

Flowers and Flow-ers: Antiphallocentric Effects in *Ulysses*

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Some works which are highly “phallogentric” in their semantics, their intended meaning, even their theses, can produce paradoxical effects, paradoxically antiphallocentric [...] I am thinking here [...] of the example of Joyce (Derrida, 1992a: 50)

The above quote provides a useful starting point for an investigation of Joyce’s depiction of gender identity in *Ulysses*. In Jacques Derrida’s view, expressed briefly in an interview with Derek Attridge, Joyce’s work can be viewed as necessarily phallogentric in its construction but simultaneously undermines this by producing antiphallocentric effects. In this paper I will investigate this claim and will argue that the character of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses* can be read as a phallogentric construction of woman as Other, that nevertheless challenges the dominant patriarchal authority. I will consider first Molly’s status as what Derrida terms a ‘pharmakon’, or an unstable textual element that overturns the text’s logic, and will then address, in relation to this, the importance of the metaphor of flow that has traditionally been associated with Molly, demonstrating how her character generates an undecidability in *Ulysses* that transcends traditional fixed concepts of gender identity. Though Derrida overtly aligns his own philosophical and theoretical preoccupations with those of Joyce, he does not provide any sustained analysis of gender in Joyce’s work, and this paper will account for this lacuna in his work.

In his seminal essay on Joyce, ‘*Ulysses* Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce’, Derrida describes Molly Bloom as ‘the beautiful plant, the herb or *pharmakon*’ (Derrida, 1992b: 294). Derrida does not expand upon this brief statement in his essay, which instead focuses on communication and chance in the narrative of *Ulysses*, and it is my contention that this deserves fuller investigation, as this unexplained equation of Molly with a ‘pharmakon’ is hugely significant in terms of Joyce’s deconstruction of traditional gender constructs that are informed by a fixed binary logic. The ‘pharmakon’ is a concept previously used by Derrida in his essay ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’ to denote the undecidability that forms the basis of structure itself, and this allows Derrida to overturn or deconstruct an entire philosophical tradition – a tradition based on a phallogocentric view of meaning and identity, in which man is privileged over woman, who is accordingly constructed as the inferior Other. This paper will assess the relevance of this pharmakon to the character of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses* and will demonstrate accordingly the correlation between the respective deconstructive approaches of Derrida and Joyce, with regards to gender constructs. I hope to elucidate and develop Derrida’s observation of ‘antiphallocentric effects’ in Joyce’s work, as a means of extending the former’s argument. A brief delineation of Derrida’s definition and discussion of the pharmakon is necessary in order that Molly Bloom’s ‘pharmakic’ status may be comprehended in terms of its disruptive capacity. Derrida’s early work is concerned with tracing the phonocentric bias, or privileging of speech over writing, in the work of seminal Western philosophers and writers, such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Claude Levi-Strauss in *Of Grammatology*, and Plato and Socrates in *Dissemination*. His deconstruction of the speech/writing hierarchy in canonical Western texts has ramifications for the entire history of Western discourse, and is instigated by his simple interrogation of the ambiguous definition of the word ‘pharmakon’ in his essay ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’,

collected in *Dissemination*. Here, Derrida interrogates the repression of writing in his tracing of Plato's condemnation of writing in the *Phaedrus*, and he dismantles the oppositions that govern Plato's text by demonstrating how writing can become as central a concept as speech.

The *Phaedrus* is a fictional conversation between two historical characters: Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates uses the myth of Thoth to convince Phaedrus of the superiority of speech over writing. Thoth is believed to have invented the art of writing and makes the offer of writing as a gift to the Egyptian King Thamus; however, the latter rejects the gift on the basis that man is better off without it, and Plato clearly concurs with this theory. For King Thamus, writing is clearly dangerous because it acts as a substitute for the authentic living presence of the spoken word. According to Plato, speech is good while writing is evil, true memory is internal while written remains external, speech carries an essential truth while writing carries the false appearance of knowledge, and spoken signs are living, while written marks are lifeless. Speech is therefore privileged while writing is dismissed and this hierarchical opposition is inserted into a set of binary oppositions that form the meaning of the text.

