs are] men who are so cynical that they seek to get sight of coitus, in order to assist their virility; or who seek to have orgasm and ejaculation at the sight of an excited woman” (525-26). Consciously on display for Bloom, whom she imagines as her exotic husband-to-be, Gerty is no doubt sexually aroused by Bloom’s gaze. Sexologists like Krafft-Ebing would have pathologized Bloom’s voyeuristic stare.

---

90 For other discussions of Bloom and voyeurism, see especially Tracey Teets Schwartz’s “Voyeuristic Utopias and Lascivious Cities: Leopold Bloom, Urban Spectatorship and Social Reform” (1997).
Yet the novel discredits that pathology, as Gerty achieves the only sort of sexuality her culture and religion allow her (as an unmarried woman) and Bloom achieves the only sort of orgasm that seems available to him. Furthermore, Gerty recognizes that Bloom’s hand is slowly moving in his pocket as he watches her; hence Bloom’s voyeurism is matched with Gerty’s consensual exhibitionism. Thus while drawing attention to the consensual nature of this “perverse” sexuality, Joyce consciously highlights the role that culture plays in making “normal” sexuality unavailable to various individuals.

Like his masturbation, which he makes natural through his comfort with it, Bloom’s comfort with his voyeuristic sexuality (which seems to have replaced his active sexuality with Molly after Rudy’s death) rebuts the sexological conclusion in pathologizing voyeurism. Bloom voyeuristically ogles women throughout the day of June 16, 1904. Bloom simply is a voyeur; in “Penelope,” Molly reaffirms this. In her fluid thoughts on Bloom, Molly not only thinks about his fetichism, she also thinks of his voyeurism: “of course hes mad on the subject of drawers thats plain to be seen always skeezing at those brazenfaced things on the bicycles with their skirts blowing up to their navels” (18.289-291). Just as she matter-of-factly recognizes Bloom’s fetichism, so too does Molly accept Bloom’s voyeurism as “plain to be seen.”

Bloom’s hallucinatory voyeurism in “Circe” is perhaps even more sensational than that in “Nausicaa.” Haunted by the knowledge of Molly and Boylan’s affair, Bloom fantasizes watching the two of them in the act of coitus. In response to Boylan’s

---

91 In Gerty’s half of the episode, she watches Bloom “take his hand out of his pocket” and then later “put his hand back into his pocket” (13.537-538, 559-560). Closer to the moment of ejaculation, Gerty sees that “[h]is hands and face were working and a tremour went over her. She leaned back far to look up where the fireworks were and she caught her knee in her hands so as not to fall back looking up and there was no-one to see only him and her when she revealed all her graceful beautifully shaped legs like that, supply soft and delicately rounded, and she seemed to hear the panting of his heart, his hoarse breathing, because she knew too about the passion of men” (13.694-700).
suggestion that “[y]ou can apply your eye to the keyhole and play with yourself while I just go through her a few times,” Bloom does just that (15.3788-3789). Peeping through the keyhole, Bloom eagerly participates in the intercourse of his wife and another man as he yells, “Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!” (15.3815-3816). In the place of “normal” sex with Molly, Bloom can only participate in a fantasy version; yet, even in his imaginary scene, he is not the one penetrating, he is simply the one watching and instructing someone to take pictures (“Shoot”). As with Bloom’s hallucinatory treatment of masturbation and masochism in “Circe,” here Bloom stoops to the full realization of what sexologists label pathological voyeurism. Joyce, however, includes this shameful voyeurism, which Bloom seems to prefer to intercourse, only in terms of Bloom’s fantasy. Thus, Joyce portrays Bloom’s sexuality as only potentially pathological in fantasy not in reality. Like Joyce’s play with Ellis’s distinction of “abnormal sadism,” here again Joyce demonstrates his knowledge of sexology, as he clearly makes the distinction between Bloom’s internal experiences and that of his outer life. In fact, Joyce seems to be criticizing the sexologists for making too much of pathologizing sexuality that often is only known within the depths of any person’s mind. Just as Freud came to argue, Joyce suggests that all people fall into hallucinatory unconsciousness in which any and all perversity may be played out; yet, an individual is certainly not pathological as a result.

Furthermore, in “Scylla and Charybdis” Bloom goes on a voyeuristic tour of the goddesses at the National Museum while Stephen takes part in his intellectualism at the National Library. Bloom’s interest in the statues of the goddesses at plays into, perhaps, one of the pathologies Krafft-Ebing lists under offences against morality: “violation of
From classical times to modernity, there have been cases in which man has used statues (often of Venus) “for the gratification of his lust” (525). Krafft-Ebing links voyeurism to violation of statues: “These cases stand in etiological relation with abnormally intense libido and defective virility or courage, or lack of opportunity for normal sexual gratification” (525). Though Bloom makes no effort to mount or deface the statues (or at least none that the text reveals), he undoubtedly gains a voyeuristic satisfaction in observing the soft curves of the goddesses’ bottoms. Furthermore, his voyeurism results from a “lack of opportunity for normal sexual gratification,” as Krafft-Ebing describes. But Joyce rejects the opportunity to depict the scene as pathological. It is the young medical, Buck Mulligan, who catches Bloom and mistakenly pathologizes him to a fellow medical (or nearly medical), Stephen Dedalus: “Jehovah, collector of prepuces, is no more. I found him over in the museum where I went to hail the foamborn Aphrodite [. . .] O, I fear me, he is Greeker than the Greeks. His pale Galilean eyes were upon her mesial groove” (9.609-610, 614-615). Mulligan misinterprets Bloom’s interest in the goddesses as an interest in anal sex, therefore he warns Stephen that “he is Greeker than the Greeks” as if Stephen were in danger of becoming Bloom’s love object. In this way, Joyce devalues the scientific voice of the sexological project by pointing out that it is often misguided in its assumptions and diagnoses.

V. “I rererepugnosed in rerererepugnant . . .”*: Anal Eroticism and Homecoming

Bloom’s interest in the goddesses at the library goes beyond voyeurism as it is their anal openings that he wishes to investigate. Readers later find out that Bloom has
an anal obsession of sorts. Joyce seems to play with the shocking honesty of Freud’s essay of “Sexual Aberrations” in *Three Essays*:

> The sexual rôle of the mucous membrane of the anus is by no means limited to intercourse between men; the preference for it is not all a characteristic of inverted feeling. On the contrary, it seems that pedicatio in men owes to its analogy with the act in women, whereas among inverts it is mutual masturbation which is the most common sexual aim. (565-66)

Although Bloom never shows interest in anal sex, he does spend a good deal of effort observing female Dublin’s bottoms. The only physical sexuality with which he embraces his wife concerns her rear. Bloom’s anal fixation is a strictly heterosexual one.

