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Introduction

James Joyce's *Ulysses* was first serialized in the American Journal "Little Review" from March 1918 until December 1920, when the publication of the "Nausicaa" episode led to a prosecution for its obscenity. In 1921, *Ulysses* was banned in the United States, which effectively closed the doors to the book's publication in English speaking countries. Fortunately, however, thanks to the offer of Sylvia Beach, the owner of the bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, *Ulysses* was published in its entirety in 1922, in Paris. Eleven years after its publication, the judge in New York finally ruled that *Ulysses* was not obscene, and thereupon the reputation of its artistic value as well as the sales of the book was boosted. Today, the public accepts that *Ulysses* cannot be censored nor judged negatively due to its obscenities. Not only has it established itself as a masterpiece in English literature, but its direct sexual descriptions, formerly disallowed, is one of the reasons it is thought of so highly. Given such circumstances in his time, Joyce dared to vividly depict erotic scenes in his work, which means that he resisted Victorian morality and seriously dealt with sexuality as fundamental human subject matter.

A number of obscene descriptions seen in *Ulysses*, as Joyce also admitted,¹ derive from pornography, such as books, erotic posters, postcards and advertisements. The titillating performance of Lydia Douce in the "Sirens" episode

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 25th annual conference of the James Joyce Society of Japan held at Kyoto University on June 15th, 2013.

¹ Joyce admitted to Sylvia Beach the obscene aspects of *Ulysses* (Vanderham 126). He also told Frank Budgen that, among 18 episodes in *Ulysses*, the obscene descriptions can be seen most frequently in the "Penelope" episode (*LI* 170).

and the striptease-like act of Gerty Macdowell in the “Nausicaa” episode are also categorized as pornography. The pornographic materials and the girls’ behavior in these pornographic passages can be considered as a kind of material representing a female conformity to male desire, for pornography generally refers to visual materials which are designed to gather a male voyeuristic gaze and show female pleasurable attitudes toward the male gaze to consciously satisfy male sexual desire. In “Power, Pornography, and the Problem of Pleasure,” Garry Leonard says of pornographic descriptions in Joyce’s works – “True to its patriarchal preoccupations, heterosexual pornography typically ‘discovers’ that a woman wants what a man wishes that she needs” (641). Leonard also gives the example of a pornographic picture – “the woman’s pleasure, presumed to be her own, is foregrounded, but only in a scenario designed, controlled, and produced for the pleasure of the voyeuristic male” (630). The view that a woman in pornography accommodates herself to male desire is applicable to the situation of the female characters described in *Ulysses*. Their passive representations, however, also show the women’s attempt that deliberately utilizes male desire to establish their own value in society. Joyce, as a male writer, must have known that a woman was so cunning and watchful of her own benefit to make use of her situation. Indeed, in the letter to Nora, he wrote that he noticed “the curious-looking eyes of the woman herself and her waitress” (*LII* 266) when he visited the Irish hotel where Nora had once worked.

Molly Bloom’s monologue in the “Penelope” episode, on the other hand, cannot be read as an accommodating behavior but, rather, as an artistic work which truthfully unveils genuine female inner thoughts without considering voyeuristic men and catering to men’s sexual desire. Critics in considering “Penelope,” have focused intensely on interpreting Molly herself. Kathleen McCormic illuminates the historical stages of Molly’s reception. In the 1930s and 1940s, critics regarded Molly as a symbolic earth mother figure. She was, then, seen realistically as a whore in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s and 1990s, critics tended to analyze Molly within her intricate cultural, historical, political and economic contexts. Elain Unkeless, for example, criticizes Molly’s stereotypical female actions within patriarchal

domination, and Suzette A. Henke, who states that Molly imitates a temptress in pornography, also sees her subjectivity restrained in male-dominated society.

