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**Gendered Phenomenology:**

**Gynaecological Authority in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake***

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**ABSTRACT**

Metaphysics and authority in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939)at first appear to be male-centric. Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* is woven into the text’s structural fabric as the novel begins following an age of renewal, highlighted by a return to divinity following a process of ‘commodious vicus of recirculation’ (3.02). Additional structural and thematic references to philosophers Giordano Bruno and Nicolas De Cusa are seen through allusions to *coincidentia oppositorum* (the ‘equal and opposite brunoipso’ and ‘of the Cusanus philophism in which old Nicholas pegs it’). Thinkers such as Descartes, Socrates, Plato, and Kant serve to complicate the overarching question of the text which haunts HCE’s polysemic and all-encompassing identity, as we ask ‘who is he?’ and therefore, who are we? (261.28).

This thesis functions as a disorientation, and reorientation of phenomenology and authority in *Finnegans Wake*, unravelling preconceived notions of the *Wake* as a male-dominated text, by establishing new and original ways of reading female phenomenology in Joyce’s work. Centring around questions of history, gender, theory, and phenomenology, I seek to elucidate how a gynaecological examination of *Finnegans Wake* enables an authoritative female phenomenology to emerge within Joyce’s text. I do so through readings of the Joycean O, speculum, womb, and bodily fluids, illuminating how this authority operates in unison with the already acknowledged male authority of the *Wake*. I also determine how this female authority strengthens and underpins the text’s metaphysical complexities, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the *Wake*’s enigmatic centre.

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**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University’s Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)). This work has not been previously presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[LIST OF FIGURES 6](#_Toc131447448)

[INTRODUCTION 7](#_Toc131447449)

[CHAPTER ONE: TEXTUAL GLORYH(O)LES 41](#_Toc131447450)

[CHAPTER TWO: SPECULA INVESTIGATIONS 87](#_Toc131447451)

[CHAPTER THREE: WANDERING WOMBS 120](#_Toc131447452)

[CHAPTER FOUR: HYDROFEMINIST AUTHORITIES 159](#_Toc131447453)

[CONCLUSION: 213](#_Toc131447454)

[APPENDIX 219](#_Toc131447455)

[BIBLIOGRAPHY 222](#_Toc131447456)

# LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1**—

*An Anatomical Dissection Being Carried out by Andreas Vesali*(*c.* 1543), *Wikimedia Commons*, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An\_anatomical\_dissection\_being\_carried\_out\_by\_Andreas\_Vesali\_Wellcome\_V0010413.jpg>

**Figure 2**—

Anon, *Sims’s Vaginal Speculum* (*c.* 1845), *Wikimedia Commons*, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sims.Speculum.jpg>

**Figure 3**—

Anon, S*péculum de madame Boivin* (*c.* 1825), *Wikimedia Commons*, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sp%C3%A9culum\_de\_madame\_Boivin.jpg>

**Figure 4**—

James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* *293* (*c.* 1939)

< https://finwakeatx.blogspot.com/2016/01/what-is-finnegans-wake-simulacrum-of.html>

**Figure 5**—

Anon, *Holmes Stereoscope (*c. 19th), *NCC Photographic Archives, <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/ncm/2013/10/21/artifact-of-the-month-holmes-stereoscope/>*

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# INTRODUCTION

Art, like life, is most joyous when not calcified by homage, but when seen as a participatory process in which painful or even culpable representations coexist with generative ones, training us to not only admire, but to revise, with a flexible independence of mind that can continue to change in response to changing circumstances.

(Vicki Mahaffey, *States of Desire*).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Vicki Mahaffey’s reference to the ‘calcification’ of art is curious. Calcification holds both philosophical and bodily connotations, referring to a hardening of tissue in the body, and to the solidification of ideas over time, both of which allude to a hampering of movement and progress.[[2]](#footnote-2) This thesis is particularly concerned with resisting calcification. My focus is both bodily and philosophical, as I unspool crystalised ideas about the role of women in Joyce’s work, by illuminating the authorial, metaphysical nature of the female body in *Finnegans Wake* (1939). I do so by adopting alternative modes of reading female authority in the *Wake*, highlighting how our interpretations of Joyce’s workemerge as part of ‘a participatory’ and ‘generative’ process through the ongoing dynamic between reader, author, and text. This thesis is thus a disorientation, and re-orientation, of the female body in *Finnegans Wake*, offering a reading which seeks to find new and original ways of interpreting the relationship between philosophy, authority, and gender in the text. These moments of ‘disorientation’ are ‘vital’ according to Sara Ahmed. They can begin as a ‘point of crisis’—arising during the process of calcification—which evokes a feeling of ‘being shattered’, yet it can lead us to find new ways of understanding our existence in the world.[[3]](#footnote-3)

To fully elucidate the aims of this project, this introduction will be both foundational and explorative in form. I will outline the core theoretical threads which structure the body of this thesis, while also working to question established ideas about how and why we should read Joyce’s work. To do so, I will first delineate the evolving relationship between *Finnegans Wake* and history. Taking both a major source for the text’s structure, Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* (1725), and a minor influence, Benedick Fitzpatrick’s text *Ireland and the Making of Britain* (1922), this section will demonstrate how Joyce’s varied use of sources build a rich historical base for the *Wake*, one which becomes simultaneously transhistorical through Joyce’s engagement with philosophy and theory. I then use this discussion to articulate the critical development of scholarship in Joyce studies, determining how the divergence between the theoretical and the authorial/ biographical approaches resulted in a split between critics, as—at times—Joyceans have chosen to privilege one approach over the other.

After establishing the plurality of interpretation that the *Wake* enables, I further explore the history of Joyce criticism by underpinning the development of studies on Joyce’s depiction of women, alongside the second, third, and fourth waves of feminism. I determine how these shifts have impacted and influenced my own study, in addition to outlining how I build on the important work which has been slowly developing since the emergence of Joyce studies. This leads me to a consideration of the boundaries between gender and use. Referring to Sara Ahmed’s *What’s the Use?* (2020)—a scholar whose body of work informs the entirety of this thesis—I outline how this project has evolved since its conception in 2018. I establish why readings of Joyce and gender are crucial to furthering our understanding of the text, while also speculating on why examinations of female philosophical influence in *Finnegans Wake* have been scarce.

The final necessary thread that this introduction explores concerns Joyce’s engagement with phenomenology, which is defined in philosophy as the study of first-person ‘structures of experience and consciousness’, that shape a person’s perception of the external world.[[4]](#footnote-4) Briefly outlining the emergence of modern phenomenology and my own approach to this philosophy, I outline phenomenology’s use in exploring the role of female authority in *Finnegans Wake*, determining how women occupy space differently in the world. After defining all of these theoretical threads, the final subsection of this introduction will provide a detailed outline of my chapters. Here I pinpoint the narrative arc of the thesis, determining how the chapters build on one another to strengthen the overriding hypothesis of the work. Centring around questions of history, gender, theory, and phenomenology, I seek to elucidate how a gynaecological examination of Joyce’s work enables an authoritative female phenomenology to emerge within *Finnegans Wake*. Operating in unison with the already acknowledged male authority of the text, this female authority strengthens and underpins the text’s metaphysical complexities, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the *Wake*’s enigmatic centre.

**THE TRANS/ HISTORICAL TEXT**

*Finnegans Wake* is known for its excess of plurality and meaning. Often deemed unreadable due to its idiosyncrasies, Joyce pushes language, sound, and pun to its linguistic limits, meaning that reading the *Wake* becomes a question of working in layers. This relies on being systematic and methodical in approach as readers work to build an encyclopaedic knowledge of the text, while maintaining an awareness that a complete understanding of the *Wake*’s intricacies is unattainable. Despite its complexities, the *Wake* does harbour a loose structure, centring around a family of five living in Dublin, which consists of the father, HCE, the mother, ALP, and their three children: twins, Shem and Shaun and the youngest, Issy. Most of the text’s subplots, allusions, and dualisms are intertwined and reflective of its basic plot: HCE is rumoured to have committed a crime in Phoenix Park, revolving around an act of voyeurism as he observes two women urinating. After his ‘great fall’, the opening of the text sees HCE lying dead, or dreaming, beside the river Liffey, where ‘the oranges have been laid to result upon the green’.[[5]](#footnote-5) From here, ALP attempts to defend her husband from the rumours which now tarnish his reputation; Shem and Shaun, both dualistic opposites and one of the same, try to overthrow the father in a bid for power, while Issy remains a reflection of the mother, and a target of her family’s skewed sexual desire.

Discussing inventive language and the concept of originality, Derek Attridge attests that these literary boundaries are tested ‘not by just fashioning into a new shape the materials at hand’, while still adhering to rules and rhythmic convention of form, but rather, ‘by destabilizing them’ and thus

heightening their internal inconsistencies and ambiguities, exaggerating their proclivities, and exploiting the gaps and tensions, in such a way that allows otherness implicit in these materials—the otherness they exclude in order to be what they are—to make itself explicit.[[6]](#footnote-6)

My focus on this thesis centres around this otherness or absence, highlighting not only what is present in Joyce’s work, but also what is excluded. One of the most prominent layers of the text that exploits these absences is Joyce’s use of historical structures and allusion, which encourage a dynamic and interrogative reading of the *Wake*. Each member of the family is polysemic in nature, representing the evolution of civilisation and nature as they continually mutate throughout the book. This provides fertile ground for Joyce to engage with a variety of historical moments and mythological figures, resulting in the family blurring the lines between fact and fiction. For example, HCE—known on a microcosmic level as Mr Porter or a pub owner named Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, who is living in Dublin with his family—extends into a variety of mythical and cultural identities. This includes a transformation into the Irish mythological hero ‘Bygmester Finnegan’ or Finn MacCool (who is often considered to be a giant), as well as becoming more figurative representations of geography and cultural history through the acronyms, ‘Howth Castle and Environs’, ‘Here Comes Everybody’ and ‘home, colonies and empire’ (4.18, 3.03, 32.18-19, 393.14). In addition to these character-based developments, Joyce references history more broadly through allusions to ‘the very dawn of protohistory’ and by noting how ‘mystery repeats itself’, as in both text and life we traverse through a ‘wholemole millwheeling vicociclometer’ (169.21, 294.28, 614.27). These ‘millwheeling vicociclometer[s]’ are reflective of Giambattista Vico’s theories of cyclical history found within the *New Science* (1725), which operates as a core structure for the *Wake*. A basic understanding of Vico’s historical philosophy has been clearly outlined by William York Tindall, who explains that,

In each cycle of history there are three ages: the divine, the heroic, and the human, or the primitive, the semi-historic, and the historic. These three ages produce three sacred customs: religion, marriage and burial, the first a product of the divine age, the second of the heroic, and third of the human. After circular flux comes reflux. When one cycle is over, another begins, and, as the phoenix rises from its ashes, history repeats itself.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The connection between Vico’s cyclical history and *Finnegans Wake* has been well established, though I am sure not yet exhausted, by scholars since before the text’s serialised appearances in the literary journal, *transition*.[[8]](#footnote-8) Just prior to this, Joyce asked friends and collaborators to respond to his initial writings of the text, resulting in a volume of twelve essays titled: *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (1929). The first essay, written by Samuel Beckett and titled, ‘Dante… Bruno. Vico.. Joyce’, explores the central literary and philosophical parallels which Joyce had used as frameworks for ‘Work in Progress’. Beckett interrogates how Vico’s etymological theories about the conception and development of words are evident in Joyce’s use of idiosyncratic language as it echoes the ‘direct expression’ used by the first gentiles (or men).[[9]](#footnote-9) Using Vico’s hypothesis, Beckett notes how ‘when language consisted of gesture, the spoken and the written were identical’ and thus *Finnegans Wake* in all its unreadability, ‘is to be looked and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself’.[[10]](#footnote-10) In this sense, *Finnegans Wake* is not just about history, it becomes history itself, reflecting the cyclical and progressive nature of civilisation and thought as the reader’s own knowledge and understanding of the text progresses with time. Beckett’s early critical response formed the foundation for further work on Joyce’s use of Vico, resulting in a long line of scholarship which establishes how Vico’s *New Science* informs and emphasises the text’s themes.[[11]](#footnote-11)

To further detail how this operates, Joyce employs Vico thematically and structurally. Beginning with the *Wake*’scircular framework: the novel begins following an age of renewal, highlighted in a return to divinity following the process of a ‘commodius vicus of recirculation’ (Vico’s cyclical history) (3.02). Here we are met with the first of ten thunderclaps, each one serving as a divine reminder of man’s primitive form. From the first thunder, Finnegan suffers ‘the great fall’ where he takes the form of an ‘overgrown babeling’, ‘laid to rust’ in a ‘langlast bed’, experiencing his first polysemic transition into HCE, before becoming ‘Haroun Childeric Eggberth’ (3.18, 6.31, 3.24, 6.26, 4.32). The mutation marks the beginning of the giant’s social evolution, alluding to how, in Vico’s philosophy, the undeveloped minds of early humans were triggered by fear, causing them to instinctively run into a cave for shelter. From this point, the connection between history and reason forms a domino effect, where from thunder came religion, from religion society, and the beginnings of primitive family life. Society then extends outwards towards and beyond feudalism, democracy, anarchy, monarchy and finally towards a tendency of destruction, where the cycle is renewed. Echoed throughout the *Wake*, Vico’s theory of history also imparts a sense of universality and transhistoricism into the text, suggesting that, on a basic level, we globally experience a similar form of historical evolution.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Although I will lightly touch upon Joyce’s Vichian allusions throughout this thesis, Vico’s work does not form an integral part of my argument. Rather, I wanted to highlight how philosophy and history can come together as a means of comprehending the past. Joyce’s use of Vichian ideas may have been influenced by the First World War, which, according to Peter Childs, saw a shift in literature as the modernists who followed ‘were more notable for their pessimism and their sense of a failed, fragmented, society’.[[13]](#footnote-13) Vico’s philosophy provides a stable historical structure for Joyce, briefly imitating a sense of wholeness amongst the fragmented nature of the *Wake*. Evidencing the extent to which Joyce engages with philosophy and theory in his work, Vico’s work is only a small example of the historical and transhistorical complexities that the *Wake* embodies. An interplay between the two approaches exists in the text, where Joyce oscillates between the historical and transhistorical as a means of enhancing his exploration of phenomenology and knowledge. Instead of engaging in series of superficial allusions, Joyce’s use of philosophy is intertextual and playful, highlighting complex theories of metaphysics that are only further complicated with the development of time, politics, and thought.

While the transhistorical nature of the text becomes apparent through the divergent philosophical and theoretical approaches that the *Wake* invites—resulting in an unstable and vast expansion of the text as it is simultaneously liberated from time and space—Joyce’s historical allusions act as contextual tethers. They offer the reader a sense of familiarity by briefly imposing a time and place onto a particular passage. For example, Benedict Fitzpatrick’s text, *Ireland and the Making of Britain*, among many others, provides the reader with historical markers that impose limits and context onto the chapters. Taking Fitzpatrick’s text as an example, threads of his work emerge in the form of fragmented rewritings, apparent in ‘The Children’s Hour’ (II.1), where Issy and her rainbow girls are making Shem guess the colour of their underwear. Giving clues to the riddle, a reference to Fitzpatrick emerges as Joyce notes ‘I see through your weapon. That cry’s not Cucullus. And his eyelids are painted’ (248.15-16). The line recalls Fitzpatrick’s description of how, in medieval Ireland, ‘the crows would grow silent and make a passage as some “high scholar of the western world” or “apostle of Erin” passed through them, a noble ascetic with long hair falling on his shoulders and painted eyelids’, which is directly referenced in Joyce’s notebook (VI.B.3).[[14]](#footnote-14) In the context of the chapter, the eyelids form a direct reference to the answer to Issy’s riddle, ‘heliotrope’, through garbled wordplay (‘his=H, eye=E, lids= LIOT, ar = R, e =O, pai = PE’).[[15]](#footnote-15) Providing the riddle with a mythical context, the allusion to Fitzpatrick’s work adds subtle layers of meaning and historical context to the passage, operating alongside the wider, overarching historical cycles of Vico’s cyclical history.

Considering the transhistorical nature of Joyce’s work alongside the divergent, interlocking, and contemporary approaches to the *Wake* that this approach enables, this thesis is largely concerned with the less tangible readings of Joyce: the phenomenological, the perceptive, and the contextualised readerly interpretations that continue to be malleable and progressive, although I will continue to draw on Joyce’s use of the historical throughout. I follow in the vein of scholars such as Vicki Mahaffey, who, as highlighted in the epigraph, describes the joy and satisfaction to be found in our refusal to let art become ‘calcified’, instead leaning into a participatory process which adapts to changing social circumstances.[[16]](#footnote-16) I also build on Sophie Corser’s new work of criticism, *The Reader’s Joyce* (2022), which compellingly underlines the shifting dynamic between reader, author, and text to determine how ‘reading *Ulysses* puts the reader in an active and creative role’, as Corser chooses to actively prioritise the reader, rather than simply declaring the ‘death of the author’.[[17]](#footnote-17) According to Corser, new methods enable us to ‘respond to the old, developing, altering, or simply adding more resources, more options’.[[18]](#footnote-18) While Corser’s work establishes a crucial foundation for reading this text-reader-author dynamic in *Ulysses* specifically, my thesis illuminates the reader’s active and creative role in regard to the construction of gender and phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*, determining how our view of the Joyce’s use of the female body is reliant on our own position as readers.

**CRITICAL RECEPTION**

The ongoing revision and reinterpretation of Joyce’s work is key to the longevity of Joycean scholarship. Despite methodological preferences that exist amongst the Joyce community, there is no correct or singular way to read Joyce. In fact, adopting a multitude of approaches can collectively further our understanding of the text. Genetic readings, defined by Genevieve Sartor as an inquiry with ‘material focus’, use ‘factual, draft-based evidence in order to retroactively examine the “work in progress” stages of a text that created, through addition or omission, its final representation’.[[19]](#footnote-19) Undeniably important in aiding the progression of Joyce studies, genetic criticism imposes artistic boundaries onto our readings of the text. These readings are primarily concerned with a historical investigation into the materiality of the text, closely tracing the dynamic between author and text and thus lessening the emphasis on the reader. It is also beneficial to consider a text alongside the ever-developing social, political, and historical contexts which the work resides in. This is especially the case with *Finnegans Wake*, as Joyce’s plurality of language, plot, character, and form traverse the boundaries of calcified thought.

As with any field, certain trends have played out throughout the history of Joyce criticism. At first, critics were largely focused on authorial readings of Joyce’s work, with critics such as Stuart Gilbert, Walton Litz, and Hugh Kenner attempting to unravel Joyce’s narrative intentions through close biographical examinations. This biographical phase took multiple forms, including more direct interventions by Joyce, such as when he heavily guided Gilbert’s book-length study, *James Joyce’s Ulysses* (1930), and the essays on the *Wake* in *Our Exagmination*. Gilbert’s work was published alongside, and greatly structured around, Joyce’s 1921 schema, which matched each episode to its Homeric counterpart, alongside the corresponding time, scene, organ, colour, symbol, art, and technic. In the 1940s, early work on *Finnegans Wake* also took on an author-centred approach, taking the form of guidebooks or explanatory sources, which grapple more with the question of what the work *is* and how and why we should read it, rather offering an exploration of its pluralities and potential that we see today. For example, Joseph Campbell’s 1944 text, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*,offers a highly valuable chapter-by-chapter explanation of the text and its loose plot. In the foreword to his text, Campbell declares that ‘*Finnegans Wake* is above all else an essay in permanence’, asserting that ‘through notes that finally become tuneable to our ears we hear James Joyce uttering his resilient, all-enjoying, all-animating “Yes,” the Yes of things that have yet to come’.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Campbell’s iteration of the final ‘yes of things that have yet to come’ encapsulates the future potential of the *Wake*, foreshadowing the dualistic shift towards both genetic criticism and critical theory in the 1970s, which rejuvenated the field and made way for a new wave of scholarship. As Corser examines intricately in *The Reader’s Joyce*, this turn in Joyce criticism emerged, rather contentiously, with the introduction of French theory at the Fifth International James Joyce Symposium in 1975, which split critics of Joyce into two camps: ‘pro-theory and anti-theory’.[[21]](#footnote-21) Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer addressed this opposition to theory in *Post-Structuralist Joyce* (1984). In this work, Attridge and Ferrer identify a core concept of literary critical poststructuralism to further protest that

The realization that texts are unmasterable, and will return new answers as long as there are new questions, new questioners, or new contexts in which to ask questions, and that Joyce’s texts display this characteristic more openly than most, is a thread that is barely visible in Joyce scholarship and criticism.[[22]](#footnote-22)

This shift, which disputes the idea that a reader, or readers, can conquer or ‘solve’ the Joycean text, illuminates the notion that works of literature refuse closure. The ambiguities of literature, especially a text as vast and layered as the *Wake*, means that texts are adaptive and unstable, echoing the development of the world as what we find in a novel is partly a reflection of our own position in society. Since Attridge’s and Ferrer’s declaration that this theoretical thread is ‘barely visible’ in Joyce studies, the approach of theory and Joyce has become more popularised—though still disapproved of by some scholars—leading to a plethora of trends in the field, as critical theory is shaped and influenced by the political and social context of the world. For example, the late 1990s and turn of the century saw a rise of postcolonial studies of Joyce’s work, through the emergence of monographs such as Derek Attridge’s *Semicolonial Joyce* (2000), Christine van Boheemen-Saaf’s *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative and Postcolonialism* (1999) and Vincent Cheng’s *Joyce, Race and Colonialism* (2005), to name just a few. More recent trends accurately reflect political concerns and a rising emphasis on nuance, particularly regarding the climate crisis (especially in light of the growth of animal studies and ecocriticism), sexuality, gender, disability, and race. Recent examples of this include Peter Adkins’s *The Modernist Anthropocene* (2022), Jeremy Colangelo’s edited collection, *Joyce Writing Disability* (2022), as well as Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin’s *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce* (2016).

**JOYCE AND FEMINISM**

To expand on this gendered dynamic in *Finnegans Wake*, the question of metaphysics and authority at first appears to be male-centric, as outlined above. Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* is woven into the text’s structural fabric as the novel begins following an age of renewal, highlighted by a return to divinity following a process of ‘commodius vicus of recirculation’ (3.02). Additional structural and thematic references to philosophers Giordano Bruno and Nicolas De Cusa can be seen through allusions to *coincidentia oppositorum* (the ‘equal and opposite brunoipso’ and ‘of the Cusanus philophism in which old Nicholas pegs it’), embodied by dualistic twins, Shem and Shaun, who are simultaneously individual and yet one and the same (488.09, 163.17).[[23]](#footnote-23) Thinkers such as Descartes, Socrates, Plato and Kant serve to complicate the overarching question of the text which haunts HCE’s polysemic and all-encompassing identity, as we ask ‘who is he?’ and therefore, who are we? (261.28). Until my intervention in this thesis, the metaphysical role of the female body has remained largely mysterious and unresolved, given that the references to the philosophical minds lurking in Joyce’s text take the shape of an all-male cast (117.11).

Scholarship on the *Wake*’s female figures has been steadily developing since the 1960s in line with second-wave feminism, a period declared by Julie Sloan Brannon to be the ‘institutionalisation of Joyce studies’ as it saw the creation of the *James Joyce Quarterly* in 1963, and the first International James Joyce Symposium in 1967.[[24]](#footnote-24) The parallel between these two movements is particularly evident in Hélène Cixous’s work. Cixous earned her doctorate through what is now the critical compendium titled *The Exile of James Joyce* (1969), before immersing herself in feminist theory through works such as ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ (1975) and the *Newly Born Woman* (1976), both of which explore the intersection between language, gender, and society.

Prior to Cixous in 1966, Anthony Burgess’s *A Shorter Finnegans Wake* was published, where he attempts to condense the plot-lines, characters and dreamscape of the *Wake* into a descriptive summary. Outlining the roles of each character, it is significant that Burgess describes HCE as man, father, and creator, while ALP is an embodiment of the archetypal female, a ‘natural majesty’, stoic wife and the ‘protectress of the children, and of the reputation of her reviled and traduced husband’.[[25]](#footnote-25) Little attention is paid here to ALP’s ‘omni-scientific’ qualities or Joyce’s attempts to unveil them. According to Burgess, her Euclidean womb or triangle (seen in the ‘Night Lesson’ chapter through a visual mathematic proposition consisting of two overlapping circles, with a triangle in the middle) is merely a reflection of her alignment with nature (a symbol of the mountain) and her tripartite role as mother, widow, and daughter, while her letter is only accessible through Shem as he forms the gateway to the scripture. Being one of the early readings of Wakean women, Burgess’s text underestimates the complexities of Joyce’s female figures, and instead chooses to emphasise the importance of the ‘big HCE legend’.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In 1969, Margaret Solomon offered an alternative means of reading Joyce’s female characters, through her critical work, *Eternal Geomater: The Sexual Universe of Finnegans Wake*. The text emphasized the role of sexuality in *Finnegans Wake*, determining that ‘the sexual symbolism of the novel is pertinent to all historical, religious, cultural and psychological human processes’, and thus highlighted its relevance in relation to the text’s overarching themes.[[27]](#footnote-27) Solomon’s text also introduced important work on the Prankquean, ‘The Children’s Hour’ (II.1), and the geometrical complexity of ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2), all of which I have chosen to explore in this thesis. Solomon’s reading of ALP’s role as ‘geomater’ (geometrical mother) in ‘Night Lessons’ is particularly pertinent. While Burgess described Joyce’s use of the Euclidean diagram as a mere reflection of ALP’s alignment with nature, Solomon imbues this comparison with meaning. She articulates how the overlap between geometer and mother ‘emphasizes the identification of time with woman, the river, the constant flow’, before outlining its wider relevance through the declaration that ‘there is no history without sex, since history—time—is a female force’.[[28]](#footnote-28) By drawing attention to the association between women and metaphysics that runs throughout the *Wake*, particularly in the context of sexuality, Solomon introduced a vital thread to Joycean criticism, one that is reflected in my own readings of the *Wake* as I uncover how these metaphysical and historical associations enable a female phenomenology to emerge.

