

“THE FLICKERINGS OF THAT INNERMOST FLAME”: OLFACTORY
AND SPIRITUAL TRANSCENDENCE IN
THE WORKS OF JAMES JOYCE

by

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate my thesis to my husband, Benji Swafford, to my father and mother, Perry and Martha Cash, and to my father and mother-in-law, Dale and Kim Swafford. Their combined support, encouragement, love, and prayers have carried me through the writing process, and when I doubted my own abilities, they never once did.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The works of James Joyce demand from his reader a careful and perceptive devotion to the intricacies of his writing. One could easily select a topic at random and, assuredly, that topic would be found within Joyce's words. Likewise, scholars have made incredible efforts to try and capture a glimpse of their meaning. What new ideas and suggestions can be made about the body of Joyce's work? The scholarship on his texts now expands over a century; critics and scholars have suggested a myriad of lenses through which to view his work, from psychoanalysis, to gender theory, and so on. What is it about his works that serves to captivate and puzzle such a wide body of readers—and have we succeeded in gaining a clearer understanding about what he wants to say through his writing?

In her 1925 essay "Modern Fiction," Virginia Woolf contemplates the then-current state of fiction writers in terms of their ability to reach beyond the material; the "materialists," she calls them, are only concerned with offering trivial impressions of life, but fail to reach the core of what makes us human. However, when Woolf reaches her discussion of Joyce, she describes his writing as something entirely unique, as writing that breaks the yoke of tradition that the materialists have formed and solidified:

Mr. Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of these signposts which for generations have served to support the

imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see. (161)

What is fascinating here is not merely the fact that Woolf recognizes Joyce's ability to move out of the tradition of realism, but that she clearly states how Joyce uncovers an inner truth within his writing that moves us into the realm of transcendence. His "innermost flame" burns through the monotony of common conventions and into the heart and soul of what makes us human: "If we want life itself, here we surely have it" (161).

I would argue that anyone who reads Joyce, regardless of stylistic preference, must recognize his ability to describe inner human consciousness and its complexities, difficult as some texts, specifically *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, may be to read. In the midst of Joyce's varying stylistic choices that serve to bolster his work into the realm of something transcendent, his use of sensory experience stands as one of the cornerstones of these transcendent abilities. For example, in "Art and the Joycean Artist," Martin Schiralli describes Joyce's attention to the artist and his or her immediate attention to the senses: "For Joyce, the artist is gifted (possibly cursed as well) with extraordinarily acute perception. The world presented to the percipient-artist is a richer, more variegated, and more immediate world than that ordinarily perceived" (38). This holds true not only for his characters, such as Stephen Dedalus, but becomes a testament to Joyce's writing as an artist himself. His acute perception of sensory experiences affords his readers with an indelible opportunity to examine the effect of these experiences on one's own life, and to distinguish mere "materialism" from experiences that transcend our physical realm of understanding.

One such sensory experience, the focus of my thesis, is the experience of the olfactory. Commonly thought to be the least important of all human senses, the olfactory rarely makes an appearance in modern fiction, except in brief instances, usually to describe the smell of food or the odor of garbage or waste. Joyce breaks the common habit of ignoring smell by placing a high importance on its faculty; in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, smell is referenced an astounding twenty-three times in the first chapter alone. Clearly Joyce assigns a crucial significance to this frequently undervalued sense.

Despite the importance of the sense of smell in Joyce's works, within the plentitude of scholarship on Joyce's work, there seems to be a significant hole in terms of a discussion on Joyce's olfactory usage. A few works do focus on the sense of smell and other sensory experiences within Joyce's works. Christine O'Neill's "'A Faint Mortal Odour': The Elusive World of Smell in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" outlines Joyce's use of smell in the novel, with particular regard to Joyce's protagonist, Stephen Dedalus. O'Neill opens the discussion on smell by stating that it is commonly undervalued in literature, perhaps for the difficulty in capturing it in words; additionally, smell is highly subjective in nature and therefore extremely personal (83).

In regards to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, O'Neill remarks on Stephen's attentiveness to smell from a young age, from the oilsheet on his bed, to the medicine-like smell of the towels at Clongowes (85). She catalogues Stephen's various encounters with smell, both pleasant and foul, and remarks that, for Stephen, "the sense of smell seems to offer an avenue of escape from sober rationality" (87). Likewise, O'Neill focuses on the fluid border between the actual and the imagined, which, like

smell itself, is oftentimes quite elusive (88). She finishes her discussion on Joyce by examining religions in which scent plays a particular role, focusing on the use of incense in the Catholic Church and its significance in terms of Stephen's inner torment for his sins (92). O'Neill's interpretation of the incense is that its imagery is remarkably similar to nightmarish imagery, such as a serpent curling upwards, or flames rising towards the damned, and therefore places Stephen in a kind of personal hell (93). To conclude, O'Neill notes that these "scentscapes" depend highly on the reader's own experience and personal memories; for example, if the reader has encountered a positive experience with the smell of incense, then he or she will "read" the smell in a positive manner as well.

O'Neill catalogues well Joyce's use of smell through Stephen Dedalus, although she does not venture into Joyce's olfactory usage in *Ulysses*, where Stephen continues to be confronted with the olfactory. Moreover, although she spends the majority of her article discussing Stephen's various encounters with the olfactory, she does not discuss the odors' significance in regards to the olfactory allowing a transcendent or elevated state for the individual. While she remarks on scent's highly subjective and elusive nature, she stops short in examining this subjectivity's significance; rather, she simply disregards one's ability to understand Stephen on a personal level because of smell's subjectivity.

Furthermore, O'Neill remarks that the olfactory blends with Stephen's intellectual life to provide him a sense of solace through certain smells that are connected with his memory, such as his memories of the countryside, which seem to calm him (86). She likens his sense of smell to that of a "sniffing animal," which, she argues, produces a blurring of the mind and the senses, particularly when Stephen's sexual desire is aroused

(88). To this point, O'Neill recognizes that the olfactory pervades our beings as a whole, whether we like it or not, and thus we are inextricably connected with the world through our sense of smell. Still, she notes that writers must depend on their readers' outside knowledge and experiences with smell in order to successfully include the olfactory as part of the literature. While this may be in part true, O'Neill focuses entirely too much on the role of the reader rather than commenting on Joyce's individual and specific ambitions for his various inclusions of the olfactory. Did Joyce truly believe that every reader would only be able to understand his olfactory references if he or she has had a direct and significant experience with that smell?

Similar to O'Neill, Laura Frost begins her chapter entitled "James Joyce and the Scent of Modernity" in a discussion regarding the absence of odors in literature, stating that the olfactory has been commonly devalued because of its "frivolous and nonaesthetic" qualities, particularly in regards to perfume (33). She notes that accordingly, while other advancements in art, cinema, and music have been carefully recorded, achievements in the perfume industry (which surprisingly coincide with literary modernism) have gone largely unnoticed. She then moves into a literary examination of writers who chose to demonstrate the impact of perfume in their writing; such writers include T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, although Frost focuses on Joyce throughout the majority of the chapter, stating, "Although contemporary criticism gives the impression that Joycean texts are most attuned to auditory pleasures and early visual technologies, Joyce also constantly registers the appeal—and repulsion—of olfactory sensation, and these moments are fundamental to his hedonistic universe" (34). Frost stresses the importance of the olfactory for Joyce, particularly through its ability to confound

bifurcations between foul and lovely, sinful and holy. For Stephen Dedalus, his consciousness is shaped through the various dichotomies of the Catholic Church, while his sense of smell confounds these bifurcations (44). Similarly, Stephen is often attracted to foul smells, such as the stench of rotted straw, and conversely repulsed by sweet smells. Frost's examination of Stephen serves to discuss how the olfactory, as a primitive, seemingly useless sense, can transform one's understanding of the natural world through its ability to hover between the body and the mind, and likewise evoke memories like no other sense can (46).

In addition to her analysis of Stephen Dedalus, Frost notes Leopold Bloom's close relationship to smell and perfume throughout *Ulysses*, particularly his sensual pleasures in thinking about and acting towards women. Specifically, Frost examines perfume's sensuality and eroticism through the lens of Bloom, noting how perfume acts as both a reference to immediate experience as well as its ability to conjure memory. She states that Bloom and Molly are most often unified through their memories of their sexual encounters in the past, more so than through any indicator of their relationship in the present (46). Frost compares the couple's memories with that of Proust's madeleine, whose sensuous experience allows Charles Swann to relocate his mind back to his childhood through smell and taste. However, Frost advances this idea one step further to argue that for Joyce, a mere contemplation of past experiences with odor, rather than an experience with the odor in the present, can conjure up specific memories and occurrences in the mind. Frost concludes her discussion on smell and pleasure by explaining that Joyce's use of the olfactory insinuates a very different type of pleasure that he wishes the reader to understand. Through the characters of Stephen and Bloom,

Joyce highlights the complexities of odor as a type of metaphor for the complexities of life; while the odors are at times sensual or erotic, they often insinuate intricate layers of understanding: “Joyce mediates somatic pleasures by rendering them aestheticized, self-reflexive, and textually difficult, but puts forward that mindful, complex process of reading as its own reward and as superior to other kinds of reading” (62). Overall, according to Frost, the use of perfume in Joyce’s works becomes a signifier of the texts’ profound and complex nature. Furthermore, Frost views censorship of modernist works such as *Ulysses* as entirely ironic.

Frost’s examination of the olfactory in Joyce’s work highlights the complexities of scent and perfume, noting their ability to confound conventional bifurcations established by societal expectations and by the Church. Frost tends to focus on a broad, universal outlook on the olfactory through the individual characters of Stephen and Bloom, rather than on individual implications for the characters themselves. Additionally, Frost rests most of her argument on the complexity of smell and its ability to highlight emotions and occurrences from the past, specifically within the realm of pleasure. For Frost, smell is neither entirely carnal nor entirely mnemonic; it rests within a liminal space that allows its perceiver to enjoy its immediate evocation of pleasure as well as reflect on its significance within his or her memory.

While I agree with Frost’s assertions regarding the complexity of scent in Joyce’s works, I would argue that she restricts the discussion in dissecting olfactory significance implied within his characters, particularly through Stephen, Bloom, and Molly. It becomes evident that Joyce wishes us to pay attention to their olfactory experiences, but that significance, for Frost and for O’Neill, rests within the realm of one’s own

consciousness. Yes, both authors signify the olfactory importance in relation to memory, but neither explore the possibilities of its significance beyond the mind and body, and into the spiritual and transcendent realms.

It is within this space that I ascertain Joyce's ability to use the olfactory as a transformative authority within the sphere of the senses. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, James Joyce suggests that our sense of smell is perhaps the greatest link in understanding and connecting with the world around us and plays a key role within the sphere of all experience, and particularly the artist's experiences.

Through a close analysis of these two texts, I observe in this thesis the manner in which Joyce deconstructs the longstanding sense hierarchy by placing smell as the highest obtainable function within the modality of the senses. Joyce makes it clear that it is the artist's responsibility to awaken this highly intuitive and important sense; embracing the corporeal aspects of smell results in a heightened awareness of one's spirituality, and what is not directly observable to the senses. Joyce uses the most carnal and banal of all of the senses to elevate the minds of his characters; I argue that this elevation is only obtainable through an intricate balance of corporeal and spiritual, physical and abstract.

In Chapter One, I begin by establishing current scientific understanding of the olfactory, as well as outlining what scientists do not yet understand, as smell's elusive and indefinable nature makes it difficult to measure and analyze. I then briefly trace the history of societal perceptions of smell, beginning with early notions of smell established by Plato and Socrates, and eventually moving into 20th century inclinations, specifically noting how Freud altered the contemporary opinion of smell by deeming the function as

carnal and animalistic. Largely based on Freud's work, our modern culture has established a "sense hierarchy" within the cultural psyche, with the function of smell on the lowest rung. The chapter then shifts to examine the use of the olfactory within literary history, largely noting its absence among contemporary fiction writers. Among his contemporaries, Joyce clearly gives more attention to the sense of smell than any other writers of his time, perhaps with the exception of Proust, who gives particular attention to sensory experience as a whole. This chapter overall establishes Joyce's unique capacity for understanding olfactory significance, while historically, psychologically, and artistically, an emphasis on the sense of smell was slowly disappearing.

In Chapter Two, I focus on a formalist reading of Joyce's works, including sections of both *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. In my close reading, I examine when, how, and why the function of smell is used in Joyce's works. I sort these references to smell by how each character understands their significance, beginning with Stephen Dedalus in both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and then continuing into *Ulysses* with an observation of Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom. Each character's experience with smell varies significantly; their references to smell oftentimes shift between actual, physical smells and abstract, emotional experiences described in olfactory terms.

Chapter Three establishes the mind-body connection of smell in Joyce's works. On a relational level, Joyce uses smell as the primary window into how his characters understand everything about the world: relationships, objects, and memories. I connect Joyce's use of smell and memory with Proust's in *In Search of Lost Time*; both authors use the function of smell to trigger a heightened memory that is stronger than the original

experience. While closely examining Stephen's, Bloom's, and Molly's relationship to smell, I argue that each character's identity is bound by his or her interaction to smell through his or her relationships, memories, and desires.

Finally, Chapter Four moves beyond the corporeal and links smell with spiritual transcendence. Paradoxically, the individual must learn to embrace the corporeal if he or she is to ascend beyond the corporeal. Joyce illustrates this paradox through all three of his primary characters; however, I argue that Molly Bloom becomes Joyce's truest representation of what it means to achieve transcendence through a delicate balance of physical and abstract, corporeal and spiritual. I concentrate on William James' theory of the "objects of consciousness" in which he categorizes the objects into "present to our senses" and "present to our thoughts." In Joyce's works, the sense of smell becomes an object of consciousness that bridges these two categories. Smell is indeed a sense, and therefore functions within the first category. However, it transcends the "senses" category as it evokes thoughts and memories, which are not directly observable. While each character uses both of these categories to some degree, it is Molly who successfully balances the two within her senses, as evidenced by her final soliloquy in Episode 18 of *Ulysses*.

