



Love As Nephenthe: Displacing Homer With Shelley In Joyce's *Ulysses*

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Abstract

One of the least explored muses for James Joyce's *Ulysses* was Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* which left its mark on Joyce's protagonists, Leopold and Molly Bloom. Joyce quoted Aristotle in his notes in the spring of 1903, "It is harder to endure pain than to abstain from pleasure" and it is this exact sentiment that brings together the similarities between Shelley and Joyce, highlighting the Blooms' yearning to banish grief from their minds regarding their deceased son, Rudy, and avoid the pain of loss, plaguing their marriage. One subtle Homeric seed from *Prometheus Unbound* – the word "nepenthe" – can be traced through Joyce's early readings of Shelley's play by his personal annotation in Shelley's works within his *Ulysses* notebooks and the published novel. This word is the balm for a character and author who suffered through the death of a child – one alive for 11 days and the other never born. Joyce metaphorically uses nepenthe to represent chloroform, the substance Queen Victoria used to dull the pain of childbirth for her son of the same name as Bloom, Leopold. However, unlike Homer's original use of nepenthe to simply banish grief from the mind, Joyce employs the version of nepenthe used by Shelley in which the drug is symbolic of love. This subtle contextual shift alters the theme of overcoming grief as not something to simply be eliminated, but rather something to be replaced by love. Understanding this can change the way in which readers approach the protagonist of *Ulysses*, the development of his struggle throughout the novel, and its ultimate conclusion.

Keywords: James Joyce, nepenthe, *Ulysses*, Queen Victoria, *Prometheus Unbound*, Percy Bysshe Shelley, love

James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*, first conceptualized around 1906, published serially from 1918–1920, was famously written with Homer's *Odyssey* as a scaffold. Not only did Joyce find inspiration in

Homer's epic poem, but also from various other literary figures he had read up to that point. One of these readings was Percy Bysshe Shelley's closet drama, *Prometheus Unbound*. The thematic similarities between Shelley and Joyce highlight the Blooms' yearning to banish grief from their minds regarding their deceased son, Rudy, and avoid the pain of loss plaguing their marriage. Understanding that the contextual use of Shelley, as opposed to Homer, changes the meaning of the Blooms' relationship and whether or not their marriage can survive the turbulence set up in the novel. Tracing the textual genetics of this context from the published *Ulysses* through Joyce's notes to his original annotation in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, one can understand how this subtle contextual shift alters the theme of overcoming grief as not something to be simply eliminated, but rather something to be replaced by love.

With the exception of Michael Schandorf, little research is available to relate Shelley's impact on Joyce. He writes that Shelley "...was a more subtle, but arguably more lasting Romantic influence on the stylistic and aesthetic development of both Stephen Dedalus and Joyce himself. Nevertheless, most critics seem to have generally ignored or brushed off Shelley's influence in *Ulysses*..." (416). However, even Schandorf ignores Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and the potential connection of the play to the Blooms of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Joyce's brother, Stanislaus, recalled the youthful writer's many inspirations in his biography of James, *My Brother's Keeper*. Stanislaus wrote of Joyce, "Among the older poets he had progressed from his boyish hero-worship of Byron through Shelley to Blake, where my prejudice in favour of sanity prevented me from following him" (99). Similarly, as part of his matriculation course at university, James Joyce wrote a paper entitled "Subjugation by Force" on September 27, 1898, which specified:

Again in works of fancy, a too prolific imagination literally flys [*sic*] away with the author, and lands him in regions of loveliness unutterable, which his faculties scarcely grasp, which dazzles his senses, and defies speech, and thus his compositions are beautiful indeed, but beautiful with the cloudiness and dream-beauty of a visionary. Such a thing as this often affects poets of high, fanciful temper, as Shelley, rendering their poetry vague and misty. (7-8)

As early as 1898 Joyce was not only reading Shelley's works, but also thinking on and critiquing them, considering his impact on the literary landscape he would later mold as well.

