“Stately Release”: How the Abject Reproductive System Represents the Lost Future in Ulysses

Mantanont, Boonyawad

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Boonyawad Mantanont – S3633349

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First reader: Dr. R.A. Clemens

Second Reader: Prof.dr. P.T.M.G. Liebregts

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1. Introduction

> And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind and O! then the Roman candle burst and It was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads and they shed and ah ! they were all greeny dewy stars falling with golden, O so lively! O so soft, sweet, soft! (Joyce 477)

In *The Cambridge Companion to Ulysses,* Joseph Brooker gives two words to describe *Ulysses*: difficult and obscene (22). The latter comes from the legal prosecution that nearly spelt an end to the novel after the first serialisation in *The Little Review*, an American literary magazine, from March 1918 to December 1920. After publishing Episode Thirteen, "Nausicaa," which contains the above excerpt, *The Little Review* underwent an obscenity trial in the United States. The reason behind the legal issue came from the scene where the protagonist, Leopold Bloom, a thirty-eight-year-old advertising canvasser, masturbates and achieves an orgasm at the sight of Gerty MacDowell, a twenty-two-year-old unmarried Roman Catholic woman, who shows her legs on the Sandymount Strand in Dublin. This sexual scene raised moral concerns and led to the obscenity trial that banned the publication of *Ulysses* in the United States from 1920 to 1933 because the American authorities believed it would instil in the American readers "impure and lustful thoughts" ("Court Lifts"). Taking

place in early twentieth-century Ireland, where Roman Catholicism was a dominant religious institution with the power to regulate social laws and order, Bloom's masturbation is a sin that disobeys and challenges the Church authorities. As the novel unfolds, it is revealed that Bloom is a father who lost an infant son, Rudy Bloom, eleven years ago. In consequence, he stops having sexual intercourse with his wife for fear of fathering another weak child, a discursive framing to address infant mortality, which was high during that time. Thus, his masturbation is not just an act of sexual gratification but an implication of reproductive futurism, a queer theory proposed by Lee Edelman in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004). Reproductive futurism is a concept that explains how heteronormative society places value on the Child and future. Moreover, I will apply Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection from her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), which theorises that bodily waste has a quality of abjectness which threatens the subjectivity of one's identity. I will analyse how the seminal release from Bloom's ejaculation is considered abject which deconstructs the world of the Symbolic. Bloom's masturbation is considered a waste in Irish Catholicism because it does not contribute to the reproductive future. In this thesis, I will make a connection between Edelman's reproductive futurism and Kristeva's abjection theories to analyse how the abject reproductive system in *Ulysses,* including masturbation, menstruation, childbirth and motherhood, represents the heteroreproductive social discourse and the sense of lost future.

Regarded as one of the greatest modernist works in English literature, James Joyce's Ulysses (1922) appropriates Homer's The *Odyssey* and Odysseus' twenty-year return to Ithaca after the Trojan War. The novel follows a day in the life of Leopold Bloom on 16 June 1904. Leopold is a middle-aged man with a Jewish background married to Marion "Molly" Bloom, an opera singer from Gibraltar. The Blooms have two children, Millicent "Milly"

Bloom, a fifteen-year-old daughter, and Rudy Bloom, a son who died on 9 January 1894, eleven days after he was born. On the surface, Bloom spends the day strolling around the city of Dublin, attends a funeral, visits a few buildings, sits on the Sandymount Strand where he masturbates, and meets Stephen Dedalus, an aspiring young artist who now works as a primary school teacher. Bloom later saves Stephen when he gets drunk and visits a brothel and the two form a father-son surrogacy. The day ends when Bloom returns home to his wife. However, the characters' interior monologues, namely Leopold, Molly, and Stephen's, reveal their unresolved past that still profoundly affects the present. As parents, Bloom and Molly still grieve over Rudy's death. Especially Bloom, who stops having sexual intercourse with his wife for eleven years for fear of bringing another infant death. According to Declan Kiberd, his fear stems from a belief that a weak child comes from a father who passes on a bad seed (1007). This gives the reason why Bloom seeks an alternative form of sexual release and masturbates instead of having full sexual intercourse because he still misses and mourns over his son. Meanwhile, Stephen, the protagonist from Joyce's first novel, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916) has family conflicts as he is estranged from his father and still grieves for his mother's death. A former Roman Catholic turned agnostic, he refuses to kneel by his mother's deathbed, which leaves him with a great sense of guilt, which he tries to overcome.

In parallel, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus are father and son trying to find a surrogate to fill the past's void and move forward to the future. However, the loss of Rudy imprisons him in the negative reproductive futurity where he loses the sense of moving forward. I see Bloom's fear of creating and losing another son in *Ulysses* resonates with the central argument in Edelman's reproductive futurism because Bloom lives in a heteronormative society where the medical and religious settings constitute a belief that the

society reproduces itself through the figure of the Child. The Child represents a collective sense of the future and continuity. The capital letter in the word "Child" in *No Future* and in this thesis is a conceptualisation and representation of children. Here, Edelman explains that procreation is an integral part of politics that affirms and authenticates social order (3). In this case, the Child becomes a simulacrum of hope and futurity. Thus, when a young life ends abruptly, it shatters "the social fantasy of a reproductive future that provides the foundation to all political visions" (Fontenot 253). This socio-political view intrinsically supports heterosexual couples and treats other forms of sexual acts, such as masturbation and homosexuality, as inferior because they are biologically unable to fulfil a re-producing society. However, Edelman argues that this queerness that defies the social duty to procreate is "the place of the social order's death drive: a place, to be sure, of abjection, expressed in the stigma, sometimes fatal…" (3). The value that society places on a child becomes the weight that pressures as well as traumatises Bloom to procreate at the same time. His inability to bring the next generation into the world is a stigma and lack of manhood, a queerness that exists outside the hegemonic norm. In addition, he lives in a society where Roman Catholicism has the power to mandate the population's way of living. Therefore, when Bloom stops having sexual intercourse with his wife and only masturbates, he challenges and reveals the socio-political agenda of the Irish Roman Catholic masculinity that governs him.

Male ejaculation is not the only form of reproductive act that is represented in *Ulysses.* Another recurring image that represents lost futurity is the female reproductive system: menstruation, childbirth and motherhood. Similar to ejaculation, these are heavily coded by religion and social taboos. These two processes of the female reproductive system appear throughout the novel. For instance, Molly's monologue in "Penelope" is disrupted by the onset of her period, Bloom is always curious about women's menstrual cycle, and Mina

Purefoy, Bloom's family friend, is three days into labour. Although menstruation is a sign of a fertile reproductive system, it can also be read as a sign of failed impregnation. This contention between potential life and missed opportunity in the female body resembles the discourse of lost futurity Bloom faces with his ejaculation. Bodily fluids that the human body creates during reproductive processes represent lost futurity because they are life-defining moments. This ambivalence in masturbation, menstruation, and childbirth that is depicted through an image of the leaky subject is what Julia Kristeva calls 'the abject'. The abject is what is released from the body that threatens to break down a symbolic meaning, causing a loss in distinction between subject and object or between self and other. Therefore, Rudy's death, Bloom's masturbation, Molly's menstruation, and Mina's labour are considered abjections because they oscillate between the living and the dead.

In the first chapter, I will examine the publication history of Ulysses and the contemporaneous sexological context that shaped the societal view of the reproductive system. The historical information, including the public perception and obscenity trial, reveals the prevalence of reproductive futurism discourse among contemporaneous readerships in the United States and Europe. The second chapter focuses on the methodology, explaining how I connect Edelman and Kristeva's theories and develop a new theoretical framework that sees the reproductive system in *Ulysses* as a form of abjection. The third chapter is the analysis of Bloom's masturbation as abject, which is followed by the fourth chapter that explains how Bloom's surrogate bond with Stephen and his paternal family background represents negative futurity. The fifth chapter analyses how the reproductive futurism discourse is utilised by religious and medical authorities to enforce reproduction on the female body in *Ulysses.* Lastly, I will conclude how the abject reproductive system in

Ulysses conveys a sense of a lost future and how it reveals the discourse of reproductive futurism in Irish Roman Catholicism.

1. The Social and Historical Context of *Ulysses*

The aim of this chapter is to provide prevalent contemporaneous historical, religious, and medical context when *Ulysses* was published. This information is significant because it proves how reproductive futurism is not only applicable to the context of Irish Roman Catholicism within the novel but has a wider prevalence in societies across Europe and the United States. Reproductive futurity has led to the stigmatisation and pathologisation of non-reproductive sexual behaviours such as masturbation and homosexual intercourse in Western societies. Therefore, masturbation, especially in Episode Thirteen, "Nausicaa," challenged contemporaneous social and religious conventions which strived towards reproductive futurism. Bloom's masturbation is a non-reproductive act and was considered a threat to the future of the reproducing Irish Roman Catholic society.

Before *Ulysses* became canonical in Anglophone modernism and became widely read and studied by readers and scholars nowadays, the novel faced legal issues during the first two decades after its initial publication. The publication began with Episode One, "Telemachus," until Episode Fourteen, "Nausicaa," and the longer episodes extended across four issues (Brooker 19). The original serialisation appeared alongside critical literary works of authors such as W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis, who are now influential figures in the modernist canon. Before the entire work was banned in the United States, three issues of the magazine containing Episode Eight, "Lestrygonians," Episode Nine, "Scylla and Charybdis," and Episode Ten, "Cyclops," which were published in January 1919, May 1919, and January 1920, respectively, were seized and burned by the United States Post office on the grounds that they were obscene. Eventually, the release of "Nausicaa" in April 1920 caused the magazine to undergo a full-scale prosecution. The allegation was brought by John

S. Sumner, head of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, whose daughter read "Nausicaa." Sumner filed a complaint that September and the magazine's editors Margaret Caroline Anderson and Jane Heap were fined and charged with obscenity, resulting in the ban of *Ulysses* in the United States for the next fourteen years.

Despite previous confiscations of the earlier episodes, the allegation was solely made against the sexually implicit and obscene interaction between Bloom and Gerty in "Nausicaa." The problematic scene takes place on the Sandymount strand. Bloom becomes sexually aroused after seeing Gerty's legs and begins to masturbate while a men's temperance retreat is being held in the background at St. Mary's, Star of the Sea church. Their voyeuristic sexual exchange escalates and climaxes in Bloom's ejaculation, which is conflated with the fireworks from the Mirus bazaar. Even though contemporaneous readers may not have been able to grasp the sexual implications fully due to Joyce's cryptic language, the authorities decided to ban the entire publication in the United States. According to the court reading, the sexual implication between Bloom and Gerty would morally corrupt the minds of the readers (Davis, "James Joyce, Ulysses and the Meaning of Obscenity"). Because of this, the serialisation of *Ulysses* abruptly ended after Episode Fourteen, "Oxen of the Sun." Therefore, according to Brooker, the book survived the first few decades through the discussion of its controversial publishing history among literary circles (20). Eventually, *Ulysses* returned to the American bookshelf when Random House, an American publisher, sought a decree to uplift the ban in the United States. Random House's counsel, Morris Ernst, testified that the novel has literary merit, is a "coherent artistic whole" (Brooker 21), and is not pornography that can be taken superficially. On 6 December 1933, Judge John M. Woolsey overturned the ban, and *Ulysses* was republished in the United States on 25 January 1934, once and for all. Therefore, the legal history of *Ulysses* in the United States shows how

the discourse of reproductive futurism is not limited to the context of Irish Roman Catholicism. In fact, reproductive futurism played a vital role in early twentieth-century Western discourses in shaping the view of society building. The reproductive discourses operated by stigmatising non-reproductive acts as immoral because they do not reproduce the Child.