Another notable piece of feminist scholarship revisited ALP’s textual role in 1974, when Margot Norris wrote a short piece on ‘maternal salvage’ in *Finnegans Wake*. Declaring ALP to be a stoic figure who embodies selflessness and community, Norris articulates ALP’s ability to reject the unlawful appropriation of women that surrounds her (for example: ‘the bridestealing cuckoldry of the Tristram and Finn MacCool myths’).[[29]](#footnote-29) Although she continues to define ALP as a stoic wife and impeccable mother—‘an agent of grace and redemption’—Norris also recognises Joyce’s subtle defiance of female stereotypes by introducing ALP as a maternal figure who plunders and steals for the good of her family.[[30]](#footnote-30) The comparisons offered between ALP/Christ and creation vs. destruction introduce the idea that the Wakean female is an epistemological curiosity, a figure of enigmatic defiance who both fulfils and subverts the social roles of the twentieth-century woman. While Norris’s approach is more subtle than Solomon’s, her recognition of ALP’s stoic undertones also encouraged readings beyond the superficial. Norris’s work established a further correlation between women and knowledge in *Finnegans Wake*, enabling me to further my excavation of hidden female complexity in my own work, by laying a foundation for these readings.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, research on Issy in comparison with ALP began to emerge. While Burgess labelled Issy as simply a ‘pretty little daughter’ and ‘temptress’, in 1989 Laurent Milesi articulated Issy’s inflammatory role in ‘Night Lessons’ to demonstrate Joyce’s interest in the defiant female figure.[[31]](#footnote-31) Attesting that Joyce uses the ‘tension between form and function in established canons of grammar’ as a subversive weapon to ‘destabilize ideological boundaries in a phallic dominant model of language and sexuality’, Milesi’s study began to further associate the *Wake*’s women with questions of epistemology and gender.[[32]](#footnote-32) He argued that Issy mimes ‘a fictional return to male-*oriented* rules’ as a means of entering the central text, before using gynocentric language and erotic flirtation to seduce the male gaze. Despite this, Milesi highlighted the ultimate failure of Issy’s attempts to penetrate male discourse. He noted that once she enters the main body of the text, Issy ‘becomes a mere step in the male quest for knowledge’ as the twins attempt to use Issy to comprehend the female body and overthrow the father.[[33]](#footnote-33) Creating a balance between female emancipation and male dominance, Milesi’s article represented a critical change in attitudes towards female sexuality. Although perhaps not intentionally related, the scholarship coincides with the late stages of second-wave feminism towards the end of the 1980s, which moved beyond a focus on political enfranchisement and into issues of rape and domestic violence.[[34]](#footnote-34) The feminist sex wars were also included in this movement, which encouraged a series of debates regarding pornography and sexual liberation. Attempting to turn sex into a symbol of power, the campaign was widely supported by those such as Audre Lorde, who in 1979 published ‘The Uses of the Erotic’, where she declares,

when I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Although Lorde’s essay was highly controversial at the time due to her apparent defence of pornography, now her reclamation of the erotic and sexual desire creates an image of female empowerment. Taking just a small strand of Lorde’s complex work—the notion of sexual reclamation—the essay can be seen to reflect the shift in attitude towards Joyce’s female characters, as the label of ‘temptress’ becomes a symbol of underlying power. Milesi thus moves towards embracing Issy’s hyper-sexualised and erotic temperament as a symbol of liberation and as a means of inserting herself, if only briefly, into phallocentric language, paving the way for other scholars to follow suit.

Nearing the turn of the century and following the second wave of feminism, further scholarship on Joyce’s female characters began to emerge. Of particular importance is Suzette Henke’s monograph, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (1990). Highlighting that most critics have traditionally either ‘praised Joyce for his intimate knowledge of the female psyche or condemned his view of women as stereotyped and reductive’, Henke observed that there is, however, ‘another side to Joyce’s canon’, as

by comically deflating sex-role stereotypes of masculine prowess and feminine passivity, Joyce tends to advocate more enlightened principles of androgynous behaviour in the complex politics of desire that govern sexual transactions.[[36]](#footnote-36)

By considering this androgynous in-between, Henke transcends a binary examination of Joyce’s women, introducing a further complexity to the *Wake*, while also marking a connection between desire, sex, and authority which will be integral to this thesis. My most prominent use of Henke’s work will be in Chapter 1, where I reflect on her early readings of the Joycean O. Considering these readings in relation to female sexuality, phenomenological authority, and literary representation, my own work builds on Henke’s early critical observations to introduce an additional complexity to the O, demonstrating that Joycean scholarship is collaborative and historical, rather than functioning in isolation from one another.

More recent scholarship has begun to address Joyce’s depiction of women not just in terms of a radical feminisation of Joyce’s work, but to suggest a more complex and subversive quality to *Finnegans Wake*. In 2004, Vicki Mahaffey addressed the question of Joyce and gender in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* through a term she coins ‘The Rudy Principle’. Translating as a fantasy of the unlived life, ‘The Rudy Principle’ is ‘a psychological, artistic response to the social divisions of gender, class, religion, and age, not a political one. It aims to change only “the perceiver”, rather than the world’.[[37]](#footnote-37) In other words, Joyce’s subversive use of the female body is not a radical act of political feminism, but rather a conversation between reader and author, whereby Joyce demonstrates the unique power of the feminine. Addressing this in the context of the *Wake*, Mahaffey concludes that the text is ‘not just a reply of the past in all its jumbled chaos, but the dream of a future in which we have learned to embrace division and entertain the incomprehensible’, expressing ‘The Rudy Principle’ in terms of social development.[[38]](#footnote-38) I explore aspects of ‘The Rudy Principle’ in Chapter 1, where I determine how Rudy’s absence in *Ulysses* is marked by the female body. Mahaffey’s reluctance to brand Joyce as either a radical feminist or steadfast misogynist is important, introducing the idea that reading the text through a female lens does not mean we have to adopt a gendered or dualistic view, where we must choose to privilege one gender over the other. Instead, Joyce’s novels can be approached as a collaboration between the male and female voice, enabling us to analyse the importance of the *Wake*’s women without introducing further hierarchies, something I particularly emphasise in Chapter 4 of this work.

Although Joyce’s work is not strictly feminist, the development of feminism over the past thirty years has been especially reflected in Joycean scholarship. The progression into third-wave feminism in the 1990s and fourth-wave feminism around 2012, has led to more intersectional readings of Joyce and gender, which has only enhanced the intricacy of the *Wake*. The transition from second to third-wave feminism saw a huge shift in the feminist movement, articulated by Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman in 2005, as they considered how ‘recent developments in social thought have heightened our awareness of how theories of emancipation can be blind to their own dominating, exclusive and restrictive tendencies’.[[39]](#footnote-39) Here, Mann and Douglas outline how women positioned themselves ‘against’, rather than ‘after’, second-wave feminism, seeking not to ‘undermine the feminist movement, but rather to refigure and enhance it so as to make it more diverse and inclusive’.[[40]](#footnote-40) While second-wave feminism was largely centred around the experience of the middle-class white woman, third-wave feminism sought to widen the parameters of inclusion by acknowledging that race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and physical appearance result in different levels of inequality. During this time, transfeminism, ecofeminism, and sex-positivity were also introduced to the field, creating further nuance and complexity in our considerations of gender equality.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Fourth-wave feminism has only furthered this approach to intersectionality. Emerging around 2012, the movement has focused largely on the marginalisation of women, most prominently in terms of the #MeToo movement. ‘MeToo’ was first coined by Tarana Burke in 2007 when she created a series of workshops to raise awareness of sexual abuse, and later re-emerged in 2015 in response to the exposure of multiple sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein.[[42]](#footnote-42) The movement initially highlighted sexual assault, rape-culture, and harassment in the workplace, but also caused a ripple effect by extending out into wider society, further fuelled by the development of technology as social media has created a platform for emphasising female voices. The question of Joyce and #MeToo has been emerging since 2018, when an Open Letter was written discussing the problem of sexual harassment and abuse within the Joyce community.[[43]](#footnote-43) Although I will not fully unpick the contents of the letter here, as it will be explored more thoroughly in my concluding remarks, it is however relevant to document how the topic has been influential on recent scholarship. For example, Casey Lawrence’s 2019 essay ‘#MeToo is Nothing New’ reflects on the #MeToo movement to consider parallels between Joyce’s Dublin and contemporary society through the figure of Molly Bloom. Although #MeToo was not in linguistic use at the time that Joyce was writing the *Wake*, Casey’s essay evidences how contemporary movements can aid our readings of Joyce’s work, as she explores how ‘Joyce’s precise snapshot of Dublin in 1904 not only holds a mirror up to the problems of his contemporaries but confirms that the world in which we live now is still very much the same’.[[44]](#footnote-44) Other reflections on the movement can be found in more recent publications, such as Joseph Valente’s ‘Et Tu, Bloom: or #MeToo, Male Masochism, and Sexual Ethics in *Ulysses*’ (2021), and Julie McCormick Weng’s forthcoming chapter, ‘Reading James Joyce in the Wake of the #MeToo Movement’ (2023).[[45]](#footnote-45) These recent more explorative and intersectional examinations of Joyce’s text have been particularly influential on this thesis. The development of scholarship over the past decade, alongside shifts in social thought, has made way for further readings of feminism and authority in Joyce’s work which seek to challenge and build on what has come before.

**GENDER AND USE**

The popularisation of theoretical approaches in the humanities often emerges in waves, apparent as the goal of critical theory is almost always one of emancipation or development. When an issue is most socially and politically pressing, it only naturally becomes a key paradigm of thought in critical studies. This is not to imply that approaches such as the ecocritical, the postcolonial, feminist, and queer readings of Joyce are merely trends, but rather the opposite, suggesting instead that they re-emerge at the points where they are most necessary: in times of oppression or enlightenment. It is in this way that Joyce’s work, like many other canonical authors, retains its longevity, because different moments in history cause us to reflect more specifically and collectively on different threads of an author’s work. Sara Ahmed engages with these questions in *What’s the Use?*, where she declares that ‘we learn about something by considering how it *is* being used, has *been* used, or *can* be used’.[[46]](#footnote-46) Use is almost always personal, according to Ahmed, and in certain cases, it becomes a ‘moral obligation to keep something alive; or, in more negative terms, use becomes necessary to avoid something being lost’.[[47]](#footnote-47)

The question of use has always been important to studies of *Finnegans Wake*, evident in Richard Chase’s early examination of the text in 1944, where he asserts that since the *Wake* was published five years prior, ‘conservative opinion’ of the text has ‘crystallized into the following objections’: that being that ‘the book is irreverent, anti-intellectual, and tries to destroy the past’ and that ‘the rewards are not worth the effort of reading Joyce’s language’.[[48]](#footnote-48) Attesting that these criticisms arise from ‘a failure to see what *Finnegans Wake*’ is, Chase declared Joyce’s book to be an infinite ‘universe’ defending its worth and importance by highlighting its usefulness.[[49]](#footnote-49) As I have shown, since this initial critical reception of the *Wake*, and particularly since the theoretical turn in the 1970s, the question of how the *Wake* should be read has been contentious. These two camps—the pro-theory and the anti-theory—are often at odds, as some scholars opt for a biographically heavy and authorial approach to the work, while others prefer a more theoretical and transhistorical reading of the text.

Considering my own position and the role of use in relation to my own work, when I first began this project, I was pursuing an investigation into the role of four white male philosophers in *Finnegans Wake*:René Descartes, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Vico, and Nicholas of Cusa. After some initial research, I began to reflect on who this research was for, and what I wanted to achieve, considering Ahmed’s articulation that things can be shaped by use. By constructing and exploring the intellectual philosophical dialectic between these particular male figures in the text, I realised I was, in a way, emulating the exclusionary and patriarchal construction of society and knowledge.[[50]](#footnote-50) I was also following a long line of Joyce scholarship, which frequently frames *Finnegans Wake* as a text dominated by male minds. Take, for instance, Donald Phillip Verene’s philosophical checklist in *James Joyce and the Philosophers at Finnegans Wake* (and Adeline Glasheen’s early register in the *Third Census of Finnegans Wake,* 1977) where he lists over sixty philosophers who are directly referenced in the text, and only one of those, Teresa of Avila, is female.[[51]](#footnote-51) While this research on clear and direct allusion in the text is vital and important, it has also slowed the progression of philosophical investigations into the *Wake*’s women, by generating the idea that a broader female phenomenology does not exist in the text, or that what does exist does not warrant further exploration. This has led to what Ahmed terms to be an act of ‘disciplinary fatalism’, which is the assumption that we can only reproduce the lines that are before us.[[52]](#footnote-52) In the context of the role of women and phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*, this assumes that because the text’s philosophical authority has been deemed male-dominant, then it must always be that way, resulting in an interpretation that has become almost monolithic in our readings of Joyce. ‘More creates more’, Ahmed explains, because ‘much usedness is shaped by the past’ and use can mean ‘being directed toward that which has become easier to follow’.[[53]](#footnote-53) By straying from this path, the use of the *Wake* can thus be challenged and repurposed.

My own response to this fatalism was reframed when examining the ‘Night Lessons’ chapter of the *Wake*, where I began to compare the epistolary discourse between Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes to Issy’s role as a philosophical interlocutor in the chapter. I soon realised that, much like these female authority voices which emerge behind the male in the field of philosophy, the lack of a clear female phenomenology emerging throughout Joycean scholarship is because these figures have been erased from our historical narratives, not because they cease to exist and have an influence. Male phenomenology is clear and overt in *Finnegans Wake*, whereas female authority is hidden and obscured, operating as part of the text’s enigmatic core and thus requiring further examination. While this research on Elisabeth and Descartes now lies outside the bounds of this thesis as I focus now on uncovering a philosophical phenomenology of the female body in *Finnegans Wake*, rather than examining female philosophers, it still remains a separate and important project.[[54]](#footnote-54) The influence of this early work can still be seen throughout this thesis, evident in the work on ‘Night Lessons’ which emerges throughout Chapters 2 and 3 and in my examinations of Issy’s phenomenological influence that run throughout.

Choosing to uncover a female phenomenology in the text is, of course, not to suggest that previous interpretations of male philosophy in *Finnegans Wake* are incorrect or any less valuable. The existence of one does not need to cancel out the existence of the other: gender and sex in *Finnegans Wake* are in constant flux, resulting in shared and complex authorities emerging that harbour creative potential. A reading of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* almost always encourages dualism through its plurality of perspectives and meanings, illuminated by Mahaffey as she articulates that the most difficult ‘challenge offered to readers […] is to create a context, a metaconscious awareness that holds a place for both perspectives’.[[55]](#footnote-55) In the context of reading women in Joyce, my aim is thus not to privilege one reading over another by positioning the female over the male, but rather to highlight the underlying female authority of the Joycean text, so that both of these authorial perspectives can be held simultaneously. The core aim of this work is to unearth a heterogeneous female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*, illuminating how the Joycean text is important not only for what emerges from the work, but because of how the text can help us to work through contemporary metaphysical and theoretical conundrums. Although my argument is primarily concerned with *Finnegans Wake*, I will also be reading parts of *Ulysses* across the chapters, to determine how certain ideas and motifs were conceptualised in Joyce’s earlier works, before interrogating how they emerge in the *Wake*. This is particularly evident in Chapter 1 which sets up a foundational reading of phenomenology in Joyce through readings of ‘Proteus’, ‘Lestrygonians’, ‘Nausicaa’, and ‘Penelope’.

**PHENOMENOLOGY AND JOYCE**

Throughout this work, my own feminist approach is located within the context of phenomenology and gendered authority. Although phenomenology has been practised in many forms throughout the history of philosophy, the modern concept of phenomenology was introduced in the early twentieth century by Edmund Husserl, in his first phenomenological work, *Logical Investigations* (1900). Developing previous uses of the term by Kant, Hegel, Lambert, and Bretano, Husserl outlined how phenomenology

lays bare the ‘sources’ from which the basic concepts and ideal laws of pure logic ‘flow’, and back to which they must once more be traced, so as to give them all the ‘clearness and distinctness’ needed for an understanding, and for an epistemological critique, of pure logic.[[56]](#footnote-56)

While the logician is only concerned with objective meaning, the phenomenologist, according to J.N Findlay, is concerned with ‘the essential structures of cognition and their essential correlation to the things known’.[[57]](#footnote-57) These studies were further developed by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty during the twentieth century. Merleau-Ponty, for example, focused closely on the relationship between perception and embodiment, identifying the body as our means of comprehending both the world and consciousness. Declaring that ‘the perceiving mind is an incarnated body’, Merleau-Ponty determined that the body is an active extension of the mind, operating as both a tangible object—in relation to others—and a lived reality, for the subject itself. [[58]](#footnote-58) Our bodies hold the ability to both think *and* perceive, dictating our perception of the world through our navigation of space, while simultaneously operating as the vehicle by which our place in the world is determined, through gender, race, and sexual orientation.[[59]](#footnote-59)

A collaborative approach between feminism and phenomenology facilitates an understanding of the way women occupy space in the world, in turn helping me to uncover how women occupy space in the *Wake*. This dynamic is addressed in Iris Marion Young’s pivotal essay, ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ (1980), where she documents the ways in which ‘women in our society comport themselves and move differently from the way that men do’.[[60]](#footnote-60) Women are orientated towards objects differently than men because women have been defined as Other in relation to men. Elaborating on this by using sport as an example, Young describes how ‘for many women as they move in sport, a space surrounds them in imagination which we are not free to move beyond; the space available to movement is a constricted space’, resulting in women approaching physical engagement with ‘timidity, uncertainty and hesitancy’.[[61]](#footnote-61) Although Young is speaking in broad terms here, her point is that women ‘learn to live out [their] existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to [them], [they] are physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified’.[[62]](#footnote-62) The female body thus has a different relationship to the material world, resulting in an alternative phenomenological perception as we unconsciously orient ourselves differently towards objects.

The connection between phenomenology and feminism has also been explored by theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, and Sara Ahmed. Ahmed’s work particularly informs the foundations of this thesis, as I explore how her intersectional and phenomenological feminism can help us to engage with contemporary ideas surrounding the female body. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed explores the necessary disorientation which is required to become ‘orientated’ or familiar with a phenomenological perspective. As mentioned in the opening of this introduction, Ahmed determines that although disorientation ‘as a bodily feeling can feel unsettling’, these moments are in fact vital, noting that ‘the point is what we do with [this] disorientation’.[[63]](#footnote-63) While my primary goal is to uncover how these phenomenological structures exist in the *Wake*, part of the thesis will be concerned with how we get there (‘how we arrive in the places we do’), and with how and why we must do the work to uncover them in the first place.[[64]](#footnote-64) My phenomenological approach thus involves a disorientation and a reorientation of our relationship to the Joycean text, unsettling the calcified ideas surrounding Joyce’s use of phenomenology in order to introduce new approaches to the field.

One of the reasons that Joyce’s interest in female phenomenology has not always been recognised as a core piece of the *Wake*’s texture is not because these aspects are not present in the text, but rather, because our minds have not been trained to see them. Decades of male-dominated scholarship have privileged the white Wakean male over the female, queer, transgender, black, and global majority figures that, when found in the text, enhance the *Wake*’s rich texture. Rather than adhering to white, patriarchal frameworks, Joyce’s focus on gender and identity in *Finnegans Wake* is neither clear cut nor stable, as each ‘character’—and I use this term loosely—traverses multiple genders and races throughout the entirely of the text. One example of this fluidity appears in 1.2 as ALP, known primarily in the text as a white Irish female, is referred to as ‘she’s a lilyth, pull early! Pauline, allow! And malers abushed’ (34.33). Simultaneously embodying three identities: Lilith, the supposed wife of Adam before Eve, ‘Pauline’ or Saint Paul, an Apostle from Tarsus, in modern-day Turkey, and ‘malers abushed’ (the South African Sans tribe, also known as bushmen) the line sets the precedent for the rest of the text as ALP traverses the boundaries of time, race, and gender. Joyce’s intersectional approach is further evidenced by the text’s abundant use of multilingualism, including, but not limited to: Armenian (‘The doun is theirs and still to see for menags’, with *doun* meaning house, and *menag* translating to solitary or alone): Japanese (‘Yoruyume across the Timor Sea’, *yoru* meaning night and *yume* dream) and Kiswahili (‘sina feza, me absantee’, I have no money, thanks) (69.11, 231.10, 198.16), which extends the loose ‘plot’ beyond its Dublin borders and towards encompassing the entire globe.

Joyce also blurs the line between human and animal. ALP doubles as Biddy Doran, the kindly hen who happens across a letter in 1.5, and in II.4 an act of copulation between the parents results in HCE being ‘jovial on his bucky brown nightmare’, implying that ALP has taken the form of a ‘bucky brown’ horse, while also alluding to another racial shift through a change in skin colour (538.12). In 2017, Laura Lovejoy elucidated the animal comparisons that operate in the *Wake*, noting that while all characters in the text are subject to beastly comparisons, the female correlations (which take the form of hens, foxes, kittens and rabbits, to name a few) ‘often convey recognisable patriarchal constructions of femininity’.[[65]](#footnote-65) Despite these superficial appearances, Lovejoy notes how *Finnegans Wake* on the whole operates as a critique of male authority, and more specifically, as a means of exposing ‘mechanisms by which women are confined to domestic holding-pens’.[[66]](#footnote-66) Lovejoy’s approach teaches us that Joyce’s use of the female is not transparent, and that the reader must be careful when analysing the *Wake*’s use of patriarchal language. When considering this alongside our examination of Joyce’s use of metaphysics, it encourages a re-evaluation of the way we view Joyce’s female characters. Although, at first glance, they appear oppressed and follow stereotypical expectations of women, when closely examined, they begin to defy gender roles, offering a new approach to interpreting their textual role. Clarifying that the scope of the *Wake* is the entire globe, Joyce’s polysemic use of race, gender, and form evidence that the text’s ‘characters’ are always in the process of coming into being, rather than residing in a fixed state. If the *Wake* is an all-encompassing ‘narrative’ of the world and ‘what has gone?’ then it can only be helpful to examine the text alongside the world’s plethora of cultures, genders, and sexualities.

Returning to Ahmed, if women are only represented through the male gaze, our embodied selves are reduced and shaped according to male expectations and desires, meaning any deviation from the patriarchal ‘path’ causes friction. If the shape or shade of our body governs how we perceive and *are* perceived, it is also used to determine whether we are at home in our surroundings. According to Ahmed, ‘space is orientated towards some bodies’, resulting in a discord between the body and its surroundings when the space is not designed for its frame.[[67]](#footnote-67) To aid her articulation, Ahmed thinks of society and its institutions as a ‘garment’, noting how, over time,

a garment clings better to the body that wears it. A garment might even become clingy. A garment and body are more attuned the more a garment clings to a body. Maybe an institution is like an old garment. It acquires the shape of those who tend to wear it; it becomes easier to wear if you have that shape. Privilege could be rethought in those terms: easier to wear.[[68]](#footnote-68)

The world is shaped to fit a certain type of body: largely that of the white male. However, the multiple lived realities of diverse cultures, genders, and races cannot be encapsulated by a singular philosophical perspective, resulting in tension between the world which has been built for a certain body, and the bodies who do not fit that shape.

As this thesis will thus demonstrate, the role of women in Joyce is complex and layered, articulating the heterogeneity of the ‘female’ experience not through direct textual representation, but through the reader’s own phenomenological reflections. Each reader approaches the text with a labyrinth of specific knowledge, bolstered by Joyce’s use of typographical figures, gynaecological references and an intricate relationship between the female reproductive system and metaphysics. This results in the emergence of an obscure female phenomenology that functions as the text’s enigmatic centre. To illustrate this, the chapters in this thesis follow a transhistorical narrative arc through the female body, echoing the development of gynaecology from the early modern period (1450-1800) to the present day, as I move from Joycean O (mouth and vagina), to speculum, womb, and bodily fluids. Each chapter is united by a questioning of how specific motifs related to these bodily, medical, or typographical symbols contribute to building an underlying metaphysical authority in the text, which is closely intertwined with the female body.