Throughout *Ulysses*, Joyce refers many times to Bloom’s fascination with Molly’s hind end. Lying in bed sometime after Bloom returns home, Molly thinks about Bloom’s orgasm (which she knows he has had during the day: “yes he came somewhere Im sure by his appetite” [18.34]) shows little surprise that it occurred, “because he couldn’t possibly do without it that long so he must do it somewhere and the last time he came on my bottom” (18.75-76). Therefore, Molly confirms the reader’s suspicion that the only sexual activity Bloom performs with Molly is to worship and then ejaculate on her back side. In Bloom’s hallucinations in the “Circe” episode, Bello Cohen berates Bloom as “Adorer of the adulteress rump!” (15.2839). Later in the same hallucinatory scene, Bello demands, “Say! What was the most revolting piece of obscenity in all your career of crime?” to which Bloom responds, “I rererpugnosed in rerererepugnant” (15.3042-43, 3057). Bloom recognizes the social reaction to his sort of anal fixation (to which sexologists reacted by pathologizing it in the name of science); yet, in every actual deed (as opposed to this hallucination) in *Ulysses*, Bloom does not allow the social or sexological conclusions concerning his sexual preferences to shame him.
Joyce highlights Bloom’s anal eroticism by forcing his reader to observe it in Molly and Bloom’s relationship. The end of the “Ithaca” episode depicts Bloom’s homecoming; just as Odysseus returned to Ithaca after his twenty-year absence, Bloom returns to his marriage bed at 7 Eccles Street. Joyce irreverently marks this homecoming by Bloom’s kiss to Molly’s “adipose anterior” (17.2232). The impersonal catechism (the form in which Joyce penned “Ithaca”) describes Bloom’s action: “He kissed the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump, on each plump melonous hemisphere, in their mellow yellow furrow, with obscure prolonged provocative melonsmellonous osculation” (17.2241-2243). Lying with his head at the foot of the bed and his feet next to Molly’s pillow, Bloom comes home, and in the quintessential physicality of *Ulysses* experiences “A silent contemplation: a tentative velation: a gradual abasement: a solicitous aversion: a proximate erection” (17.2245-2246). Thus Joyce punctuates the long-awaited homecoming of Odysseus/Bloom with a non-climactic kiss on what Molly calls “2 lumps of lard” “where we havent 1 atom of any kind of expression” (18.1404, 1403). Therefore, Joyce brings a great deal of attention to Bloom’s fascination, even obsession, with Molly’s hind end while making it clear that Bloom is a normal, not pathological individual.

The Hind End

Bloom, then, embodies Joyce’s construction of a male type, his revision of the manly Odysseus, which, through a discourse with contemporary theories of sexuality, explodes into a radical vision of sexual fluidity. Critic Cristina M. T. Stevens writes, “While aiming at a serious exploration of modern life, (and probably because of that)
Joyce intended to achieve mock-heroic effects by making direct parallels between archetypal heroes and the contemporary common man” (149). Stevens’s reading implies the cultural critique implicit in Joyce’s male characters, who retain certain characteristics of the hero while falling into the nasty reality of modernity. Joyce’s Bloom certainly calls into question the Victorian desire to categorize a select norm and pathologize all others. As Freud argued, “In no normal person does the normal sexual aim lack some addenda which could be designated as perverse; a universality in itself shows the futility of applying opprobrious names to perversions” (*Three Essays* 571).

Finally, Joyce mocks the sexologists in Bloom’s trial scene in “Circe.” Calling in “Dr. Mulligan, sex specialist, to give medical testimony” (15.1772-73), Joyce mocks and co-opts the sexology writings directly. It is, however, not only in the hallucinatory abyss of “Circe” that Joyce reveals a knowledge of sexological writings. As this chapter has made evident, Joyce indirectly mocks such writings throughout the entirety of *Ulysses*. In “Oxen of the Sun,” for example, Joyce plays with the question of sexology through the characters of the young Dublin medicals at the National Maternity Hospital. Here, the reader witnesses mock-sexology as the many young “sexologists” try their hands at cracking the mysteries of sexuality (especially female sexuality) (15.1772-1817). This seems to be at least Joyce’s nod to sexology, but next to the all-encompassing list of Bloom’s polymorphous perversities Joyce undoubtedly used *Ulysses* (and specifically the Leopold Bloom’s character) to respond to the sexology of his time.
Chapter Three: Molly and her Sexuality

The unfaithfulness of the wife, as compared with that of the husband, is morally of much wider bearing, and should always meet with severer punishment at the hands of the law. The unfaithful wife not only dishonours herself, but also her husband and her family, not to speak of the possible uncertainty of paternity.

-Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*

The condemnation of sexuality involved the glorification of the virgin; and indifference, even contempt, was felt for the woman who exercised sexual functions.

-Havelock Ellis, *The Sexual Impulse in Women*

Like Bloom, and Stephen, Molly has come of age in a colonial outpost of Victorian England; yet, as her monologue clarifies, it was not everyday Dublin, but a more exotic, bordering on oriental, one. Molly grew up in British Gibraltar, the daughter of Major Brian Tweedy in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Although Molly had a Spanish Jewess as a mother, in the novel she and Bloom think primarily about her Irish father and her British childhood home of Gibraltar. Molly thinks specifically about questions of colonial politics throughout her monologue, demonstrating the intensity with which politics influenced her life—first in British Gibraltar and then in British Dublin. She recognizes the colonial influence in her childhood home of Gibraltar; when remembering a suitor, she admits, “I was afraid he mightn’t like my [Irish] accent first he so English” (18.879-880). As Carol Loeb Schloss puts it, “Molly Bloom is not without knowledge of political life, and, in fact, it is often dislike of what she knows that leads her to turn back to the private sphere and toward its implicit possibilities for change and renewal” (106). Therefore, Joyce’s *Ulysses* clearly demonstrates that the Victorian culture

---

92 This is only one example of Molly’s thoughts about politics in the course of “Penelope.” For example, she belittles Dante Riordan for thinking too much about politics. She also berates women who discuss politics which “they know as much about as my backside anything in the world to make themselves someway interesting” (18.880-881).
influenced Molly’s youth and aided in constructing her identity, just as it did for Stephen and Bloom.

Not only is Molly Victorian, she also offers Joyce the same opportunity, in contrast to sexological findings on women. As chapter one emphasized, much of sexology’s project was to determine the nature of female sexuality, which as Freud poetically put it, is hidden by “the veil of impenetrable darkness.” Molly Bloom illuminates the darkness of female sexuality by inviting the reader into her most intimate sexual thoughts and memories.93 In “Penelope,” Joyce examines various notions of womanhood—poetic, historical, religious, and sexological—in his characterization of Molly Bloom.94 Molly’s thoughts alone refute many of the chauvinistic claims made by sexologists about the “weaker sex” and their sexual passivity.