This paper, however, focuses on interpreting Molly's monologue rather than re-visioning the critical reception of Molly herself. Early French feminists, such as Hélène Cixou and Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, have observed Molly's language and argued that "Molly's language of flow and overflow is an example of 'écriture féminine'" (McCormic 34). "Écriture féminine" is literally "women's writing," more precisely feminine language, the inscription of the female body and female difference. According to French feminists, Molly's language, whose lexical array is rhythmic and flowing with no punctuation, is not contained by the limits of logocentric or masculine authority; it is feminine and polymorphic. In recent years, there has been great interest in reading Molly's monologue as a theatrical performance. Cheryl Herr, for instance, says that "the 'Penelope' episode is a script" (65). Building on Herr's argument that Molly is not a character but a role, Kimberly Devlin shows how her "monologue" is "a concatenation of roles, an elaborate series of 'star turns' that undermines the notion of womanliness as it displays it" (82). Lisa Ruth Sternlieb also regards "her soliloquy" as "the textual performance" (758). There is considerable validity to such views which focus on Molly's monologue, though her monologue is yet to be analyzed in relation to the other female characters. Nor has there been an inquiry into the significance of it being located independently in the concluding chapter.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the behavior of the female characters in *Ulysses*, in particular, Lydia, Gerty and Molly. The first two are described in the text as behaving "pornographically," whereas Molly's monologue is described by the author as an artistic work that is not pornographic in so far as its purpose is to reveal the real nature of a woman and not to project an image of female desirability for the sake of flattering male desire. By comparing the female acts which are the opposite of each other, I reevaluate *Ulysses*, which unconventionally as well as experimentally tackles universal human issue in a high artistic way.

1. Pornographic Descriptions

We will begin considering the pornographic “materials” and the “performances” of Lydia and Gerty to examine how they fall under the category of pornography that shows an accommodating woman. As for the pornographic materials, they appear frequently throughout *Ulysses*: the large poster of Marie Kendall, “charming soubrette” (10.381-82; 10.1141-42), who is “holding up her bit of a skirt” (10.383), cigarette-cards featuring attractive women (10.1142-44), a poster of smoking mermaid on the door of the dining room (11.299-300), the *Police Gazette* (12.1165), which inserts sensual pictures, looked at by men at Barney Kiernan’s pub, and an erotic photocard in Bloom’s drawer (17.1809). These pornographic materials in the story can be seen as allusions to the social condition that allows the commercialization of sex at that time. What is more noteworthy, however, is that these girls in pornography are precisely depicted as sex objects who are obedient to male sexual desire. In other words, “real” pornography in *Ulysses* is distinctly described as not only the male-targeted materials but the representations of female conformity to male desire.

Lydia’s erotic performance in “Sirens” is also described as a kind of pornography that represents a woman accommodating herself to male desire. The description of how she behaves in this performance reminds us of an erotic show dance on the stage: she “nipped a peak of skirt above her knee” (11.410) and “set free sudden in rebound her nipped elastic garter smackwarm against her smackable a woman’s warmhosed thigh” (11.413-14) along Lenehan’s enthusiastic shout: “Go on! Do! Sonnez!” (11.399), “Sonnez!” (11.412), and “La cloche!” (11.415). As we notice her “willful eyes” (11.411) during the performance, she accepts lustful looks of the male audience and gives this performance in response to their requests to stimulate their sexual desire.

Meanwhile, that Lydia tries to create her own value through this submissive performance is indicated in the following quotation: “She smilesmirked supercilious (wept! aren’t men?), but, lightward gliding, mild she smiled on Boylan” (11.416-17). Her “supercilious” attitude toward the excited male audience implies her

self-confidence in attracting their gaze by her sex appeal. In addition, it implies her contempt for their vulgar manners. In other words, to attract the male gaze is, for Lydia, a kind of status symbol to increase her value of existence. We can see how much she is concerned to captivate the opposite sex in these two episodes: her narcissistic interpretation of the man's look in the carriage (11.69-79), when she utters "O wept! Aren't men frightful idiots?" (11.79), the same astonishment as the quotation above, and her conduct to accentuate her bosom (11.347-48; 11.360-61). Thus through Lydia's erotic performance, she is depicted pornographically in terms of her submissive acting to satisfy male sexual demands. At the same time, she is described as being cunning in the light of her use of men for her benefit. It is certain that, like one of the Sirens whose singing lures sailors to their doom in the *Odyssey*, Lydia allures men in the bar by her sexual performance, but she also shows her female worldly identity when she turns male desire to her own advantage.