The first chapter lays the groundwork for further phenomenological readings of *Finnegans Wake* through a close interrogation of the Joycean O. The O appears throughout Joyce’s work, functioning as a curious plot device which is often associated with a projected female sexuality. Examining sections of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, I uncover the further, hidden potential of the O, underpinning how it both affirms and negates the Joycean woman by exploring the dynamic between author, reader, and text. The first half of the chapter focuses primarily on *Ulysses*, examining ‘Lestrygonians’, ‘Proteus’ and ‘Penelope’ to illuminate how, despite its initial, projected superficiality, Joyce’s O functions as a complicated symbol, operating as a textual gloryhole that enables the reader to project their own phenomenological desires into the text. From here, I explore how the O reaches its apex in *Finnegans Wake,* through close readings of the ‘Questions’ Chapter (I.6) and the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), where the female body intersects with complex philosophical conundrums. Together, these two examinations of the O illuminate its phenomenological presence, uncovering how its role as a textual marker enables a more complex understanding of Joyce’s female figures. The readings which take place throughout this chapter form a foundational base for the gynaecological and phenomenological readings which permeate the breadth of this thesis.

Chapters 2 and 3 function as twinned readings, where I explore the full intricacy of this female phenomenology, as well as its intertwinement with metaphysics. In Chapter 2, I delve deeper into these Os, or textual spaces, exploring the relationship between phenomenology and society in *Finnegans Wake* through Joyce’s use of medical metaphor. I build on my examinations of the O here, by determining how Joyce further supplements his inability to fully articulate the female experience through the history of gynaecology. The chapter begins by dissecting Joyce’s interest in the metaphorical potential of childbirth and the female reproductive system in *Ulysses* through close readings of ‘Oxen of the Sun’, establishing Joyce’s acute awareness of the history of the gynaecological field which will act as a foundation for further analysis. This is then used as a framework for reading the speculum in the *Wake*, where I consider how looking instruments function as symbols of the male desire for female knowledge. In the third part of this chapter, I determine how the speculum operates as a device for examining the *Wake*’s dual philosophical authority by revisiting the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5) and examining ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2). This chapter furthers my readings of female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake* by demonstrating how it requires a different reading approach than male phenomenology, because while male authority in the *Wake* is overt, female authority is intricate and hidden.

While Chapter 2 examines how the Joycean speculum directs us towards the female authority (or womb) of the text, Chapter 3 uses these readings to perform a close examination of the *Wake*’s textual uterus. Split into three, interrelated sections, this chapter explores the layers of the Joycean womb to reveal its metaphysical potential. I begin by uncovering historical associations between women, wombs, and weaving, determining how these histories operate as metaphors and structures for Joyce’s use of metaphysics in the *Wake*. To fully illuminate this, the chapter takes the form of a tripartite reading across three chapters of the text: the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), ‘The Washers on the Ford’ (I.8) and ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2). Reading across the sections, I determine how each chapter functions as a repetition of the same event, aligning with the *Wak*e’s fractal structure as they all depict a philosophical enquiry into our metaphysical origins through the figure of the womb. I read these three chapters as progressions of one another, depicting a move from chaos to civilisation as our ability to see the womb improves as the *Wake* develops. These three readings underpin Joyce’s complex use of the womb as a philosophical metaphor, moving from a system which articulates a microcosmic, plot-orientated understanding of the rumour, to a macrocosmic and all-encompassing understanding of the universe.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis reads the *Wake* through a wider lens, establishing a dual authority of the text through a reorientation of the fluid body in Joyce’s work. While the previous chapters have sought to establish and uncover an original female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*, this chapter examines how the dual, gendered authorities of the text work in unison with one another. To do so, the chapter will comprise of three, interrelated sections, framed by a reading of Astrida Neimanis’s theory of hydrofeminism. I use Neimanis’s work to analyse the fluid bodies of the *Wake* through a close reading of the Prankquean passage in I.1, followed by a comparative analysis of male fluidity in *Finnegans Wake*. I first interrogate how, in ‘Bride Ship and Gulls’ (II.4), the four male judges become philosophical emblems of the Prankquean through the transitional scenes of urination, challenging a ‘unique’ female ‘leakiness’ through a shared sense of bodily connectivity. This will then be explored in tandem with the images of male breastfeeding that permeate ‘Yawn’s Inquest’ (III.3). Illuminating the porosity of the male body in *Finnegans Wake*, this chapter explores the full phenomenological implications of this liquid connectivity by demonstrating how Joyce’s subversion of leaky stereotypes both uncovers and destabilises the dual authority of the text.

The primary aim of this thesis is to evidence that authority in the *Wake* is plural and unstable, doing so to uncover original and productive ways to read the female philosophical body in Joyce’s work, that inform us about the text’s wider metaphysical significance. By uncovering alternative ways to read authority in Joyce’s work, through close readings of Os, speculums, wombs, and bodily fluids, I demonstrate that female phenomenology operates differently from male phenomenology in the Joycean text, requiring a different approach to uncover. The wider aim of this work is to dismantle some of the fatalistic walls which complicate—and in some cases, prevent—productive queer, racial and feminist readings in Joyce studies, opening up further questions about the importance of reflecting on the practice of reading and what we are choosing to privilege.[[69]](#footnote-69)

# CHAPTER ONE: TEXTUAL GLORYH(O)LES

The novel’s secret centre is a weighted silence, which does not speak, but which nonetheless signals its presence, a secret core which draws in the reader who may simultaneously be quite aware of its intangibility.[[70]](#footnote-70)

In the epigraph, Katherine O’Callaghan reflects on the secret centre of the *Wake*, recalling Orhan Pamuk’s articulation that this ‘secret centre’ is what sets ‘novels apart from other literary narratives’ as we, the readers, ‘rely on our conviction that there is a centre we should search for as we read’.[[71]](#footnote-71) According to O’Callaghan, in *Finnegans Wake*, this secret centre ‘may well be the recognition that there are huge losses and elisions in our stories, our histories, and our narratives’.[[72]](#footnote-72) These instances of loss emerge both inside and outside of the text. They emerge inside, in the sense that Joyce uses instances of ‘textual silence, in which subject and form act in sympathy’ with one another, to articulate the ‘inexpressibility of loss’.[[73]](#footnote-73) O’Callaghan exemplifies this by declaring that

between the last fading part-sentence of the text, “A way a lone a last a loved a long the’, (*FW* 628.15-16), which ‘carries the word “loss” as a manifestation, and its famous return in the opening line of the book “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s” (*FW* 3.01) is a silence which has been heavily foreshadowed in the last paragraph of *Finnegans Wake*.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Loss is also observed in the perspectives which are left out of readerly interpretation due to our inability to perceive and record everything. Absence and loss thus have a special place in *Finnegans Wake,* operating as a reverberated echo of a lost history and uncovered in moments of textual silence.

My primary focus in this chapter will be the Joycean O, a complex typographical figure which enables these absences and silences to be known. Originating in *Ulysses*, the Joycean O is an unusual locus of meaning. It has frequently been dubbed a superficial symbol of female sexuality and pleasure as it marks multiple orgasms throughout the text, appearing at the climactic peak of the ‘Nausicaa’ and ‘Penelope’ episodes. Despite its superficial appearance, there is a hidden complexity about the O. The O both negates and affirms the Joycean woman, with its difficulty and ambiguity reaching its apex in *Finnegans Wake* where the female body intersects with complex philosophical conundrums.

The first half of this chapter is concerned with the phenomenological as I illuminate the birth of the O in *Ulysses.* I examine how Joyce’s use of the O enables the reader to deepen the portrayal of his female characters, by allowing us to project our own desires into the text. I begin with an analysis of ‘Lestrygonians’ and ‘Proteus’, evidencing how a male phenomenology operates in the text through Bloom’s and Stephen’s contemplation of the senses, memory, and bodily functions, in relation to their external surroundings. From here, I move towards establishing a female phenomenology of the text, beginning by tracing interpretations of the O throughout Joycean scholarship. Through close readings of ‘Nausicaa’ and ‘Penelope’, I establish how the O has been explored as a figure which depicts Joyce’s female characters as pornographic constructions of male desire, resulting in superficial depictions of the female body as Molly and Gerty are seen as projections of the male gaze. To build on this, I then draw on Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi’s philosophy of holes in relation to ‘Penelope’. I determine how the O is in fact paradoxical in nature, exemplifying both female absence and philosophical presence as it forms a series of textual glory holes which enable the reader to construct multiple Mollys. When referring to ‘glory holes’, I am using the term in light of its sexual and voyeuristic connotations, describing how, by creating a series of holes in the textual matter, Joyce uses the O to detach Molly from his authorial body, forming a textual glory hole that redirects the reader towards the authority, or flesh, of the womb.

After establishing the full phenomenological potential of the O in *Ulysses*, the second half of this chapter will trace the philosophical development of figure in *Finnegans Wake*. Here I determine how the O’s deeper intertwinement with metaphysics, philosophy, and the female body in results in a more complex typographical figure which reveals the absent centre of the Joycean text. Outlining how the O straddles the binary between life and death, womb and tomb, I interrogate how the figure simultaneously illuminates the fragmented nature of literary representation, drawing on Maurice Blanchot’s ‘Literature and the Right to Death’ (1949) and ‘Inspiration’ (1955) to strengthen my hypothesis. I do this by examining the gendered, metaphysical riddles which are framed by the typographical figure in 1.6, otherwise known as the ‘Questions Chapter’. I then balance the superficial gynaecology of the O with its deeper metaphysical complexities through a brief reading of the ‘Mamafesta’, determining how a philosophical reading of this kind can enable a more in-depth view of the Wakean female figure.

Illuminating the phenomenological presence of the O throughout *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, this chapter collectively outlines the O’s role as a textual marker which makes space for the reader’s desire, enabling a fuller, more philosophical examination of Joyce’s female literary figures. In addition, the readings which take place throughout this chapter form a foundational base for the gynaecological and phenomenological readings which permeate the breadth of this thesis. Establishing an original reading of the O as a dynamic and pervasive marker of a female phenomenology will allow me to further my exploration of female philosophical authority in *Finnegans Wake*, as I move towards establishing a dual authority in the text. These investigations thus enable me to build a foundation for examining Joyce’s underrepresented and perhaps lesser analysed figures, resulting in us making more use out of the Joycean text. This is because, in the context of a female, queer, or racial phenomenology of the text, we must ‘use it or lose it’, Sara Ahmed posits. If we fail to uncover these under-examined textual positions, we risk losing valuable material. In fact, we lose a part of the *Wake* itself, because ‘a tongue that is not spoken will shrivel into indistinction’.[[75]](#footnote-75)

**THE ULYSSEAN O: A MALE PHENOMENOLOGY**

Upon a first reading of *Ulysses*, phenomenology appears to be male-centric. The first three episodes unfold from Stephen’s perspective, the following twelve are more closely intertwined with Bloom, and only the final three are aligned with Molly.[[76]](#footnote-76) Only one out of eighteen of these episodes—‘Penelope’, the closing episode of the text—centres directly around female consciousness, where Joyce provides the reader with a free-indirect-discourse of Molly’s inner thoughts. *Ulysses* therefore appears to offer a detailed exploration of the ‘male experience’, rather than the female, though of course the breadth and intricacy of this experience surpasses what a single text can fully encapsulate. The lengths are taken by Joyce to enhance the ‘reality’ of this male consciousness, particularly evident in ‘Proteus’ and ‘Lestrygonians’. Taking ‘Lestrygonians’ as a starting point, Bloom wanders around Dublin looking for a place to eat lunch, resulting in an episode that revolves the experience of consumption and excretion as hunger is superimposed onto Bloom’s perception of his surroundings. Joyce’s prose takes on a muscular form here, expanding and contracting in a way that echoes the digestion tract (marked in the Linati schema as peristaltic prose, the associated organ: the oesophagus). This is evident as the pages are dissected into long paragraphs which are punctuated with shorter, punchier sentences. Worth quoting at length to demonstrate the structure, these alternations appear to expand and contract alongside Bloom’s hunger pangs as he hunts for satiation:

His heart astir he pushed in the door of the Burton restaurant. Stink gripped his trembling breath: pungent meatjuice, slush of greens. See the animals feed.

Men, men, men.

Perched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling, wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches. A pallid suetfaced young man polished his tumbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New set of microbes. A man with an infant’s saucestained napkin tucked round him shovelled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: gums: no teeth to chewchewchew it. Chump chop from the grill. Bolting to get it over. Sad booser’s eyes. Bitten off more than he can chew. Am I like that? See ourselves as others see us. Hungry man is an angry man. Working tooth and jaw. Don’t! O! A bone! That last pagan king of Ireland Cormac in the schoolpoem choked himself at Sletty southward of the Boyne. Wonder what he was eating. Something galoptious. Saint Patrick converted him to Christianity. Couldn’t swallow it all however.[[77]](#footnote-77)

Evidencing the sharp shifts in paragraph length, the passage depicts the whetting of Bloom’s appetite as he enters the restaurant. The structure moves from short, sharp thoughts, ‘men men men’, before swelling as Bloom’s hunger-tarnished observations of the world are partially satiated by the sight of food. Joyce also compels the reader to observe how the inner hunger Bloom feels is translated onto his perception of the material world and the surrounding community. Earlier observations of a ‘sugarsticky girl shovelling scoopfuls of creams’ and the ‘warm sweet fumes of Graham Lemon’s’, demonstrate a shift in Bloom’s phenomenological relation to his surroundings as his thoughts run parallel to his stomach.[[78]](#footnote-78) Bloom’s sight, sound and mind are also consumed by the experience of eating and hunger-orientated idioms. The reader observes the sounds of food ‘swilling’ as men wolf ‘gobfuls of soup’, as well as the ‘gurgling’ of stomachs and ‘halfmasticated gristle, as one restaurant dweller—like Bloom perhaps feels in his relationship with Molly—has ‘bitten off more than he can chew’. This particular idiom emphasizes Bloom’s phenomenological projections of Molly that run throughout the episode, which emerge through a conflation of the O and memory (seen in the passage through Bloom’s ‘Don’t! O!’). The O’s function here is twofold. On the one hand, the O operates as a phenomenological reflection of Molly through its embodiment of carnal desire (hunger) and memory, as Bloom has ‘bitten off more than he can chew’ in his marriage. On the other hand, the O signifies the hole which sits in the centre of Bloom’s consciousness while he tries to avoid thinking about the affair that will later take place at 7 Eccles Street.

Despite Bloom’s attempt to suppress Molly from his consciousness, this absent centre and phenomenological hole keeps reappearing, as food evokes memories of their relationship. This is most prominent when Bloom observes how ‘two flies buzzed, stuck’, while contemplating how the ‘glowing wine on his palate’ evokes a memory, as it ‘touche[s] his sense[s]’. He remembers how, ‘hidden under wild ferns on Howth’, Molly lied ‘pillowed on [his] coat’ with his ‘hand under the nape’ as he ‘kissed her mouth. Yum’. [[79]](#footnote-79) Bloom’s use of ‘Yum’—which echoes Molly’s final ‘Yes’ in ‘Penelope’—encapsulates the conflation between phenomenology and food, as Bloom’s desire for Molly becomes intertwined with the pleasure of eating. Furthermore, as the memory deepens, Bloom once again utters an O (‘O wonder!’), before the passage is framed by the digestive tract as he thinks about how

Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet and sour with spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft, warm, sticky grumjelly lips. […] Wildly I lay on her, kissed her; eyes, her lips, her stretched neck, beating, woman s breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me.

Me. And me now.

Stuck, the flies buzzed.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Bloom’s recollection is concerned with physical touch, projecting the figure of Molly through images of sex and desire. Molly is a mere bodily outline here, a figment of Bloom’s male phenomenology as she remembered for her ‘fat nipples’ and ‘sticky grumjelly lips’.

A phenomenological split also takes place, where Bloom considers himself two separate selves, the ‘Me. and me now’, as well as fly one and fly two. The observation of the flies indicates that Bloom’s perception is both human and non-human in the passage, highlighting an awareness that extends outside of his body as he projects his feelings outwards and towards Molly. These two flies also represent the two phenomenologies that converge when Molly later recalls the same event in ‘Penelope’, where she introduces her own perspective as she recounts how,

The sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Creating a shared textual authority as we see a double retelling of the past, these two perspectives are both marked by Joyce’s use of the O. While Bloom’s recollection is concerned with physical touch and the body, Molly’s is tied to emotion and language, reframing the image of herself which has been projected by Bloom throughout the text. In Bloom’s passage, the O operates as an awareness of this physical, sexual hole which lies at the centre of his marriage. In Molly’s reflection the O comes full circle, rectifying the anxiety of Bloom’s recollection as her own phenomenology indicates a return to Bloom, through an intertwining of food, love and desire which is cemented by the final ‘yes I said yes I will Yes’.[[82]](#footnote-82)

In ‘Proteus’, Joyce’s depiction of a male phenomenology is equally complex, establishing a connection between metaphysics and the female body that extends into *Finnegans Wake*. The episode follows Stephen’s sensory perception of Sandymount as he walks along the beach while engaging in deep philosophical thought. Like Bloom, Stephen also projects his consciousness outwards; however, rather than recalling memories of love, food and desire, Stephen contemplates philosophical conundrums through the metaphor of the womb and navel. Considering his relationship to the material world, the episode begins with Stephen’s opening reflection, ‘ineluctable modality of the visible’, which indicates that he is currently more in tune with his visual surroundings as he observes ‘the nearing tide’, ‘snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs’.[[83]](#footnote-83) Stephen’s visual musings are halted when he closes his eyes and impedes his perception, followed by a series of shifting sensory observations. Stephen then becomes aware of his audible surroundings (marked once more by the now adapted line, ‘ineluctable modality of the audible’).[[84]](#footnote-84) Hearing ‘boots crush crackling wrack and shells’, Stephen observes a ‘catalectic tetrameter of iambs marching’ as he detects rhythmic patterns in his walking.[[85]](#footnote-85) This audible awareness also triggers a contemplation of time as Stephen’s movements echo the rhythm of a clock, as he notes how ‘you are walking through it, howsomever. I am, a stride at a time’.[[86]](#footnote-86) Philosophical in its measure of progress in our existence, this reflection on time indicates that Stephen’s sensory perceptions are running parallel to his philosophical contemplations, resulting in a symmetry between the mind and body as the material world influences Stephen’s metaphysical perception of his own existence. He becomes aware of his own connection to the world and the way his body occupies space.

As the episode develops, the relationship between Stephen’s mind and body begins to further intertwine through a conflation of touch and memory. Stephen thinks,

She trusts me, her hand gentle, the longlashed eyes. Now where the blue hell am I bringing her beyond the veil? Into the electable modality of the ineluctable visuality […] Touch me. Soft eyes. Soft soft soft hand. I am lonely here. O, touch me soon.[[87]](#footnote-87)

Here, the textures and temperament recalled through Stephen’s memory become almost tangible, constructing a sense of depth in the novel as the complexity of human experience is explored through Stephen’s musings. Like in ‘Lestrygonians’, the O is associated with male projections of the female body here, appearing in Stephen’s moment of philosophical remembrance and harbouring sensuality and sense of longing as he thinks ‘O, touch me soon’. The senses of touch and sight suggest that the O is once more a marker of external perception here, granting it a sense of superficiality in the context of Stephen’s philosophical musings as he projects his own phenomenology onto the imagined or remembered woman with ‘longlashed eyes’ and a ‘gentle’ hand, while he masturbates on the beach.

To further this, Joyce frames Stephen’s metaphysical musings within the metaphor of a womb, resulting in a complex connection between the female body and metaphysics which is embodied by the O. Throughout *Ulysses*, the womb functions as a symbol of fear for Stephen due to his guilt over not praying at his mother’s bedside upon her death. This is evident in the episode’s opening, where the womb also refracts Stephen’s religious values and his fear of committing an act of sin, seen through his contemplation of birth as a midwife ‘lugged [him] squealing into life’, resulting in an act of ‘creation from nothing’.[[88]](#footnote-88) Stephen is unable to fully comprehend this birth, signifying the impossibility of returning to our origins, and emphasising the womb’s role as a metaphysical enigma as it cannot be fully known. Stephen’s thoughts then spiral into a metaphysical contemplation of the human race. He notes how the navel ‘cords all link back’, forming a ‘strandentwining cable of all flesh’ that unites humanity as all births appear to transcend beyond the singular.[[89]](#footnote-89) Joyce also conflates Stephen’s contemplation of these metaphysical conundrums with mathematics, observed through the allusion to ‘Aleph, Alpha, Nought, Nought, One’.[[90]](#footnote-90) The line is referencing a sequence of numbers used as a means of representing the cardinality of infinite sets. Stephen’s contemplation of birth indicates that this gestational ‘cable’ lies beyond the scope of human comprehension through its infinite connotations, associating the womb with incomprehensible knowledge. This small but important passage foregrounds the work Joyce will later do to establish the womb’s metaphysical presence in the ‘Night Lessons’ episode of the *Wake*, where the three children Issy, Shem, and Shaun partake in a mathematical and philosophical lesson in an attempt to comprehend the mother’s womb, something I explore more thoroughly in Chapters 2 and 3. Stephen’s fears regarding the womb, alongside the episode’s themes of intellectual enlightenment, phenomenological perception, and metaphysics, begin to establish a connection between Joyce’s female characters and enigmatic knowledge. The episode’s epiphanies indicate, in addition to Joyce’s use of the O, that there is knowledge to be found within the Joycean womb. Uncovering these complexities therefore has the potential to transform our understanding of Joyce’s female characters, beginning in *Ulysses*, and later developing further in *Finnegans Wake*.

**THE ULYSSEAN O: A FEMALE PHENOMENOLOGY**

and then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind blank and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sign of O! and everyone cried O! O!.

(*Ulysses*, ‘Nausicaa’, p. 350).

Ill tighten my bottom well and O wait now Sonny my turn is coming Ill be quite gay and friendly over it O but I was forgetting this bloody pest of a thing.

(*Ulysses*, ‘Penelope’, p. 730).

The early establishment of the metaphysical womb in ‘Proteus’ enables a more in-depth exploration of these female holes or Os. As explored above, Joyce’s attempts to underpin phenomenological reality in his novel appear to be largely centred around the male experience, while hinting at an emerging female phenomenology through the metaphysical potential of the womb. In ‘Penelope’, Stephen’s and Bloom’s female projections are reframed by the introduction of a stream-of-conscious style episode narrated from the female mind. While the reality of Joyce’s male phenomenological depictions is believable given his male authorial perspective, Joyce’s attempts to explore Molly’s consciousness are often thrown into question, due to the possibility—or rather, impossibility—of narrating the inner consciousness of an Other. This is particularly seen through Suzette Henke’s declaration that women emerge in Joyce’s work as either ‘virgin or whore, Madonna or temptress, but usually within a problematic context of maternity’.[[91]](#footnote-91) Outlining Joyce’s binary and oversimplified depiction of women in *Ulysses*, this sentiment is clear within a first reading of the text: Molly stands as eternal temptress and a figure of infidelity after having an affair with Boylan. In ‘Nausicaa’, Gerty MacDowell takes the form of an innocent virgin onto whom Bloom projects his fantasies and desires, while more liminal characters, such as the brothel owner Bella Cohen, found in the play-like realm of ‘Circe’, stand as (problematic) representations of temptress and whore.

Joyce remedies these superficial binaries and absences using the O, signalling the emergence of a female phenomenology as it appears in moments of deep contemplation and bodily pleasure. At first glance, the female O feels hollow, yet when examined more closely, these bodily surfaces give way to a consciousness and authority which emerges from the relationship between author, reader, and text. This makes way for two or more simultaneous perspectives to be held, marking the reality of consciousness and the complexity of human action, by encouraging us to follow the text’s pluralities, rather than forcing us to privilege one over the other. On a superficial level, Molly operates as a pleasure system fuelled by the voyeuristic reader as she says ‘yes’ to submission. However, using the O, Joyce creates a space where the construction of Molly becomes fuelled by readerly desire, operating as a textual glory hole which points towards the authority of the womb.

To explore the O more fully, it is useful to frame it as a textual hole which runs through the work, signalling presence and absence (whole and hole) through its circular shape. Considering the material properties of holes, Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi assert that while ‘every hole has a material host’ (the visible edges), it ‘may also have a material guest’, such as a liquid, which temporarily fills the cavity.[[92]](#footnote-92) This is because, structurally, holes are merely ‘hole-linings’ as the material profile or ‘host’ of a hole forms only its outside edges, and the inside is an ambiguous, and sometimes liquid, space.[[93]](#footnote-93) In the context of the *Ulyssean* O—where Joyce’s use of the O creates a space for the reader to impart their own desire into the text—Joyce forms the material host (or edges) of the hole with his authorial hand through the act of writing (and then typing), constructing a marker from which the reader can build meaning. The reader then functions as the material guest, temporarily filling the hole’s ambiguous middle with their own desires and knowledge. This space is liquid because these interpretations are slippery and malleable, changing according to each reader’s knowledge and will. Furthermore, these holes are formed by an absence of matter, resulting in a contradiction. The absent centre functions as both the inside and outside of the hole. It is the inside, in the sense that it is surrounded by hole’s material, visible boundaries, yet it is the outside, because it lies outside of these material edges. In the *Wake*, our interpretations of the O forms similar contradictions. Scholarship that emerges from the hole’s absent centre lies both inside and outside of the text. Inside, in the sense that is connected to and emerging from the material markers offered by Joyce, and outside because Joyce does not make an explicit indication of the hole’s meaning. The symbol is thus ductile and paradoxical, functioning as a marker of both womb and text as it alludes definitive definition, operating inside and outside of the narrative.