The binary oppositions that structure meaning in Plato's *Phaedrus* always necessarily privilege one term over another and Derrida sets out to subvert this bias in Plato's text through a detailed investigation of Thoth's notion of the 'pharmakon', the term he uses to describe Molly Bloom in his later essay. Thoth claims that his invention of writing is a pharmakon for memory and wisdom and offers his gift as a cure, but King Thamus returns it as a poison. Derrida observes the problematic aspect of the translation of 'pharmakon', as it signifies two opposite meanings – it translates as both cure and poison, and thus has both positive and negative connotations. It is

the translation of this word and the resulting ambiguity that renders Plato's text unstable and consequently allows Derrida to dismantle the logic that governs the *Phaedrus*. He states:

Hence, for example, the word *pharmakon*. In this way we hope to display in the most striking manner the regular, ordered polysemy that has [...] permitted the rendering of the same word by "remedy", "recipe", "poison", "drug", "philter", etc. It will also be seen to what extent the malleable unity of this concept, or rather its rules and the strange logic that links it with its signifier, has been dispersed, masked, obliterated, and rendered almost unreadable [...] by the redoubtable, irreducible difficulty of translation (Derrida 1981, 71-72).

If the paradoxical meaning of the word *pharmakon* is the concept which orders the binary oppositions in the text, then these binaries, and the intended meaning of the text, must be rendered unstable. If the poison inhabits the cure, then each term in each binary opposition is always already inhabited by its opposite, or 'other' term and this results in an undecidability of meaning. Derrida also notes how Plato paradoxically depends upon writing to record Socrates' view of the negative effects of writing and the superiority of speech, and in this way too, Plato's text subverts its intended meaning. In this sense, the privileged term of the opposition is dependent on the marginal term and hence destabilises the opposition. This in turn throws the meaning of Plato's text into an ambiguous realm of reasoning, as the entire structure of the text is governed by the distinct opposition between speech and writing. I aim to demonstrate how the connection Derrida makes between the *pharmakon*, writing, and deconstruction is significant in terms of Joyce's association of Molly Bloom with writing in *Ulysses*.

In *Of Grammatology*, after observing a similar phonocentric bias in the work of Saussure, Rousseau, and Levi-Strauss, Derrida proposes the term *arche-écriture*, or ‘arche-writing’ to describe that which goes beyond restricted definitions of language and representation, or what he calls ‘the vulgar concept of writing’ (Derrida 1976, 56). As Christina Howells explains, ‘archi-écriture [...] connotes those aspects of writing shared with speech which are denied and repressed in theories that have an investment in maintaining the natural and unmediated nature of the spoken word’ (1999, 49). For Derrida, all culture, history and knowledge would not be possible without the prior existence and absolute necessity of this arche-writing, a kind of non-concept which calls into question the metaphysics of presence that represses writing in favour of speech. This model, which resists essentialist notions of concept itself, locates the effects of writing – absence, difference and instability – at the origin of meaning, paradoxically demonstrating that there can be no fixed origin.

This phonocentric privileging of speech over writing in Western philosophy operates, in Derrida’s view, according to the same logic as logocentrism and phallogentrism. A connection can therefore be discerned between writing and patriarchal gender constructs, and it is in this correlation that I will locate Molly Bloom’s pharmakic status in *Ulysses*. Derrida refers to the ‘*family* metaphors’ in Plato’s text, and observes how ‘nothing is said of the mother [...] as a living thing, *logos* issues from a father [...] Writing is not an independent order of signification; it is weakened speech’ (Derrida 1981, 143). Presence is attributed to the father and absence the mother, and this ultimately gives rise to patriarchal ideology which necessarily subordinates women to men. The *logos*, presence and the paternal position are placed in opposition to writing, absence, and the maternal position, and, for Derrida, these binary structures underwrite and form Western ideology. Derrida’s

aim with deconstruction is to invalidate the logocentric and phallogocentric assumptions that form the meaning in every text and system, and he attempts to achieve this by de-centring the logos through an examination of the ambiguous moments in a text where meaning deprives itself of its own origin. The undecidable meaning of the pharmakon decentres the word and presence of the father figure and consequently uncovers the logocentric assumptions that structure the meaning of Plato's text. As Derrida notes:

If the pharmakon is "ambivalent", it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other [...] The pharmakon is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference (Derrida 1981, 127).