Overall, I not only establish Joyce's close relationship to smell within his works but also argue that this fact is readily apparent to anyone who reads *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or *Ulysses*. However, it is *why* he so readily gives significance to the olfactory that is important to my thesis. While on the horizontal plane, we can view an inherent mind-body connection to the olfactory, revealed through his characters' inner dialogue of their emotions and their memories. His use of the sense of smell sets his

works apart in terms of how the olfactory allows his characters to transcend that horizontal plane; the olfactory offers a window into the transcendent realm that perhaps no other sensory experience can. Therefore, it is my opinion that James Joyce unearthed an element of literary significance that has not been seen before, or perhaps since. I conclude by discussing this matter in looking at Joyce's work within the literary canon, in order to speculate on the future of the olfactory within literature.

II. THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF SMELL

Although scientists today largely understand the primary functions of smell and the links from the nose to the brain, the science of smell remains in parts a mystery to the scientific community. As a chemical sense, it is not as easily measurable as sight or hearing can be, because the sense as a whole is largely subjective, and there is no easily measurable factor, such as a wavelength. One person may find a smell pleasurable, while another finds the same smell to be barely tolerable. In addition to its highly subjective nature, smell is altogether fleeting and highly elusive (Chiang 405). Dutch psychologist Piet Vroon argues that smell is not widely studied today, not only because of its difficulty to capture and measure, but because the general human viewpoint towards smell is that as a scent, it is unnecessary and useless:

Taste and smell together are the so-called chemical senses, meaning that stimuli associated with them are chemically based. In many respects the sense of smell is mysterious--not only because little is known about its operation as yet, but also because most people are insufficiently aware of its importance. When people are asked what sense they would be prepared to do without if necessary, smell comes at the top of the list and sight at the bottom. (*Smell: The Secret Seducer*)

Vroon reinforces the idea that our society has constructed a sense hierarchy by which we place what we believe to be the most important of the senses, sight, at the very top, while largely ignoring or discarding smell and taste, which fall on the bottom rung. Could our sense hierarchy be altered if we understood more about the olfactory, a highly elusive and

mysterious function? Many scientists argue that if we truly understood its importance, we would no longer immediately ignore its function and value.

Scientists do, however, understand how the basic function of smell works; while many questions about this highly elusive sense are still left unanswered, we do largely understand the process of smell as it affects our brain. As a chemical process, smell begins when airborne odor molecules enter the nostrils and dissolve into the mucus on the roof of each nostril. Underneath the mucus lies the olfactory epithelium, which contains specialized receptor cells called olfactory receptor neurons. These neurons are what detect each specific odor, and have the capability to detect thousands of separate and distinct smells. The neurons then transmit this new information to the olfactory bulbs, which are located in the back of the nose. The olfactory bulbs play a highly important role in the olfactory system, as they are responsible for transmitting this information to the brain, which in turn interprets our unique, specific reaction to the smell. The sensory receptors within the olfactory bulbs send messages to two specific parts of the brain: the limbic system and the neo-cortex. Within the limbic system structures, messages received from the olfactory bulbs are then transposed into our emotions, memories, and hunger and sexual drives. The second center of the brain that our sense of smell largely affects, the neo-cortex, is responsible for modifying conscious thought, and it is this highly evolved section of the brain that distinguishes humans from other mammals (Rodriguez-Gil). These two brain centers work together to perceive and interpret odors, often correlating them to specific emotions, desires, and memories.

In regards to the scientific evidence we have (and the lack thereof) of the olfactory system, how has this highly elusive sense been interpreted throughout changing

cultures? Much of our societal interpretation of smell has stemmed from what we do not understand about the sense, rather than from the information that we have. While our interpretation of the olfactory system has changed over time, the manner in which smell acts and affects us has not. As the most immediate of all sense perceptions, smell forces us to react to and interpret a particular odor: “Smell is the most mimetic of the senses, because it acts on our bodies before we are conscious of it. Smell requires a bodily contact with the world, which in turn is mediated in the brain in an especially instinctual fashion” (Marks 115). We cannot control our perception of smell or our reaction to it; as an invisible entity, smell overtakes our senses and causes our brains to interpret it, not only as pleasurable or foul, but also to interpret it from the perspective of our past experiences and memories.

Additionally, the olfactory is entirely unique among the senses for its ability to produce within us an immediate decisive reaction, directly affecting our emotions: “Vision and hearing convey spatial and temporal relations accurately but they are often devoid of meaning in an emotional sense, whereas smell carries with it a liking or disliking” (O’Neill 83). In knowing what we understand about the role of smell today, the purpose of smell in Western culture’s past becomes important in understanding how it has shaped our interpretations of its function.

The status of smell in the Western world has fluctuated greatly over time, along with (and separate from) humans’ understanding of its role and function. Westerners’ love-hate relationship with smell can be traced back to the time of Plato and Socrates. These two great philosophical minds reflect the continuation of the clashing viewpoints on smell, as their opinions on the olfactory system varied immensely. Our contemporary

interpretation of smell stems more one-sidedly from Plato, as he denounced smell to be of lesser importance than sight and hearing (Vroon). Smells, and more specifically perfumes, directly correlated to sexual desire and physical pleasure; therefore, the use of aromatics was largely reserved for prostitutes. Plato connected smells with the corporeal, the “temporary tomb of the soul,” denouncing odors as mere tropes of physicality.

Regarding social situations, such instances required more of the functions of hearing and sight, the “noble” senses, more so than that of smell. The idea that men and women walk upright—a notion that would later be explored further by Freud—asserts that humans no longer have the need to smell the ground as a means of survival. With the aid of sight and hearing, man is more than capable of seeing or hearing a threat at a long distance.

Socrates instilled a less assertive view of the role of smell; he “felt that odors reflected the social class to which a person belonged, meaning that an odor had a certain informative value” (Vroon). The overwhelming viewpoint was that such an ambiguous and elusive sense was better left unexplored, and was promptly disregarded as unnecessary and vulgar. Because of these early philosophers’ negative interpretation of the role of the olfactory, continued research and exploration of the scent was disregarded nearly entirely by later philosophers, except briefly by Kant, who continued the Platonic tradition of smell as solely associated with the irrational body, and completely detached from the mind (Frost 36).

The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century only sought to reinforce the lack of value in the olfactory, as the period greatly concentrated on rationality and intellect, notions that smell directly fought against: “A certain contempt arose for emotions and for the body as a whole. That also applied to smell, since that

sense is associated with (unpleasant) bodily and breath odors among other things--a view that was in the tradition of both Plato and Kant” (Vroon). It is also worth noting that the Western world was indeed a much smellier place in the 18th century; with no plumbing or sewage systems, and a lack of personal hygiene, an individual’s daily life would have been overwhelmed by stench. These odors soon became an accepted aspect of ordinary life, and eventually spurred the invention of perfumes, a development that saw a particular popularity in Paris. The rising reputation of perfume emanated from the desire to mask the foul-smelling odors, in an attempt to imitate cleanliness, as well as have therapeutic effects as a counterodor (El-Khoury 9).

Smells, particularly malodorous ones, took on the role within the scientific community at this time as a means of understanding and interpreting disease. Airborne illnesses were not largely understood due to their unobservable presence; however, such diseases were often associated with the stench that would follow, i.e., the stench of vapors released from rotting corpses, bodily fluids, even vapors that rose from the cracks of earthquakes, allegedly causing illness from “the bowels of the earth” (Vroon). Odors were viewed in direct correlation with what was happening in the body, and were thought to give clues to the health of an individual. Hence, the terms “poisonous” and “foul-smelling” became interchangeable, and it was fairly common to believe that one could die from a revolting odor.

Not everyone denounced the role and function of smell as scientists commonly did during this time. In fact, many Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau and Goethe praised the function of smell and its correlations to emotion, and saw its function as of equal importance as the pursuit of science and knowledge. These philosophers

viewed artistic expression as only fully reachable through the thorough exploration of all senses and a full investigation of all smells and the emotions connected to them, whether pleasant or foul, joyful or somber. This attachment to one's emotional life was not the consensus of the general public, but rather a small subgroup of philosophers and artists who sought "to overcome the limitations of bourgeois existence by living in seclusion, plumbing their feelings, seeking intoxication" (Vroon).

Apart from the interpretations of smell from these philosophical minds, Vroon notes that there was indeed a universal change of opinion regarding the role of smell that stemmed from the scientific community and penetrated into the cultures of the 19th and 20th centuries. This simple change stemmed from the fact that advances in chemistry and biology were being developed at a rapid pace, and by 1880, the long held belief that stench directly correlated to disease dissolved entirely. At the turn of the 20th century, smell was almost always associated with sensuality and sex. Human pheromones are still a controversial, widely debated topic as odorless hormones, as scientists still do not agree on whether or not humans have the capacity to produce them at all (Marks 115). For the purposes of this study, I will focus on smell that is perceptible as an odor.

One might argue that Sigmund Freud has largely shaped our modern perception of smell single-handedly; in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he asserts that the olfactory is now a useless, "leftover" sense from our former unevolved selves, and in order to progress and mature as a society, we must abandon all attempts to uncover a useful function for the olfactory (30). Freud closely associates the olfactory with the "anal phase" of psychological development, a stage in which very young children learn to control their bowel movements, a brief stage in human development that we must pass

beyond in order to advance intellectually. According to Freud, our visual abilities therefore bypass any intelligent information we could receive from our noses, a rudimentary, residual sense that simply acts as a reminder of our evolutionary growth. Our deodorized culture today is a direct reflection of Freud's assumptions about smell, assumptions that continue to infiltrate personal opinions of what role smell should play in our daily lives:

In short, Western cultures have had a love-hate relationship with the sense of smell. And if we look at the war waged nowadays in the commercials over sanitary pads, tampons, diapers for infants and adults, sweet-smelling soaps, skin-care products, deodorants, perfumes and the like, we can say that smell is considered important once again. (Vroon)

Regardless of how far the Western world has evolved in terms of its position on the role of smell, there will perhaps always be remnants of how it has affected Western society in the past; for example, Vroon points out that we still associate smell with animalistic rather than human traits by how we place value (or lack of) on occupations dealing in smell. Our society undoubtedly assigns the fouler-smelling occupations to the lowest rungs of the social ladder: the garbage man, the farmer, the janitor, etc. How others were taught to view smell within social culture may take much time to consciously change.

Because the sense of smell (and its varying opinions) has come to intrigue both the scientific and philosophical communities over time, it should come as no surprise that this sense has left its mark in literature over the years as well. Jill McCabe Johnson argues that the scientific and literary values of smell are more similar than we may think:

Smell might actually help readers set aside their disbelief and bond with the characters, because smell—even the memory of smell—is believed to trigger oxytocin, and oxytocin has been associated with our ability to trust and form attachments. Oxytocin’s presence in the olfactory bulb of the brain helps explain the important role of smell and odor in the bonding process. (“The Art of Literary Olfaction”)

To be able to describe a specific smell in a literary work may prove to be a difficult task, as each individual deems a particular smell as “good” or “bad” due to the highly subjective nature of most smells. Furthermore, is it possible for an author to describe accurately such a specific and personal smell that it causes the same chemical reaction in the reader’s mind as the smell itself would? While a physical smell is temporary and fleeting, many authors have successfully captured a specific emotion evoked by a smell, as the emotion is what becomes embedded in the brain long after the smell is gone: “Although smells are notoriously difficult to capture in words, the *sense* of smell is often employed as a means of characterization: bound up with memories, it is highly subjective and hence intimate and emotional” (O’Neill 83). If it is the goal of an author to reach his or her reader on an intimate, emotional level, then it becomes logical for the author to evoke the sense of smell in the text itself.

If the sense of smell is truly such an important tool to impact the reader on an emotional level, then why does its use seem to be slowly disappearing from literature? Perhaps the reason is simply the relative ease of constructing visual imagery over the more difficult task of characterizing the subjective nature of smell. “Given the power of smell, you’d think authors would cram their work with scents, but we don’t. Open any

literary journal and compare the instances of visual imagery with the number of references to smell” (Johnson). While visual references greatly outnumber olfactory references in most works of fiction today, this perhaps wasn’t always the case. Vida argues that this shift has been caused by the deodorization of Western culture in general; Americans in particular work endlessly to deodorize themselves and their environments, so it should come as no surprise that our fiction has progressively become less smelly as well:

The fact of the matter is, things were smellier then, especially in European cities. People dumped their refuse—which included human waste and entrails of slaughtered animals—out the window. Rain eventually sludged discarded items into a local river, but that could take days. (“Scents and Sensibility”)

Perhaps the Western obsession of deodorizing all aspects of daily life has shifted into a deodorization of Western literature itself.

Vida’s theory of the disappearance of smell in literature corresponding with the deodorization of society is verified when we observe Patrick Suskind’s vast evocation of smells in his 1986 novel *Perfume*. Suskind’s novel follows the life of Jean-Baptiste Grenouille and his journey to become a master perfumer in eighteenth-century France. His life throughout the novel is haunted by his supernatural ability of smell, dictating his movements, though he lacks a personal scent of his own. Grenouille’s olfactory abilities are anything but ordinary; it becomes clear that he “sees” and understands the world through his nose. In the opening pages of *Perfume*, Suskind invites the reader into a world brimming over with smells, both good and bad, although they have become

absorbed into an everyday aspect of life, not truly distinguishable by anyone. He notes that all people are equally subject to odor: “the peasant stank as did the priest, the apprentice as did his master’s wife, the whole of the aristocracy stank, even the king himself stank” (4). The odors of eighteenth-century Paris make no distinction between class or ranking, and the popularity of perfume as a counterodor becomes one of the major themes of the novel, particularly in Grenouille’s pursuit to become a master perfumer. Such a strong and thorough evocation of odors and perfumes is made possible by Suskind’s distinct choice of timeframe and setting: “Grenouille, with his magically powerful and discriminating sense of smell, is born in carefully located space and time: in geographical space ‘in Paris under the sway of a particularly fiendish stench,’ and in textual time immediately after the opening catalogue of stenches” (Faris 15). We are forced to wonder if the overwhelming presence of smell in the novel is only evoked because of the subject matter at hand, or if it is truly added to enhance the reader’s sensory experience.