Joyce highlights the conflation between the O, metaphysics, and the female body in his Linati schema (1921), where time in ‘Penelope’ is marked by the infinity symbol (∞). Taking the form of a sideways 8—otherwise known as Molly’s number­­––the symbol’s numerical shape has led to multiple interpretations. Most simply, it marks the eight run-on sentences that form Molly’s concluding soliloquy, aligning Molly with rebirth and new beginnings through its associations with the resurrection of Christ.[[94]](#footnote-94) Interpreted in a bodily sense, the 8 visualises Molly’s two adjacent, penetrable holes (Os) which form much of the episode’s focus, seen through declarations such as ‘whats the idea making us like that with a big hole in the middle’ and ‘my hole is itching me when I think of him’.[[95]](#footnote-95) Reminding us of Penelope’s infinite, anatomical female presence, the symbol not only marks the importance of Molly’s sexual identity, but also has mathematical connotations, echoing Stephen’s earlier comparison between the umbilical cord and the numbers ‘Aleph, Alpha, Nought, Nought, One’. According to Diane Tolomeo the 8 is indicative of an octagon through its number of sides and similarity to the Schӓlfi symbol {8}. Both the octagon, with its circular shape, and the 8, with its crude connotations of rebirth, associate the chapter with Vico’s cyclical history, highlighted by Tolomeo as she articulates how the extension of the four-part cycle into an eight-part cycle can ‘imply either two full turns of the cycle or a single turn seen from two vantages’.[[96]](#footnote-96) Vico’s *New Science*, which Joyce himself later admitted to using as a ‘trellis’ in order to structure *Finnegans Wake*, takes the form of three parts, the divine age, the heroic age and the human age, followed by a fourth, the ricorso or renewal, where the cycle begins once more.[[97]](#footnote-97) Indicating the presence of at least two phenomenologies or perspectives in *Ulysses*, these ‘two vantages’ suggest that Molly’s soliloquy forms a second ‘female’ historical cycle or ‘earthball’, which aligns with the overarching masculine authority of the text.

In *Ulysses*, the 8 and the O are closely intertwined. While the 8 is tied to rebirth and the female body, the O is often associated with brazen sexuality, a pornographic and stylised version of the orgasm as seen from the male gaze. This has been frequently critiqued by scholars such as Nicola Ivy Spunt, who attests that ‘“Nausicaa”, along with its female protagonist, Gerty MacDowell, have been the targets of reductive interpretations that equate feminine subjectivity with facileness and transparency’.[[98]](#footnote-98) The O’s circular shape makes it both auricular and bodily. It conjures an image of female flesh through its embodiment of the mouth, vagina, and womb, while also echoing an exaggerated performance-based representation of the female orgasm by imitating a cry of pleasure. The O therefore embodies the emptiness of its own performance. Full circled and hollow, the endgame is orgasm and rushed pleasure, feeling perfunctory as its emptiness epitomizes a reductive, male-centric view of women’s sexual enjoyment.

While performative pleasure is unproblematic, it is the reductive nature of the *Ulyssean* female O that initially proves tricky, as ‘this orgasmic attribution might [at first] seem a frivolous projection of the male authorial imagination’, according to Suzette Henke.[[99]](#footnote-99) Intertwined with Molly’s body in ‘Penelope’, the Os indicate female passion yet feel deliberately hollow, highlighted by Henke as she notes how, ‘Joyce teases and titillates our voyeuristic sensibilities and invites us to construct a male-centred vision of Molly as eternal temptress – the insatiable female, the perpetually receptive vagina/mouth/womb of pornographic fantasy’.[[100]](#footnote-100) The O operates as a fleeting icon, a marker of the projected and ephemeral nature of the text’s female characters through its circular shape. This is reflective of Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, where Queen Margaret calls Queen Elizabeth ‘a dream of what thou wast’, declaring her to be ‘a breath, a bubble’, and thus evoking the shape of the O while marking its transient nature.[[101]](#footnote-101) These Os appear throughout ‘Penelope’, harbouring an important use on the level of the text by functioning as replacements for punctuation. They appear in moments where Molly changes her train of thought, takes a pause for breath, or recalls a memory, evident as she thinks, ‘what are we waiting for O my heart kiss me straight on the brow’, and ‘when I’m 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’.[[102]](#footnote-102) Positioning Molly and her textual ‘Os’ as carriers of male desire, the O signifies the mouth, vagina and womb, which stand as receptacles for the male appetite. This is reinforced by Molly’s repetition of ‘Yes’ in the closing lines of the text, as she describes how ‘first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes’.[[103]](#footnote-103) Described by Joyce as ‘the female word’, which indicates ‘acquiescence, self-abandon, relaxation, the end of all resistance’, the lack of resistance in the final ‘Yes’ initially implies that Molly has given in to bodily desire, reinforcing Henke’s notion that she stands as an insatiable ‘pornographic fantasy’ designed for the male reader.[[104]](#footnote-104)

Molly’s character construction in ‘Penelope’ is bolstered also by allusions to her menstrual cycle. I explore this fully in Chapter 4 where I examine the connection between bodily fluids and authority, however, here menstruation has a distinct connection to the O. The O and menstruation are intertwined through the moon, both through their circular/ spherical shapes— which symbolise cyclicality and rebirth—and through their associations with the female body. Menstruation has historically been tied to lunar theory, described in 1730 by John Cook who argued that periods ‘go very much, as to the Time of Eruption, by the Moon’.[[105]](#footnote-105) The theory emerged due to the similar length of lunar and menstrual cycles, further promoting the idea that women are intertwined with nature, as the female body echoes nature’s cyclical rhythms. According to Katherine Dauge-Roth, ‘in French anti-feminist writing and imagery of the seventeenth century, the *femme lunatique* [lunatic women] emerged to justify characterisations of women as changeable and inconstant, like the moon running through its phases’.[[106]](#footnote-106) Harbouring negative connotations, the moon/menstruation comparison reinforced the notion that women were unpredictable and unable to regulate their bodies. In ‘Penelope’ these connections emerge as Molly references her own ‘flow’, questioning, ‘have we too much blood up in us’ as she contemplates the biology of those who menstruate. Themes of menstruation run throughout the episode, becoming structures for Molly’s womanhood as she declares that ‘theres always something wrong with us 5 days every 3 or 4 weeks’ and ‘O but I was forgetting this bloody pest of a thing’.[[107]](#footnote-107) Functioning here as identifying factors of Molly’s ‘natural’ womanhood, these allusions to menstruation are reinforced by the continual reoccurrence of the ‘O’ as its circular shape embodies the reproductive cyclicality that has been largely associated with women’s bodies.[[108]](#footnote-108) Because history has primarily documented the development of the cis white ‘male’, while erasing women from historical grand narratives, menstruation has previously provided men with a means of ‘knowing’ the female body because, according to Katherine Mullin, menstruation ‘harbours epistemological power’.[[109]](#footnote-109) It forms a means of speculation in *Ulysses*, seen through Bloom’s observations of Gerty and Martha. Despite knowing little about the women, Bloom speculates about their menstrual cycles to compensate ‘for his lack of knowledge on them’, confirming Gerty’s desire for him by noting that her ‘natural craving’ is heightened during her time of the month.[[110]](#footnote-110) Joyce preserves this connection between menstruation, knowledge, and desire through Gerty’s confirmation of Bloom’s assumption, as she engages in his act of sexual voyeurism. While Bloom masturbates to the sight of Gerty’s underwear, Gerty ‘let[s] him’, before ‘trembling in every limb from being bent so far back’.[[111]](#footnote-111) Rationalising Gerty and Martha’s behaviour based on their menstrual cycles temporarily plugs a missing history or identity, allowing Bloom to construct a sense of transparency around the women by associating their bodily functions with their identity. As interrogated by Mullin, this is a tactic frequently employed by male authors, including Joyce, because menstruation

acts as the proof of the unarguable femininity of a female character ventriloquized by a male novelist. Molly, describing how it feels to menstruate, can be read as a *tour de force* on Joyce’s part, a prodigious play with realism.[[112]](#footnote-112)

Molly’s menstruation provides her with a history and desires that lie outside of Joyce’s male realm of experience: in short, constructing a false (and arguably lazy) sense of femininity. However, this superficiality is perhaps intentional on Joyce’s part, argued by Mullin as she suggests that ‘menstruation becomes a paradigmatic example of Joyce’s fascination with, and amusement at, competing myths of sexuality’, thus implying that Joyce’s use of sexual and menstrual clichés leans more towards exposing them, rather than adopting them.[[113]](#footnote-113) These ‘superficial clichés’ work to temporarily plug a missing female authority in *Ulysses*, something which is altered when the reader comes into play.

Surpassing its own misogynistic label, the O thus operates as a paradox, simultaneously embodying and refuting frivolous desire as it reveals a hidden female authority within its philosophical curvature. In 1921, Joyce outlined the relation between the O and the Yes in a letter to Frank Budgen, describing how ‘Penelope’

begins and ends with the female word *yes*. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words *because*, *bottom* (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart), *woman*, *yes* […] *Ich bin der [sic] Fleisch der stets bejaht*’. [[114]](#footnote-114)

Positioning Molly as both creator and puppet, the first half of the passage aligns the O with female flesh, as the four ‘cardinal’ points of woman (breasts, arse, womb, and cunt) are contained within its earthly sphere. Joyce then asserts that the words ‘*woman*’ and ‘*yes*’ function as linguistic substitutes for the cardinal points of ‘womb’ and ‘cunt’, suggesting that woman (flesh) and affirmation (yes) are intertwined, and thus introducing a female phenomenology to *Ulysses*. This is confirmed by the closing line, ‘*Ich bin der [sic] Fleisch der stets bejaht*’ (‘I am the flesh that always affirms’) which is an inversion of Goethe’s *Faust*—‘*Ich bin der Geist der stets beneint*’ (‘I am the spirit that always denies/ negates’)— spoken by the devil, Mephistopheles. On a playful level, the English translation results in a sexual innuendo as the ‘affirming’ (firming) of the flesh evokes an image of an erection, simultaneously forming an allusion to phallogocentricism as the male author writes through the phallus. Although the ‘I’ refers to Joyce himself as he is the affirming flesh of the book—reminding us that Molly is a creation of the male authorial imagination—the line follows the word ‘*weib*’, German for woman, and is italicised like the words ‘*woman*, *yes’*. This implies that Molly—woman—is also the flesh that affirms, as a second phenomenology emerges from Joyce’s authorial flesh. On the one hand, Molly is the ‘O’ that always says ‘Yes’ at the hand of the male writer, positioning women as systems of pleasure designed to never negate or deny the male body. However, on the other hand, Molly affirms her own flesh as the O and Yes operate independently from Joyce, fuelled by the reader’s eye. According to Maud Ellmann, Joyce’s statement on ‘Penelope’ has encouraged critics to treat

Molly as *woman* [“Weib”] rather than *a* woman, while equating *woman* with *the* body – not *a* body. […] Molly shows acute awareness of differences between women, as did Nora Joyce, who dismissed the proposition that Molly was created in her image with the verdict: “She was much fatter.” Some women are fatter than others, but by assigning the organ “fat” to the “Penelope” episode in the Linati schema of 1921, Joyce absorbs these variations into undifferentiated blubber.[[115]](#footnote-115)

This undifferentiation is seen as Molly continually diverts attention towards her body parts. Throughout ‘Penelope’ she makes reference her ‘great breast of milk’, the ‘tongue between [her] lips’, the ‘sweat stuck in the cheeks of [her] bottom’, and her ‘back belly and sides’, while also declaring that ‘[her] eyes were dancing’ and ‘[her] hole is itching [her]’.[[116]](#footnote-116) Alluding to her eyes, legs, bottom, tongue, hair, cheeks, back and belly, these references are undescriptive and broad, rather than particular, reinforcing the idea that the episode operates like a ‘huge turning earthball’ as it simultaneously offers a macroscopic examination of the female experience, rather than just an individual exploration of Molly’s female consciousness.

However, if the Os are understood to be fat cells through their circular shape, ‘Penelope’s’ ‘undifferentiated blubber’ is somewhat transformed. While the O initially appears deliberately cosmetic through its intrusions on the narrative, on further inspection, these Os store the chapter’s energy. They indicate a pause in thought, a raise of the voice, and a series of minute epiphanies as thoughts enter Molly’s consciousness and spill out onto the page. They also function as filler words, marking a hesitation in speech or a change in direction (‘what was it she told me O yes’), while also expanding the episode’s textual boundaries by reserving a space for the reader. The surrounding words then represent the constructed, or deconstructed, flesh of Molly, reinforced through Molly’s use of language, as words such as ‘plump’, ‘large’, ‘flesh’, ‘fat’, and ‘thick’ are spread throughout the episode.[[117]](#footnote-117) Reinforcing the fleshy and excessive overtones of ‘Penelope’ as Joyce attempts to construct an accurate depiction of the female consciousness, these words also reinforce the presence of the O as it functions as a hyperbolic representation of the female body. Like fat cells, the Os fill the body of the text, regulating the reality of Joyce’s female ‘cycles’ in the same way that fat helps to regulate the menstrual cycle.[[118]](#footnote-118)

In this reading, Joyce’s readers function like mitochondria, small organelles that attach themselves to these textual fat cells, mitigating the production of the female ‘blubber’ that fuels the substance of Molly’s words. Just as mitochondria is the ‘powerhouse’ of the fat cell, the reader is the powerhouse of ‘Penelope’, as the O forms the lipid vehicle on which on reader can construct and expand the flesh of Molly’s reality, forming phenomenological holes or portals that expand and contract with readerly interpretation.[[119]](#footnote-119) Each reading of ‘Penelope’ builds a different Molly, and thus a different woman, transformed through the eyes of the reader through the potential of the fatty, textual ‘O’. Molly weaves her flesh into words; the reader then takes these words and weaves them into flesh.

**THE ‘HOEL’ OF THE WAKE**

Returning, more closely, to O’Callaghan’s articulation of the *Wake*’s enigmatic holes and elisions, this can now be further understood through Maurice Blanchot’s notion that ‘a book, even a fragmentary one, has a center that attracts it’.[[120]](#footnote-120) In both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, this secret centre emerges through the body of a woman. In *Ulysses*, this is apparent as the text pivots around female absence. Bloom spends his day contemplating Molly’s adultery with Boylan, while also surrendering to his own infidelities through his various encounters with women. Searching for erotic fulfilment through passive acts of voyeurism and fantasy, Bloom corresponds with a woman named Martha under the pseudonym Henry Flower, denying her requests to meet as she calls him ‘naughty’.[[121]](#footnote-121) Bloom also observes a woman’s ‘moving hams’ as she leaves the butchers, thinking how its ‘pleasant to see first thing in the morning’, before later reaching the peak of his sexual frustration in ‘Nausicaa’ as he masturbates to Gerty MacDowell on the beach, observing her ‘nainsook knickers’ as she is ‘trembling in every limb from being bent so far back’.[[122]](#footnote-122) Molly’s affair and Bloom’s subsequent musings locate the centre of the text within the context of the female body. More specifically, the core emerges from the female reproductive system—vagina, womb, and ovaries—seen as they form the sexual centre of Bloom’s marital problems, as well as the bodily origins of Stephen’s guilt over his mother’s death.

As highlighted in relation to ‘Lestrygonians’, ‘Proteus’, and ‘Penelope’, the paradoxical absence and presence of Joyce’s female characters is frequently marked in the text with the O. Bloom first suspects Molly’s infidelity when he spots a letter underneath Molly’s pillow. After asking who it is from, Molly simply replies ‘O, Boylan […] He’s bringing the program’.[[123]](#footnote-123) While the response seems inconsequential, Bloom turns it over in his head, made apparent while he is quietly ‘restraining himself’ on the ‘jakes’ and thinks, ‘is that Boylan well off?’.[[124]](#footnote-124) Marking the first indication of Molly’s possible infidelity, the letter evokes a sense of paranoia in Bloom that will play out through the day, reaching its climax in ‘Sirens’ as Boylan makes his way to 7 Eccles Street to sleep with Molly.

Like Bloom, Stephen’s consciousness is also centred around female absence. While Bloom’s longing is embodied and sexual, Stephen’s is maternal, concerned with guilt and grief over his mother’s death. Stephen longs for a return to the origins of life—his mother’s womb—which once again locates desire within the female reproductive system. This is observed in his frequent expressions of guilt for not praying at his mother’s bedside during her death, emerging particularly in ‘Circe’, where a drunk Stephen wonders into Nighttown—Dublin’s red-light district—and enters a brothel, shortly followed by Bloom who has been trailing Stephen. Both men start experiencing hallucinations which take the form of a play script, and midway through the corpse of Stephen’s mother rises from the dead. Here, Stephen admits his concern, as, ‘choking with fright, remorse and horror’, he declares that ‘they say I killed you mother. He offended your memory. Cancer did it, not I’.[[125]](#footnote-125) The ‘he’ here refers to Buck Mulligan, Stephen’s roommate, who in the opening episode tells Stephen,

you could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you […] to think of your mother begging you with her last breath to kneel down and pray for her. And you refused. There’s something sinister in you.[[126]](#footnote-126)

The corpse of Stephen’s mother then tells him to ‘repent!’ before exclaiming ‘O, the fire of hell!’.[[127]](#footnote-127) Marking the mother’s increasing intensity, the O acts as another indicator of female projection, further highlighting Stephen’s fear of being reabsorbed into his mother’s womb as it figures as another reproductive symbol. The typographical figure also highlights the mother’s simultaneous presence and absence in the passage through the hollowing of textual space, marking her role as a part of the text’s ‘fragmentary centre’ through never being made fully present, as she rises through the floor ‘emaciated’, ‘worn and noseless’ with ‘hollow eyesockets’ and a ‘toothless mouth’.[[128]](#footnote-128) Appearing similarly in ‘Telemachus’ when Stephen admits that ‘silently, in a dream she had come to him after death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes’, the line highlights Stephen’s fear through the absence of the motherly figure.[[129]](#footnote-129) Here then, the O is equally intriguing, functioning as a marker of a female presence and absence later made evident in ‘Penelope’ where it becomes indicative of Joyce’s inability to fully articulate a female phenomenology. In these two instances—Bloom’s suspicions of infidelity and Stephen’s motherly guilt—the O thus takes on a more exaggerated form, becoming simultaneously representative of this missing sexual centre as its bodily presence marks the sexual, reproductive, and motherly core of *Ulysses*.

This dynamic between presence and absence is further highlighted by the contrasting apparition of Rudy, Bloom and Molly’s deceased son, who appears before Bloom at the end of ‘Circe’:

*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.[[130]](#footnote-130)*

Although Rudy’s appearance is bronzed and ‘smiling’, rather than emaciated, the apparition similarly reminds Bloom of an absence. Rudy’s death has created a figurative hole in the centre of Molly and Bloom’s marriage, marked by the bodily ‘holes’ as Bloom has been unable to fully make love to Molly for ‘a period of 10 years, 5 months and 18 days’ since Rudy’s death.[[131]](#footnote-131) In addition to being marked by an absence of sex, the absence of Rudy is further emphasised by the presence of Molly and Bloom’s daughter, Milly. Bloom associates Milly with her mother, often referring to her sexual nature, such as when he thinks of the night Milly brought a little mirror into the parlour, and exclaimed ‘O, look what I found in professor Goodwin’s hat!’. Bloom then thinks ‘sex breaking out even then. Pert little piece she was’.[[132]](#footnote-132) By associating Milly with Molly, Bloom emphasises the notion that Molly has her ego replacement in her daughter, while he is missing his own. This results in a gender imbalance that adds to the fragmentary centre, or hole, of the text, intertwined with the female body as male absence and fear always revolves around female presence. This causes Bloom to look for an ego replacement in Stephen, figured in the apparition of Rudy, as critics such as Erwin R. Steinburg have noted parallels between the ‘fairy boy of eleven’ and Stephen, Bloom’s idealised son, since the text’s conception.[[133]](#footnote-133) Rudy here is a ‘changeling’, a figment of Bloom’s imagination which temporarily plugs the grief of the missing son. However, like Stephen’s apparition of the mother, the image of Rudy only seeks to remind Bloom of Rudy’s absence, reinforcing the hole or O (embodied by Milly and Molly), that lies at the centre of Bloom’s daily life.

In *Finnegans Wake*, this centre is more explicit and overt, taking a similar, womb-like form which is refigured in the form of multiple gynaecological metaphors and symbols.[[134]](#footnote-134) In *Finnegans Wake*, the O also marks the simultaneous presence and absence (life and death) present in literature, highlighted as writing, according to Blanchot, is built on ‘on top of its own ruins’.[[135]](#footnote-135) This parallel can be understood through Sigmund Freud’s theory of the death drive (1920), which recalls the womb as he asserts that we have in us an urge for completion, a desire to return to the ‘old state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads’.[[136]](#footnote-136) Declaring that in all humans there is a drive towards death, an instinct which pushes us to seek an earlier, inanimate state which was present before life, a dialectic emerges between these two conflicting drives, forming the crux of Freud’s theory as he asserts that *‘the aim of all life is death*’ and our compulsion to repeat is simply a means of delaying and fulfilling the death drive.[[137]](#footnote-137) This same drive is figured in literature. Literature is a drive towards death because writing is a simulation of life, articulated by Peter Brooks as he asserts that Freud’s death drive, is the ‘very motor of narrative’ as the text provides a ‘theory of comprehension on the dynamic of lifespan’.[[138]](#footnote-138) In *Finnegans Wake*, this dynamic of lifespan is both figurative and literal: literal, in the sense that the book expands four billion years’ worth of history and evolution, tracing the lifespan of humanity through Vico’s three-part historical cycle; Figurative, in the sense that Joyce appears to use the metaphor of the female body to articulate complex philosophical conundrums, including the philosophy of literature.

This is particularly seen through the womb/tomb parallel that emerges throughout Joyce’s work. Echoing a similar sentiment to Freud’s death drive, womb/tomb theory posits that once we enter life through birth, we are immediately moving towards death. Womb/tomb parallels have appeared in works such as Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953), when he declares that women ‘give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more’.[[139]](#footnote-139) Shakespeare also utilised the womb/tomb pairing in both *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), when Friar Lawrence declares that ‘the earth that’s nature’s mother is her tomb;/ What is her burying grave that is her womb’, and in ‘Sonnet 86’, where he writes that they were ‘making their tomb the womb wherein they grew’.[[140]](#footnote-140) Throughout Shakespeare’s collection of sonnets, he uses this womb/tomb parallel as a reflection of writing and creation, using the pregnancy trope to explore the binary between life and death which is present in literature. In ‘Sonnet 86’ the unfilled womb becomes a symbol of self-annihilation, confirming the death of the boy as his life will not be preserved and continued through his child. In ‘Sonnet 126’, the womb/ tomb parallel emerges as Shakespeare begins with an O, a marker of youth as the ‘lovely boy’ possesses power over time and ageing:

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy pow’r

Dost hold time’s fickle glass his sickle hour,

Who hast by waning grown, and therein show’st

Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow’st—

If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,

As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,

She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill

May time disgrace, and wretched minute kill.

Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure;

She may detain but not still keep her treasure.

Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,

And her quietus is to render thee.[[141]](#footnote-141)

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Here, nature harbours both a deconstructive and a creative role. The ‘sovereign mistress’ begins by possessing power over time, plucking ‘thee back’ as she prevents the boy from ageing. However, even nature cannot ‘keep her treasure’ as the body eventually succumbs to the ‘quietus’ requiem of the dead. The visual structure of the poem draws the boundaries between life and death by opening with an O and closing with a double paratheses in the original text, marking a silence or grave as even the boy, with his remarkable youth and beauty, will die one day. Shakespeare’s poem echoes Bloom’s apparition of Rudy, embodying the loss of a son (or boy) through the veiled line between life and death, womb and tomb. When considering Shakespeare’s sonnets as a whole, further parallels emerge between Joyce’s workand the quarto. Sonnets 1-17 are concerned with procreation. The writer encourages the young man to marry and have children to secure his own immortality, urging him to ‘make war upon this bloody tyrant Time, / And fortify yourself in your decay’.[[142]](#footnote-142) This further emphasizes the notion that Bloom is missing his ego replacement, Rudy, which makes his own death more final. Establishing that procreation and poetry are a means of preserving life, sonnets 18-154 shift their focus from literal procreation to literary procreation, focusing on how poetic writing can facilitate a type of fictional immortality. This is evident in ‘Sonnet 126’, where the gestational references become poetically focused. During the course of the poem the boy grows older, framed by references to the swell of pregnancy as he has ‘by waning grown’. He begins with poem with power over time as, in ‘thy power he Dost hold time’s fickle glass his sickle hour’. The ‘fickle glass’ references an hourglass, symbolic of time’s fleeting presence and the finite nature of life as we move towards death. As time progresses the boy simply looks more youthful, defying nature’s grasp while the lovers that surround him are ‘withering’ as ‘thy sweet self grow’st’. The poet cannot prevent the boy’s ageing in real life as ‘she cannot still keep her treasure’ but they can immortalise the youth in writing.

