Androgyny and (near) Perfect Marriage: A Systems View of the Genders of Leopold and Molly Bloom

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Few problems are causing more misunderstanding in literary criticism and theory than that of gender. The misunderstanding is mainly a consequence of the post-modern dogma of the social construction of human psychology and behavior, including that relating to sexual dimorphism, that is, the division of our species into male and female variants of differing reproductive anatomy and function. Social constructionism maintains that our gender identities, how it feels to be a man or a woman or something in between, are entirely a question of upbringing and socialisation; that is, they are functions of the socio-cultural environment, and have nothing to do—we are led to believe—with biological sex or with any psychological predispositions that we may be born with (Denny, Green 86; Gergen, Davis xiii, 152-5).

Despite its popularity and influence in academia, however, the concept of the social construction of gender is untenable on both logical and empirical grounds (Boghossian 6-8; Bauerlein 229), and its persistence is entirely due to the beliefs of its adherents rather than to factual evidence, which is why I call it a dogma. On the one hand, social constructionists regard gender identity as unstable and changeable (because socially constructed and, therefore, free from the constraints of biology), thus denying any essential difference in the psychology of men and women. At the same time (sometimes within the same paragraph), when talking about gender social constructionists contradict themselves by advancing concepts, such as "the new psychology of women," or "truth about Woman," with the underlying assumption that women's minds differ after all from men's, quite independently of any social pressures (Walsh x; Belsey 260; Harrison and Hood and Williams 50, 62, 78).

The inevitable self-contradiction springs from the basic tenet of the post-modern view of gender, namely the tabula rasa concept of the mind, which is simply untrue for evolutionary reasons (Pinker, Blank 14-48; Ridley 56-8). To be more precise, social constructionism is only partly true because environment does of course influence our behavior without, however, fully "constructing" it from scratch. What

seems much more probable and what, indeed, is obvious to biologists, evolutionary psychologists, and to common sense is that human behavior, including gender roles, is neither exclusively the result of social programming, nor is it determined once and for all by our genes, but is always a function of both of these generators of behavior, nature and nurture, which constantly interact with one another during our development, producing our unique personalities, identities, and behavioral patterns (Symons 14; Ridley 252-3; Kenrick and Trost 163-4).

Current evolutionary thinking, for example, holds that, during a lifetime, each individual picks and chooses from a range of stimuli and events on the basis of his or her genotype to create a unique set of experiences. This means effectively that, guided by their innate predispositions, people create their own environments, which in turn influences how they think and act. According to the developmental psychologist Thomas J. Bouchard Jr., the theory of evolution "views humans as dynamic creative organisms for whom the opportunity to learn and to experience new environments amplifies the effects of the genotype on the phenotype" (102). The traditional dichotomy of mutually exclusive culture and nature, society and biology, is thus being replaced by an integrative, dynamic, adaptive view of human personality, in which any manifestation of behavior is both biological and cultural at the same time.

The integrative, non-contradictory approach to personality can be fruitful not only in studying the behavior of real people in social contexts, but also in analysing the actions and motivations of literary characters within fictitious plots. The main object of my present essay is to analyse the psychological genders of Leopold and Molly Bloom from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and to comment on the nature of their marital relations as influenced by the spouses' respective genders. More specifically, I want to focus on the Blooms' postulated psychological androgyny as manifested by their actual conduct, as well as by their private fantasies, and to argue that despite the Blooms' temporary sexual crisis, theirs is an ultimately successful, mutually satisfying marriage, if ever there was one.

Any psychological approach to literary characters rests, of course, on the assumption that fictitious narratives, including one as stylized and experimental as Joyce's novel, can be fruitfully analysed using a methodology developed primarily outside literary studies to account for the working of real, not fictitious, personalities. It has been fashionable in post-modern literary criticism to insist that it is naïve to treat narrative characters as real people or to assume that literary fiction should in any way resemble life as we know it outside literature. However, as the literary scholar Marisa Bortolussi and the psychologist Peter Dixon have recently argued,

sophisticated and naïve readers alike do tend to respond to literary characters as if they were real people, and they bring both their intuition and psychological theories to bear when analysing fictitious personalities. A variety of recent psycho-narrative theories, including systems theory of character (Sadowski, *Dynamism* 26-48), have likewise emphasized the role of readers' real-world knowledge and expectations in the interpretation and understanding of literary personages (Bortolussi and Dixon 134, 164-165).

The notoriously contentious problem of gender is, in an obvious way, inextricably linked with human personality and behavior, and it, too, rests on some theoretical understanding of what elements of personality define one's gender, and in what way, or indeed if, gender relates to the anatomical, biological differences between men and women. The view dominant in contemporary gender studies—that of the social construction of gender and the irrelevance of biological sex—appears as inadequate and incomplete as the general doctrine of social constructionism referred to earlier. Just as unreliable is the related doctrine of Sigmund Freud, which moves the differentiation of gender to early infancy rather than to behavior in later life, but which also denies the importance of heredity in the formation of psychological differences between the sexes (Fast 173, 177, 191).