Sexological Context in the Early-Twentieth Century

Sexology is the scientific approach that was developed in the late nineteenth century to study the physical and psychological perspectives of human sexuality, including sexual behaviour, orientation and physiology. The contemporaneous knowledge of sexology in *Ulysses* was defined by two contending forces: religion and the state. This axis is clearly depicted in Episode Ten, "Wandering Rocks," where two characters, Reverend John Conmee and Viceregal Cavalcade, roam around Dublin in a parallel direction. Although the two never meet, the former represents the Roman Catholic Church with theological approaches, and the latter represents the Irish state with medically modernised approaches. The two men represent joined forces that dictate Dubliners' way of life. *Ulysses* was published during the time when both authorities had the power to mandate and monitor every aspect of life. This section will show how the social and historical context of sex in *Ulysses,* impacts the reproductive acts that are presented as abject, namely masturbation, menstruation, and childbirth, and how they shape the concept of (lost) futurity.

Roman Catholicism is a pro-natalist religious institution. The Church has the power to vastly intervene in the population's education, family planning, reproductive health choices,

and so on. It is written in the Book of Genesis that after having created the world, God orders the divine injunction, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis. 1-28). The tenet becomes one of the central motifs throughout *Ulysses* as Bloom and his wife still mourn Rudy’s death. For instance, in Episode Eight, “Lestrygonains,” Bloom wrongly quotes, “Increase and multiply” (191) when he thinks of Simon Dedalus, who has several children. The ability to bring the next generation into a Catholic household is paramount. Following Patton, sexual intercourse was deemed a ‘necessary evil’ but tolerated in the early twentieth century because it served the only legitimate goal, which was procreation (291). Because of that, any sexual orientation that deviates from male-female coupling or heterosexuality is condemned by the Church because it is considered inutile, including masturbation, oral or anal sex, bestiality, and homosexuality. Therefore, as a converted Roman Catholic, Bloom commits a grave sin because not only does he fail to fulfil his duty to father a child, but he also commits the wasteful sin of masturbation.

While the Irish Catholic Church in the early twentieth century tried to regulate secular family planning from a theological standpoint, the state, which was led by men of science, also constantly brought the topic to the fore. The population’s most private aspect was under intense public scrutiny by both institutions. This is the reason why *Ulysses* was publicly banned in the United States. The secret encounter between Bloom and Gerty brings the authorities into question how it can potentially disrupt social organisation. The abject masturbation is a taboo topic in the context of the novel as well as other societies. Reproductive futurism is a wide-ranging discourse that dominates Western culture. Despite all of this, the novel came out during the time when opinions regarding sexual health and lifestyle began to shift in a progressive direction.

Although the term ‘sexual health’ was not coined until 1975, discussions and concerns regarding the Irish population’s sexual activities in a cultural context took shape over a century before (Houston 3). The modernisation of sexuality began at the end of the nineteenth century when the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing published the book *Psychopathia Sexualis* (*Science of Sex*) in 1886, which influenced Joyce, especially in Episode Fifteen, “Circe.” Although there were already an increasing number of discourses concerning sex, health, and their interconnection in Europe, they were mostly subjected to religious monitoring. Quoting from Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sex*, Lloyd Houston says that the emergence of Krafft-Ebing’s work was a pivotal moment that transformed sexology from a secularised into medicalised discourse as “it came to constitute ‘a volatile pathological field’ which required categorization, diagnosis, and therapeutic intervention from both the medical profession and the state” (4). This modernization of sexology shed light on sexual diversity and dispelled what was labelled as perversion, which was laced with moral code. The extensive study shifted the public view of sexual deviations from viewing them as sinful acts to an innate morbid condition (Oosterhuis 133). Several sexual behaviours that Bloom does in the novel, such as masturbation, voyeurism, and masochism, were given proper medical diagnoses by Krafft-Ebing.

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, the publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis* transformed the public psychiatric understanding of non-procreative sex as a perversion by systematically putting different forms of sexual deviations from heteronormative coupling into categories (Oosterhuis 135). It was a watershed as Krafft-Ebing’s studies on sexuality gave new meanings to sexual pleasure as a necessary force for humans, which was no longer limited to procreation: “If man were deprived of sexual distinction and the nobler enjoyments arising from that place, all poetry and probably all

moral tendency would be eliminated from his life" (Krafft-Ebing 1). He was a leading proponent in terms of sexual pleasure as an integral part of the human experience. Despite this new knowledge of sexology, Krafft-Ebing's view remained misogynistic and discriminatory towards non-Christians. For example, he believed that women are inferior to men when it comes to sexual life (3). However, according to Krafft-Ebing, monogamy in Christianity promotes equality between man and wife and puts Christians above the "polygamic races" like Islamic peoples (5). From explaining the basis of sexual instinct and providing physiological and anthropological facts to classifying different variations of sexual pathology, Krafft-Ebing quenched public curiosity and offered space for the discussion on subjects that were seen as unimaginable, such as masturbation, possible. By taking the first word that appears in *Ulysses*, "stately," in the title of this thesis, I want to show how the novel reveals the religious and medical discourses that take part in creating the reality of a society in which its population has no choice but to comply to the rules of reproductive futurism.

The Reproductive System: Masturbation and Menstruation

Since sexology deals directly with human sexual interests, behaviours, and functions, it regulates in tandem with reproductive discourse in society. As mentioned earlier, masturbation is coded with the Christian discourse in the Western culture and was regarded as an unnatural sexual behaviour. The Western conceptualization of masturbation can be traced back to the Old Testament via the sin of Onan. As part of a levirate marriage, Onan, the second son of Judah, refuses to impregnate his brother's widow by spilling his seed or semen on the ground and angers God. The defiance to procreate was equated with murder and

was punished by eternal damnation. The Catholic Church expressed strong opposition towards masturbation throughout the Medieval and the Renaissance periods (Pattton 291). Another influential work that reinforces the Catholic Church's opposition towards masturbation was the edition of *Onania* in 1758 by Samuel-Auguste Tissot, a Swiss Catholic neurologist. He studied what he saw as the ill effects of masturbation, linking the loss of semen to insanity and health issues (Patton 291). Tissot's work represented the joined forces between religious teachings that were backed by scientific evidence, inculcating hostile sentiments towards masturbation. As a result, it created a fearmongering discourse and the pathologisation of masturbation, which instilled a sense of fear, shame, guilt, and anger in Catholic society.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* offered new knowledge on sex and directed the public perception of masturbation in a progressive direction. He postulated that sexual gratification and impulse are essential components of social life. In doing so, Krafft-Ebing removed the subject from a religious into a medicalised discourse. He redirected the public view which considered sex a sin in Catholicism and only served as a means for procreation after marriage. He said that "enforced celibacy prevented the performance of the natural functions" (14) and explained that men and women should enjoy sexual pleasure as part of natural sensation. However, as revolutionary as it might be, his clinical explanation of autoeroticism and other sexual diagnoses was contradictory:

> To civilised man, the ready presence of ideas which inhibit sexual desire is of distinct import. The moral freedom of individual, and the decision whether, under certain

> circumstances, excess, and even crime, be committed or not, depend, on the one hand, upon the strength of the instinctive impulses and the accompanying organic sensations; on the other, upon the power of the inhibitory ideas. Constitution, and especially organic influences, have a marked effect upon the instinctive impulses; education and cultivation of self-control counteract the opposing influences (40)

Despite medically recognizing sexual pleasure instinctive impulses in every human being, Krafft-Ebing still believes that masturbation or any form of sexual gratification should be in moderation. If one loses self-control and engages in excessive sexual outlets, his or her health and moral conscience will be at risk. This belief reflects the concept of the male closed energy system in the nineteenth century. The male sexual drive was believed to come from an inner force that climaxes in orgasm. Semen was part of the sexual economy, and excessive spilling was considered detrimental to all areas of life (Oosterhuis 141). Although Krafft-Ebing's work promoted more understanding and empathy for sexual behaviours that were considered deviant at the end of the nineteenth century, it still regarded autoeroticism as a form of abnormality. By the time *Ulysses* was published, religious and medical discourses still had a strong influence on people's lives, which culminated in cultural disgust and taboo when it came to masturbation. As a result, the sexual behaviours that Bloom does are still seen as deviant by the public in the novel.

The female reproductive system shared a similar fate to masturbation when it came to public perception and mistreatment. Menstruation, or the monthly vaginal bleeding of the female body, is treated with disgust and considered taboo in many cultures and religions. In Roman Catholicism, there is a long history of stigma in menstrual blood and menstruants.

The *Corpus Juris Canonici* (1234-1916), a collection of sources of the Canon of Law of the Catholic Church, did not allow menstruating women to take Holy Communion ("Menstruating?"). Victorian and early-twentieth century societies considered menstruation to be the essence of femininity (Mullin 497). Joyce also had a great interest in the female reproductive system and how it constructs womanhood. According to Katherine Mullin's article "Menstruation in *Ulysses*," Joyce's interest in female anatomy was reflected in a letter written by his brother, Stanislaus Joyce, in 1903. Stanislaus wrote that Joyce "has lately become a prig about women, affecting to regard them as dirty animals and frequently quoting a maxim of doctor Perse's: 'Woman is an animal that micturates once a day, defecates once a week, menstruates once a month and parturates once a year'" (497). *Ulysses* contains a vast knowledge of the female body, including folkloristic and superstitious discourse on menstruation, medical texts, and contraceptive methods. All female characters Bloom encounters on 16 June, Molly, Milly, Gerty, and Martha, are discussed in relation to their menstruation.

However, the representation of menstruation in *Ulysses* exposes a paradoxical reproductive discourse written all over the female body. Since menstruation is an essential element of reproduction, it was inevitably included in the Roman Catholic teachings on procreation. Menstruation is a sign of fertility; the female body starts menstruating when it is ready to reproduce. Therefore, the Church needed to intervene and come up with reproductive discourses that direct women to that sole purpose. Paradoxically, the Church only allows married women to engage in sexual intercourse despite its doctrine to multiply. This discordance is evident in "Nausicaa". According to Bloom's observation at the beginning of the episode, Gerty Macdowell seems to be menstruating, indicating that she is of age to get married and start a family. However, being raised in a strict Roman Catholic

household, Gerty is taught that premarital sex is a sinful crime and that women are supposed to remain virgins until marriage. As a result, she can only engage in a voyeuristic encounter with Bloom and not physical sexual intercourse because she needs to preserve her virginity. Gerty is the epitome of an early twentieth-century Irish woman whose femininity, sexuality, and autonomy only existed in the Roman Catholic context of family planning.

In conclusion, the historical context of *Ulysses*, including its publication history, contemporaneous religious and medical discourses regarding sexual activities, and the reproductive system were deeply imbued with reproductive futurism. The repercussions *Ulysses* received in the United States and across Europe show that its content challenges social discourse which was heteronormative reproductive futurism. In the following chapter, I will lay out the theoretical framework in which I make a connection between Edelman's reproductive futurism with Kristeva's theory on abjection. The reproductive futurism manifested in Irish Roman Catholicism's discourse on procreation views non-reproductive sexual activities like masturbation as wasteful which is what Kristeva considers as abject. By combining the two theories together, I will use this new theoretical framework to analyse how the abject reproductive system in *Ulysses* challenges the Church's heteroreproductive discourse and the doctrine of reproductive futurism.

2. Theoretical Framework

Reproductive Futurism in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*

Developed in the context of gay liberation movements in the United States, Lee Edelman's book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* offers a provocative criticism of how heteronormative society is collectively obsessed with reproductive futurism which manifests in an image of the Child in opposition to non-reproductive sexuality which is queerness. Queerness, within the context of Edelman's theory, is everything that exists in opposition to heteroreproduction which is sexual intercourse that results in the Child of a couple of opposite genders. Therefore, queerness is not limited to homosexuality but also any sexual activities that do not align with heteronormative reproduction. Because masturbation, menstruation, and Rudy's infant mortality exist in opposition to heteroreproductive futurism, they are queer. In this theoretical chapter, I will contextualise Edelman's theory by applying it to *Ulysses* in which Bloom refuses to reproduce and commits the non-reproductive Roman Catholic sin of masturbation. In its sinful non-reproductive taboo, I position Bloom's masturbation as queer. Moreover, I will relate non-reproductive sexual activities to Kristeva's theory of abjection which describes how leaky bodies released from the subject have the power to destroy the world of symbolic order. Therefore, Bloom's masturbation is an abjection that queers social order and exposes the repressive reproductive imperative in Irish Roman Catholic society.