Gerty's striptease-like display on Sandymount Strand in "Nausicaa" can be read as pornography, as well: aware that Bloom is gazing at her, she deliberately exposes her leg to satisfy his sexual desire. The following quotation shows how Gerty is conscious of Bloom watching her and performs in accordance with his expectations:

. . . she let him and she saw that he saw and then it went so high it went out of sight a moment and she was trembling in every limb from being bent so far back that he had a full view high up above her knee where no-one ever not even on the swing or wading and she wasn't ashamed and he wasn't either to look in that immodest way like that because he couldn't resist the sight of the wondrous revealment half offered like those skirt dancers behaving so immodest before gentlemen looking and he kept on looking, looking. (13.726-33)

Even though it is obvious that Gerty notices Bloom's gaze, she pretends that there is no one in sight. Such a figure as is described here fits one of the erotic

images in the mutoscope he peeps into in Capel Street. The intimate relation between the obscene image in mutoscope films and “Nausicaa” is acutely pointed out by Katherine Mullin, who says, “Bloom is the sort of mutoscope customer. . . . Gerty imitates the mutoscope’s unique mechanics of viewing, striking poses which dissect her gradual gestures of disclosure to provide opportunities for uninterrupted scrutiny. . . .” (153). As Bloom remembers the image in the mutoscope when he happens to see Gerty’s exhibitionist display, Gerty represents the performer in pornography, who gradually undresses in a way intended to be sexually exciting for Bloom, a customer peeping at her exhibition, as she pretends not to notice his gaze. Bloom, then, comes to see her display voyeuristically saying, “Watch! Watch! See! Looked round. She smelt an onion. Darling, I saw, your. I saw all” (13.936-37), with a feeling of being omnipotent.

In addition to Gerty’s obedience to Bloom’s desire, which we have seen above, her own feeling of exaltation and accomplishment gained by titillating Bloom is also indicated as follows: “Her woman’s instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him and at the thought a burning scarlet swept from throat to brow till the lovely colour of her face became a glorious rose” (13.517-20). We can see that Gerty, like Lydia, is described as feeling exalted through Bloom’s excitement aroused by her erotic performance, which means Gerty takes advantages of male desire to make herself valuable.

In examining how Gerty utilizes Bloom’s desire for herself, however, we must carefully consider the narrative and Gerty’s consciousness employed in the “Nausicaa” episode. The first half of the chapter, where Gerty shows her erotic dance to Bloom, although, in fact, Bloom hasn’t been identified by name yet, is constructed of the narrative that introduces readers to the consciousness of Gerty. The second portion of the chapter, on the other hand, focuses on Bloom’s consciousness using the technique of free indirect discourse. As Joyce wrote to Budgen: “Nausikaa is written in a namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style with effects of incense, mariolatry, masturbation, stewed cockles, painter’s palette, chitchat, circumlocution, etc. etc.” (210-11), in the first half, the narrative

imitates a sentimental romantic style. Since the narrative reflects Gerty's consciousness, Gerty's language doesn't directly show the reality but is strongly influenced by the circumstances around her and her female desire. For example, Gerty doesn't tell sexual things directly but instead, she uses euphemistic expressions: "the place" (13.332) for "a restroom," "that thing" (13.561-62) for "a menstruation," and "the other thing" for "a sexual act" (13.709). Her use of euphemistic expressions is influenced by sexual morality promulgated by the Irish Catholic Church and Victorian mores (Mort, 113; Mullin, 21). Moreover, when the narrative hides her lameness, which Bloom and readers notice only as she is walking away, and emphasizes the beauty of her leg, it reveals her desire constructed by the male-centered vision.