Joyce's oeuvre has long been a favorite among psychoanalytic critics (Henke; Schwaber; Reizbaum; Thurston), with *Ulysses* hailed as a "Freudian novel" (Shechner 15). It is difficult, however, to engage with Freudian criticism of *Ulysses* without first considering the general validity and usefulness of psychoanalysis as an explanatory paradigm. As with other critical schools, Freudian readings of literary works are only as good as the conceptual framework that underlies them, which means that any flaws or deficiencies that the theoretical foundation inherently possesses are automatically carried over into the critical analyses inspired by the theory. Psychoanalysis has long been a subject of close scrutiny by psychiatrists and philosophers, who found it unempirical, speculative, dogmatic, and un-scientific (Eysenck and Wilson; Grünbaum, *Foundations* 97-104; Grünbaum, *Validation* 383-4). After reviewing, for my own purposes, Freud's contribution to psychology, I find it difficult to disagree with the literary critic William C. Dowling when he describes Freudianism as "a compound of medical quackery and Greek myth and fin de siècle irrationalism attempting to pass itself off as a science" (418). Likewise for Richard Webster, the author of a magisterial study of Freud's mistakes, psychoanalysis remains "a complex pseudo-science which should be recognized as one of the great follies of Western civilization" (438). Whatever the future of

psychology-inspired literary criticism, it seems that Freudianism has to be relegated to the museum of early modern psychological misconceptions where it belongs.

To arrive at an understanding of gender that is neither dogmatic, illogical, nor empirically invalid one first has to acknowledge the biological fact that, like all sexually reproducing species, humans come in female and male variants, with differing selective, evolutionary pressures applying to the two sexes in relation to reproduction: heavy biological investment in terms of energy, resources, time and care in the case of women, compared with a relatively small biological investment by men (Symons 22; Pinker, *How* 468). Different reproductive behavior sustained over an immensely long evolutionary time would have produced, on average, corresponding innate behavioral predispositions as foundations of psychological gender: greater competitiveness, aggressiveness, display of material achievements, and tendency towards sexual promiscuity and polygamy in men; and a more conciliatory and empathetic disposition, display of physical attractiveness, better social and character reading skills, and monogamic tendency in women (Kenrick and Trost 150-1; Baron-Cohen 1-5).

Needless to say, like other inherited psychological traits such as intelligence or specific talents, the above general characteristics of the feminine and masculine minds apply to the two sexes only in the statistical sense. This means that in any society the majority of men and women will respectively incline in their behavior towards the masculine and feminine genders outlined above, with one minority of women and men exhibiting what the psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen refers to as the balanced brain (6-7), or what can be called the androgynous gender (Kaplan and Bean viii; Sadowski, *Gender* 122-7), and another minority representing transsexual genders, that is, masculine minds in female bodies and vice versa (Baron-Cohen 8; Denny 5-13). Also, it can be argued that the two main genders represent a continuum of psycho-behavioral traits and dispositions rather than two separate and unconnected feminine and masculine psychological complexes. (If the latter were the case, the psychology of men and women would be mutually incompatible, preventing any communication and psychological understanding between the sexes.) The distribution of the gendered psycho-behavioral traits between men and women in any population can thus be represented in the form of two overlapping Gaussian curves of normal distribution, as visualised below:

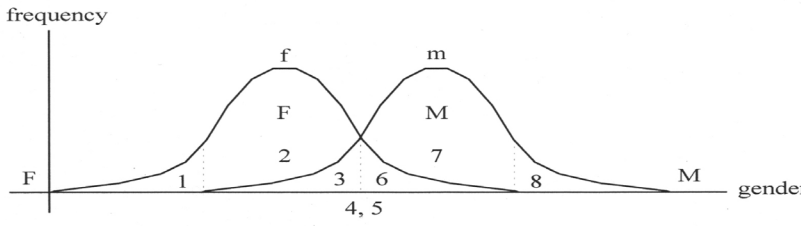

Fig. 1. Frequency distribution of feminine (F) and masculine (M) traits (genders) in female (f) and male (m) populations (Sadowski, *Gender* 115).

The horizontal co-ordinate represents a continuum of gendered psycho-behavioral traits stretching between the theoretical poles of "extreme" femininity (F) and "extreme" masculinity (M), with the actual genders of men and women distributed gradually in between. The partial overlap of the gender curves reflects both the distinctiveness and the interconnectedness between the two main genders, in practice between the psychology of men and women. As is also apparent in the diagram, the actual genders of most people consist of feminine and masculine traits mixed together in different proportions.

The continuous gender scale (F-M) can be divided into smaller segments representing both the majority and minority genders, whose nature depends on the particular mix of the feminine-masculine traits in individual psychology. Combined with the two sexes, the distinguished genders produce eight specific gender types to be found hypothetically in any population. The types are listed below, with literary characters as examples. Please note that the first component in the name of each type refers to the gender, and the second to the sex of the person:

1/ *the feminine woman* (Madame Bovary, Daisy from *The Great Gatsby*, Nabokov's Lolita, Tennessee Williams's Blanche DuBois);

2/ *the womanly woman* (Shakespeare's Cordelia, Desdemona, and Hermione; Williams's Stella);

3/ *the womanly man* (Marlowe's Edward II, Shakespeare's Richard II, Des Esseintes from Huysmans's *Á Rebour*, Oscar Wilde's dandies);

4/ *the androgynous man* (Hamlet, Brutus, Leopold Bloom);

5/ *the androgynous woman* (Antygone; Shakespeare's Viola, Rosalind, and Portia; Molly Bloom);

6/ *the manly woman* (Medea; Shakespeare's Regan, Goneril, and Lady Macbeth; Hedda Gabler);

7/ *the manly man* (Odysseus, Shakespeare's Othello, Pericles, Macduff, Kent, generally the "good guys");

8/ *the masculine man* (Shakespeare's Richard III, Macbeth, Iago, Claudius, Williams's Stanley Kowalski, generally the "bad guys").

It is important to emphasize again that rather than being arbitrarily "constructed" under the dictates of given socio-cultural pressures, the distinguished gender types, as found in real life or expressed in literary narratives, represent relatively stable psychological categories, resulting from an interplay between one's genetic predispositions and manifold environmental influences. In other words, one's gender, whether a conventional one (because statistically more prevalent) such as the womanly woman or the manly man, or a less conventional one (because statistically less common) such as the womanly man or the manly woman, is at any moment a given, constant element of personality, not to be changed by societal pressures or even by one's own volition.

