

NECROPHILIA AND LITERATURE OF THE 1920S:
GENDER AND DEATH IN *ULYSSES*, *WOMEN IN LOVE*, AND
THE WASTE LAND

THESIS

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By

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For my father

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION: NECROPHILIC DISCOURSE	1
	i. The Texts at Hand	
	ii. Death Obsession and the New Woman	
	iii. Homoeroticism and Feminine Suppression	
	iv. Literary Traditions of Necrophilic Desire	
	v. The Study	
II.	"NEVER KNOW WHO WILL TOUCH YOU DEAD": NECROPHILIA, SEXUAL IDEOLOGY, AND THE HADES EPISODE OF JAMES JOYCE'S <i>ULYSSES</i>	21
III.	PSEUDO NECROPHILIA: HERMIONE AND MINETTE AS FEMINIST CORPSES IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S <i>WOMEN IN LOVE</i> .	42
IV.	"THE RATTLE OF BONES": DEATH AND THE BURIAL OF THE FEMININE IN T. S. ELIOT'S <i>THE WASTE LAND</i>	67
V.	CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING THE FEMININE SEXUAL SELF. . .	90
	WORKS CITED	95

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

NECROPHILIC DISCOURSE

i. The Texts at Hand

The texts explored in this thesis--James Joyce's *Ulysses*, D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*--are among the most widely read works of the modernist era. Each work typifies the modernist tendency to ask "unanswerable questions" and to experiment with narrative structure. And all three have a similar position in the literary canon as complex and somewhat inexplicable texts. But these similarities are not my main reasons for bringing these texts together. Rather, the three texts invite comparison because of thematic similarities. All three were greatly influenced by World War I, as seen in their literal obsession with morbidity and mortality. As well, all three are preoccupied with the emergence of the New Woman and the subsequent rise in female power. This shared concern with the feminine corresponds, I believe, to an exploration of homoerotic desire.

While the male protagonists of each work exhibit what

might be called "homosexual tendencies," it is important to note that these "tendencies" do not work *against* the essentially heterosexual matrix of the texts; rather, homosexuality is only one part of the psychosexual explorations of various forms of love and desire. In their search for personal and sexual "identity," the male protagonists of these works explore socially "perverse" forms of sexual desire, thus satisfying their need both to control their own effeminate desire and to correct the rise in female power. In the process, the female body is rendered passive. In all three works, the subversion of the female body is seen most overtly in the male characters' necrophilic desire for passive, and controllable, femininity. And in each text, a negative psychological construction of women is interwoven into fantasies of psychological necrophilia.

This is not to say that other works inside and outside the modernist canon might not work equally well in this discussion. Nor, too, does this study attempt to be exhaustive in its discussion of the works at hand. Rather, my purpose is to suggest a hitherto unnoticed connection between female power and male desire that, in short, examines something culturally acceptable (the subordination of women) and labels it something unacceptable (necrophilia).

ii. Death Obsession and the New Woman

In the texts of Joyce, Lawrence, and Eliot, as well as in the texts of many other modernist writers (Proust and Hemingway among them), there is an obsession with death. If one were looking for a common theme that connects the majority of modernist works, the theme of "death exploration" would perhaps be the most tangible connection. Largely, though, this "death theme" has been discussed in conventional literary terms: the modern disconnection of mind from body or the oft-explored notion of death and rebirth. But such conventional readings may mask darker, more disturbing images of death. As readers, we often attempt to explain away what we do not like. As critics, we sometimes disarm and cloud issues that are quite clearly disturbing to our society.

But why are so many modernist writers obsessed with death? The simplest answer is also the most obvious: because we, as humans, will die. But modernist writers (at least, those in the modernist "canon") are somehow more *universally* obsessed with death than are writers of previous periods. Largely, this obsession finds its roots in World War I. But more importantly, one cannot discount the effects of the *combination* of World War I, the emergence of feminism, and the textual protests against Victorian sexual repression.

The amalgamation of these social forces (death, feminism, and sexual repression) caused an aggressive clash of gender representations. The modernist obsession with death (an effect of the war) and the New Woman's threat to phallic power combined to create a patriarchal bodily subordination of women. Scholars such as Susan Bordo have noted that, in order to control the rise in female power, a woman's body is often used as the mechanism to facilitate that control:

Through the pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity--a pursuit without a terminus, requiring that women constantly attend to minute and often whimsical changes in fashion--female bodies become docile bodies--bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, "improvement." Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress . . . [women] are rendered less socially oriented and more centripetally focused on self-modification. . . . At the farthest extremes, the practices of femininity may lead [women] to utter demoralization, debilitation, and death. (91)

Women's desire for social power became, through the

connotations of the movement's label of "feminism," translated as a desire to subvert patriarchal notions of "beauty." It is important to note that feminism, even today, is often interpreted as a negative term with its connotations of "rocking the boat" or dismantling phallic supremacy and female strictures of beauty and sexuality. After more than a century of attempted female liberation from sexual and social inequalities, the word "feminism" is now often used as a label for any person who is "anti-femininity"--that is, against the traditions of what is "actually" female beauty, i.e., dresses, long hair, and stiletto heels combined with a waifish, yet sensual, body. If, after all this time, feminism is so "unnatural," then the revulsion toward its earlier manifestations cannot be underestimated. Feminine sexual characteristics, whether internalized in the male or female gender, have been continuously repressed in one manner or another. In particular, the effects of the war, in combination with the feminist movement and explorations of "deviant" desires (those desires which are "other" and therefore in the realm of the feminine), produced in the modernist movement an urge to *destroy* feminine sexual desire. In this destruction, there is an erotic yearning for female passivity. By asserting the supreme rule of the phallus, one achieves the ultimate sexual gratification: annihilation of female power

by sexual conquest.

Despite historical subjugation of feminine sexuality, we tread lightly on terms used to define that subjugation. One avoids labeling a character a "homosexual" because that term suggests negative female (effeminate) associations, *not* because of the existence or non-existence of implicit or actual physical male-male sexual activity. Likewise, one "should not" label a desire for subconsciously or consciously killing females "necrophilia" because one "should not" assume that such desire exists in mainstream culture, and *certainly* not that it exists in respected writers. However, necrophilic desire is as mainstream as homosexual desire, and both are intrinsic components of the modernist search for sexual identity. The dispute is not about *actual* physical sexual activity but, rather, about the presence of sexual *desire*. It would be silly to suggest that Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, or their characters actually went grave-digging at night to receive some erotic pleasure. But it is not silly to suggest that Leopold Bloom at times wishes Molly could be nothing more than a mindless body, that Gerald Crich would rather kill women than have them possess any power, or that T. S. Eliot's narrators too often comprehend women as no more than walking corpses. In the sociological formation and maintenance of gender, the presence of such desire is all that is needed for continued

subjugation of the feminine.

Therefore, any necrophilic desire present in the text--that is, any desire for corpse-like erotic passivity of females--especially when that desire is represented as an intrinsic part of the social and moral conscience, should be labeled what it is: a destruction of feminine power. It is not the term "necrophilia" by itself that warrants disgust but, rather, it is the political and moral implications that require the use of the term that are detestable. One recalls Foucault's discussion of the problems of linguistic "muteness": "Calling sex by its name . . . became more difficult and more costly. As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present" (17). Necrophilic desire exists as a social disease whether or not one wants to see that disease represented in a respected literary work.

In the "death exploration" of modernist writers, many scholars have found a thematic connection of what Susmita Bhal calls the "elegy of the death of modern civilizations" (15). However, civilizations throughout history have lamented the moral and social decline of their people. Were the modernists merely trudging along in the mean range of

appropriate human literary exploration? More likely, their "elegy" for their civilization did not find its impetus in moral decline, but rather in the shift of the gender status quo. The social acknowledgment of gender inequality (such as occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century) produced a weakening of phallic power, therefore threatening the male subconscious and causing a collision of the Freudian notions of Eros and Thanatos. But if the psychological struggles between love and death are the result of outside forces (i.e., woman), then it would be logical to attempt to remove that element. Combined with an anxiety about mortality--a byproduct of World War I--the New Woman's search for equality became more than a mere annoyance; it became a tangible threat to phallic power that elevated feminism to a "kill or be killed" struggle with the traditions of patriarchy. Thus, with the rise in feminism came the literal exploration of necrophilic desire in order to destroy threats to phallic power and to pacify Eros-Thanatos conflicts.

iii. Homoeroticism and Feminine Suppression

The modernist writers, of course, did not invent the subordination of the feminine to the level of death. Rather, "death punishment" for feminine seduction has existed as a literal tradition which merely became more

concentrated in the modernist movement. Certainly, there has existed in Western thought a warning to women to be ashamed of their own sexuality, which is both an object of male desire and a cause of their own death. One cannot underestimate the strength of the message in Judges 19, where a man who has taken in "a certain Levite" is accosted by the men of Gibeah to "bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him" (Judges 19:22). The man, in order to persuade the men of Gibeah from doing such a "vile thing," offers them his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine. After the men have raped the concubine all night, the Levite cuts his concubine into twelve pieces and "sen[ds] her throughout all the territory of Israel" (Judges 19:29). The femininity of the concubine is her only fault: her sexuality and her passivity are both the desire of the men and the reason for her death. She is to be offered both as an alternate to homosexuality and as a sacrifice to woman's wantonness; yet, she neither advocates homoerotic desire nor is consciously seductive. Her reason for death is her mere femaleness.

Yet, this biblical story teaches a further lesson about the origins of literary homoerotic desire, one that is continued from its biblical source and incorporated into the modernist sexual identity. The Levite escapes the evils of "vile" homosexuality because a female is offered in his

stead--just as Lot's daughters are offered to the Sodomites who want to "know" his two male angelic guests (Genesis 19:1-8). Western thought, through stories analogous to these biblical accounts, has developed a sociological solution to "abnormal" homosexuality: the abuse of women. The moral is sadly obvious: it is better for a man to rape a woman to avoid homoerotic desire than to have consensual sex with another man. Thus, killing a woman, as the story from Judges teaches, is more noble than acknowledging one's own effeminate tendencies. Femininity, in any form, is sacrificial.

This biblical teaching is transferred to the modernist dynamic of sexual exploration. The explorations of homoerotic desire in the works of Joyce, Lawrence, and Eliot draw similar parallels between homosexuality and feminine evil. All three writers explore the various forms of "deviant" sexuality in a search for sexual identity and in a cleansing of sociological morality. This "deviant" desire, however, is aligned with femininity to form a negative association between feminine sexuality and moral contamination. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick finds that this parallel between homoerotic exploration and the subordination of the feminine is a result of "compulsory heterosexuality": "It has been clear that women had a kind of ultimate importance in the schema of men's gender

constitution--representing an absolute of exchange value, of representation itself, and also being the ultimate victims of the painful contradictions in the gender system that regulates men" (134). All three writers--Joyce, Lawrence, and Eliot--"normalize" homoerotic desire in their works, bringing that desire within the acceptable range of sexual exploration established for men in the world of each text. Yet, this "normalizing" remains at constant odds with the sociological categorizing of homoeroticism as abnormal in *fin de siècle* America and Europe. Despite the assimilation of homoeroticism into a text's sexual ideology, femininity remains the locus of any guilt that arises from such homoerotic explorations, as the "deviance" of "abnormal" desire is a result of an acknowledgment of inherent femininity.

In her analysis of Sparkish in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, Kosofsky Sedgwick explains the feminine position in homoerotic desire as the channel through which such desire occurs: "The ultimate function of women is to be conduits of homosocial desire between men" (99). Kosofsky Sedgwick would most likely agree that this use of women to explore "deviant" desire is not limited to *The Country Wife*, but rather is an intricate part of the patriarchal societal maintenance of sexual "norms." Exploration of homoerotic desire comes, as recognized in *Ulysses*, *Women in Love*, and

The Waste Land, with a subjugation of the feminine that is both an effort to suppress the sociologically abhorrent desire for another man, and an attempt to restore the male power lost with the emergence of feminism.

iv. Literary Traditions of Necrophilic Desire

Certainly, the exploration of necrophilic desire is not limited to the modernists. The biblical stories of "death punishment" for women were ultimately transformed in the medieval period to a glorification: good, pious women died. If they were true saintly Christians, then they would long for their own death in order to join their God in heaven; therefore, death for women became a positive act: the younger a woman died, the more holy she was. A young woman's death was a way for her to control the seduction of her sexuality; the devout Christian woman should take a vow of chastity (though her chastity was, of course, in constant jeopardy because of man's lust). Therefore, death was a woman's only true escape from her own threatening feminine sexuality.