Hence, many critics regard the image of Gerty, which is narrated in this episode, as the representation of the sacrificial girl that portrays the desire of men and the society. They also say that her narcissism and vanity are parodied when the narrative sentimentally describes her consciousness. Most approaches to "Nausicaa," however helpful, exclusively insist on Gerty's obedience to male desire or social demands in the description of her erotic performance.² Yet, even though the image of Gerty, which the narrative reflecting Gerty's consciousness sentimentally informs, is male-constructed or parodied,³ it is true that Gerty selfishly interprets Bloom's gaze and makes use of the male-centered vision to establish a positive self-image in order to deal with her sufferings including her father's violence and her own bodily deformity. In the following quotations, for example, Gerty herself is so satisfied by the enthusiastic gaze from Bloom that her "shortcoming," which stands for her

² Karen Lawrence notes, "Gerty is 'troped' according to the dual roles of angel in the house and femme fatale" (252). Henke, who emphasizes, "Gerty Macdowell is male-identified" (35) in her previous study "Gerty MacDowell: Joyce's Sentimental Heroine," reasserts in "Joyce's Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Refashioned," "she is the fantasized icon of male desire" (87). In *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce*, Gary Leonard indicates, "Gerty's 'personality' is a product. More than that, she carefully advertises and packages her sexuality as a complex masquerade of femininity designed to attract a male consumer – in this case, Leopold Bloom" (99).

³ Margot Norris asserts in *Joyce's Web*, the voice that describes Gerty in "Nausicaa" might well be construed as a "phantom narrator constructed equates with art. Her narration therefore represents Gerty not as she is . . . but as she would like to be . . ." (169).

lameness, is positively glorified and becomes “graceful beautifully shaped legs” and “soft and delicately rounded” legs:

. . . but for that one shortcoming she knew she need fear no competition and that was an accident coming down Dalkey hill and she always tried to conceal it. But it must end, she felt. If she saw that magic lure in his eyes there would be no holding back for her. Love laughs at locksmiths. She would make the great sacrifice. Her every effort would be to share his thoughts. Dearer than the whole world would she be to him and gild his days with happiness. (13.649-55)

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, supple 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 like that . . . (13.695-701)

Although such self-affirmative image is sentimental and reflects social demands, it is, for Gerty, a psychological support to live through physical hardships rather than an empty narcissism or an escape from reality.⁴ Gerty, in a sense, artfully utilizes male desire directed toward her as I have said earlier quoting: “Her woman’s instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him and at the thought a burning scarlet swept from throat to brow till the lovely colour of her face became a glorious rose” (13.517-20).

In “Nausicaa,” Gerty’s behavior is depicted like pornography where Gerty is “in full control of her performance” (Mullin 170), but her cunning is also implied when she interprets Bloom’s gaze as she wishes and makes use of his sexual desire

⁴ See Henke, “Gerty MacDowell” 134 and Marilyn French 158.

to establish a positive self-image. Although her self-image, which is sentimentally described by the narrative, reflects male-centered female desirability, this attractive female image is a sort of proof for her to recognize her own value in society.