Between 1903–1905, Joyce again used inspiration from Shelley in his posthumously published *Stephen Hero*, a draft of sorts for *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* featuring Stephen Daedalus. Joyce had Stephen address his above concern with Shelley's works dazzling the senses with a "vague and misty" prose style. He wrote, referring to a line from Act II, Scene 1 of *Prometheus Unbound*, "...sometimes Shelley does not address the eye. He says 'many a lake-surrounded flute.' Does that strike your eye or your sense of color?" (*Selected Poetry* 129). Stephen also quoted Shelley from Act I, Scene 1: "'I [He] will watch from dawn to gloom / The lake-reflected sun illumine / The yellow bees in the ivy[-]bloom'" (*Selected Poetry* 129). Joyce's thoughts on Shelley's closet drama were certainly utilized in relation to a character – Stephen Daedalus – who would become one of the protagonists in *Ulysses*. However, neither of these excerpts from *Stephen Hero* made it to the final draft version as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Interestingly, one quote from *Prometheus Unbound*, did make it into the final draft of Joyce's. As Sebastian Knowles reveals in *The Dublin Helix*, "After Bloom's appearance in 'Scylla and Charybdis,' Mulligan quotes Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*: 'Life of life, thy lips enkindle'...He is referring to Bloom's encounter with the statues; the lines can also be taken to refer to Bloom's encounter with Molly on the Hill of Howth..." (109). Between the two quotes in his unpublished *Stephen Hero* and single line tucked in *Ulysses*, one could be forgiven for being unaware of the influence Shelley's closet drama had on Joyce's writing career.

According to Giorgio Melchiori in *The Genesis of Ulysses*, on July 31, 1906, Joyce wrote to his brother from Rome: "Hesitate to give my impression of Rome lest my interview with the bank-manager might change it. Terrorised by the bank, while looking for it I found this on a wall 'In this house Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*'...(L, II. 144)" (51). While working on *Ulysses*, Joyce took note of his current career status in relation to that of Percy Bysshe Shelley – albeit 90 years earlier – at the same location. In the same building Joyce, highly disgruntled, was to begin working a menial job in a bank to support his family while writing, where Shelley had penned two of his classics. Whether this left a subconscious imprint on Joyce's psyche or not, we will never know for

certain. However, the year Joyce spent in Rome was none other than the year he shaped *Ulysses* from a short story into a novel.

In “The Shade of Shelley: From Prometheus to Ulysses” Carla de Petris notes Joyce’s affinity for Shelley: “And the year before his stay in Rome James had written to Stanislaus who was still in Dublin: I am writing (imagine!) a summary of English literature for a Berlitz book for the Japanese: five or six pages [...]. In my history of literature I have given the highest palms to Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Shelley” (286). Carla de Petris, citing C. Curran’s *James Joyce Remembered*, also writes about “the assistant librarian in the National Library of Ireland, J.J. O’Neill, who remembers ‘listening to Joyce and Gogarty discussing Shelley’” (291). While Joyce’s views of Shelley certainly evolved over the years, one cannot escape the fact that during a critical period of his literary career pre-*Ulysses*, Joyce greatly admired the Romantics. And so, from the timeline presented, we know that Stanislaus had noted Joyce’s admiration of Shelley in his youth and that as early as 1898 Joyce was writing about him at university. Between 1903–1905, Joyce was including quotes from *Prometheus Unbound* in his own writing and admiring the house in which the play was written when he moved his family to Rome in 1906. While this was eight years before devoting his full attention to *Ulysses*, Joyce had already written to Stanislaus that he was working on a story for *Dubliners* entitled “Ulysses” and over the next few years more of his famed novel would slowly take form. When Frank Budgen was discussing with Joyce the admiration he felt for the lyrical dramas of Shelley, Joyce replied, “No doubt there is much beauty in Prometheus Unbound and Héllas, but I feel that it’s all on the wrong track” (182). Despite his criticisms of the Romantics, Joyce admired the skill of Shelley and his use of Aeschylus’s works as an inspirational base for the two works mentioned to Budgen. However, he felt the lack of realism and attention to human detail in Shelley’s writing that he would later utilize in *Ulysses*. In similar fashion to Shelley, Joyce scaffolded *Ulysses* onto the mythological story of Homer’s *Odyssey*. According to Richard Ellmann in the James Joyce Online Notes, Joyce’s library contained in his Trieste personal library as of 1920 a copy of Shelley’s *The Complete Poetical Works* from 1912 and *The Poetical Works* by Shelley, both of which contained *Prometheus Unbound*. With this contextual set up, one can start to delve into the texts of these two writers to study the intersection of Shelley’s vision and Joyce’s imagination.