A less apparent use of smell in the contemporary Western canon is Marcel Proust’s use of sensory experiences, particularly smell and taste, in his work *In Search of Lost Time*. The novel continuously focuses on the power of memory, both voluntary and involuntary, and often utilizes smell as a pathway to release these memories. For Charles Swann, childhood memories of Combray are involuntarily evoked through dipping a madeleine in a cup of herbal tea, as Gordon M. Shepherd discusses:

The taste of a madeleine must be mostly due to its smell. The stimulus for Proust’s taste experience was therefore primarily the odors emanating from the mixture of pastry crumbs soaked in *tilleul*, the aromatic lime-

scented infusion made from linden blossoms. What, then, might these smells have been? (175)

Shepherd continues this correlation to speculate which particular odors may have a high sensory impression (e.g., the vanilla and butter in the madeleine, or the herbs in the tea). He suggests that smells are heightened even further when dissolved in liquid, and therefore, Swann's tea-soaked madeleine provides him with a high level of sensory experience. It is not the ingredients of the madeleine or the tea that make this scene so special and memorable though, but rather the immediate effect these ingredients seem to have on evoking memory:

all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the waterlilies on the Vivonne and good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the Parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea. (Proust 51)

Unlike Suskind, Proust uses evocations of smell to enhance and bring back to life memories from the past, as they act as a mechanism to transport the person to a particular place and time, even stretching into childhood. Smell is not forcefully and consciously used as a passageway into memory, as Proust concluded that memories invoked by the senses were often spontaneous: "Proust believed that the recollection of Combray was an involuntary memory from the past, purer and nobler than memories recalled voluntarily" (Shepherd 178). These types of involuntary memories caused by a particular smell often blur the lines of definite time, muddling the boundaries of past and present because of the strength and power of these evoked memories. Today, this ability for odors to

immediately cue autobiographical memories has become known as the *Proustian phenomena*, in which these memories, regardless of how long ago were experienced, are returned to the person's mind in the same amount of intensity as the original experience (Chu 111). This phenomenon is not restricted to the artist; however, one may argue that the acute perceptions of the artist are needed in order to accurately describe the experience into words.

While Proust undoubtedly employs a vast range of sensory experience into his works, we now arrive at James Joyce. To compare the two authors may seem futile, as stylistically they are entirely different. Western readers have come to know Proust as the ultimate conveyor of sensory experience into writing. Nevertheless, Joyce employs the olfactory far more often throughout both *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* than does Proust in his fiction. As previously noted, Joyce makes reference to the sense of smell twenty-three times in the opening chapter of *Portrait* alone. What do these conventions of the olfactory reveal about Joyce's protagonists, and consequently, what does Joyce wish to convey to his readers through such a high concentration of the olfactory? In the next chapter, I present Joyce's vast range of the use of smell as experienced through his three main characters: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom.

III. JAMES JOYCE'S INCLUSION OF THE OLFACTORY

In this chapter, I display the vast range of olfactory references that Joyce employs in relation to his main characters. In examining Joyce's use of smell in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, I argue that there is a distinct bifurcation between the abstract and concrete in these two works. Stephen Dedalus' life in *Portrait* centers around his search for meaning beyond the natural world, and his observations of smell reflect this search. Conversely, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* focuses on the scientific and practical aspects of smell as a means of examining and understanding the world around him in a pragmatic manner. Lastly, Molly Bloom's soliloquy in the final episode of *Ulysses* reveals her varied interpretation and relationship to smell; while at times she invokes smell through her sexuality, she also at times relates smell to intimate emotions and her relationship to her husband.

Stephen Dedalus

In both *Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus views the observable world through a Platonic, nonphysical lens; while he is highly conscious and aware of the natural world, he uses its information as a means of understanding what he cannot physically observe. He does not distrust the natural world but rather views its evidence as a passageway to reaching a higher understanding of the unseen world. Much like Plato, Stephen seeks to find truth within the abstract world, but an examination of the natural world may in fact be a direct passageway to these higher truths.

Joyce's choice of adjectives in the opening of *Portrait* reflects Stephen's tendencies to be engaged with the abstract: "queer," "nice," "lovely" (5). Stephen fondly reflects on the smells of his childhood from the first page of the novel; smell allows him

to access his childhood memories by reflecting on specific moments. Stephen recalls his mother first not from *her* specific smell, but rather by the oilsheet she would place on his bed: “His mother put on the oilsheet. That had a queer smell” (5). The word “queer” is somewhat abstract; to describe a particular smell as “queer” does not relay much sensory description to the reader, and instead of Joyce describing particular aspects of the oilsheet’s smell, conversely we experience Stephen’s subjective reaction. A “queer” smell may suggest a foreign, strange smell, and perhaps even prompt the mixed emotions Stephen has towards his mother. Stephen recalls this particular smell before remembering his own mother’s smell, suggesting the intense effect that the oilsheet must have within his memory. Joyce does not romanticize Stephen’s childhood by suggesting that Stephen remembers particularly fond smells first and foremost, but he suggests the strong and involuntary power that *any* smell may have. The olfactory memories continue as he traces his recollections back to another memory of his mother warming her feet by the fire, and the specific scent of her slippers: “[Mother] had her feet on the fender and her jewelly slippers were so hot and they had such a lovely warm smell!” (9). “Lovely” and “warm” suggest an amiability felt towards his mother at this moment, particularly in contrast with the “queer” smell of the oilsheet, which he also associates with his mother. Stephen does not initially recall or reflect on the physical components of these smells, nor does he attempt to describe them in concrete terms. Rather, he remembers the smells by specific emotions or feelings they invoke.

In the first chapter of *Portrait*, Joyce establishes a dichotomy of smell as experienced by Stephen in his early years at Clongowes Wood College. Some of his earliest recollections of his experiences at the school center on the smells of the chapel

during his night prayers. He describes the darkness of the night air and the chapel, which heightens his inclination toward smell as his primary sense function by desensitizing his function of sight. After hearing a cold, rehearsed prayer from the priest, Stephen absorbs and reflects on the smell of the room: “There was a cold night smell in the chapel. But it was a holy smell. It was not like the smell of the old peasants who knelt at the back of the chapel at Sunday mass. That was a smell of air and rain and turf and corduroy” (15). Stephen does not make mention of what the specific “holy” smell consists of within the chapel; however, he establishes that its opposite is the smell of the peasants. “Air,” “rain,” “turf,” and “corduroy” are all natural, rustic, agricultural smells; to suggest that these smells are the opposite of “holy” smells implies that Stephen interprets holy smells as unnatural and manmade.

Stephen makes mention again of these particular smells as he rides home for the Christmas holiday. As the peasants stand in their doorways, Stephen notes “the lovely smell there was in the wintry air: the smell of Clane: rain and wintry air and turf smouldering and corduroy” (17). Stephen clearly prefers earthy, rustic smells from a young age, which may imply his early distrust of organized religion. From his childhood, Stephen thus begins to utilize his sense of smell to categorize and interpret the world around him; he distinguishes the earthy smell of the peasants in the back of the chapel as distinct and separate from the smell of the chapel’s incense and candles. His interpretation of the role of the Catholic Church is also perhaps colored through these categories of smell; the chapel has a “holy” smell, but Stephen has yet to reveal his personal relationship to objects that are “holy.”

These “holy smells” are further developed within Stephen’s first experience in taking Holy Communion; his memories of the event are deeply embedded with smells. For example, the smell of wine for Stephen directly correlates as a marker of sin: “But to drink the altar wine out of the press and be found out by the smell was a sin too: but it was not terrible and strange. It only made you feel a little sickish on account of the smell of the wine” (41). From an early age, Stephen begins to understand smell beyond its corporeal limits, as he associates certain smells with both religious and abstract ideas, such as the “sickish” smell with sin, further insinuating his distrust and apprehension towards religion. When the rector offers Stephen his first communion, his sense of smell is further heightened as he closes his eyes to receive the elements:

On the day when he had made his first holy communion in the chapel he had shut his eyes and opened his mouth and put out his tongue a little: and when the rector had stooped down to give him the holy communion he had smelt a faint winy smell of the rector’s breath after the wine of the mass. The word was beautiful: wine...but the faint smell off the rector’s breath had made him feel a sick feeling on the morning of his first communion.

(41)

It is once again his sense of smell that deters him away from religion and limits his trust of the Church. We also recognize here Stephen’s particular fascination with words, and notably the sound of them. He finds beauty in the way the word “wine” sounds, but the smell of wine on the priest’s breath causes him to feel nauseated. His interpretation of the “holy” aspects of the Church becomes distorted in his early years through the good and

bad olfactory associations, especially through the smells of the Clongowes chapel, the rector, and his first Communion.

At the same time that Stephen observes the world through literal smells, his understanding and interpretation of them are somewhat abstract, reflected in the adjectives he uses to describe his experiences with, such as the categorization of his homeward drive as having a “holy smell” (15). Additionally, Stephen tends to personify smells by describing them as one would describe a relationship with an individual; he does not understand smells as being separate and distinct from himself, but rather describes them as relational and interactive. When he climbs the stairs to approach the rector in his office, Stephen notes the “solemn smell in the room like the old leather of chairs” (49). His emotions take on scents of their own, as Stephen imagines what sort of smell the amalgamation of his emotions might create: “Pride and hope and desire like crushed herbs in his heart sent up vapours of maddening incense before the eyes of his mind” (75).

Stephen’s emotions of pride, hope, and desire are also directly correlated with the smell of incense; while these emotions are unseen, they wield a certain power and force over Stephen’s mind. His understanding of the senses already transfigures his reality; for Stephen, the tangible, empirical world cannot sustain his emotions on their own. Joyce continues to reveal Stephen’s perceptions of smell by combining other senses into Stephen’s words, creating a synesthetic understanding of the world; Stephen cannot compartmentalize individual senses within his mind, nor can he separate these senses from his emotions. In Stephen’s first sexual encounter, he acknowledges a moment of surrender, the surrender of his body, mind, and senses: “They pressed upon his brain as

upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour” (89). His encounter with the prostitute becomes a rite of passage, and in this specific moment, Stephen inextricably combines touch, color, sound, and smell.

In the third chapter of *Portrait*, Stephen’s olfactory views are shaped through Father Arnall’s fiery sermon on hell and repentance. As Stephen and his fellow peers listen intently, Father Arnall describes the horrors of hell in grotesque and horrific olfactory detail:

The very air of this world, that pure element, becomes foul and unbreathable when it has been long enclosed. Consider then what must be the foulness of the air of hell. Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting and decomposing in the grave, a jellylike mass of liquid corruption. (105)

The adjectives that Father Arnall chooses to describe hell shakes Stephen to his core; words such as “foul,” “putrid,” and “rotting” signify a nightmarish place in which Stephen wishes to avoid at all costs. His interpretation of morality and the Church are shaped by these olfactory references within the sermon, a description that causes him to obsess over the avoidance of sin and corruption in his life.

After making his confessions to the priest at the end of Chapter 3, Stephen attempts to begin a new life of strict religious discipline, which includes a “mortification” of all his senses. He begins with his sense of sight, and forces himself to walk down the street with his eyes downcast. To mortify his hearing, he makes no attempt to escape any sound or noise which irritates him. When he finally attempts to mortify his sense of

smell, however, doing so proves to be the most difficult. “To mortify his smell was more difficult as he found in himself no instinctive repugnance to bad odours, whether they were the odours of the outdoor world such as those of dung and tar or the odours of his own person among which he had made many curious comparisons and experiments” (131). His olfactory preferences are undoubtedly formed from his experiences with certain smells as a child, as olfactory associations are extremely personal in terms of how they are understood. Stephen’s own sensory experiences cannot truly be understood by the reader, even with the most elaborate and detailed descriptions, because the individual’s interpretation of a certain smell is unique on its own. As Christine O’Neill notes, the reader must invoke his or her own memories to help place oneself within Stephen’s own experience: “There is a remarkable difference between actual sensory experience and imaginative evocation. Moreover, it should be noted that, no matter how potent the evocation of a particular smell may be, we are only really able to imagine what we have encountered consciously in real life” (84). When Stephen discovers a smell that does repulse him, a “certain stale fishy stink like that of longstanding urine,” Joyce employs adjectives such as “stale” and “fishy” that invoke the reader’s imagination to be repulsed by this odor simultaneously with Stephen (131).

However, not all smells that are commonly thought of as foul repulse Stephen; for example, the unique combination of horse piss and rotted straw serves to assuage his emotions: “That is horse piss and rotted straw, he thought. It is a good odour to breathe. It will calm my heart now. My heart is quite calm now. I will go back” (76). Stephen’s interpretations of smells are highly unique to his person and often depend on his specific memories and encounters of the past.

In the opening episode of *Ulysses*, smell enters the novel through Stephen's memory of his mother and the guilt that haunts him through her death. His mother appears to him in a dream and disturbs Stephen with "her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood" (1.105), along with the distinct smell of her breath, "a faint odour of wetted ashes" (1.106). After four repetitions of these images and smells in Episode 1, her memory continues to haunt Stephen in Episode 2, which repeats much of the same language of this distinct memory: "She was no more: the trembling skeleton of a twig burnt in the fire, an odour of rosewood and wetted ashes" (2.145). Stephen continues to juxtapose "living" smells with "dead" smells at the end of his stream-of-consciousness monologue in Episode 3, in which he states, "Hauled stark over the gunwale [a drowned man's corpse] breathes upward the stench of his green grave, his leprous nosehole snoring to the sun" (3.480). Stephen seems to gloss over the fact that death is indeed a decay of the physical body, and that there is a certain finality that the smell of death implies. Stephen's encounters with the olfactory widely vary throughout both of Joyce's texts; here we have the sole character whose consciousness exists across the two novels, whose personality and character are shaped through his interpretations of these instances.