In *No Future*," Edelman describes that the Child "marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity: an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism" (21). The fixated goal of striving toward the future has created an imperative for the population to reproduce to

preserve the heteroreproduction, a concept which holds the assumption that heterosexuality and procreation between cisgender male and female is normal. That is because when the Child is born, what is ensured is the continuation of society. Therefore, same-sex intercourse or other sexual activities that are not heteronormative sexual intercourse are undesirable because they do not conform to reproductive futurity due to the inability to produce a new generation. They also threaten to disrupt social order and lead society to an impasse, hence "No Future." Drawing on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic concept of the Death Drive, Edelman argues that this optimism placed on the Child has condemned non-reproductive queerness as inherently oppositional to the reproductive futurism and excluded queer individuals and desires from the dominating heteronormative discourse.

Society's perception of the future is mirrored in the face of the Child. When a child's life is in danger, it is nearly unfathomable that anyone would refuse to protect them. Children can provoke the adult population's protective instincts and empathy. This is due to the idealisation of the Child or what Edelman terms "the sacralization of the child" (28) as vulnerable subjects who cannot fend for themselves which is deeply imbued in the collective conscience. Children become a symbol of futurity and hope of posterity that propel society forward. Moreover, society has a mutual responsibility to bring forth, nurture, and protect its future generation to ensure collective security in the future. In consequence, any decision that deviates from this reproductive imperative has no place and significance in the reproductive future. However, Edelman argues that in order for the Child to earn such privileged status in the heteronormative social hierarchy, it comes at the cost of the homosexuals as "the sacralization of the Child necessitates the sacrifice of the queer" (28). Queerness that is seen in Bloom's masturbation becomes the bane of the Child's existence because its nature refuses to remain in the reproductive narrative, disrupting the sense of continuity and futurity.

Society holds on to the idea that children are a beacon for the future because they represent the potentiality of life. Such optimism, considered from an opposite point of view, stems from the fear of the unknown. If the Child signifies growth and continuation, what resides on the opposing end is death. Rudy's untimely death problematises the social and symbolic orders. The afterlife is the unthinkable abyss because it escapes the realm of semantics, existing beyond human comprehension. In 1977, Roland Barthes wrote a critical essay "Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Poe," which analyses Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." In the essay, Barthes describes death as the semiotic blind spot, "In the ideal sum of all possible utterances in the language system, the coupling of the first person (I) and of the attribute "dead" precisely what is radically impossible: it is the empty point, the blind spot of language structure…" (10). The afterlife or death becomes a semiotic void that escapes the constative signification in the symbolic order. However, the fear of the unknown is mitigated through a comforting idea that parts of who we are as modern subjects will live on through our children and to their children long after our death. Therefore, the Child functions as "the secular theology that shapes at once the meaning of our collective narratives and our collective narratives of meaning" (12). It encompasses futurity and becomes a narrative for domesticity and extended bloodline. The meaning of the Child becomes inseparable from the notions of heteronormative marriage and the traditional family model. This is evident in Roman Catholicism, where sexual activities are only allowed in marriage. This is because marriage has a civil function to procreate the Child. Thus, the virginal Gerty MacDowell could have her slight sexual gratification by daydreaming about her future husband and reacting to Bloom's masturbation in a voyeuristic manner because she is still unmarried. Through the voyeuristic sexual exchange, Gerty is exercising her sexual autonomy at the limits of what the repressive Roman Catholic

reproductive futurism discourse allows because extramarital sexual activities are taboo. However, homosexuality and non-reproductive sexual acts problematise the signification of heterosexual marriage because they separate sexual intercourse from marriage and aim for pleasure. Therefore, the reading of non-reproductive sexual activities as queer, such as masturbation, voyeurism, and so on, defies societal core values of collective futurity. This situation, according to Edelman, in a radical projection, puts queerness in the psychological state of the death drive. The death drive is a psychoanalytical concept developed by Sigmund Freud towards the end of his career, also known as the 'Nirvana principle' ("death-drive"). The death drive is a behavioural aggression in the form of self-destruction. When it is applied to reproductive futurism, the death drive becomes the force that pushes queerness toward the deconstruction of the symbolic order in the heteronormative pro-natalist discourse:

> De-idealizing the metaphorics of meaning on which heteroreproduction takes its stand, queerness exposes sexuality's inevitable coloration by the drive: its insistent on repetition, its stubborn denial of teleology, its resistance to determinations of meaning (except insofar as it means this refusal to admit such determinations of meaning), and, above all, its rejection of spiritualization through marriage to reproductive futurism. (Edelman 27)

Queerness is a destructive force that challenges and refuses to conform to the rigidity of the heteronormativity. Its non-reproductive nature embodies the death drive that disrupts the linear progression of time and, ultimately, destroys the Child in the reproductive future. Thus,

in order for the sacralisation of the Child in the heteronormative society to be held in esteem in the symbolic order, it requires an obliteration of the queer.

Edelman's reproductive futurism appears throughout *Ulysses.* The novel's religious context, Roman Catholicism in Ireland in the early twentieth century, portrays social conditions in which religious and political institutions have the authority to reinforce specific ways of living. The Christian commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" is a discourse of reproductive futurism. This reproductive doctrine has integrated into every character's subconsciousness, prompting different reactions depending on their social factors. For this thesis, I develop a methodology using a theoretical framework of reproductive futurism and the abject to deconstruct the discourse of reproductive futurism in *Ulysses*. It will analyse and deconstruct how masturbation, menstruation and childbirth are represented in *Ulysses* in Irish Roman Catholicism.

Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection and Maternal Eroticism

The explosive and gnarly image of ejaculation, menstruation and childbirth in *Ulysses* is allied with the conceptual development of abjection by Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* is a book written by Julia Kristeva in 1980. Kristeva presents the literary theory of abjection that problematises the world of the Symbolic which is the signification within linguistic communication. In the symbolic order, meanings are created through intersubjective relations to distinguish the subject from 'the other.' Signification in linguistics relies on the coherent symbolic order. However, the abject contains a violent, disruptive force that aims to challenge the subjectivity of the "I." The most common analogy of the abject is

represented in the form of waste, for instance, fluids, leakage, and bodily waste. Kristeva defines the abject as:

> A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture. (2)

The process of abjection is a forceful image of an ejection, an insignifiable substance thrusted to the outside world of the symbolic order by its subject. It oscillates in the nothingness between the realms of the subject and the object, making it unrecognisable by the subject. However, the nothingness that it inhabits is not no-thing either. When confronted by the abject, one often turns away in disgust due to its undesiring qualities. However, it is "not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Kristeva provides the ultimate example of abjection in the form of a corpse. Since subjectivity is written all over a human body through signification, the sight of a decaying carcass, puss oozing, and skin decomposing, brings us back to the unknown chasm where meanings cease to exist. The discharge released from the body becomes neither subject nor

object. Thus, an encounter with the abject evokes fear within the subject because it exposes a liminal threshold where meanings are destroyed, and the boundary that separates life from death is blurred. It gushes out in order to wreak havoc in the symbolic order. Despite that, the abject is a vital element in the symbolic order because it reminds the subject of its vitality while hinting at the possibility of death, becoming "death infecting life" (Kristeva 4). Its presence, according to Kristeva, is "the primers of my culture" (2) because it separates what is acceptable and should be given life from what is repulsive and must be eradicated. Therefore, Bloom's masturbation is imbued with abject elements according to the Irish Roman Catholic view because it is a wasteful substance that does not create life.

In this thesis on *Ulysses*, Edelman's reproductive futurism is linked to Kristeva's theory of abjection in terms of the abjection in the reproductive acts and the queering of heteronormativity. The contention between life and death is a dominant motif in the novel. To elaborate, the protagonists, Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Stephen Dedalus, are all trying to recover from the haunting past that stems from family-related issues. Bloom and Molly are still struggling to get over Rudy's death. Consequently, Bloom decides to stop having sexual intercourse with his wife for fear of bringing another unhealthy child. Molly, on the other hand, has her first extra-marital affair on the day with Hugh Blazes "Boylan," her concert tour manager whose masculinity is compared to Bloom's on several occasions. Moreover, during her eight-sentence monologue in Episode Eighteen, "Penelope," it is revealed that Molly is also struggling to cope with her infant son's death and still wishes to have another child with Bloom. While Molly waits for her first tryst at their house at 7 Eccles Street, Bloom wanders around Dublin and has a chance to form a paternal bond with Stephen. Estranged from his father and having recently lost his mother, Stephen is a lost son who is trying to navigate his ways in life. As an adaptation of the *Odyssey*, *Ulysses* is an intertext

where Bloom occupies the role of Odysseus and Stephen is Telemachus. However, instead of being related by blood, Bloom and Stephen are a sonless father and a fatherless son who meet and form a surrogate relationship that eases their feelings of loss. The sadness these characters feel after the parental loss of a child symbolises reproductive futurism. The death of young Rudy amplifies the Child's symbolic value. When what is supposed to represent life and future untimely dies, it unsettles the symbolic order and makes the Child's death impossible to comprehend. Thus, as parents, Bloom and Molly are still profoundly affected by their loss.

However, abjection becomes part of reproductive futurity when Bloom masturbates on the Sandymount strand, and Molly's menstruation starts during her monologue. Bloom's ejaculation from masturbating in "Nausicaa" is considered abject because the semen that comes out of his body is an ambivalent object floating between life and death. Semen is a crucial element in the heteroreproduction for the Child to be conceived. However, when it is ejected into the outside world, it becomes a foreign object that no longer contains life, a subject of taboo, perversion, and uncleanliness. According to Kristeva, it also signals the uttermost desire within the subject:

> The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural *loss* that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is, in fact, recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded. (5)

Bloom's masturbation, therefore, is not done solely for sexual pleasure, but it is his way of making sense of the world after his son's death. The analysis in the following chapter will show that, subconsciously, Bloom wishes to become a father again despite his fear of losing another child under the influence of reproductive futurism.

Lastly, the abject reproductive system in the female body is applicable to the notion of motherhood. Once the female body succeeds in bringing the Child into the world, the next heteroreproductive duty is to protect and nurture the Child. In *Ulysses*, Stephen explores the notion of motherhood by philosophising the two concepts of *ex nihilo* (from nothing) and *amor matris* or "love of mother," to overcome his guilt for not having knelt at his mother's deathbed. These two concepts of motherhood, which I will analyse in the last chapter, contain elements of abjectness because maternal love is often depicted as an indestructible, selfless love from a mother to her Child. The maternal subject loses her subjectivity in order to take care of the Child at the expense of her life. In 2014, Kristeva wrote an article "Reliance, or Maternal Eroticism," a critical essay that criticises the way society relies on and eroticises motherhood as a masochistic subject who is willing to endure an excruciating amount of pain during pregnancy and childbirth which exists beyond "symbolic capacities" (Kristeva, "Reliance" 72). Therefore, I consider motherhood as abject in reproductive futurism because the eroticisation of motherhood is used as a rhetoric to justify the discourse of reproductive futurism and the function of the Child. In the fifth chapter, I will apply Kristeva's maternal eroticism to the abject female reproductive system in *Ulysses* to show how the female body is inscribed with reproductive futurism when I analyse the maternal relationships of Stephen and his mother and Molly and Rudy.