This medieval "death-longing" of the female as a means of controlling her sexuality becomes overtly connected to necrophilia in Hrotswitha of Gandersheim's play *Callimachus*. According to Larissa Bonfante, Hrotswitha, who lived circa 935-1000, has a "unique place in the history of literature,"

particularly because of her six plays of rhymed prose (ix). *Callimachus* is the story of Drusiana who, because of Callimachus's lust, is afraid her chastity is in jeopardy. She asks God, "as reward for [her] piety," to grant her "swift death" (60). Fortunatus, the slave guarding her tomb, describes to Callimachus her death-sustaining beauty and seductiveness:

Her body, even now, lies fresh and lovely still.

It was not wasted by disease, for she died
suddenly--

A mild fever, as you saw, and she was dead. (62)

In search of personal gain, Fortunatus says he will "give her body to" Callimachus to "do with as [he] please[s]" (62). While kneeling near Drusiana's body, Callimachus says to her corpse, "Now it lies within my power to force you, / To bruise you and injure you as much as I want" (63). The sociological message is quite obvious: a woman whose sexuality is not controllable in life, is controllable in death. Despite Callimachus's later conversion and Drusiana's eventual resurrection, Drusiana is still defined by her alluring female sexuality. Possibly, there will be other Callimachuses who are tempted by Drusiana's body, whether living or dead, putting into question the ultimate usefulness of her, and of any woman's, true piety.

The modernist concentration of the seductive woman's

"death punishment," spoken of earlier, finds its roots in the patriarchally-supported literary tradition of erotic female passivity. Biblical and medieval representations of female death are a part of that tradition. For Joyce, Lawrence, and Eliot, with their modernist fascination for morbidity, the Gothic romance is also part of the tradition. Leslie A. Fiedler describes the "gothic fable" as "committed to portraying the power of darkness" (128):

Perhaps another way to say this is that the fully developed gothic centers not in the heroine (the persecuted principle of salvation) but in the villain (the persecuted principle of damnation). The villain-hero is, indeed, an invention of the gothic form, while his temptation and suffering, the beauty and terror of his bondage to evil are among its major themes. (128)

Bloom, the hero of *Ulysses*, is characterized by his inability to conform to his society and, not least of all, by his conscious and unconscious struggles with his sexuality. Both Gerald and Birkin in *Women in Love* struggle throughout the novel to come to terms with their "bondage" to love, marriage, and desire. And certainly the overriding masculinity of *The Waste Land's* narrative voice is painfully aware of the moral implications of sexual temptation. All three works are primarily concerned with the "temptation and

suffering" of men. The women in each of the works are used chiefly as vessels in which to show such male suffering.

Certainly, one can find Gothic allusions in each of the texts, particularly allusions to Edgar Allan Poe; but the direct literal references are of less importance than the gendered effects Gothic tradition produces in the texts. Fiedler hints that the Gothic romance introduced the exploration of "abnormal" desire into mainstream culture, since before its influence "there existed in America no body of pornographic literature" (76). Such an influence, no doubt, helps to explain what Fiedler finds as the mid-nineteenth century obsession with death:

The death of Little Eva surely sold as many copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the fatal whipping of the pious slave; and Dickens could with the death of Little Nell stir up a public orgy of weeping in which we find it hard to believe. As the thrill of seduction was expurgated from popular fiction . . . death was more and more demanded.

(87)

The Gothic tradition allowed the modernists to combine two of the most compelling topics in literature--sex and death--to produce the ultimate erotic effect of both shock and titillation. Certainly, a Gothic work like Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* (to which Fiedler alludes) sets forth a

basis for the combining of sex and death. In *The Monk*, a preacher gives a sleeping potion to a girl whom he then rapes among the rotting corpses of a tomb (Fiedler 130): a clear example of necrophilic desire. But more importantly, works like Lewis' encapsulate the literary excitement of the death-and-sex exploration--an excitement that continued to arouse later twentieth-century readers.

In a definition similar to Fiedler's, Kosofsky Sedgwick finds that the Gothic novel exhibits certain features:

Reasons for considering [a book] Gothic are that it is ambiguously supernatural, that it is lurid, that it is "psychological" (i.e., literalizes and externalizes, for instance as murder or demonic temptation, conflicts that are usually seen as internal), that its action seems to be motivated by religious absolutes, and, most importantly, that it richly thematizes male paranoia. (97)

It takes little explication to establish that the three texts to be explored in this thesis correspond with Kosofsky Sedgwick's characterizations. What is more intriguing than the mere association of the Gothic with modernism is the connection of Gothic sexual dynamics to modernism. Gothic romance usually involves some type of threat to the feminine--rape, death, or stalking--that renders the female passive, powerless, and vulnerable. The Gothic

preoccupation with death is often aimed at female characters: they are *physically* threatened, unlike the *spiritually* "tortured" male villain. Readers of the Gothic novel delight in the fear and subjugation of women--a delight that extends through the modernist period and continues today. We are smugly delighted when the slutty cheerleader is murdered in a horror movie; she had sex in the opening scenes of the movie, so she must be morally deficient. Likewise, in *Women in Love*, Gerald's threats to Gundrun's life are somehow justified: her vocalizations of discontent do not align with social prescriptions of passive female behavior. In other words, women like Gundrun are threatening and annoying, so it's acceptable if they have their lives threatened.

The intention of actually seeing such women in corpse-like terms, however, is disturbing. Such eroticism of female death is not relegated merely to the Gothic or to the Gothic-influenced, but is prevalent throughout literary history. One recalls the fascinating Persephone, who spends half her life dead and half alive, or Hero, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, who becomes all the more alluring after her faultless "death." As well, Jane Austen's Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* has to go through a near-death experience to be able to have any "sense." Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca is all the more alluring to readers *because* she is dead.

Catherine's dead body is irresistible to Heathcliffe in *Wuthering Heights*. And one cannot help but notice that Waterhouse's famous painting of the Lady of Shalott riding toward her death hangs in poster-form on many a professor's wall. The suggestion of erotic feminine death continues to be repeated *ad infinitum* throughout literary history with far more examples than space permits. But the point is easy to make: sadly, a corpse-like woman is considered good reading.

v. The Study

Each of the following chapters looks at necrophilic desire in a particular modernist text. Chapter II addresses the Hades episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which Bloom's fears of sex and death are linked in an Eros-Thanatos conflict. This struggle exposes itself primarily through a structure in which Bloom's thoughts of women continually follow those of death and/or the dead. In essence, Bloom psychologically turns his wife Molly into a corpse in order to correct her adulterous desire and to regain his phallic power. This exploration of necrophilic desire is part of Bloom's search for sexual identity which occurs throughout *Ulysses*.

Chapter III then examines Lawrence's *Women in Love* by applying the established connections between feminine sexuality and masculine desire for feminine death. Lawrence's detestation of feminine power is especially

apparent in his treatment of two female characters--Hermione and Minette--both of who are stripped of their particularly feminine powers and rendered corpse-like. Both women are representative of feminism's new-found power: Hermione represents feminism's intellectual power while Minette represents feminism's sexual freedom. In Lawrence's desire to usurp this strength, he subordinates these two characters into passive, thus controllable, positions.

Chapter IV looks at Eliot's *The Waste Land* in terms of female passivity. When the poem is read in such terms, its necrophilic exploration becomes a viable part of its makeup. The allusions to dead, dying, and violated women--in conjunction with the allusions to "dangerous" female sexuality--create an antifeminist atmosphere similar to that of *Women in Love*. Eliot's influences, most especially Poe, add to the atmosphere of forced female passivity in *The Waste Land*.

As the conclusion suggests, the necrophilic connections in these texts represent a larger ongoing social problem of gender hierarchies. Necrophilic desire does not exist purely as a literary phenomenon but, rather, as a social phenomenon that is reflected in literature. In order to maintain the patriarchal status quo, it is necessary to control the rise of female power, be that power intellectual or sexual. Unfortunately, the need for control manifests

itself as a desire that women be used solely for their
bodies or, when that proves impractical, that they be dead.

CHAPTER II

"NEVER KNOW WHO WILL TOUCH YOU DEAD":

NECROPHILIA, SEXUAL IDEOLOGY,

AND THE HADES EPISODE OF JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

The sexual ideology of *Ulysses* is continually described by scholars as a "homosexual versus heterosexual" struggle which, with the "unnatural versus natural" connotations of such labeling, discloses the homophobia that is still used to define sexuality in much modern scholarship. Undoubtedly there are textual clues, particularly in the descriptive thoughts of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, that produce what Marilyn French calls "a homosexual tinge" to *Ulysses* (249). However, in an attempt to avoid implications of sexual categorization, scholars like Colleen Lamos ("A Faint Glimmer" 191) use elastic terms like "homoerotic" or "homosocial" to describe elements of same-gender desire in *Ulysses*. But the use of these "cure-all" terms has exclusatory and absolute implications about social-sexual categorization that is "other" than normal. Tim Dean takes this point further by emphasizing that "the conventional sublimation of homosexual into homosocial liaisons tends to reinforce the closet and its homophobic

discipline" (241). That is, there has been much scholarly debate over the presuppositions of the term "homosexual," causing the questioning of modern homosexuality as a decidedly "invented" category, and thus, by the nature of binaries, the labeling of heterosexuality as "natural" against homosexuality's "un-naturalness." The dual sexual structure that is so often used to broach topics of "perverse" desire in *Ulysses* fails to address the historical separateness of sexual identity. George Chauncey points out in his historical study of homosexual culture that "in important respects the hetero-homosexual binarism, the sexual regime now hegemonic in American culture, is a stunningly recent creation" (13). However, labeling the sexual ideology of a work as "homoerotic" is no different than labeling it "homosexual," except that the former term purges the guilt of "negative" suggestion in the academic conscience. Unfortunately there are, as yet, no better words in American standard English to express adequate "fields" of sexuality.

The problems of linguistic sexual categorization and "new-inventionism" (Cady 9) is not confined to literary scholarship, but rather discussed in the discipline in conjunction with discourses in social contexts. Probably the most notable contribution to the discussion is *Gender Trouble*--one of "the founding texts of queer theory" (vii)--

in which Judith Butler explores the sexual categorizations inherent in linguistic connotations: "There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of 'the subject' as the ultimate candidate for representation or indeed, liberation, there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category" (4). In other words, who exactly *is* a homosexual, and what, indeed, does it mean to belong to the homosexual "race"? If the category "homosexual" cannot (and should not) be adequately defined, then by what means do we label a work "homosexual" or, for that matter, "heterosexual"? If we label a work "homosexual," does it then conform to its label? The mutability of continually-evolving human sexuality does not conform to social categorizations, but rather glides on a plane of consciously recognized and unrecognized sexual desire. It is on this omnimorphic plane that Bloom and Stephen navigate between their unconscious and conscious sexual desires. If we view *Ulysses* through this lens, instead of the standard lens of "homosexuality versus heterosexuality," the question of which "category" of sexual representation *Ulysses* "ascribes" to becomes inconsiderable. The "category" is then neither completely representative of an "othered" deviance from a heterosexual "norm," nor is heterosexuality the absolute around which the characters revolve. The work is simply *sexual*.

The indistinguishable nature and various combinations of heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and occasional bestiality in Joyce's fiction position him as a precursor to modern gender studies. Stephen comes to mind, with his non-categorized and "unintelligible" sexuality, when Butler argues that "the question of homosexuality is, within some psychoanalytic discourse, invariably associated with forms of cultural unintelligibility" (xxx). Due to its nature as "other," homosexual desire is outside the realm of societal comprehensibility. But Stephen's sexual identity is not put into self-question in *Ulysses*. Stephen's homoerotic desire, his "Cranly's arm" (1.159), his "Touch him for a quid" (1.290-91), and his "six sixteen" (16.1196), are constant and, in Stephen's sexual structure, "normal." It is *Bloom's* sexual functioning, sexual thoughts and desires, and relations with his wife that provide the catalyst for the exploration of the "abnormality" of *all* sexual desire in *Ulysses*.