2. An Artistic Quality of Molly's Monologue

Molly's monologue in the "Penelope" episode is a different act from that of Lydia and Gerty, and cannot be categorized as pornography. Surely, Molly sometimes behaves pornographically. A striptease erotic dance she performed to draw attention from her next-door neighbour when she was a little girl is a good example of her pornographic behavior:

I loved dancing about in it then make a race back into bed Im sure that fellow opposite used to be there the whole time watching with the lights out in the summer and I in my skin hopping around I used to love myself then stripped at the washstand dabbing and creaming only when it came to the chamber performance I put out the light too so then there were 2 of us (18.920-25)

What is noteworthy here is, however, that she precisely recalls what she has done when she was young and vividly delineates how she has been obedient to male desire; that is to say, even though Molly's behavior are sometimes accommodating, her monologue itself isn't trying to satisfy men or going along with their desire in the same way as Lydia and Gerty's striptease, but rather truthfully reveals her accommodating attitude from the female point of view. Molly's monologue is also chaotic and unrestricted, full of the unveiled real nature of a woman, which is usually invisible to the opposite sex or unacceptable to them since her monologue takes place entirely in her own mind without being intended for a male audience.

Female sexuality is one of the genuine female inner thoughts that Molly truthfully discloses in her monologue – as she says, "I made him pull out and do it on me considering how big it is so much the better in case any of it wasnt washed out properly the last time I let him finish it in me" (18.154-57). The causative verbs,

such as “made” and “let,” emphasize that she isn’t passive when she has sex with Boylan. She also makes fun of naked men: “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 cabbageleaf” (18.542-44). In another line, a penis, which is the symbol of masculinity, is scornfully described as a “sausage or something” (18.558). Furthermore, her monologue baldly confesses her own sexual pleasure to be had from sexual intercourse with Boylan:

I feel all fire inside me or if I could dream it when he made me spend the 2nd time tickling me behind with his finger I was coming for about 5 minutes with my legs round him I had to hug him after O Lord I wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all (18.585-89)

Here, we notice that Molly recognizes her ability to make up her mind regarding the sensual relationship with men. This ability is also stated in other passages of her monologue. For example, in her relationship with Mulvy, her first boyfriend, she says that she wouldn’t let him put his penis in her vagina: “I wouldnt let him” (18.800) and “I pulled him off into my handkerchief” (18.809-10). As we can also see in the next two quotations, her initiative in sexual acts is also indicated: “Ill tighten my bottom well and let out a few smutty words smellrump or lick my shit or the first mad thing comes into my head then Ill suggest about yes O wait now sonny my turn is coming Ill be quite gay and friendly over it” (18.1530-33), and “Ill make him feel all over him till he half faints under me” (18.1363-64). The former description is about having sex with Bloom in real life, and the latter is about with Stephen in her daydream.

The right of self-determination regarding reproduction is another female peculiarity that Molly’s monologue discloses. Firstly, her monologue shows her disapproval of passive and mechanical pregnancy, which Mrs. Purefoys experienced; “Mina Purefoys husband give us a swing out of your whiskers filling her up with a child or twins once a year as regular as the clock” (18.159-61).

Secondly, her free will to choose and decide to have a child, is suggested in the following quotation:

not satisfied till they have us swollen out like elephants or I dont know what
supposing I risked having another not off him though still if he was married
Im sure hed have a fine strong child but I dont know Poldy has more spunk in
him yes thatd be awfully jolly (18.165-68)

Here, we see that Molly is considering whether to have another baby or not, and if she does, she wants Bloom's child not Boylan's. Such careful consideration on having a baby indicates female independence that can control her own reproduction instead of submissively being impregnated by men driven with lust.

Additionally, Molly's monologue retains her maternity. Although some critics assert an essential lack of her maternal instincts,⁵ her devotion for her kids is explicitly stated in her monologue. Other critics, such as Robert Boyle, suggest that "her attitude toward her children appears healthy and even loving" (418). Bonnie Kim Scott also supposes that "Motherhood is an important, if subordinate, part of her identity" (168). One of the obvious instances is the painful recollection of Rudy, who lived for only 11 days, and his death:

I suppose I oughtnt to have buried him in that little wooly jacket I knitted
crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I know well Id never have
another our 1st death too it was we were never the same since O Im not going
to think myself into the glooms about that any more (18.1448-451)

His death provides a powerful emotion in Molly's monologue in which Molly shows

⁵ Erwin R. Steinberg observes, "Molly's rejection of her live daughter and her dead son point up further the weakness of her maternal instincts and the strength of her self-love" (58). Henke points out, "Because Molly's notion of female parenting was defined negatively, by detachment and insouciance, she has a great deal of difficulty relating successfully to her own adolescent daughter" (*James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* 154).

how deeply she, as a mother, still feels grief for her deceased son and the effect of his loss on the conjugal relation between she and Bloom.