The reader will, I hope, excuse this rather extensive introduction to the discussion of Leopold and Molly Bloom's androgyny, but it is only in the context of the exhaustive and holistic spectrum of gender types, as presented above, that it is possible to adequately analyze androgyny as a mean between the extremes of feminine and masculine psychology. An interesting and important thing about the androgynous personality is that both the feminine and masculine traits underlying this type are moderated and toned down, so to speak, being equally removed from the two extreme gender poles. The resulting elusiveness and indistinctiveness of androgyny have puzzled philosophers and scholars, inviting all kinds of speculation, as in Plato for example, who referred to androgyny as a separate, third gender, superior to the main two (190b). A harmonious and balanced mix of moderate femininity and masculinity seems to make androgyny a perfect golden mean between the extremities of conflicting psychological tendencies, not unlike the famous Aristotelian mean virtue of temperance (Aristotle II, 6-8). For example, the Renaissance humanist Sir Thomas Elyot praised temperance by describing it in gendered terms as a combination of masculine fierceness, audacity, willful opinion, and desire for glory, moderated by feminine mildness, timorousness, tractability, and benignity, that produce an androgynous mixture of magnanimity, constancy, and honor (qtd. in Woodbridge 140-141).

Nineteenth-century evolutionist George Romanes had this to say about an ideal configuration of psychological traits in androgyny: "to be strong and yet tender, brave and yet kind, to combine in the same breast the temper of a hero with the sympathy of a maiden—this is to transform the ape and the tiger into what we

know ought to constitute the man" (177). Similarly, in the 1970s, the psychologists Alexandra G. Kaplan and Joan P. Bean found androgyny compelling because "it seeks to define a model of well-being that draws from the valued characteristics of both men and women." They saw androgyny as "a pervasive alternative in which members of both sexes can retain the positive traits they prize, while broadening the option of adopting cross-sex-typed attributes" (viii).

However, while acknowledging the reality of psychological androgyny in some men and women, Kaplan and Bean erroneously made androgyny freely available to everyone, as if one's gender was a question of individual unfettered choice rather than a function of genetic predispositions which constrain the formation of personality around certain pre-set parameters. Kaplan's and Bean's view of gender was influenced by the clinical research of Sandra L. Bem, who saw androgyny as a way of "freeing the human personality from the restricting prison of sex-role stereotyping and of developing a conception of mental health that is free from culturally imposed definitions of masculinity and femininity ("Probing" 59). Writing in 1964, the literary critic Carolyn G. Heilbrun expressed similar optimism of gender liberation, in which androgyny, the ideal gender, can be "freely chosen," allegedly because "the human impulses expressed by men and women are not rigidly assigned" (ix-x).

While correct in highlighting the existence of a broader gender spectrum extending beyond the traditional masculine-feminine stereotyping, the liberational view of gender found in feminist research appears to be downplaying the constraining role of inherited psychological characteristics, which in fact eliminate the element of arbitrary choice in the formation of individual gender. Acknowledging that, the Joycean critic Declan Kiberd has rightly pointed out that, "for Bloom, androgyny is not an option . . . but a *donné*. He is androgynous to begin with" (lxii). By contrast, typical Dublin males in Joyce's narrative, as evidenced by the frequentees of Kiernan's pub in the *Cyclops* episode, are only "masculine" as a result of social conditioning, quite independently from their actual, often less-than-manly genders—they neurotically define themselves in opposition to women, in their anxiety and insecurity repressing the feminine within, so they can pass as normal and denounce the androgynous Bloom as deviant and eccentric (Kiberd lxi-lxii).

The reality of androgynous personalities is today fully confirmed by clinical studies, such as those conducted by the psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen for example, who talks of "balanced brains" combining the masculine systematizing mind with the feminine empathizing disposition (131). Sandra L. Bem's questionnaire for measuring gender identity also included such options as feminine, masculine,

and an androgynous combination of both. As one would predict from the statistical model of gender types (Fig. 1), in Bem's inventory of socio-psychological traits, femininity and masculinity are not necessarily tied to biological sex. Masculine females and feminine males are potential outcomes along with the androgynous type in both sexes (Bem, "Measurement" 159-161). Similarly, the evolutionary psychologists Douglas T. Kenrick and Melanie R. Trost argue that just as there are overlapping morphological differences between men and women (men are, on average, about 10 per cent taller and 30 per cent heavier than women, but within any culture there are nevertheless women who are taller than most men), so there are inter-sexual overlapping gender differences in behavior and personality (Kenrick and Trost 150).[1]

Compared with the presented statistical model of varied gender types likely to be found in life, traditional literary representations of gender appear to be biased towards conventional, more prevalent types, or gender stereotypes, with male protagonists, for example, inclining decisively towards the manly, heroic type: strong and brave rather than tender and kind. In this context, it perhaps comes as little surprise that the iconoclastic James Joyce should choose to fashion his anti-hero Leopold Bloom as a more feminized, although not fully feminine, man: a male androgyne, a modern comic version of the ancient manly and heroic Ulysses. By the same token, the androgynous Molly, the modern urban would-be Penelope, has her femininity masculinized by social independence and promiscuous impulses.