3. Masturbation and a Sense of Lost Future

By naming this thesis “Stately Release: How the View of Reproductive System as Abject Represents the Lost Future in *Ulysses*,” I intend to mimic the novel’s opening sentence, “Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed” (1). The moment the novel begins at the Martello Tower at 8 a.m., Joyce welcomes his readers by offering a guide on ways to read *Ulysses*. The morning of the 16 June 1904 starts with Malachi ‘Buck’ Mulligan, a medical student with a buffoonish character who shares the tower with Stephen, parodying the Catholic Mass as he shaves his face with his “untonsured hair” (1) and “the loose folds of his gown” (2). Clearly, Buck’s behaviour mocks the Church’s superfluous religious proceedings. Similar to Buck’s morning ritual, Bloom’s masturbation and other masturbatory implications in *Ulysses* contain prevalent religious and medical discourse in early twentieth century in Ireland. Therefore, “stately release” here contains double meanings. On the one hand, Bloom’s masturbation can be considered sinful in the context of Ulysses; on the other hand, it exposes a hidden nexus of medical, religious, and political complications. Thus, “stately release” is the metaphorical abjection that breaks the characters free from the discourses of stately establishments that circle around Ireland in the early twentieth century that imprison their lives in *Ulysses*.

Although it was the scene from “Nausicaa” that caught the public attention and raised moral concerns that led to the obscenity trial, it was not the first time that Joyce had explored the topic of masturbation. Joyce had already touched upon this subject in his first novel, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man,* 1916, in which Stephen Dedalus appears as a protagonist. Stephen, an aspiring young artist who is going through religious and intellectual

awakenings in a self-imposed exile in Paris at the time, also masturbates. In "James Joyce and the Masturbating Boy," Colin Gillis provides an example that although it is not explicit, it is suggested that Stephen masturbates during a confession when a Roman Catholic priest replies:

> Let me implore of you to give up that sin. It is a terrible sin. It kills the body and it kills the soul. It is the cause of many crimes and misfortunes. Give it up, my child, for God's sake. It is dishonourable and unmanly. You cannot know where that wretched habit will lead you or where it will come against you. As long as you commit that sin, my poor child, you will never be worth one farthing to God. (169)

Riddled with an authoritative religious disquisition, the Church expresses a strong distaste for masturbation. In the priest's view, not only does masturbation or "wretched habit" will ruin Stephen's relationship with God, but also his honour and manhood. The passage also reveals the religious rhetoric that Irish Roman Catholicism imposed onto the young, virile male population. They are expected to fulfil social obligations by procreating the next generations and the punishment for breaking God's intent is social ostracisation. However, it also reveals the intense anxiety of the Church as it tries to encourage members to procreate by propagating such discourse. For that rhetoric to be effective, masturbation must be considered wasteful and sinful as it does not lead to offspring which is linked to reproductive futurism. The Church views the Child as a beacon toward the future. The same topic reappears in *Ulysses* when the new protagonist, Leopold Bloom, struggles to cope with his son's death and

commits the same sin. The continuation of the same topic in Joyce's oeuvre suggests the prevalent influence of the religious establishment over the population's reproduction and their assertive power in family planning.

When it comes to masturbation in *Ulysses*, before Leopold Bloom reaches the climax on the Sandymount Strand in "Nausicaa" at 8 p.m., the event is foreshadowed earlier during the day. In the episode "Scylla and Charybdis," Mulligan pokes fun at a morality play:

Everyman His own Wife
or
A Honeymoon in the Hand
(a national immorality in three orgasms)
By
Ballocky Mulligan (278)

Characteristically, medieval morality plays use allegorical characters to teach moral lessons that heavily promote Christian values and repentance. However, Buck's version parodies the titular forms of medieval morality plays and is full of sexual innuendos. Again, Joyce uses Mulligan's light-hearted character to reflect on Irish society that was obsessed with its citizens' reproduction.

Several hours later, Bloom relaxes on the Sandymount Strand after having an intense interaction with the Citizen at Barney Kiernan's pub. In the same area, a group of three young women, Edy Boardman, Cissy Caffrey, and Gerty MacDowell, two toddler boys, Tommy and Jacky Caffrey, and a baby in a stroller are hanging out on the strand. Bloom and Gerty's voyeuristic sexual interaction begins when Jacky kicks the ball down the beach, and

Bloom tries to retrieve it. Not embodying heroic athleticism, Bloom misses the target, and the ball rolls down under Gerty's skirt. The two lock eyes, and according to Gerty's sentimental language, Bloom's face is "the saddest she had ever seen" (463). She begins to daydream about Bloom or "the gentleman" After observing him in detail, she concludes that "he was deep in mourning" and "the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face" (465). The sexual tension escalates as Gerty continues lifting the hem of her skirt to reveal her legs. The two voyeuristically engage with each other as Bloom's reaction to Gerty's lifting her skirt hints at his libido, "His dark eyes fixed themselves on her again drinking in her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine" (471). Although it is only implied that Bloom masturbates in the text, a close reading reveals he reaches an orgasm and ejaculates when the fireworks from the Mirus bazaar go up in the sky:

> And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind and O! then the Roman candle burst and It was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads and they shed and ah ! they were all greeny dewy stars falling with golden, O so lively! O so soft, sweet, soft! (477)

The phallic objects used to describe the fireworks, such as "rocket," "the Roman candle," along with abject verbs, "sprang," "burst," "ruptures," and "gush," are indicative that a male orgasm is achieved. There is evidence of ejaculation, which is conflated with the explosive fireworks, "O!" "ah !" and "a stream of rain gold hair." Moreover, the end of the episode makes it clear that Bloom masturbates and physically ejaculates as he remarks, "Tired I feel

now. Will I get up? Drained all the manhood out of me, little wretch" (491). The episode ends as Bloom gets up and picks a stick to draw a message in the sand for Gerty but changes his mind because the waves will wash it away. Gerty, beaming as she successfully pleases the gentleman of her dreams, gets up and returns to her company, revealing her limping leg.

However, the reality is drastically different from Gerty's sentimental fantasy. The sad-faced gentleman with whom she has a voyeuristic encounter does not think of her at all, even though his body sexually responds to the sight of her legs. In fact, he always thinks of his wife, Molly, even when he is no longer physically having sex with her. After the orgasm, Bloom's mind revisits the moment at the Hill of Howth where he proposed to Molly sixteen years ago. Moreover, Bloom's masturbation is not only for sexual gratification, but it is his way of dealing with the loss of his son, Rudy. The entire day is framed around death as Bloom has to attend Paddy Dignam's funeral, an old friend who dies of old age, and is seen wearing black. Because of this, Bloom's thought is constantly preoccupied with Rudy's death. In Episode Eight "Lestrygonians," an episode that focuses on family life, Bloom ruminates, "Could never like it again after Rudy. Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand" (213). In contrast to a stream of fireworks that gushes out which represents his ejaculation in "Nausicaa," the loss of his son is comparable to water that keeps escaping from his grasp. The reason that the loss of a child, especially a son, is hard for a parent to overcome is that a son will bear the family's last name and extend the family tree to the future within the Irish patronymic customs at the time. In the context of the novel, Roman Catholicism is a dominating religion in the society that Bloom lives in. As a result, the Church interferes and provides teachings that encourage reproduction in married heterosexual couples. This idea is related to reproductive futurism because Bloom's grief comes from his surrounding religiopolitical conditions that place value on the Child.

This reproductive ideology is apparent in *Ulysses* through the allusion to Plumtree's potted meat. The term "potting meat" is a Dublin slang for sexual intercourse ("Plumtree's Potted Meat"). Bloom first encounters this phrase in the newspaper under Patrick 'Paddy' Dignam's obituary:

What is home without

Plumtree's Potted Meat?

Incomplete.

With it an abode of bliss. (91)

In the morning, Bloom attends Dignam's funeral. Thus, the word "potted meat" here has a double meaning. First, it means to have sex. Second, it is a pun because Dignam's corpse or "meat" is getting buried, that is, "potted" on that day. As a news media, what is published in the newspaper is a reflection of hegemonic social values and trends. In combination with the Church's reproductive futurism doctrine, the advertisement has the control to amplify or propagate similar discourse to their secular readers. The advertisement straightforwardly imposes an image of a perfect family. The complete household, according to the text, is a household where husband and wife actively engage in marital bliss or sexual intercourse. As a reader, Bloom is constantly reminded that he has a domestic duty to fulfil back home. Furthermore, the newspaper is important to Bloom because he is a canvasser for *The Freeman's Journal*, Ireland's nationalist newspaper in the nineteenth century. As a man who makes a living by selling ads to the news agency, this advertisement is a direct insult to his potency as he fails to live up to societal expectations.

Bloom's incompetence in reproductive futurism is further emphasised through the allusion to "Rip van Winkle," an 1819 short story by the American author Washington Irving. As Bloom gets up and leaves the Sandymount Strand, he reminisces about the year 1887 before he got married to Molly. Bloom and Molly played charades, and the word was Rip van Winkle, which at present makes Bloom think of Rip's rusty gun. In Irving's story, Rip is a henpecked husband who goes squirrel hunting in the mountains with his dog and a gun to avoid his nagging wife. Rip joins a group of men and drinks their liquor; he falls into a deep sleep and wakes up twenty years to a different world. He returns to his village as an old man carrying a rusty gun, the scene which Bloom reenacts in his head, "Twenty years asleep in Sleepy Hollow. All changed. Forgotten. The young are old. His gun rusty from the dew" (492). Rip's story resembles Bloom's life in relation to his sexual dormancy. Rip's rusty gun is a metaphor for Bloom's penis which has not been in use for over a decade. Rip also returns to his children, who are now grownups, a daughter and a son who shares his name. His daughter names her infant son Rip as well. Despite his disappearance for twenty years, Rip returns home to find out that he is outlived by his son and grandson who bear his name. Bloom's life, on the contrary, still has an undetermined future as he is still mourning his son's death and still cannot come around to father another child. His family legacy is at stake because he has no male heir to inherit the Bloom last name. He is emasculated as his impotence fails to meet the domestic reproductive role that is assigned to him. In the meantime, he is a cuckold who returns home after his wife had sex with a young man whose masculinity outshines his rusted gun.

The Roman Catholic discourse to procreate, an advertisement promoting sex as an indicator of domestic bliss, and the story of Rip Van Winkle serve as constant reminders and pressure for Bloom to fulfil his heteronormative duty to reproduce. As an adult Catholic

male, Bloom has a social obligation to procreate. However, the fact that he fathered a son who died as an infant and is incapable of impregnating his wife with another child in eleven years is a sign of failure to conform to heteronormative reproductive futurism. Even worse, he commits the Roman Catholic sin of masturbation. Thus, he chooses to break the social convention and refuses reproductive futurity. In Roman Catholicism, a religion which promotes procreation within the sacrament of heterosexual marriage, masturbation is a mortal sin because it rejects God's offer of life. According to Roman Catholic teaching, God intended sexual acts for two things, "the one-flesh love of committed married persons; and the orientation of this love — that is, its openness — to new life" (Brugger). Masturbation, therefore, is considered a selfish act because the masturbator only focuses on their sexual pleasure and not on their spouse's. It is a self-directed act that isolates the doer from committing the marital unification with their spouse. Most importantly, it rejects an opportunity to bring a new life. Therefore, masturbation or the spilling of semen is abjected from Roman Catholicism because it does not lead to meaningful offspring, a sense of a lost future.

