Leopold Bloom and the Unveiling of the Abject in Joyce's *Ulysses*

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ABSTRACT: *This paper studies Ulysses in the light of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection posited in her essay, Powers of Horror. My focus will be on Leopold Bloom as the protagonist who represents all the traits that can be termed as "abjection of the self," according to Kristeva's definition. Leopold Bloom has also been looked at as the embodiment of the image of "the wandering Jew," an abject figure. The paper also examines the link between women depicted in the novel and the state of Ireland as a colonized, abject space, being plundered and used as a commodity. In Kristeva's view, "all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse" that seems to be rooted "on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject" (Powers 207). James Joyce's Ulysses, from this perspective, can be aptly considered a literary text which depicts a nation in a state of abjection, subjugated and dominated by the British Imperialist forces, tracing at the same time, the journey of its protagonist, Leopold Bloom, through the streets of Dublin, back to Ithaca/home. Leopold Bloom, a man of multiple origins, and uncertain religious identity: Irish/British, Catholic/Jewish, man/woman, represents a hybrid personality, a man in search of his authentic self.*

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"On close inspection," writes Julia Kristeva, "all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its socio-historical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject" (*Powers* 207). James Joyce's *Ulysses*, if observed from this perspective, can be aptly considered a literary text which, on the one hand, depicts a nation in a state of abjection, subjugated and dominated by the British Imperialist forces, and on the other, traces the journey of its protagonist, Leopold Bloom, through the streets of Dublin, back to Ithaca/home. Leopold Bloom, a man of multiple origins, and uncertain religious identity: Irish/British, Catholic/Jewish, man/woman, represents a hybrid personality, a man in search of his authentic self.

This paper studies *Ulysses* in the light of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection posited in her book *Powers of Horror*. My focus will be on Leopold Bloom, as the protagonist who represents all the traits that can be termed as "abjection of the self," according to Kristeva's definition. Leopold Bloom can also be studied as the embodiment of the image of "the wandering Jew," an abject figure. Also, I intend to trace the link between women depicted in the novel and the state of Ireland as a colonized, abject space, being plundered and used as a commodity.

The concept of abject exists in between the concept of an object and the concept of the subject, something alive yet not. In contemporary critical theory, it is often used to describe the state of often-marginalized groups, such as people of color, prostitutes, homosexuals, convicts, poor people and people with disabilities. In *Ulysses*, Joyce touches upon most of these forms of abjection, and one that dominates the entire text is the figure of Leopold Bloom. But before I discuss Bloom's journey towards abjection, it would be pertinent to view Ireland as a land where the protagonist faces it in the form of an inscrutable force that threatens his existence.

Ulysses can rightly be claimed to be "*the* text of Ireland's independence," to use Enda Duffy's words (1). *Ulysses* was written between 1914 and 1921, the period when Ireland attained independence from Britain after much bloodshed and anticolonial guerrilla war. The Easter rebellion took place in 1916, when Dublin streets were destroyed by shells, and more than four hundred casualties were reported. Moreover, the Sinn Féin Irish parliament in Dublin was set up in 1918, and the guerrilla War of Independence lasted from 1919 to 1921. This came to an end after the

Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 was signed and the Irish Free State was established.

Ulysses was published before the Irish Free State was proclaimed, but it may rightly be termed as a realist portrayal of the anticolonial struggle that was going on at that time. Although Joyce has employed modernist, even post-modernist strategies to illustrate life in the Dublin of that era, a post-colonial subtext can be discerned underlying the issues that have been dealt with more blatantly. Enda Duffy in his *Subaltern Ulysses* notes that *Ulysses* was written with "the forces of anticolonial revolution in view which also embodies the subaltern concerns of a postcolonial text" (7). In this regard, the opening chapter, "Telemachus," sets the tone of the novel as a subaltern text, portraying Ireland and the Irish people as colonized, marginalized, and quaint. Colonized nations were viewed as inferior and primitive by their colonial masters. Whereas a colonial city was characterized in Frantz Fanon's words as a "bifurcated place", with the modern town of wide streets for the colonial administrators, and the native old town as crowded and (in the eyes of the colonizer) "teeming, stench-filled, dangerous enclave" (4). It represents a "heterotopic" space, a concept elaborated by Michel Foucault and used by Duffy to describe the "Otherness" of the colonized Ireland. Duffy posits that "Dublin, which in *Ulysses* is rife with heteroscopic spaces—the cemetery on the edge of the city, the strand at Sandymount, the Ormond Hotel and Nighttown, a heterotopia which has taken over the city's heart—is itself a city as heterotopia . . . an 'other place'" (51).