Freudian readings of *Ulysses* apart, the critical interpretations of Leopold's and Molly's genders are largely limited to analyses of the spouses' individual adulterous tendencies and sexual fantasies, especially of Leopold's alleged masochism (Brown 19-23, 103-107; Mahaffey 124-142), rather than focusing on the consequences that the spouses' postulated androgynous genders have on their marital relations. Nor are the Blooms' androgyny and its implications always fully acknowledged. For example, Carolyn G. Heilbrun's study of androgyny in literature contains just one paragraph on Bloom alone (95), while Tracy Hargreaves' recent *Androgyny in Modern Literature* surprisingly does not mention Joyce's Bloom, the most famous twentieth-century male literary androgyne, at all. In this context, Declan Kiberd's insightful analysis of Bloom's partial femininity remains a laudable exception (li-lxiv), although again Kiberd looks at Bloom's gender largely outside the context of marital relations, a perspective no doubt encouraged by the spouses' independence and physical separation during the action of the novel.

Like any other relatively stable and lasting type of relationship, such as friendship or sibling relations, marriage has an internal dynamic whose nature depends both

on the partners' individual characters *and* on the psychological consequences of the partners' interactions. In other words, from a holistic, or systems, point of view sustained interactions create psychological effects that are more than what the partners' personalities contained before they entered into a relationship. Such an interactive, holistic view of intimate relationships is emphasized for example by the recent applications of Family Systems Theory to literary studies. Drawing on cybernetic theory, FST views families as self-regulating systems, whose members interact with one another to maintain homeostatic balance within the family, as well as to develop and protect their individual identities (Knapp 18-19).

The interactive dynamic may be more than the sum of the two personalities involved, but it obviously depends on what the partners initially bring into the relationship; in other words, it depends on individual characters, and, in the case of a sexual relationship, on the partners' genders. In my systems study of gender (Sadowski, *Gender* 133-147), I worked out a complete set of gender configurations and types of interactive tendencies, depending on whether the gender types (Fig. 1) were identical (e.g. manly versus manly), consecutive (e.g. manly versus masculine), distanced (e.g. feminine versus androgynous), or opposite (e.g. womanly versus manly). In this context, it is interesting to note that given Leopold's and Molly's postulated androgyny, their genders appear to be both identical and opposite. This is because as the genders from the opposite sides of the scale draw nearer and nearer towards each other, they finally meet in the middle point of androgyny, where they become identical and opposite at the same time. This would indicate that androgynous matches are the most fulfilling and rewarding of all: the full psychological compatibility makes both partners understand each other's motives and desires, and, in the case of androgynes of opposite sexes the element of erotic attraction adds extra spice to an already satisfying relationship.

Apart from the Blooms, another famous androgynous marriage in literature is between Brutus and Portia from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Here Brutus' manliness is tempered both by his scruples about the anti-Caesar conspiracy and by his gentleness and humanity, while the womanly gender of "gentle Portia" is complemented by her manly resolve to stand by her husband and to share his uncertain fate: "I have a man's mind, but a woman's might" (2.4.8).

In Joyce's narrative, Bloom, a "complete" and "balanced" man, less conventional and one-sided in his manliness than his Homeric prototype, nonetheless fails in the two traditionally most important tests of masculinity: physical prowess and sexual conquest. Bloom is physically if comically defeated in the confrontation with the Cyclops, the solid citizens of Ireland, in Kiernan's pub, despite his moral victory in

the dispute about pacifism, and he is sexually humiliated by Blazes Boylan, Molly's lover, despite her *post factum* conclusion that is it her husband, not her lover, who is still the most attractive man in Dublin.

In his complex characterization of Bloom, Joyce consistently mixes moderated masculine and feminine traits in a way that is as paradoxical as it is psychologically convincing, if untypical (at the time) as far as literary representations of male characters were concerned. Long before TV commercials with husbands, aprons and all, bent over cooking stoves preparing meals for their wives, we find Bloom in the traditionally feminine, domestic context of the kitchen, cooking breakfast for the imperious Molly, who is still in bed reading one of her smutty novels. If the scene is reminiscent of the heroic Ulysses's humiliating enslavement by the nymph Calypso, the less manly Bloom, far from being a domestic slave, actually enjoys his daily cooking routine and the freedom that this activity affords, not least because by serving Molly breakfast in bed, Bloom can keep the kitchen to himself. Nourishment, a traditionally feminine domain, is indeed the first thing we learn about Bloom, who, curiously enough, relished the inner organs of beasts and fowls, regarding "pungent meatjuice" as too much a sign of aggressive male machismo. At the same time, Bloom considers the vegetarian food too watery, good for the "poetical," "ethereal" minds of the "esthetes": "dreamy, cloudy, symbolic" (Joyce 210), which Bloom's androgynous, that is, partly masculine personality, finds too effeminate. By contrast, the inner organs, "thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencod's roes," and "grilled mutton kidneys" (Joyce 65), as a mean between the dietary and gender extremes, appear a more suitable fare for an androgynous person.

On his own in the kitchen and enjoying his fried kidney, Bloom can read in peace an affectionate letter from his daughter, Milly, characteristically addressed to him ("Dearest Papli"), and not to the mother, a fact resented by Molly who loves receiving letters and even posts them addressed to herself. But the fifteen-year-old daughter living away from home finds it more difficult to relate to her mother, whom she considers more of a rival, than to her gentle, understanding father with his appealing combination of motherly tenderness and fatherly concern about his daughter's virtue. On the other hand, Molly's agenda for the day is set by another letter, addressed, with a "bold hand" later identified as Boylan's, to "Mrs Marion Bloom," not to "Mrs Leopold Bloom" as would normally be the case, which seems to indicate a considerable degree of independence in the equally androgynous wife of Bloom, who is womanly in her erotic appeal and voluptuousness, and yet manly

in her sexual assertiveness, infidelity, and general dislike of domestic tasks as when she remarks that she "Hates sewing" (232).