Leopold Bloom

Leopold Bloom is introduced at the beginning of Episode 4 of *Ulysses* as he prepares breakfast for his wife. Joyce surrounds Bloom with both images and smells of the body, as he enjoys eating "the inner organs of beasts and fowls" (4.1). Bloom's preference of meat is perhaps the most heavily scented: "Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of the faintly scented urine" (4.4).

While Stephen's impressions of smell are generally elevated and at times abstract, Bloom's introduction gives the reader an initial impression of how truly grounded, rudimentary, and corporeal his character is, his thoughts stemming more from experience rather than intellect. We are introduced to the inner-workings of Bloom's mind in this episode, and his scientific mentality is thereby exposed. In the same way he takes pleasure in the urine-scented mutton kidneys, Bloom transposes the notion of smell to the flesh of his wife: "To smell the gentle smoke of tea, fume of the pan, sizzling butter. Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes" (4.238). Bloom's sexual desire for Molly is symbolized here by a literal piece of meat, emphasizing Bloom's carnal, lustful nature. Joyce purposefully blurs the line between Bloom's description of meat and of his wife's scent in her bed, suggesting Bloom's scientific, Aristotelian inclinations, which Joyce develops further in later episodes, particularly in the funeral scene of Episode 6.

Bloom's inclination to assess his surroundings scientifically is emphasized in the Hades episode, an episode that enhances Bloom's individuality and separation from other Dubliners. His propensity to view the world through an empirical lens is displayed through Joyce's description of Bloom's innermost thoughts, a stream-of-consciousness-like trail of thought that usually ends with a rational, scientific explanation of his surroundings. For example, odor appears in this chapter through Bloom's interpretation of what remains of men after death. His thoughts toward corpses at Dignam's funeral describe the smell of bodies in an insensitive, raw manner: "Corpse of milk. I read in that *Voyages in China* that the Chinese say a white man smells like a corpse. Cremation better" (6.982-983). As he continues to ponder what will become of his friend's body, he imagines the body as no different from any animal, ready for scavengers to consume:

“Flies come before he’s well dead. Got wind of Dignam. They wouldn’t care about the smell of it. Saltwhite cumbling mush of corpse: smell, taste like raw white turnips” (6.992-994). Although Bloom does not smell in this moment the corpse of his friend, he conjures up in his mind what he may smell like. Smell remains the central sense within Bloom’s imagination here, working simultaneously with imagined taste.

Episode 8 of *Ulysses*, in which Bloom eats lunch, focuses heavily on aspects of his physical surroundings, particularly his perceptions of the consumption of food. Joyce juxtaposes these food images with the episode’s title, “Lestrygonians,” a tribe of giant cannibals who ate many of Odysseus’ men during their journey back to Ithaca. The first page of Episode 8 mentions the overwhelming smells of Bloom’s pantry and the memories associated with it: “Night I went down to the pantry in the kitchen. Don’t like all the smells in it waiting to rush out. What was it she wanted? The Malaga raisins. Thinking of Spain. Before Rudy was born” (8.23-24). Bloom’s discussion of smells throughout the chapter are often invoked from specific moments within his memory; as he remembers going to the pantry for Molly and the overwhelming smells within, he also recollects a memory of smell from around the same time, before Rudy was born. This particular memory is associated with a happier time for Bloom: “Milly’s tubbing night. American soap I bought: elderflower. Cosy smell of her bathwater. Funny he looked soaped all over” (8.171-173). It is the smell of the soap and bathwater that first invokes Bloom’s memory, followed subsequently by his memory of sight.

The scene in Episode 8 that acts as a parallel to the Lestrygonians in *The Odyssey* occurs when Bloom enters a local bar for a glass of wine. The first sense that overtakes Bloom’s faculties upon entering is his awareness of the bar’s smells: “His heart astir he

pushed in the door of the Burton restaurant. Stink gripped his trembling breath: pungent meatjuice, slush of greens. See the animals feed” (8.650-652). The entire scene is saturated in odor, as Joyce wishes his reader to absorb and experience the stink of Bloom’s encounter. As Bloom finds a place to be seated, he continues his description of the room through olfactory cues: “Smells of men. Spaton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarettesmoke, reek of plug, spilt beer, men’s beery piss, the stale of ferment” (8.670-671). As in Episode 4, Bloom’s interpretation of the smells of food are often inextricably intertwined with human smells, emphasizing Bloom’s inability to separate human and animal functions and tendencies.

Bloom again ponders the function of smell and the individual’s aptitude for interpreting various scents after he helps a blind man cross the street in Episode 8. He imagines all of the things that blind persons have a greater aptitude for since they cannot rely on sight: “Sense of smell must be stronger too. Smells on all sides, bunched together. Each street different smell. Each person too. Then the spring, the summer: smells” (8.1121-1123). His interpretation of how each individual experiences smell is once again entirely scientific and rational; simultaneously, Bloom, even with his perfectly intact sight, understands the distinct role that smell has to label and define every person, street, and season.

Furthermore, Bloom often interprets perfume as a perfumer would dissect its unique characteristics; as an empiricist, Bloom not only wishes to uncover a perfume’s distinct elements, but consequently, why and how those elements serve to intrigue and seduce. As he ponders his wife’s affair with Boylan, Bloom enters into an imagined dialogue with him: “Perfumed for him. What perfume does your wife? I want to know.

Jing. Stop. Knock. Last look at mirror always before she answers the door” (11.688-690). Here, Bloom recognizes that Boylan will soon be entering their home to engage in sexual activity with his wife; what is curious here is that Bloom does not make reference to Molly’s physical appearance, but rather, to her unique smell and perfume which serves as a marker of her identity to Boylan.

In the second half of Episode 13, Leopold Bloom continues to reveal through interior monologue his fascination with the sense of smell. Bloom dissects the smells around him in an empirical manner, dividing each note of Gerty MacDowell’s perfume: “What is it? Heliotrope? No. Hyacinth? Hm. Roses, I think. She’d like the scent of that kind. Sweet and cheap: soon sour” (13.1009) Bloom imagines that Gerty has waved to him only to leave him with her scent, like an invisible token for Bloom to remember her by. Bloom contrasts Gerty’s cheap perfume with Molly’s opoponax (a type of sweet myrrh), and the memory of Molly’s scent transports him to the night they first met: “Mysterious thing too. Why did I smell it only now? Took its time coming like herself, slow but sure” (13.1015). He continues to describe the effects of smell as a gossamer web, clinging to whatever it finds (13.1020). It is in this moment that the memory of Molly overtakes present-day Molly, exhibiting the power of the olfactory sense. Bloom is far-removed from Molly on this particular day, as he fears he is losing her in her affair with Boylan; and yet, the memory of their first meeting is seen more clearly than the original event itself, as a result of her perfume’s odor.

Reflected in Bloom’s highly corporeal, non-sentimental mentality in the “Hades” episode, Bloom once again rationalizes humans as mere animals in Episode 13, “Nausicaa,” specifically regarding animals’ relationship to smell. He imagines a world in

which people greet each other through scent: “Good evening. Evening. How do you sniff? Hm. Hm. Very well, thank you. Animals go by that” (13.1029). He suggests that women use the odor of their period to warn off men (13.1030). In a continuation of his stream-of-consciousness thoughts of the connection of smell and relationship, he ponders what women must think of a man’s particular odor:

Perhaps they get a man smell off us. What though? Cigary gloves long John had on his desk the other day. Breath? What you eat and drink gives that. No. Mansmell, I mean. Must be connected with that because priests that are supposed to be different. Women buzz round it like flies round treacle. Railed off the altar get on to it at any cost. The tree of forbidden priest. O, father, will you? Let me be the first to. That diffuses itself all through the body, permeates. Source of life. And it’s extremely curious the smell. Celery sauce. Let me. (13.1034-1041)

Don Gifford’s *Ulysses Annotated* suggests that this passage reflects the common superstition that priests should smell differently than other men, because of their celibacy (398). The notion that every human should be distinguishable by their scent would be entirely odd today, as we do not commonly distinguish relationships by smells. Joyce here insinuates Bloom’s inclinations to view—and smell—the world as an animal might.

Altogether, Bloom’s comments and inner dialogue regarding smell insinuates a highly scientific relationship to the olfactory; as an empiricist, Bloom often dissects a certain smell by first determining its source, and then, its consequential meaning. Rarely does Leopold Bloom venture into modes or descriptions of the abstract, or use smell as abstract imagery, as Stephen so often does.

Molly Bloom

Molly Bloom's character is found within fragments of other characters throughout the majority of *Ulysses* (such as Bloom's recollections in Episode 13 of a passionate moment they shared on Howth Hill), but with the exception of a brief instance in Episode 4, we do not hear her own voice and perspective until the final episode of the novel, "Penelope." The episode consists of eight giant "sentences" that afford the reader an in-depth insight into Molly's thoughts and emotional state through Joyce's stream-of-consciousness style. She openly and honestly considers the day's activities, past and present lovers, and the act of sex itself. Molly conceals nothing regarding her relationship to her husband and her previous relationships, as she candidly expounds on these relationships and the odors associated with them. While Molly mentions smells and odors many times throughout this final episode, they primarily reflect her feelings towards the men she has encountered throughout her life.

As with Stephen, some of Molly's earliest recollections of smell are attributed to her relationship with the Church, particularly through the odors of the clergy: "Id like to be embraced by one in his vestments and the smell of incense off him like the pope besides theres no danger with a priest if youre married" (18.118-120). As previously suggested in Episode 13, there existed a common superstition at the time that priests should have a different, unique smell from other men. Molly's sexual curiosity clearly extends to church clergymen, as she openly and unapologetically enquires about unknown and unexplored sexual encounters. We could perhaps not go as far as to speculate on how this particular view of a priest reflects her relationship to religion as a

whole, but it does reveal to the reader that she is willing, at least in her mind, to cross boundaries created by the social norm.

Repeatedly, Molly invokes ideas of the olfactory to contemplate how she would wish her ideal partner to smell; scent is undoubtedly very important to her, as she weighs scent as a type of relational value in the same manner that Bloom does. As she ponders methods of improving her current relationship with her husband, she begins to wish that Bloom could smell more masculine: “I wish hed even smoke a pipe like father to get the smell of a man” (18.508-509). This passage insinuates that Molly understands how a man is supposed to smell by that of her father, who apparently smoked a pipe himself. Molly’s interpretation of masculinity is clearly shaped in her early years, and consequently, she associates the smell of pipe smoke with manliness.

As Molly recollects a previous relationship with Harry Mulvey in Gibraltar, she focuses on how she retained his unique scent through the safekeeping of a handkerchief: “I kept the handkerchief under my pillow for the smell of him there was no decent perfume to be got in that Gibraltar only that cheap peau d’Espagne that faded and left a stink on you” (18.863-865) We can speculate that the scent of Mulvey was of a specific perfume, and perhaps an expensive one, as her thoughts move directly into an interpretation of “cheap peau d’Espagne,” which is thought to be one of the suggestively sensual perfumes, consisting of rose, sandalwood, and clove (Frost 55). It is worth noting that while Molly Bloom’s character is portrayed as highly sensual in the final episode of *Ulysses*, her abhorrence for peau d’Espagne, arguably the most highly sensual of all perfumes, suggests that her personhood is much more complex than an archetypal seducer or whore.

Molly's train of consciousness continues throughout her time in Gibraltar with a recollection of a specific smell on the coast: "The smell of the sea excited me of course the sardines and the bream in Catalan bay round the back of the rock" (18.973-974) Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* notes that Catalan bay is a small fishing village under the cliffs on the east side of Gibraltar, inhabited almost entirely by fishermen; additionally, their principal catch is sardines and bream (625). We can speculate that Molly's "sea smell" is in fact the smell of these fish rather than the sea itself, an odor that becomes pleasant to her through its associated memories, much like Stephen's calming "horse piss and rotted straw."

In the final lines of the novel, Molly once again traces her memory back to a highly sensual, pleasurable encounter with Bloom on Howth Hill. Joyce's high attentiveness to smell becomes undeniably important here, as he implements the olfactory into the final words of the novel: "first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going mad and yes I said yes I will Yes." (18.1606-1609). "All perfume" in this sentence, with the absence of punctuation, could insinuate various interpretations of the line. The perfume could be in reference to her breasts and the fragrance she has worn to entice Bloom on their romantic adventure. Or, the word "perfume" in the sentence could be an indicator of a more abstract element, similar to how Stephen previously addressed his thoughts as "maddening vapours." The word "all" suggests a kind of metaphorical perfume that has saturated the couple's physical and mental space.

Here we have examined Joyce's various uses of the olfactory throughout his two works, as viewed through the lens of Stephen, Bloom, and Molly. From a formalist

reading alone, all three characters come into contact with smell quite frequently, whether it be through physical smells, pleasurable and foul, or abstract interpretations of smell. Often, it appears that Joyce's characters combine, with varying levels of degree, the notions of physical, tangible smell with an abstract understanding. The combination of these two affords Joyce's characters a highly complex outlook on their lives as well as their surroundings; smell no longer only affects the individual, but it begins to take on a life of its own as a bridge between relationships and memories. In Chapter 3, I discuss this mind-body relationship of the olfactory as a means of processing the outside world, and its implications upon these characters.