Notably, Molly gets the last word in a novel which witnesses, however indirectly, her adulterous liaison with Blazes Boylan; thus the very form of Ulysses refuses to accept the notion of female passivity which Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud all embraced. Following six hundred pages in which much of masculine Dublin (or so it seems in the novel’s drama) thinks about, talks about, and ogles Molly, she spends nearly

---

93 Ironically, following Jung’s reaction to what he considered Joyce’s all-encompassing conception of women, Nora famously said of Joyce: “He knows nothing at all about women” (qtd. in Haslett 45).

94 Most contemporary critics interested in the constructedness of Molly Bloom focus upon the cultural sphere in terms of advertisements, popular novels, and magazines. See, for example, Suzanna Chan’s “Looking for Molly Bloom: Frances Hegarty and Andrew Stones’ art work For Dublin” (2003), Bonnie Kime Scott’s Joyce and Feminism (1984), and Joseph Heininger’s “Molly Bloom’s Ad Language and Goods Behavior: Advertising as Social Communication in Ulysses” (1994). These works seem to replace the earlier critical work which focused upon Molly as a reconstitution of various literary and mythical female characters. For works dealing with this treatment of Molly’s construction, see J. Mitchell Morse “Molly Bloom Revisited” (1959), Frances Devlin-Glass’s “[Remembering] .../ Her breath in mine”: Heterosexuality as Exchange in Joyce and Heaney” (1997), and Kathleen McCormick’s “Reproducing Molly Bloom: A revisionist History of the Reception of ‘Penelope,’ 1922-1970” (1994).
forty refuting and affirming various cultural realities—most significantly those which deal with sex and gender roles.

Taking Issue with Gender Roles

Molly demonstrates an awareness of her period’s fascination with (and interest in maintaining) female gender roles. She recalls hearing, and disagreeing with, a “long preach about womans higher functions about girls now riding the bicycle and wearing peak caps and the new woman bloomers” (18.838-839). In turn, Molly weighs in on the Woman Question just as the sexologists did. The sexologists used bizarre science (often based upon experiments of only fifty people) to prove that men are more mentally and physically active than woman. As a result, the sexological findings reified the cultural double standard that demanded women to sacrifice and care for men and children, but concurrently demanded their mental inferiority. In “Penelope,” Joyce uses Molly’s character and the voice of a woman to answer the sexological verdicts concerning the social nature of women.

Throughout her monologue, Molly’s language is simplistic and often based upon essentialized notions of men (usually referred to as “them” or “they”) and women (conversely titled “us” much of the time). Yet even in the midst of essentialized language, Molly’s monologue decenters many of the claims made by sexologists in two ways: by simply revealing the absurdity and social construction of such assertions and by offering disparate and more personal visions of female notions of sexuality. In his articulation of female gender roles and sexuality, Joyce assumes more authority, even if only in the novel’s fiction, for his claims by placing them in the mouth of a woman.
In particular, Molly challenges the double standards—both social and sexual—that Victorian society championed and that the sexologists often naturalized. Early in her monologue she bemoans that “they [men] can go and get whatever they want from anything at all with a skirt on it and were not to ask any questions but they want to know where were you where are you going” (18.297-300). The tone of her claim offers it more validity, as the reader feels the double standard through her indignation at it. When it comes to sexual partners, Molly recognizes that “they [men] can pick and choose what they please a married woman or a fast widow or a girl for their different tastes like those houses round behind Irish street no but were to be always chained up theyre not going to be chaining me up” (18.1388-1391). She concludes her awareness of the sexual double standard by refusing to be a part of it and therefore reminding the reader that as a woman she is a part of what she observes. Unlike the sexologists who attempted to divorce their science from everyday life (by falling into Latin or pathologizing everyday life scenarios that they chose to include), Molly is intimate with the double standards she proclaims and therefore seemingly a more reliable source.

Yet Molly also recognizes the complexity of gender as a cultural/social construction. Molly certainly does criticize not only men for what she characterizes as their essential nature, she also rebukes women. But even in the midst of her disgust for women’s cattiness, she recognizes the social construction of such: “or its some woman ready to stick her knife in you I hate that in women no wonder they [men] treat us the

---

95 In fact, at times in refuting cultural double standards, Molly begins to sound like suffragettes of her time: “show them [men] attention and they treat you like dirt I dont care what anybody says id be much better for the world to be governed be the women in it you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering when do you ever see women rolling around drunk like they [men] do or gambling every penny they have and losing in on horses yes because a woman whatever he does she knows where to stop” (18.1434-1439).

96 According to Gifford, Molly is referring to Gibraltar’s Irish Town and its red light district.
way they do we are a dreadful lot of bitches I suppose its all the troubles we have makes us so snappy" (18.1458-1460). Molly tempers her abhorrence of women’s cruelty with the hellish reality of many women’s lives in 1904 Dublin. In this sense she is able to implement a degree of constructivism while Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis could not. Gender, though repeatedly essentialized through her language, is culturally influenced according to Molly’s observation and analysis. Thus Joyce slights these sexologists by allowing his not-so-bright heroine to offer more complex and observant sexological findings than they do.

In addition to recognizing the double standard, Molly refutes cultural and sexological claims concerning women, marriage, and monogamy. In her monologue, Molly thinks, “I'd rather die 20 times over than marry another of their sex” (18.231-32). This hyperbolic statement, however, does not stop her from thinking about a divorce (18.373-374, 408-412, 846). By contemplating leaving Bloom for Boylan, Molly challenges Krafft-Ebing’s claim that marriage is the end-all for women.97 Like Havelock Ellis in his radical work, The Sexual Impulse in Women,98 Joyce counters Krafft-Ebing’s argument that women essentially yearn for marriage more than men because they have more to be gained from it. Bloom, it should be noted, never directly contemplates divorce although he is very aware of Molly’s adultery.99 Hand-in-hand with the question of marriage is monogamy. Again Krafft-Ebing asserts, “Woman’s mind certainly

---
97 See footnote 38.
98 Ellis concurs with Prof. Durkheim whom he cites: “It [marriage] is regarded as having been instituted for the sake of the wife and to protect her weakness against masculine caprices [. . .] In reality [. . .] it is man who has profited most. [. . .] Woman had not he same reasons for abandoning freedom, and from this point of view we may say that in submitting to the same rule it is she who has made the sacrifice” (qtd. on 153).
99 He does think about the possibility of wandering off and never returning (and therefore leaving Molly) in “Ithaca”. Also, in “Circe” he imagines his former wife no longer present and marries another. Yet neither of these allusions to divorce are nothing more than implied.
inclines more to monogamy than that of man" (15); yet, in the drama of *Ulysses* Bloom retains a much greater extent of monogamy than Molly. In fact, Molly verbalizes her non-monogamy: “Id like a new fellow every year” (18.782). Molly, unlike Krafft-Ebing, concludes that it is men and not women who are more interested in marriage: “what do they ask us to marry them for if were so bad as all that comes to yes because they cant get on without us” (18.238-240). Thus, through Molly, Joyce inverts the sexological findings concerning marriage and gender showing that at least some women do not fit their descriptions of “woman.”