This 'play [of] difference' is that which conceptual thought and metaphysics has always tried to suppress. Therefore, it can be concluded that Derrida's description of Molly Bloom as a pharmakon suggests that she embodies and foregrounds this play of difference in *Ulysses*, and it is this play of difference that I will investigate here. It is my contention that Joyce deliberately links the female in his text with writing, as a means of challenging both phonocentric and phallogocentric cultural assumptions and that it is in this context that Derrida's description can be understood. In this way, I would argue that Joyce's deconstructive impulse foreshadows much of Derrida's work.

Joyce's identification of the problems and contradictions inherent in phonocentric and phallogocentric discourse can be discerned in his foregrounding of writing throughout his fiction, and his attribution of what might be called 'pharmakic' qualities to his chief female character. Ostensibly, *Ulysses* would appear to favour

speech over writing – indeed Joyce himself stresses the importance of listening to his text rather than reading it. This is evident in a number of places throughout Joyce’s text – famously in the ‘Proteus’ episode where Stephen Dedalus listens to a ‘fourworded wavespeech’ which when read is unintelligible, but when spoken aloud, captures almost exactly the sound of a wave hitting the shore, and the ‘breath of waters’ which ‘in cups of rocks [...] slops: flop, slop, slap’. Then ‘its speech ceases’ (Joyce 1993, 49). The use of onomatopoeic words combined with the emphasis on speech would appear to situate Joyce’s language within a traditional phonocentric framework that would repeat the classical speech/writing hierarchy. However, while Joyce prioritises speech and phonetics, he simultaneously undermines this hierarchy by confronting speech with the effects of writing, thus demonstrating the validity of Derrida’s claim that Joyce’s texts, which can be considered ‘phallogocentric in their semantics, their intended meaning, even their theses, can produce paradoxical effects, paradoxically antiphalllogocentric’ (Derrida 1992a, 50).

Perhaps the most striking instance of the foregrounding of writing effects occurs in the ‘Aeolus’ episode, in which the narrative is organised into what appear to be sections from a newspaper, complete with headlines. The setting is the *Freeman’s Journal* newsroom, where the modern production of words takes place. The visual impact of the bold headlines has a startling effect on the reader, which cannot be achieved through the spoken word. Karen Lawrence contends that ‘the headings represent a discourse generated in the text that advertises the fact that it is “written”, anonymous, and public – that is, cut off from any single originating consciousness. The “written” or printed nature of the book is introduced most forcibly through the headings’ (Lawrence 1981, 62). Joyce’s emphasis on writing is juxtaposed with both speeches and quotation of speeches, and this suggests an interaction between the two.

The ‘Art’ of the chapter, as listed in both the Gilbert and Linati Schemata provided by Joyce, is ‘Rhetoric’ (Joyce 1993, 735, 737), and this manifests itself in the proliferation of orators and allusions to famous speeches throughout the chapter. There is oration-in-oration, as successful past speeches are quoted by the multitude of speakers. Professor MacHugh for example, describes in detail John F. Taylor’s speech to the college historical society, and claims it is ‘the finest display of oratory I have ever heard’ (Joyce 1993, 135) which contradicts his earlier contention that ‘[w]e mustn’t be led away [...] by sounds of words’ (Joyce 1993, 126). An ongoing battle is staged between the written word, and these ‘sounds of words’. Rather than centralising writing, and prioritizing it over speech, I would argue that Joyce rejects phonocentric hierarchy altogether, and emphasises the play between speech and writing, or the play of difference.

Joyce’s methods of foregrounding writing are multiple and his ultimate challenge to the philosophical system’s tendency to debase writing can be located in his characterisation of women, in particular, Molly Bloom. As evinced by Derrida, in the binary structures of Western discourse, the woman is traditionally accorded a marginalised status, and can be therefore equated with writing. ‘Aeolus’ is littered with references to the ‘pen’, and one of these appears in a title which reads: **‘SOPHIST WALLOPS HAUGHTY HELEN SQUARE ON PROBOSCIS. SPARTANS GNASH MOLARS. ITHACANS VOW PEN IS CHAMP’** [bold original]. What follows is the Professor’s comparison of Stephen Dedalus with ‘Antisthenes’, who ‘wrote a book in which he took away the palm of beauty from Argive Helen and handed it to poor Penelope’ (Joyce 1993, 142). Stephen is here representative of Joyce himself, and ‘poor Penelope’ is Molly in the final chapter of the book. Jean-Michel Rabaté observes that ‘in the notes for the Penelope episode,