In Joyce’s work, this dualism between life and death emerges in multiple forms. In *Ulysses* the womb/tomb pairing emerges most clearly in three lines spoken by Stephen, appearing in ‘Proteus’ where Stephen mouths ‘mouth to her moomb. Oomb, allwombing tomb’, in ‘Aeolus’, through the line ‘mouth south: tomb womb’ and in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ through the words ‘obedience in the womb, chastity in the tomb’.[[143]](#footnote-143) During the writing of *Ulysses,* this dynamic also appeared in Joyce’s dreams, where Molly rejected Joyce’s attempts to represent her. Karen Lawrence summarises how

In one version, Joyce said, “Molly came calling on me and said, “What are you meddling with my old business for?’ She had a coffin in her hand and said, ‘If you don’t change this is for you”’. Here Molly expresses her murderous anger toward her creator for his interest in woman’s private, that is, sexual “old” (smelly?) business. In another version of the dream, Molly flings a child’s black coffin at Bloom (presumably Rudy’s) and says, “I’ve done with you.” Joyce, indignant, tries to intercede by delivering a “very long, eloquent” and passionate speech “explaining all the last episode of *Ulysses* to her.” Molly smiles at the end of Joyce’s “astronomical climax,” then flings at him “a tiny snuffbox, in the form of a little back coffin” and says, “And I have done with you, too.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

Molly here is scolding Joyce for his inability to fully articulate her ‘old business’ as he attempts to access, and articulate, a female phenomenology in the final episode of *Ulysses*. This is marked by Molly throwing the tomb at Joyce, demonstrating that once Molly (the womb or fragmentary centre of the text) comes into existence through Joyce’s writing, she immediately experiences a death (the tomb) due to a writer’s inability to fully articulate the reality of things. Recalling Blanchot’s notion that ‘literature is built on top of its own ruins’, in *Finnegans Wake*, the O can thus be seen as a container for life (presence) and death (absence), articulating the paradoxical nature of literature and life and the impossibility of complete representation.

Joyce’s dream appears to have later informed some of his writing of ALP and Issy, who exist in this space between life and death. Issy is figured in the text as a small cloud or ‘nuvoletta’, and is frequently reborn and dissolved through cycles of precipitation, marking this tethered binary between womb and tomb as nature takes its course:

then Nuvoletta reflected for the last time in her little long life […] she climbed over the bannistars; she gave a childy cloudy cry: *Nuée! Nuée!* A lightdress fluttered. She was gone. And into the river that had been a stream’ (159.06-10).

Articulating that she ‘*canna stay*!’ as she must enter into her vaporous lifecycle once more, Issy embodies this binary between womb and tomb, existing on the cusp of a ‘little long life’ as she is continually reabsorbed by the river (or ALPs womb) (159.18). ALP also straddles this binary. When she gains her voice and enters the discourse in the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), the letter opens with an O, a marker of an epistolary and vocal birth as it embodies a mouth of a river, while also marking the moment the washerwomen begin to air out her dirty laundry: ‘O / tell me all about Anna Livia’ (196.01-3). The closing lines of *Finnegans Wake* then indicate a death as ALP’s bodily waters appear to flow into the sea when she reaches the mouth of the river, dissolving into an absence as the text finishes halfway through a sentence when ALP drifts out to sea: ‘A way a lone a last a loved a long the’ (628.15-16). This echoes Shakespeare’s ‘Sonnet 126’, which similarly begins with an O and ends with a textual silence, as a means of articulating the binary between life and death.

This complex dynamic between womb/tomb and the phenomenological O, encapsulated by both Shakespeare and Joyce, can be further understood through Blanchot’s articulation of the philosophy of literature. Blanchot posits that literature consists of two interrelated slopes—one which is ‘turned towards the movement of negation’, and another which ‘is a concern for the reality of things, for their unknown, free, and silent existence’—Blanchot encapsulates the experience of literature as the slopes rest on the binary between life and death.[[145]](#footnote-145) The slope that concerns the ‘movement of negation’ centres around the life, or death, of being in language, articulating the separation between subject and word as Blanchot notes how things are ‘destroyed in order to be known’, recalling that literature, like life, is built ‘on top of its own ruins’.[[146]](#footnote-146) The second slope emerges from the first, concerning ‘the reality of things’ as it simulates life. This slope is crucial to comprehending literature’s relationship to reality, demonstrating how literature ‘turns away’ from the world through an act of negation. These slopes are crucially indivisible as both rely on each other in the production of literature, resulting in a complex paradox as they simultaneously contradict and strengthen each other.

After outlining the dynamic role of the O in *Ulysses*, I can now explore its metaphysical role in *Finnegans Wake*. While most of literature’s fragmented nature is masked by the slope which ‘concerns the reality of things’, creating an illusion of wholeness, in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce makes these enigmatic centres visible on the page through the female O and allusions to the womb. The womb operates as the perfect vehicle for exploring these paradoxical absences. On the one hand, the womb embodies the complexity of life and conscious thought, reflecting multiple layers of progression and thought through three layers of interwoven tissues: the endometrium, the myometrium and the perimetrium, all of which have different functions.[[147]](#footnote-147) On the other hand, the womb embodies the fear of (and desire for) death, standing as the unknowable absence in the centre of life. Like death, birth stands as the unexperienced experience of life: experienced in the sense we all must enter life through birth (and the womb), yet unexperienced, because once we enter life, we are unable to recall this origin, experiencing a death as it lies outside of our conscious experience.

These two literary slopes of life and death, womb (O) and tomb, are particularly evident in 1.6, known as the ‘Questionnaire’ or ‘Riddles’ chapter. Here Shem acts as a quizmaster, calling on Shaun to answer twelve questions regarding the *Wake*’s strange and confusing pluralities. Covering each member of the ‘Earwicker’ family––including their multiple forms and settings––the chapter helps to solidify the themes of the text following the ‘Mamafesta’, which sheds little light on the *Wake*’s meaning. Most intriguing is question nine, which addresses the *Wake*’s ‘collideorscapic’ form following a description of the ‘maggies’ or leap-year girls:

9. Now, to be on anew and basking again in the panaroma of all flores of speech, if a human being duly fatigued by his dayety in the sooty, having plenxty off time on his gouty hands and vacants of space at his sleepish feet and as hapless behind the dreams of accuracy as any camelot prince of dinmurk, were at this auctual futule preteriting unstant, in the states of suspensive exanimation, accorded, throughout the eye of a noodle, with an earsighted view of old hopeinhaven with all the ingredient and egregiunt whights and ways to which in the curse of his persistence the course of his tory will had been having recourses, the reverberration of knotcracking awes, the reconjungation of nodebinding ayes, the redissolusingness of mindmouldered ease and the thereby hang of the Hoel of it, could such a none, whiles even led comesilencers to comeliewithhers and till intempestuous Nox should catch the gallicry and spot lucan's dawn, byhold at ones what is main and why tis twain, how one once meet melts in tother wants poignings, the sap rising, the foles falling, the nimb now nihilant round the girlyhead so becoming, the wrestless in the womb, all the rivals to allsea, shakeagain, O disaster! shakealose, Ah how starring! but Heng's got a bit of Horsa's nose and Jeff's got the signs of Ham round his mouth and the beau that spun beautiful pales as it palls, what roserude and oragious grows gelb and greem, blue out the ind of it! Violet's dyed! then *what* would that fargazer seem to seemself to seem seeming of, dimm it all?

Answer: A collideorscape!

(*FW* 143.03-28).

Notable, according to Sam Slote, for its ‘especially convoluted syntax and, in the first draft, for the only appearance of the O siglum’, the riddle’s reference to cyclicality fits with my interest in the O so far.[[148]](#footnote-148) The O here is often interpreted as being indicative of Vico’s cycles or ‘recourses’ (ricorso), while also depicting the circular view through the kaleidoscope (‘collideorscape’), which forms the answer to the riddle. The passage is also often read through a masculine lens, declared by Slote to be centred on the ‘exhausted subject’ (presumably HCE), who appears in the passage as ‘a none’ and can only be presented ‘through repeated introduction’ as he is in a ‘suspended animation’.[[149]](#footnote-149) However, as will shortly be explored, when read in the context of gynaecology, the O sigla forms a marker of matriarchy, functioning as a textual birth canal that signifies the presence of a female authority.

Recalling Blanchot and Freud, death also appears in the passage through the reference to ‘eye of a noodle’, which echoes the biblical phrase of it being ‘easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God’.[[150]](#footnote-150) Indicating that someone who pursues riches would have a harder time following God, and thus evoking the sin of greed, the line is twofold. Firstly, it highlights HCE’s rumoured mishap, which took place between him and two women who were urinating in Phoenix Park. In addition to this, the line also recalls the afterlife, integral to the context of the chapter and the O (or womb) which appears throughout as it once more evokes the womb/tomb parallel. The answer: ‘a collideorscape’ forms a summary of life, which operates like a kaleidoscope through a conflation of changing elements and patterns as we enter life through the womb and are ‘anew’, before moving to a tomb when we have ‘dyed!’. The passage also inverts the form of ‘Sonnet 126’, as we move from death to life, rather than womb to tomb. HCE is first described with ‘gouty hands’, looking ‘sleepish’ and ‘fatigued’, as he approaches death. He then moves towards ‘recourses’ or renewal as the passage develops, triggered by the act of intercourse (where he ‘comeliewithhers’), which harbours the potential to create new life.

In addition to death, there is a conflation of time in the passage as past, present, and future converge through ALP’s gestation cycle. The scrambling of tense and time requires a non-linear reading to gather meaning as the passage is filled with muddled inflections of labour, echoing Joyce’s earlier work in ‘Oxen’ where gestation is used as a metaphor for the development of language and thought. While the parents engage in ‘reconjugation’ which leads to ‘recourses’ (a ricorso or birth), the reader is met with a ‘reverberration of knotcracking awes’ (or screams) as orgasm and childbirth intertwine. These ‘awes’ phonetically echo Os, indicating both sexual intensity and orgasm which aligns with early modern myths regarding conception and gender. A potential influence for these aspects of the passage is Nicholas Venette’s treatise on sexology, titled *The Mysteries of Conjugal Love Reveal’d*, where he defines the distinction between the male and female sex by articulating that eggs or ‘balls’ found in women’s ovaries contain ‘liquors’ that are the ‘bud of infant’.[[151]](#footnote-151) While boys were thought to be made of ‘hot, dry and thick Matter, full of Fire and Spirits’, girls were conceived of ‘less hot, moister, and more delicate’ matter.[[152]](#footnote-152) Associating heat with the conception of boys, parents desiring a male heir would take unusual steps in an attempt to dictate the child’s sex. This included laying a woman on her right side out of the belief that the sperm would fall towards the right ovary, which is naturally warmer due to its position next to the liver.[[153]](#footnote-153) This early modern folklore plays out throughout ‘collideorscape’ passage, seen through the heated intensity of the intercourse. As the parents scream ‘nodebinding ayes’ (genital-binding yeses) and one body ‘melts in tother’, they attempt to see a ‘recourses’ (ricorso) of HCE’s ‘history’ or lineage through the birth of male heir. Despite trying to generate enough heat to determine the baby’s male sex, Issy’s ‘girlheady’ appears and is met with a cry of ‘disaster!’.[[154]](#footnote-154) In dismay, the parents proceed to ‘shakeagain’ the ‘collideoscape’ (kaleidoscope) in the hopes of achieving a different sex, resulting in the appearance of the male twins, Shem and Shaun, here Jeff and Ham, as they describe how ‘Heng’s got a bit of Horsa’s nose and Jeff’s got the signs of Ham round his mouth’. The shift from a male perspective to a female one in the presence of the female O, indicates its role as a symbol of matriarchy, echoing the role of the O in Molly’s soliloquy as it makes space for a female authority to emerge.

Amongst the scrambling of tense and time the reader is directed towards ALP’s birth canal and given a view of the ‘Hoel of it’ (whole/hole), resulting in ‘falling’ as ‘the nimb now nihilant round the girlyhead so becoming the wrestless in the womb, all the rivals to allsea, shakeagain, O disaster! shakealose’ (143.20-21). The word ‘nimb’ or nimbus highlights the presence of Issy who is also referred to as nuvoletta (a small cloud). She completes an inverted life cycle as she is ‘falling’ from the sky in the form of precipitation and into the river Liffey, becoming ‘nihilant’ or nothing as she returns to the mother’s waters or womb. Early modern obstetrics blurs into ancient Greek mythology here, as ALP’s re-impregnation with Issy echoes the goddess Danaё’s impregnation by Zeus. After hearing from the Oracle of Delphi that his (unborn) grandson would later kill him, Danaё’s father, King Acrisius, imprisons his daughter in an underground chamber so that she remains a virgin. However, Zeus, who is in love with Danaё, unleashes a golden shower of rain that seeps through the subterraneous roof of the chamber and is absorbed into Danaё’s womb, impregnating her and leading to the birth of Perseus.[[155]](#footnote-155) Echoing Zeus’s watery insemination of Danaё, Issy’s liquid return to ALP’s bodily waters results in her using her mother’s body to recreate herself. Following her own ‘golden shower’ Issy is thus born into life again, apparent as her ‘girlyhead’ appears and she lets out a ‘gallicry’ (girly cry) as she becomes ‘wrestless in the womb’. This results in the appearance of a rainbow (‘beau’) that ‘spun beautiful pails’ of ‘roserude’, ‘oragious’, ‘gelb’, ‘greem’, ‘blue’, ‘ind’ and ‘Violet’s’, which signifies that the reproductive cycle is complete. Playing on obstetrical folklore and Greek myth, Joyce’s early modern and ancient inflections further conflate the riddle’s passage of time as historical ideas about gender and childbirth are combined and muddied, recentering the passage around the O or mother’s womb. I continue to build on these discussions throughout this thesis. In Chapter 2, I examine how the Euclidean diagram of the mother’s womb highlights the enigmatic nature of our historical and bodily origins, while in Chapter 4, I perform a close analysis of the slippery nature of gender, history and authority in *Finnegans Wake*, through the framework of bodily fluids.

With this alternative philosophical reading the cyclical nature of the passage doubles as a symbol of reproduction and matriarchy. It marks the paradoxically present and absent centre of the book as ‘His tory’ briefly becomes her story, as the ‘such a none’ also alludes to the female genitalia (nonesuch), while the masculine ‘will’ becomes a female ‘will’. The word ‘will’ also facilitates this transition, as in early modern slang it references both female and male genitalia, resulting in a sense of fluidity emerging between the two reproductive organs.[[156]](#footnote-156) Creating a dual phenomenology within the passage, the aligned historical and gestational cycles which are embodied by the O sigla, echo the cycles that run through *Ulysses*. Like the end of Molly Bloom’s soliloquy, masculine and feminine are intertwined through the genitalia. ‘His’ story (history) is thus determined by ‘her’ story through women’s reproductive abilities: man can only enter life through the womb, women can only sustain life through semen.

To further comprehend these complexities in light of the riddle, it is helpful to turn to Blanchot’s notion that every night is two nights. Blanchot declares that

In the night, everything has disappeared. This is the first night. Here absence approaches—silence, repose, night. […] But when everything has disappeared in the night, “everything has disappeared” appears. This is the *other* night.[[157]](#footnote-157)

This *other* night is the night that appears when the night spent in sleep has disappeared. It is the night spent in dreams. These nights run parallel to one another, according to Herschel Farbman, because

The night the body spends in sleep is not the same as the night the dreamer spends in dreams. The sleeping body may lie under the stars, and the dreamer may dream of the stars—even of a journey to the stars—but the night of the dream is a night without stars.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Every night is therefore ‘two nights’ in the sense that the sleeping body belongs to the day, while the dreamer, or night of dreams, belongs to the night. These two nights are intertwined with one another and cannot be separated as they rely on each other to function. According to Farbman, ‘the “other night” is not a parallel night nor the night of a parallel world, rather, it is a sleep resistant centre—an intimate alien—around which the night of sleep curls’.[[159]](#footnote-159) The night of sleep curls around the unknowable centre, the night of dreams, placing the ‘reality’ of the night around the unknowable night of dreams. Farbman also articulates that the dream ‘operates according to the same “grammatical formula” as writing’, noting how both centre on the central absence of the subject. Writing is not formed out of a desire or drive towards the artwork; it is formed out a drive towards this unknowable centre, a desire to discover the missing origin of the text that has been lost to the impossibility of knowing the experience of death or ‘night’. Our understanding of this ‘death’ or ‘night’ parallels our understanding of the womb, as this too articulates the perfect metaphor for the experience of writing. We emerge from the womb/sleep and experience death without ever ‘knowing’ these experiences. They are unexperienced experiences, experienced in the sense that we undergo these events, yet unexperienced in the sense that they are outside of human comprehension or memory. The womb nurses these states of death and sleep; it is an unknowable origin or missing centre of the text, used in *Finnegans Wake* to articulate the unexperienced experiences of life, and knowledge which lies outside of our comprehension. Nursing the states of death and sleep, ALP and Issy, embodiments of the womb, lie outside of Joyce’s own authorial realm of experience as he harbours a distinctly male phenomenology. Therefore, the womb forms the perfect metaphor for the text’s ambiguous centre. It embodies the two conflicting drives of writing, which is always caught between life and death, womb and tomb, continually upholding the desire to locate the text’s origin.

Reading the passage with these absences in mind, the themes of renewal and birth run parallel to references to death, resulting in a muddled binary of the two ontological questions of life. Allusions to ‘haven’ (heaven) and ‘nothing’ (‘nihilin’) creates the contradictory illusion of death, by suggesting that death leads both to nothing and to something. Introducing metaphysical questions about our existence, the passage highlights our lack of certainty around the experience of death as what happens to us post-life is unknowable. While reflecting on these enigmatic riddles, the passage also sees Issy and ALP—who are intertwined here by the process of reproduction and precipitation—both embody ‘intempestuous Nox’, the matriarchal goddess of night who in Roman mythology stands at the beginning of creation, nursing the two children of Death and Sleep.[[160]](#footnote-160) Attending, then, to the two intertwining states of HCE as he lies dead to the world and dreaming beside the Liffey, ALP and Issy form part of the core authorial structure of the *Wake*, and in turn a crucial part of the riddle. They act as the two ontological questions of Being—life and death, day and night—and encapsulate the impossibility of writing, or knowing, ‘the hoel of it’—immortalised by the typographical O.

In the ‘collideorscape’ riddle, the O (or womb) thus figures literature’s inability to articulate the ‘hoel of it’ as literature is built on ‘on top of its own ruins’, seen previously in *Ulysses* as Joyce is unable to fully articulate Molly’s female experience. This idea is highly modernist in nature, echoing T.S Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), which articulates the impossibility of writing after the collective trauma of World War One. Referencing the act of renewal and growth after destruction, Eliot writes that ‘April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain’.[[161]](#footnote-161) Indicating that life continues even after death and trauma, the poet then asks,

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats.[[162]](#footnote-162)

This ‘heap of broken images’ represents the impossibility of fully articulating reality. In reference to the O of the *Wake*, this fragmentation is encapsulated by the female body, representative of the impossibility of achieving wholeness and complete truth in narrative, and the impossibility of narrating the Other. Due to both the nature of writing and Joyce’s male positioning, Molly experiences a death once she is written into existence, because to be able to write Molly Joyce must first negate her. Through the use of narrative gaps and visible fragmentation—described previously through the use of the O in ‘Penelope’—Joyce enables Molly to be continually brought back to life by the desires of the reader. Examining these philosophical and literary fragmentations in the *Wake*, Joyce plays with this further. Rather than merely make space for the reader, Joyce depicts both the ‘birth’ of these holes, and our attempt to comprehend them, through multiple, visceral investigations of the female body.

**POKING HOLES**

To conclude my investigations of the O, it is useful to turn to the *Wake*’s ‘Mamafesta’ (1.5) where the holes I have been analysing have a similar function but take a different form, becoming linguistically and visually present on the page. In this chapter ALP takes the form of Biddy Doran, the kindly hen who finds scraps of a letter upon a heap of dung. The letter, or ‘polyhedron of scripture’, functions as a microcosm of the *Wake* itself as it traces the life of the ‘deliquescent recidivist’ or polysemic criminal, HCE (107.08-10). A reading of the letter reveals that there are ‘numerous stabs and foliated gashes’ in the paper, resulting in gaps in the scripture as our reading of the letter is impeded. Here, Joyce writes how,

The unmistaken identity of the persons in the Tiberiast duplex came to light in the most devious of ways. The original document was in what is known as Hanno O’Nonhanno’s unbrookable script, that is to say, it showed no signs of punctuation of any sort. Yet on holding the verso against a lit rush this new book of Morses responded most remarkably to the silent query of our world’s oldest light and its recto let out the piquant fact that it was pierced but not punctured (in the university sense of the term) by numerous stabs and foliated gashes made by a pronged instrument. These paper wounds, four in type, were gradually and correctly understood to mean stop, please stop, and O do please stop respectively, and following up their one true clue, the circumflexuous wall of a singleminded men’s asylum, accentuated by bi tso fb rok engl a ssan dspl itch ina, –– Yard inquiries pointed out → that they ad bîn “provoked” ay Λ fork, of à grave Brofèor; àth é’s Brèak— fast — table; ; acutely profèššionally *piquéd*, to=introdùce a notion of time [ùpon à plane (?) sù ’ ’ fàç’e’] by pùnct! ingh oles (sic) in iSpace?! (123-30-124.12).

In a basic reading of the passage, Joyce is concerned with the holes that pierce the surface of the letter or ‘verso’, dualistically introducing moments of silence into the scripture as they disrupt the narrative. On the one hand, the ‘stabs’ suggest an obscured view of the letter, which functions as a palimpsestic representation of society’s historical grand narratives, as it attempts to articulate the ‘hoel of it’. On the other hand, the holes form punctuation: the words ‘stop. please stop, and O do please stop’ linguistically echo full stops, while also forcing a pause, or silence into the passage. Commenting on these acts of punctuation, Federico Sabatini declares that rather than limit the narrative, these full stops (or holes) increase its boundlessness. He describes how the ‘repetition of the term “stop” provides the syntax with paradoxical fluency and ever-expanding flow, as if the function of the “stop” would be exactly the opposite of what it stands for’.[[163]](#footnote-163) Like the O or holes seen in *Ulysses*, these circular intrusions enable the Joycean text to operate as a literary concertina, which expands and contracts according to the reader’s will. These ‘full stops’ encourage pauses that lead us to new phenomenological textual spaces, aligning with Sophie Corser’s assertion that a reading which ‘is difficult can lead us somewhere affecting’, such as ‘a moment or moments of pathos [or a] development of character’.[[164]](#footnote-164) According to Corser, the act of ‘following a textual echo, unravelling a network of intra- or intertextual references, or piecing together something that is unnarrated can lead us to the human warmth of the novel’.[[165]](#footnote-165) These acts of ‘limitless’ reading, prescribed by Joyce through visible textual gaps (Os), instructive pauses (O please Stop) and holes, work to expand the Joycean narrative, enabling a richer and wider understanding of the text’s philosophical and phenomenological perspectives.