The audience’s role in Shelley’s play resembles that of a novel’s reader. When reading a closet drama, there is no shared experi-

ence in a theatre, but rather an imagining of the words coming to life in one's mind. Episode 15 – the “Circe” episode – of *Ulysses* is even written in the format of a closet drama as it is in a script format with no intention of being, or with proper ability to be, performed on stage. In this way, *Prometheus Unbound*, owing to its form, is near to the experience of reading a novel than a typical drama. Contextually, Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound* with a message, following massive political turmoil. Victoria Lynn Scrimmer wrote that Shelley's closet drama was “in part, a response to the bloody aftermath of the French revolution which weighed heavily on Shelley's mind (as it did for many of the Romantic poets)” (31). Similarly, Joyce was writing *Ulysses* in the shadow of World War I. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom reflected, “I resent violence and intolerance in any shape or form. It never reaches anything or stops anything. A revolution must come on the due instalments plan” (525). Likewise, Bloom's wife, Molly, thought to herself in her stream-of-consciousness episode, “...I dont care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering...” (640). Joyce, himself, had a similar attitude, confiding in Frank Budgen on many occasions, “You know, Budgen, I am not a bloodyminded man” (256). Joyce, Bloom, and Molly all make note of rejecting violence. Thematically, following the French Revolution for Shelley and World War I for Joyce, there is a similarity between Shelley's use of Prometheus to show his readers that love triumphs over violence and the peaceful proclivities of Joyce's protagonists. Just as through brute masculine force Jupiter cannot forever dominate Prometheus, the usurpers cannot take Ithaca and Penelope from Odysseus, Hugh “Blazes” Boylan cannot steal Molly from Bloom, and love cannot be overcome by the violence of war.

In *Ulysses*, when Leopold Bloom was writing intimate letters to his pen pal, Martha Clifford, under the pseudonym Henry Flower, and discretely masturbating to a flirtatious Gerty MacDowell on a Dublin beach, his wife, Molly, was having an affair with Hugh “Blazes” Boylan at their home. In *Prometheus Unbound*, the titan Prometheus had been chained to the icy sharp rocks on the side of a mountain, plagued by a multitude of tortures, as punishment for his defiance in giving mankind the gift of fire – often symbolic of wisdom or illumination. Unlike Aeschylus's version in *Prometheus Bound*, in this version Prometheus was freed and the tyrant, Jupiter, fell from power. In *Ulysses*, despite Bloom's sexual distance from his wife and their simultaneous infidelities, Molly chooses her husband in the end, much

like *Prometheus Unbound*, where despite the tragedy and trials which occurred earlier, the end represented hope for the future.

The concept/tradition of using some sort of natural drug to banish grief or anger is an old one. Nepenthe is a drug from Homer's *Odyssey* which banishes grief from the mind. From ancient times as well as in mythology, nepenthe was a highly sought-after remedy for real human problems. In Act III, Scene 4 of *Prometheus Unbound*, the Spirit of the Hour narrated the changes to the world following the liberation of Prometheus after Jupiter's defeat: "nor pride, / Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame, / The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall, / Spoilt the sweet taste of nepenthe, love" (365). This also wove its way into Joyce's *Ulysses*, albeit used metaphorically.

Grief was most definitely felt by the two protagonists in *Ulysses* and the concept of banishing it with an Homeric drug would certainly have been appealing to Joyce for usage with his characters. As seen in the novel, Bloom and Molly longingly read a letter written by their teenage daughter far away in Mullingar, working in a photo shop. Their other child, Rudy, died eleven years prior to when the novel took place. Rudy was born in December of 1893, but passed away just eleven days later. Bloom felt guilty for his death as he recited the adage, "If it's healthy it's from the mother. If not the man" (79). Bloom and Molly have not had sex since Rudy's death ten years ago, creating the erotic tensions presented throughout the June 16th day of the novel.