Joyce in his abbreviations always alludes to her as “Pen” (Rabaté 1991, 53). There are obvious connotations here which establish a connection between Molly’s monologue and writing, and this is reinforced by Joyce’s contention in ‘Aeolus’ that ‘**PEN IS CHAMP**’ [bold original]. The association of Molly with writing is implied by Derrida when, as we have already seen, he describes Molly Bloom as ‘the beautiful plant, the herb or *pharmakon*’ (Derrida 1992b, 294). Derrida’s *pharmakon* overturns the speech-writing hierarchy, and I would argue that Joyce’s Molly-as-*pharmakon* achieves something similar. Significantly, there is a latent reference to Molly’s *pharmakic* qualities in ‘The Lotus Eaters’ section, when Bloom goes to the pharmacy to purchase Molly’s lotion and muses, ‘[p]oisons the only cures. Remedy where you least expect it’ (Joyce 1993, 81).

Molly as *pharmakon* is cast in the role of the faithful Penelope in the Homeric parallel to *Ulysses*, who weaves and unweaves her web while awaiting the return of the wandering Odysseus. Vicki Mahaffey observes that ‘[w]eaving is a complex intermeshing of opposites to form a web, or network, that figures both interconnection and entrapment’ (1995, 145). This ‘web’ can be identified as exemplifying the ‘*pharmakic*’ logic that I have identified as common to both Joyce and Derrida. Penelope’s weaving and unweaving of a shroud in *Ulysses* mirrors Derrida’s deconstructive operation, as its double contradictory movement undermines the oppositions that work towards maintaining the hierarchical structures that govern phallogocentric discourse, and this correlates with Derrida’s notion of the *pharmakon* as ‘the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other’ (Derrida 1981, 127).

Vicki Mahaffey observes that the word “text” derives from *texere*, to weave’ and concludes that ‘Joyce found in the analogy of weaving practical ways of emphasizing the texture of language, the intricate interrelationships and differences that make up its unstable surface’ (Mahaffey 1995, 146). Joyce’s identification of difference in language, which is always unstable, foreshadows Derrida’s (non) concept *arche-writing*, and consequently Penelope’s weaving and unweaving of her shroud mirrors Joyce’s weaving and unweaving, and deconstruction, of language and identity. This image of the artist weaving is evoked by Stephen in the library scene in *Ulysses*. He states: ‘[a]s we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies [...] from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image’ (Joyce 1993, 186). The reference to Dana, the mother of ancient Irish Gods, is significant as she is ‘simultaneously the goddess of fertility, youth, knowledge, and of disintegration and death’ (Joyce 1993, 840 *notes*). Her ambiguous status is linked to the artist’s formation of a text and recalls the paradoxical logic of the *pharmakon*.

As we have seen in the example of ‘Aeolus’, speech is given almost as much attention as writing in *Ulysses*. It would appear that Joyce weaves a logic that prioritises speech and then unweaves this logic by confronting it with the graphic marks on the page. Something similar occurs in the ‘Penelope’ chapter, which explains Derrida’s equation of Molly with a *pharmakon*. I would argue that Molly, as Penelope, metaphorically weaves a phonocentric logic, and, through her *pharmakic* qualities, simultaneously unweaves this. She links words and meaning through phonetic association, and the chapter is replete with onomatopoeic words. Mahaffey notes that ‘Molly uncovers a poetic – or humorous – “logic” in the correspondence of similar sounds [and] she associates an unfamiliar word with other similar-sounding

words [...] and automatically resituates those words into a narrative context that is more familiar to her' (1988, 142). A much-quoted instance of this is her interpretation of the word 'metempsychosis', which, Bloom explains in 'Calypso', means 'the transmigration of souls', to which Molly responds, 'tell us in plain words' (Joyce 1993, 62). In the penultimate episode of *Ulysses*, Bloom says of Molly, '[u]nusual polysyllables of foreign origin she interpreted phonetically or by false analogy or by both: metempsychosis (met him pike hoses), alias (a mendacious person mentioned in sacred Scripture)' (Joyce 1993, 639). The last reference denotes Molly's confusion of alias and 'Ananias' from the Bible. In her monologue Molly reiterates her phonetic interpretation of 'metempsychosis', referring to it as 'that word met something with hoses in it' (Joyce 1993, 705). The textual focus, therefore, seems to be on sound, speech and phonetic interpretation. However, Molly's misspellings and inaccurate use of upper-case and lower-case initial letters problematises the elevation of speech in the text.