Bloom's continual obsessions with his wife appear to position him on a heterosexual continuum; however, their relationship is significantly "queered" in numerous aspects, calling into question both the "heterosexuality" of their relationship and whether or not their subconscious and conscious desires are rooted in the dual social-sexual structure. Not only is the "heterosexuality" of their

relationship broken by their impotent sexual relations, it does not exist, in fact, in terms akin to male-female desire. To apply Butler's words, the relationship "fail[s] to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons [and sexualities] are defined" (23). The disfunction of their relationship contributes to and is a result of their "unintelligible" sexuality, so that while "Molly lubricates Bloom's relationships with other men" (Levine 115), she, in turn, "is the only one of *Ulysses*' main characters to admit to having had a homoerotic experience" (Lamos, "A Faint Glimmer" 191). If Bloom's "'identity' is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality" (Butler 23), his sexual relations with Molly, his "abnormal" sexual desire, and his "other" status as a Jew cause a lack of "identity stability," all of which contributes to what Jennifer Levine calls "Bloom's particular, and possibly perverse, psychosexual formation" (115). The "psychosexual" workings of Bloom's mind explore diverse and perverse (in both modern and *fin de siècle* social consciousnesses) forms of sexual desire. Bloom's search for personal and sexual "identity" includes an exploration of the culturally unspeakable taboo of necrophilia.

The title of the sixth episode, Hades, establishes the episode as addressing what generally is topically ignored as

a socially acceptable discourse. While the existence of hell and necrophilia are ignored through societal silence, psychologically they are ever-present, in Freudian terms, as latent content. The "title" of the episode suggests that these two terms are connected in a cause (necrophilia) and effect (Hades) relationship. The sex-and-death relationship is established in the opening paragraphs: "One dragged aside: an old woman peeping. Nose whiteflattened against the pane. Thanking her stars she was passed over. Extraordinary the interest they take in a corpse" (6.12-14). The lines become sexually suggestive through the interpretation of "pane" as "pain," and "whiteflattened" as a visual of the old lady's sagging pale buttocks. This sexual connotation is strengthened with the following line: "Never know who will touch you dead" (6.18). The old woman is associated with death, glad not only that the finality of death has passed her over, but glad as well that the literal and figurative disgraces that occur after death are put off a bit longer. In effect, the old woman *becomes* the corpse through Bloom's psychosexual associations and fears of death. Bloom's obsession with death, triggered here by the funeral brigade, is psychologically linked with his obsessions of sexual desire, sexual activity, and psychosexual function. The most obvious example of Bloom's sex-and-death psychological connection occurs when he

imagines the corpse falling out of its coffin: "Much better to close up all the orifices . . . The sphincter loose. Seal up all" (6.425-26).

In Freudian terms, sex and death are inexplicably linked in the forms of Eros and Thanatos in a phenomenon which Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson explains as follows: "the sexual instinct in its desire to join another fights against the conservative pull toward death, and the tragic conflict of Eros and Thanatos is resolved only at the level of the species" (26). The sexual desire of the libido and the fear of death work together as "equally strong instinctive drive[s]," competing within psychosexual functions (Lewiecki-Wilson 26). It is in Hades that Bloom's sexual obsession with his wife meets his obsession with death, and the results provide the reader with insight into what Freud deems the deepest fears of the human mind, namely, sexual inadequacy and death. The combination of these fears creates a link between them, thus connecting sex and death to necrophilia.

Bloom's psychosexual function, his Eros and Thanatos, provide a direct causal relation between sexual thoughts and thoughts of or about death. Specifically, this relation is seen in Bloom's interconnected and simultaneous thoughts of Blazes Boylan, Molly, and himself:

Fascination. Worst man in Dublin. That keeps him

alive. They sometimes feel what a person is.
 Instinct. But a type like that. My nails. I am
 just looking at them: well pared. After that:
 thinking alone. Body getting a bit softly. I
 would notice that: from remembering. What causes
 that? I suppose the skin can't contract quickly
 enough when the flesh falls off. But the shape is
 there. The shape still. Shoulders. Hips.
 Plump. Night of the dance dressing. Shift stuck
 between the cheeks behind. (6.202-08)

The crystalized sexuality of Molly getting ready for a
 dance--the locus of Bloom's heteroerotic desire--is
 psychosexually paired with the shapeliness of a rotting
 corpse. By turning Molly, in essence, into a corpse, Joyce
 reveals Bloom's latent psychosexual necrophilic desire.
 Kimberly J. Devlin, in her effort to emphasize the
 androcentric focus in the first half of Hades, interprets
 these lines as Bloom's recollection of "the middle-age
 'spread' visible in Molly's figure" (70). If Devlin's
 argument of the "en-gendering of death in 'Hades'" is
 applied to Bloom's necrophilic transformation of Molly, the
 lines can then be read as a subconscious attempt to
 psychologically correct Molly's infidel desire (67).
 Bloom's transferring of Molly's sexuality onto a corpse--a
 mental enactment of "the love that kills" (6.997)--may

therefore represent a passive-aggressive desire to murder her in order to simultaneously fulfill his Eros and Thanatos fears, while at the same time avenging Molly's infidelity.

Lawrence Kramer, in his work on sexual and cultural violence, finds a historical trend of necrophilic desire, stating that "dead and dying women were notoriously seductive for nineteenth-century men. The bodies of such women . . . were felt to combine the pliancy of flesh with the perfection of sculpture, making the death of women at once a form of art and a form of sex" (194). Kramer poses the question of marital murder (whether imagined or enacted) by asking "Does each man kill the thing he loves, as Oscar Wilde maintains? If so, it is because the thing he loves can be embodied only in the thing he hates. . . . What is loved and what is hated are necessarily interwoven into the texture of the same person's being" (2-3). Bloom's pacifism displaces his anger toward Boylan onto Molly, causing her to bear the brunt of his sexual insecurities and violent fantasies, as well as causing her to be the locus of Bloom's negative portrayals of femininity. This desire for "complete feminine passivity"--what Kramer terms "necro-voyeurism"--may result from Bloom's "wish to be absolved of responsibility toward women as human beings" (Kramer 195). R.E.L. Masters, in his 1966 study *Sex Crimes in History*, finds a similar connection between necrophilic desire and

subversion of femininity: "The sex act [the necrophile] performs is usually only an extension of his violation of his victim. The necrophile . . . is often quite incapable of making an effective sexual approach, and especially a sadistic one, to a living person" (116). Certainly Bloom's inability to make "an effective sexual approach" is evidenced by the sexual disfunction of his marriage, his unfulfilled "homosecrecy" (Leonard 79), and his impotent malice toward the prostitutes and the "necessary evil" they represent (15.1980).

Bloom's obsession with death and sexuality pervades his subconscious and conscious thoughts so that the subject of murder becomes a fetishized attempt to resolve his Eros and Thanatos conflict. In the Hades episode, Bloom's thoughts move from murder to sexuality:

Wrongfully condemned. Murder. The murderer's
 image in the eye of the murdered. They love
 reading about it. Man's head found in a garden.
 Her clothing consisted of. How she met her death.
 Recent outrage. The weapon used. Murderer is
 still at large. Clues. A shoelace. The body to
 be exhumed. Murder will out.

Cramped in this carriage. She mightn't like
 me to come that way without letting her know.
 Must be careful about women. Catch them once with

their pants down. Never forgive you after.

(6.477-85)

A pattern is created in Hades as Bloom's thoughts on sex continually follow those of death and/or the dead, as in the epitomal line, "One must go first: alone, under the ground: and lie no more in her warm bed" (6.554-55). The culmination of this sex-and-death relationship occurs in a lengthy passage where Bloom thinks of the cemetery caretaker, ghosts, prostitutes, the character of Romeo, and Molly in terms of death and sex (6.743-86). Death is once more fetishized, explored both as a sexual stimulant and as a catalyst for marriage: "Fancy being [the caretaker's] wife. Wonder had he the gumption to propose to any girl. Come out and live in the graveyard. Dangle that before her. It might thrill her first. Courting death" (6.746-49). Throughout this passage, the "abnormal" sexual desire for necrophilia becomes universal, in effect "normal," through the use of ambiguous pronouns ("Men like that") and cross-cultural references to "whores in Turkish graveyards" and "Chinese cemeteries" (6.758,757,769).

The practice of necrophilia, then, becomes an erotic device Bloom explores as a resolution to the sexual difficulties which, like coitus, a woman must "keep her mind off it to conceive at all" (6.753) and which she will "learn" to find sexually stimulating "if taken young"

(6.757). "Abnormal" sexual desire is universalized to the point that it transcends death, so that the corpses themselves, in their jealousy of earthly sexuality, long to be "defiled":

Love among the tombstones. Romeo. Spice of
pleasure. In the midst of death we are in life.
Both ends meet. Tantalising for the poor dead.
Smell of grilled beefsteaks to the starving.
Gnawing their vitals. Desire to grig people.

Molly wanting to do it at the window. (6.757-62)

Sexuality is psychologically constructed by Bloom as eternal, not only in this passage, but in a later Cyclops passage where the erect phallus is "scientifically" proven to retain its power beyond death, so that a "scission of the spinal cord" (12.470) in a male would result in a "ganglionic stimulus of the nerve centres of the genital apparatus" (12.472-73), causing a "morbid upwards and outwards philoprogenitive erection" (12.477-78). Bloom's unconscious desire to have sexual intercourse with the corpse of Molly, as well as his fascination with passive sexuality of death, works to establish a dominance over Molly by regaining control over his phallic power, symbolically "killing" her "in order to be repelled rather than aroused by her," so that, by being repelled, Bloom secures "the masculine position that desire has always

subverted" (Kramer 195).

Joyce, of course, had many necrophillic cases and literary examples to draw from, such as the Marquis de Sade's *Juliette* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, not to mention the well known and documented case of the mid-nineteenth century necrophile, Christina Trivulzio of Belgiojoso (Masters 138). Bloom himself cites "that case I read of to get at fresh buried females or even putrefied with running gravesores" (6.998-99). He even goes so far as to express his own possible necrophilic intentions: "I will appear to you after death. You will see my ghost after death" (6.1000-01). The concluding paragraphs of Hades mark the completion of Bloom's more overt necrophilic exploration, as he denounces his necrophilic desire: "I do not like that other world she wrote. No more do I. Plenty to see and hear and feel yet. Feel live warm beings near you. Let them sleep in their maggoty beds" (6.1002-04).

While sexually suggestive language, combined with Bloom's psychosexual function and fears of death, allows for a necrophilic reading of Hades, it is only within the sexual context of *Ulysses* that such a reading is possible. Within each episode there is an exploration of some type of "perversity"--necrophagia and food fetishisms in Lestrygonians, incest in Scylla and Charybdis, sadomasochism in Circe, homosexual desire in Eumaeus--that un-categorizes

and deconstructs societal notions of "abnormality." Though these "explorations" are not always obvious, nor always central to the action of the episodes, they nonetheless enrich the fabric of the narrative and the complexity of the characters. Though necrophilia is only one theme of "abnormality" explored in Hades--concepts of incest are also explored through Molly/Milly and Simon/Stephen Dedalus constructions--this specific "abnormality" is not confined to Hades alone, but found throughout the text through Bloom's psychological connections of female sexuality to death and/or the dead. French's notion that "Joyce had contempt for women" may provide insight into Bloom's direct thoughts of death continually following his thoughts of women (274). In Lotus Eaters, while connecting the "corpus" of Christ with the notion of "corpse," Bloom also psychologically transforms women receiving communion into corpses: "Then the next one: a small old woman. The priest bent down to put it into her mouth, murmuring all the time. Latin. The next one. Shut your eyes and open your mouth. What? *Corpus*: body. Corpse. Good idea the Latin. Stupefies them down. Rum idea: eating bits of a corpse" (5.347-52). The line "Shut your eyes and open your mouth" particularly resonates sexual violation with its connotations of fellatio. While a literal interpretation of this internal monologue reveals Bloom's thoughts on the

mystery of transubstantiation, the sexual overtones of the passage are similar to the transformation of women into objectified corpses that occurs in the Hades chapter.

Bloom's Eros and Thanatos fears and desires collide again in the Sirens chapter when thoughts of a dead young man lead to thoughts that he is sexually and socially "missing out": "At Geneva barrack that young man dies. At Passage was his body laid . . . By rose, by satiny bosom, by the fondling hand, by slops, by empties, by popped corks, greeting in going, past eyes and maidenhair, bronze and faint gold in deepseashadow, went Bloom, soft Bloom, I feel so lonely Bloom" (11.1131-37). Similarly, thoughts of Milly, Molly, and "those lovely seaside girls" (13.906) in the Nausicaa episode turn to thoughts of women's positions as "nature"'s bearers of both life and death: "Washing child, washing corpse. Dignam." (13.956). This line particularly suggests the limited roles assigned to women in *Ulysses*. As Richard Brown notes in *James Joyce and Sexuality*, Joyce's construction of the feminine limits women to three roles: "ministering to men's needs in birth, reproduction and then laying out the bodies" (98). The supremacy of the phallus over female sexuality especially exerts itself when Paddy Dignam comes back from the dead in the Circe episode to make a direct connection between how "awfully cut up" his wife is after "bearing" his death, to

thoughts on "satisfy[ing] an animal need" (15.1233-34).