Fully aware of the identity and role of the letter's sender, Bloom nonetheless contains his jealousy out of respect for Molly's social independence afforded by her artistic accomplishments. He tactfully remains silent and soon removes himself from home, pondering Molly's infidelity for the rest of the day. Nor is he a hapless cuckolded husband, humiliated and emasculated by his wife's assertive sexuality. He is a would-be lover himself and, in fact, a cleverer one than Molly because he receives his indiscreet letters not at home but at post restante, under the assumed name of Henry Flower. Still, the manliness of the contemplated extramarital affair is qualified by Bloom's caution and prudence in not really becoming involved, by his lack of initiative, and by the confident, masculine tone of the letter from Martha. A half-feminine man in his marriage, in his unrealized extramarital fling, and in his sexual fantasies, Bloom remains partly true to the feminine nature of his name, both the real and the adopted one, when, like a woman, he receives a dried flower pressed inside Martha's boldly erotic letter. The floral and sexual imagery also informs Bloom's thoughts about the letter:

> Language of flowers. They like it because no-one can hear. Or a poison bouquet to strike him down. . . . Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don't please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet all naughty nightstalk wife Martha's perfume. (Joyce 95)

The letter itself is a mixture of open and rather manly erotic invitation ("when will we meet? I think of you so often you have no idea. I have never felt myself so much drawn to a man as you"), pretence of motherly irritation and rebuke ("you poor little naughty boy"), and a more masculine if playful threat of violence ("I do wish I could punish you"), which all indicate a manly gender in Martha, too domineering for the androgynous male. Prudently, therefore, Bloom decides to discontinue the budding extramarital relationship, although he keeps Martha's letter in his pocket and continues to think about it as an unrealized possibility for the rest of the day. Compared with Molly's fully-blown rendezvous with Boylan, Bloom's only sexual gratification that day is a solitary and rather pathetic voyeuristic climax over Gerty MacDowell on Sandymount Strand.

Comfortable with his androgyny when on his own, or even when at home with Molly, Bloom feels less secure among the Dublin males with their put-on machismo. The gentle and agreeable manners of this man "of inherent delicacy" (Joyce 708), his warmth and sympathy for fellow humans and especially for women, meet with little understanding with the often rough, tactless, prejudiced, and narrow-minded

"patriarchs" of the colonized city, with their conventional ideas of what it means to be a man. A Dubliner like the others, the olive-skinned Bloom is constantly reminded of his status as an outsider both on account of his Jewishness and of his indeterminate gender (Reizbaum 7-23). Most of the time, he is either ignored or spoken to only when the conversation can turn insensitively to the subject of his wife, whose affair with Boylan is a public secret in parochial Dublin. When talked about behind his back, Bloom is defined by "Madam Marion Tweedy," the famous soprano, contrary to the patriarchal custom whereby wives are socially acknowledged only through their husbands. Bloom himself is regarded as a non-entity ("What is he? . . . What does he do?") and his marriage with Madam Tweedy as a mésalliance: "what did she marry a coon like that for?" (Joyce 134).

The elusiveness of Bloom's social identity is as much a function of his mixed ethnic origin as of the androgyny that underlies his unusually soft, gentle, "unmanly" character. During a heated political debate in Kiernan's pub, in which the more than usually disputatious Bloom defends his doctrine of non-violence and universal love, his identity and status continue to baffle the narrow-minded Dubliners: "Is he a jew or a gentile or a holy Roman or a swaddler or what the hell is he?" (Joyce 438). Bloom's apparent tolerance about his wife's affair is also interpreted as a sign of the latent homosexuality of this "half and half," "a fellow that's neither fish nor flesh" (Joyce 416), "one of those mixed middlings," and doubt is even cast on his potency: "I wonder did he ever put it [his penis] out of sight [i.e. into a woman]" (Joyce 439).

Rejected, slighted, or ignored on account of his elusive and unconventional gender in the daytime, Bloom and his androgyny receive their ultimate apotheosis at nighttime, in the underworld of Dublin's red-light district. Characteristically for his gentle and compassionate manner, however, Bloom winds up in the brothel, not as a client, but to rescue and protect the young, drunk, and confused Stephen Dedalus, Bloom's would-be adopted son. After struggling to reconcile the conflicting tendencies of his part-masculine part-feminine personality during his daytime peregrination through the city, Bloom now experiences his full nocturnal initiation into the mysteries of gender. His self-abnegation and humiliation as a man reach here their absolute limit, and, after a symbolic sex/gender change operation, he finally emerges fully reintegrated and reconciled with his male androgyny.

The hallucinatory visions of the *Circe* episode intensify and exaggerate Bloom's androgynous (that is, partly feminine) fascination with strong-willed, manly women, as he masochistically submits to their taunts and chastising. First to appear in Bloom's fantasies is Molly herself, dressed in Turkish costume with scarlet trousers,

shouting angrily and commandingly at her husband: "Mrs Marion from this out, my dear man, when you speak to me" (Joyce 570). Man-like, she expertly handles her camel, "scolding him in Moorish," while Bloom abjectly "stoops his back for leapfrog." A moment later, however, Molly's imperious, masculine attitude is diffused in keeping with her androgynous gender, when, with a "friendly mockery in her eyes," she encourages her husband to "go and see life" (Joyce 571).