As for Milly, their 15-year-old daughter, although Molly sometimes feels jealous of Milly's sexual attractiveness and youthfulness, her motherly love and concern for Milly are seen when she is talking about her interest in Milly's future, and when she is reminded of her care of her sick daughter.

Among several instances of the reference to her breasts or nipples, she portrays them as the body parts of a mother who is breast-feeding her baby. For example, looking back on the days of the weaning, she says, "I had to get him to suck them they were so hard he said it was sweeter and thicker than cows then he wanted to milk me into the tea" (18.576-78). The metaphorical characterization of Boylan, even during a sexual intercourse, as "a big infant" (18.582) also emphasizes her maternal instinct.

Furthermore, the signs of her ageing are disclosed in her monologue. She is concerned about her "lines" (18.589) in her face and uses the custom-made "face lotion" (18.458-59) containing "opoponax and violet" (18.463) that makes her skin "look coarse" (18.464). She is also conscious of her age, with a little confusion: "I have of life up to 35 no Im what am I at all Ill be 33 in September will I what O" (18.474-76), and she tries to look young. Female goods, such as "those kidfitting corsets" (18.446) and "antifat" (18.456), are mentioned, as well, as anti-ageing products that Molly wants to try. It is true that she is influenced by the commercialism and male-centered values when she overly concerns herself with female clothes or cosmetics in order to fit herself into a young beautiful girl, the ideal figure for men. Yet, her monologue itself isn't controlled by the male point of view since it baldly reveals her ageing body without showing it in an attractive light.

Conclusion

What Molly's monologue reveals is the real nature of a woman, which is invisible to the opposite sex, since, from the male-centered point of view, the image of a woman is obedient to men and ideally-suited to being a sex object like Lydia

and Gerty. Hence, her behavior of speaking in her mind characterizes itself to be distinguished from the pornographic behavior of Lydia and Gerty in so far as it is filled with subjective feelings of herself and not submissive to male desire. Given that Molly's monologue truthfully unveils her genuine female nature, we can explain Joyce's purpose to situate exclusively her monologue at the end of the story: he finally indicates the independent, liberated woman to overturn the male-dominated perspectives observed throughout the seventeen previous chapters. On the whole, Molly's monologue un-weaves what has been presented in the previous chapters in a way that is analogous to Penelope's activity of unweaving in the *Odyssey*. The image of Molly, for example, is established as a sex symbol in male characters' conversations, but in her monologue, it is reconstructed as an independent and motherly woman. Molly's word "Yes" repeated again and again in her monologue, then, probably indicates the positive attitude of Joyce himself toward Molly's reconstructed image. It is thus noteworthy that Joyce, as a male writer, can positively represent her true female nature, free from the conventional male-dominated perspectives.

As Molly's monologue acutely points out: "theres nothing for a woman in that all invention made up" (18.495), Joyce tries to tell readers that pornography invented to satisfy male desire doesn't include the true female self and provides ample evidence of what is worth reading. Molly's monologue is exactly the worth reading artistic work which reveals the truthful female figure. Without Molly's monologue, readers would confine themselves to the conventional concept of a woman since most of the female characters in the text are depicted pornographically. With Molly's monologue, however, readers can have a wider vision on a woman and see what she's actually thinking about. Molly's monologue, then, leaves the readers with impression that *Ulysses* as a whole is a sublime literature which is widely-read in the world.

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