Finally, Molly defends her position as an adulterous woman, and therefore counters the sort of attitudes championed by early sexologists—like Krafft-Ebing—that adulterous women ought to be doubly shunned.\(^{100}\) She exclaims: “I cant help it if Im young still can I it’s a wonder Im not an old shriveled hag before my time living with him so cold never embracing me except sometimes when hes asleep the wrong end of me not knowing I suppose” (18.1397-1401). Molly anticipates and responds to the sort of criticism she will face in 1904 Dublin as an adulterous woman by claiming that she has a frigid husband. If Bloom fails to comply with the marriage debt, Molly sees nothing scandalous about her having an affair. This argument not only de-stigmatizes Molly, it also points out the crudely ideological nature of Krafft-Ebing’s initial claim. Only through his intimate portrayal of characters like Molly could Joyce demonstrate the complex nature of all human sexuality, not excluding adultery. In contrast, then, the sexologists’ claims lose validity as they appear overly harsh and simplistic.

---

\(^{100}\) See epigraph of this chapter.
The Sexuality of Maternity

Molly’s character often seems primarily sexual, yet she is a mother. In her monologue, she thinks about her daughter and their relationship. But even in her maternity, Molly does not evade sexuality. She jealously thinks about Bloom and Milly’s close relationship by sexualizing it do at least a degree. She concludes that her relationship with Milly is, for all intents and purposes, stronger than Bloom’s relationship with their daughter. She comforts herself thinking that “if there was anything wrong its me shed tell not him” (18.1021). Yet she fears that Bloom has set her aside in comparison to youthful, beautiful Milly: “I suppose he thinks Im finished out and laid on the shelf well Im not no nor anything like it well see well see” (18.1021-1023).

Therefore, even in her maternal thoughts about and concerns for her daughter, Molly falls back into her sexual self. Through Molly, then, Joyce challenges his culture’s vision of maternity as pure and nonsexual.

In fact, all of the sexologists in question comment on the sexuality of breastfeeding mothers and their large breasts. Freud, for example, sees breast-feeding as an infant’s first object of pleasure and reads thumb-sucking as an auto-erotic attempt to capture that initial pleasure. It is not surprising, then, that Joyce sexualizes Molly’s breast milk. She “had [such] a great breast of milk with Milly” that she “had to get him [Bloom] to suck them they were so hard” (18.570-571, 576-577). Bloom, “like some big fat infant,” “said it was sweeter and thicker than cows then he wanted to milk me into the

---

101 Havelock Ellis expounds upon the sexuality of breast-feeding in his *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse*: “The analogy is indeed very close: the erectile nipple corresponds to the erectile penis, the eager watery mouth of the infant to the moist and throbbing vagina, the vitally albuminous milk to the vitally albuminous semen. The complete mutual satisfaction, physical and psychic, of mother and child, in the transfer from one true physiological analogy to the relationship of a man and a woman at the climax of the sexual act” (15).
"I was a bit wild after": Molly’s Active Female Desire

Molly Bloom is an overtly sexual woman. As radical as a sexual woman may have been for Joyce’s audience, he exceeds that radicality by also making Molly explicitly active in her sexual experiences. In her first sexual encounter, Molly was the active participant. She recalls her first beau, Mulveys: “I pulled him off into my handkerchief pretending not to be excited but I opened my legs I let him touch me inside my petticoat [. . .] when I unbuttoned him and took his out and drew back the skin it had a kind of eye in it theyre all Buttons men” (18.809-811, 815-816). Following the liaison (which was anti-climactic for her) she recalls, “I was a bit wild after” (18.830). In her direct, active sexuality, Molly embraces the memory of her sexual excitement rather than

---

102 Krafft-Ebing never offers his vision of the entirely non-aberrant matron; the closest he comes is in a discussion of menopause and its effects upon sexual desire: “In the sedate matron this condition is of minor psychological importance [. . .] The biological change affects her but little if her sexual career has been successful, and living children gladden her maternal heart” (13). Krafft-Ebing obviously assumes that if a woman has successfully had children, she will not mourn the loss of sexual desire (which he weirdly connects with menopause and the loss of fertility). In other words, procreation is more important to women, according to Krafft-Ebing, than their sexual desire.
feeling shamed by it. Counter to notions of female passivity, then, Molly challenges Krafft-Ebing’s claims concerning women’s weaker sexual drive.103

Through Molly, Joyce continues to contest various sexological points concerning the weakness of women. Victorian sexology—again reaffirming Victorian cultural beliefs—typically asserted female passivity: “Generally speaking the following masculine qualities impose on woman, viz., physical strength, courage, nobility of mind, chivalry, self-confidence, even self-assertion, insolence, bravado, and a conscious show of mastery over the weaker sex” (Krafft-Ebing 23). While Molly does think about Boylan’s virile frame (and the “big red brute of a thing he has” [18.144]), she certainly is not aroused by being mastered. Though Molly seems to have loved the adulterous sex she had with Boylan (“O thanks be to the great God I got somebody to give me what I badly wanted to put some heart up into me” [18.732-733]), she says multiple times, “I didn’t like him slapping me behind going away so familiarly in the hall though I laughed Im not a horse or an ass am I” (18.122-123).104 Joyce’s portrayal of Molly, then, refutes not only the notion of female passivity in initiating sex, but also in being mastered by men. Molly envisions heterosexuality not in terms of the active male libido mastering “the weaker sex,” but in terms of egalitarian sexual politics.

Not only is Molly active in her sexuality, she also verbalizes her sexuality especially so in “Penelope.” Molly has no problem being sexually excited; but perhaps even more shocking, for turn-of-the-century Dublin, is her willingness to verbalize that excitement. For example, when thinking about Boylan, Molly crassly observes, “my hole

---

103 See page 25 of chapter one.
104 Later she returns to the subject of Boylan slapping her back side: “no thats no way for him has he no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing in his nature slapping us behind like that on my bottom” (18.1368-1369).
is itching me always when I think of him” (18.902). Joyce naturalizes Molly’s sexual arousal by placing it within her thoughts, hence suggesting that at least some women experience sexual excitement when thinking about past sexual encounters. Joyce anticipates that readers and sexologists alike might pathologize Molly’s sexual desire and refuse to generalize her seemingly natural lust to all women. Later in her monologue, therefore, Molly generalizes about all women’s sexual appetite: “of course a woman wants to be embraced 20 times a day almost to make her look young no matter by who so long as to be in love or loved by somebody” (18.1407-1409). Therefore, between Molly’s own sexual desire, as she expresses it, and her universalizing statements about all women’s sexual desire, Joyce crafts a negation of sexological conclusions concerning female sexuality. Joyce fashions his rebuttal of the sexological writings as a mixture of case study (Molly’s intimate mind wanderings) and universalizing statements about Woman and her sexuality.