Further explorations into the unconscious of Bloom's gender include a mock trial and a parody of the last judgment, in which Bloom, forever apologizing, gives account of his imaginary sins and misdeeds, mostly erotic in nature. Far from being a conventional, manly, and assertive seducer, Bloom emerges during the comic hearings as more of a flirt and a fantasist than a womanizer, just as the women called to the witness box to testify against Bloom are, themselves, far from being helpless victims of Bloom's alleged sexual harassments. They include manly, self-assured, well-dressed, high-society ladies, more a product of Bloom's erotic fantasies than recollections of actual experiences. The exaggerated outrage and unembarrassed articulateness with which the ladies relate in public the details of Bloom's alleged advances testify, indeed, to their own sexual frustrations as much as to Bloom's. For example, the Amazon-like Mrs. Talboys admits that Bloom's juvenile innuendoes "have lashed the dormant tigress in my nature into fury" (Joyce 594), while Mrs. Bellingham describes in detail Bloom's elaborate compliments regarding her "nether extremities," and the "swelling calves in silk hose drawn up to the limit" (Joyce 592). As the female witnesses become more masculine and domineering, Bloom becomes more submissive, feminine, and child-like. He masochistically looks forward to being "flayed alive" and enjoys being walloped on his buttocks by a group of overbearing manly women. At the end of his mock trial, Bloom, his gentle nature frail but otherwise innocent, is exonerated from alleged sexual misconduct on humanitarian grounds, on account of "cases of shipwreck and somnambulism" in his family, and for being in fact "of Mongolian extraction and irresponsible for his action" (Joyce 589).

His ultimate apotheosis as an androgynous person, able to reconcile within himself the contradictions of human nature, follows further explorations into the feminine side of his androgyny. During a mock medical examination performed by a sex specialist, Bloom is accordingly pronounced "bisexually abnormal," of female sex, and in fact a virgin. At the same time, his sudden pregnancy identifies him fully with the feminine experience: "O, I so want to be a mother." The official medical report sums up his kind, part-manly/part-womanly character:

> Professor Bloom is a finished example of the new womanly man. His moral nature is simple and lovable. Many have found him a dear man, a dear person. He is a rather quaint fellow on the whole, coy though not feebleminded in the medical sense. . . . He is practically a total abstainer and I can affirm that he sleeps on a straw litter and eats the most Spartan food, cold dried grocer's peas. He wears a hairshirt winter and summer and scourges himself every Sunday. (Joyce 614)

As argued by Richard Ellmann, Joyce borrowed the phrase "womanly man" from the notorious, anti-feminine and anti-Semitic book by Otto Weininger *Geschlecht und Charakter* (*Sex and Character*, 1903), in which Jewish men are referred to as passive, womanly, and illogical "non-men" (Ellmann 463; Reizbaum 101). It must be emphasized, however, that while the phrase fits Bloom's temporary state during his symbolic sex-change operation, it does not accurately describe his real, conscious character, which is consistently androgynous, that is, only partly womanly, throughout the novel.

Bloom's hallucinatory explorations into the feminine side of his androgyny also involve deepening his self-sacrificial and self-abnegating disposition, a trait traditionally associated with women at the time. To fully embrace the feminine condition, Bloom has to fall at the mercy of the whoremistress Bella Cohen, the supreme personification of the virago, the manly woman, whose appearance is the culmination of the procession of strong-willed, assertive women in male attire, which Bloom's submissive, feminine side finds so appealing (what we would call today having a "thing" about women in uniform). Bella instantly overpowers Bloom with her fan—normally a symbol of feminine coyness and flirtatiousness—which in Bella's hand turns into a magic wand and an instrument of masculine, "phallic" control and subjugation. Following the downward movement of the fan, Bloom stoops to tie Bella's boot laces, while Bella herself undergoes a sudden sex change to align her masculine, domineering personality with a male body, just as Bloom's temporary submissive, feminine character has become fully aligned with a female body. With the sex/gender inversion now complete for both characters, the female/feminine Bloom is subjected to the utmost degradation, humiliation, and torture at the hands (or rather under the heels) of the tyrannical male/masculine Bello, who squats on Bloom's upturned face and quenches his phallus-like cigar in Bloom's ear, then sits astride on Bloom's back and horserides him, squeezing Bloom's testicles to spur him on. To feel the woman's condition at its most oppressive and degrading, Bloom is ordered to sweep the brothel's floor, to wash the whores' "smelling underclothes," to clean the latrines, make the beds, empty the pisspots, rinse them and "lap it up like champagne" (Joyce 649).

Bloom's complete identification with the female body and the feminine condition at its most humiliating has a cathartic effect on him, becoming a turning-point in his relation to gender; after hitting the absolute bottom of degradation, he begins to recover and reassert his masculine side. The process starts with Bloom's restoration of his male sex, as Bello addresses him more respectfully for the first time as "Leopold Bloom" and tries to stir his sexual jealousy about Molly and Boylan. Back in his male body, but not yet fully a man in the psychological sense, Bloom histrionically rejects his womanly character and proceeds in a more manly manner to confront the problem he has been avoiding all day: his marital crisis and Molly's infidelity. Boylan himself appears with his usual swagger and animal sexuality in Bloom's voyeuristic and self-demeaning fantasy, which, however humiliating, helps to recover his manly jealousy about Molly, if not fully his dignity.

The story of Bloom ends where it began, in Bloom's house and its two main areas, the kitchen and the bedroom, the domains of Leopold and Molly respectively. As in the Homeric prototype, Ulysses's home-coming is fraught with difficulties, as if to indicate that the restoration of identity, challenged and profoundly shaken by the night's events, can only be accomplished gradually. Bloom's reintegration with his domestic environment follows a stratagem of breaking quietly into his own house in the early hours of the morning, after symbolically leaving his "phallic" key to the house in another pair of trousers. Bloom subsequently restores his domestic authority in the kitchen by lighting the gas stove and righting the alterations in the lay-out of the kitchen utensils and articles of furniture caused by Boylan's visit.