Most intriguing is the idea that the letter is orated by ALP and scripted by Shem. The Os are once again intimately aligned with the female body here, signalling the mouth and womb (O stop), vagina (wound), and the navel, which are the bodily holes that bind mother and son together.[[166]](#footnote-166) Sabatini further elucidates these developments through the notion that the

The subsequent reference to the “circumflexuous wall of a singleminded men”, moreover, suggests a connection between interruption (“stop, please stop...”) and progression, between a limited circular hole (the wound) and a more general idea of the globality.[[167]](#footnote-167)

For the reader of the Joycean text, allowing yourself to be interrupted by these Os enables this progression. While Sabatini notes that these circular holes are limited and function in opposition to the circular notion of globality, as I uncover in this chapter, these Os encourage globality in the *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, enhancing the dynamic between reader, author, and text, as they release the text from a singular, authorial phenomenology. Considering the O of the passage to be indicative of the womb, the Os form textual birth canals which enable new ideas to form as long as the reader ‘stops’ to observe them. These ‘foliated gashes’, according to Tekla Mecsnóber, ‘are quite clearly associated with bodily aggression (“stabs,” “wounds”), (male) sexual activities (“the piquant fact that it was but pierced butnot punctured”) and possibly with transgression (“stop, please stop, do please stop, and O do please stop”)’.[[168]](#footnote-168) Examined in the context of ALP role as orator, these exclamations have historical connotations. When giving women a voice in literature of the Elizabethan period, male authors would often depict their female characters in heightened states of emotion, particularly that of woe. This is especially the case for Shakespeare, who, according to Lynn Enterline, took inspiration from early school practice when writing his female characters. In the sixteenth-century, ‘humanist masters used imitation right alongside corporal punishment as a method for obtaining compliance with the school’s linguistic and social regime’, where schoolboys would ‘learn eloquence’ through mimicking ‘the life and passions of others’.[[169]](#footnote-169) Discussing Shakespeare’s poem ‘The Rape of Lucrece’, Enterline notes that Lucrece behaves ‘much as any schoolboy would, searching for classical exemplars to imitate and so find words to express her “woe”’.[[170]](#footnote-170) Operating in conjunction with these Elizabethan expressions of woe, the Os in the passage could thus be reflecting a history of ventriloquising women by male authors, reinforced as the ‘Mamafesta’ is orated by ALP, but is scribed by her son, Shem. These ‘masculine’ gashes or Os disrupt ALP’s oration, operating in contrast to Molly’s soliloquy in *Ulysses*, where punctuation is substituted with the O to avoid entering the dominating and violent nature of male discourse.

Whereas in *Ulysses* the fragmentation of representation is masked by false ‘flow’ and menstruation, in *Finnegans Wake*, this literary fragmentation feels more visceral. Here the letter (representative of both ALP as orator and the *Wake* as material document) has several ‘paper wounds’ which symbolise textual wombs, as we, the readers, are unable to fully perceive the text’s enigmatic centres. The word ‘wound’ also holds menstrual connotations, seen as the endometrium undergoes the process of shedding its lining each month that results in a wound-like appearance as tissue needs time to heal.[[171]](#footnote-171) This process is observed in the passage as the documents first shows ‘no signs of punctuation’, before being ‘pierced but not punctured’ and later receiving ‘foliated gashes’ which develop into ‘paper wounds’, figuring a gradual shedding of the paper womb as the narrative sheds into indistinction. The letter’s process of menstruation also depicts a speculum examination, moving us towards the focus of Chapter 2, as the ‘pronged instrument’ slowly pierces the fabric of the ‘unbrookable script’ until it creates a wound (womb). This suggests that these holes have been created by past readers of the letter, embodying the lost readings, misinterpretations, and falsities of these interpretations and retellings as the historical grand narrative is reductive in its representation. There are also key references to ‘Penelope’ here through the line, ‘the original document […] showed no signs of punctuation of any sort’ as it was written in ‘unbrookable’ unbreakable, unbroken, script. Alluding to Molly’s stream-of-conscious musings at the end of *Ulysses*, the letter sheds clarity on the O, as the puncture wounds (holes) become substitutes for punctuation as they were ‘gradually and correctly understood to mean stop, please stop, and O do please stop’ (full stops). This is reinforced by the latter reference to ‘pùnct! ingh oles’ which contains the German word for full stop (punkt). Punctuation is designed to break up flow, so these paper wombs can be seen as intentional disruptions, included by Joyce to unsettle the ‘circumflexuous wall of a singleminded men’s asylum’ through a marker of female authority. To write is also to ‘introduce the notion of time onto a place surface by punching holes into time and space’. It involves preserving the present, it is a metaphysical act.

Finally, the ‘unbreakable script’ of the ‘new book of Morses’ mentioned here is reminiscent of the binary code mentioned previously in ‘Proteus’, where Stephen thinks: ‘Hello. Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one’.[[172]](#footnote-172) In ‘Proteus’, the infinite symbolism of these codes reflects Stephen’s inability to fully comprehend his own birth, when he notes how the navel ‘cords all link back’ and form a ‘strandentwining cable of all flesh’ as we are all intertwined by our origins and our inability to comprehend them.[[173]](#footnote-173) Here, this mention of ‘Morse’ code (which is made up of binary numbers), recalls that same navel or hole—this time from a female phenomenological perspective—as the navel is related to violence and absence, rather than memory. In the context of Blanchot, these textual navels come to signal the navel of the dream or night, articulated by Freud and later reflected in Blanchot’s articulation that every night is two nights. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud argues that ‘there is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable—a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown’.[[174]](#footnote-174) The navel is the ‘tangle of dream-thoughts that cannot be unravelled’, a point of obscurity which signifies that our interpretation has reached its limits.[[175]](#footnote-175) As a result, a paradox is formed where dream interpretation is complete, yet incomplete; it is finished in the sense that we can interpret the dream no further, yet unfinished, due to the final knot which cannot be unravelled. By reaching the final, incomprehensible crux of the dream we have thus reached the navel, a frustrating tugging of knots which, as Josh Cohen asserts, functions as a ‘counterintuitive signal that we’ve learned something about the dream’.[[176]](#footnote-176) Examining these navels in the context of literature, the Joycean holes and our explorations into their meanings and possibilities leads to a text which questions the incomplete nature of knowledge and thought. These holes thus operate paradoxically as they signify both impossibility—the absent centre of the text and its fragmentary navels—and possibility, the expansion of the Joycean text through the eyes of the reader.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the Os mark an attempt by Joyce to represent the phenomenology of women outside of his authorial role. Evoking the dynamic between author, reader and text, Joyce uses these Os to reserve a textual space for readerly desire, enabling a construction of Joyce’s female characters which is continually woven and unwoven by the readers as they bring their own phenomenologies to the act of reading. Beginning in *Ulysses* and later re-emerging in *Finnegans Wake*, the O grows more complex in its representation. In *Ulysses*, the Os have limitations, occasionally intertwined with metaphysical conundrums while largely being used to enhance the reality of the Joycean text through being used on a textual punctuation-orientated level, and a theoretical level. In *Finnegans Wake*, however, these Os are not only structural, but spatial and philosophical, intertwined with the female body on a level where women are positioned as the enigmatic and unknowable centre of the text, the O.

By exploring the phenomenological potential of the Joycean O, this chapter establishes a foundation for my readings of female phenomenology and authority which run throughout the entirety of this thesis. In addition to confirming that a female phenomenology exists in the text, the chapter also determines how female authority operates differently from male authority in *Finnegans Wake*, emerging from both inside and outside of the text as Joyce is unable to fully articulate the experience of his female characters. Considering the dynamic between author, reader, and text that the O facilitates, these approaches to reading the *Wake* will be particularly important in the following two Chapters, which will examine how gynaecological motif enables additional readings into the female phenomenology of the text, through an examination of speculum and womb. The final chapter will then draw these readings together, determining how the double, gendered authority of the text is destabilised and undermined through Joyce’s conflation of gender and bodily fluids.

# CHAPTER TWO: SPECULA INVESTIGATIONS

When Nora fell pregnant in Trieste in 1904, Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus, asking him to ‘study by yourself or with [Vincent] Cosgrave some midwifery and embryology and to send me the results’.[[177]](#footnote-177) Having expanded his knowledge on scientific and medical theories of the female body in relation to Nora’s experience, Joyce eventually used these frameworks to add depth and complexity to *Ulysses*, encouraging the intersection between gestation and the birth of the English language in ‘Oxen of the Sun’, and Molly’s musings about menstruation and gynaecology in ‘Penelope’. The same concerns were later carried over into *Finnegans Wake* via the text’s female protagonists, Anna Livia Plurabelle and Issy. Here, Joyce interrogates the female body sexually and medically, seen most prominently in ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2) as the twins, Shem and Shaun, attempt to comprehend the enigma of origins through an investigation of ALP’s womb or ‘muddy triagonal delta’. Issy, on the other hand, contributes to the discussion through a series of hyper-sexualised footnotes (‘when I’m not ploughed first by some Rolando the Lasso’) (297.24, 279.fn1). The interplay between elaborate, and often scientific, readings of the female body alongside chapters which are dominated and structured by the thought of male thinkers (such as Vico and Giordano Bruno), results in a complex dynamic between phenomenology and gendered authority.

Joyce’s interrogation of sexual difference has previously been analysed by Vicki Mahaffey, who aptly examines how ‘Joyce short-circuits theoretical discussions on authority by redirecting attention to the parts of the body that authorize it’.[[178]](#footnote-178) Emphasising the ‘complex potential of the body as a figure of thought’, Mahaffey demonstrates how Joyce redefines phallogocentrism––a term first coined by Derrida that describes ‘privileging of the masculine (phallus) in the construction of meaning’–– which is an authority often regarded as being singular and unitary.[[179]](#footnote-179) Mahaffey interrogates how phallogocentric authority is based ‘on not one but two parts of the body that might seem to reflect one another, the head and the phallus, which results in a sense of doubleness’.[[180]](#footnote-180) Using this logic, our perception of sexual difference is altered as female authority is similarly double through the ovaries and the womb. By examining authority as a collaboration between mind and genitalia––between sexuality and intellectual authority––both genders are given a sense of equality through their shared, yet opposed, doubleness. However, while male authority is external and directed through the head and phallus, female authority is internal, emerging through the womb and ovaries. It is a ‘simple inversion of top and bottom’, Mahaffey declares.[[181]](#footnote-181) Considering Mahaffey’s valuable investigation of authority and gender in *Finnegans Wake*, there is more to be said for how the notion of the body-as-thought and Joyce’s focus on sexual knowledge contributes to the gendered epistemological and phenomenological boundaries of the Joycean text.[[182]](#footnote-182)

To consider this in relationship to Joyce’s use of female philosophical body it is necessary to first discern women’s position in society, because women have a different relationship to philosophy than men. Discussing the question of the sexed body in the context of phenomenology, Elisabeth Grosz articulates that ‘our ideas and attitudes seep into the functioning of the body itself, making up the realm of its possibilities or impossibilities’.[[183]](#footnote-183) Patriarchy has historically determined the possibilities and the pathways of the female body, resulting in a world which revolves around the male gaze. These power dynamics create limitations, not only for the oppressed, but also for the development of philosophical thought, science, and literature, as they are hindered by an exclusive, and largely white, male consciousness. Grosz then illuminates the constraints of a singular phenomenology in relation to gender, by attesting that

the enigma that Woman has posed for men is an enigma only because the male subject has construed itself as the subject par excellence. The way (he fantasises) that Woman differs from him makes her containable within his imagination (reduced to his size) but also produces her as a mystery for him to master and decipher within safe or unthreatening borders.[[184]](#footnote-184)

In the context of phenomenology, patriarchy has resulted in two clear social and philosophical restrictions. The first is an aforementioned limit on development, as scientific and philosophical fields are reduced to a white male perspective. This has slowed advances in technology and philosophical thought as progress is hampered by the limits of male phenomenology. For example, medicine has been made for men *and* by men, resulting in an androcentric understanding of the human body. Male cells and animals have been used as test subjects, while women were excluded from participating in clinical drug trials up until 1993. This meant that all medical prescriptions were based around doses fit for men, failing to consider the biological differences in drug absorption.[[185]](#footnote-185) Examples of this include the use of Ambien (also known as Zolpidem), an anti-insomnia medication in which the dosage was based around the average male. In 2012 a series of car crashes were reported which were caused by women under the influence of Ambien. The investigation that followed led to the hypothesis that the drug’s prescribed dosage was not fit for the female body. It was discovered that women’s bodies metabolize the drug twice as slow as males, meaning that female drivers still had high levels of the drug in their system by morning which resulted in drowsiness behind the wheel. Other common medication such as acetaminophen, used for pain relief and often branded as Tylenol in the US, has been shown to result in increased cases of overdose or acute liver failure in women due to the dosage being too high for the female body.[[186]](#footnote-186) One study determining the differing side-effects of acetaminophen on men and women discovered that ‘nearly three quarters’ of patients who suffered an acetaminophen overdose were women. In addition, they were ‘more likely to present with high grade HE [Hepatic Encephalopathy: a symptom severe liver disease which results in a decline in brain function due to a build-up of toxins] and to have critical care needs at both study entry and throughout hospitalisation’.[[187]](#footnote-187)

The failure to provide appropriate medical care forms just one part of a larger, widespread problem. As evidenced by Caroline Criado-Perez, objects such as keyboards and phones have been made for the average male hand, leading to conditions such as repetitive strain injury in women. Office air conditioning is frequently set to the optimal temperature for the male body and women’s clothing lacks adequate pockets. Voice recognition software in cars has, in some cases, been found to only recognise the male voice, resulting in an increased risk of road accidents due to added distraction while driving.[[188]](#footnote-188) The same issue occurs in speech-recognition software in hospitals and other workplaces, making it harder for women to do their jobs and putting patients at risk.[[189]](#footnote-189) Demonstrating that women have ultimately been rendered invisible in society as their bodies are not catered for, these examples form what Criado-Perez terms the ‘gender data gap’, as the phallocentric nature of society results in a world built for the male body. This is a problem partially caused by a ‘double not thinking’ because ‘men go without saying and women don’t get said at all. Because when we say human, on the whole, we mean man’.[[190]](#footnote-190) The phallocentric nature of society has therefore directly impacted women. The failure to think outside of the male body has resulted in discrepancies between male and female healthcare, forming just one example of how bodies of knowledge have been structured to fit the male frame.

Analysing Grosz and Ahmed’s statements in light of *Finnegans Wake—*an interdisciplinary text incorporating scientific, philosophical, and literary perspectives—parallels can be drawn between Joyce’s text and the complex relationship between society, gender and phenomenology. The *Wake* functions as a microcosm of the world, exploring ‘what has gone?’ and ‘how it ends’ by traversing a ‘wholemole millwheeling vicociclometer’ of evolution and history (614.19, 614.27). Within the text’s Vichian cycles lies the development of human thought, as Joyce navigates ‘today’s truth [and] tomorrow’s trend’ through complex allusions to philosophy and its well-known thinkers (614.21). At first, these allusions appear to be largely focused on male minds, evidenced in the introduction through Donald Philip Verene’s philosophical checklist. However, Joyce supplements the male inability to fully articulate the female experience (as the writer can only write, or know, their own lived experience) with the addition of textual markers, such as the O, and allusions to speculums, wombs, and bodily fluids.

This chapter builds on my interrogation of female phenomenology in Chapter 1, by examining how Joyce’s depiction of female authority is given more depth by complex allusions to gynaecology, in the form of medical metaphor. By analysing the dynamic between female genitalia, womb, and speculum in *Finnegans Wake*, I build on Mahaffey’s analysis of gendered authority and sexual difference in Joyce, to develop a nuanced understanding of how Joyce’s use of the female body subverts traditional notions of the *Wake* as a male-dominated text. I begin by dissecting Joyce’s interest in the metaphorical potential of childbirth and the female reproductive system in *Ulysses* through close readings of the aforementioned ‘Oxen of the Sun’, establishing Joyce’s acute awareness of the history of the gynaecological field which will act as a foundation for further analysis. From here, I use this awareness as a framework for reading the speculum in the *Wake*, considering the role of looking at instruments as symbols of the male desire for female knowledge, as well as their influence on the broader modernist field. In the third part of the chapter, I fully develop the dynamic between speculum, desire, and philosophical knowledge through an interrogation of Joyce’s use of medical metaphor. I determine how the speculum operates as a device for examining the *Wake*’s dual philosophical authority through close examinations of the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), previously introduced in Chapter 1, and ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2). When considered as a whole, these threads, alongside my interrogation of the O in Chapter 1, work to establish a new feminist phenomenology of *Finnegans Wake,* determining how a refusal to conform to the limitations of ‘disciplinary fatalism’ transforms our view of the *Wake*’s figures and their cultural and gendered impact on the novel.

**MODERNISM, GYNAECOLOGY AND *FINNEGANS WAKE***

During Joyce’s life (1882-1941) gynaecology was undergoing several radical transformations following a vast expansion of the field in the 1850s. The 1880s saw a curiosity about the female menstrual cycle, which was labelled as a ‘drain on the physical and mental energies of women’, expressed as a disability which prevented women from being men’s equal, according to Julie-Marie Strange.[[191]](#footnote-191) This was paralleled by a rise in operations on the female reproductive system. The clitoridectomy (or removal of the clitoris) which was widely practised in the 1860s and used as a method of treating female ‘diseases’, such as nymphomania and masturbation, became less common as the ovariotomy (or removal of the ovaries) gained favour among doctors.[[192]](#footnote-192) Most curiously, the nineteenth century saw what is known as the ‘obstetric revolution’. Up until the late eighteenth century, midwifery was regarded as an area of women’s knowledge and skill, yet, at the turn of the century, accoucheurs, or male midwives, as described by Ornella Moscucci, characterised themselves as ‘the carriers of rational, scientific expertise to an area hitherto dominated by allegedly backward and dangerous practice’.[[193]](#footnote-193) Accoucheurs convinced society that they were the only ones who could safely take care of mother and child during delivery, undermining ‘public confidence in the midwife’s capacities’ and gradually taking hold of a once female-dominated practice.[[194]](#footnote-194)

Although the reason why accoucheurs were so successful in persuading the public of their medical ability is still a point of contention, Moscucci characterises their ‘onslaught on the female ceremony of childbirth’ as an ‘attempt to substitute woman’s customs for new medical rites masquerading as scientific practices founded on “objective” knowledge’.[[195]](#footnote-195) In the nineteenth century, male midwives were equipped with forceps after they were kept a secret for nearly a 150 years by the Chamberlen family.[[196]](#footnote-196) Forceps allowed for a safer delivery, enabling the doctor to retrieve the baby from the womb during difficult births. Anna Ostrowka describes how, prior to this, hooks and crochets were used to partially remove the dead foetus after complications, or a caesarean would be performed on the mother in an attempt to save the baby.[[197]](#footnote-197) Women were initially prohibited from using forceps, because they were deemed ‘not technically savvy enough’.[[198]](#footnote-198) This widened the gap between accoucheurs and female midwives by equipping men with the latest technological advances, while women were still using outdated and risky instruments for delivery, reinforcing the association between female midwives and ‘dangerous practice’. The dynamic between male midwives and their ability to control and monopolise scientific advances offers just one example of the limiting effect of masculine authority on philosophical and medical perspectives. By preventing women in the field from offering the best medical care, men were able to overturn public faith in female midwives by creating the illusion that women are less capable of safe medical practice.

Prior to this, gynaecology had already endured a long and complex history. In the early modern period, the uterus was seen as a riddle. Sixteenth-century medical writers, according to Helen King, recognised that female illnesses were ‘particularly difficult to treat’ and thus required their own branch of medicine.[[199]](#footnote-199) While comprehending the male body during this time was a complex task, understanding the female body and its ability to reproduce was momentous. Diseases of the genitalia and reproductive system ‘provoke[ed] anxiety and [were] difficult to cure’, not least because physicians were reluctant to lift ‘the veils of nature and modesty that conceal these parts’.[[200]](#footnote-200) This resulted in the female reproductive system being vastly misunderstood and underexplored as most inspections of the female genitalia could only occur after death. Andreas Vesalius’s ground-breaking study, *On the Fabric of the Human Body* (*De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, 1543) was among the first anatomical texts to include diagrams of the female genitalia. Most intriguing is the book’s cover, which depicts a woman lying open on an operating table while a hoard of men inspect her internal organs (fig. 1, appendix 1). The image directs the eye to the womb, inferring that it is both an enigma (through the intrigue of the crowd) and a source of knowledge, as it acts as the frontispiece for one of the most important works on anatomy. The cover also marks the gendered state of medicine during the 1500s, as the men are the physicians, while the female reproductive system is the subject of curiosity. The depiction of the skeleton, combined with the graphic image of the internal organs, lures in the reader, advertising the extent of the knowledge contained within the book by marking the text as a final frontier of knowledge. In addition, the placement of the skeleton above the woman’s body recalls the womb/tomb parallel discussed in Chapter 1, marking the dangers of childbirth, while highlighting the intimate connection between birth and death through the explorative surgery taking place in the body of a woman.

Despite this curiosity towards the female reproductive system, technological developments in the gynaecological field were slow. This was largely due to the restricted nature of dissection, which meant that only the bodies of executed criminals were allowed to be used for such purposes.[[201]](#footnote-201) Female bodies were also not readily available for dissection as fewer women were executed than men, and if a woman was pregnant, the execution would be delayed until after the birth.[[202]](#footnote-202) The acclaim of ‘father of modern gynaecology’ is often given to the American physician James Marion Sims (1813-1883) who has been praised for the invention of the modern speculum (fig. 2, appendix 2) and his advances in developing a technique to treat the vesicovaginal fistula (a complication of obstructed childbirth).[[203]](#footnote-203) Sims invented the double-bladed speculum in 1845, of which the first prototype was nothing more than a bent pewter spoon.[[204]](#footnote-204) The instrument was used to treat vesicovaginal fistulas which required a clear view of the anterior vaginal wall. A woman would lie on her side with legs bent towards her chest and Sims would stand behind the woman, inserting one blade of the speculum into the vagina, while the other would be used as a handle to retract the posterior vaginal wall. This would hold the vagina open, while the instrument’s grooves ensured that blood and secretion was able to still flow freely. Regardless of his success, Sims’s character and work are controversial and raise the ethical questions. He has been critiqued for operating on black female slaves without anaesthesia or consent, resulting in painful surgeries due to his misconduct and improper use of experimental subjects.[[205]](#footnote-205) Sims also openly expressed his disdain for the field, claiming in his half-completed autobiography that lectures on diseases of the female body made him ‘shudder inside’, and if ‘there was anything I hated, it was investigating the organs of the female pelvis’.[[206]](#footnote-206)

The first prototype of the modern speculum used by gynaecologists today was actually created by the French midwife, Marie-Anne Victorine Boivin, who made radical advances in the gynaecological field through her work on miscarriage, caesarean section, and the uterine haemorrhage.[[207]](#footnote-207) While the speculum invented by Sims took the form of the double-bladed instrument, Boivin invented what is known as the bivalve or duckbilled speculum (fig. 3, appendix 3). The two-part instrument is inserted into the vagina while a woman lies on her back with her legs spread wide. After insertion, it can be widened by turning the screw, enabling a clear view of the cervix, and thus allowing for a more comprehensive examination while causing less pain for the patient than previous models. Unlike Sims’s speculum which had to be held in place with both hands, Boivin’s speculum could be widened, locked into place via a screw, and left to rest there, allowing the doctor’s hands to be free. The twenty-first century speculum takes a similar form. Plastic or glass is used instead of metal and the bill can be gradually widened by releasing the hand, rather than turning a screw.

In spite of its success in enabling physicians to directly view the vagina, the speculum is still limited as a visual aid. The device must be opened wide to allow gynaecologists to view the cervix, and this is still not guaranteed to provide the physician with a clear view. Additionally, the womb sits too far up to be viewed through the instrument, meaning that during examinations the fingers are used to feel for any unusual lumps or inconsistencies on the cervix. The first hysteroscopy was only introduced in 1869, enabling physicians to carefully inspect the womb if they felt further care was needed. Prior to this the womb could only be accessed by physicians after the death of the patient, seen in the early modern period where a caesarean would result in the death of the mother.[[208]](#footnote-208) Because the womb could not be accessed when the patient was alive, it meant pathologies such as hysteria and suffocation were often misdiagnosed and thought to be caused by a ‘wandering womb’, a term popularised by Edward Jorden in the first publication on hysteria, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603). Jorden used the wandering womb to defend those accused of witchcraft, instead asserting they were suffering from the unusual medical condition which caused hysteria-like symptoms. Labelling these women as victims of their own bodies, Jorden employed Hippocrates’s notion that a cure can be found in ‘the application of cupping glasses, of sweete plaisters, of ligatures, & beneath, and of euell smelles aboue’.[[209]](#footnote-209) Put simply, the womb was thought of as an animal or demon that could be lured back into place by holding strong smells beneath the vagina and under the nose. Other suggestions included that women could prevent the womb from wandering by marrying young ‘(as close to menarche as possible), engag[ing] in repeated intercourse with her husband and bear[ing] as many children as possible, so that the womb will always be moist and heavy and thus incapable of movement’.[[210]](#footnote-210)

**‘EMBRYONIC PHILOSOPHERS’: GESTATION AND METAPHOR IN ‘OXEN OF THE SUN’**

Given Joyce’s interest in female sexuality and the complexity of women’s bodies in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake,* it would be unusual for the radical developments of gynaecology and its gendered practices not to have caught his attention. This is especially evident given Joyce’s interest in medicine as an alternative career. He attempted to enter the medical field three times. Firstly, in October 1902 where he began studying at the Catholic University Medicine School, leaving after just a month. Secondly, in December 1902 where he attempted to study at Faculté de Médicine in Paris, and thirdly, when he returned to Dublin in 1903. [[211]](#footnote-211) Evidence of this medical intrigue is first expressed in *Ulysses* as themes of gynaecology, obstetrics and menstruation pervade ‘Oxen of the Sun’ and ‘Penelope’.[[212]](#footnote-212) In the former, Joyce associates the episode with the uterus, detailing complex notions of gestation and birth while illuminating the birth of the English language. This is marked by a conflation between language and labour, where Joyce documents Bloom’s visit to Holles Street Maternity Hospital through a chronological parody of prose styles, ranging from Latinate, ‘Deshil Holles Eamus’, to twentieth-century slang, in the form of ‘he’s got a coughmixture with a punch in it for you, my friend, in his backpocket’.[[213]](#footnote-213)

Early genetic scholars, such as Phillip Herring, were perplexed by the episode’s conflation between childbirth and language. While to most Joyce’s chronological parody of important figures in English literature appeared to be obvious, at the time Herring noted that ‘what has not been clearly understood is the relevance of his parody to the gestation cycle or plot of *Ulysses*’.[[214]](#footnote-214) Over time, new critical approaches to the chapter have been developed. In 1985, Susan Bazargan used comparative theories of imitation and repetition to argue that Joyce does not merely borrow from the literary sources he used in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ but gives them new life through an act of rebirth. Bazargan attests that ‘the symbols of fertility—used and abused—are also words, language, whose growth and development on an expanded historical level are conflated with the nine-month evolution of a foetus.’[[215]](#footnote-215) Joyce repurposes the ideas and forms of previous writers through medical metaphors of the female body, echoing a longstanding tradition of equating literary creativity with childbirth. In ancient Greek literature the image of the pregnant male was deployed in metaphor and myth ‘as a way to figure paternity and, by extension, “authorship” generally – of, for example, ideas, works of art, and legislation’, as interrogated by David Leitao.[[216]](#footnote-216) Between 470-350 B.C.E, Greeks would have deployed the concept of the pregnant male to work through complex issues and controversies, including the ‘nature and origin of thought and creativity’, providing Joyce with a framework for his use of medical metaphor. This use of gestation also echoes my discussions of the womb/tomb parallel in Chapter 1, where I explored how Shakespeare employs depictions of gestation and death as a metaphor for failed literary composition.