Joyce creates in Molly’s mind a fantasy relationship with young Stephen Dedalus to whom she knows Bloom extended an invitation to live with them which parallels the case studies of sexologists. This imaginary affair offers a subject through which Molly further explains her comfort with sex. Within the fantasy of Molly’s stream-of-consciousness monologue, she contemplates giving Stephen oral sex:

also his lovely young cock there so simple I wouldn’t mind taking him in my mouth if nobody was looking as if it was asking you to suck it so clean and white he looks with his boyish face I would too in ½ a minute even if some of it went down what its only like gruel or the dew there is no danger. (18.1352-1356)

Interestingly, Sigmund Freud is the only one of the sexologists in question to directly bring up the aberrancy of fellatio or cunnilingus, which “since antiquity have been
common practices among mankind” (565). As always, Freud makes a distinction between normal and aberrant sexuality: “The employment of the mouth as a sexual organ is considered as a perversion if the lips (tongue) of the one are brought into contact with the genitals of the other, but not when the mucous membrane of the lips of both touch each other” (565). Hence, Freud characterizes oral sex as perverse and kissing as normal. However, Molly’s thoughts about a potential relationship between Stephen and herself call into question the perversity of oral sex by simply adding it to the growing list of things which comprise Molly’s sexual being. Here again, Joyce uses Molly’s fleshy self to include a discussion (however one-sided it may seem) about women and oral sex. Through Molly’s thoughts, Joyce dares to touch upon the subject that Ellis and Krafft-Ebing evade.

In addition to honestly contemplating oral sex, Molly thinks about picking up random men for sexual pleasure: “I was thinking would I go around by the quays there some dark evening where nobodyd know me and pick up a sailor off the sea thatd be hot on for it [. . .] or one of those wildlooking gypsies” (18.1410-1412, 1413). She concludes it is a bad idea, not because of social stigma or moral reasons, but because, in her words, “I suppose the half of those sailors are rotten again with disease” (18.1425-1426). Just as Bloom fails to comply with the confessional tone when thinking about masturbation, Molly here refuses to be guilty for her sexual appetite. Following a day on which she broke her marriage commitment by sleeping with another man, Molly’s thoughts reveal the impenitence with which she considers future sexual exploits outside her marriage bed. While this aspect of Molly Bloom may not be likeable or upstanding, it is honest, and by
insisting upon her frankness, Joyce suggests the possibility that more women may think similarly.

Finally, Joyce’s conception of active female sexuality climaxes with Molly’s contemplation of penetration; it is Molly, not Leopold, who considers it in the novel. Molly suggests the only future intercourse between Leopold and Molly Bloom mentioned in the novel; but she qualifies that it would not occur “unless I made him stand there and put him into me” (18.1514). In addition to taking the dominant role (even devoid of a phallus), Molly literally has penis envy, but devoid of the hierarchy which Freud gives it. In the poetic vulgarity of Molly’s monologue, she wonders what it would be like to have a penis: “I wished I was one [a man] for a change just to try with that thing swelling up on you so hard and at the same time so soft when you touch it” (18.1381-1383). Just as Bloom covets the experience of maternity, Molly wishes she could experience the male side of coitus. She lusts after the thrill of mounting and penetrating another of her gender: “I wouldnt mind being a man and get up on a lovely woman” (18.1146-1147). Like Bloom, however, Molly only imagines such an experience to be heterosexual. Joyce presents the Blooms as his archetypal family, yet both Molly and Leopold Bloom seem anything but “normal,” especially for 1904 Dublin. Both long to experience the other gender, whether in procreation or in intercourse, and as a result Joyce introduces the notion that the genders may not be so different and that the desire to experience the other side of heterosexual coupling may not be that strange of a concept or that we are all bisexual to some degree.

In a sense, Molly allows Joyce to air the dirty laundry of the female mind. Through her lewd thoughts in the early morning of June 17, 1904, Joyce undercuts the
didacticism of sexology, especially that of Krafft-Ebing. What is more, by revealing the complexity of Bloom and Molly’s marital history, Joyce demonstrates that certain sexual realities are not simply pathological but specific to a particular personal history. Consequently, Molly’s adulterous relations—both real and imagined—are understandable if not honorable. By leading the reader through Molly’s detailed, private thoughts, Joyce discredits the sexological conclusions about female sexuality as simplistically pedantic.

Molly Science: Mocking the Voice of Sexology

Molly weighs in not only on the Woman Question, she also offers her share of commentary concerning men. She constantly others men in her language of “they.” Like the male sexologists’ generalized claims about women, Molly makes her own claims about men regarding sex, love, and social rules. In fact Molly wishes she knew more about human anatomy; near the beginning of her monologue, Molly declares, “I often wanted to study up that myself what we have inside us in that family physician” (18.180-181). In her desire to understand the human sexual body, Molly demonstrates precisely the same interest that the sexologists do.

Perhaps most poignantly Molly berates men for their treatment of women because “they havent the character a woman has” (18.827). According to Schloss, Molly’s “relationships with men can reveal something about the conjugal suppression of Irish women in 1904 as well as the more general civil suppression of the Irish under George Wyndham’s Unionist government during this part of her lifetime” (105). This socio-historic aspect of Molly’s character is no doubt apt, yet Molly’s language also reflects and responds to that of sexology, which sought to sort and label men and women
according to their narrow gender definitions. Men, Molly claims, gain true satisfaction from successfully procreating; they are “not satisfied till they have us swollen out like elephants or I don’t know what” (18.165-166). Molly, however, is fascinated by the way men love women’s bodies: “like a Stallion driving it up into you because that’s all they want out of you,” “they love doing that [caressing women’s breasts] its the roundness” or “they’re always trying to wiggle up to you” (18.152-153, 796-797, 1040-1041). Molly also observes the sexual politics between men and women: “they always want to see a stain on the bed to know you’re a virgin for them” (18.1125-26). Men want to feel primary to a woman, so Molly suggests a trick in her trial-and-error method: “a daub of red ink would do or blackberry juice no thats too purply” (18.1127-1128). Although she obviously recognizes men’s selfish interest in women and sex, Molly concludes, “it’s well for men all the amount of pleasure they get off a woman’s body were so round and white for them always” especially since “they don’t know what its like to be a woman and a mother” (18.1379-1381, 1440). Molly, like the sexologists, punctuates her discussion of men with an attitude of essentialized difference. She criticizes and surveys masculinity in such a way that “Penelope” begins to appear like a rudimentary sexology manuscript.