In a contemplative moment, Bloom examines his reflection in the mirror, where he sees "the image of a solitary (ipsorelative) mutable (aliorelative) man" (Joyce 831). In the catechetical jargon parodied by Joyce in the *Ithaca* episode, the "ipsorelative," or self-reflective, facet of Bloom's personality denotes his loneliness and alienation ("brothers and sisters had he none"), while the "aliorelative," or externally referential, facet denotes Bloom's inherent androgyny and "mutability": "from infancy to maturity he had resembled his maternal procreatrix. From maturity to senility he would increasingly resemble his paternal creator" (Joyce 832). In other words, at the middle point of his life, Bloom is now able to balance equally the feminine and masculine tendencies of his character, achieving philosophic equipoise and inner peace.

It is in this newly attained, stoical frame of mind that Bloom is able to understand and, consequently, to forgive Molly her infidelity. As he tries to fall asleep in his bed, his head at Molly's feet in silent protest of her breach of their marriage, he contemplates the illusion of all men, husbands and lovers alike, who think themselves

"to be first, last, only and one, whereas [they are] neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity" (Joyce 863). His reaction to Molly's adultery is, therefore, neither one of righteous condemnation nor of evasive indifference but is characterized by "antagonistic sentiments" of envy, jealousy, abnegation, and equanimity, which cancel each other out, leaving the sexual score between the spouses settled. The now stoical Bloom can harbor little or no resentment for Boylan, seeing the outrage of institutional matrimony evened out by the outrage of adultery: "the matrimonial violator of the matrimony had not been outraged by the adulterous violator of the adulterously violated" (Joyce 866). Besides, Bloom himself has engaged in clandestine, if inconsequential erotic correspondence with Martha and now contemplates the fantasy of

> exercising virile power of fascination in the most immediate future after an expensive repast in a private apartment in the company of an elegant courtesan, of corporal beauty, moderately mercenary, variously instructed, a lady by origin. (Joyce 851)

His nocturnal ruminations end on a philosophic note, as he meditates the balance of need and desire in nature, and on a note of more personal satisfaction at "the ubiquity in eastern and western terrestrial hemispheres" (Joyce 876), symbolized by the "adipose posterior female hemispheres" of Molly's sexy buttocks.

The last word on Bloom and his marriage, as indeed on anything in Joyce's novel, belongs to Molly and her famous internal monologue of over sixty pages of uninterrupted, punctuation-free verbal flow. The uncontrolled, lyrical warmth of Molly's thoughts visibly complements Bloom's dry, rational, heavily punctuated, question-and-answer, catechetical style of reasoning, representing the feminine and masculine modes of reasoning respectively. Indeed, just as the balanced mixture of feminine gentleness and manly responsibility betokens an androgynous character in Bloom, so a combination of womanly sensuality and manly confidence bespeaks a similar character in Molly.

A strong admixture of contrasexual elements in both personalities thus accounts for a fair degree of psychological compatibility between the spouses: the similarities in their characters make them accept each other with understanding and tolerance, while their psychological differences explain the mutual attraction and warmth Molly and Leopold still feel for each other, despite their temporary sexual crisis. Their morning conversation may have been laconic, but their thoughts remain focused on one another for the rest of the day, revealing the friendly, warm, non-antagonistic feelings of two people who have lived together for a sufficiently long time to know and tolerate each other's foibles and idiosyncrasies, and who respect each other's privacy and individual routines. As (almost) identical gender types,

Bloom and his wife are united, despite their present difficulties, in a relationship based on companionship and mutual understanding, just as the opposite elements in their androgynous, mixed personalities account for the psychological and sexual attraction they still have for each other. In other words, their personalities are compatible but inversed in respect to each other on account of their common gender but opposite sex, as is indeed emblematized by their head-to-toe antipodal sleeping positions in the common bed.

The principle of androgynous, symmetrical inversion appears to be at work in Molly's rambling narrative right from the start, as she depicts her husband in the same role as herself from the beginning of the novel: lying in bed in the morning demanding breakfast, with Molly having to do "the damn cooking" (Joyce 874). The feminized Bloom appears to be something of a hypochondriac, too: "theyre so weak and puling when theyre sick . . . if his nose bleeds youd think it was O tragic and that dyinglooking" (Joyce 872), the weakness Molly resents in her husband on account of her own disinclination to do the feminine, nursing tasks ("I hate bandaging and dosing" [872]).

Against Bloom's earlier imagined catalogue of his wife's infidelities, Molly presents her own series of Bloom's erotic escapades, "some little bitch or other he got in with somewhere or picked up on the sly" (873). Both cases are signs of moderately masculine, active, assertive sexuality. Both spouses are also able to suppress their jealousy, to respect each other's secrets, managing to get out of each other's way in their infidelities: Bloom, when he decides to spend the whole day in town knowing that Boylan will visit Molly at that time, and Molly, when she says, "not that I care two straws who he does it with or knew before that way though Id like to find out so long as I dont have the two of them under my nose all the time" (873). Just as "1 woman is not enough" for Bloom, so one man is not enough for Molly, although neither would lower themselves to spy on the other.