Bloom's woman-as-whore " pornosophical philotheology" (15.109) is most overt in his fetishization of female suicide:

*Many most attractive and enthusiastic women also
commit suicide by stabbing, drowning, drinking
prussic acid, aconite, arsenic, opening their
veins, refusing food, casting themselves under
steamrollers, from the top of Nelson's Pillar,
into the great vat of Guinness's brewery,
asphyxiating themselves in stylish garters,
leaping from windows of different storeys.*

(15.1745-51)

These passages mirror Bloom's perception of women as indicative of the Eumaeus postcard of the "savage women in striped loincloths" who, with their "primitive" intellectual ability and bestial nature, sit "blinking," "suckling," and "sleeping amid a swarm of infants" (16.475-77). Through what Lesley Higgins calls Joyce's "overtly negative presentation of women as the embodiment of destructive energy" (47), Bloom attempts to resolve his simultaneous Eros and Thanatos fears through fantasies of inflicting violence on women, and by turning women into "savage" creatures which he can mentally manipulate into inferior, controllable objects.

Mark Shechner explains this "sexual exploration" and subversion of feminine power in *Ulysses* as a result of "Jim's erotic propensities: the virgin-whore polarization of the sexual object; the need for an injured third party; the multiform oral, anal, and genital sexuality; and the withdrawal of libido in the presence of its object" (94). Richard Brown finds that a portion of the material for Bloom's views of women comes from Joyce's study of Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, in which Weininger "argues that women are essentially irrational and consequently unable to participate in intellectual or moral disciplines" (97). Certainly, the 607 pages of *Ulysses* dedicated to the male psyche far outweigh the 35 pages of text Molly is granted. However, numerical quantity does not, as Brown suggests, position the masculine as the "perfectly sane" gender of the text (99), nor are Weininger's beliefs integrated into *Ulysses* for an overall negative portrayal of femininity: "Though few modern feminists have wished to avail themselves of [Molly's] image of femininity, it was evidently one which Joyce constructed out of his own version of feminist literary tradition and its obtrusive sexual dimorphism is conceived as a vindication of, rather than an attack on, femininity" (Brown 101).

Molly herself senses the male desire to control her

sexuality:

When Im stretched out dead in my grave I suppose
 Ill have some peace I want to get up a minute if
 Im let wait O Jesus wait yes that thing has come
 on me yes now wouldn't that afflict you of course
 all the poking and rooting and ploughing he had up
 in me now what am I to do Friday Saturday Sunday
 wouldn't that pester the soul out of a body unless
 he likes it some men do. (18.1103-08)

A connection between female sexuality and death is once more explored in *Ulysses*: Molly relates the inability of the "curse" of all women, the "secretive" biology of menstruation, and being "stretched out dead" as both unable to prevent sexual masculine assertion. As Higgins points out, Molly's exploration of her own sexuality (as opposed to the exploration of her sexuality through Bloom's eyes) occurs as a pseudo-appendix to the text, reinforcing the subversion of femininity through death imagery:

By placing the only section of the narrative with a distinctively female voice and perspective outside the bounds of the "story," the text thus enacts a structural system of exclusion that complements several other exclusionary systems (mythic, religious, cultural) that define woman as Other. (48)

Molly's narrative position in the text reasserts Bloom's negativity toward female sexuality by relegating her to an subordinate textual position. In an extension of his fear of feminine sexuality, Bloom psychologically "kills" women in order to regain his phallic power.

The discussion of what most scholars regard as *Ulysses*' "suppressed" sexuality is often deemed to exist only in its deviance from the text's heterosexual "norm." Lamos, in her study of the sexuality of Modernist texts in relation to hierarchical "norms," constructs a similar bipolar sexuality for *Ulysses*: "Inasmuch as femininity and homosexuality are both deviations from the male heterosexual norm, they are always already 'in error,' whether openly celebrated as such or despised and concealed" (*Deviant Modernism* 119). While Lamos' insight may be applicable to modern sociopolitical constructs and conceptual natures of "sexualities," and certainly applicable to definitions of "deviant" sexuality in *fin de siècle* Dublin, the automatic positioning of a dual sexual structure onto *Ulysses* is hasty. The assumption that *Ulysses* is positioned in a heterosexual matrix must be quickly discarded when we look with any depth at the sexuality of Bloom and Stephen. With societal thought processes decidedly heterosexual, it is tempting to categorize something not rooted exclusively in heterosexuality as decidedly homosexual. To label *Ulysses*

as a homosexual or homoerotic work is as homophobic as to deny its homoerotic subtext altogether. Instead, one must label the text as *sexual*, "hover[ing] around questions of sexual 'abnormality'" (Levine 113), while at the same time challenging the "abnormality" of *all* sexual desire, whether labeled "other" or "normal." While Lamos astutely lists "sexual transgressions" that Bloom explores, those "transgressions" are not, as she suggests, "linked to the decisive and phobically charged division between heterosexuality and homosexuality" (*Deviant Modernism* 123). Rather, heterosexuality and homosexuality are only part of Bloom's "variety of shades of sexual taste" (Brown 84) that *Ulysses* seeks to disclose as inherently part of humanity, reinforcing French's notion that "Joyce's approach to sexuality was primarily one of exposure" (44).

Ulysses and Bloom, then, by being neither exclusively heterosexual nor homosexual in nature, are *queer* in the original sense of the word. As such, *Ulysses* and Bloom are sexually volatile and, whether intentionally or not, they question "acceptable" sexuality. Though such scholars as Brown, Lamos, Higgins, Susan Sutliff Brown, Martha Fodaski Black, Christine Froula, and others have discussed aspects of "abnormal" sexual desire in *Ulysses*, necrophilia has not yet been addressed. Perhaps this is because necrophilia is not yet a common category in sexual discourse. This does

not mean, however, that an attempt should not be made to disclose these "abnormal" elements, for *Ulysses* still remains open for exploration.

CHAPTER III

PSEUDO NECROPHILIA: HERMIONE AND MINETTE

AS FEMINIST CORPSES

IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S *WOMEN IN LOVE*

I don't want to serve you, because there is nothing there to serve. What you want me to serve is nothing, mere nothing. It isn't even you, it is your mere female equality. And I wouldn't give a straw for your female ego--it's a rag doll. (Lawrence, *WL* 243)

D. H. Lawrence is *not* a feminist. That statement is obvious to many readers. Nonetheless, there are still those, such as Margaret Storch, who feel the need to praise Lawrence by citing his "natural sympathy for and identification with women" before tentatively criticizing his abuse of women in his texts (2). Quite plainly, readers and critics have been too kind to Lawrence. Even those scholars who do note Lawrence's antifeminist motifs do so under the guise of respect for his permanency in the canon. That is to say, one may criticize Lawrence's abuse of women in his texts, but one should not question his *right* to abuse

them. Lydia Blanchard notes this odd paradox:

Lawrence is the archetypal male chauvinist--that is doctrine now accepted by nearly every current book reviewer, popular critic, and cocktail party pundit, and even those women who admire the way in which Lawrence uses words are quick to add that they feel nothing but contempt for the way in which he uses women. (443)

Lawrence's manipulation of the written word may, at times, be worthy of praise. But form does not supercede content. Any praise Lawrence receives is but a throwback to the patriarchal construction of the canon, when praiseworthy use of the written word went hand-in-hand with exertion of supreme phallic power over the subordinate "classes," be they female or racial. Though the statement that "Lawrence is an anti-feminist" seems an obvious enough one to make, why does one not hear the logical responsorial question asked: "Why, then, is he so often read?" If Lawrence's purpose in *Women in Love* is, as I believe, to show phallic domination over feminism, why then does the work remain so widely read? The answer is simple: one cannot underestimate the sustaining patriarchal construct of modern society--a construct which is encouraged by Lawrence's prominent position in the canon.

In an admission of his anti-feminist intentions,

Lawrence, through the narrative voice of *Mr. Noon*, directly addresses his New Woman readers:

Remember, you girning, snarl-voiced hell-bird of a detestable reader that you are. . . . you bitch, that the fight is over nothing at all, if it isn't everything. . . . Therefore you sniffing mongrel bitch of a reader, you can't sniff out any specific why or any specific wherefore, with your carrion-smelling psycho-analysing nose, because there *is* no why and wherefore. (*Mr. Noon* 205)

The female reader of Lawrence's texts ought to be disgusted: Lawrence's intentions of dissolving his female characters into passivity are obvious, especially in *Women in Love*, and he attempts, through statements like the above, to force his female reader into the same submission. He makes perfectly clear that *women* readers will be the ones to "sniff out" his desire for *all* women to be in an unconscious, corpse-like state. There is a "why and wherefore"--a reason Lawrence would like to destroy all feminine power: because he can rhetorically do so.

Lawrence's subordination of the female goes further than previously noted by scholars. What Linda Ruth Williams sees as Lawrence's "hungry authorial paranoia" is more than a "panic about the excessive femininity which can come and come again" (65). What Lawrence wants to accomplish in his

works is more than a mere "notion of male supremacy" (Simpson 65): what he desires is complete annihilation of female power over men. Within the text of *Women in Love* this scheme manifests itself as a necrophilic desire to reduce the female characters to a state of corpse-like passivity. This corpse-transformation is most blatantly recognized in the characters of Hermione and Minette.

Ronald Holmes, in his psychological study *Sex Crimes*, expands the traditional definition of necrophilia (sexual intercourse with corpses) to encompass any "erotic interest in dead bodies" (124). This expanded definition is important to understanding not only Lawrence's abuse of the feminine in *Women in Love*, but to understanding the extent of female suppression in both *fin de siècle* and modern society. Holmes explain the reason for the augmented definition in the following passage in which he cites the standard manual used by health professionals to classify mental disorders:

DSM-III-R describes necrophilia as an atypical paraphilia and defines it as having sexual intercourse with a corpse. . . . However, this definition is too limited. There is more to necrophilia than having intercourse with a dead body. . . . A syndicated columnist often repeats a letter she received from a woman whose husband

demanded that she take a cold shower, douse herself with powder, and lie completely still in bed while he had intercourse with her. If she moved in response to his advances, he lost his ability to perform sexually. Certainly this man has a fantasy that centers on sex with a dead person, a form of necrophilia. (58)

Holmes goes on to explain the "levels of necrophilia" (58), one of which involves the "pseudo necrophile" who has a "transient attraction to a corpse," but to whom "living partners are the preferred choice" (60). Clearly, a person who *desires* females to be dead, but is nonetheless sexually attracted to living women, fits within this category.

Lawrence metaphorically portrays women as dead as a manifestation of his unconscious desire to negate female power, thus blurring his desire to see females as corpses and his desire to subordinate them. Therefore, little distinction should be made between Lawrence's desire to subordinate his female characters and his desire to see them dead, as the language used by Lawrence to describe a passive living female varies little from the language used to describe a dead female. The motivation behind desiring passivity and physically enforcing that passivity, is essentially the same.

Women in Love is overly concerned with female power to

the extent that the novel is representative of two symbolic poles of larger significance than merely Gundrun/Gerald or Birkin/Ursula. Rather, the two pairs of couples represent the societal struggle between feminism and masculinism. That is to say, the novel's ideological purpose is concerned more with the "kill or be killed" battle between societal male and female power than it is with the actual struggle between Gundrun and Gerald or Ursula and Birkin. Waltraud Mitgutsch believes this struggle--what he terms the "polarity of antagonistic tendencies"--results from Lawrence's belief in the "dualism of male and female features within the individual" (5). My interpretation is that, in order to maintain "phallic supremacy" (Mitgutsch 5), one must "kill" one's female traits and "kill" the "modern" woman who inhabits and encourages such traits. Ultimately, Lawrence is more than an "antifeminist" in the superficial theoretical sense; *Women in Love* is the manifesto of his antifeminist movement in which he tells of the supremacy of the phallus through Ursula's submission to Birkin, while at the same time he warns, through the final result of the Gerald/Gundrun relationship, of the outcome for men if feminism is not overpowered.