Just as sexologists described female and male genitalia (though they often spent more time describing female genitalia because it was more foreign to the all-male discipline), Molly offers her own version of basic anatomy. She follows the sexological paradigm of focusing on that which is alien to oneself and spends a good amount of time and a long list of euphemisms describing men’s genitals. In “Penelope,” Molly “uses words like ‘brute’, ‘wild’, ‘hard’, ‘swell’, etc. as sexual euphemisms but also in common

105 Molly’s most developed description of male genitalia seems to pun on the nursery rhyme ‘Ba Ba Black Sheep’. “What a man looks like with his two bags full and his other thing hanging down out of him or sticking up at you like a hatrack no wonder they hide it with a cabbage leaf” (18.542-544).
(excepting prior references, not obscene terms)” (Conde-Parilla 232). As a result of Molly’s limited vocabulary, “the connotations associated with them [Molly’s crude euphemisms] seem to recur in the reader’s mind, giving an apparently innocuous passage a new dimension” (232-233). In addition to brilliantly manipulating his readers’ memory, Joyce’s crafting of these euphemisms perhaps acts as a commentary upon not only sexological writings, but Victorian sensibilities as well. Despite allegedly dealing with the psychology of sex and sexuality, the sexologists never mention the substitution of everyday words for human genitalia. But the very existence of such colloquialisms suggests a cultural fear of dealing with human sexuality directly. Thus through Molly’s creative terminology for the male reproductive apparatus, Joyce deals more directly and truly with the human psychology of sex than any of the sexologists with their large-worded vocabularies. Accordingly, Joyce’s “Penelope” mocks the elitism of the sexologists as they fail to treat the common person’s psychological experience of sex.

Besides discussing male genitalia, Molly euphemistically describes the female reproductive organs as a “hole” (although she also uses this term to refer to her anus later in the episode, 18.1522), “cochinchina”, and “etcetera” (18.902, 1157, 1387). Molly also deliberates upon the term “vagina” used by her gynecologist (18.1154). She concludes that the word “vagina” in classist: “your vagina he called it I suppose thats how he got all the gilt mirrors and carpets getting rouch those rich ones […] running up to him for every little fiddlefaddle her vagina” (18.1154-1156). Molly’s interpretation of her gynecologist’s vocabulary could be a criticism of the entire medical community—including the sexologists—and their detached attitude towards female sexuality. Molly prefers her intimate euphemisms to their scientific terminology (that she pays so little
attention to it she mistakes “omission” for “emission” [18.1170]). She concludes this section of her monologue with the question: “where do those old fellows get all the words they have” (18.1170). Through Molly’s disinterest in the concerns of sexologists^{106} and their multi-syllabic expressions, Joyce offers a commentary upon disparity between what male sexologists (and gynecologists) conclude and what women (of whom Molly Bloom is one of the earthiest) think about their sexual biology.

In addition to genitalia, Molly expounds upon the topic of female bodies, particularly in regard to menstruation. Following the many episodes in which Bloom thinks about menstruation and what it must be like, Molly takes the stage in order to describe it. Yet Joyce does more than simply offer Molly’s thoughts on menstruation; Molly actually gets her period in the middle of her monologue: “O Jesus wait yes that thing has come on me yes” (18.1104-1105). Of course, Molly’s explanation of menstruation is less than scientific—“have we [women] too much blood up in us or what” (18.1122)—but her description of the experience shames the scientific indifference of the sexologists’ biological accounts of menstruation: “its pouring out of me like the sea” (18.1122-1123). Through Molly’s thoughts on woman’s monthly affliction, Joyce illustrates the actual experience in much greater detail and with greater reverence to women’s suffering than any of the sexologists did. Thus as “Penelope” “invites the reader (male or female) to occupy a distinctively female discursive space,” it challenges the male sexologist’s authority to naturalize their various claims about female sexuality (Brown 153).

^{106} Molly scoffs at the ridiculousness of her gynecologist’s questions not only about her “omission” but also if it “had an offensive odour” (18.1160). Her reaction suggests that the concerns of Molly’s gynecologist (and by extension the sexologists) were absurd.
In Molly’s assumption of the authoritative voice (or even in her interest in the voice) of a sexologist, Joyce mocks the Victorian men of science. Molly is not intellectual; in fact, she constantly confuses words and definitions in her monologue; something that men of science would never do (think, for example of Krafft-Ebing and his use of Latin or Freud and terms like “polymorphous-perversion disposition”). Yet many of Molly’s thoughts offer as valid a description of human sexuality (albeit a cruder one) than those of the sexologists. Joyce, therefore, criticizes the sexologists for creating a science, full of big words that only the over-educated could have understood at the time, to explain what any human is qualified to understand. Joyce suggests, through Molly’s dabbling in the science of sexuality, that society does not need sexologists; it just needs to allow for an open, honest, and non-scientific treatment of human sexuality.

“its only nature”: Molly’s Comfort with the Body and Sex

Not only does Joyce’s characterization of Molly intimate a need for a more open sexual discourse, it also depicts the comfort with which people ought to approach their bodies and sexuality. Molly questions her readers’ reservations concerning the body directly: “it [talking about sexuality] didn’t make me blush why should it its only nature” (18.1385). While Molly’s vulgar language at times comes across as crass, Joyce advocates for her comfortable body politics. In contrast, the sexologists—though seeking to educate those who have access to their writings about human bodies and sexuality—paradoxically divorce the subject from his or her body by often pathologizing bodily desires.
Since bodies and sex are “only natural,” Molly is capable of admitting to her past sexual experimentations. In contrast to the body-fearing subjects of Krafft-Ebing or Havelock Ellis’s case studies who in general contritely recite, according to the sexologists, apologies for any sexual experimentation which happens to fall outside of the narrowly-defined norm, Molly recalls her sexual experimentation without hesitation or shame. Following her first sexual encounter with Mulvey, Molly acknowledges that she masturbated with a banana: “after I tried with a Banana but I was afraid it might break and get lost up in me somewhere” (18.803-804). By capitalizing “Banana” Joyce communicates the awe with which Molly recalls the experience. Just as Bloom does not regret his masturbatory practices, Molly simply categorizes this experience among the many natural/sexual happenings of her life. Through Molly, then, Joyce offers an example of self-reflexive thought concerning sexuality alternative to that advocated by the sexologists.