IV. THE OLFACTORY MIND-BODY CONNECTION

As previously stated in the introduction, the olfactory sense has been largely omitted from authors' works; one could argue that this is due simply to the lack of olfactory words, and writers continuously face the challenge of describing smell through a very limited vocabulary. However, others argue that smell has disappeared due to a shift within the sense hierarchy. In Laura Frost's "James Joyce and the Scent of Modernity," she concludes that smell has gone largely unnoticed within the literary arts because it is often construed as a secondary, solely pleasure-inducing sense: "Historically, smell has been construed as vision's other: the archaic to the modern, the spontaneous to the cultivated, the irrational to the logical. Accordingly, the pleasures of scent have been dismissed as frivolous and nonaesthetic" (33). As explored in Chapter 2, smell is difficult to find in modern literary works because of its rank within this "sense hierarchy." When authors set out to provide readers with a realistic and accurate sensory experience, they often resort to sight imagery, as images are both more concrete and less open to interpretation. Our language itself reflects our modern inclinations to the "higher senses"— i.e., sight and sound— as our perception verbs regarding these senses have the ability to cover some or all of the sense modalities on the lower rungs, i.e., smell and taste (Popova 138). For example, one might ask an individual how he or she "views" a particular smell, rather than using a more accurate olfactory verb. In other instances, we trade abstract verbs such as "to understand" for sight verbs; i.e., "I see your interpretation." In James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce disrupts this hierarchy by instituting smell as the highest obtainable function within the modality of the senses. This skewed sense hierarchy is seen in the way his main

characters—Bloom, Molly, and Stephen—physically and intellectually absorb the world around them. Joyce establishes an important mind-body connection of smell within these characters, as they engage their physical surroundings, understand present and past relationships, and reflect on memories, all through the “lens” of the olfactory.

Smell as a relational indicator is a relatively new phenomenon; in Victorian literature, smell was quickly devalued as corporeal, animalistic, and offered evidence of not fully formed human life (Carlisle 4). These long held societal beliefs about smell are reflected in Joyce’s protagonists, but are manifested in different ways within each character. In 18th- and 19th- century Europe, the world was undoubtedly a much smellier place, and perfume was used solely to cover up the stench of everyday life; personal, bodily scent was disregarded entirely.

Emmanuel Kant solidified the notion of smell as impersonal and unimportant to the scholarly mind: “For Kant, smells—ephemeral and mostly foul—are associated with the masses and the irrational body. Olfaction was not thought to be connected to aesthetics, and the pleasure it did produce was deemed too ephemeral to merit contemplation” (Frost 36). Whereas sight became the most appealing sense due to its connotations of the aesthetic and rational tendencies, the olfactory continued to descend to the lowest rung within the hierarchy, primarily because of its fleeting, transient, and more often than not unappealing nature. 20th- century philosophers and scientists continued to solidify the notion of smell as banal; Freud asserts in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that the olfactory is solely a useful faculty to animals. Joyce suggests his own knowledge of Freudian olfactory beliefs through the character of Bloom and his animalistic, carnal qualities. As human rationality became the primary means for societal

progress, the relegation of smell seemed necessary for this process to take full effect (O'Neill 82). Once humans began to walk upright, the visual overtook the use of the olfactory; thus, in order to progress from an evolutionary standpoint, one must disregard the olfactory for the more intelligent and evolved senses of sight and hearing in order to mature one's psychological development.

For Joyce, the importance of the olfactory does not suggest a reversion to primal instincts; rather, he views the sense as a central connection between the body and the mind, particularly through the character of Leopold Bloom. Joyce asserts that the olfactory plays not a secondary, but rather a primary role in understanding the interaction within human relationships. Thus, Joyce understood the importance of the olfactory as an inextricable link between human understanding of physicality of the body and the body's pathway to process our environment through one's intellect:

For Joyce, odor is significant because it so hauntingly hovers on the threshold between body and mind, confounding the bifurcation that has always been central to the cultural hierarchy of pleasure. His understanding of smell is predicated on the idea that it is a primitive, irrational sense that expresses base instincts and has strongly associative, mnemonic properties. (Frost 46)

The sense of smell in Joyce's texts therefore represents the dichotomy of the carnal and primitive alongside with the elevated and intellectual. According to Freud, the use of the olfactory would primarily constitute the primitive and instinctive components of the *id*, while Joyce would argue that the olfactory may allow for a clearer interpretation of the ideal self, or the *superego* (84). While although we may still have distasteful experiences

with smell, Joyce acknowledges the possibility of the experience to become elevated and move one beyond its primitive, carnal nature. Joyce suggests that smell is indeed difficult to capture in words, as its properties often express abstract feelings and emotions.

Furthermore, the qualities of the olfactory are highly subjective; what one person may perceive as a foul smell, another may instinctively associate with a treasured memory; therefore, the scent inherently becomes a “good” smell due to its associative properties.

Stephen Dedalus: Abstractions of the Olfactory

Stephen Dedalus’ outlook on the relational, mind-body aspects of smell is a complicated one, as his own position on the effects and importance of the olfactory fluctuate throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. From a young age, Stephen comes to understand smells around him and the relationships they represent through the elementary uncomplicated categories of “good” and “bad.” For example, the novel opens with a portrayal of Stephen’s reaction to the oilsheet his mother places on his bed to prevent him from wetting it (*Portrait* 5). His associations with the oilsheet’s smell affect his own emotions towards his mother and hint at some hesitations and mixed feelings towards her, feelings that continue into *Ulysses*. In contrast to the unpleasant smell of the oilsheet, Stephen has fond memories of his mother lounging by the fire, according to his memories of the scent of her slippers (*Portrait* 9). We do not know the specific components of his mother’s slippers that contribute to their overall smell, but we do understand that their components combine to produce an invoked feeling of warmth and happiness in Stephen’s memory. Joyce here implies that the olfactory is essentially the most prominent link to the past for Stephen, as he remembers his mother according to her own personal smell or the smell of objects associated with her.

Stephen's mind-body relationship to smell is often overshadowed by his changing feelings towards religion through the sum of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and into the opening chapters of *Ulysses*. While he remains highly conscious of and receptive to the olfactory, his impressions of these smells are interpreted by what Stephen comes to understand as "holy" or "unholy." The term "holy" is confounded within Stephen's interpretation of it, and comes to take on a different meaning from its standard definition, as "dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose" ("holy"). Furthermore, his perceptions of smells as "holy" begin to branch out as he abandons what he has been taught to understand as holy through his experiences at Clongowes and with the Catholic Church. This confounding of the definition of "holy" is best represented in a scene from Stephen's first year at Clongowes, where he absorbs a mixture of smells in the chapel: "There was a cold night smell in the chapel. But it was a holy smell... They breathed behind him on his neck and sighed as they prayed... it would be lovely to sleep for one night in [their] cottage before the fire of smoking turf, in the dark lit by the fire, in the warm dark, breathing the smell of the peasants" (15). In this passage, Stephen inhales and interprets two distinct groups of smells: the chapel and the peasants. Initially, he describes the smell of the chapel as a "holy" smell; he does not directly describe the sensory components, but we can assume that the chapel smells consist of smoke, incense, and wine, as described in a later experience (41). However, he clearly differentiates the smell of the peasants from the smell of the chapel by stating that the peasants smelled like "air and rain and turf and corduroy." The "but" in the second sentence signifies that the smell is different from his usual interpretation of a "cold night smell," a smell that he probably more closely associates with pastoral, natural smells. Stephen then concludes

that the peasants are “holy” as well, although they remain distinct and separate from the holy smells of the chapel. Consequently, Stephen’s interpretation of the term has been bifurcated into two distinct categories: the smells that he has been instructed are holy, and the smells that he has interpreted as holy out of his own will and intellect.

Before Stephen is taught by the Church that his senses can produce sensual, sinful thoughts and are therefore deemed as evil, he comes to appreciate and revere the scents of the natural world as a sacred, holy space. Similarly to his experience with the peasants inside the chapel, he later expresses a deep appreciation for the smells of the natural world:

The air was soft and grey and mild and evening was coming. There was the smell of evening in the air, the smell of the fields in the country where they dug up turnips to peel them and eat them when they went out for a walk to Major Barton’s, the smell there was in the little wood beyond the pavilion where the gallnuts were. (51)

The pleasant smells of the countryside coincide with Stephen’s understanding of what constitutes a true “holy” smell— not by what he has been taught at Clongowes, but from his childhood understanding of what to appreciate and revere as sacred.

Stephen later has a terrible relationship to his understanding of smell, which has once again been skewed by the indoctrination of the Catholic Church. After being terrified into living a righteous and holy life by Father Arnall’s fiery, condemning sermon in Chapter 3, Stephen makes it his mission to “mortify” his senses in order to live a truly pure and holy life. In denying all senses of the body, Stephen feels he will vindicate the sins of his past while preparing his sensory intuitions to cope with the temptations of sin

in the future. While he undergoes the process of mortifying each sense individually, he finds the olfactory sense to be the hardest to control:

To mortify his smell was more difficult as he found in himself no instinctive repugnance to bad odours, whether they were the odours of the outdoor world such as those of dung and tar or the odours of his own person among which he had made many curious comparisons and experiments. (131)

Stephen finds that there are few smells that repulse him, perhaps caused from his instinctive love and enjoyment of the natural world, an amalgamation of pleasurable and malodorous scents. He discovers that his emotional ties to specific smells are what determine his reaction to and interpretation of them, not the chemical makeup of the smell itself. It is ironic that the one smell he finds a strong repugnance to is that of urine: “the only odour against which his sense of smell revolted was a certain stale fishy stink like that of longstanding urine: and whenever it was possible he subjected himself to this unpleasant odour” (131). The one smell that Stephen cannot stand to tolerate directly correlates to his earliest olfactory memory, the oilsheet his mother would place on his bed to prevent him from wetting it (5). His recollections of the “queer-smelling” oilsheet may have in turn influenced his reactions to smell in the present day, perhaps even unconscious feelings of shame and embarrassment.

The notion that Stephen interprets his olfactory experiences with memories of the past is further emphasized in Episode 1 of *Ulysses*, in which Stephen is overwhelmingly haunted with guilt and remorse of his mother’s death. The qualities of his mother that haunts Stephen’s mind more than anything else are the smells he associates with the last

time he saw her, at her funeral, a mixture of wax, rosewood, and wetted ashes (1.105-106). As rosewood was one of the more common materials of caskets at the time, Stephen is most likely remembering his mother only in death, as he associates these smells with trauma and guilt. Therefore, the mixture of the wax, rosewood, and ashes becomes a representation of death to Stephen, inseparable and indistinguishable from his final memories of his mother. His relations to smell in both *Portrait* and *Ulysses* suggest a permanent and inescapable window into his past, as well as a primary faculty of understanding his present world from which he cannot live without.

Leopold Bloom: Pragmatic Observer

In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom becomes a focal point to illustrate how effective the olfactory can be used to truly “see” the empirical world and all of its components. In direct contrast to Stephen Dedalus throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Leopold Bloom’s sensibilities are concerned with the pragmatic and practical, rather than the spiritual and elevated. Joyce’s initial description of Bloom in Episode 4 introduces Bloom as a man primarily concerned with aspects of the body, as his breakfast choice is itself a bodily organ: “Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls...Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine” (4.1-5). Joyce immediately grounds Bloom’s character within his fascination of the body and its smells, but this by no means discredits Bloom as an unintelligent or primal character. Rather, it is Bloom’s connection and closeness with his bodily senses that allows him to explore the world from a scientific and empirical perspective.

Unlike Stephen, Leopold Bloom is perfectly comfortable exploring aspects of the body, both his own and his wife's, without feeling any sense of shame, sin, or guilt. He does not make a connection of the body as having a direct correlation to lusts of the flesh, as Stephen often does in *Portrait*. The odors and smells that surround Bloom vitally connect him to the world, to both his physical surrounding and his relationships with people. Clearly, Joyce does not favor pleasant smells over the foul ones, as they equally serve Joyce's characters in their understanding of their relationships. Episode 4 is certainly saturated in more foul odors than pleasant ones; perhaps this is Joyce's way of initially introducing Bloom's openness and impartiality for all smells, whether foul or fragrant. In his review of *Ulysses* in The New York Times, Joseph Collins described the novel, and particularly Bloom's opening chapter, as having a "mephitic atmosphere" (46). In fact, Bloom opens the chapter with his perception of the odor from one bodily function, and he closes the chapter seated in the WC, noting the stench of his own excrement: "He read on, seated calm above his own rising smell. Neat certainly" (4.512-513). Thus, one could argue that Bloom is hyper-aware of how his world smells, and as an empiricist who constantly ponders the source and explanation for the various smells he comes into contact with, he sharpens his aptitude of olfactory knowledge early in the novel for Joyce to establish the highly intuitive and curious character that Bloom is.

Although Joyce may not have been aware of the complicated biology behind the function of smell, he was certainly cognizant of the important role it plays within all humans on a relational level. In examining the neurophysiology of the olfaction, we now understand that odor is processed uniquely among all sense perceptions; the olfactory cortex overlaps the limbic system, which is directly responsible for memory and

emotions (Marks 119). Therefore, the olfactory has a privileged connection to emotion and memory that the other senses do not. It is no surprise then that Joyce employs numerous references to smell within *Ulysses*, as the novel's core relies on the relationships it contains, both past and present. As Bloom continues to prepare breakfast in Episode 4, he reflects on his wife, who remains upstairs in bed (4.237-239). The odor of butter in the pan recalls for Bloom the feeling of his wife beside him in their bed, hinting at the notion of their relationship as somewhat carnal, as Molly is described as mere "flesh." Nevertheless, it is the olfactory, above all other senses, that establishes both a sensual and psychological connection from Bloom to his wife, and the chapter illustrates the olfactory ability to invoke and remind Bloom of pleasurable experiences. While Bloom always begins with an empirical, rational understanding of his olfactory encounters, he uses his scientific evidence as a springboard into his memory and emotions.

In regards to Bloom's relationship with Molly, smell functions not only as a means of pleasure in their present lives, but also as a window to the past, and a trigger to re-experience what their lives were once like. Within the literary sphere, Marcel Proust was one of the forerunners to approach memory from sensual perceptions, particularly in his treatment of Charles Swann and the famous madeleine. *Swann's Way: In Search of Lost Time* is saturated in memory, and Swann's recollections are primarily invoked through the most elementary of the hierarchal senses, smell and taste: "And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray" (51). As previously noted in Chapter 2, the sight of the

madeleine itself does nothing to invoke this childhood memory until the moment he smells and tastes it by dipping it into his tea.