The past decade has seen Joyce’s use of imitation examined more closely. Vike Martina Plock (2010) explores Joyce’s use of medical metaphor by illuminating the intricate dialogue between Joyce’s ‘Oxen’ and the first three volumes of Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67). Establishing that the uniting crux between the two works lies in Joyce’s use of the early modern medical text, *Aristotle’s Master-Piece* (1684)––‘the bestselling guide to pregnancy and childbirth in the eighteenth century’, according to Mary Fissell––Plock argues that through alluding to the conflicting medical philosophies used by Sterne, Joyce’s allusions to *Master-Piece* establish a dialogue between modern turn-of-the-twentieth-century medicine and ancient medical folklore.[[217]](#footnote-217) This enables Joyce to situate his stylistic imitation of Sterne historically, as the 1700s saw the obstetric revolution and the overturning of midwifery as an ancient, and often female, medical practice.

The intricate relationship between medical metaphor, language, and the female body becomes immediately apparent upon reading the episode. Documenting Bloom’s visit to the hospital to check on Mrs. Purefoy, a young woman who has been in labour for three days, the birth coincides with nineteenth-century prose mimicking multiple figures of the 1800s, such as Charles Dickens through the line, ‘meanwhile the skill and patience of the physician had brought about a happy accouchement’, and John Ruskin: ‘mark this farther and remember. The end comes suddenly’.[[218]](#footnote-218) The use of the 1800s is curious, aligning the birth of the boy with the peak moment of obstetrics and gynaecology, reflected in the text as Joyce suggests that the ‘happy accouchement’ is performed by a male midwife, ‘Dr A. Horne’, ‘the able and popular master’, bringing with him ‘skill and patience’.[[219]](#footnote-219) The name ‘Horne’ appears satirical, functioning as a sexual innuendo by referring to cuckoldry or an erect penis through the seedy connotations of the word, and thus framing the male midwife with negative connotations. Joyce’s use of these gynaecological details indicates his interest in the politics of midwifery and the complex revision of the field that took place during Joyce’s upbringing, as the references to the ability and skill of the physician echo the language used to undermine the position of female midwives.

Joyce’s apparent interest in gynaecology is furthered by the narration of two simultaneous events. The first is an ongoing conversation between Stephen Dedalus, Buck Mulligan, Haines, and a group of medical students, as they drunkenly mull over topics related to pregnancy and childbirth. They question women’s rights through the topic of birth control, with Stephen later condemning the contraceptive by declaring that ‘those Godpossibled souls that we nightly impossibilise […] is the sin against […] the giver of life’.[[220]](#footnote-220) Following this is a rumination of various complications of gynaecology, such as the ‘Caesarean section’; ‘miscarriages or infanticides, simulated or dissimulated, the acardiac foetus in foetu and aprosopia due to congestion’; ‘the prolongation of labour pains in advanced gravidancy by reason of pressure on a vein’; ‘artificial insemination by means of syringes’, and ‘involution of the womb consequent upon the menopause’.[[221]](#footnote-221) These terms are usually confined to the vocabulary of medical professionals, rarely entering public discourse. It would have therefore been necessary for Joyce to research the topic further to accurately relay them in the text.

Much of the gynaecological information Joyce used for the chapter was learned from Guilio Valenti’s *Lezioni Elementari Di Embriologia,* according to Udo Benzenhöfer, who notes that ‘we can estimate that he gathered more than 50 per cent of the medical terms in the “Oxen” notesheets from Valenti’.[[222]](#footnote-222) In the episode, Valenti is alluded to alongside six others: ‘Culpepper, Spallanzani, Blumenbach, Lusk, Hertwig [and] Leopold’, each of whom influenced the medical field in differing ways. Astrological apothecary Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) was a herbalist in the seventeenth century known for rebelling against the medical establishment. Culpeper despised medicine’s closed-door policy, whereby both the profession and healthcare were only accessible to the privileged few. Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-1799) was an Italian physiologist who engaged in extensive research regarding animal reproduction. He also disproved spontaneous generation, the theory that living organisms—such as maggots—could form from non-living matter. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) was a German physician and physiologist, primarily known for his research *andbuch der vergleichenden Anatomie* (*The* *Handbook of Comparative Anatomy*). William Thompson Lusk (1838-1897) ––both an obstetrician and soldier––is most recognised for his text, *The Science and Art of Midwifery* (1882). He was also one of the first obstetricians to perform a successful caesarean section in which both mother and child survived, making him a highly regarded figure in field of gynaecology. Oscar Hertwig (1849-1922) was a professor and German zoologist who worked on animal fertilisation and studied under Ernst Haeckel, the famous scholar whose hypothesis of recapitulation theory–– the notion, according to Plock that ‘the fetus in its embryonic development parallels and repeats the evolutionary progress that reproduced the human race’––is echoed throughout ‘Oxen’.[[223]](#footnote-223) Finally, listed alongside Valenti is Christian Gerhard Leopold (1846-1911), a German embryologist and gynaecologist who is remembered for his pioneering ‘Leopold manoeuvres’. These four manoeuvres are used to determine the foetus’ position in the uterus and are still commonly used in today’s medical practice. They determine whether the birth of the child will involve complications, thus helping to ensure a safer delivery. While these allusions tell us that Joyce was intrigued by all forms of medicine and medical practice, Joyce gathered his sources from a variety of places. In particular, ‘Oxen’s’ gestational theme was supplemented by a large embryological diagram that Joyce kept next to him while writing, aiding him visually, as well as intellectually.[[224]](#footnote-224)

By chronologically listing an array of physicians, herbalists, gynaecologists and professors, whose methods, morals, and medical research widely differs, Joyce captures the expansive nature of the development of medical thought, implying that his research on the topic of embryology was extensive, while also providing a philosophical insight into different approaches to medicine. This in turn reinforces the dialogue between ancient folklore and modern medicine that was present the gynaecological field, both of which feed into the minds of the doctors at Holles Street Hospital. Medical folklore is introduced through references to *Aristotle’s Master-Piece* and the notion of monstrous births, conjuring an image of regressive practice and medical myth which taints the students’ reputations as medical professionals. The manual first appears in the line, ‘in a word all the cases of human nativity which Aristotle has classified in his masterpiece with chromolithographic illustrations’, before the doctors recall how the

gravest problems of obstetrics and forensic medicine were examined with as much animation as the most popular beliefs on the state of pregnancy such as the forbidding to a gravid woman to step over a countrystile lest, by her movement, the navelcord should strangle her creature and the injunction upon her in the event of a yearning, ardently and ineffectually entertained, to place her hand against that part of her person which long usage has consecrated as the seat of castigation. The abnormalities of harelip, breastmole, supernumerary digits, negro’s inkle, strawberry mark and portwine stain were alleged by one as a prima facie and natural hypothetical explanation of those swineheaded […] or doghaired infants occasionally born.[[225]](#footnote-225)

These ‘monstrous’ abnormalities are coupled with fragments of Mrs. Purefoy’s modern birthing process and the biological development of an embryo, which was only discovered by Karl Ernst von Baer in 1827 through observing the mammalian ovum.[[226]](#footnote-226) Joyce articulates how the baby’s ‘head appeared’ and ‘tears gushed from the eyes of the dissipated host’, followed by news of the afterbirth being complete as the ‘smiling surgeon’ comes downstairs ‘with news of placentation ended’.[[227]](#footnote-227) The process of gestation, on the other hand, is more discreet, seen woven into the descriptions of the characters and their movements. Stuart Gilbert highlights a cluster of these, evidencing how,

In the first month [the embryo] is wormlike, a “punctus”, in the second it has a (relatively) big head, webbed fingers is eyeless, mouthless, sexless. The mention of fishes “withouten head in “oily water” is a reference to the first month: the vermiform shape and amniac fluid. Later Stephen tells how “at the end of the second month” a human soul is infused and, soon after, we see Mr Bloom “lay hand to jaw”; the formation of the jawbone is a feature of the third month.[[228]](#footnote-228)

These two threads of gestation and accouchement mingle with the history of language and ideas, associating the female body with knowledge as the ‘embryo philosopher’ (or pregnant woman) narrates the ‘pregnant word’ (otherwise known as the birth of language) through her labour.[[229]](#footnote-229) Meanwhile, the combination of scientific medical practice––reinforced once more through the mention of forceps as Bloom later recalls the episode in ‘Lestrygonians’: ‘Child’s head too big: forceps. Doubled up inside her trying to butt its way out blindly, groping for the way out’––and the ancient medical folklore of *Aristotle’s Master-Piece* undermines the illusion of male medical superiority that the obstetric revolution tried to conjure.[[230]](#footnote-230) Instead, Joyce outlines the influence of medical folklore that had been adopted by female midwives for centuries, while highlighting the imperfections of the male accoucheur or doctor as Mrs. Purefoy still has a very difficult delivery.[[231]](#footnote-231) When examined alongside one another, these two forms of medical practice evidence that the development of medical knowledge, like philosophical knowledge, relies on a conflation between the scientific and the traditional. This also infers that both men and women influenced the development of gynaecology and obstetrics, as female folklore meets the modern male. By structuring the development of language and thought through the framework of gestation and the womb, Joyce therefore challenges the singularity of phallogocentric authority by metaphorically directing the authorial powers of growth, intellect, and creativity to the uterus.

**‘UNDER THE PUDENDASCOPE’: *FINNEGANS WAKE* AND SPECULA VISION**

The significance of analysing the development of gynaecology—and the speculum in particular—in the context of Joyce’s use of medical metaphor is due to the body’s influence on modernist literature. Up until the early nineteenth century, penetration of the body in medical examinations was deemed too dangerous due to improper equipment. The body ‘was a boundary’, according to Tim Armstrong, ‘a machine in which the self lived; the site of an animal nature which required conscious regulation’.[[232]](#footnote-232) However, Armstrong goes on to note how by the early twentieth century the ‘body could be penetrated by a number of devices’, such as ‘the stethoscope, ophthalmoscope, laryngoscope’, and the ‘speculum’.[[233]](#footnote-233) Temperature, blood pressure, and pulse could also be observed and monitored, new drugs were prescribed and microscopes enabled us to examine bacteria. These new means of accessing the body led to an ‘attempt to regulate the body in relation to machine culture’, leading to an internal crisis and a desire to return to the primitive self as technology became more ingrained in everyday life.[[234]](#footnote-234) What resulted, as Armstrong asserts, was ‘both a fragmentation and augmentation of the body in relation to technology; it offers the body as lack, at the same time as it offers technological compensation’.[[235]](#footnote-235)

The conflict between fragmentation and augmentation coincided with the beginning of literary Modernism and as our approach to the human form changed, so did our approach to the novel. As noted by Armstrong, certain theorists have posited that Modernism was a reaction against modernity’s rapid technological advancements. For Theodor Adorno, the

difficulty of artistic Modernism is a reaction against a commodified and packaged mass culture and the brutality of states bureaucracies; an attempt to create a space for the self outside power in which the relation of the aesthetic sphere to history is, per-fore, a negative one’.[[236]](#footnote-236)

However, Modernism also embraces these technological advancements. By focusing on the intricacies of human nature and thought in an attempt to exchange the mechanistic undertones of modern life for a psychological examination of human consciousness, Joyce uses these developments in technology and science to analyse and reflect on human nature, opposing the rigid and objective nature of the technological self in favour of a complex examination of phenomenology and consciousness.

As in *Ulysses* where Joyce uses the process of gestation to reflect the development of language, medicine and thought, in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce uses medical metaphors of the female body to produce vignettes which reflect women’s phenomenological position in the text. Although references to the womb and genitals appear throughout the *Wake*, images of the female sex organs culminate in II.2, where the three children, Shem, Shaun and Issy participate in a ‘Night Lesson’ in an attempt to comprehend complex metaphysical questions of knowledge. The chapter centres around philosophy, being, and the question of origins, embodied primarily by ALP’s womb or ‘muddy old triagonal delta’ (287.24). Central to the chapter’s loose plot is Shem and Shaun’s attempt to comprehend the riddle of the mother’s ‘trickkikant’ by lifting up her skirt in order to ‘see her good’ (297.24).

The chapter’s conflation between mathematics and female genitalia culminates in a Euclidean diagram which sits at the heart of the lesson. Emerging in the middle of Shem’s daydream as ‘he gazet’ sleepily through the ‘lazily eye of his lapis’, the diagram is multifunctional, expanding across multiple bodies of knowledge (fig. 4, appendix 4). Most obviously, the diagram depicts a well-known Euclidean proof used in geometry, reiterating the chapter’s mathematical teachings as the twins use the theorem to comprehend the mother’s genitalia or uterus. This is seen as the mathematical proof simultaneously functions as ALP’s womb, with the two overlapping circles visually represent the ovaries, while the central triangle embodies both the womb and opening of the vagina, marked by the letters ‘A’, ‘L’ and ‘P’ (293.12). A third interpretation aligns the diagram with a pair of eyes, hinted at through the surrounding text as from ‘the lazily eye of his lapis’ Shem sees the ‘Vieus Von DVbLIn’ (views of Dublin) (293.11-12). This adds a visual complexity to the image, suggesting a conflation between the male mind (the twins’ mathematical investigations), the female body (the womb) and the senses (sight).[[237]](#footnote-237) Considering the conflation between the male minds that dominate the surrounding body of text, coupled with the overtly sexual female body––present through ALP’s genitalia and Issy’s relegation to hypersexualised footnotes–– the diagram hints at an alternative and multi-gendered approach to the phenomenology of the text and the production of philosophical thought. The visual element of the image embodies this dual phenomenology as the two eyes cross over to meet in the middle, creating a space for the mathematical male mind and the sexualised female body to meet. This sheds a gendered lens onto Joyce’s own statement that, while writing *Finnegans Wake*, he was ‘boring into a mountain from both sides’ and the question was ‘how to meet in the middle.[[238]](#footnote-238) Taking these two sides to be a question of how to approach the philosophy of the *Wake* through the lens of multiple genders (and therefore multiple phenomenologies), the reader’s approach to *Finnegans Wake* encounters a radical shift as a consideration of the medical (or gynaecological) metaphor becomes ‘The keys to’ the genital ‘Lps’, or origins, of the *Wake*’s interrogation of metaphysics (628.15).

A valuable comparison between the womb and philosophical questions of origins has been articulated by Luce Irigaray in a feminist interpretation of the exclusion of women from Western discourse. Irigaray compares the womb to Plato’s cave through the impossibility of returning to the origin, meaning humanity is unable attain absolute truth. Functioning as the origin of life, Irigaray notes how the chains of the cave (or womb) restrains beings ‘from turning toward the origin but/ and they are prisoners in the space-time of the pro-ject of its representation’.[[239]](#footnote-239) The womb, or origin, holds men hostage by ‘keeping up the allusion that the origin might become fully visible if only one could turn around, bring it into one’s field of vision’.[[240]](#footnote-240) However, because the womb is left behind at birth, it can never be presented, only represented, as the origin is unseen; unknown. It is the place from which man is brought into life, yet its unknowability suspends humanity in a constant state of questioning.

Although *Finnegans Wake* predates Irigaray’s feminist theory, reflections of the womb-as-cave are present in the ‘Night Lesson’ through a series of allusions to Plato. Clear references to the philosopher’s name emerge throughout the chapter, in the form of ‘p.t.l.o.a.t.o’, ‘Plutonic loveliaks twinnt Platonic yearlings’ and ‘*Noah, Plato’* (286.03, 292.30-1, 307.ln1).While these are important in that they indicate Plato’s presence in the lesson, the most intriguing allusion to Plato appears near the start of the teachings through the line: ‘Easy, calm your haste! Approach to lead our passage! (262.01-2). The line offers multiple reflections on the macrocosmic relevance of the teachings, as HCE, present in the words ‘**e**asy, **c**alm your **h**aste!’, and ALP (**a**pproach to **l**ead our **p**assage) are mapped out philosophically. The first letters of the words ‘approach to lead our passage’ form an anagram of Plato, reinforcing the notion that ALP’s womb acts as an embodiment of Plato’s cave through both the anagrammatic conflation between their names, and the fact that she is previously described as having a ‘Cave of kids’ (261.15). By instructing HCE to ‘calm [his] haste’ as he approaches one of the cave’s passages, Joyce recalls the path of the male philosopher in tracing the origins of life, reinforced by the ten questions which precede the line: ‘Who is he? Whose is he? Why is he?’, which echo a metaphysical investigation through means of the Socratic method (261.28-31).[[241]](#footnote-241) Joyce’s imitation of a Socratic dialogue forms another allusion to Plato by echoing his writings which capture this philosophical approach in prose, seen in *Euthyphro* and *Ion*, and later in *Theaetetus*. In the latter of the three, Socrates engages in a dialogue with Theaetetus, forming an investigation into the concept of knowledge as Socrates begins to probe Theaetetus on whether ‘knowledge and wisdom are the same?’.[[242]](#footnote-242) These dialogues echo Shem and Shaun’s use of the Socratic method, as they attempt to understand the concept of knowledge and origins through their dialectical and mathematical investigations of the parents. Like the twins, HCE, or man, is caved in (‘**H**oo **c**avedin **e**arthwight’) by his inability to see the female origin, both literally–– in the sense that it is left behind at birth––and metaphorically, because men have historically refused to view the female body as capable of producing philosophical thought. Mapping the allegory of the cave onto the male and female body, Joyce signals that philosophical authority is held by both genders, implying that it takes a collaboration between the sexes to comprehend metaphysical knowledge.

The ten questions also recall the ten mystical elements of the Jewish Kabbalah as HCE is referred to here as Ein Sof or ‘Ainsoph’, the Kabbalistic God who stands ‘upright’ with that ‘noughty besighed him zeroine’ (261.22-23). Vicki Mahaffey argues that the numbering of HCE (‘upright’ being one) and ALP (‘zeroine’ being zero) is both sexual and intellectual, echoing my discussions in Chapter 1, where I explore how the female body is marked by an O (0) in Joyce’s work. The numeric symbols 1 and 0, which represent infinity in the Jewish Kabbalah through the ten emanations of Ein Sof, visually symbolise the womb and phallus here as they are ‘equally unitary images—one linear and the other round—which represent two different modes in which authoritarian power operates, one overt and potentially intrusive, the other covert and enveloping.’[[243]](#footnote-243) Together, according to Mahaffey, man and woman thus form an interdependent reality based on two differencing types of authority, and ‘to favour man over woman—or woman over man—is comparable in its futility to a preference for space over time: it leaves us with half a world’.[[244]](#footnote-244) Considering this in light of ALP and HCE’s roles as figures of Plato’s cave, man and woman are equalised in the ‘Night Lesson’. Joyce demonstrates their necessary roles in the formation of knowledge, which symbolizes the necessity for a double authority (or phenomenology) of the text.

To further comprehend this doubled authority, Joyce employs the medical metaphor in the form of instruments which expand and improve our ability to look and perceive, such as the ‘collideorscape!’, ‘telescope’ ‘spectroscope’, ‘macroscope’ and ‘helioscope’, all of which become metaphors for the text itself (143.28, 178.28 230.01, 272.Ln1, 341.23). Each optical instrument has a very specific use in the world, allowing us to get a clear view of matter undetectable to the naked eye, and in certain cases, a better understanding of the human form. A close examination of these instruments in the context of the *Wake* aids our reading of the text by allowing us to further penetrate the textual matter and the female body. Some of these devices have been previously interrogated by scholars, such as Philip Kitcher, who compares the *Wake* to a kaleidoscope, continually shaken by the reader in the hope of discovering a steadfast interpretation of the text.[[245]](#footnote-245) Most intriguing, however, is Katherine Ebury’s detailed reading of the spectroscope in *Finnegans Wake,* as she attests that ‘Joyce’s text functions as a kind of instrument that reveals a hidden strangeness within the everyday’.[[246]](#footnote-246) Ebury elucidates how Shem uses the spectroscope to unsuccessfully guess the colour of Issy’s (and the rainbow girls’) underwear in the ‘Questions’ Chapter, noting how ‘the section is deeply concerned with colour, light and the connections between sexual and scientific discovery’.[[247]](#footnote-247) Associating technology with subjective desire, Joyce’s use of the spectroscope introduces the ‘new and plural realities’ of the *Wake*, as light becomes associated with ‘hidden, spectral knowledge’.[[248]](#footnote-248) My own readings of the ‘Questions’ chapter will appear in Chapter 4 of this thesis, where I explore the connection between sexual and metaphysical discovery in the context of bodily fluids.

An association between optical instruments, sexual desire, and hidden knowledge is especially prominent in ALP’s letter or ‘Mamafesta’. While in Chapter 1 I examined the physical form of the letter by examining its textual holes, here I can now analyse its contents. As ALP attempts to exonerate her husband from his rumoured crimes, the illicit activity (which apparently took place between HCE and two women in Phoenix Park) is refracted throughout the chapter as incestuous desire emerges in the form of medical metaphor. After a brief examination of the letter, which is paradoxically simple yet repetitively obscure, we are left ‘lost in the bush’ by the ‘teasy dear’ and told that ‘we need the loan of a lens to see as much as the hen saw’ (112.03, 112.30, 112.02). This is shortly followed by a Vichian thunderclap (‘Thingcrooklyexineverypasturesixdixlikencehimaroundhersthemaggerbykinkink ankanwithdownmindlookingated’) which marks the progression of civilisation and knowledge by echoing Vico’s theory that ‘the heavens were filled with thunder and lightning, and each nation began to read in this thunder and lightning the omens of its own Jupiter’ (113.09-11).[[249]](#footnote-249) To mark this intellectual development, Biddy reveals that we are now ‘drawing nearer to take our slant at’ the letter, in the hopes it will ‘let us see all there may remain to be seen’ (113.30-31). Written in plain English­––a far cry from the multiple punning and idiosyncrasy offered by the rest of the textual matter––Biddy’s invitation invites a sense of clarity and understanding, suggesting that the ‘keys’ to the *Wake* are about to be revealed. However, the line is prefigured by the topic of philosophical perception, or phenomenology, that hints at the complexity of the situation as Biddy declares that ‘for while the ear, be we mikealls or nicholists, may sometimes be inclined to believe others the eye, whether browned or nolensed, find it devilish hard now and again even to believe itself’ (113-29). On a basic level, the sentence is a defence against hearsay, as ALP encourages the readers of the letter to not believe everything they hear regarding HCE’s exploits in Phoenix Park. The line is also macrocosmic, scrutinising the canonical and lineal portrayal of philosophy’s history by illuminating the different levels of sensory perception that go into our constructed understanding of the world. This is evidenced by Biddy’s questioning of the reliability of the eyes and ears in the context of belief, and the reference to the publishers Brown and Nolan, as they, among other publishers, hold the power to decide what literature or scripture reaches a public audience.