As these examples demonstrate, in reading “Penelope,” one does not go more than a hundred lines without some reference to sex—be it (pre)marital sex, adulterous sex, Nighttown sex, procreative sex, or sex as memory. Molly Bloom’s monologue honestly, often vulgarly, recalls the monumental sexual encounters of her life: Mulvey and Lt. Gardner in Gibraltar, Bloom on Howth Hill, Rudy’s conception, Boylan earlier that day; and possible future sexual relations between herself and Bloom, Boylan, and Stephen. In fact, as Elaine Unkeless (among others) claims, “Most of Molly Bloom’s actions are associated directly or indirectly with sex” (150). It is, however, her willingness to embrace her active sexuality and the agency she gains through it that makes Molly such a radical revision of the sexologists’ (and more generally Victorian society’s) image of
woman. By giving Molly a voice, albeit an uneducated one, Joyce rearticulates normal female sexuality through a woman’s personal narrative.

“yes I said yes I will Yes”: Affirmative Conclusions

Just as Joyce uses bits and pieces of literary characters and tropes to build Molly’s character, he also uses aspects of the debate over women’s sexuality present in sexological writings. By constructing Molly’s character as complexly as he does (both Penelope and Calypso), Joyce questions the simplistic readings of female sexuality and gender offered by the sexologists. In addition, Joyce complicates what Ellis calls “the picturesque idealization alike of the angelic and the diabolic types of women” which, in a moment of criticality, Ellis suggests is “subtly lurking even in the most would-be scientific statements of anthropologists and physicians to-day” (SIW 155-156). Through Molly’s uncontested comfort with her body, Joyce’s *Ulysses* challenges the ease with which some sexologists tended to shame female active sexuality as obscene.

Molly’s character and her commentary on human sexuality repeatedly claim that sex is natural and therefore not reprehensible. By her monologue’s conclusion, Molly (and Joyce her creator) recognize the façade of sexological normality behind which so many people hide: “God knows its not much doesnt everybody only they hide it” (18.1518). If God knows, Molly makes the case that to conceal sexuality is needless. Joyce’s conclusion about female sexuality ends with the same affirmation of experience that closes Molly’s monologue: “yes I said yes I will Yes” (18.1608-1609). Thus Joyce incites his readers to embrace their sexuality and their bodies, counter to the claims of his
contemporary culture and men of science, with the capitalized “Yes” of Molly’s pseudo-orgasmic final word.
Conclusion

everything connected with your glorious Body everything underlined
that comes from it is a thing of beauty and of joy

what else were we given all those desires for Id like to know
James Joyce Ulysses

The sexologists, whose work may appear today as out-dated and simplistic, sought to scientifically explore the sexual taboos and conundrums of the Victorian period. In the process it is not surprising that as their works progressed and delved into more intricate explanations of human sexuality and human psychology, society hesitated in accepting their findings. This was especially true for the comparatively radical Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. Compared to the work of Krafft-Ebing (that I would title traditional sexology as it sought to describe and by extension contain aberrant sexuality in order to allow for “normal” sexuality which aligned nicely with socially and religiously accepted versions of sexuality), the writings of Ellis and Freud pushed the boundaries of normality and concluded in much more problematic terms (at least for Victorians) that humans are essentially sexual. What’s more, Freud extended the argument to include human children (who, according to his radical theories of psychoanalysis, desired their parents among other things). Unsurprisingly, Freud and Ellis met with various censorships and cultural resistance to their works as they called into question an assortment of cultural assumptions and ideals. Havelock Ellis, for example, faced state-sponsored censorship following the publication of Sexual Inversion (1898) which would become part of the first volume of his Studies in the Psychology of Sex. The book, according to the courts, contained “‘divers wicked, lewd, impure, scandalous and obscene libels,’ and was the cause of ‘manifest corruption of the morals
and minds’ of Her Majesty’s subjects” (Harrison 107). Freud faced similar, though less legally severe, censorship as *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* announced to early twentieth-century Europe that its children were overtly sexual and that every human is sexually aberrant to one degree or another.

These men of science met with great opposition at times as their discipline moved from naturalizing cultural stereotypes to questioning the psychology behind such assumptions. From the publication of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) to the publication of Freud’s *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905), the field of sexology had greatly changed as Freud resisted the force with which Krafft-Ebing and others drew lines between normalcy and pathology. Freud recognized the complexity of human sexuality as humans are all perverse, but not all pathologically so. Freud failed to play the earlier Victorian sexological game of othering all who fail to correspond with culture’s ideals about acceptable sexuality (although Freud was by no means entirely outside this game, as his work with homosexuality demonstrates). Emphasizing the role that the human unconscious plays in forming individual sexuality, Freud departed from the sexological field while simultaneously exploding it. Following Freud sexology was never to be the same, as sexologists through the twentieth century tended to leave the counseling to psychiatrists and instead focused upon demographic studies concerning sexuality (think, for example, of American sexologist Alfred Kinsey and his 1948 and 1953 Kinsey Reports).

While Freud and Ellis both experienced some censorship for their “radical” treatments of sex, the art world faced significantly more severe expurgation. Since the

---

107 Ellis escaped prosecution of this obscenity by assuring the Crown “that he would never again publish sex books in England” (Harrison 107).
Enlightenment, Western Civilization has valued the voice of science over that of art. As a result, in the past three hundred years people have tended to perceive revolutionary art less acceptingly than similarly ground-breaking science as art forces its audience to directly experience its media. While science is empirically-based, art has the potential to do anything through a particular medium. Therefore, it is not surprising—though slightly troubling—that revolutionary books like James Joyce’s *Ulysses* face such harsh criticism and even censorship for participating in a debate of which science is more or less sanctioned to be a part.

*Ulysses* honestly renders human sexuality in terms of its two mature characters, Molly and Leopold Bloom. Through Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness style, the reader enters the psyche of each character and literally thinks along with them. As a result, Joyce’s literary investigation into human sexuality is more radical than Krafft-Ebing’s or any other sexologist’s. While Krafft-Ebing lists case studies for hundreds of pages, the entire tone surrounding each situation clearly moralizes and shames the actions of its patient. Conversely, Joyce’s narrator is typically not didactic, and when a moral tone is taken is noticeably satirical. Consequently, *Ulysses* fails to demonize the multiple expressions of human sexuality which it documents. Because the novel investigates such blatant sexuality (active for both the male and the female character) and because it includes profane words like “cunt,” “bitches,” and “fucked” (4.227, 18.1459, 1511), the United States censored *Ulysses* in 1933 under the Tariff Act (revised to include such censorship in 1930). In 1934 in *U.S. v. One Book Called “Ulysses”* Judge John M.