Another strategy employed in the novel which defines Ireland as an abject space is the account of the protagonist's descent into Nighttown in "Circe"— in *Ulysses* echoing the hero's descent into Hades in Canto (xxvi) of Dante's *Inferno*. Both Eliot's London and Joyce's Dublin are emblems of dead cities, paralyzed wastelands. "Both works present visions of a desired apocalypse destroying man's civilization" (Sultan 36). In *Ulysses*, Stephen ruminates: "I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame" (*U* 2.9–10). Chapter 6 of Ulysses- "Hades" is replete with claustrophobic images of corpses and coffins which evoke in Bloom a fear of being buried alive: "The gravediggers took up their spades and flung away heavy clods of clay in on the coffin. Mr. Bloom turned away his face. And if he was alive all the time? Whew! By jingo, that would be awful! No, no he is dead, of course" (*U* 6. 864-66). As Kiberd has observed "The households of Ulysses are mostly unhappy: Paddy Dignam's wife is now a widowed mother of many children; Martin Cunningham's is an alcoholic; Molly

Bloom is sexually frustrated. … These homes are like burial mounds in which a man is entombed with his holy objects" (101). On his way to the cemetery, Bloom comes across the coffin of a child that reminds him of the death of his own son, Rudy. In the beginning of "Hades", Bloom recollects an old woman peeping into the carriage: "Extraordinary the interest they take in a corpse. Glad to see us go we give them such trouble coming" (*U* 6.14-15). The narrative moves on to describe deaths of different people, including Bloom's father's suicide and a detailed account of the incident. Then they pass "Murderer's ground. It passed darkly. Shuttered, tenantless, unweeded garden. Whole place gone to hell. Wrongfully condemned. Murder" (*U* 6.76-78). The city of Dublin seems to be a city of the dead, as Bloom ruminates: "Must be twenty or thirty funerals every day. Then Mount Jerome for the Protestants. Funerals all over the world everywhere, every minute" (*U* 6.512-13).

Bloom is obsessed with images of decay and disease throughout the narrative, as when he thinks about the death of his little son: "If it's healthy it's from the mother. If not, from the man" (*U* 6.328). Images of rats recur frequently in the text, and with them are associated corpses and dead flesh and bones decaying, and rotting away in the graves: "An obese grey rat toddled along the side of the crypt, moving the pebbles. . . . Tail gone now. . . . Pick the bones clean no matter who it was. Ordinary meat for them. A corpse is meat gone bad. Well and what's cheese? Corpse of milk" (*U* 6.973-83). This decay and rottenness are a constant reminder of the current situation of the land under British control that has rendered its citizens paralyzed and half dead. The inhabitants of the city are doomed; waiting for their unforeseen tragic ends which they are unable to avert.

The conditions in Dublin during that era that Bloom encounters correspond exactly to what Kristeva has described in her definition of the abject: "The corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance" (3). The Irish land is a place where death has encroached upon everything; the living are wandering in the streets of Dublin under the dark shadow of abjection. Bloom watches his world, breaking down, drifting away from him, as he confronts the abject more and more.

Another aspect of the abject that Kristeva posits is death viewed without faith in religion, the absence of God: "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. It is something rejected from which one does not protect oneself as from an

object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (4). Bloom is a skeptic, although he was baptized as a Catholic, whereas his father was a Jew. While attending the last rituals of Paddy Dignam's funeral, his mind wanders off, and his thoughts about the priest performing the rituals border on profanity and are even humorous. Bloom keeps on ruminating over birth and regeneration as well as disease and death simultaneously which turns him into a schizophrenic personality who is living on a borderline.