Bloom's desire to "exercise virile power of fascination on some elegant courtesan" is also paralleled by Molly's fantasy of renting "some nicelooking boy," on whom to exercise her womanly attractiveness: "Id let him see my garters the new ones and make him turn red looking at him seduce him" (Joyce 874). Both spouses have high standards and expectations regarding the physical beauty of the opposite sex, and both have the habit of comparing the living specimens with naked statues in the museum. Molly's night-time reverie about the sculptures of beautiful male nudes (892) was earlier unconsciously anticipated by Bloom in his conversation with Stephen Dedalus:

> Coincidence, I just happened to be in the Kildare street Museum today, shortly prior to our meeting, if I can so call it, and I was just looking at those antique statues there. The splendid proportions of hips, bosom. You simply don't knock against those kind of women here. An exception here and there. Handsome, yes, pretty in a way you find, but what I'm talking about is the female form. Besides, they have so little taste in dress, most of them, which greatly enhances a woman's natural beauty, no matter what you say. Rumpled stockings—it may be, possibly is, a foible of mine, but still it's a thing I simply hate to see. (737)

Molly and Leopold also share a desire for frequent sexual contacts with a variety of partners and without commitment: "why cant you kiss a man without going and marrying him first" (875). Molly actually dislikes the institution of marriage altogether: "Id rather die 20 times over than marry another of their sex" (880). Her maternal instincts, too, are largely underdeveloped, as she views her pubescent daughter, very much her own image, with womanly jealousy and even bitchiness rather than with tenderness.

The internalization of women's experience in Bloom and his ability to feel like a woman, in part at least, are mirrored by Molly's reluctance to accept herself only as a woman: "whats the idea making us like that with a big hole in the middle of us" (877). She also wishes that men, too, could feel the pains of childbearing: "if someone gave them a touch of it themselves theyd know what I went through with Milly." A soldier's daughter, she recalls having a masculine desire to fire her father's pistol, like Hedda Gabler from Ibsen's play, to whistle like a man, to have a penis, and to make love like a man: "God I wouldnt mind being a man and get up on a lovely woman" (915). She also envies men their freedom in sexual matters: "they can pick and choose what they please a married woman or a fast widow or a girl for their different tastes" (924). Molly also confirms Bloom's preference for women in male attire, recalling the black closed breeches he made her buy for herself, while Molly for her part prefers men with strong, masculine appeal. She would even like to see her husband smoking a pipe, like her father, "to get the smell of a man" (890).

As Declan Kiberd observes, it would appear that the levels of androgyny in Molly and Bloom are not fully compatible after all, he turning out to be a little more womanly than manly, she a bit more manly than womanly. This would explain the sexual arrest of their marriage and Molly's slight domination over Bloom, although not sufficient to turn him into a proverbial hen-pecked husband. The imbalance may be slight, but it's enough to make the couple miss the golden mean of a perfect union. Still, without quite realizing or appreciating it, they share, in Kiberd's words, "an entire cast of mind and imagination" (xxxvi). Even the memory

of her affair with Boylan seems to fade in Molly's mind, as her thoughts wander back to Bloom, his courtship before marriage, their times together, his character, intimate quirks and foibles, and their love-making. Paradoxically, then, despite the absence of direct verbal communication and despite their infidelities, real or fantasized, theirs is ultimately not an unsuccessful marriage, a true relationship based on considerable compatibility of character, although, sadly, neither of them seems to be aware of it.

Their marriage may be something of a puzzle to the outsiders, but it appears to have been predestined. Back in Gibraltar, where Molly grew up, she joked to the first man who kissed her that she was engaged to "a Spanish nobleman named Don Miguel de la Flora," and now, in Dublin, she realizes that "theres many a true word spoken in jest there is a flower that bloometh" (Joyce 901). Her first tryst with Bloom was almost *déjà vu* from a past life: "we stood staring at one another for about 10 minutes as if we met somewhere I suppose on account of my being jewess looking" (916), and now, at night, Molly calls Bloom again "the great Suggester Don Poldo de la Flora" (926). Both, in fact, have "flowery," feminine connotations: "he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life" (932). Earlier, Bloom also referred to Molly's photograph as showing her "in the full bloom of womanhood" (758).

Almost without realizing it, on the day of her marital betrayal, Molly suddenly feels pride about her husband, who is "fit to be looked at," has good manners, is kind and obliging ("whatever I liked he was going to do immediately if not sooner" [Joyce 909]), and who "looks after his wife and family" (920)—an important enough virtue in a city full of improvident and irresponsible husbands and fathers. She still desires Bloom sexually, calling him "the fellow you want," and regrets his coldness: "never embracing me except sometimes when hes asleep" (925). Molly may generalize that men, as a rule, "dont know what it is to be a woman," but in the end she concludes that Bloom, the exceptional man, does know. She remembers having "impregnated" Bloom with a seedcake among the rhododendrons on Howth Head, and that it was the woman in him that attracted the man in her: "yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him" (932). Her reminiscence unconsciously echoes Bloom's own, earlier, lunch-time recollection of his first love-tryst with Molly at Howth, in which the imagery of nourishment is intermingled with sensual erotic experience:

> Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet

> and sour with spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft, warm, sticky gumjelly lips. (224)

Bloom's erotic recollection may be a sign of healthy manly instincts ("Wildly I lay on her, kissed her; eyes, her lips, her stretched neck, beating, woman's breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright" [224]), but his initiative in love-making is tempered by his feminine passivity: he makes love to Molly and at the same time Molly makes love to him ("She kissed me. I was kissed" [224]). Molly's gesture of feeding her male partner with a seedcake can thus be interpreted as an androgynous act, whereby the woman inserts her seed in the man. In the end, all Molly's lovers, real and imagined, blend into one heightened erotic experience focusing on Bloom, a flower like her, as her mind is carried away by the love ecstasy of the two androgynous, passive-active lovers:

> 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 round him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (933)

Notes

I would like to thank Professor John V. Knapp for his most helpful and insightful critical comments and suggestions for revision of the earlier drafts of my essay.

[1]Nor is the phenomenon of overlapping genders obvious to all psychologists. For example, Eleanor E. Maccoby's book bearing the promising title *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart, Coming Together* (1998), contains no discussion about cross-sexual genders.

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