Though Lawrence, as Simpson points out, has "no one axe to grind" in *Women in Love* (65), certainly the largest "axe" he has is with feminism. Storch emphasizes Lawrence's

preoccupation with female social power:

Lawrence's . . . attitude towards his women is usually attributed to social and political causes. Hilary Simpson relates his increasing antifeminism to his contact with the women's suffrage movement and to a deepening of feeling against women on the part of men in general, during and immediately following the First World War" (3).

As Garry Watson points out, Lawrence ascertains a growing social animosity in the modernist movement: "As Lawrence reads them, 'all the very modern novels'--by, for example, Joyce, Huxley, Gide, and Wyndham Lewis--force us to conclude that we have become secretly repulsive to one another" (12). Given the overwhelming interest in homosocial and homoerotic interaction among modernist authors, one can deduce that this "repulsion" is not so much between men, as between men and women. This deduction manifests itself in the modernist obsession with "difference," as Gabriele Griffin explains: "Indeed, proclamations of the specificity of modernism meet the resistance of difference already present in the work of modernist artists and writers in the form of fragmentation and tensions expressed as competing truths" (2-3). Yet, as with Joyce, sexual "difference" in Lawrence is normalized by the construction of homosexual desire as universal; therefore, the "other" must reside outside the masculine

realm.

If we apply the *Ulysses* model of the discussion of "liberated" sexuality, Lawrence's exploration of necrophilic female passivity in *Women in Love* seems to follow the logical course in the modernist investigation of one's sexuality. In Bloom's search for "identity stability," he explores socially "perverse" sexual desires. Likewise, in *Women in Love*, Gerald and Birkin explore, both on a conscious and unconscious level, the "perversity" of homosexual desire. The sexual climate of *Women in Love* is similar to that of *Ulysses* in that both novels normalize such "perversity." Charles L. Ross points out that the homoerotic "exploration" of *Women in Love* seems, judging from the first draft of the opening to the novel, to be the point of the work: "As the chapter opens Birkin and Gerald are sharing a skiing holiday four years before the marriage of Laura Crick. . . . A week of mountain sports passes like an intense brief lifetime, and the friends part with the 'submerged' knowledge that 'they loved each other, that each would die for the other'" (23). Hugh Stevens finds a similar homoerotic focus to the novel: "In the unpublished 'prologue' to *Women in Love*, Rupert Birkin's desires for other men become quite simply 'the question,' a question which is central to how he sees himself" (222). In his development of this modernist theme, Ross makes a direct

comparison between Lawrence and Joyce: "[Lawrence] not only blurs the line between conscious and unconscious within individual characters, as does Joyce, but also shows consciousness dissolving and reuniting with and between characters in acts that are actually or metaphorically sexual" (83). Thus, the "metaphorical" difference between acts that are actually performed, and those that are merely *desired* is essentially nullified: there is no more importance placed on what is consciously desired than on what is unconsciously desired. Thus, Gerald and Birkin are "homosexual" to the same extent that Bloom and Stephen are. Likewise, Gerald and Birkin are necrophiles through their desire for subordinate passive females to the same extent that Bloom is a necrophile because of his desire for Molly's passivity.

There is little question that Lawrence shows a fascination for the body in his writing. Paul Poplawski points out Lawrence's reasoning behind his preoccupation with the body:

His concern with the writing of the body naturally began somewhat less theoretically with a more pressing practical determination simply to write about the body and sexuality in a more convincing way than had been done before--and, most importantly, in a way that would break down

repressive taboos on sexuality and liberate both mind and body from prurience, puritanism, and "sex in the head" pornography. (xii-xiii)

Such a "liberation" from sexual taboos includes Lawrence's exploration of incest in *Sons and Lovers* through the Paul/Mother construction, and of lesbianism through the Ursula/Miss Inger construction in *The Rainbow*. The logical course of such exploration does not stop short of necrophilia. Perhaps most clearly, this necrophilic desire for a woman so passive that she resembles the dead can be seen in the following stanzas from Lawrence's poem, "The Bride":

My love looks like a girl tonight,
 But she is old.
 The plaits that lie along her pillow
 Are not gold,
 But threaded with filigree silver,
 And uncanny cold.

She looks like a young maiden, since her brow
 Is smooth and fair;
 Her cheeks are very smooth, her eyes are closed,
 She sleeps a rare,
 Still, winsome sleep, so still, and so composed.
 (464-65)

One can see that Lawrence is not squeamish about speaking of the dead. One would not assume necrophilic desire to be a taboo topic for him, especially considering the incestuous tone of the above poem (it was written, presumably, about his dead mother).

Lawrence's preoccupation with the power of the male body and the passivity of the female body manifests itself in a particularly revealing manner through his obsession with Gerald's "loins": "she saw . . . the movement of his white loins" (112), "the beauty of the subjection of his loins" (173), "the darkest, deepest, strangest life-force of the human body, at the back and base of the loins" (306), "his suave loins of darkness" (310), "magical current of force in his . . . loins" (310). Notably, as the novel progresses, Gerald's loins become associated with darkness, suggesting them to be "a force in darkness" (310) that will overpower Gundrun. David Holbrook points out that Birkin's virility is also emphasized: "another word that is reiterated is *real* to insist upon the *reality* of his *potency*, about which in life [Lawrence] was deeply anxious" (208). It is this potent virility and sexual power that drive the novel forward; from their introduction, Birkin and Gerald are sexual conquerors: Gundrun notices Gerald for "his gleaming beauty, maleness" and the "lurking danger of his unsubdued danger" (9), while Birkin "could make"

Hermione "sound and triumphant, triumphant over the very angels of heaven" (11).

In order to add strength to this phallic power, Ursula and Gundrun are introduced in terms of their passivity: Gundrun is "very beautiful, passive, soft-skinned, soft-limbed" with a "virgin look of modern girls" (2). Likewise, Ursula is described in terms of her *inaction*: "She lived a good deal by herself . . . passing on from day to day, and always thinking, trying to lay hold on life. . . . Her active living was suspended" (3). The sisters' introduction leads directly to talk of "ghouls" and "graveyards," setting up a direct connection between attraction for the two men, and death: "The people are all ghouls, and everything is ghostly. Everything is a ghoulish replica of the real world" (5), "they had watchful, underworld faces" (7), "a vague scent of . . . violets from off the graves" (8), "white daisies were out, bright as angels" (8). It is this imposition of male sexual power over female passivity that encompasses the main action of the text: Ursula's marriage to Birkin is the victory of phallic power, Gerald's death is the result of his inability to exert sustaining control over Gundrun's femininity.

The supremacy of this phallic power over feminism is best illustrated by Lawrence's treatment of the character of Hermione Roddice. In her introduction in the text, Hermione

is described as the archetypal New Woman:

Hermione knew herself to be . . . the social equal, if not far the superior. . . . She knew she was accepted in the world of culture and of intellect. . . . With all that was highest, whether in society or in thought or in public action, or even in art, she was at one, she moved among the foremost, at home with them. No one could put her down, no one could make mock of her . . . and those who were against her were below her. . . . So, she was invulnerable. All her life, she had sought to make herself invulnerable, unassailable, beyond reach of the world's judgment. (10-11)

Hermione is the accomplishment of the release of centuries of female oppression: she is the embodiment of feminism, the "social equal" to the male. She is all that Lawrence seeks to destroy. He begins his destruction of Hermione early by adding to the above description that "her soul was tortured, exposed" (11) and contained a "deficiency" (11). The message: feminism is not all that it is cracked up to be. Through Birkin's later talk of mystical union and marriage, it is obvious that Hermione's self-assurance as a female is only a crutch for her real problem: a lack of a male penile counterpart.

If Hermione is representative of women's "new-found" feminism, then Birkin is representative of the male conqueror of that feminism. Birkin's desire for Hermione's death is evident in his vitriolic attack on her: "that loathsome little skull of yours, that ought to be cracked like a nut. . . . If one cracked your skull perhaps one might get a spontaneous, passionate woman out of you, with real sensuality" (36). As Birkin warns, until Hermione accepts her fate as man's subjugate, she hasn't "got any real body" (35). Lawrence's attempt at manipulation of the female reader's psyche manifests itself through his presentation of Hermione as the "anti-woman": a *real* woman would allow her "mind and the known world" to be "drowned in darkness," so that out of that "deluge" would rise the *sensual* woman who is defined by her placidity rather than her intellect (36): "You've got to lapse out before you can know what sensual reality is, lapse into unknowingness, and give up your volition. . . . You've got to learn no-to-be [sic], before you can come into being" (37). That is, Hermione has "got to learn" to be dead.

Lawrence's message to his New Woman feminist reader is reflective of the orchestrated manipulation of patriarchal society to destroy female intellectual and social power at its Achilles' heel: female vanity. As Naomi Wolf points out in her study of female beauty and female oppression--*The*

Beauty Myth--there is a parallel increase in female power and the restriction on standards of female "beauty":

"Research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West's controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret 'underlife' poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred"

(10). Though Wolf's discussion centers on contemporary notions of "beauty" and female success, her theories are applicable to the rise in female social status in turn-of-the-century England and America. This female "poisonous dark-vein of self-hatred," Wolf points out, is orchestrated by the male-dominated media in order to counteract the rise in female social power. By restricting the definition of "beauty" to that which forces women into intellectual subservience, as Birkin attempts to with Hermione, female power is limited to the sexual, thus controllable, realm: "The quality called 'beauty' objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it" (Wolf 12). Therefore, Birkin's remarks that "real" female "sensuality" comes from cracking a woman's skull is not only a necrophilic desire--in effect, his saying that Hermione would be more beautiful if she were dead--but also serves as a way to manipulate Hermione and the female reader into *wishing* they were beaten into becoming the "spontaneous, passionate" women Birkin desires.

In chapter eight, "Breadalby," Lawrence's desire to "kill" the feminist representative of Hermione manifests itself in a passage that describes Birkin's attempts to make Hermione into the desirable "passive" woman:

[Birkin] stared back at her, devilish and unchanging. With another strange, sick convulsion, she turned away, as if she were sick, could feel dissolution setting-in in her body. For her mind was unable to attend to his words; he caught her, as it were, beneath all her defences and destroyed her with some insidious occult potency.

"Yes," she said, as if she did not know what she were saying. "Yes," and she swallowed, and tried to regain her mind. But she could not, she was witless, decentralised. . . . She suffered the ghastliness of dissolution, broken and gone in a horrible corruption. And he stood and looked at her unmoved. She strayed out, pallid and preyed-upon like a ghost, like one attacked by the tomb-influences which dog us. And she was gone like a corpse. (82)

Lawrence emphasizes Hermione's transformation into a death-like, passive state through his emphasis of the word "corpse" and other words associated with death, both in the

passage above and in later passages: "She suffered sheer dissolution like a corpse" (85); "She was rather ghastly and pale, as if left behind, in the morning" (91); "Unless she could break out, she must die most fearfully, walled up in horror" (98). The connecting of "woman" with "corpse" is reinforced in Birkin's statement to Hermione that "It isn't I who will die" (99) and in Hermione's being described as "almost macabre" with "her face strange and long and pale" (150).

After Hermione's forced descent into passivity by Birkin--the loss of her female power--she attempts to regain that power, but her efforts are futile. She has been, in effect, reduced to a powerless corpse. Even her most significant action in the text--her attempt to smash Birkin's skull with the lapis lazuli--is diminished by Birkin's flippancy: "You were quite right, to biff me--because I know you wanted to" (102). Izabel F. O. Brandão interprets the violent action as "Hermione's fear [which] leads her to try her last card: the attempt to kill her lover. In this she tries to keep her feminine center shut within herself" (61). Heroine "had only hit him, as any woman might do, because he tortured her" (WL 99), yet this violence, which should be representative of woman's ultimate attempt to regain ascendancy, is nullified by Birkin's return to the masculine "beast" and absorption in his own

masculinity. As Gavriel Ben-Ephraim points out, "Birkin's reaction to Hermione's blow is to escape her and the culture she represents" (209). Still "barely conscious" from the blow, Birkin "took off all his clothes, and sat naked among the primroses," threw "wet grass" on his back, and stuck himself with "dark bristles of the fir-boughs" in order to regain his masculinity and come to vital Lawrentian conclusion that "he did not want a woman--not in the least" (WL 100). Hermione's attempt to regain some semblance of authority by hitting Birkin is used against feminism by Lawrence as making the male wallow in his own masculinity so that the reader is repulsed by Hermione's action and pities the poor injured male.