Given that Bloom was able to masturbate on the beach to Gerty MacDowell and Molly was having an affair with Boylan, the cause of Bloom's and Molly's sexual separation was ostensibly not physical, but rather the result of an emotional disconnect following the death of their son. But, Katherine Singer's observation on Shelley's use of nepenthe, unintentionally, sounds Joycean in its application to Molly and her reconciliation with herself. "The drug-induced mechanism for revolution that Asia has imbibed is now disseminated to the rest of the world, particularly women, in a refined form of the drug...In the last half of the poem, nepenthe raises women's awareness of their own false obeisance to tyranny and then proceeds to medicate grief and pain by erasing traces of the war and conflict of the recent past. This drug," Singer noted, "both stimulates great acts of 'truth-loosening' and mutes the pain and humiliation from years of gender inequality and colonization, a forgetting perhaps necessary for acts of forgiveness" (698). This description is decisively Joycean in how Molly, who is given the last word in the novel, is aware of her

own obeisance to men throughout her life and this allows her to open up in the stream-of-conscious “Penelope” episode, therapeutically sorting out her complex emotions brought on by her affair and Bloom’s noticeably late return to home. This led to a one-sided reconciliation of sorts for Molly, ending in her affirmative “Yes” (644).

Homer originally used the drug to simply wash away the pain of the past, Shelley’s focus is more on the future with a redemptive and restorative quality. Homer wrote that nepenthe was “A drug infused, antidote to the pains / Of grief and anger, a most potent charm / For ills of ev’ry name” (50). But it isn’t just the matter of banishing grief from the mind that connects Shelley’s nepenthe to Joyce’s. Joyce’s nepenthe, which reflects Shelley’s as opposed to Homer’s, does not merely exile the pain. Shelley meant to mend society whereas Joyce wanted Bloom’s mind to heal. While Molly revealed in her stream-of-conscious soliloquy that she had emotionally recovered from her loss, she noted how her husband has not. “...the first cry was enough for me...hed go into mourning for the cat...” (637). Bloom, meanwhile, was haunted by his son’s absence as it was felt throughout the novel and most notably at the very end of the closet-drama-styled “Circe” episode in which he saw the specter of his son and called out his name to no reply. It is thus apparent how the drug, nepenthe, banishing grief from the mind, would play into the relationship of Bloom and Molly, particularly the former. It was the nepenthe of love referenced in Shelley’s play that Joyce used to anesthetize Bloom’s grief which was a prerequisite for healing his marriage.

The sense of loss the Blooms felt for Rudy was personal for Joyce. He and the love of his life, Nora Barnacle, both had a son, Giorgio, and daughter, Lucia, as of 1908. However, Nora had a miscarriage when she was around three months pregnant. This, apparently, affected Joyce more than it did Nora, with Joyce even examining the fetus before its burial. According to Richard Ellmann, Joyce wrote to his brother, Stanislaus, about the fetus “whose truncated existence” he was “probably the only one to regret” (269). It can be no coincidence that Molly was able to recover from the death of Rudy and Nora was not so much affected by her miscarriage whereas the fathers – Bloom and Joyce – were both haunted by the loss. This brings the allure of nepenthe into clearer focus for Bloom and his creator, Joyce.

From a thematic perspective, Shelley’s use of “nepenthe, love” (365) in *Prometheus Unbound*, for banishing grief from the mind would have been of particular interest to Joyce in regard to the charac-

ter development of his protagonist in *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom. Joyce had even reportedly told Frank Budgen, during the writing of *Ulysses*, that he thought *Prometheus Unbound* was the “Schwärmerei of a young Jew” (13). Schwärmerei is German for “enthusiasm” and so it is interesting that Joyce would suggest that Shelley’s closet drama would be the enthusiasm of a young Jew when he was writing about Leopold Bloom who was of Jewish heritage. Bloom was familiar with German as he thought about what it could have been like if Rudy hadn’t passed away so young. “I could have helped him on in life,” Bloom pondered. “Learn German too” (74). It was only those brief moments of what-could-have-been – those minor and loving intimacies a father would have shared with his son – that temporarily removed Bloom from the grief of Rudy’s death.

Most importantly to this thesis, Joyce had in his personal library in Trieste, during the time he was writing *Ulysses*, two collections of Shelley’s works, both containing *Prometheus Unbound*. With the invaluable help of Richard Watson of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, where Joyce’s Trieste library is housed, it was revealed that between his two copies of *Prometheus Unbound* – both catalogued by Richard Ellmann – in *Shelley’s Poetical Works*, the word nepenthe had been underlined (214). It’s exciting to consider that this subtle underlining was the marked genesis of Joyce’s interest in the Bloomian concepts of love, forgetfulness, and grief all wrapped in a single word and concept. Through this, it can be estimated that Joyce not only read *Prometheus Unbound*, but had specifically singled out the drug, nepenthe, during the time period he was working on *Ulysses*. And no annotations were made to the reference of nepenthe in Joyce’s copy of *The Odyssey* as well.