Roman Catholic influence is present during Bloom's masturbation in "Nausicaa." While Bloom is masturbating to the sight of Gerty's legs, a men's temperance retreat at the St. Mary's Star of the Sea church can be heard in the background. His masturbation and erection are conflated with the Roman candle in the Mass. And when he ejaculates, it is in the image of the Roman candle, "Then the Roman candle burst" (477). The service ends right after Bloom reaches orgasm when he remarks, "Mass seems to be over" 492. Gerty MacDowell, who can be seen as an object of desire for Bloom, is comparable to the Virgin Mary. Her description in the episode bears a strong resemblance to Mary. To illustrate, she

wears a blouse of electric blue which is the colour of the Virgin Mary, and her features are described:

> The waxen pallor of her face was almost spiritual in its ivorylike purity though her rosebud mouth was a genuine Cupid's bow, Greekly perfect. Her hands were of finely veined alabaster with tapering fingers and as white as lemon juice and queen of ointments could make them though it was not true that she used to wear kid gloves in bed or take a milk footbath either. (452)

The language that is used to describe Gerty's fair skin and slender features has a religious undertone. Also, the way that Gerty is represented is reminiscent of the veneration of icons in Roman Catholicism. Moreover, Bloom and Gerty's action happens in parallel with the temperance retreat inside of the church, which is held for alcoholic men who wish to end their alcoholism by praying to the virginal Mary. The statue of the Virgin Mary becomes an object of the male gaze for men to pay their respect and leave. Similarly, Gerty is a twenty-two-year-old virgin who is brought up in a strict Catholic household. Therefore, she must remain a virgin until marriage and can only express her sexual desire for Bloom in a voyeuristic manner. Gerty, in this scene, becomes Bloom's object of desire as "his dark eyes fixed themselves on her again drinking her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine" (471). The way in which Bloom gazes at her is as if he is venerating her like the men in the Church. Lastly, Bloom pays respect to Gerty as he tips his hat as the two depart. Thus,

masturbation in *Ulysses* is deeply coded in Roman Catholicism because it is part of the reproductive rhetoric which is prevalent in society.

Bloom's failure to conform to the Catholic reproductive discourse and his sin of masturbation results in Catholic guilt. After his ejaculation, Bloom immediately senses a sense of guilt as he questions, "Murderers do. Will I?" (479). According to Declan Kiberd's interpretation, Bloom temporarily feels guilty because he has just split his seed, which is his ejaculation (1099). Thus, he considers himself a murderer because he just omitted a chance of fathering another child. Declan also remarks that Bloom makes a misogynistic comment, "That's why she's left on the shelf" (479), after discovering that she is lame to cover his shame of masturbation (1094). The misogynism stems from the discourse reproductive futurism that forces young women to reproduce. Her disability is considered defective for reproduction in the heteroreproductive society which is why she is left on the shelf. Bloom's reaction in the wake of his own masturbation mirrors Roman Catholic values and views regarding the Child's procreation from a heterosexual couple. The Roman Catholic church relies on heteronormative reproduction to generate the number of populations. Since masturbation allows one to obtain sexual pleasure without heterosexual coupling, the Church must prohibit its population from committing this sin because it is against the principles of reproductive futurism. Masturbation defies Roman Catholic domestic obligations; it embodies the death drive, which takes its stand against heteroreproduction. Therefore, for the Church to prevent its members from committing the sin that could lead society to no future, it must obliterate it by stigmatising it in the discourse of shame and guilt.

The shame and guilt which derive from masturbation in Roman Catholicism is linked to Kristeva's theory of abjection. Masturbation is considered abjection because it gushes out

to blur the boundaries between the subject and the other. Especially from the Catholic point of view, semen is an unclean substance that threatens to contaminate the subject's identity and integrity; the unclean, the waste, the taboo that exists outside the symbolic order. The seminal fluids that are secreted from the human body unsettle the pro-future and pro-natal discourses because they float between life and death. Bloom spills a seed of life that could potentially beget him another Rudy. But since his ejaculation does not substantialise into flesh, it becomes a wasteful fluid that contains no symbolic meaning. The abjected semen here disturbs identity and the heteronormative symbolic structure. It exposes the subject, Bloom, to his very own identity and sexuality which can disturb the socially constructed norms which are heteroreproduction in Roman Catholicism. Thus, masturbation and the masturbator are abjected from the societal order because they violate moral purity and collective security. Rhetoric and stigmatisation are created around the topic in order to warn them against masturbation and encourage them to engage in sexual intercourse for procreation. In consequence, it is treated with disgust by mainstream society. Even Bloom himself is heavily influenced by this discourse. First, he questions whether he is a murderer for having split his seed, as mentioned earlier. Second, he expresses a strong distaste when he is confronted with his own abject. Although he commits the sin of masturbation and enjoys the sexual release, he has an immediate reconciliation with the Catholic stern morality as he gets ready to leave, he adjusts his wet shirt and "begins to feel cold and clammy. Aftereffect not pleasant" (482). Moreover, he adds, "This wet is very unpleasant. Stuck. Well the foreskin is not back. Better detach" (487). Bloom experiences Catholic guilt because of his social conditions, whether it would be an advertisement, Rip Van Winkle's story or the Church constantly pressuring him to procreate.

However, despite its destructive nature, the inaugural loss that the subject experiences through abjection exposes the subject to the uttermost desire. Kristeva describes the abjection of self, "There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is, in fact, recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (5). The abject incessantly challenges the subject's existence. The subject thus becomes "weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject" (5). Therefore, Bloom's masturbation represents his conundrum, the fear of losing another child and his strong desire to become a father again. The imagery of Bloom spilling his own seed is also abject because the subject, or Bloom, loses part of himself to create another human being. In "Sirens," an episode which focuses on musicality and musical prose, Bloom is reminded of Rudy and ponders over the possibility of having another son after hearing Ben Dollard, a renowned Dublin tenor, singing "The Croppy Boy" at the bar of the Ormond Hotel. "The Croppy Boy" is a melodramatic ballad from the 1840s about the Rebellion of 1798, an uprising by an underground republican group called the Society of United Irishmen against British rule in Ireland which eventually led to the 1801 Act of Union ("Irish Rebellion of 1798"). The song is about a Catholic boy who wants to join the rebellion against British tyranny and who is killed by a British army captain who disguises himself as a priest during his confession. As Dollard reaches the end of the song, Bloom realises that the lyrics reflect his life:

> All gone. All fallen. At the siege of Ross his father, at Gorey all his brothers fell. To Wexford, we are the boys of Wexford, he would. Last of his name and race.

> I too, last my race. Milly young student. Well, my fault perhaps. No son. Rudy. Too late now. Or if not? If not? If still? (367)

Bloom refers to the event on 5 June 1798, when 10,000 County Wexford rebels attacked the town of New Ross, which was defended by 2,000 British troops. The rebels, armed mainly with pikes, initially captured much of the town but were eventually driven back and defeated by British reinforcements. The battle and subsequent massacres resulted in the loss of a quarter to a third of the rebel force, marking the bloodiest action of the rebellion (*The Joyce Project: Ulysses: Croppy Boy*). The majority of casualties from the rebellion were young Catholic boys who fought for the nation's freedom. The loss of young men's lives signifies the end of the country's future since those young men were expected to become fathers and populate more generations of Roman Catholic Irish countrymen. The defeat at Wexford, hence spelt the end of the Irish nationality. Bloom is also facing the same fate. Even though he will be survived by his daughter Milly, she will not bear his last name once she is married nor give him a grandchild with the last name Bloom due to the patronymic custom in patriarchal heteroreproduction. Ultimately, Rudy's death seals the end of the Bloom family tree. Bloom's reaction to the song shows that he is still trapped in reproductive futurism as he believes that the future is placed on a son, Rudy. Although his masturbation is considered a violation of Roman Catholic teaching, it also brings him closest to his innermost desire. Despite the Catholic guilt and disgust that he feels after having masturbated, he repeatedly asks himself whether there is enough time for him to become a father again. His masturbation becomes abject which reveals the doctrine of reproductive futurism that is deeply rooted in Roman Catholicism. At the same time, the horrifying confrontation he has with his own

abjection reunites him with his lost future as he is convinced to try for another child again. Eventually, Bloom's wish to beget another Rudy sees a possible future when he meets a surrogate son, Stephen Dedalus.

In short, Bloom's masturbation to Gerty's MacDowell legs in "Nausicaa" is considered obscene and sinful in *Ulysses* and among contemporaneous readerships because it defies the hegemonic discourse of reproductive futurism. Masturbation is a non-reproductive sexual activity which does not contribute to the heteroreproduction of the Child. Therefore, it is condemned by the Church and many societies who believe that the sense of futurity lies in the figure of the Child. Though considered wasteful within these contexts, Bloom's masturbation is the abject which gushes out to invoke disgust and exposes the domineering discourse of reproductive futurism that dictates everyone's life.

4. Dispossessed Sons in Contest

The events in *Ulysses* align with Homer's *Odyssey* (circa 725–675 BCE). The original *Odyssey* centres around father-son and familial relationships as Odysseus tries to return home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. During his twenty-year absence, his palace is overrun by suitors who try to court his wife, Penelope, who has remained faithful to him. His son, Telemachus, whom he did not have a chance to raise, has grown to be a young man. When Odysseus finally returns to Ithaca, he and Telemachus come up with a plan to fend off the suitors and take control of Ithaca. Although they are not related by blood, the surrogate relationship between Bloom and Stephen is comparable to Odysseus and Telemachus. Bloom is a father who is looking for a second son to fill in the reproductive futuristic void that Rudy left. After the end of *Portrait*, Stephen returns home to his dying mother's deathbed, where he refuses to kneel, a trauma that still haunts him in *Ulysses.* His biological father, Simon Dedalus, is still alive but remains distant from his son. Similar to the *Odyssey,* the novel opens with Episode One, "Telemachus," at the Martello tower, where readers are first introduced to Stephen who is overridden by guilt regarding his disobedience of his late mother's last wish. When Joyce finished writing *Ulysses* in 1920, he came up with two detailed tables, now known as the Litani schema and the Gilbert schema, to provide his friend, Carlo Litani, with the fundamental structure and details of the novel (*The Joyce Project: Ulysses: Schemas*). In the Litani schema, he described "Telemachus" as "Dispossessed son in contest," as Stephen is trying to cope with his guilt and navigate his past and future while working as a teacher at the Dalkey school. Without a tight bond with his father, Stephen is looking for a father figure whom he can look up to. Considering his background, there is no question that the dispossessed son in contest, according to Joyce's schema, is Stephen. However, after more information about Bloom's family and background

is made known, it turns out that the surrogate bond between these two men is intensified as both men are dispossessed sons in contest.

Before Bloom and Stephen finally meet in Episode Fourteen, “Oxen of the Sun,” at the Holles Street Maternity Hospital, parallels have been drawn to foreshadow their climactic encounter. Stephen is still in mourning, as he is always dressed in a black suit and a hat and carries a walking stick or “ashplant”. Similarly, Bloom wears a black suit on the day because he attends Paddy Dignam’s funeral at 11 a.m. Both are considered antiheroes in conventional heroic descriptions. For instance, Bloom has feminine traits; his masculinity is challenged by Molly’s lover, Boylan. Stephen is terrified of thunderstorms and water; the latter makes him avoid showering for eight months. The first three episodes dive into Stephen’s interior monologue and explore his family issues.

A well-educated and philosophical man, Stephen ponders whether it is possible for a human to come into being *ex nihilo* (from nothing) when he thinks of his birth where a midwife pulled him from his mother’s body, “One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life. Creation from nothing.” Ex nihilo is significant in Roman Catholic theology as it explains immortality and how God creates human souls. This concept directly impacts Stephen’s life because it deals with the maternal linkage of mother and child. The guilt from the past haunts Stephen for not kneeling at his mother’s deathbed. People around him also judge him, “You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you,” (4) says Buck Mulligan at the beginning of the novel. A few hours later, when he has a history discussion with Mr. Deasy, headmaster of the Dalkey school, he remarks, “History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (42). While Mr. Deasy sees history as a deterministic force, Stephen expresses a more nuanced understanding of

causality. He wonders if history is a malleable occurrence which shifts when viewed from different perspectives. Moreover, if that perception of history is validated, he will be rid of the guilt and free himself from his nightmarish history. *Ex nihilo* and the concept of maternal origin will be analysed further in the following chapter when I discuss abjection and motherhood in the female reproductive system. In the meantime, this chapter will analyse how Bloom and Stephen's missing paternal family background and their struggles to overcome family traumas are the consequence of reproductive futurism that idealises futurity in the figure of the Child.