In a paradoxical manner, Molly's phonetic repetition of words, which would appear to prioritise speech, is only discernible through writing. Her inability to correctly spell words, or to adequately differentiate between lower-case and upper-case letters, cannot be detected through speech, and it has the effect of repeatedly transforming pronouns into common nouns. Numbers in her monologue are represented by actual figures rather than words, while her own admission of her inadequate spelling ability contains a phonetic spelling of 'double you' (Joyce 1993, 709). She loves writing and receiving letters and the visual impact of words is important to her. She states, 'I never thought that would be my name Bloom when I used to write it in print to see how it looked on a visiting card or practising for the butcher and oblige M Bloom' (Joyce 1993, 712). All these errors are indicative of

Molly's lack of education and even her 'deficient mental development' (Joyce 1993, 639). Whether or not this evinces Joyce's misogyny, or, conversely, his accurate portrayal of a typically uneducated woman of his time, is irrelevant; either way, the various errors and idiosyncrasies of Molly's language are fully revealed through writing.

Joyce's enactment of the pharmakon's subversion of the speech/writing hierarchy does not merely reverse the binary and it is instructive to read this in accordance with Derridean principles. Instead, I would contend that Joyce demonstrates the interdependence of both terms in the opposition – the writing of certain words is contingent on their phonetic pronunciation, while certain words and symbols receive their fullest expression through graphic inscription. As Derek Attridge observes, "Penelope" is a text which exploits readerly habits to fuse speech and writing, or more accurately to demonstrate the inseparability and interdependence of speech and writing in a literate culture'. The play between speech and writing can be viewed as a manifestation of Derrida's arche-writing, in which the properties associated with the writing of language – absence, difference and deferral – may also be found in speech and thought. According to Attridge, '[t]he graphic marks that exist only in the written mode do not simply transcribe aural (or mental) features, but play a part in constituting it – which means that thought is subject to the accidents, deferrals, and absences that we prefer to pin on language' (Attridge 2000, 105). Molly's monologue, which consists of eight long unpunctuated sentences, is intended to be a direct transcription of her thoughts, and the examples throughout of the effects of writing situate writing at the origin of thought and language. Therefore, the origin of meaning is associated with instability and difference, and Molly Bloom becomes a kind of 'pharmakon'.

As I have demonstrated, the traces and effects of writing in Molly's language are engaged in an interplay with speech, and this is mirrored by the interplay between fixity and flow throughout *Ulysses*, as it relates to gender distinction. In *Ulysses*, Molly's language is traditionally characterised as a 'language of flow' (Joyce 1993, 253), and this metaphor of flow is itself situated within a binary opposition that traditionally associates Man with fixity and Woman with flow. Those feminists that praise Joyce for his voicing of a female language of flow are, it can be argued, merely recreating the privileging of man over woman in patriarchal, phallogocentric discourse by equating woman exclusively with flow. Suzette Henke claims for example, that 'Molly's lyrical prose poetry offers a paradigm of *écriture féminine* [...] Molly's discourse is fluid and feminine, deracinated and polymorphic, uncontained by the limits of logocentric authority' (Henke 1988, 149-152), while for Luce Irigaray, female language is 'always fluid' (Irigaray 1985, 79). According to Derridean logic, an *écriture féminine* is an impossibility. There is no way to conceptualise female otherness beyond phallogocentric discourse, and I would argue that Joyce presents a similar predicament in his construction of Molly's character and language.

Attridge's insightful essay on the metaphor of flow in *Ulysses* lists more than twenty examples of varied descriptions of Molly in Joycean criticism, all of which use the metaphor of flow to describe her language (Attridge 2000, 93-94). Taking as a starting-point the fact that the word flow 'does not appear to have been initiated by Joyce and is not prominent in the early commentators he instructed', Attridge dismisses with ample evidence from the text of *Ulysses*, the exclusive association critics have repeatedly made between Molly and the metaphor of flow, and claims that the 'syntactic deviations' in Molly's language 'are characteristic of casual speech' (Attridge 2000, 95-96). Furthermore, the long winding sentences in Molly's

monologue that ostensibly ‘flow’ endlessly are compared by Attridge to similar lengthy sentences that occur in other episodes of *Ulysses*.