---

108 Earlier acts of censorship also took place. As an April 28, 1921 write-up in *New Age* explains: “‘[T]he authorities’ (as one might say the furies, the parcae or the weird sisters) have descended upon our unfortunate but deserving friend, the *Little Review*, and suspended its mail service on account of its publication of a chapter of Mr. James Joyce’s new novel, *Ulysses*” (Deming 185).
Woolsey of the District Court for New York’s Southern District “ruled that the book, although containing many words ‘usually considered dirty,’ was not written for the purpose of exploiting obscenity. Assessing the effect on ‘a person with average sex instincts,’ Woolsey held that the book was not pornographic” (“Fighting Words” 145). Woolsey based his decision in the case upon his definition of the normal or average reader. The censor and the sexologist, then, overlap in their concern in defining (or prescribing) “normal” in order to perpetuate normality.

If Joyce did not intend *Ulysses* to be pornographic, the question of what he did intend remains. *Ulysses* outlines an unhappy marriage between two average people living in Dublin in 1904. Much of the novel revolves around the theme of their reunion, or the potential for such a reunion, just as *The Odyssey* builds to a reunion of Odysseus and Penelope on the island of Ithaca after twenty years apart. But unlike Homer, Joyce fails to clearly conclude whether Molly and Leopold Bloom do reunite; instead he optimistically implies that such a possibility exists. Joyce beautifully concludes his final episode with Molly’s affirmative dream-like mantra as she recalls Bloom’s proposal of marriage:

> and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breast all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (18.1604-1609)

By choosing to end his masterpiece by affirming the marriage of Leopold and Molly Bloom with Molly’s eight yeses, Joyce reveals one of his primary concerns of the

---

109 Following the Woolsey decision, as the case has come to be known, *Ulysses* has been almost untouched by state-sponsored censorship. It should be noted that according to Archie Loss’s “The Censor Swings: Joyce’s Work and the New Censorship” (1996), following the Woolsey decision, “only in certain totalitarian countries, where reading his [Joyce’s] book was prohibited, did official censorship occur” (369).
novel—salvaging the Blooms’ marriage. By constructing Leopold and Molly as such everyday people, Joyce encourages his readers to relate to their experiences. As a result, *Ulysses* offers advice through example (often negative examples of what not to do). In his interest predominately in heterosexual (and specifically marital) relationships, Joyce writes *Ulysses* in such a way that the novel becomes a sort of sexological manual for married couples.\(^{110}\)

Yet if *Ulysses* is Joyce’s version of sexology among other things, it ought to suggest a norm through which we might understand human sexuality. *Ulysses* includes so many depictions of human sexuality, both ideal and real, that such a norm is difficult to define. By focusing upon Joyce’s fixation with the married couple even amidst allusions to various other forms of sexuality (homosexual, adulterous and fantastic, to name a few), it seems clear that Joyce finds normality primarily in heterosexual union. What is more, such union, Joyce suggests, ought to include egalitarian sexual politics; Molly is not shunned for the affair she has during the day because Bloom has failed to equally participate in their sexual union. Therefore, Joyce’s sexological manual in *Ulysses* builds upon the normalcy found in heterosexual, active union. Just as the Catholic Church focuses upon the ejaculation of semen within the vagina, Joyce focuses upon Molly and Bloom’s need to reunite in order to return to normalcy. As Bloom climbs into bed with Molly at the end of his day’s journey, the impersonal catechism of “Ithaca” reveals that Molly ponders what Joyce titles “limitations of activity and inhibitions of conjugal rights” (17.2271). Since the death of Rudy “there remained a period of 10 years, 5 months and 18 days during which carnal intercourse had been

---

\(^{110}\) There is a large amount of homoerotic relations in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as well as his *Portraits*, between various male characters, yet Joyce’s primary interest is clearly heterosexual.
incomplete, without ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ” (11.2282-2284). Joyce renders Molly and Leopold’s marriage “limited” in Bloom’s mind “inasmuch as complete mental intercourse between himself and the listener [Molly] had not taken place since the consummation of puberty” of Milly (17.2285-2287). Thus, Joyce seems to negotiate normal sexuality in a healthy sexual and mental intercourse between partners. Furthermore, he locates the Bloom’s difficulties with both in issues of their procreation: Ruddy’s death and their upcoming death signaled by their daughter’s approaching maturity. Thus, also like the Catholic Church, Joyce suggests a norm not only in traditional coitus, but also in the hope of a potentially procreative reunion of the couple.

Clearly Joyce’s *Ulysses* champions heterosexual, mature union in a potentially procreative manner, but this is certainly not the end of the sexual normalcy that the novel suggests. In order to fully recognize Joyce’s pseudo-sexological project in *Ulysses*, a third character must be introduced and analyzed. Stephen Dedalus, the young to-be artist, offers a different perspective through which Joyce explores human sexuality. Unlike Bloom or Molly, Stephen is deeply immersed in Catholic orthodoxy, particularly it seems in regards to his sexuality, even as he rejects it. Stephen is also a young man in the novel and therefore is not a mature sexual creature. Stephen’s sexuality is complex to say the least, but he completes Joyce’s trinity of heroes in *Ulysses* and therefore no final conclusions about Joyce’s sexological project can be made without Stephen entering the equation.

Thus this project begins to explore that which critics like Richard Brown have previously touched upon, but it suggests other studies to be investigated as much as it
clearly comes to any irrefutable conclusions. One thing seems clear, though: Joyce’s *Ulysses* undoubtedly surveys the key questions of the contemporary sexological movement in its investigation of sexual perversity, multiplicity, and potential “normalcy.” Because Joyce’s project, unlike Krafft-Ebing, Ellis or Freud’s, distances itself from directly championing one sexuality over another to discuss the novel’s suggested “norms” is itself an act of interpretation. Joyce’s *Ulysses*, according to Bernard Shaw, is “a revolting record of a disgusting phase of civilisation; but it is a truthful one” (Deming 189). In its creation, then, Joyce encourages the same honest portrayal of life—not only in fiction, but in reality—in order for people to improve this “phase of civilisation”.111 Through Molly and Leopold Bloom specifically Joyce investigates and concludes his version of modernist literature as Victorian sexology while simultaneously making the argument that art as well as science can successfully investigate human sexuality.

---

111 Joyce claims to have written his first published fiction, *Dubliners*, in order to rile the Irish from their paralysis.
Works Cited


<http://www2.huberlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/LIBRO.HTM#kopf>.


-----. “‘When in doubt do gender’: Constructing Masculinity in ‘Penelope’:


EBSCO Host, Academic Search Premier, 17 November 2004,

<www.lib.umt.edu>.


Chrisholm, Dianne. “Obscene Modernism: Eros Noir and the Profane Illumination of


-----, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex vol. II: Part One: Erotic Symbolism, The*
Mechanism of Detumescence, and the Psychic State in Pregnancy; Part Two.
Eonism and Other Supplementary Studies; Part Three: Sex in Relation to Society.


Freud, Sigmund. The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud. Trans. and ed. Dr. A. A. Brill.


Pearce, Richard. “How does Molly Bloom Look Through the Male Gaze?” *Molly