Hermione's eventual descent into extreme passivity, evident when she wishes Birkin "had asked *her* to subserve him, to be his slave" (286), is notably paired with corpse-like language: Hermione's "long, grave, downward-looking face," so solemn in her disintegrating state, adds to her non-existence--"in the darkness, she did not exist"--while her "spent and ashen body" was like "a leaf upon a dying tree" (284). Hermione returns, as if from the grave, to warn Ursula of Birkin's power of masculine destruction. Birkin, and Lawrence, have conquered Hermione and her feminine power so that she *desires* to be passive and "willing to suffer," willing to, in fact, replace Ursula in

a "fatal," "disastrous" marriage to Birkin (288). Hermione's "horrible desire to prostrate herself before a man" (286) is deliberately created by Lawrence as a "positive" punishment for her female power.

Similarly, Minette, who is introduced as Julius Halliday's lover in chapter six, "Creme de Menthe," is also representative of the New Woman in *Women in Love*. But whereas Hermione represents the power associated with the women's movement, Minette is associated with the bodily and sexual freedom that movement helped grant, as her introduction implies: "At Birkin's table was a girl with bobbed, blonde hair cut short in the artist fashion, hanging straight and curving slightly inwards to her ears. . . . There was a delicacy, almost a floweriness in all her form, and at the same time a certain attractive grossness of spirit" (54-55). The liberation of women's sexuality during the nineteen-teens and twenties came with the rise in female political freedom. The reason for this freedom was the combination of what Caroline F. Ware terms an attack "simultaneously" of "Puritanism and bourgeois morality," and the "growing equality between men and women of which the success of the suffrage movement was only one manifestation" (59). Ware goes on to explain that the "'arrival' of Freud and psychoanalysis" brought "sex into the center of the stage" (59). As much importance as women's working and

political advancement deserve, one should not undervalue the importance of women's bodily freedom. John Lucas points out that "new modes of dress, of hair-style, new modes of behaviour, of smoking in public, of going unchaperoned to dances and parties: these were among the outward signs of change which between them suggested the possibility of further changes, still greater freedoms" (69). Minette's pregnancy and her flirtations with men position her as a sexually liberated woman; therefore, in Lawrence's antifeminism manifesto, she must be undermined by a male force.

In *Women in Love*, repulsion for the liberation of female sexuality manifests itself in the characters' hatred for Minette. The sexual experimentation that Lawrence explores in the novel is limited to the masculine realm, a classic example of the patriarchal double-standard: it is okay for men to explore homosexual desire, or to sleep with "loose" women, but female sexuality may only be explored when the male deems it appropriate. Gundrun's "remote virgin look" must reflect her sexless-purity, at least until Gerald dictates otherwise. However, Gerald's attraction to Minette is based on his ability to conquer her New Womanly freedom of body:

He felt an awful, enjoyable power over her, an instinctive cherishing very near to cruelty. For

she was a victim. He felt that she was in his power, and he was generous. The electricity was turgid and voluptuously rich, in his limbs. He would be able to destroy her utterly in the strength of his discharge. But she was waiting in her separation, given. (57)

Gerald is not sexually attracted to *Minette* but, rather, is sexually attracted to the thought of destroying her: "The sensation of her inchoate suffering roused the old sharp flame in him, a mordant pit, a passion almost of cruelty" (72). His desires are intently necrophilic:

Her inchoate look of a violated slave, whose fulfillment lies in her further and further violation, made his nerves quiver with acutely desirable sensation. After all, his was the only will, she was the passive substance of his will. (72)

Minette is repulsive because she desires to "capture Halliday, to have complete power over him" (73), so by turning Minette into a sexual-defiled corpse, Gerald punishes Minette. She then disappears until the end of the novel, leaving the reader with the moral that "real men, like Gerald, put her in her place too much" (74) by subjugating women to the powerless position of a corpse. For the remainder of the novel, Minette is spoken about as

if she were actually dead; Gerald speaks of her skin as if it were decaying: "There's a certain smell about the skin of those women, that in the end is sickening beyond words--even if you like it at first" (88). Later, Minette's head is spoken of in skeleton-like terms: "There was something curiously indecent about her small, longish, fair skull, particularly when the ears showed" (374).

Minette represents one of the themes of *Women in Love*: masculinity has the power to destroy femininity but kindly chooses not to. Like children with helpless fire-flies in their palms, the women "writhe" in "black subjugation" to the men (85). The "helpless" language of women permeates the text: Gundrun says of Gerald, "he was master" (112); Ursula asks of her relationship with Birkin, "how was one to get out, anyhow" (118); Gerald "grasped" Gundrun's "arm in his one hand, as if the hand were iron" (163); Ursula "seemed to have to struggle for her life" (177) and "sat crushed and obliterated in a darkness that was the border of death" (183); Gerald "seemed to believe in education through subjection and torment" (197) and holds Minette "in the hollow of his will" (72). The novel's fascination with female subjugation is closely linked with its fascination with death, as particularly seen in the horse scene of chapter nine, "Coal-Dust," in which Gerald, for the enjoyment of the conquest, scares his female horse into

thinking she will be killed by the train.

Birkin's statement reveals Lawrence's theories behind such female subjugation: "It takes two people to make a murder: a murderer and a murderee. And a murderee is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered" (27). Women, Lawrence posits, desire to be subjugated, and as such, desire to be killed. Therefore, when Gerald's virility and "subjection of his loins" make Gundrun "want to die, to die" (173), this wish for death is Gundrun's "secret desire." When Ursula frets about the "something regardless" in Birkin and worries that "he might kill her" (295), she actually *longs for* the death. During Gundrun and Gerald's love scene, Gundrun actually *likes* the feeling that "she would . . . die, under the vibrating, inhuman tension of his arms and his body" (323). When Gerald wishes "if only" he "could kill" (434) Gundrun, and she in turn "was being killed," she in fact should be *happy* because such death is a fulfillment of her deepest desire.

The construction of this feminine "desired" death is repeated in Lawrence's work, particularly in his poem "Cruelty and Love." As the farmer in the poem returns home "in triumph" with a dead rabbit, he places the "uplifted sword / Of his hand" against the woman's breasts and touches her mouth with fingers "which still smell grim of the

rabbit's fur," (29). The woman is then compared to the dead rabbit, creating a link between the animal's death, and the woman's desire to be dead:

God, I am caught in a snare!
 I know not what fine wire is round my throat,
 I only know I let him finger there
 My pulse of life, letting him nose like a stoat
 Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood:
 And down his mouth comes to my mouth, and down
 His dark bright eyes descend like a fiery hood
 Upon my mind: his mouth meets mine, and a flood
 Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
 Within him, die, and find death good. (29)

Clearly, Lawrence is clutching at manipulative straws here. In an attempt to maneuver his female reader into analytical submission, he twists necrophilic desire into a positive, if not *alluring* quality in a male: necrophilic desire is shown here as a characteristic of masculine strength, thus translating into a sign of phallic potency. This acceptance of necrophilic desire, in turn, makes the female more enticing, coordinating with Freud's notion that "as soon as the sexual object fulfils the conditions of being degraded, sensual feeling can have free play, considerable sexual capacity and a high degree of pleasure can be developed" (502).

Thus, necrophilic desire is not exclusively an imagined or enacted erotic "killing," nor exclusively the desire to have intercourse with a passive female; but, as Lawrence Kramer points out, such desire for death "spiritualizes the woman by infinitely deferring the effect of her orgasm, at once offering her sexuality to the man's gaze and denying it to her enjoyment" (194-95). Desiring women to be, or turning them into, dead, passive objects is the ultimate way to gain ascendancy over them and to nullify their power. Yet Lawrence's manipulation does not hide the antifeminist manifesto of *Women in Love*, for the feminist "carrion-smelling psychoanalysing nose" is at work (*Mr. Noon* 205). Perhaps Lawrence fears that his subconscious inhabits what Ursula remonstrates in Birkin: "What you are is a foul deathly thing, obscene, that's what you are, obscene and perverse. . . . No, you want *yourself*, dirt and death-- that's what you want. You are so *perverse*, so death-eating" (299). Perhaps Lawrence fears, as well, that we too may "sniff" this out.

CHAPTER IV

"THE RATTLE OF BONES":

DEATH AND THE BURIAL OF THE FEMININE

IN T. S. ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND*

The Waste Land is the quintessential necrophilic text, as its premise is built around the intrinsic link between sexuality, sexual desire, and death. From the beginning of the text, with its reference to the Cumaean Sibyl and her decaying body, the feminine is associated with death. The repeated references to drowning and the images of water in the poem--symbols of the female body--situate *The Waste Land* as a work of and about a feminine sexuality that is, in Eliot's words, "neither living nor dead" (lines 39-40); all men who are "hanged" by such femininity should "fear death by water" (55). The text's homoerotic and heteroerotic desires express themselves within the scope of unrecognized and suppressed feminine sexual desire; the androgynous, yet masculine Tiresias omnipotently watches over the necrophilic rape of the typist--she, being lifeless, "indifferen[t]" (242), and "hardly aware" (250) while the rapist "assaults" (239) and "explor[es]" with "no defense" (240). Eliot thus constructs masculinity as a violent assault on passive

feminine sexuality. The message is evident: "drowning" femininity "can harm no one" (390) if it is "obedient to controlling hands" (421-2).

Motivated, perhaps, by concern for honoring authorial intent, critics often speak of the desire for death in vague terms. We, as critics, instinctively react against offending the author's intentions; and Eliot had many opinions about how his work should be interpreted, particularly in his later critical essays. In fact, Eliot's near-maniacal need to control interpretation took him so far as to write a text, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, to explain exactly what the limitations of interpretation ought to be. As Sanford Schwartz notes, "Eliot describes the artist in terms of a total detachment, or 'death' of the personality, a 'death' that makes possible the creation of the new world" (205). Nevertheless, Eliot's efforts to guide interpretation of his and others' poetry should not, and ultimately cannot, "block" the use of his texts as representative of a larger social and literary tradition. Therefore, Eliot's own interpretation of death or, more specifically, of the death-instinct as applied to the male-dominated consciousness of his poetry, is not necessarily relevant to the analysis of its meaning. That is, one need not take into account Eliot's intentions to garner a viable and accurate interpretation of the social

and political implications of his writing. What Eliot foreordains death to mean in his work is of little consequence. The text *is* what it represents, not what it is intended to be. Whether or not Eliot *intended* his text to serve as a platform for necrophilic discussion does not merit a dispute about the validity of holding the discussion.

The process of coping with the psychological ramifications of feminism manifests itself in the modernist death obsession. Within the modernist "death elegy" is a similar epic form reminiscent of a "happier" time when men were intellectually dominant, most evident in Joyce's, Pound's, and Eliot's Homeric references. Gregory S. Jay points out that "*The Waste Land*, the *Cantos*, *Ulysses*--the texts of modernism--would try their hand at weaving 'the inextricable nexus of different times'" (43). Notably, this "weaving" is almost exclusively the work of male authors, revealing their desire to uphold the patriarchal canon and intellectual male dominance, and thereby subverting female power, whether consciously or unconsciously. Lawrence's "kill or be killed" battle with feminism, overtly expressed in *Women in Love*, is equally applicable to Joyce and Eliot. Bloom fantasizes about Molly's death because she threatens his phallic importance by her affair with Boylan (a result of female sexual liberation). Likewise, *The Waste Land* can

be read as a lamentation on the loss of phallic power at the hands of intellectual and social "inferiors."

In Joyce and Lawrence, the battle with feminine sexuality is internalized so that it is fought not only with the "othered" enemy of woman, but with the feminine tendencies that reside within the masculine subconscious. In *Ulysses*, Bloom and Stephen explore their homoerotic desires, as do Gerald and Birkin in *Women in Love*, representing both a fear of the "non-masculine" forms of traditional sexuality (those which reside outside of patriarchal notions of male-dominant heterosexuality), and a usurping of feminine sexuality for its abetting of phallic power. In other words, in order to destroy the power of feminine sexuality represented in homoeroticism, one takes possession of that feminine sexuality, consequently nullifying its power. Homoeroticism is representative of feminine sexuality while simultaneously being exclusively masculine, thus giving multiplied potency to phallic power.