The stream-of-consciousness style and apparent random associative thoughts that characterise Molly’s monologue can be compared with the stream-of-consciousness technique used in passages that convey both Stephen’s and Bloom’s inner thoughts. Consider for example Stephen’s closing reverie in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’: ‘[h]ere I watched the birds for augury. Ængus of the birds. They go, they come. Last night I flew. Easily flew. Men wondered. Street of harlots after. A creamfruit melon he held to me. In. You will see’ (Joyce 1993, 209). Though Stephen’s thoughts are constructed into clear sentences, this passage evinces grammatical displacement that is more deviant than Molly’s, and the random links that Stephen makes between words obfuscates meaning. While the style of the passage differs from the style in ‘Penelope’, it produces the same effect. Bloom’s language at times bears significant similarity to Molly’s. At the end of ‘Nausicaa’ he sleepily muses:

O sweetie all your little girlwhite up I saw dirty bracegirdle made me do love sticky
we two naughty Grace darling she him half past the bed met him pike hoses frillies
for Raoul to perfume your wife black hair heave under embon seniorita young eyes
Mulvey plump years dreams return tail end Agendath swoony lovey showed me her
next year in drawers return next in her next her next (Joyce 1993, 364).

Though it could be argued that the apparent flow of Bloom’s language is due to the fact that he is falling asleep, it should be noted that Molly too is on the verge of falling asleep for the duration of her monologue. These examples highlight the similarity between Molly’s language and the language of the main male characters in *Ulysses*, and the metaphor of flow therefore transgresses the logic that equates the

Man with fixity and Woman with flow and resists what Lawrence calls the ‘genderization of writing as feminine’ (Lawrence 1984, 245). In this way, it functions in a similar manner to Derrida’s pharmakon.

Attridge notes the significance of Bloom’s mention of the ‘language of flow’ in the ‘Sirens’ episode, which is immediately preceded by his reference to ‘Henry Flower’ and ‘[f]lower to console me’ (Joyce 1993, 253), and argues:

the second syllable of ‘flowers’ has been cut off [...] so that the word flows into the word ‘flow’ [...] This in turn alerts us to the fact – otherwise obscured by our rush from signifier to signified – that the word spelled ‘flower’ can mean ‘one who flows’. As we have seen, Henry Flower is also a flow-er; and Molly Bloom in ‘Penelope’, though she is usually discussed by critics as a flow-er, is also a flower, a ‘flower of the mountain’ (Attridge 2000, 113-114)

Attridge’s observation effectively dismantles the phallogentric gender distinction – both Molly and Bloom are flowers and flow-ers, and the opposition between the concepts of male and female language collapses. Interestingly, in *Glas*, Derrida documents Jean Genêt’s use of a flower metaphor as a means of inverting the opposition between the sexes. He writes: ‘[f]or castration to overlap virginity, for the phallus to be reversed into the vagina, for alleged opposites to be equivalent to each other and reflect each other, the flower has to be turned inside out like a glove, and its style like a sheath’ (Derrida 1986, 47). Genêt’s flower mutates into a glove which disturbs the opposition that prioritises man over woman, and he demonstrates the interchangeability of these opposite concepts. I would relate this double structure of this flower metaphor to the flower-flow-er link in Joyce’s work, which can only be recognised through the written word, and the play between flow and flower that

deconstructs phallogentric, gendered oppositions is therefore analogous to Joyce's deconstruction of the phonocentric, speech/writing hierarchy.