So far I have discussed Dublin as a colonial city, signifying death and decay, while Ireland is a racialized, and colonized "Other." It is also pertinent to note that in order to assert their identity, the colonized people often had to retrieve their past, their own distinct culture and literature. But according to scholars of postcolonial discourse, this action further removed them from mainstream, modern imperialist culture. As Vincent J. Cheng observes about Haines, the Englishman in "Telemachus": "Haines in *Ulysses* reflects one discourse—that of the colonizer—that fashions Irish character and identity as one of 'otherness,'" (242)… and "he tries speaking Gaelic—as a linguistic marker of genuine Irish identity—to the old milkwoman, a presumably 'authentic' Irish figure" (241). But the milkwoman is unable to speak the Gaelic language, which threatens her identity as a true Irish citizen. The point is what marks the identity of people living in Ireland, religion or language or the place of birth. The text reveals all these aspects as insufficient markers of an individual's identity. An individual may have been born in Ireland and speak native languages but still be an outsider, as is the case with Leopold Bloom.

Who actually is Leopold Bloom? Irish? British? Hungarian? Catholic? Protestant? Jew? The text raises these questions, and Bloom also feels himself as an entity that does not fit anywhere. The multiplicity of his character makes Bloom a complex individual, with many dimensions to his personality. Bloom defines the word "nation" as "A nation is the same people living in the same place… or in different places" (U 12.1423-27).

Ulysses was written while Joyce was in the state of self-imposed exile, outside Ireland, watching the political upheavals as an outsider. In the novel, both Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus remain detached from the resistance of the staunch Irish nationalists against the hegemonic colonial forces. However, in "Circe," Bloom even tries to identify with the British imperialist forces when he refers to Molly's father, Major Tweedy: "one of Britain's fighting men who helped win our battles"

(15.779-80). Again in the same chapter, Bloom is accused by the watch of being involved in some "activity" which is not made clear in the text, and is caught "unlawfully watching and besetting" (15. 732-33).

Basically, Bloom is interrogated for being who he is, which puts him even more into a dubious situation, as he is a personification of multiple identities. He is supposed to be "Dr Bloom, Leopold, dental surgeon" (15.721), and further he is the cousin of "von Blum Pasha" who has "umpteen millions" and "owns half Austria" (15.721-22). Next, we come to know that he may have been a naval officer, and may be a doctor as well: "We medical men" (15.761-62).

But what makes Bloom an abject figure and casts him out is his half Jewish origin. This can be traced to anti-Semitism prevalent at that time, not only in Ireland but all over Europe. A thematics of Jewishness, anti-Semitism and Bloom as a scapegoat are pervasive as a motif through the entire narrative of *Ulysses*. Bloom's Jewish ancestry renders him an object of ridicule and criticism, thereby making him an alien and "Other." Susan E. Shapiro has observed:

> The Jewish uncanny represents the Jew(s) as spectral, disembodied spirits lacking a national home and, thus, as unwelcome guests or aliens wandering into and within other people's homes, disrupting and haunting them, making them "Unheimliche" unhomey. Moses Hess wrote of the Jews, as "a soul without a body, wandering like a ghost through the centuries." (160)

Kristeva, also, in her *Powers of Horror*, has described the Jews as abject figures in her discussion of the French novelist Celine and his anti-Semitism and quotes:

> The Jews, you know they're all camouflaged, disguised, chameleon-like, they change names like they cross frontiers, now they pass themselves off for Bretons, Auvergnats, Corsicans, now

> for Turandots , Durandards, Cassoulets… anything at all . . . that throws people off, that sounds deceptive. (181)

Kristeva has traced the origins of hatred against the Jews in great detail linking it with their religious rituals like the tradition of circumcision which arouses the fear of castration in males. She has also linked xenophobia and misogyny to Jewish religious rituals and the fear of getting separated from the mother's womb. The dreaded Jew becomes "an object of the law of the Father, a piece of waste, his wife as it were, an abjection" (185). I will elaborate this point later in the essay.

Bloom is a typical Jewish figure who arouses this anxiety (of getting castrated) at an unconscious level in xenophobes. He has been portrayed as a wandering figure, a flaneur, sometimes referred to as a "ghost;" he changes identities, names, and even transforms into other beings during the course of the "Circe" episode. In "Hades," Bloom, at Paddy Dignam's funeral, reflects about the "centuries-old 'blood-libel' the superstition that Jews kill Christian children in order to use their blood to make *matzoh*, the ritual unleavened bread eaten on Passover" (Reizbaum 12). In the same episode, he meets people who are accompanying him to attend Dignam's funeral. It is then that we first witness him being treated as "Other" owing to his Jewish origin. Moreover, "on the way to the cemetery, Bloom has been linked with the moneylender Reuben J. Dodd, who although Catholic in extra-literary life, is regarded as a Jew in the novel since he fits the stereotype; he is in this sense Jewish" (Reizbaum 13). The Jewish stereotype as moneylenders and usurers is frequently associated with Bloom's figure during the course of the novel.