While Stephen has a bittersweet memory of his mother while he is trying to cope with her death, his relationship with his living biological father, Simon Dedalus, is the complete opposite. Simon comes across as a sociable man in Episode Six, "Hades," when he attends Dignam's funeral and engages in a humorous conversation with fellow Dubliners. At the Ormond bar in Episode Eleven, "Sirens," he charms the crowd with his voice during an emotional rendition of "M'appari tutt'amor." Amiable in public, at home, Simon is a negligent father who chooses to spend money on drinking over his children. Stephen has difficulty bonding with his father because Simon disapproves of his dream of becoming an artist. As a result, Stephen does not have a meaningful relationship with his father and acts as if he does not exist. Thus, in the first three episodes, he is depicted as a son in contest who is looking for a paternal role model to connect and bond with until he meets Leopold Bloom.

However, Bloom's history is not that much different from Stephen's. It is revealed that Bloom also has family issues due to his complex identity and background. Bloom's father, Rudolf Virág, was a Hungarian Jewish immigrant who migrated to Ireland from Szombathely and married Ellen Bloom (née Higgins), an Irish Protestant woman. His father

anglicised the family's surname from Virág, which means "flower" in Hungarian, to Bloom to assimilate into Irish culture. Originally, Leopold Bloom was a Jewish Protestant. He converted to Catholicism when he married his wife, Marion (née Tweedy) Bloom, who was a Roman Catholic, in 1888. Rudolf committed suicide on 27 June 1886 when Bloom was twenty years old, a family tragedy that profoundly impacts Bloom's views on identity, mortality and legacy. Although he is no longer alive in *Ulysses*, his presence is strongly felt by Bloom throughout the entire novel. The Jewish heritage of his father contributes to Bloom's identity and the discrimination he experiences from his fellow Dubliners. When Bloom is on the way to Dignam's funeral with his Dublin friends on a carriage, he constantly thinks of his father and son, Rudolf and Rudy Bloom. Rudolf is indirectly mentioned when they discuss death. One of them, Mr. Power, shares his opinion that the worst death of all comes from "the man who takes his own life" (120). He also adds that suicide is "the greatest disgrace to have in the family" (120). According to the Roman Catholic theological rationale, committing suicide is a self-murder, and those who commit the sin face strong sanctions from the Church, namely the prohibition of Catholic burial (Adamiak, Stanisław, and Dohnalik). Although Mr. Power does not address Rudolf's suicide directly, the cause of his death is a taboo that still has a spectral presence in Bloom's life in the Roman Catholic social circle. Since his father cut his life short, Bloom is left fatherless and becomes a dispossessed son in contest like Stephen. Thus, Bloom does not only bond with Stephen because he is a substitute for Rudy, but the negligence they both receive from their fathers also makes them empathise and find solace in each other.

Bloom's fatherless identity and his thoughts on begetting another Rudy through surrogacy with Stephen resonate with reproductive futurism. His background reveals that he is not only a fatherless son but also a sonless father. He has no lineage and is left with no link

from the past nor direction to the future. Since the Child is used as a temporal metaphor for an imagined possible collective future, the death of the Child becomes the death of the future. His father and son's deaths have made him in opposition to reproductive futurism, and, ultimately, the society he lives in. The Church sees his father as a murderer for ending his own life, and now Bloom is also questioning whether he is a murderer for refusing to live in the reproductive futurity after masturbation. He has an identity crisis and must find ways to reconcile with mainstream reproductive values by extending his family legacy through a male heir.

Bloom's attempt to conform to reproductive futurism begins as soon as he becomes a father to a son. He tried to absolve his father's sin when Rudy was born on 29 December 1983. Bloom chooses to name his only male heir Rudolf "Rudy" Bloom, after his late father, in an attempt to restore the Bloom bloodline and overcome the notion of a lost future. Unfortunately, it becomes a failed attempt when Rudy dies eleven days later. Both tragedies that happened to Rudolph and Rudy defy the law of reproductive futurism because their deaths are not caused by old age. Suicide and infant mortality are unprecedented deaths that do not fulfil generational reproduction. Back to the present, on 16 June 1904, Bloom is incessantly trying to overturn his family's doomed fate despite his fear of bringing another weak child. Since the start of his day, Bloom already thinks of his late son as he goes through the morning. In "Calypso," after reading a letter from Milly who celebrates her fifteenth birthday the day before, he revisits the moment of Rudy's first and only birthday. Mrs. Thornton, a midwife who delivered Rudy, knew he was not going to survive right after she saw him, "She knew from the first poor Rudy wouldn't live. Well, God is good, sir. She knew at once. He would be eleven now if he had lived" (80). Bloom counts every day as time irrevocably moves forward how old Rudy would have been had he stayed alive. Later in

"Hades," an episode which reminds Bloom of his father and son the most as it primarily focuses on death, Bloom's mind wanders during the funeral service and thinks of Rudy again, "If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton suit. My son. Me in his eyes" (110). Bloom envisions how it would have been different for him and for Molly had Rudy grown up to be a young man. He would have received fine education and become the family pride. The looming reproductive futurism conceives Bloom into believing that the only way to ensure the Bloom family's legacy is through the Child as parts of him will be survived by Rudy. Thus, it behoves Bloom that he must have another son.

Bloom is always conscious of his reproductive shortcomings and the pressuring Catholic obligation to reproduce. Before his tribulations culminate and climax in "Nausicaa," the scene is anticipated earlier in "Lotus-Eaters." On the way to Dignam's funeral, Bloom decides to go to a bathhouse where he imagines himself masturbating in the bath, "Also I think I. Yes I. Do it in the bath. Curious longing I. Water to water. Combine business with pleasure" (105). The abject image is shown here as his ejaculation would muddy the water had he orgasmed and ejaculated in the bath. Declan Kiberd considers this masturbatory fantasy as a return to the original problem, his failure to impregnate Molly and create another Rudy (973). When the episode comes to an end, he fantasises the masturbation as the Catholic Consecration of the Mass. Similar to the Mass performed by Buck earlier in the morning, Bloom parodies the Roman Catholic mass by reciting, "This is my body" (107). However, he does not complete the second half of the sentence 'which is given for you'. The incomplete sentence signifies his failure to turn his seed into flesh. Again, the Roman Catholic undertone is obvious and is linked to the abject because once the semen fails to conceive the Child, it no longer holds futuritive value. Instead of the bread and wine turning

into the Body and Blood of Christ, Bloom's consecration will never be substantiated into the Child and only begets sexual pleasure.

Bloom's search for a son comes true when he finally meets Stephen Dedalus in "Oxen of the Sun" at the Holles Street Maternity Hospital after taking a tram from Sandymount strand back into the city. The fatherless son and sonless father meet in front of the delivery room as Bloom visits Mina Purefoy, who is three days into labour, and Stephen shows up drunk with a group of young raucous medical students. Bloom paternal instinct towards Stephen grows as he is concerned about Stephen's company, "so grieved he also in no less measure for young Stephen for that he lived riotously with those wastrels and murdered his goods with whores" (510). The group of young men leave the hospital after displaying rowdy behaviour at the hospital. Concerned, Bloom decides to follow drunken Stephen to Nighttown, Dublin's brothel district, at midnight in Episode Fifteen, "Circe". Named after the witch goddess in the *Odyssey*, Circe, who has the power of black magic, the episode entails a series of hallucinations, drunkenness, and the combination of dream sequence and reality to imitate Circe's power. Stephen becomes too drunk and loses control of his decision-making. He overpays Bella Cohen, the brothel's owner, and Bloom must step in and resolve the financial situation. Stephen later breaks Bella's chandelier and is chastised out of the brothel. Acting as Stephen's guardian, Bloom covers the damage and follows Stephen out of the brothel. Then, Stephen runs into another problem as he is involved in an altercation with Private Carr, an occupying English soldier, who strikes him in the face. At the end of the episode, Stephen is seen lying on the floor with a caring Bloom hovering above him. Nearly unconscious and defeated, Stephen curls his body, which makes him look like a fetus who needs protection, "He stretches out his arms, sighs again and curls his body" (702). The worried Bloom bends over and unbuttons Stephen's waistcoat to help him breathe. At that

moment as Bloom looks down on Stephen's face and form, his mind conjures a vision of Rudy:

> *(Silent, thoughtful, alert, he stands on guard, his fingers at his lips in the attitude of secret master. Against the dark wall a figure appears slowly, a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand. He reads from right to left inaudibly, smiling, kissing the page.)*
>
> BLOOM: *(Wonderstruck, calls inaudibly)* Rudy!
>
> RUDY: *(Gazes unseeing into Bloom's eyes and goes on reading, kissing, smiling. He has a delicate mauve face. On his suit he has diamond and ruby buttons. In his free left hand he holds a slim ivory cane with a violet bowknot. A white lambkin peeps out of his waistcoat pocket.)* (703)

The description in Bloom's fantasy is a continuation of the image he has of Rudy earlier in "Calypso." The spectral Rudy is a young boy who receives a fine education. The gesture of reading from right to left implies that Rudy reads Hebrew, preserving and extending the family's paternal legacy. However, Rudy is described as a changeling which is a baby who is used as a substitute for another baby. Also wearing a waistcoat, Bloom returns to reality as he is gazing at Stephen who is unconsciously lying in front of him. The changeling Rudy in Bloom's fantasy has been replaced by the intellectual yet vulnerable Stephen, who seeks his

guidance and protection. At the end of the episode, the two dispossessed sons in contest bond and find solace in one another.

Despite their different characters, Stephen is artistic and intellectual whereas Bloom is more inclined towards science and scientific titbits; they have a common interest in music and engage in a bonding conversation in the following episode, "Eumaeus." Later in "Ithaca," Bloom invites Stephen to his home in Eccles Street at 2 a.m. While drinking hot cocoa, they have a conversation of 309 questions followed by detailed answers. In the Gilbert schema, Joyce described the narrative technique in this episode as "catechism (impersonal)" ("UlyssesGuide.com — 17. Ithaca"), which mirrors the Roman Catholic texts which contain a series of questions and answers to convey Christian teaching to children and adult converts. In one of those questions, Stephen asks Bloom about his family to which he replies:

> By the listener a limitation of fertility inasmuch as marriage had been celebrated 1 calendar month after the 18th anniversary of her birth (8 September 1870), viz. 8 October, and consummated on the same date with female issue born 15 June 1889, having been anticipatorily consummated on the 10 September of the same year and complete carnal intercourse, with ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ, having last taken place 5 weeks previous, viz. 27 November 1893, to the birth on 29 December 1893 of second (and only male) issue, deceased 9 January 1894, aged 11 days, there remained a period of 10 years, 5 months and 18 days during which carnal intercourse had been incomplete, without ejaculation of semen within the female organ (869)

Bloom recaptures the first three years of his marriage to Molly. His answer shows that he vividly remembers both of his children's consummations. Due to his enthusiasm for scientific knowledge, Bloom knows that in order for conception to take place inside the female womb, semen must be ejaculated inside the female sexual organ. On both occasions, Bloom made sure that he had inseminated inside Molly's body. Though their marriage is blessed by the arrival of Millicent Bloom after the consummation on their wedding night, this answer reveals that Bloom wishes to have a male heir as they try for a second child soon after. The precise calculation of Rudy's conception shows that the parents meticulously elaborated and anticipated the birth. The message in a bracket following his birth "(and only male)" stresses the importance of male issues in reproductive futurism. The end of the excerpt shows that Bloom is aware of the function and significance of his seed or semen in the reproductive system. He also remembers precisely how long he has not engaged in sexual activity with his wife. In combination with the Christian narrative style of this episode, reproductive futurism is written in the religious discourse, which pressures everyone in society to reproduce. As a man whose family's reproductive succession has failed to follow its natural course, Bloom is trapped in the middle and is struggling to find a way to reconcile with the hegemonic value.