In *The Waste Land*, homoerotic desire is represented by the poem's construction of a masculine psyche that is isolated from its female characters. In this narrative construction, Colleen Lamos sees an exploration of "perversion," for which she finds her definition in Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*:

Freud claims that "perversions are sexual

activities which either (a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) linger over immediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim."

(*Deviant Modernism* 23)

Therefore, sexual exploration of *The Waste Land* cannot reside solely in the heterosexual realm, for the sexual tensions in the poem are not leading toward "sexual union" of male and female, as is particularly demonstrated in the impotent androgyny of Tiresias.

Tiresias is undoubtedly a "man," but his sexuality is androgynous, so his omnipotent observation in the poem reflects the sexual "perversion" both of the poem itself and of the modernist era (by claiming female sexual power): "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see" (218-19). Tiresias' usurping of feminine sexuality is an attempt to correct rising feminine social power--what Lamos finds as Eliot's concern about "the supposed effeminacy of art and what Eliot called the 'monopolisation of literature by women'" (*Deviant Modernism* 27). At the same time, Tiresias, because of his androgyny, simultaneously represents fear of and desire for homoeroticism. Lamos finds that Eliot's

concern with "the newly designated 'homosexual'" (*Deviant Modernism* 28) is evident in his reference to Walter Pater: "Eliot's association of Pater with homosexual perversion is evident in the drafts of *The Waste Land* where Fresca, sitting in her bath, reads Pater along with the openly gay John Addington Symonds and the closeted Vernon Lee" (27). Jay finds a similar homoerotic influence in Eliot's work: "The degree to which Eliot may have shared Whitman's tumultuous engagement with the body, and even its unsanctioned desires, is measurable by [Eliot's] incredible assertion, passed off in the lowest key, that Whitman's were 'the ordinary desires of the flesh'" (170). Eliot's references to such "deviant" desire, and his preoccupation with defining sexuality, manifest themselves in *The Waste Land* in an atmosphere of sexual perversion. Though the impotent Tiresias seemingly projects an aura of sexual disengagement in *The Waste Land*, he in fact represents a preoccupation with "unnatural" sexuality, not only through his voyeuristic observation of the typist's love scene in the third section but through his commandeering of female sexual power in his androgynous body.

In his work *Sexuality and the Devil*, Edward J. Tejerian finds a connection between homosexual desire and a desire for female submission, especially in his case study of "Frank": "In his sexual fantasies, [Frank] was dominant,

'the king,' with the woman being submissive, doing anything for him" (56). Tejjirian finds that, when coping with homosexual desires, men often develop a "Devil obsession" (56). Men like Frank, who have what Tejjirian calls a "homosexual wish," feel that "it would be easier with gay men" than with women, as such men "knew what they liked about him, and because they were men he could understand them better" (56). By applying Tejjirian's findings to *The Waste Land*, one can surmise that Eliot is using a deduction similar to Frank's notion that it would simply "be easier" if sexuality were relegated to men; the atmosphere of *The Waste Land*, with its usurping of female sexuality for male gain, manifests fear of female sexuality in its direct attempt at its suppression.

Lamos finds a similar negative construction of homoeroticism in *The Waste Land*, stating that "Just as Headstone and Riderhood embrace under water, and just as Tennyson warmly expresses his love for Hallam when the latter is cold in the grave, so homoeroticism in Eliot's poetry invariably takes the form of necrophilia" (*Deviant Modernism* 114). However, it is my belief that this necrophilic connection to homoeroticism is a reaction against the innate feminine sexuality that homoeroticism represents. As pointedly represented in the typist's scene, the strength of female sexuality is nullified by

appropriating its power to masculine control.

John T. Mayer points out that "the memory" of *The Waste Land* "is saturated with death and the loss of intimates" (271). Certainly, there is an unmistakable eroticism of death throughout the poem, especially where death and destructive love are related to romance: Eliot's allusions to Tristan and Isolde, *The Tempest*, Tereus and Philomena, Ariel's song, Antony and Cleopatra. Love, it appears from the allusions, achieves nirvana when it is on the verge of self-destruction. One would assume, then, that to hasten the achievement of this nirvana, one can force such destruction. When combined with a desire for annihilation of female sexual (and social) power, this ultimate union is speedily achieved by female submissive death. While the omnipotent Tiresias watches, the young man "assaults" the typist (239) as she lies passive and unresisting in a corpse-like state:

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

Bestows one final patronising kiss. (239-47)

Tiresias, through his omnipotence, represents the reader's conscience. However, it is a *masculine* reader who is being represented; despite Tiresias' androgyny and his leading "two lives" (male and female), he is at his core an "old man." Consequently, within his consciousness there is a supremacy of masculinity over femininity. Thus, Tiresias is dominantly masculine and, from the nominative allusion, representative of the patriarchal power that controls Philomena, the typist, and the female reader. Theoretically, Tiresias can stop the rape-like actions of the "young man carbuncular" but, by choosing not to, endorses the assault of the typist, thus revealing Eliot's support of and, in fact, encouragement of masculine dominance over feminine sexuality. As well, the language in the above scene suggests a passivity of the typist that goes beyond that of an unwilling female. The man's "vanity requires no response, / And makes a welcome of indifference," suggesting the receipt of erotic pleasure from corpse-like passivity. Tiresias' allusion to "walk[ing] among the lowest of the dead" reinforces the necrophilic imagery, while at the same time reaffirming the female as "the lowest" of the genders.

The typist scene works within the framework of *The Waste Land* to explore the eroticism of female death in

history. D. W. Harding points out that "the references to *The Tempest*--'This music crept by me upon the waters,' 'Musing upon the king my father's death,' 'Those are pearls that were his eyes'--bring a romantic story and a rather romanticized handling of death" (20). Harding goes on to suggest that the "reference to the romantic Tristan and Isolde story . . . reinforces the allusions to the romantically perfect love of Ferdinand and Miranda" (20). As well, Schwartz finds that the Tristan and Isolde reference is a "moment . . . rendered primarily in negative terms--loss of voice, sight, consciousness. . . . We find not two lovers 'melting into incoherent unconsciousness of their isolated selves,' but one person" (190). More pointedly, however, Eliot's references to seductive "dead and dying women" (Kramer 194) are evident in the second section of *The Waste Land*, as Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley indicate:

In the second part of *The Waste Land*, we have an example of how one poet transformed his material into art. The focus in "A Game of Chess" is primarily on women. Taking doomed female characters from art, history, myth, and contemporary life, Eliot creates a cubistic woman, a multiperspectival portrait of women in waste

lands, of wasted women in history and nature.

(95)

While the references to Cleopatra, Ophelia, Dido, Eve, and Queen Gertrude, among others, form a literal basis of women "violated or betrayed or exploited by men" (Brooker and Bentley 95-96), the section utilizes the language of death and passivity to glorify such female subjugation.

The otherworldly atmosphere of "A Game of Chess" places its female inhabitants not only in the realm of "other" but, more accurately, in a domain that exists after death, complete with cupids and green-orange flames of the "sylvan scene" (98) that Satan encountered in Eden (North 8). The atmosphere is simultaneously heavenly and hellish, as are the women who inhabit the room. The "synthetic" perfumes of women leave one "troubled, confused" and "drowned" (87-9). Above the mantle, the picture of "Philomel" hangs as an iconic reminder both of the cruelty of women and of the masculine responsibility to silence them. The nightingale's song of "Jug Jug" (103), slang for sexual intercourse in the Elizabethan era (Gross), punctuates the necrophilic undertone of the scene with its aural suggestion of a person drowning. In an original draft of *The Waste Land*, Eliot followed the nightingale's song with "into the dirty ear of death; lust" (11), which suggests a direct necrophilic connection: words that have the simultaneous suggestion of

"sex sex" and asphyxiation are whispered into a corpse-like ear and to "other withered stumps of time" (104). The climate of the room is tomb-like, suggesting that the women who occupy it--the "staring forms" (105)--are gathered together after their death "where the dead men lost their bones" (116). Hence, the lines "Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak. / What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? / I never know what you are thinking. Think" (112-14), when combined with the above-mentioned effect, resemble a necrophilic love scene between a corpse and a violator. Curiously, the words are applicable to either the corpse or the rapist, as neither is likely to speak to the other. As the love scene comes to a close, the women are left in their corpse-like state waiting for another necrophilic violation: "Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door" (138).

The suggestion of a necrophilic love scene is not so outlandish as it might otherwise seem given that the scene is followed by the curious passage in which a woman is described in blatant corpse-like language: Lil needs "to get [herself] some teeth" (145), and "ought to be ashamed . . . to look so antique" (156). The suggestion of necrophilic images in "A Game of Chess" becomes less incredible when the passage is examined: Lil is literally a corpse (her teeth have already rotted away) who waits for

her husband to return to have a "good time" with her body (148). Eliot's choice of the word "antique" seems notably at odds with the fact that Lil is thirty-one years old. As well, the suggestion that she has overdosed on pills to bring about an abortion--"It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said. / (She's had five already)" (159-60)--strengthens the connection between sex (pregnancy) and death (abortion). In addition, the punctuated call of "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" throughout the passage suggests the ringing of a death bell for both Lil and the women of the tavern. Finally, the last lines emphasize the necrophilic connection as Eliot pointedly tells the dead women "good night, sweet ladies" (an allusion to Ophelia's suicide), thus removing any mystery as to the passive state of the women in "A Game of Chess" (172).

Booker and Bentley find that the feminine structure of "A Game of Chess" is not limited to that section alone but, rather, femininity is a vital part of the "transcendent knowing" of *The Waste Land*: "The title . . . is feminine, the epigraph deals with a female knower (the Sibyl), the first lines focus on Marie, and the first section has Madame Sosostris and her tarot cards at its center" (96). As well, the allusion to masculine dominance over femininity is not limited to the second section. The necrophilic implications of the poem continue in the third section not only with the

typist's corpse-like rape, but through the references to death, cemeteries, and eternal punishment for sexual transgression. Michael North explains in his notes to *The Waste Land* that the title of the third section, "The Fire Sermon," takes its name from "a sermon preached by Buddha against the things of this world, all figured as consuming fires" (11). This reference and others in the section--to Parsifal's defenses against female temptation (North 12) and to the "sensual temptations" of Augustine's youth (North 15)--reveal a preoccupation with the lure of female sexuality and strengthen the notion of women as sources of evil desire.

The second section of "The Fire Sermon" reinforces an exploration of death and necrophilic desire through the line "white bodies naked on the low damp ground" which, notably, is situated after a line containing the word "death" and before one that reads "bones cast in a little low dry garret" (192-94). The concern with corpses is then followed by the reference to Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (196), the contents of which suggest that one engage in sexual intercourse before "worms shall try / that long-preserved virginity" (Marvell, lines 28-9), thus assembling a necrophilic construction between the "white bodies naked" and the "bones cast in a little low dry garret." The song of the Rhine-maidens further emphasizes passive female

sexuality, as a maiden "raised her knees" (has intercourse) in a coffin-like "narrow canoe" while in a "supine" (passive) position (294-5). The allusions to the dangerous female sexuality of Diana in line 198, and to the murdered La Pia beginning on line 293, clarify the reason for the desire for female death with a "kill-or-be-killed" mantra similar to that of Lawrence in *Women in Love*: female sexuality is a dangerous temptation; therefore, that sexuality should either be usurped by masculinity or rendered passive, i.e., dead. Female sexuality remains seductive after death in its passivity, thus arousing necrophilic desire which will leave the male "burning" (308) in hell for his inability to resist sexual temptation: "To Carthage then I came / Burning, burning, burning, burning / O Lord Thou pluckest me out" (307-9).

The necrophilic explorations in "A Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon" are framed by the preoccupation with death in the first and last sections of *The Waste Land*. While necrophilic desire is not overtly explored in "The Burial of the Dead" and "What the Thunder Said," both sections support the examination of corpse-love established in sections two and three. The poem begins as it ends: in an exploration of dead and dying sexuality.