In "Cyclops," again, Bloom becomes the object of ridicule and prejudice for being a cuckold and a Jew. The Citizen, the emblem of the one-eyed monster in Homer's epic, gets enraged and violent owing to his narrow-minded nationalistic sentiments. Bloom, enraged too retorts: "And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God" (12.1805). Here Bloom identifies himself with the figure of Christ, the Saviour, and assumes a hybrid identity which creates a split in his personality, making him unable to decide whether he is a Jew or a Christian. In Kristeva's words: "It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Bloom represents the abjection of the self, which is created when the self undergoes a division, leading in its turn to self-hatred and masochism.

He will remain an outsider, a spectre, and a ghost-like figure, lurking on the borders, a shadow. The following verses aptly describe Bloom's dilemma:

> The timber in our voice
>
> betrays us
>
> however far
>
> we've been
>
> whatever tongue
>
> we speak
>
> the old ghost
>
> asserts itself
>
> in dusky echoes (Nichols, "We New World Blacks," 30)

Ironically, Bloom's identification with Christ, and his assertion of his Jewishness makes him an individual who is both the persecutor and the persecuted, accentuating his ambiguity. "Dante's image of Ulysses as a punished sinner bears a strong resemblance to the medieval figure of the legendary wandering Jew, who as a punishment for his sin against Christ was cursed with eternal wandering" (Ferris 42). In "Nestor," Mr. Deasy expresses his prejudice against Jews by narrating the traditional Christian belief: "They sinned against the light. … And you can see the darkness in their eyes. And that is why they are wanderers on the earth to this day" (2. 361-63). Bloom as a wanderer becomes a figure in exile, enigmatic, arousing interest and hatred simultaneously. At the end of "Scylla and Charybdis," Buck Mulligan points out to Stephen, when he spots Bloom there, "The wandering jew… Did you see his eye? He looked upon you to lust after you. I fear thee, ancient mariner" (9. 1209-11). Thus he is a Manichaean, and as Kristeva points out: "The one by whom the abject exists is thus a *deject* who places (himself), *separates* (himself), situates (himself), and therefore *strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belongings, or refusing" (8). We watch Bloom wandering through the day and then even after the dusk falls, he keeps roaming aimlessly. He is a deject, in exile, perturbed by the thoughts of infidelity of his wife, and the death of his only son.

> Instead of sounding himself as to his "being," he does so concerning his place: "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?" For that space that engrosses the *deject*, the excluded, is never one, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, catastrophic . . . A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. (Kristeva 8)

Bloom strays in the streets of Dublin; thoughts of Boylan repel him away from home. The space that allures him (his home), excludes and separates him simultaneously. The object of his desire lures him to stray more, and the more he strays, the more he is saved. Bloom's object of desire is Molly, who attracts and repels him due to the fear of death that he associates with her.

Bloom is an individual who fears death and decay at the touch of the feminine. The image of the mother is associated with both life and death; Molly is Janus-faced. Bloom's universe is like Celine's world in Kristeva's words, "dichotomous; two terms rise up, facing each other, Woman and Lover, Sex and Corpse, Woman in Childbed and Doctor, Death and Words, Hell and the Writer, the Impossible and Style" (160). The last three epithets describe Joyce's fascination with words, style, and questions of life and death that are the salient features of his works, including *Ulysses*.

Bloom's association with femininity can be related to the aspect of anti-Semitism as Jews were viewed as an uncanny and feminized race. Freud in his *Moses and Monotheism*, traced the origin of monotheism and anti-Semitism, and related the hatred against the Jews to the fear of castration and of the Law of the Father. Freud in his study endeavored to dispel the perception of the Jews as a feminized race. According to Shapiro:

> The Uncanny has often been associated with the feminine, with passivity and lack. …it is 'the fear of ghosts' that is 'the mother of Judeophobia.' And, of course, Freud treats the Uncanny as a

> form of homesickness and nostalgia, of a desire to 'return home,' to the mother's womb. (168)

In Kristeva's view too:

> The Jew becomes the feminine exalted to the point of mastery, the impaired master, the ambivalent, the border where exact limits between same and other, subject and object, and even beyond these, between inside and outside, and disappearing—hence an Object of fear and fascination. Abjection itself. (185)

In this regard, Leopold Bloom, viewed as a Jew and also as an effeminate figure can be studied as a hybrid or *mischling*, the German term used by Reizbaum. "This was the technical term for the offspring of different races, though it came to signify 'mixture,' or degradation in a variety of ways, its exemplar the Jew" (91). And in a *mischling* Jew, all the symbols of perversity that threaten a non-Jew~~ish~~ are present: sexual perversity, disease (including syphilis), prostitution, (Bloom/Bella), femininity (sexual impotence). Bloom, as a hybrid, reveals traits in his nature that are feminine, while Molly, more dominating and in control, signifies masculinity to some extent. Reizbaum has noted that both "Molly and Bloom are countersigns in this respect as well, trading off elements of male/female/Jewishness" (92).

Subsequently, Molly, Bloom/Jew, and Ireland, as a Motherland can be studied under the same rubric, female figure being plundered by masculine colonial hegemony. Bloom accuses the Citizen in "Cyclops" when he is being humiliated for being a Jew: "Robbed, says he. Plundered. Insulted. Persecuted. Taking what belongs to us by right. At this very moment, says he, putting up his fist, sold by auction in Morocco like slaves or cattle" (12.1470-72). Bloom's mention of Morocco has been interpreted by critics like David Hayman as a reference "to the exotic and therefore as an association with Molly who is at that moment in the novel being 'taken,' 'plundered' as it were by Boylan" (qtd. in Reizbaum 16). Bloom as a Jew, and as an Irishman, Molly as a woman, and as an Irish citizen and Jew, and Ireland, as a nation and as a land, are

being "taken" and "plundered" by the masculine force of the British Imperialism.

In the same vein, colonized nations are viewed as feminized in postcolonial critical discourse. In the case of Ireland, Joseph Valente has observed:

> On one side, the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for failing to meet the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being insufficiently courageous, powerful, and unyielding in their resistance to colonial rule; on the other side, the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for exceeding the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, for being excessively violent, aggressive and refractory in their resistance to colonial rule. (106)

Thus, the Irish men were both feminized for being colonized subjects, and hyper-masculine, simultaneously. Edward Said's observations regarding the relations of power inscribed in the colonial discourse are also applicable to Celticism: "Orientalism (Celticism) depends for its strategy on … flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner (Englishman) in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient (Ireland) without ever losing him the upper hand" (qtd. in *Writing Ireland* 47-48). Moreover, the Irish citizens are equated with cattle, oxen, and women in the text. Jews and women being doubly marginalized as colonial subjects, and therefore—Abject.

Subsequently, Bloom's journey into Nighttown in "Circe" highlights not only his own hybridity as a man/woman, but also projects the image of the land being "plundered" by the abject figures of the prostitutes. Bloom's hybridity also links him with women and mothers when he visits the hospital to inquire about Mrs. Purefoy who is in labor; bringing him again to the site of abjection—the maternal figure.

In "Oxen of the Sun," the hospital is the space where birth is taking place, and Bloom's presence here signifies his desire for rebirth and

regeneration, a task that he cannot accomplish himself. Women arouse sexual desire and, at the same time, he gets appalled by the idea of birth and mortality associated with it. In this sense, women, abject figures, become for him "a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered. … the abject must have been a magnetized pole of covetousness," but Molly, who is desired and coveted, "reflects aversion, repugnance. The clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable) becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame" (Kristeva 8). Sexual contact with Molly is both desired and held at bay, owing to Bloom's fear of death and disease related with the act. In this connection, E. L. Epstein has rightly noted, "The fear of bodily death … pursues Bloom through the book" (qtd in Ferris 54). It is pertinent to note that there are several references in the text that imply that Bloom is probably suffering from a venereal disease. "Bloom's otherwise incomprehensible behavior can be explained if we assume that Joyce's many references to venereal disease in *Ulysses* point to the idea that Bloom is a sick man" (Ferris 54). Bloom carries the burden of disease and guilt associated with the death of his only son. According to Kathleen Ferris, "Joyce reinforces the theme of guilt over the death of Rudy" through phrases like "'Child's murder' in 'Oxen of the Sun,' and the description in 'Circe' of the death of Mary Shortall's baby, which occurred because the mother was infected with the pox" (55). Ferris again argues that the sound "clappyclapclap" echoes through Bloom's head when he contemplates Blazes Boylan keeping his appointment at 7 Eccles Street. "*Clap* is a slang term for gonorrhea, but here Joyce uses the word to encompass the venereal diseases generally, including syphilis" (55). Disease and the fear of spreading infection that may become a cause of death render Bloom impotent, paralytic, and therefore, an abject figure.