There has been some debate over the authenticity of the books in the Joyce collection at the Harry Ransom Center given that the books were transferred from James to Stanislaus when he left Trieste. Annotations cannot typically be verified as having been made by James Joyce himself even when the publication dates of some of the books in the collection have also been scrutinized in the timeline of Joyce’s residence in Trieste. However, the publisher’s London address on the title page dates this edition of *Shelley’s Poetical Works* as 1877 which allows for ownership of the book while Joyce was in Trieste from 1904–1920. Given that this particular book had only one owner between James Joyce and the Harry Ransom Center, Stanislaus, it is highly unlikely that the annotation was made by anyone other than James Joyce. Stanislaus wrote of Joyce that while his youthful brother was an admirer of Shelley’s, he could not be persuaded to read the

Romantic poet himself. Stanislaus's aesthetic prejudice against Shelley makes it highly improbable that he would have read his brother's copy of Shelley's works, let alone annotated it. Lastly, as revealed by the Harry Ransom Center through photographic evidence, this edition of the book bears James Joyce's "J.J." book stamp on the flyleaf which is a significant clue that this was James Joyce's book and the annotations within it are his.

To take this underlining instance one step further in the linguistic genetics, a study was done on Joyce's Notebook VIII.A.5 by Phillip Herring at the University at Buffalo's James Joyce Collection. Herring referenced a note by Joyce written around 1918: "L (nepenthe – anesthetic [Queen Vict.])" (1969, 295). It is important to understand that this is the only known mention of nepenthe in any of Joyce's surviving notes for *Ulysses*. Herring clarified that, "PARENTHESSES, preceded by COLOR INDICATORS (B = blue, R = red, L = lavender) show the portion of a phrase marked through in color pencil, and, generally what Joyce found most interesting" (295). The indication of lavender is another point that will be delved into later.

In the "Lestrygonians" episode of *Ulysses*, for which these notes were used, Bloom considered Mina Purefoy's lengthy three-day labor in the hospital as, "Life with hard labour. Twilight sleep idea: queen Victoria was given that. Nine she had. A good layer. Old woman that lived in a shoe she had so many children" (132). The phrase "twilight sleep" was a term coined for the use of an anesthetic to numb pain without loss of consciousness, typically for childbirth. Appropriately, Joyce used this term in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode while Mina Purefoy was giving birth when he wrote, "the benefits of anesthesia or twilight sleep" (335). The earlier quote was a reference to Queen Victoria's use of chloroform as an anesthetic during the labor of her eighth child in 1853. As Robert Liston wrote, "Many people still distrusted surgeons, and many religious fundamentalists resisted the idea of easing pain in other situations, such as childbirth" (155). However, after the popular monarch's use of the drug, "it became wholly respectable" (155).

The eighth child referred here was the queen's youngest son, Leopold, named after the uncle of Victoria and Albert, Leopold I of Belgium. The quote from *Ulysses* was the product of Joyce's note regarding nepenthe: "nepenthe – anesthetic [Queen Vict.]" (Herring 295). In none of Joyce's other literary works is nepenthe referenced. Like Bloom of *Ulysses*, both are named Leopold and the prince was

alleged of being a freemason, something Joyce's character was known to be as well. There are numerous references to Bloom's membership in the freemasons throughout *Ulysses*. Likewise, there was also a parent-child connection to nepenthe being used metaphorically for chloroform: Bloom's father, Rudolph Bloom, committed suicide using an overdose of "2 parts of aconite liniment to 1 of chloroform liniment" (560) and Queen Victoria used chloroform in the labor of her son, Leopold.

Furthermore, there is additional connection between Victoria, Bloom, and Shelley's Prometheus. In the "Hades" episode, as Bloom thinks about life and death, he ruminates on loss and grief. He also reflects on his sense of guilt over Rudy's death. That is why, when Rudy died, his relationship with Molly changed. In a thematic inverse, when Queen Victoria's husband passed away, her relationship with her son was equally altered. As S.L. Goldberg wrote, "upon the widowed Queen Victoria at last abandoning grief for her Consort: 'her son was the substance. Something new to hope for not like the past she wanted, waiting. It never comes. One must go first: alone under the ground: and lie no more in her warm bed.'" (134). It shows that Joyce was not relying on the literal Homeric, but rather the metaphorical Shelleyan nepenthe because it isn't simply a drug banishing grief from the mind, it is love fighting against the pain of the past. Prometheus's love banishes the grief of Jupiter's tyranny; Victoria's love of Leopold banishes the grief of Albert's death; and there is Bloom's love of Molly that holds their marriage together by a thread to banish the grief of Rudy's death. For Bloom, because of Rudy's death merely eleven days after birth, there forms an association between birth and death, which allows for Joyce's use of chloroform to act as the metaphorical nepenthe - "twilight sleep idea" (132) - during Victoria's childbirth of Leopold - the Duke of Albany, not Leopold Bloom.