Bloom explores the vaults of memory in much of the same manner; in Episode 13, Bloom exhibits through interior monologue his fascination with smell and memory. Through his interaction with Gerty MacDowell, he dissects her character by the perfume she wears (13.1009). Bloom's implication that Gerty would like a "scent of that kind" suggests that she prefers cheaper, less complex perfumes, which could suggest something about her character and personality as well. Gerty's scent contrasts that of Molly, who would only wear a very expensive, unique perfume. The contrast between Gerty's cheap, quick-to-sour perfume and Molly's expensive, complex perfume suggests something about how their characters relate to Bloom himself. While a sexual encounter with Gerty would in effect represent a cheap, casual affair, his relationship with Molly is much more complex and time-tried. Bloom does not smell Molly's perfume in this moment, but his memory of Molly is evoked through the memory of her smell (13.1015). In "The Logic of Smell," Laura Marks discusses that odors allow us the direct ability to contextualize specific situations: "The associations we have with odor are strongly individualized and context-dependent, and will be as long as humans have different life experiences. Even if the memories themselves are different, smells build communities around remembering" (121). Therefore, the associated memories connected to a particular smell take on an equal importance, if not a greater importance, than the original smell itself.

Bloom's relationship to women in general is heavily attributed to scent; his internal monologue reveals that smell is often the primary factor in recognizing or remembering a female. Odor undoubtedly has sensual connotations and characteristics;

for many centuries, scent has been associated with sexuality. However, Bloom's description of women is elevated above its carnal attributes; yes, a woman's scent is a marker of her sexual nature, but it is simultaneously an indicator of her unique identity. Frost explains, "[Bloom] imagines women as both passive and active atomizers. Scent is an involuntary secretion issuing from the body, but it is also a deliberate enticement women choose to send out into the world" (48).

Molly thus becomes personified by her specific, unique smell. Bloom describes the attributes of female odor, abstract notions, through concrete imagery: "It's like a fine veil or web they have all over the skin, fine like what do you call gossamer, and they're always spinning it out of them, fine as anything, like rainbow colours without knowing it. Clings to everything she takes off" (13.1019-1022). While Bloom and Molly are mostly alienated from each other throughout the novel, it is through Bloom's memory, specifically olfactory memory, that the couple is united: "Scent is one of the great unifiers of Molly and Bloom— at least in their memories. Although they are sexually estranged, perfume bridges the gap between them" (48). Molly's personhood takes full shape in light of Bloom's fondest remembrances of her; scent leaves an imprint of their past lives as much as it does their present.

As previously noted, Bloom begins with a physical, scientific experience with a smell, and then utilizes his interpretation of that experience to mentally connect the smell to particular places, people, and associated memories.

Molly Bloom: Discerning Perceptions

In much the same manner that Bloom recognizes women by the smells that he attributes to them, Molly reveals that she connects to men in a similar manner. It is through her

interior monologue in Episode 18 that the reader is first able to glimpse into Molly's personal thought processes. Her memories of past relationships with men, both sexual and platonic, are colored by her memories of smell. Molly's thoughts allow her to navigate backwards, to past experiences at confession, and remember the incense-soaked clothes of a priest (18.118-120). Her stream-of-consciousness monologue reveals an intertwining of both sensual and rational.

Molly's perceptions of men and their scents are indeed at times sensual, although the smell of incense is not commonly thought to be an aphrodisiac. Joyce's resounding suggestion is that Molly does not adhere to any societal standards regarding the exploration of her emotions and her sexuality. This is made apparent through her sensual feelings toward the priest; she has crossed the societal border set in place of priests being nonsexual. Her relationship to these specific smells divulges the multifaceted, personal aspects of the odors themselves; while incense is a "holy" smell, as it is for Stephen Dedalus, it may be a sensual smell to others, according to their specific memories and interactions with the odor. Molly further emphasizes these relational aspects of smell through the memories of her father, wishing that Bloom would smoke a pipe as he once did (18.508-509). Her interpretation of what a man should smell like was presumably determined at a young age, as the familiarity of her father's pipe became saturated into her understanding of the male role. Bloom, who is often critiqued by Molly and others for his "poor performance" of masculinity, does not meet his wife's stereotypical gender requirements for a man's odor.

Within her rambling, stream of consciousness monologue, Molly recalls memories of a former lover in Gibraltar, Harry Mulvey. As her mind drifts into the

recollection of their encounters, she remarks on her enduring memory of him after their separation: “I was thinking of him on the sea all the time...weeks and weeks I kept the handkerchief under my pillow for the smell of him there was no decent perfume to be got in that Gibraltar only that cheap peau d’Espagne that faded and left a stink on you more than anything else” (18.861, 863-865). Peau d’Espagne, a combination of various individual scents including leather, cloves, and cinnamon, represents the antithesis of Molly’s own perfume of choice, opoponax, an expensive and highly complex perfume. Laura Frost describes Peau D’Espagne perfume as having highly sensuous characteristics: “Unlike perfumes that mask human odors, Peau d’Espagne emphasizes carnal, mammalian scents: musk smeared on leather, the animal in the human” (55). Molly’s aversion to this scent may represent her parallel distaste to being treated as carnal and animalistic, mere flesh by her husband. This is evidenced by her earlier request for expensive, “wealthy-smelling” perfume over a cheaper variety, especially when contrasted with Gerty’s inexpensive, quick to sour rose perfume. Furthermore, Molly’s treasured opoponax etymologically stems from a Greek word meaning “all-healing juice” (“opoponax”). The very word of the perfume itself suggests an attempt at a healed relationship with her husband; her chosen scent is not only a marker of her womanhood, but acts as a factor in distinguishing her and Bloom’s relationship as separate, and higher, from all others.

Molly’s soliloquy ends with a resounding “yes” while fondly tracing her memory back to the day Bloom proposed on Howth Hill, as recalled by Bloom earlier in Episode 8. Despite her previous recollections of past lovers, including the affair with Boylan which took place earlier in the day, her unrestrained passion for her husband is certainly

apparent in these final lines: “I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes” (18.1606-1609). The word “perfume” in the last line could be taken quite literally, although there is no mention of Molly wearing any perfume in the parallel scene described in Episode 8. Conversely, “all perfume” may represent a self-created, metaphorical perfume within her mind. Her memory of this highly significant encounter with Bloom has become sealed in her consciousness by the “scent” of the very scene: the heather scrub, the seedcake, the rhododendrons, and the currants combine to produce a unique perfume that only exists now within her memory.

While Molly and Bloom explore the nature of smell through different lenses, they collectively affirm that odor is an integral part of understanding every part, the mundane and the elevated, of their daily lives. Bloom fixates on the origin source of the scent—his primary interest is in uncovering meaning behind the daily odors he encounters; like a scientist, he discovers, dissects, and analyzes both the smell and its source to uncover empirical truth about himself and his relationships. These tendencies are revealed consistently through Joyce’s portrayal of Bloom’s inner dialogue, where he habitually encounters a smell, analyzes its source and likeability, and finally ponders its implications.

Molly appears to take the relational aspect of scent and perfume even further—smell and odor are both sexual and nonsexual and often seem to reflect her outlook on gender roles. Scent’s sexual role subdivides into both the more carnal, animalistic approach to sex, such as her fantasies about the priest, as well as an understated, sensual approach to sex, such as her memories of an extremely intimate moment with Bloom on

Howth Hill. Nevertheless, Joyce's use of the function of smell in *Ulysses* is undoubtedly included to reveal to the reader intimate, non-visual aspects of relationship: "Once we have followed Joyce's 'perfumance,' it is doubtful that we will regard olfaction or scents as neutral, simple commodities" (Frost 62). Joyce's scent-heavy language throughout *Ulysses* reflects a unique attachment to all relational aspects of smell— and the memories that are invoked by it— that distinguishes his writing from that of his modernist counterparts.

Joyce's primary characters—Stephen, Bloom, and Molly—all reveal direct encounters, relationships, or memories to smell. These olfactory experiences manifest themselves through the characters' recollections, emotions, and interpretations of their surroundings. On a mind-body level, their interaction with the olfactory is undeniable, and the sheer volume of olfactory references that Joyce places throughout both *Portrait* and *Ulysses* is astounding—surely, the sense of smell holds an unassailable importance within the fibers of these characters' identities. Do the effects of the olfactory fail to press beyond an intellectual understanding of their purpose? Or does Joyce exhibit such a wide range of olfactory experiences in order to suggest a deeper, more profound connection that the sense of smell achieves? In my final chapter, I explore implications of the olfactory within Joyce's writing, particularly the notion that Joyce's employment of smell indicates an elevation beyond the mind-body, horizontal realm, and into the vertical realm of the spiritual.

V. SMELL AND SPIRITUAL TRANSCENDENCE

James Joyce uses the function of the olfactory to stress its importance on the relational level, dissecting each odor and its empirical function to reveal how and why specific odors and perfumes affect his characters' memories of past and present relationships. For example, in Bloom's case, the olfactory is closely connected to the functions of the body, as he "reads" his memory of Molly's perfume on Howth Hill as an animal would detect its prey. Bloom's mind works to process all types of odors, the pleasant and the mundane, in order to interpret his life experiences. However, can the most carnal and earthly of all the senses be used to elevate the mind into a different realm?

Paradoxically, Joyce attributes his characters with the ability to not only interpret smell on a rational level, but he uses its function to suggest that his characters can transcend above the corporeal, and the olfactory acts as the primary window, amongst all other senses, into that realm.

By using William James' theory of the objects of consciousness, I argue that Stephen, Bloom, and Molly all explore the implications of smell within their minds. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus as the archetypal artist must learn to awaken his sense of smell in order to uncover truths that are not directly observable to the senses; Stephen must embrace the corporeal in order to ascend above the corporeal. In *Ulysses*, Bloom becomes so transfixed upon the physical realm, the objects present to the senses, that he is ultimately unable to free himself from those physical limitations. Finally, it is ultimately Molly Bloom in the final chapter of *Ulysses* who affords equal

attention to both objects of consciousness; therefore, she achieves a truly transcendent state through her ability to bridge the gap between the physical and abstract worlds.

“Transcendence” is derived from the 14th century French term *transcendre*, meaning “to surpass.” The Latin origin of “trans,” meaning “beyond,” combined with “scandere,” meaning “to climb,” denotes the action of moving beyond or exceeding a given set of limits, in Joyce’s case, to move beyond the physical, tangible world (“transcendence”). Therefore, to be in a space of transcendence suggests the ability to have an experience beyond the physical level of ordinary human experience. Similarly, in Kantian philosophy, transcendence implies being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge. For some, to “reach beyond” the known world implies a complete relinquishing of the “known” space, including the senses. Speer Morgan suggests how truly inconsistently the term is used:

The notion of transcendence is by definition paradoxical. The Latin *transcendo* means to climb above or pass over, which begs the obvious question: rise above or get beyond what? However the word is used—whether in reference to religion, philosophy or literature—it is associated with its opposite, the immanent world with all its failures and blessings.

(5)

However, to suggest that we can “move beyond” a designated space implies that there exists a tangible world that is separate and distinct from an unknown world, a problem of thinking that William James deliberates in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. He writes, “‘A world’ of fact! –that exactly is the trouble. An entire world is the smallest unit with which the Absolute can work” (522). Although the idea of transcendence for some is

so lofty and inaccessible that it unconsciously invokes thoughts of fairy-tale and magic, James asserts that to believe in an absolute truth, and to make its distinction from what we cannot know, is in itself fruitless; no spiritual or religious experience is absolute, and to “transcend” does not mean to abandon the known world. Instead, transcendence is a specific and refined awareness of the unseen world, which exists simultaneously with what we can consciously and without thought absorb and understand. James works through these issues by quoting from *The Higher Law*:

Man can learn to transcend these limitations [of finite thought] and draw power and wisdom at will. The divine presence is known through experience. The turning to a higher place is a distinct act of consciousness. It is not a vague, twilight or semi-conscious experience. It is not an ecstasy; it is not a trance...It is a perfectly calm, sane, sound, rational, common-sense shifting of consciousness from the phenomena of sense-perception to the phenomena of seership. (516)

The experience of transcendence, as defined by James, is thus a conscious decision, not an act of divine interference that exhibits control over one’s mind and body without permission. James continuously asserts that the act of transcendence is a rational choice that each individual has the power of choosing for themselves.

To add the term “spiritual” to the idea of transcendence further complicates the definition, as “spirituality” encompasses a vast range of meanings, and the term does not necessarily denote a specific religion or set of beliefs; it simply acts as a counterpart and a division from the known world. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James discusses the definition of “religion” in a similar way that we have come to

understand the meaning of “spirituality” today. The opening of Lecture II comments on the futility of attempting to assign a specific definition to spirituality, as each individual experiences its essence in a myriad of ways: “[spirituality] cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name. The theorizing mind tends always to the over-simplification of its materials” (26). To assign a concrete, absolute definition to such an abstract conception would be entirely misleading, as spirituality, and the individual’s understanding of it, is both diverse and complex. As James observes, spirituality is deeply personal, and “the relation goes direct from heart to heart, from soul to soul, between man and his maker” (29).

Spiritual transcendence therefore implies exactly what the roots of these words denote; the action is to move beyond or ascend above the everyday, ordinary world, in order to experience a higher understanding of whatever he or she considers divine (James 31). The act of transcendence stems from a curiosity to reach beyond what is immediately obtainable and observable, into a state of personal transformation, a kind of intimacy with the spiritual world that could perhaps never be accurately described or relayed to another person. James believes that this curiosity exists in each individual from birth; however, one must make a conscious decision to explore it: “You must go behind the foreground of existence and reach down to that curious sense of the whole residual cosmos as an everlasting presence, intimate or alien, terrible or amusing, lovable or odious, which in some degree everyone possesses” (35).