If the metaphor of flow in *Ulysses* can be said to represent something, it is that all language is flow, and that the absence and difference that opposes fixity is applicable to all discourse. However, this is not to suggest that this difference merely collapses into sameness; this would contravene the very principles of the deconstructive process. Rather, what is suggested by Joyce is that there is no fixity in language. It is a combination of sameness and difference, and Bloom's repeated observations in relation to the flow of water, reinforces this point. In 'The Lestrygonians' he claims that water is 'always flowing in a stream, never the same' and this is reiterated in 'Ithaca' in his description of 'fresh cold neverchanging everchanging water' (Joyce 1993, 146, 625). The latter quote in particular reflects the interdependence of fixity and flow, which paradoxically means that neither term in the opposition can be fixed and repeats the logic of the pharmakon. This can be applied to the respective identities of both Bloom and Molly. As man and woman, they share the experience of flow in language that combines sameness and difference, and this is evinced in Bloom's consideration of 'his, her and their natured natures, of dissimilar similarity' (Joyce 1993, 685). The interdependence of male and female mirrors the play between self and other in identity, and shows that, in line with Derridean reasoning, the other 'always amounts to the same' (Derrida 1982, vii). And as Derridean logic would have it, as soon as the other becomes the same it must necessarily then become other – it is a constant process of deferral.

Molly's characterisation raises, as Lawrence notes, 'the problem of woman represented by the male pen' (Lawrence 1984, 253), and this anticipates Derrida's question, '[b]ut can one speak of an experience of the other or of difference?'

(Derrida 1978, 152). The fact that a male writer writes Molly's language means that her monologue cannot be totally other because it is written from a patriarchal viewpoint. However, it should be noted that if 'Penelope' was written by a female writer, the same problem would arise, simply because there is no place outside of patriarchal, phallogocentric discourse, in which to situate marginalised voices. As van Boheemen-Saaf observes, '[t]he discourse of the other is never truly other. It is always a variant of, and within, the dominant discourse. Thus, Molly Bloom cannot, and never does, speak for herself as wholly other' (van Boheemen-Saaf 1988, 97). This is evident, as I have demonstrated, in the similarities between the language of Molly and that of Bloom and Stephen, exemplified in the metaphor of flow. Molly's identity cannot be fixed, and this, as I have shown, is reflected in her highly contradictory mode of thought, while Bloom's relationship with Molly reflects the imbrication of traditionally gendered styles of language. This is appropriate for Joyce's depiction of 'the new womanly man' (Joyce 1993, 465).

Though Joyce cannot succeed in voicing the female other, he does break down the traditionally gendered descriptions and styles of language, so no clear 'male' or 'female' style of language emerges in *Ulysses*. Obviously there are clear differences between Molly's language and the language of Bloom and Stephen, but this is necessary in the play of sameness and difference that dissolves the fixity of oppositions. As Attridge notes, '[f]low and fixity, nature and culture, female and male, speech and writing, material and system: *Ulysses* asserts neither an absolute difference between these opposed terms nor a transcendence of all difference. Rather it shows [...] that each pair is linked and separated by a hymen that both unites and divides' (Attridge 2000, 115). Though Joyce is unable to mediate the voice of the other through a discourse that is fully other, he nevertheless displays the difference

within identity that evades ontological boundaries, a difference that is contained within sameness, and an otherness that is always part of the self.

In Molly, Joyce shows that the apparent fluidity of her language can be found in all language, regardless of gender stereotypes. In his deconstruction of the boundary between man and woman, Joyce foreshadows Derrida's revaluation of gender distinctions in language expressed in 'Women in the Beehive' in which Derrida advocates a language that would 'neutralize the sexual opposition, and not sexual difference, liberating the field of sexuality for a very different sexuality, a more multiple one. At that point there would be no more sexes [...] there would be one sex for each time' (Derrida 1987, 199). This aim however, is impossible because such a 'neutralization' can only be mediated through patriarchal and phallogocentric discourse, and this is the double bind in which deconstruction is contained. Nevertheless, both Joyce and Derrida after him reveal the otherness that can be traced in language and Being, and illustrate that though logocentric and phallogocentric language is inescapable, it contains inconsistencies and paradoxes, like the pharmakon, that highlight its inadequacy as a means of conveying ultimate truth, in language and identity. Joyce's deconstruction of phallogocentric discourse is achieved, as Derrida observes, by his subversion of what is in appearance, phallogocentric logic, and I have attempted here to explain how *Ulysses* is illustrative of this. Molly's monologue may highlight her otherness as woman, but on closer inspection, as I have shown, the 'female' aspects of her language and identity are combined in an uneasy play of sameness and difference with 'male' discourse, and the opposition collapses. Joyce presents what appears to be textual unity, only to deconstruct it with the difference on which unity is based.

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