The color indication in Joyce's notebook of lavender also has a poetic connection to *Ulysses* in the "Ithaca" episode when Bloom's first unlocked drawer contained "...a 1d. adhesive stamp, lavender, of the reign of Queen Victoria..." (593). This certainly fits in with what Molly Bloom, in the "Penelope" episode, referred to as "the language of stamps" (625). It is also intriguing to get to see the line in *Ulysses* from the reference written in Joyce's notebook, traced back to its initial inspiration from the underlined nepenthe in his copy of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.

The latter half of Queen Victoria quote regarding the Mother Goose nursery rhyme of the old woman who lived in a shoe was a pun

on the number of children the British monarch had and was even referenced in a note Joyce penned between 1903-1920 under the header “Lestrygonians”: “...old woman who lived in a shoe (Vic)...” (II.i.2. Notebook). Joyce was thinking of Queen Victoria when drafting “Lestrygonians” as she was given an entire line in his notes out of only a dozen for that entire episode. Merely two lines below in Joyce’s same notebook, he wrote, “...left Lombard street because Rudy +...” (II.i.2. Notebook). The cross is symbolic of a gravestone, referring to his death. The mention of Rudy and Lombard Street relates to the excerpt from *Ulysses* five pages later from the Queen Victoria reference when Joyce wrote, “When we left Lombard street west something changed. Could never like it again after Rudy” (137). Joyce wrote twelve lines of notes on the “Lestrygonians” episode in this notebook; there are 1,225 lines in the “Lestrygonians” episode of *Ulysses*. It could be argued that if Joyce mentioned an idea in his notes, it was very important to his draft of the novel. In one-sixth of these lines from his notebook, Joyce wrote about Queen Victoria’s children and Rudy’s death as the cause of the Blooms’ move from Lombard Street and as mentioned immediately after in *Ulysses*, the cause of Leopold Bloom’s lack of interest in sex with Molly. As Queen Victoria was not a character in the novel, her presence should be viewed with more symbolic signification, such as her clear connection to nepenthe and the banishing of grief from the mind. As it was Prometheus who introduced the nepenthe of love back into the world, allowing for the rebirth of society in Shelley’s play, it was Queen Victoria who popularized the use of chloroform as an anesthetic, allowing for the banishment of pain during childbirth. These usages of nepenthe are bridged by Bloom’s grief over his son who passed away so close to birth.

A final explanation for Queen Victoria’s presence also lies within the pages of Joyce’s notesheets in the British Museum, as transcribed by Phillip Herring. For the “Ithaca” episode, Joyce had written, “Victoria = Penelope” (449). Like Molly, Victoria is, at least in a particular aspect, an avatar for Penelope in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Both were monarchs of their respective kingdoms and both had to reign without their husbands for a time. However, it is also interesting to consider that Joyce linked both Molly and Queen Victoria together given his interest in their maternal similarities. Victoria’s presence in *Ulysses* was intentional in a deeper literary sense than the simple historical and contextual levels most people associate her with in the novel.