Bloom's unmanning takes place in "Circe" when he follows Stephen and Lynch who are heading towards Nighttown, the red-light district of Dublin. Joyce dramatizes the entire episode employing the techniques of expressionist drama, with surrealistic fusion of dream and reality, creating a nightmarish atmosphere. In this hallucinatory episode, Bloom's fears and desires submerged in his subconscious come to the surface, appearing in the form of various people whom he comes across during the day, or from his past. Bloom is accused of various misdemeanors and offences by apparitions, and various other figures, including the sin of his "Otherness," for being a Jew, and for not being a Jew, by the ghost of his father, for being a "mongrel," and for being a "mixed marriage mingling," (15.433). These remarks refer to his mixed

heritage and hybridity that was scorned by the Irish nationalists like the Citizen in "Cyclops" episode. But in "Circe," Bloom is literally unmanned, as he is referred to as being a "cuckold" recurrently: "I'll flog him black and blue in the public streets. I'll dig my spurs in him up to the rowel. He is a well-known cuckold. (She swishes her hunting crop savagely in the air.) Take down his trousers without loss of time" (15.1115-18). Then echoes of "Cuckoo" are heard not only in "Circe" but at the end of "Nausicaa" too, reminding Bloom of adultery of his wife. Again Bloom gets accused of being a "dynamitard, forger, bigamist, bawd and cuckold and a public nuisance to the citizens of Dublin" (15.1157-60). During the course of this episode, the prostitute, Bella, metamorphoses into a man, Bello, and Bloom is once again unmanned:

> (*stands up*) No more blow hot and cold. What you longed for has come to pass. Henceforth you are unmanned and mine in earnest, a thing under the yoke. Now for your punishment frock. You will shed your male garments, you understand, Ruby Cohn? And don the shot silk luxuriously rustling overhead and shoulders. And quickly too! (15.2962-69)

This passage reveals the unconscious desire of Bloom for femininity: "You are unmanned and mine in earnest" (15.2963) and again when Bello says: "What you longed for has come to pass" (15.2962). In the ensuing passages also, Bloom is associated with all the feminine rituals and paraphernalia, lingerie, silks and frills, feminizing him more and more. Bloom also reveals that he had participated in a High School play as a female impersonator, which further contributes in his portrayal as an androgynous figure. Dr. Mulligan announces in this nightmarish phantasmagoria that Bloom is a woman: "I have made a pervaginal examination and, after application of the acid test to 5427 anal, axillary, pectoral and pubic hairs, I declare him to be *virgo intacta*. (Bloom holds his high grade hat over his genital organs)" (15.1783-87) In the ongoing passages, his conversion into a complete and whole woman is once again repeated by Dr. Punch Costello: "(*reads a bill of health*) 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 about to have a baby" (15.1798-1810). These lines expose Bloom as a new man who belongs to modern age, having some feminine qualities, who believe in the equality of men and women, but at the same time, these were the qualities that were not appreciated during that age and the male dominated society in Ireland. Bloom's conversion becomes absolute with his procreational capability, when the doctor declares him pregnant. Bloom's giving birth to male octuplets is his desire for male heirs that is fulfilled in this dream. Moreover, he also becomes an abject figure in the sense that now he has become an object, feminine, maternal, and an entity that creates desire and abomination simultaneously. Bloom's hybridity, as a Jew, a woman, and as a colonized Irish subject is consummated in this episode. This journey into Nighttown also highlights another aspect that has been discussed in detail by Enda Duffy in his article, "'The Whores Will Be Busy': Terrorism, Prostitution, and the Abject Woman in 'Circe.'" Duffy has related the plight of the prostitutes in "Circe" to the tar covered women painted in Seamus Heaney's poem, "Punishment." "Circe," notes Duffy, "like Heaney's 'Punishment,' juxtaposes and then merges spectacles of violence and portraits of women at their most exploited; but while the women in 'Punishment' are victims of actual terrorist violence, 'Circe''s prostitutes, in their representation, are allegorical of the predicament of the subaltern subject in the terrorist milieu" (132). This episode projects women as "doubly determined" subaltern figures, enmeshed in the quagmire of brothels, exposed to venereal diseases, and the objects of men's desires. They are being exploited as was Ireland; its men feminized and paralyzed due to their inability to resist the British hegemony. Duffy has rightly compared the condition of these women to the portrayal of the native woman in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, dancing on the shore of the Congo River. Conrad depicted that woman as fascinating and alluring, but she was also a source of abomination as she represented all that was abject, associated with the inferior, colonized, black Africans. While in *Ulysse*s, women are residents of a big city, populated by the white race, but in spite of belonging to the white race, they are the locus of abjection, owing to their subaltern position.