Objects of Consciousness

William James defines “objects of consciousness” as “the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves” (53). These objects of

consciousness may be divided into two categories: objects present to our senses, and objects present to our thoughts. Typically, these objects are only present within a single category; regardless of which category an object may fall into, they tend to elicit a specific reaction from the individual. In terms of spirituality, James suggests that it is human nature to assign concrete objects to abstract ideas; if one believes in the existence of an abstract, spiritual, and transcendent world, then one must use tangible, physical objects in order to describe and understand the significance of the abstract. James illustrates how significant this abstract, transcendent world can become to the human psyche: “Polarizing and magnetizing us as they do, we turn towards them [abstractions] and from them, we seek them, hold them, hate them, bless them, just as if they were so many concrete beings. And beings they are, beings as real in the realm which they inhabit” (57).

As James suggests, we all have the propensity to find unseen realities at times more real and genuine than what we can understand through our senses. In the same manner, the memory of a person or event may have a deeper effect on our mind and emotions than the original person or event caused. While we often continue to categorize our objects of unconsciousness into the seen and the unseen, the physical and the abstract, these lines begin to blur as James records countless accounts in which the subject feels that his or her transcendent experience was in fact “more real” than anything within the material world. These experiences are often described as having a “sense of reality,” something more deep and profound than any object of reality can describe.

In regards to spiritual transcendence, does there exist an object of consciousness that falls within both categories— present to our senses and present to our thoughts?

Undoubtedly, objects present to our thoughts may be more closely associated with transcendence than objects present to our senses, as transcendence occurs beyond the borders of the tangible world. Our senses provide us a pathway to interpret and understand the natural world, oftentimes for the most practical of purposes, i.e., to be mindful of danger, basic means of survival, etc. The olfactory is no different; as previously discussed, smell is often thought to be the most rudimentary, and perhaps unnecessary, of all the senses. Could smell, which rests on the lowest rung of the sense hierarchy, which many have thought best to relegate in order to progress culturally and intellectually, actually be the hidden key that unlocks the human mind to move from rationality to transcendence? While traditionally thought to be the most grounded and basic of all the senses, its effect on the human mind and emotions is perhaps greater and more concentrated than any other sense. As Laura Marks says, “When we smell, we are able to re-create this sense of past in our own bodies—lucky for us, because these are memories that often can’t be apprehended any other way; unlucky, because the memories smell brings us can be overwhelming” (113). The olfactory “transcends” our present world in the sense that easily, and at times without permission, cues our mind to revisit the past—not only the physical space and structure of the moment, but the memories, emotions, and sentiments held within the moment. It is evident that the olfactory connects us on a horizontal plane to memory and relationships; however, these relationships are only a stepping stone towards transcendence, as they often reflect transcendent qualities by emphasizing the parts of human experience that are transcendent.

The notion of smell as “holy” traces back to ancient rituals of the Torah. In the book of Genesis, Noah builds an altar to the Lord on which he places burnt offerings as

an act of sacrifice. Smell takes precedence over sight, as the odor is described as reaching the nose of God: “The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done’” (Genesis 8:21). As fumes from a fire travel upward, the direction itself implies a connection between the earthly and spiritual realms. Further readings in the Torah make it clear that the Judeo-Christian God, a divine, spiritual being, exhibits more attention and concern toward the role of smell than any other sense. This notion is again displayed when Moses hears and interprets a direct command from God himself in the book of Exodus. God gives Moses highly specific measurements of cinnamon, myrrh, cane, and cassia in order for him to make a fragrant, pleasing perfume: “You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand” (Exodus 30:27). When concerning the spiritual realm, this sense hierarchy is then reversed to support the olfactory as the primary and most important sense; it encompasses both the seen and the unseen, the material world and the spiritual world. Conversely, sight can only contain the material world, as that is as far as its boundaries can reach. Therefore, the “trail” of smell acts as a lifeline between the two worlds; simultaneously, smell is both an indicator of our tangible, relational world, as well as a pathway to understand what lies beyond the natural world, a pathway that sight, nor any other sense, can offer.

How then, does Joyce illustrate this act of transcendence through smell? Spiritual transcendence, in the case of Joyce, implies exactly what the roots of these words denote; the action is to move beyond or ascend the everyday, ordinary world, in order to experience a higher understanding of whatever he or she considers divine (James 31). While one can assume that Joyce did not intentionally use James' theory to write his novels, we can still test James' theory through an examination of Joyce's characters. Moreover it should come as no surprise that Joyce uses the function of smell as a pathway from the mundane to the spiritual.

Stephen Dedalus: Objects Present to our Thoughts

In examining the transcendent qualities of smell in Joyce's work, Stephen Dedalus is the perfect candidate for investigating a character who invests much of his time in understanding and exploring spirituality to uncover truths hidden beyond the physical world. His acute and introspective mind exhibits a curiosity to explore the philosophical and spiritual world more so than any aspect of his natural surroundings. For Stephen, in order to become an "artist" (the journey he begins in *Portrait* and ends in *Ulysses*), Stephen must anticipate and decipher the nature of the abstractions that surround him. His artistic mind prefers to examine and observe lofty and abstract ideas, i.e., beauty, love, joy, etc., as all good artists feel they must in order to succeed in their fields. Like these abstractions that we attempt to describe and assign qualities to, the nature of smell is similarly elusive, unseen, and yet very much a part of our everyday lives. From a young age, Stephen deciphers not the actual source of the scent he experiences, but rather the feelings and emotions invoked from the smell, such as the oilsheet his mother places on his bed. Therefore, he is already invested in "viewing"

smell from an artistic, transcendent perspective. He learns to unlock the abstract meaning *behind* the smell rather than the chemical components of the scent itself.

The language and word choice of Stephen Dedalus is highly elusive and abstract throughout both *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, combining tangible, realistic smells with abstract descriptions through his conclusions about these specific smells. Stephen's language mixes the abstract and concrete to focus on, according to James, the "objects present to our thoughts." Just as the nature of smell is highly elusive, the adjectives and word choices Stephen attempts to define them with are equally abstract; he understands the physical world through these abstractions, as the archetypal artist must do. How much of this language can we be sure are Stephen's own internal thoughts, and how much are remnants of Joyce's own parallel beliefs that he unconsciously places within Stephen's words? The two certainly overlap, as Joyce may have seen a younger version of himself through the eyes of Stephen: "For the greater part of the work, Joyce's narrative is a thing of sublime slipperiness, in which it is often impossible to say exactly how much of a given statement is Joyce's narrative and how much is Stephen's thought" (Dibble 33). In their inseparable nature, we can be certain that Joyce lends to Stephen the gift of the artist's mind, reflected from his own perceptions of dissecting the nature of smell. For Joyce, smell was not only a useful faculty of the artist, but also rose within his own hierarchy as his eyesight began to fail him (Miller). Stephen's highly acute perceptions of smell become even more entangled with Joyce's own observations: "What results is a tension between reality and contrived reality, as Joyce, in allowing Stephen to develop an "autonomous" sense of smell, subconsciously unleashes his own olfactory associations; as a result, we catch glimpses

of Joyce's consciousness filtered through the lens of Stephen's perspective" (King 14). Therefore, the elusive and highly abstract descriptions of Stephen's olfactory sensibilities reassert smell as a necessary function of the artist, as his ambitions are reflected through his creator, the artistic inclinations of Joyce himself.

As James describes the boundaries within his objects of consciousness, Stephen's ideas of smell begin to blur the boundaries between the abstract and physical world. He often directly correlates smell, a "carnal," grounded faculty of the senses, to obtain lofty, abstract reactions and emotions, feelings that he conveys through his elusive, stream-of-consciousness style of thinking. The smells themselves become a tangible link to the transcendent world, just as James suggests humans often correlate together, as we must process and understand the transcendent world through objects and senses that we can physically see and experience. An ideal example of Stephen's abstract thought process is demonstrated through his inner dialogue after relinquishing an opportunity for intimacy with his desired, Emma: "Pride and hope and desire like crushed herbs in his heart sent up vapours of maddening incense before the eyes of his mind" (*Portrait* 75). In this instance, Stephen imagines a figurative odor, as he does not literally smell anything; and yet, the moment of intense emotion is so powerful to him that he can only make sense of it through olfactory description. Furthermore, he sees the vapors of the "maddening incense before the eyes of his mind," insinuating the greater importance of an emotional, figurative "sight," individually belonging to each person, over the physical sense of sight itself.

Stephen's first sexual encounter reveals a similar effect of power of smell in Stephen's mind. In his attempt to accurately describe the experience, he once again

resorts to an abstract description of a combination of many senses, including smell:

“They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour” (*Portrait* 89). Here, Stephen’s mind moves beyond the absolute world, as the transcendent world proves more powerful than anything he can literally experience; this feeling of deep intimacy and understanding of a transcendent world proves to overwhelm the boundaries of common physical experience. His unique sense of artistry, a reflection of Joyce’s own artistic sensibilities, is revealed through his confusion of both figurative and literal smells.

As Stephen fails in his attempt to mortify his sense of smell, it is proven here that Stephen’s mind and body are inextricably connected to the olfactory throughout his life; as smell has been important to his understanding of the abstract world in the past, so it will continue to be in the future. Stephen initially believes that through the process of abandoning the faculties of his senses, he will become more “holy,” and therefore, closer to the transcendent, spiritual world. However, he finds it impossible to “punish” his senses through experiencing bad smells, as he finds no repugnance in even some of the most foul-smelling items, such as dung and tar (*Portrait* 131). Instead, he observes these odors as an outlet to better experience and understand the nature of his city and surroundings; Stephen’s fascination and upheld importance of smell does not discriminate between pleasant and foul odors. All his attempts to extinguish the faculty of smell continuously prove futile as smell is as interconnected to his life experiences as the act of breathing, to sustain life, is integrally essential and inseparable from the ability to smell. Therefore, Stephen’s inability to separate smell from his life becomes symbolic of

the deeper intention of the olfactory: its intertwining into his conscious and unconscious thoughts, present to both his thoughts and his senses.

Stephen's associations to smell remain primarily in the realm of the abstract; while he mentions literal smells, such as the winy breath of the rector (Portrait 41), his reflections about the olfactory continuously push him outside of the literal and into the figurative. In the opening chapter of *Ulysses*, the memory of smell for Stephen drives him to contemplate his mother's death, so much to the point that he associates literal smells with a transformative world, the afterlife: "She was no more: the trembling skeleton of a twig burnt in the fire, an odour of rosewood and wetted ashes" (2.145). While Stephen's mother is no longer physically present to him, her smell, or the smell of her death, continues to haunt Stephen's thoughts as he conjures up the aromas of rosewood and wetted ashes in his mind. The realm of death where Stephen's mother resides, a realm beyond Stephen's natural surroundings, becomes more real and apparent to his conscious, unavoidably pressing on his mental thought process.

Altogether, smell exists primarily within the realm of the abstract for Stephen Dedalus, and the olfactory is ultimately, to use James' term, tied to his "objects present to his thoughts." Stephen's stream of consciousness and thoughts, often lofty and elevated, are primarily tied to abstractions. Because of this, Stephen often fails to recognize the importance of physical olfactory sensation; as an artist, perhaps he fears it would ground him too much in the present, within his physical surroundings, that he would no longer be able to obtain an understanding of these abstractions. His mind becomes so elevated that he ultimately struggles to find a true sense of transcendence; perhaps this is also a result of his jilted view of the Catholic Church (although, for the sake of this kind of

transcendence, it extends beyond one set of religious beliefs, and perhaps beyond religion entirely.) Stephen fails to use the olfactory as the connecting bridge between the objects present to the senses and the objects present to thoughts, as he tries to override, or skip entirely, the process of utilizing his understanding of literal scents to elevate him to a transcendent space.

Leopold Bloom: Objects Present to our Senses

Joyce signifies the importance of the olfactory through an entirely different lens in the character of Leopold Bloom, so much so that Bloom nearly becomes Stephen's olfactory doppelganger. Bloom remains, through the course of *Ulysses*, almost entirely fixed on smells as "objects present to the senses." In other terms, Bloom rationalizes smell and its source so completely that he leaves no room for transcendence to take place. When a sensory experience occurs, Bloom often identifies the source of the smell first and foremost, and subsequently interprets its meaning on a physical and rational level, rarely allowing his mind to venture into the abstract.

From the moment that Leopold Bloom is introduced to the reader in Episode 4, Joyce centers his character around elements of the carnal and animalistic. Our first knowledge of Bloom stems from a depiction of a man who dissects his breakfast to delight in the most inner part of an animal, its organs, in a kind of fleshly, bestial ritual (4.1-5). There is no elevation to Bloom's breakfast ritual, and no notion that the smell and taste of the grilled mutton kidneys signify an elevated idea beyond the meat itself. Rather, Bloom remains fixed on their smell for the purposes of its groundedness, its earthiness, and the subsequent pleasure he enjoys from the senses they produce. Furthermore, his hyperawareness of bodily, carnal smells ensues throughout his initial thoughts towards

Molly in the same episode. Bloom's stream of consciousness connects the smell of his breakfast with the "flesh" of his wife (4.237-239). Bloom remains so enraptured with pleasures of the body that his thoughts remain consistent, specifically in this first episode, on fleshly, animalistic desires. In light of James' objects of consciousness, we see little evidence in Bloom that he wishes to reach beyond what is immediately obtainable to his senses, specifically to the olfactory.