In conclusion, Bloom's abject masturbation and masturbatory fantasies are his attempts to reinforce himself back into reproductive futurism. Bloom's complex religious background and his non-linear family succession due to Rudolf and Rudy's untimely deaths have left him in the semiotic blind spot of negative futurity. Bloom is abandoned in isolation because his life is not in tune with heteroreproductive futurism. His identity rejects the ancestral inheritance which is quintessential in reproductive futurism as it symbolises a sense

of moving forward. However, his new-found surrogacy with Stephen offers a possibility into the future that does not rely on paternal bloodline. The adversity that these dispossessed sons in contest face within the heteronormative reproductivity oppresses and yet pushes them into new territories through surrogacy, releasing them from the oppressive reproductive futurism.

5. Reproductive Futurity in the Female Reproductive System

Not only does the view of male ejaculation as abject represent a sense of a lost future, but the female reproductive system in *Ulysses*, which extensively includes menstruation and childbirth, is also part of reproductive futurism. In relation to Edelman's theory, reproductive futurism in heteronormative society gives rise to the sacralisation of the Child. In the Roman Catholic context of *Ulysses*, the Church relies on the population's collective conscience that children are valuable tokens to the future in order to assert their influence on the hetero-reproductive discourse. Since the Child is brought into the world through pregnancy and childbirth, the female body becomes a semantic landscape on which the rhetoric of reproductive futurism is created. This is reflected through clashing yet limited folkloric, religious and medical knowledge of the female reproductive system, which appears throughout the novel. In this chapter, I will analyse how the abject, when applied in the female reproductive system, conveys a notion of lost futurity. The analysis will follow the reproductive stages, from menstruation to pregnancy and motherhood, which constitute the collective perception of womanhood.

Menstruation is an important stage in female reproduction, as it is a sign that the body is fertile and ready to conceive. Menarche marks the entry to reproductive futurism, as one's body can give birth to a Child. The three women, Molly, Gerty, and Martha, are mentioned in regard to their monthly cycles, each representing misconceptions regarding women and their reproductive health at the time. Bloom is also inclined to observe and surmise the menstrual cycles of women he has sexual contact with. Firstly, menstruation in Roman Catholicism is depicted through Gerty who is a young virgin. In "Nausicaa," Gerty remembers the first time she had her period, "that time when she told him about that in confession crimsoning up to

the roots of her hair for fear he could see" (466) where she went to Father Conroy and confessed with shame. Father Conroy then told her, "Not to be troubled because that was only the voice of nature and we were all subject to nature's law, he said, in this life and that that was no sin because that came from the nature of women instituted by God" (466-67). His reassuring response reverberates the Roman Catholic belief that menstruation is a "marker of sexuality and fertility, and as sign of creation in the image of God" (Kieser 2). The discourse is in line with the Church's pro-natal agenda as it encourages fertile individuals to reproduce and be a part of reproductive futurism.

The next view of menstruation is represented through Martha Clifford, a woman whom Bloom has a sexual epistolary correspondence with under the synonym Henry Bloom. In Episode Five, "Lotus-Eaters," an episode which is written in the language of flowers, Martha writes to Bloom, "I have such a bad headache. Today" (95), which leads Bloom to think that it is due to her menses, "Such a bad headache. Has her roses probably" (96). According to Katherine Mullin in "Menstruation in *Ulysses*," "roses" was a Victorian euphemism for menstrual cycles (498). In addition to euphemisms, many terms were created around the subject. For instance, in Irish Roman Catholicism, where menstruation is a taboo subject, the Church used the term "in season" to describe menstruating women, which is the term used to describe the catamenial state in domestic animals (Joffe 182). Both the euphemistic and animalistic language that frame women's natural reproductive cycles imply that menstrual bodies are written in a constructed discourse with an aim to utilize the female reproductive system for a specific purpose, that is procreation. Particularly in the Roman Catholic context, the institution only sheds light on menstruation in relation to family planning and procreation (Kieser 9). Moreover, the shame that Gerty feels during the confession suggests that menstruation is a taboo subject and is heavily stigmatised by society.

This stems from Christian texts which proliferated and framed menstruation in a negative light. In the thirteenth century, medical theorists postulated that menstrual and childbirth pain originated from "the Curse of Eve" (Ott 2). In the Book of Genesis, God punishes Eve after eating the forbidden fruit, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). This Biblical text resulted in numerous influential religious and medical interpretations on the cause of pain women experience during labour which is linked to the menstrual process. This misconstrued discourse circulated in Central Europe from the mid-thirteenth century, constructing a cultural and religious stigma on menstruating bodies (Ott 2). Thus, the contemporaneous medical and religious understanding of the female body and reproductive system in *Ulysses* derived from misogynistic and inadequate sources of knowledge, which is reflected through Gerty's shame and Bloom's false speculation about it. The negative view towards menstruation from the Church and the stigmatisation of menstruation is abject. The authorities regard menstruation as wasteful and revolting because its existence eliminates the chance of pregnancy.

Bloom's curiosity about female menstruation is a representation of society's perception of the subject that is constructed on a contradictory body of knowledge and misinformation. After his speculation about Martha's menstrual cycle, he observes as Gerty is limping and walking away from the Sandymount strand. Bloom realizes she is handicapped and assumes that her cycle is about to begin, "Near her monthlies, I expect, makes them feel ticklish. I have such a bad headache today" (479). The way that Bloom's subconscious links Gerty's disability to menstruation and arousal due to a "ticklish" feeling displays the pathologization of menstruation (Mullin 502). He also displays a few folkloric superstitions and beliefs. For instance, he sees Gerty sitting on damp rocks and believes that it will cause

"white fluxions" (491) and have health effects on her reproductive system. He expresses, "Some women for instance warn you off when they have their period" (489). This belief shows that menstruation is abject and sexual intercourse during menstruation is heavily coded with taboo. Sexual intercourse during menstruation is shunned because it is unlikely to lead to reproduction due to the low fertility levels. Thus, it receives disgust because it is in opposition to reproductive futurism. Bloom always questions the reproductive health of women in his life, "That's the moon. But then why don't all women menstruate at the same time with same moon, I mean? Depends on the time they were born, I suppose. Or all start scratch then get out of step. Sometimes Molly and Milly together" (479). Lastly, while he is going through a bookseller's cart to buy a book for Molly in Episode Ten, "Wandering Rocks", he comes across *Aristotle's Masterpiece,* a popular sex manual and childbirth guide published in 1684. Despite its scanty and unstable medical knowledge on menstruation (Mullin 499), the book was widely read in America and England for over two centuries and became the most frequently reprinted medical book of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (*Aristotle's Masterpiece*). Bloom's knowledge regarding menstruation, whether folkloric, astronomical, or medical, is a conglomeration of the incoherent and contradicting body of knowledge that lacks attention to the health of the female reproductive system. These incongruous discourses reveal that the reproductive futurity that is imposed on the female body neglects women's reproductive health and is only concerned with the procreation of the Child.

Lastly, the societal view towards menstrual blood is reflected in the last episode, "Penelope," when Molly's eight-sentence monologue is interrupted by the onset of her menstruation, "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"(913).

Her interior monologue reveals societal norms and expectations that are placed on the female body. As a thirty-three-year-old catholic woman, Molly is of reproductive age and has a responsibility to reproduce. The onset of her menstruation is a sign of fertility. Under the reproductive futurism imperative, the fertile female body becomes an essential tool for the Church to generate its population. When the female body stops menstruating, the body is equivalent to waste or death in reproductive futurism because it is no longer able to produce the Child. Thus, Molly's sentence here reveals that death and menstruation are allied because as much disgust and taboo that menstruation receives, it is what gives value and vitality to the female body in reproductive futurism.

Although menstruation is a sign of the fertile reproductive system, it can also be read as a sign of failed impregnation. Thus, once the menstrual blood is released from the body, it is considered as wasteful and unclean because it does not contain life. Molly expresses a sign of relief as her menstruation is an indicator that the tryst she just had with Boylan does not make her pregnant. She then complains about the amount of her menstrual blood that is pouring out and is worried that it will dirty her bedsheets, "Too much blood up in us or what O patience above its pouring out of me like the sea anyhow he didnt make me pregnant as big as he is I dont want to ruin the clean sheets" (914). By saying that the blood will ruin the clean sheets, the period stain is juxtaposed with cleanliness and purity. The feeling of disgust that she expresses towards her own discharge is related to the theory of abject. On the one hand, it represents a fertile body capable of reproduction; on the other hand, it equates to a missed opportunity because a pregnancy does not occur. This notion is supported by Roman Catholic theology, which associates the bleeding body with the notion of chastity and sinfulness due to the connection with Eve's curse. Any discharge that comes out of the female body is thus coded with taboo and negativity. This narrative also includes an

inspection of blood to prove one's virginity and whether the hymen is still intact. This belief is proven to be wrong, as hymenal tearing and bleeding are not a universal experience among women after the first sexual intercourse (Shaffir). Molly comments that men are obsessed with female virginal status, "they always want to see a stain on the bed to know youre a virgin" (914), which can be marked by "a daub of red ink" (914). Female vaginal bleeding, whether from menstruation or after sexual intercourse contains religious significance and is heavily monitored by religious authorities and society. The abjected discharge receives much repugnance from the religious entity because it contains an ambivalence between life and death, which does not conform to the reproductive imperative. Menstruation in an image of abject by the female characters in *Ulysses* represents the incongruous body of knowledge from different sources that try to pathologize, stigmatise and control female reproductive health in order to utilise it for futuritive reproduction.

Childbirth and Motherhood as Abject

The dichotomous depiction of childbirth and funeral in Ulysses emphasizes the image of abjection and a sense of a lost future. The entire Episode Fourteen, "Oxen of the Sun," takes place in Holles Street maternity hospital. It is divided into nine parts, representing each month of pregnancy, an analogy which Joyce equipped to demonstrate the evolution of the English language from Latin to American slang. It is obvious that the main motif of this episode is childbirth. Bloom stops by the hospital to check on Min Purefoy, a family friend who is giving birth to her twelfth child and is on the third day of labour. He runs into a group of drunk men, including Stephen, and all of them gather in front of the delivery room. Bloom marks the moment as "the time's occasion as most sacred and most worthy to be most

sacred" (512). This refers to the sacralisation of the Child because it is in this moment where meanings are created and the Child reaffirms the collective future and security in reproductive futurism.

However, childbirth is an important moment not only because the Child is about to be born but because it is the most precarious moment where life and death are at stake. Childbirth is comparable to abjection because it is a life-defining moment as the mother's body ejects the Child into the world. This forceful action challenges the symbolic order where signification is blurred. The mother's body during labour becomes "fragile with fallacious chance" (Kristeva) as her body convulses and ejects blood, discharge, organs, and eventually, the Child. The discharge and bodily fluids which normally represent death are now signs of vitality. Bloom is aware of the violent process of childbirth when he thinks of Mina's labour earlier, "Doubled up inside her trying to butt its way out blindly, groping for the way out. Kill me that would" (204). Childbirth is the unfathomably painful process of individuation as the mother, who is the subject, violently dismembers herself to form a new life. This breach of a maternal body and the Child actualises internal and external reality. It is also this very movement where life is at its most fragile, and the sacred arrival of the Child could turn into a lost future like Rudy.

The sacralisation of the Child through Mina's labour is intensified when it is situated in proximity to death. In Episode Eight, "Lestrygonians," Bloom is pondering about Mina's labour and expresses some concerns as he runs into Mr. M'Coy, the city coroner. The two exchange a few words. Bloom mentions that he is heading to the funeral. As he walks away his psyche conflates the two events together:

> Dignam carted off. Mina Purefoy swollen belly on a bed groaning to have a child tugged out of her. One born every second somewhere. Other dying every second. Since I fed the birds five minutes. Three hundred kicked the bucket. Other three hundred born, washing the blood off, all are washed in the blood of the lamb, bawling maaaaaa (208)

Dignam's decaying dead body, according to Kristeva, is an absolute form of abjection because it is "death infecting life" (4). Both dead and maternal bodies resemble similar abject qualities as blood and bodily waste are discharged during decomposition and delivery. Thus, the text depicts a violent contention between life and death as Mina is fighting for her life to give birth to the Child. The proximity between life and death is blurred during childbirth by the abject that floats among them. Moreover, a religious undertone is present in the scene when a newborn is washed in lamb's blood. In Christianity, the lamb is a symbol of Christ. It also represents innocence, purity and gentleness.