In this regard, the position of Irish subalternity can be related and compared to the colonized nations of the African continent. African and Asian countries were also being plundered and exploited for material, and capitalistic designs. The Africans were considered brutes and cannibals, practicing black magic, involving "unspeakable rites" by the White Europeans. The colonized people were associated with all the dark images, emblematic of ignorance and wilderness. In "Circe," Bloom

recounts Molly's wish: "She often said she'd like to visit. Slumming. The exotic, you see. Negro servants in livery too if she had money. Othello black brute" (15.407-10). Following it, Tom and Sam, two unknown figures speak and then are portrayed in these words: "(They whisk black masks from raw baby faces: then, chuckling, chortling, trumming, twanging, they diddle diddle cakewalk dance away)" (15.424-26). These were the stereotypical images associated with the Africans, as servants, and as entertainers.

In *Ulysses*, the "Circe" episode is depicted as if Bloom has undertaken a journey into the center of the earth, dark, obscure, enveloped in mist. Obscurity and confusion add to the bizarre atmosphere of the place. Like Heart of Darkness, all kinds of nightmares and unconscious desire find a way to be objectified. Moreover, Joyce has also woven cannibalistic imagery into the pattern of the text. In "Circe," Bello utters these words, expressing his/her cannibalistic desire: "Very possibly I shall have you slaughtered and skewered in my stables and enjoy a slice of you with crisp crackling from the baking tin basted and baked like sucking pig with rice and lemon or currant sauce. It will hurt you" (15.2898-91). In "Eumaeus," one of the characters, a sailor, describes his adventures: "And I seen man-eaters in Peru that eats corpses and the livers of horses. Look here. Here they are" (16.470-71). Then the sailor shows his audience a picture of the stark naked people eating a dead horse's liver raw. Definitely, such images, creating nauseating, and repugnant feelings, recur frequently in the novel, and connect Ireland to the native savages of the colonized countries. Indeed, underlying these allusions is Joyce's concern with the colonized status of Ireland, and resentment against the British Imperialist regime.

Ulysses can rightly be termed a work that has multiplicity, and polysemic texture, resisting and subverting any fixed notion of art and critique. But, due to its stylistic range and plurality, we can also discover and explore a lot by close analysis of the text. However, coming back to Kristeva's theory of abjection, I would quote her words about Joyce's art and *Ulysses*:

> How dazzling, unending, eternal—and so weak, so insignificant, so sickly—is the rhetoric of Joycean language. Far from preserving us from the abject, Joyce causes it to break out in what he

> sees as prototype of literary utterance: Molly's monologue. If that monologue spreads out the abject, it is not because there is a woman speaking. But because, *from afar*, the writer approaches the hysterical body so that it might speak, so that he might speak, … The abject lies, beyond the themes, and for Joyce generally, in the way one speaks; it is verbal communication, it is the Word that discloses the abject. (23)

My focus in this essay has been on Leopold Bloom, and the way he faces abjection of the self, and the space where he wanders, his home, streets of Dublin, Ireland. Joyce used his rhetorical power, the power of words, to reveal the abjection of the lives of the citizens of Ireland; their status as colonized, subjugated, and oppressed subjects of the British Empire. *Ulysses* is a great work indeed, as it has touched upon such diverse elements in the Dublin of 1904, happening during a single day. Every street and corner of the city, every aspect of life, and the abjection, have been painted with a detached and ironical glance.

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