Lastly, Joyce even mentioned “Prometheus” in his Linati Schema, written around 1920 for his friend, Carlo Linati, to help with the reading of *Ulysses*. It is worth mentioning that while other characters from Homer’s *Odyssey* are understandably included in the “Persons” category such as Telemachus, Antinous, Menelaus, and Helen, Prometheus is not an Homeric character, having no mention at all in *The Odyssey*, making his appearance all the more fascinating. While Prometheus’s reference in this schema for the “Cyclops” episode is ambiguous, it is interesting that its significance is listed as “The Egocidal Terror” and its Science and Art association is listed as “Surgery”. Egocide is defined as a symbolic suicide “aiding individuals in the rebirth process” (Rosen 209). This bridges the two texts by Shelley and Joyce. This egocidal suicide can indicate Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* in the violent suicide of the French Revolution and the healing rebirth of a nation in its ashes, reflected in the closet drama; it can also connect to Joyce’s Leopold Bloom, whose father committed suicide and whose thoughts throughout the day in *Ulysses* reflected a strong yearning to reconcile with the death of his son – named after the suicidal Rudolph – and its impact on his marriage. Another identifiable bridge here is that, in the “Cyclops” episode for which Prometheus is associated in Joyce’s schema, Bloom expounded upon his theory on life in which, “love, says Bloom. I mean the opposite of hatred” (273). Bloom here was speaking like Shelley when the 19th century writer penned, “nor pride, Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame, The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall, Spoil the sweet taste of nepenthe, love” (365). In both texts there is the belief that life’s only redeemer is love. One can get a sense of Bloom’s promethean ideals in the “Cyclops” episode, as the Linati schema suggests, where love is the very bond keeping Molly and Bloom together despite the widening distance between them acting as the catalyst of the novel’s drama. Also, Prometheus’s Science and Art association being called “Surgery” is certainly applicable to Queen Victoria’s use of chloroform in the birth of her son, Leopold. The label given by Joyce for the “Lestrygonians” episode in the Linati Schema is “Dejection”. It is in this episode that Queen Victoria’s twilight sleep idea is mentioned, defining the thesis of this paper with Bloom’s yearning to abandon the grief of his son’s death. It is difficult to imagine a more apt word to sum up the source of Bloom’s marital troubles with Molly than the very symptom nepenthe is designed to remedy: dejection.

In 1820, Percy Bysshe Shelley published *Prometheus Unbound*. As early as 1898 Joyce had been mentioning Shelley’s works in his writings for his matriculation course at university and between 1903-1905, Joyce included excerpts of *Prometheus Unbound* in his

posthumously published *Stephen Hero*, which never appeared in its published literary cousin, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Between 1903-1920, Joyce wrote a comment in his *Ulysses* notebook on Queen Victoria having many children and the Blooms leaving their home on Lombard Street because their son, Rudy, died, which was also the catalyst of Bloom's celibacy with Molly. Joyce annotated, underlining nepenthe, in his copy of *Prometheus Unbound* sometime between 1904-1920. Around 1918, Joyce also made a note of connecting nepenthe with Queen Victoria as an anesthetic. And around 1920 Joyce wrote his Linati Schema which included Prometheus related to surgery and egocidal terror, uniting Joyce's novel with Shelley's closet drama on a thematic level. When considering similarities between Shelley's and Joyce's use of nepenthe along with the timeline of Joyce's writings pertaining to these connections, we can see the genetics of this inspiration as a key aspect of *Ulysses*.

Understanding that the contextual use of "nepenthe" stems from Shelley and not Homer is the significant aspect of this paper. The Homeric nepenthe would suggest a mere numbing of sorrow whereas the Shelleyan nepenthe reveals that the very anesthetic to grief is love, opening door to future redemption and growth. Shelley, like Joyce in the end of *Ulysses*, was suggesting that the true drug which banishes grief and sorrow is love. This Shelleyan ideal of collective love conquering tyranny and war, espoused in *Prometheus Unbound* in the shade of the French Revolution, was unavoidably felt and used in *Ulysses* by Joyce in the shadow of World War I. 1922 was the year Joyce published *Ulysses* and it was the centennial of Shelley's death. In the aftermath of World War I and in commemoration of Shelley, Gertrude Slaughter wrote of *Prometheus Unbound*, "Perhaps it is because we are in such need of a spiritual vision that shall recall the disillusioned mind to a sense of the majesty of life, that Shelley's belief in a world redeemed by perfect love and universal sympathy is acquiring a new value" (69). Bloom sought an anesthetic for his painful loss of Rudy which had created the association of sex and death for him; Molly sought the opposite of an anesthetic – a stimulant, so to speak – to resurrect her love life and make her feel desired. And it was Victoria's use of nepenthe or chloroform, the same anesthetic Bloom's father used in his suicide, to numb the sensation of childbirth for her Leopold, that bridged birth and death, love withered and love renewed. Love, as Shelley so beautifully stressed, was the only redeemer for mankind. Love was the very bond Bloom and Molly felt that, despite their emotional or physical infidelities, their insecurities

and fears, kept them together in the same bed in the end, awaiting the dawn of a new day.



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