In subsequent episodes, Leopold Bloom does indeed make a leap from directing his interests from solely carnal, sensual experiences, and into more of a relational, mind-body connection of the olfactory. Even still, Bloom's continuation of his hyperawareness of the body often blinds him to the spiritual or unearthly, and he therefore forfeits opportunities to reach spiritual transcendence through his sense of smell. In Episode 13, Bloom's encounter with Gerty MacDowell asserts his scientific, empirical relationship to smell; instead of allowing the olfactory to move him into the realm of the abstract, he utilizes scent to better apprehend his relationships and their significance. Such is the case when he encounters the smell of Gerty's perfume: "What is it? Heliotrope? No. Hyacinth? Hm. Roses, I think. She'd like the scent of that kind. Sweet and cheap: soon sour" (13.1009). Bloom's reaction to Gerty's perfume directly correlates to her personal character, insinuating that "she'd like the scent of that kind" because she is, in some way, a reflection of the perfume she wears. As Bloom becomes sexually aroused by her pulling up her skirts, his consequential interpretation of her perfume insinuates that as a person she is sexually or morally "cheap," and her value to Bloom corresponds with his sexual reaction, the masturbation scene (13.736). He fails to recognize her character beyond what she can offer to him sexually, only until Bloom realizes she is lame in one leg, and

he begins to regret his mental treatment of her (13.771). Nevertheless, his interpretation of Gerty's scent remains fixed on its carnal nature, relating it to what he could obtain on a mere physical plane.

Bloom's encounters with smell are almost often associated to his relationship with women, from his encounter on the beach with Gerty MacDowell, to his interpretation of the letter from Martha Clifford (5.260). Likewise, Bloom continues to evaluate his relationship with his wife, both past and present, through the lens of the olfactory. As previously noted, Bloom utilizes the memory of smell a marker and primary attribute of identity; while he does not elevate smell to an abstract level as Stephen so often does, Bloom uses the olfactory as a sensory indicator of relationships. In Episode 13, Bloom recognizes the scent of Molly's perfume from their sexual encounter on Howth Hill, but only in his memory: "Mysterious thing too. Why did I smell it only now? Took its time coming like herself, slow but sure" (13.1015). Initially, Bloom questions the scent's quality and nature, as he is normally quite attuned to the logic of his olfactory capabilities. He then concludes that the scent itself, like Gerty's, is a direct attribute of her personal character, which "took its time coming like herself." The memory of his wife's smell signifies a powerful reminder to Bloom of who his wife was, and what her character was like, in their first sexual encounter together; and yet, these memories are habitually interrupted by his sexual interest in Gerty.

Bloom's inner dialogue suggests a sort of entrancement he feels towards the scents of women; his thoughts suggest that they continuously, and involuntarily, emit a scent to entice the sexual appetites of others: "It's like a fine veil or web they have all over the skin, fine like what do you it gossamer, and they're always spinning it out of

them, fine as anything, like rainbow colours without knowing it. Clings to everything she takes off” (13.1019-1022). Bloom insinuates the idea that smell produces a sort of synesthesia, that when women involuntarily release their personal scent, color is produced alongside it. This statement is perhaps the most abstract description of smell that Bloom’s mind debates; while he recognizes the power of smell in terms of attracting another person, he also recognizes its unique and personal quality for the individual. He digests his reaction of smell in terms of how each woman’s unique identity affects him personally; therefore, Leopold Bloom remains the center of his interpretation of the olfactory, a kind of self-absorption that constrains his ability to understand smell beyond the physical level. Bloom understands the power of smell in terms of its ability to transcend time (i.e., conjure up a particular moment of time in his memory), but even still, he does not attribute smell as an indicator of the transcendent; he makes no evidence that would allow us to believe that his character feels that the olfactory can move him into the realm of the spiritual.

Molly Bloom: Transcendence within the Liminal Space

In terms of Molly Bloom’s encounters with the olfactory, we are left with little evidence to work with compared with that of Stephen and Bloom; aside from a brief instance in Episode 4, we only encounter Molly through her own voice in the final episode of *Ulysses*. Critics have seemingly entered into an endless battle over Molly’s character, some siding with her as a mother-goddess, others as an archetypal whore and a product of Joyce’s underlying misogyny. Regardless of one’s stance on Molly’s personal attributes, it becomes clear that Joyce intended Molly to hold a unique place within the novel, as her soliloquy in the final episode consists purely of her thoughts, and finally,

she is given the honor of having the last word. According to her thought process, how does Molly decipher smell in terms of James' objects of consciousness? Certainly, she is aware of smell as an object present to the senses, as she attributes the memory of smell to her relationships with men. Additionally, her character forms an understanding of smell around abstract terms, or objects present to her thoughts, as she interprets smell on a spiritual level as well. Molly becomes the most complex character of all: she understands the relationship of body and spirit; she is not afraid to dig deep into the physical nature of her surroundings (and herself) in order to uncover possibilities beyond the natural world; in fact, she is somewhat of a paradox. Her character emanates the revealed possibilities and power of utilizing smell as a bridge between the objects of consciousness in order to obtain transcendence.

Molly's dialogue in the final episode, while brief in comparison to the attention given to Bloom, is altogether uninhibited by outside narration or interruption of other characters. The clarity of her voice rings out strong and unrestrained, her innermost thoughts liberated from the more constrained structures of Joyce's earlier episodes, such as Bloom's dialogue in which he is constantly interrupted by outside occurrences in Episode 8. Joyce gives Molly the gift of autonomy, a rarity for his female characters—her voice, from the opening of the episode, is special and distinct. Although "Penelope" takes place in the Blooms' bedroom in the early morning, Molly's thoughts move freely through time and space. Few events or sensations impinge to organize her thoughts, and Joyce as narrator does not overtly interrupt her; as Hugh Kenner has noted (in a discussion of Molly as Muse rather than woman), this is "the only episode with not one narrative interruption" in all of *Ulysses* (Henderson).

In regards to James' objects of consciousness, Molly is unrestrained to one category. Unlike Stephen, her senses are not primarily understood through the abstract realm, or objects present to our thoughts; her character is often carnal, overly sexual, and at times vulgar. However, her thoughts extend beyond the physical, empirical realm; she does not dissect the physical world around her as Bloom so often does, giving primary attention to object present to the senses. Molly's relationship to the sense of smell is a complicated one, but we can understand how she bridges the gap between the two objects of consciousness if we examine how Joyce gives her such a unique, exclusive voice in this last episode.

Joyce affords Molly with such an empowering sense of autonomy that the reader may often forget that the words are, in fact, written by a male voice. The clarity and boldness in which her thoughts appear on the page is striking in the sense that they do not adhere to a defining pattern; her consciousness becomes a wild and unpredictable perplexity. Her conclusions about men exist in much the same manner; unashamedly, she imagines what a sexual experience with a priest would be like: "Id like to be embraced by one in his vestments and the smell of incense off him like the pope besides theres no danger with a priest if youre married" (18.118-120). Unlike Stephen, her sense of smell and its responses are not restrained by a set of religious beliefs or moral standards. Molly freely imagines the smell of an intimate encounter she has never experienced, an experience so intimate, and while it is only imagined within her thoughts, it perhaps becomes as real to her as an actual encounter through its olfactory sensations. Molly often utilizes olfactory imaginings to envision relationships with men in this final chapter; similarly, she imagines how her relationship with her husband may be different

if he smelled like her father: “I wish hed even smoke a pipe like father to get the smell of a man” (18.508-509). In this instance, Molly remembers a distinct smell previously present to her senses, the smell of pipe smoke, a smell she immediately signifies as having masculine qualities. As with her thoughts regarding the priest, Molly is able to recall objects present to her senses, the smells of the priest and the pipe smoke, and transform them into a realistic event within her consciousness; she creates a reality that is greater than reality itself through these olfactory inclinations.

Through her memories of Gibraltar and her sexual encounter with Harry Mulvey, Molly once again uses her senses to border on the natural and transcendent world. We must remember that Molly almost never leaves her bed during this final soliloquy; and yet, she is able to travel through time and space, transcending her current conditions, by invoking the memories of past events through the senses. As stated before, Molly treasures the smell of Harry on a handkerchief she holds onto long after he has left her (18.863-865). By obtaining his smell, along with the intoxicating scent of Peau d’Espagne, Molly is able to transcend the one event in the past; as an object present only to her thoughts, the smell carries over to the present, along with its associated emotions. Similarly, Molly remarks on another instance in Gibraltar in which she smells the fishy odor of the sea: “The smell of the sea excited me of course the sardines and the bream in Catalan bay round the back of the rock” (18.973-974). The word “excited” may be read as a term of sexual excitement or emotional excitement; nevertheless, it becomes clear that Molly holds tightly to smells that allow her emotions to transcend the present moment, to move her into another place and time.

Perhaps the most telling of all of Molly's olfactory encounters is revealed in the last line of the novel, as she fondly remembers her husband's embrace on Howth Hill, many years ago: "first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going mad and yes I said yes I will Yes" (18.1606-1609). Her resounding "yes" at the end of the novel, while its meaning has been widely debated, may signify her deeper understanding of transcendence. She proclaims that yes, she has obtained transcendence— she understands the connection of the physical and the abstract through her senses, and is able to bridge the gap between the objects present to the senses and the objects present only to thoughts. Her memories of Bloom take on a greater importance in this moment than the original event; Molly is able to mix the past with the present seamlessly, a truly transcendent quality, as she not only transcends space, but time as well.

Molly's unique qualities in the final episode unify the attempts of her fellow protagonists; she rests comfortably between Bloom's struggle within the physical, or objects present to our senses, and Stephen's abstractions, or his inclinations towards objects present to our thoughts. She recognizes that a solitary observation of the physical world will result only in the idea of abstractions, and not an obtainment of those abstractions themselves. Conversely, Molly acknowledges the futility of ignoring the physical world entirely, as James notes that we may only understand the transcendent, abstract world through the things which we can physically know. This liminal space between the two objects of consciousness becomes the key in achieving spiritual transcendence for Molly; she may only experience an encounter with the abstract world

by embracing both the abstractions, and ironically, the most carnal and physical of all the senses: the olfactory.

VI. CONCLUSION

For James Joyce, the use of the olfactory becomes inherently critical to his works, not only for its inclusion as a demonstration of descriptive imagery, but for its ability to relay a specific importance of a spiritual nature. If Joyce's characters are able to present to us their lives, vulnerably and confidently, and to offer us a glimpse into what truly makes them human beyond the physical realm, then the olfactory acquires a new significance beyond descriptive imagery alone. It allows the reader to press into the depths of the character's consciousness, and to veer into that "innermost flame" that Woolf so passionately describes. Furthermore, because we have examined the olfactory on a scientific level, we have discovered that the sense of smell exists today as the most elusive and mysterious of all the senses. What we do understand, however, is its importance regarding its ability to transfer our thoughts and emotions into past experiences, and to recollect moments that we may have concluded were long forgotten. Smell's underlying power, as evidenced through Joyce's characters, cannot easily be ignored or cast off as frivolous or unnecessary.

If smell provides authors with a window into their characters' consciousness, why do so few authors choose to take advantage of this highly important sense? And furthermore, what can be determined about the future of the olfactory in fiction? If one were to view the current trend of its exclusion, it becomes apparent that the sense of smell is slowly dissolving. Not only has smell been relegated to the bottom rung of the sense hierarchy, but its presence is more and more often associated with the foul and the abhorrent. We no longer wish to smell anything—as smell, to the average Westerner, has become an accessory sense that is most useful in detecting when something should be

thrown away. The disappearance of smell in literature is most likely a reflection of Western culture's resolve to clean and deodorize the culture as a whole:

But today, we Americans have cleaned up our act. We're both a more egalitarian culture and a more sanitized one. We live in a society in which some of the sexiest segments on TV are ads for deodorant, a society in which pine-scented tree ornaments often hang from taxicabs' rear-view mirrors. Equipped with garbage disposals, Scope, and Lemon Pledge, unsavory odors have been expunged from our lives as much as possible. (Vida)

Because all odors are widely ignored in contemporary literature, their effect on the human mind is likewise being dismissed. It no longer matters if a fictional character is calmed by the foul odor of horse piss and rotted straw—because authors have decidedly consigned the use of smells as superfluous and nonessential. Perhaps fiction writers no longer entertain the possibility of smell's transcendent qualities because the task of its inclusion becomes messy and unpredictable. How will the individual reader react to a certain odor? Will he or she be repulsed by a personal experience with a particular smell? This is the chance that authors must take in including smell in works; for most, it appears that olfactory inclusion is too much of a gamble.

A noteworthy exception to this trend, second only to the sensual imagery of Proust, is Suskind's *Perfume*; published in 1985, its high concentration of smells distinguished the novel as entirely unique among other works, as most authors were continuing the trend of pulling away from the implementation of smell. However, one may argue that the novel's abundance of olfactory references is due to its subject matter alone. Additionally, the sense of smell is heightened in Suskind's novel due to genre; as a

magical realist text, the olfactory serves the purpose of blending elements of reality and abstractions, complementing the elusive nature of smell itself. Suskind's *Perfume* may be somewhat of an anomaly amongst its contemporaries; it is logical that a novel about perfume would contain a high concentration of smell. And yet, the novel's ability to showcase smell in relation to human emotion cannot be ignored.

The disappearance of smell, according to my theory presented through an examination of Joyce's works, would equate to a disappearance of transcendence through smell, or the ability to move outside the boundaries of ordinary, physical human experience. Is this very notion not the goal of every author—to transcend physical boundaries and allow readers to experience something beyond their mundane lives, and into the realm of the extraordinary? Of course, the author ultimately has no control over how his or her writing will affect his or her readers, including the writer's use of the olfactory. However, this holds true for all of the senses, and not only the implementation of smell.

It may be said that Joyce's body of work is about all people at all times—his fiction so accurately represents the human experience through its ability to access to soul of our consciousness, perhaps at a level that has not been presented ever since. If the sense of smell represents such a large portion of the human experience—as it invades our perceptions at all times, as we are always breathing, and therefore always smelling—then why would an author ever deliberately ignore or eliminate it from their work? Suskind and Joyce clearly understood the undeniable power that the olfactory would wield for their texts, and yet, that same power remains widely ignored by contemporary authors today. The disappearance of the olfactory from contemporary fiction would be a

devastation to both the complexities of the characters themselves and to the reader, as the relevancy of those characters to the reader would diminish significantly. If fiction writers continue to exclude this vastly important sense in their works, then it is my opinion that the future of fiction will suffer for it, and that innermost flame which becomes so readily available through the olfactory will be extinguished.

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