As a father who lost a son soon after birth, Dignam's funeral and Mina's labour impacts Bloom on a personal level than other attendees. In the morning, Bloom asks and reminds himself several times about the time of the funeral which is at eleven. Although he remains conscious of time throughout the day because Molly is going to have an affair with Boylan at 4 p.m., this obsessive behaviour also hints at the distorted sense of time he experiences after Rudy's death. Finally, M'Coy asks Bloom about the time of the funeral. Even though Bloom has been repeatedly reminding himself about it, he stutters, "E…eleven" (89). Coincidentally, eleven is also the number of days Rudy was alive. Rudy's death has made Bloom live in another plain of reality where he still contemplates his son's lost future.

Therefore, his decision to check on Mina at the delivery room does not stem only from his empathy for her but is his opportunity to experience his innermost desire, the birth of a son. While Bloom and a group of young men gather in front of the delivery room, he hears Mina's shrieking voice and looks up to see Stephen:

> But sir Leopold was passing grave maugre his word by cause he still had pity of the terrorcausing shrieking of shrill women in their labour and as he was minded of his good lady Marion that had borne him an only manchild which on his eleventh day on live had died and no man of art could save so dark is destiny. And she was wondrous stricken of heart for that evil hap and for his burial did him on a fair corselet of lamb's wool…and now sir Leopold that had of his body no manchild for an heir looked upon him his friend's son. (510)

Mina's excruciating pain brings Bloom back to Rudy's birth. Again, the image of an innocent lamb symbolises the loss of innocence, a male heir, and, ultimately, the future. However, it is at this moment when Bloom looks at Stephen for the first time that his mind fuses birth, infant death, and Stephen together, suggesting that Stephen will be the changeling later in Episode Fifteen, "Circe". The birth of Mina's child, Rudy's birth and death, and the image of an innocent lamb feed into the narrative that the newborn Child is a vulnerable and innocent creature worthy of protection. The abject that gushes out during childbirth and after death represents the fragility and ambivalence that separates life from death. Therefore, childbirth and funerals are momentous in Roman Catholicism and reproductive futurism as they allow

the authorities to narrativise a discourse which promotes heterosexual reproduction and a collective future manifested in an image of the Child in society.

In continuation with Stephen's philosophical query whether it is possible to create everything *ex nihil*o to absolve his guilt for not having knelt at his mother's deathbed, it is crucial to look at the construction of motherhood and how it plays a vital role in Roman Catholic reproductive futurism. As much as paternal lineage is necessary to extend the collective future, the female body or maternity is equal, if not more important, because it is the medium which substantiates the Child's body. The previous analysis shows that menstruation and childbirth are two essential components in the discourse of reproductive futurism in Roman Catholicism. Once a woman surpasses these steps and gives birth to the Child, she is thrust into another reproductive obligation, which is motherhood. While Stephen is watching his student, Cyril Sargent, copying data in his notebook with pity in "Nestor," he has a flashback to his own poignant childhood, "Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. Was that then real? The only true thing in life?" (33). The depiction of motherhood and maternal love as unrequited and sacrificial, even to the expense of one's own life as the mother is willing to have the blood abjected from her to her Child. As Sargent finishes the sums, Stephen's mind arrives at a conclusion that his mother's love is "*Amor matris*: subjective and objective genitive. With her weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of others his swaddling bands" (34). *Amor matris* is a Latin phrase which means "love of mother." However, *matris* also grammatically serves as a subjective genitive, which gives the phrase double meanings. First, the mother is the subject who feels the love. Second, she is the object who is loved by the Child. When this analogy is viewed within the

Roman Catholic context and the curse of Eve, motherhood is a culturally and religiously eroticised concept that can withstand the infinite latitudes of pain for the sake of the Child.

In Kristeva's essay "Reliance, or Maternal Eroticism," she explains that maternity in Christianity is reliant on "*Passion/Vocation,"* the two inseparable attributes that establish motherhood defy rationality (72). Christianity eroticises this sentimentality to elicit filial piety to maternal love and strengthen reproductive futurism. *Amor matris* or love of the mother is the highest form of love and sacrifice as the mother or the subject "regulates the time of death into a temporality of new beginnings: jubilatory affirmations and anxious annihilations that literally put me beside myself, outside of myself, and, without annihilating me, multiply me" (Kristeva, "Reliance" 73). Moreover, the maternal love that is poured into the Child during labour through self-abjection exemplifies the most self-less act:

> Maternal eroticism lets the death drive loose in the vital process, all while binding [*reliant]* the two together: the maternal transforms the abjects (which the death drive has re-jected into the not-yet space of mother-child) into objects of care, into survival, and into life. (Kristeva "Reliance" 76)

The process of childbirth, unconditional love, and selflessness that are gut-wrenchingly extracted from the death drive by the maternal subject to give life to the Child encapsulates the notion of motherhood. Thus, Stephen is racked with guilt because the maternal love or *amor matris* he receives from his mother is the rawest form of love, which he will never experience again.

After following Bloom for an entire day, *Ulysses* ends with the final scene with Molly lying in bed reminiscing about her former lovers, childhood in Gibraltar, and ends with her revisiting Bloom's marriage proposal at the Hill of Howth in May 1888. Her short appearance in the novel does not provide her enough room to grieve over Rudy's death compared to Bloom and her monologue is overfilled with non-grammatical English detailing her ex-lovers and Gibraltar. However, there is an underlying bereavement from Rudy's death that still haunts her. Having a career as a singer, Molly is mentioned earlier in "Lotus-Eaters" when Bloom thinks of her performance at St. Xavier's church in Gardiner Street, "Molly was in fine voice that day, the *Stabat Mater* of Rossini" (101). Later in her monologue, she recalls the same performance. *Stabat Mater* is a nineteenth-century operatic work by the Italian composer, Gioachino Rossini. The piece is inspired by a thirteenth-century Christian hymn to the Virgin Mary of the same name. The opening line, "*Stabat mater dolorosa,*" is translated to "The grieving mother was standing" (*The Joyce Project: Ulysses: Stabat Mater*). The connection between the grieving Mary and Molly's performance implies that she is still trying to recover from Rudy's death and is experiencing emotional pain as much as Bloom. Rossini's *Stabat Mater* appears in Episode Eleven, "Sirens," when Bloom recites the line "quis est homo?" (364), which means "Who is the man?" According to Kiberd, he considers this reiteration as the way in which the Blooms are trying to become sexually intimate with each other again to produce a male heir. Lastly, Molly's grief resurfaces during her monologue when she thinks of Rudy's death, "I suppose I oughtn't to have buried him in that little woolly jacket I knitted crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I knew well Id never have another our 1st death too it was we were never the same since" (927). Rudy's death has left an indelibly painful memory for Molly. As a mother, the death of the Child is equivalent to the death of oneself. Molly also attaches the image of a lamb to Rudy which

signals the loss of the Child and reproductive future. Despite the fact that Rudy's death results in a rift between Bloom and Molly's sexual relationship, her grievance here displays a maternal yearning of a sorrowful mother who wishes to carry a son in her arms again.

The abject that comes out during menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth, answers Stephen's question that it is impossible for the creation to be *ex nihilo* or from nothing. In order to bring the Child's life into the world, the female body must endure an unimaginable amount of pain and risk her own life or subjectivity in order to bear another human being, which is a token of the future. Through the lens of Kristeva's concept of abjection and maternal eroticism, the abjection of the female reproductive system through bodily fluids in each stage is a complex concept that involves the negotiation of physical boundaries and identity. It also reveals that the concept of maternity is religiously and erotically charged to serve the purpose of reproductive futurism. The religious and contradicting body of knowledge around the subject discloses the stately authorities' attempt to write the narrative of reproductive futurism over the female body.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the male and female reproductive acts in *Ulysses* through the lens of abjection reveals a sense of a lost future and the doctrine of reproductive futurism that is deeply ingrained in Irish Roman Catholicism. By combining Edelman's reproductive futurism with Kristeva's abjection, I create a new literary methodology to reveal how the abject reproductive system in *Ulysses* represents a sense of a lost future under the dominance of Roman Catholicism in Ireland in the early twentieth century. By adapting Edelman's theory, which outlines how homosexuality or queerness is considered hostile to the collective future in American politics, I contextualise the concept and situate it within the events in *Ulysses.* The Church places a significant emphasis on family and heterosexual procreation as central to its teachings. The Biblical text "Be fruitful and multiply" results in a procreative discourse that emphasises the continuation of the species through heteroreproduction, often symbolized by the image of the Child. The Child serves as a tool to preserve and authenticate social order. In consequence, any sexual activities that do not lead to procreation, such as masturbation and homosexuality, are morally sanctioned by the Church. In combination with Kristeva's theory on abjection, which explains how the leaky substance that the body casts out, such as discharge or blood, disturbs identity and social order. The abject, which is present through masturbation, menstruation, and childbirth in *Ulysses*, reveals a sense of a lost future.

There are several instances in *Ulysses* which disclose how the protagonists fail to conform to reproductive futurism. Leopold Bloom, a grieving father who has lost an infant son, stops having sexual intercourse with his wife for over eleven years for fear of repeating the same fate. As a Roman Catholic man, he is breaking the social convention by not

reproducing an heir to secure his family's future. Instead, Bloom commits the Catholic sin of masturbation. His masturbatory fantasies and masturbation on the Sandymount Strand contain an image of the abject through the ejaculation of semen from his body. Once the semen is released outside and not inseminated into the female body, it is deemed wasteful by the Church because it loses the potential to form a new life. However, abjection is also a means for the subject to reveal their innermost desire which is a son in the case of Leopold Bloom. The abject here reveals that the view of masturbation as sinful is a way for the Church to control the population to participate in reproductive futurism by inciting the discourse of shame and immorality around it.

The Roman Catholic influence on reproductive futurism also extends to the regulation of the female body. The female body is an indispensable component in reproductive futurism because it is a portal that brings life to the Child. Therefore, the Church must regulate a discourse throughout the female reproductive stages, which are menstruation, childbirth and the notion of motherhood, to strengthen the Child's value and promote reproduction. The abject in the form of menstrual blood unleashes the misogynistic and inadequate knowledge regarding the topic during that time, which pathologises and subjugates menstruating bodies. Stephen's philosophical question about the creation from nothing and the concept of *amor matris* reveal how Christianity utilises the biblical text, which is the curse of Eve, to justify and eroticise the pain during childbirth and the hardship in motherhood in order to constitute an impenetrable bond between the mother and the Child.

The abject in the form of reproductive waste in *Ulysses* erupts and queers the symbolic notion of reproductive futurism in Irish Roman Catholicism which invests in the fixation of the Child. Although the scope of this thesis is centred around Irish Roman

Catholicism in Ireland in early twentieth century, I want to point out how powerful and destructive the discourse of reproductive futurism is in other cultures and contexts. *Ulysses* is a canonical novel and the legacy of Irish literature. It came out during the time moral propriety was closely monitored and people's social and reproductive lives were strictly regulated by the authorities in many countries. However, the very same heteroreproductive discourse is still prevalent in contemporary societies as it reassesses the way the state legislates the reproductive body. Not long ago, Ireland witnessed referendums on divorce (1995), same-sex marriage (2015), and abortion (2018) (O'Leary), the issues that were taboo and far from comprehension in Bloom's time. Therefore, the abject in masturbation, menstruation, and childbirth represented in *Ulysses* challenges yet emancipates the subject from the imprisonment and the pain of reproductive futurism. The dreadful abjection liberates the subject from the sense of no future to gratify in the freedom of stately release.

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