In the first section there is an examination, as the title suggests, of the "Burial of the Dead." The title

establishes the poem's preoccupation with corpses, while Marie, the poem's first speaker, reveals the fascination with female sexuality. The connection of Marie to death begins *The Waste Land's* exploration of necrophilic desire. As with the women in "A Game of Chess," there is a suggestion that Marie is speaking from her grave: the "lilacs out of the dead land" (2) bloom from her "grave" as she reminisces about her former life of sledding and coffee. Metaphorically, Marie is in the dead "winter" (18) of life, i.e., she is corpse-like. Eliot then establishes necrophilic desire as a sexual temptation, clarifying Marie's position in the grave by asking "what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish?" (19-20), and beckoning the reader to explore necrophilic desire: "(Come in under the shadow of this red rock), / And I will show you something different" (26-27). The corpse-like seduction of "come to me" is directly connected to death through the reference to Eliot's unpublished poem "The Death of St. Narcissus" (North 6) and to the warning that the speaker "will show you fear in a handful of dust" (30). The death connection is continued with the hyacinth, which reveals "a cry of woe, in its petals" (North 6), and with the allusion to the "neither / Living nor dead" Tristan (39-40).

The gruesome exploration of necrophilia is then addressed by the masculine voice of the poem who, in his

reference to canto 3 of Dante's *Inferno*, suggests that he is "equally without blame and without praise" for his sexual temptation, for "there is nothing that can be done" about his condition (North 7). Eliot makes reference to this allusion by accusing the reader of similar sexual corruption--"You! hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable,--mon frère!" (76)--thus suggesting that we all have "corpse[s] . . . planted" (71) in our gardens. In other words, we all have sexual skeletons in our closets. Hence, Eliot universalizes necrophilic desire by directly calling into question the reader's "purity" in a manner similar to Joyce's universalization of "abnormal" desire through the use of ambiguous pronouns.

Similarly, in the fifth and last section, "What the Thunder Said," the concentration on seductive death and dying continues. However, this section focuses on a repentance for necrophilic desires, for "We who were living are now dying" (329). We ourselves do not wish to be defiled after death and as such are repulsed by our own corpse-like potential, by our own "Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit" (339). Lamos points out that "according to Lyndall Gordon, 'all of [Eliot's] adult life he had been haunted by a sense of guilt--most frequently . . . sexual guilt,' which found 'relief' upon his conversion by his adoption of a program of spiritual

discipline, as though he were eager to be punished" (*Deviant Modernism* 76). We are enjoined to repent and absolve ourselves of the sins of sexual pleasure (as Eliot would in his own life) so that we can recognize Christ, as referenced in the line "Who is the third who walks always beside you?" (359).

Lamos cites Harriet Davidson's finding that *The Waste Land* "lacks 'respect for tradition,' is fascinated with 'mutation, degradation, and fragmentation,' split between a longing for 'improper' sexual desires' and a wish to be 'rid' of them" (*Deviant Modernism* 108-9). In the last section of the poem, Davidson's notions prove true: Eliot renounces his necrophilic desire, for the "woman" with her "long black hair" (377) who has "bats with baby faces" (379) crawling around her is replaced with "reminiscent bells" (383) and "voices singing" (384). The "decayed hole" (385) and the "tumbled graves" (387) offer no allure, as now the "dry bones can harm no one" (390). Near the close of the poem, Eliot again addresses the reader's own conscience by the reference to the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* in which God contends that one must have empathy for "the demons, who are cruel" (North 18), suggesting that Eliot is asking the reader for forgiveness for the "unnatural" desires in the text. In order for the reader to forgive "the awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never

retract" (403-4), one must denounce what Eliot finds as a humanistic "insist[ence] on . . . the radical privacy of all experience" (North 19). Thus, the poem comes full circle, from the seduction of necrophilia through the corpse-like Marie at the beginning to the renouncing of such desire and the turn toward God at the end. This necrophilic movement can be seen in the very structure of the poem, for, as Jay points out, *The Waste Land* "descen[ds] into the other world of ghosts and memories" and "ends . . . in the harbor of a beatified lady" (175).

Eliot's eroticism of corpse-like women finds its precedent in many authors, in particular, Edgar Allan Poe. Given Eliot's analysis of Poe in his 1948 work "From Poe to Valéry," Eliot was certainly familiar with the sexual subtext of Poe's work. The psychological necrophilia in Poe's work undoubtedly did not go unnoticed by Eliot: given Eliot's characteristic interweaving of texts, Poe's presence in *The Waste Land* can not be discounted. Poe's treatment of women in such tales as "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and the Dupin tales is horrifying from a feminist perspective. Joan Daylan perfectly describes the feminist dilemma with Poe: "What are we to do with Poe's bleeding, raped, decapitated, dead and resurrected women, brutalized, buried, cemented in cellars, and stuffed up chimneys?" (qtd. in Kot 400). Even more distressing, as Paula Kot points

out, is that "Poe relates these deaths to his aesthetic practice, asserting in 'The Philosophy of Composition' that 'the death . . . of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world'" (388). Poe explicitly puts this philosophy into practice in his literary works, particularly in "Ligeia," which dwells on the alluring female form by "fetishizing" the death of a woman. Even after death, Poe's women are still subject to the patriarchal construction of femininity by being presented only in terms of their bodies. Such subjugation is evident in the narrator's preoccupation with the deceased Ligeia:

My memory flew back, (oh, with what intensity of regret!) To Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed, I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love. (177)

The narrator's obsession with the state of Ligeia's corpse as living flesh manifests itself as erotic desire. In death, Ligeia becomes all the more alluring: "But in death only, was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection" (173). Ligeia's sexuality remains potent after death so that, even in her "verdant decay," she is tantalizing: "Yet although the external abbey, with its

verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way, with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows" (175).

Jay finds a similar corpse-obsession shared by Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Eliot:

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, an entire chapter revolves around the dead figure of Judge Pyncheon. . . . The narrator's account is nearly hysterical. . . . He resembles the uncanny murderers in Poe's tales who compulsively confess, in tones of glee and horror, their no-longer-secret crimes. (19)

Likewise, Eliot relies on texts of the past to feed the interpretation of his poetry. His technique is similar to Poe's weaving of Gothic romance into his narratives: "Gothic romance and the tales of Poe disclose the past as a nightmare, a series of figures that haunts the consciousness of the present" (Jay 43). Jay finds that this "weaving," utilized in both Eliot's and Poe's works, "cultivates a sensory paranoia and morbid acuteness" (102). Lamos points out that Eliot felt that "Poe's 'arrested development' . . . hint[s] none too vaguely at certain sexual, especially autoerotic, vices" (*Deviant Modernism* 32).

Undoubtedly, women in *The Waste Land* are connected to

death, as Jay notes: "Women . . . undergo a further repression, linked as they now are to death and nonidentity" (178). In examining Eliot's other works, one quickly finds that such female repression is a recurring theme. Lamos notes that the "erotics" of Eliot's religious conversion--what she terms the "religious experience of domination and submission" (*Deviant Modernism* 76)--manifest themselves in his 1914 poem "The Love Song of Saint Sebastian," where "the climax of the speaker's devotion to the woman" is achieved by "her strangulation" (*Deviant Modernism* 77). The narrator, in effect, proclaims "I should love you the more because I mangled you" (*Deviant Modernism* 77). As well, in "Whispers of Immortality" Eliot notes the literary tradition for the preoccupation with death: "Webster was much possessed by death / And saw the skull beneath the skin" (*Complete Poems* 32). Further allusions to death and passive femininity pervade Eliot's work--the "atmosphere of Juliet's tomb" in the house of "A Portrait of a Lady" (*Complete Poems* 8), or Prufrock's assertion that "There will be time to murder and create" (*Complete Poems* 4)--that reveal a disturbing captivation with death and female subordination.

Yet, one need not crucify Eliot but, rather, blame the society which feeds such tendencies. Eliot and his poetry are a part of the social consciousness that desires women to

be passive, unresisting objects. For, though "it has been generally agreed that the modern world is the waste land" (Drain 30), one needn't resolve that the "waste" is women.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION:

RECLAIMING THE FEMININE SEXUAL SELF

To use Juliet Mitchell's words, "the proverbial passivity of women is really quite a simple issue" (115). Certainly, as Mitchell notes, masculinity is equated with activity, and femininity with passivity (116). But that simple definition of gender dynamics does not reflect the magnitude of the subversion women face in modern society. As Luce Irigaray explains, feminine pleasure remains "inarticulate in language" and, more importantly, "in its own language," resulting in a strict forbidding of women "to express their own pleasure" (571). Biblically subordinated as a by-product of a *man's* rib and culturally represented as a silent meat-like product in modern mass-consumption society (as in AC/DC's objectifying lyric "knocking me out with those American thighs"), women are consistently positioned as the prostrate in the gender hierarchy. The objectification of the female body, and the dictated control over its "acceptable" presentation, has led to this female sexual "inarticulation." Sadly, as performance artist Arlene Raven points out, the female body still remains

trapped in this subordination: "It is extremely clear to me that women's bodies are a huge controversy in this country and who's going to control them. Is it going to be women themselves or is it going to be old men?"

When Kate Chopin published *The Awakening* in 1899, the critical responses to her portrayal of a sexually liberated woman were almost comical in their blatant protests against female sexuality: "The worst of such stories is that they will come into the hands of the youth, leading them to dwell on things that only matured persons can understand, and promoting unholy imaginations and unclean desires" ("Books of the Week" 53). What, exactly, is so "unholy" about Edna's sexuality? Is the 1899 reviewer for the *Providence Sunday Journal* afraid that women, after reading *The Awakening*, will suddenly discover that they have sexually responsive bodies under their neck- and ankle-covering dresses? Unfortunately, this reviewer's fear of female sexuality is not an anomaly. Naomi Wolf, in her study of female beauty, finds that female sexuality has been portrayed as a "disease" in need of surgical correction:

Normal female sexuality was a disease in the nineteenth century, just as normal breasts are operable today. The role of the nineteenth-century gynecologist was the "detection, judgment, and punishment" of sexual diseases and "social

crime." Pelvic surgery became widespread as a "social reflex," since "orgasm was disease and cure was its destruction." (244)

If female sexual pleasure was so much a threat in Victorian culture, it is no wonder that portrayals of feminine erotic desire like those in *The Awakening* were deemed socially destructive and "hardly . . . fit for publication" ("Books of the Week" 53). More importantly, it is no wonder Edna has to die in a realization and ironic fulfillment of the societal desire for female sexual passivity. Similar "deaths," as we have seen, face female characters in *Ulysses*, *Women in Love*, and *The Waste Land*--though without the irony that Chopin invests in her portrayal of Edna. Sadly, comparable "deaths" continue today.

The necrophilic connections to the texts discussed in the previous chapters indicate a sad state of gender affairs, not only in *fin de siècle* America and Europe, but in the present day. Unfortunately, with successive rises in female social and sexual power come attempts to limit that power by the dominant androcentric culture. Women's bodies are not yet their own. Certainly, if one examines the modern notion of female "beauty," it becomes evident that the necrophilic impulse has not gone away. The cultural necessity to defend Calista Flockhart's skeletal body, while at the same time criticizing Rosie O'Donnell's girth (and

ignoring her multi-million-dollar philanthropic endeavors), blatantly expose the media practice of wanting women to remain ever close to death. We have translated the word "healthy" to mean deathly thin and "robust" to mean grossly obese. Likewise, a woman is sociologically chastised for endeavors which are "masculine": the standard for female beauty is not based on the strength of a professional woman basketball player, nor on the mind of the woman president of a financial firm. Sadly, an honest look at gender reveals that not much has changed in regard to definitions of female beauty since Joyce, Lawrence, or Eliot sat down to write their works.

A few months ago I was discussing with a colleague the changes over the centuries, or lack thereof, in what is considered "beautiful" in a woman. He was adamant that "no average man ever found the Rubenesque woman beautiful." When I replied that the waifish woman of today does not necessarily indicate how a woman instinctively cares to look, he responded that I "obviously don't know anything about women." Perhaps I don't. But femininity, in all its manifestations, should not exist solely as a pawn for increasing masculinity, nor should femininity which does not conform to societal or personal notions of acceptability be negated.

The only way to transcend the strictures imposed on

female sexuality is, as Irigaray suggests, to "step outside the system of male equivalence" (paraphrased in Rivkin 347). Women must "fall back on themselves" and learn to value their sexuality instead of loathing it and conforming it to the expectations of phallic desire (Rivkin 347). It is only with such an appropriation and reclaiming of the female body that modern society can avoid Wolf's example of the tragedy that can occur with extreme phobias of female sexuality: "One of Victorian Dr. Cushing's patients, relieved by the scalpel of the 'temptation' to masturbate, wrote, 'A window has been opened in heaven'" (244). Women today, unlike those in *Ulysses*, *Women in Love*, and *The Waste Land*, must find a pathway to "heaven" that is not reached by death at the hands of men.

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