By instructing the readers to ‘see all there may remain to be [philosophically] seen’, there is a suggestion that the following pages will provide some clarification regarding the letter’s contents. This culminates in a gynaecological and psychoanalytical examination involving a speculum, or ‘pudendascope’, revealing the ‘lens’ we have loaned to comprehend the letter. The section offers another insight into Joyce’s gendered approach to phenomenological authority, foreshadowing the twins’ attempt to uncover their mother’s female genitalia in the ‘Night Lesson’ by depicting another pelvic examination of the female body. Worth quoting at some length, the passage describes how,

as any balmbearer would to feel whereupon the virgin was most hurt and nicely asking: whyre have you been so grace a mauling and where were you chaste me child? Be who, farther potential? and so wider but we grisly old Sykos who have done our unsmiling bit on ’alices, when they were yung and easily freudened, in the penumbra of the procuring room and what oracular comepression we have had apply to them! could (did we care to sell our feebought silence \in camera\) tell our very moistnostrilled one that \father\ in such virgated contexts is not always that undemonstrative relative (often held up to our contumacy) who settles our hashbill for us and what an innocent allabroad’s adverb such as Michaelly looks like can be suggestive of under the pudendascope and, finally, what a neurasthene nympholept, endocrine-pineal typus, of inverted parentage with a prepossessing drauma present in her past and a priapic urge for congress with agnates before cognates fundamentally is feeling for under her lubricitous meiosis when she refers with liking to some feeler she fancie’s face (115.18-35).

The use of ‘pudendascope’ here is one of the Joyce’s clearest references to the speculum in the *Wake*, as ‘pudendum’, a Latin reference to genitalia (particularly the vulva), translates to that where one ought to feel shame, while the addition of scope––or *scopium*––alludes to instrument for looking, in this case, a means of viewing the vagina. Conflating both a sexual and medical examination, the passage once more suggests that clues to the *Wake* can be found between the genital lips, evident as desire and the quest for knowledge are conflated through the lens of a speculum.

The passage also centres around the topic of taboo, considering whether the young, virginal girl has the ‘potential’ to be raped by her ‘farther’, which forms a reflection of the potential for incest within the relationship between Issy and HCE. The line ‘what an innocent allabroad’s adverb such as Michaelly looks like can be suggestive of under the pudendascope’ plays on the history of gynaecology, as Michael’s look at the vagina through the speculum is sexually driven, rather than medical. Instead of attempting to find knowledge in the female body, ‘Michaelly’ sees the young girl objectively, viewing her as a sexual object and thus portraying a misogynistic image of the male-female relationship. This also recalls the long-held fear that a gynaecological examination would be mistaken for a sexual experience. In the nineteenth century the medical field was populated by male physicians, resulting in fears that the female patient would become uncontrollably sexually aroused from being touched by a man. Women undergoing examinations were therefore expected to be completely passive, ‘unresponding and uncomplaining’ objects during the process, as articulated by Terri Kasalis.[[250]](#footnote-250) This is present through the ‘suggestive’ looks which are being exchanged while under the ‘pudendascope’, yet it is the male, rather than the female, who is mistaking the examination as a sexual act. Illuminating the flaws in the male desire by subverting gender roles, Joyce establishes an alternative reading of the gynaecological examination. Just like Joyce’s use of the spectroscope, the speculum reveals the incestuous desires of the *Wake*’s male characters within the context of technology and medical developments. The medical metaphor helps to reveal the multiple pluralities of the *Wake*, and in particular, a feminist phenomenology, by centring on the importance of the female body in the production of epistemological thought.

This is reinforced during the first half of the passage, which asks us reflect on the ‘Sykos […] on ’alices’, or psychoanalysis, of ‘freudended’ and ‘yung’ (Freud and Jung), as the girls involved are simultaneously frightened and young. This is both a mind and body examination, seen as ‘sykos’, or psyche, also alludes to sykon, the Greek word for a ripe fig and a symbol of the female genitalia. Offering a commentary on the psychoanalytic misdiagnoses that concern the female body—as an inspection of female genitalia is linked to the female mind and possible psychosis (sykos) of young ‘alices’––the line associates the female reproductive system with women’s intellectual power, as the girls’ psyches take the shape of a genital fig. By redirecting female authority to the womb, the use of the speculum infers that an alternative reading of phenomenological and philosophical authority must be adopted to determine women’s position in the text. While male minds are on display through logic, mathematical theorems, and historical cycles (seen previously in the ‘Night Lesson’), female philosophy can be located through the medical metaphor of the speculum, as the genital ‘sykos’ exudes a female phenomenology. The act of taking a girl’s virginity in *Finnegans Wake* thus emulates an act of stripping a woman of her intellectual authority, as the phallus (or phallogocentricism) metaphorically penetrates the female mind through its domination over language and society. Joycean male figures attach themselves to (and reside in) the female psyche, evident in ‘Oxen’ as Bloom is the sperm residing inside the episode’s uterus.

Further readings of the passage result in two alternative interpretations. The first offers a satirical reading of the psychoanalytic field by poking fun at how traumas of the mind are often tied to psychosexual and incestuous fantasies of the parent, misdiagnosing the patient as a ‘neurasthene nympholept, endocrine-pineal typus, of inverted parentage’. A sense of satire emerges through Joyce’s hyperbolic diagnoses, as neurasthene, or neurasthenia, references a condition of mental or physical fatigue; nympholept—in addition to alluding to nymphomania—describes a person affected by nympholepsy (an ancient Greek belief that an individual could be possessed by nymphs); and an endocrine-pineal typus functions as a possible allusion to Descartes’s theory of dualism as he associated the pineal gland, part of the endocrine organ, with being the seat of the soul. The allusion to Descartes introduces a philosophical theme to the passage, once again reinforcing the notion that the female genitalia functions as the source of women’s philosophical power, as Descartes believed that the pineal gland was the place where are thoughts were produced, while also highlighting the dualism between the reasoned male mind and the sensory female body.[[251]](#footnote-251) This mix of diagnoses not only ridicules psychoanalysis, but also forms a commentary on the misdiagnoses of the female body both in the medical field—through the poor history of gynaecology––and the philosophical field, by associating women with a lack of reason.

The final worthwhile thread that the passage has to offer is Joyce’s reference to *Alice in Wonderland* (‘who have done their unsmiling bit on ’alices’). Joyce illustrates the seediness of the psychoanalyst (or HCE) as he gets a thrill off the sexual nightmares of the young women, something reflective of Lewis Carroll’s own rumoured fascination with young girls (rumours which first emerged in the 1930s, while Joyce was writing the *Wake*).[[252]](#footnote-252) Securing a space for the speculum in *Finnegans Wake––*as a looking-glass is simultaneously slang for the medical device (the Latin for mirror is speculum) and thus reminiscent of *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*––references to Alice become a trope for identifying both HCE’s crime and the exclusion of women from philosophical and medical discourse.

This is once again indicated in the ‘Night Lesson’ as another gynaecological examination takes place. While the children attempt to lift the mother’s skirt to view her ‘muddy triangle delta’ (alluding to, as seen previously, both genitalia and womb), Lewis Carroll is present in the line, ‘though Wonderlawn’s lost us for ever. Alis, alas, she broke the glass! Liddell lokker through the leafery, ours is mistery of pain’ (270.19-22). Emulating the same seediness as the previous examination, the reference to ‘Wonderlawn’ evokes a loss of innocence as it has ‘lost us forever’, echoing Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, which results in the first human expulsion from Eden. The combination of ‘leafy’ and ‘lawn’ reinforces this biblical image, while also alluding to the female genitalia (leaf) and pubic hair (lawn). Illuminating the move from childhood to adolescence, the lines describe the process where women are expelled from ‘Wonderland’ as they go through puberty and are thus brought into the realities of everyday life, captured here as life is a ‘mistery of pain’ for women because gynaecology fails to account for female reproductive health and comfort.

The key point of interest here is the looker who the narrator is addressing. They move ‘Alis […] Liddle[’s]’ leaf to get at the look at the genitalia, or womb, using a speculum, which is present here through the reference to broken glass, alongside the use of ‘locker’ which is another word for the vagina. Recalling the previous allusions to the ‘pudendascope’ in the ‘Mamafesta’, the image of a pelvic examination in a chapter concerned with uncovering theories of knowledge provides a curious tie to phenomenology and the female body. Here, the speculum, which has frequently been used as a method of control by men through keeping women in the dark about medicine, is once again used in a philosophical context. Alice, who was having her ‘sykos’ inspected by two psychoanalysts in the ‘Mamafesta’, has now ‘broke the glass’ of the speculum by stepping outside of her gendered role. This is visible as Alice is aligned with Issy, whose footnotes seem to correlate with the central text here as she comments ‘Dear and I trust in all frivolity I may be pardoned for trespassing but I think I may add hell’ (270.fn3). Serving firstly as a potential reference to the painful history of the speculum as well as the ‘mistery’ and ‘pain’ that women have faced at the hands of ‘misters’, the combination of ‘trespassing’ and broken glass suggests that Issy has broken the glass ceiling of philosophy. By interrupting the main body of text, which until this point has been dominated by Shem and Shaun, Issy surpasses her role as onlooker and becomes a philosophical interloper.

In addition, Issy’s use of ‘hell’ recalls a history of misogyny towards the female body through reference to William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*:

Down from the waist they are centaurs.

Though women all above:

But to the girdle do gods inherit,

Beneath is all the fiend’s; there’s hell, there’s darkness,

There is the sulphurous pit; burning, scalding, stench /

consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah![[253]](#footnote-253)

Lear implies that women feign innocence and chastity ‘above’, while describing the vagina as a fiend. The use of ‘stench’ ‘hell’ and ‘consumption’ implies a sense of disgust towards the female genitalia, expressing Lear’s repulsion towards the female body. By recalling a history of misrepresentation in the context of the broken glass speculum, Issy reclaims this misogynistic past by surpassing the patriarchal boundaries of female authority.

Joyce’s allusions to gynaecology remind us that it is imperative to adopt alternative modes of uncovering a female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*. The presence of female authority in the text has long been rendered invisible through an acceptance of disciplinary fatalism, the aforementioned assumption that we ‘can only produce the lines that are before us’. However, just like the misjudgements of medical dosage, to approach the *Wake*, and the broader philosophical field, with a sense of gender blindness is unhelpful; it results in fatalities and exclusions as we miss important details. While at first philosophical (and phenomenological) authority seems to be overtly male in *Finnegans Wake*, as the book is structured around the works of male philosophers, by redirecting authority to the body, specifically the genitalia, Joyce equals these two sexes through evidencing the metaphysical potential of the womb. The only difference is we need tools—speculums, medical metaphors, and knowledge—to view the authority of the female genitalia because it is internal and hidden, while the phallus or the phallogocentric authority of the Joycean text is protruding and overt. Gynaecology provides the perfect metaphor for revealing the multiple authorities of the *Wake*, centring the importance of the body, or womb, in the comprehension of knowledge, and allowing us to move towards a more detailed investigation of the Joycean womb.

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# CHAPTER THREE: WANDERING WOMBS

While the previous chapter examined how the Joycean speculum directs us towards the female authority (or womb) of the text, here a close examination of the *Wake*’s textual uterus will unearth the full potential of female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*. The womb is often misrepresented in literature due to the lack of appropriate medical care and knowledge surrounding the female reproductive system. Female sex organs have frequently been depicted as a negated space, further evidenced by Gordon Williams’s *Glossary of Shakespeare’s Sexual Language*, which defines the vagina as ‘nothing’.[[254]](#footnote-254) Nevertheless, the vagina and uterus are actually part of a complex system with several unique functions. The muscular, pear-shaped organ stretches to house a growing foetus and contracts to push the baby out. Sitting in front of the rectum and behind the bladder, the womb is comprised of four sections. The fundus, which is a curved, broad area that connects the uterus to the fallopian tubes (the narrow ducts which transport sperm to the unfertilized egg); the corpus, or main body of the uterus, that starts bellow the fallopian tubes and narrows downwards; the isthmus is the narrowest part of the uterus, connecting the cervix to the corpus, while finally the cervix­­––the lowest part of the uterus––opens into the vagina and dilates to allow the foetus to leave the womb. The womb also has three layers of tissue: the endometrium (the innermost layer which thickens during menstruation), the myometrium (firm and dense construction of muscle fibres, which induce uterine contractions during childbirth), and perimetrium (the outermost fatty tissue which separates the cervix from the bladder).[[255]](#footnote-255)

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s descriptions of the female genitalia, and in particular, the womb, are full bodied and material. The text is riddled with slang for female genitalia, such as the ‘touchole’, ‘lobsterpot’. ‘weibduck’, ‘quincecunct’, ‘muddy old triagonal delta’, ‘pokehole’, ‘jewel’ and ‘cunnyngnest’ (8.26, 71.23, 138.34, 206.35, 297.24, 339.02, 441.19). Joyce also moves beyond the surface of the female body through references to the womb, in the form of ‘*uteralterance*’, ’womth’, ‘woom’, ‘hystry’ (hystera), ‘fruits of my boom’ ‘alve’ (alvus) and ‘wom’ (293.l1, 348.25, 465.08, 535.18, 535.34, 600.07, 610.18). Genital slang was especially prominent in literature of the early modern period, seen in a three-volume dictionary of Shakespeare’s sexual language which lists various terms for vagina, including ‘chine’, ‘cloven’ ‘seal’, ‘oven’, ‘pit’, ‘purse’ and ‘river’.[[256]](#footnote-256) More specific allusions to the womb also emerge in *Finnegans Wake*, appearing in declarations such as: it ‘took place before the internatural convention of catholic midwives and found stead before the congress for the study of endonational calamities’, forming an allusion to the ‘endometrium’ which is reinforced by the reference to ‘midwives’ (128.27-28). Later, Shaun also asks Shem, ‘where have you been in the uterim’, which echoes the uterine (187.36). While finally, a discussion of HCE and ALP, who are ‘wedded now evermore in annastamoses by a ground plan of the placehunter’, doubles as a reference to anastomosis and the placenta (585.22-23). This is evident as anastomosis (annastamoses) describes the connection of two normally divergent things, such as blood vessels, located here within the context of the placenta (placehunter) which grows within the walls of the womb.[[257]](#footnote-257)

Split into three, interrelated sections, this chapter will peel away the layers of the Joycean womb to reveal its full metaphysical potential. I will begin by uncovering historical associations between women, the womb, and weaving, determining how these histories operate as metaphors and structures for Joyce’s use of metaphysics in the *Wake*. To fully illuminate this, the chapter will take the form of a tripartite reading across three chapters of the text: the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), ‘The Washers on the Ford’ (I.8) and ‘Night Lessons’ (II.2). Reading across the sections, I determine how each chapter functions as a reiteration of the same event, aligning with the *Wak*e’s fractal structure as they all depict a philosophical enquiry into our metaphysical origins.[[258]](#footnote-258) Here the womb acts as a central metaphor for philosophical knowledge, as its paradoxical sense of complexity and negation provides Joyce with the perfect vehicle for articulating the enigmatic nature of our origins. Despite their similarities, these three chapters will be read as progressions of one another, rather than repetitions of one another, depicting a move from chaos to civilisation as our ability to see the womb improves with each chapter. Beginning by interpreting the ‘Mamafesta’ as a material uterus, I underpin how a doubled authority of the text emerges within the paradoxical boundaries of the anatomical origin of life, providing the reader with a wider scope for understanding the complexities of the *Wake*. This comprehension will then be applied to the ‘Washerwomen’ chapter. Here, I will illuminate how the women’s act of scrubbing laundry can be reframed as an act of philosophical pursuit, as the women try to scrub the origin of the rumour clean within mother’s Liffey waters, which functions as bodily metaphor for the origins of life. Finally, with the progressive role of the womb uncovered, a reading of ‘Night Lessons’ will situate the uterus within the larger, macrocosmic universe, interrogating Joyce’s conflation of womb and cosmology. Together, these three readings will underpin Joyce’s complex use of the female body as a philosophical metaphor, moving from an investigation of the womb as a system which articulates a microcosmic, plot-orientated understanding of the rumour, to a macrocosmic and all-encompassing understanding of the universe.

**FABRIC AND FLESH: THE WOMB AS MATERIAL**

In 1908, Freud introduced his questionable notion of ‘Penis Envy’, outlining a theory of female psycho-sexual development where girls seemingly develop anxiety in response to discovering their lack of penis.[[259]](#footnote-259) Freud later draws connections between ‘Penis Envy’ and weaving, positing that while ‘women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions in the history of civilization; there is, however, one technique which they may have invented—that of plaiting and weaving’.[[260]](#footnote-260) This contribution, according to Freud, was a visceral response to ‘Penis Envy’, as women likely began weaving to hide their lack of male genitals behind a woven layer of pubic hair, in an attempt to cover up the ‘deficiency’.[[261]](#footnote-261) Although absurd and misogynistic, Freud’s theory sheds an intriguing feminist light on to the connection between women and weaving, framing weaving as a defensive gesture against male violence.

The image of weaving-as-defence-mechanism has long been depicted throughout literature. In one of the earliest works of fiction—Homer’s *The* *Odyssey*—Penelope weaves and unweaves her father-in-law’s burial shroud to delay marrying one of her suitors, forming a symbol of cunning as she claims she will marry once the loom is complete. Like many literary women, Penelope weaves out of necessity, using the loom as a substitution for strength as she attempts to keep her body out of the hands of the suitors who are ‘pestering’ her and causing ‘destruction’ in the house.[[262]](#footnote-262) These textile defence mechanisms are also seen in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, through his depiction of Philomela. After being raped by her sister’s husband, Tereus, Philomela has her tongue seized ‘with pincers’ to prevent her from voicing the crime. Because her ‘speechless lips can give no token of her wrongs’, Philomela ‘hangs a Thracian web on her loom’ and tells the story to her sister, Procne, by ‘skillfully weaving purple signs on a white background’. Ovid specifically draws attention to how Philomela’s weaving is both a clear response to her suffering and an act of cunning, noting how ‘grief has sharp wits, and in trouble cunning comes’.[[263]](#footnote-263) This echoes Penelope’s act of weaving, as both instances evoke a sense of intelligence, which leads to a revolt against male violence. Philomela’s rape is later alluded to in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, prefiguring Lavinia’s mutilation as Shakespeare writes that ‘His Philomel must lose her tongue today’.[[264]](#footnote-264) While Philomela weaves the name of her rapist in cloth, Lavinia is unable to do so as Chiron and Demetrius, described as ‘a craftier Tereus’, ‘hath cut those pretty fingers off, / That could have sewed better than Philomel’.[[265]](#footnote-265) To surpass this, Lavinia uses textual weave to articulate the act of sexual violence, pointing to a copy of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and guiding Titus and Marcus to the story of Philomela.[[266]](#footnote-266) By comparing her own abuse to Philomela’s, Lavinia regains her voice through the woven text. In each of these examples, weaving forms a defence against the violence of the women’s attackers, imbuing both textual and material weaving with a sense of political power.[[267]](#footnote-267) In this sense, Freud’s theory of Penis Envy harbors a feminist undertone: women weave a layer of pubic hair not to hide their ‘lack’ of genitals out of shame, but rather to form a defence against threats to the female body.

In addition to being a cunning survival tool, weaving also plays an important role in some indigenous traditions. The symbolic importance of textiles is recognized by the Nasa or Páez people, indigenous native Americans who live on the edge of the Columbian border. The Nasa have a long and symbolic relationship with weaving, according to Susana E. Matallana-Peláez, who illuminates how the ‘Nasa people consider weaving to be the original act of creation, as ‘Uma, the first woman, is remembered as the supreme weaver who wove the world into existence’.[[268]](#footnote-268) Bridging a connection between weaving and origins, textiles are directly associated with both the womb and the material world, encapsulated by the metaphorical braiding which results from lineage and reproduction. Families are braided together through lineage and the womb forms the origin of this braid as the family genes are sustained through reproduction.

During the time Joyce was writing *Finnegans Wake*, there was a growing interest in anthropology, ritual, and myth, exemplified by books such as James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890). Although Frazer’s book does not reference the Nasa, it demonstrates the emerging research on other cultures and traditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Piquing society’s interest in other religions and cultures at the time, Frazer’s text was read and used by Joyce as source for his literary work. In *Finnegans Wake,* Joyce references *The Golden Bough* at least four times through allusions such as ‘they have waved his green boughs o’er him as they have torn him limb from lamb’, which refers to the ritual murder of a divine king (58.06-7). Other allusions include references to Frazer’s chapter on the superstition of Mistletoe. Joyce writes, ‘let us be holy and evil and let her peace on the bough’, holy forming a reference to ‘holly’, and ‘hatching most out of his missado eggdrazzles’, playing on sound as ‘missado’ phonetically echoes mistletoe (465.13-14, 504.35). Joyce also potentially references the Nasa amongst allusions to multiple nationalities and religions. These allusions include Arabic, through a discussion of the ‘direction of Moscas’ (a combination of mecca and mosques), and Russian, seen in ‘Moscas’ as it forms an additional reference to Moscow, reinforced by Joyce’s use of the Russian language in the following line, in the form of ‘hurooshoos’, which echoes khorosho, Russian for ‘very well, okay’ (84.01-2). Shortly after, Joyce refers to the ‘uncertain weapon of *lignum vitae*, but evermore rhumanasant of a toboggan poop, picked up to keep some crowplucking appointment with some rival rialtos’ (84.05-7). When read closely, ‘rhumanasant’ (reminiscent) forms a direct reference to the Nasa as the middle part of the word contains the Nasa’s name, while lignum vitae is a hard wood, typically found in South America or the West Indies, often used in medicine. Locating us geographically in the Nasa’s territory, the reference to ‘toboggan poop’ or a tobacco pipe, also forms an indigenous reference, forming an allusion to a ceremonial smoking pipe used by several indigenous cultures in sacred ceremonies. These pipes are typically used as symbols of peace, reinforced in the text through the slang ‘pluck a crow’ or ‘crowplucking’, which means to settle an unpleasant affair. Demonstrating an awareness of multiple cultures, traditions, and religions, and a possible awareness of the Nasa themselves, Joyce’s allusions signify the possibility of the *Wake* being influenced by other cultures’ use of weaving and reproductive symbolism.

In *Finnegans Wake*, the material connections between weaving, braids, and lineage are visually embodied on the heads of the women. Issy and the rainbow girls’ ‘flowerheads’ are styled with ‘nattes’ (French for plaits), while ALP sports a similar style as ‘she pleated it. She plaited it’ (236.33, 207.02). These braids are symbolic of women’s ability to reproduce and sustain the family weave, reinforced as the women use the plaits as tools of seduction. Anna Livia weaves a braided ‘garland for her hair’ as she prepares to entice HCE, before making her face up with ‘strawbirry reds’ and ‘extra violates’ (207.10-11). This act of preparation interlaces multiple historical associations between women and weaving. The pun on ultraviolence (‘extra violates’) once more recalls how women have used weaving as a defence mechanism against the violence used on their bodies, shedding an ominous light on the scene as the ‘cock strik[es] mine’ (nine), leaving ALP ‘oysterface[d]’ when her husband ‘came’ (cums) in the ‘forth of her bassein’ (207.01-20). Later in II.2, the reproductive quality of their braids is made clear as Issy and her twenty-eight accompanying girls dance and expose themselves to Chuff (Shem). Forming a part of their own act of ‘begayment’ (beguilement), the ‘nattes’ which are ‘stylled’ upon their ‘flowerheads’ are directly associated with the womb, as a ‘style’ is the name of a flower’s reproductive system (236.30). The ‘style’ takes the form of a stalk which emerges from the pistle, the ovary of the flower which contains its seeds or ovules. Just as a flower’s bloom takes the form of a dance as it leans towards pollination, Issy and the rainbow girls dance seductively in their transition from girl to women, attempting to sustain the intergenerational braid which sits on top of their reproductive heads.

The influence of indigenous weaving also extends into Joyce’s use of form and symbolism. The Nasa frequently draw inspiration from spiral fractals when weaving. These are indicative of the universe and its ever-expanding nature, as the spiral is declared by the Nasa to be ‘a symbol of evolution’, reminding us

that everything has an origin; it is a snake or a rolled-up chumbe. It is the weft of life, with both an umbilical cord (the beginning of life) and a crown (intelligence), animals, people, jigras, hats. It is a coil that allows us to advance and find our origins at the same time.[[269]](#footnote-269)

These spirals form an important part of the *Wake*’s weave. This is firstly seen as Joyce structures the text around Giambattista Vico’s theory of cyclical history, which I previously outlined in the introduction. This history, with its notions of corso and ricorso, spirals outwards as it progresses and expands with each new turn of the circle, accommodating new levels of consciousness and human development with each stage. While the *Wake*’s four books align with these four stages of history, reinforced by Joyce’s own assertion that he uses these cycles as a ‘trellis’ on which to mould the remaining text, in ‘Night Lessons’, Joyce also turns these spirals inwards.[[270]](#footnote-270) The Euclidean diagram of the mother’s womb which the twins attempt to uncover (explored in the previous chapter in relation to the speculum) is accompanied by the marginalia ‘*Uteralterance or the Interplay of Bones in the Womb. The Vortex, Spring of Sprung Verse*’ (293.l05). Associating the mother’s uterus with a vortex or spiral—an ever-expanding braid—a connection is established between womb, weave, philosophy, and text. The ‘bones’, which are intertwined in ALP’s womb, symbolise the ontological questions of life and death which stand at the forefront of being and metaphysics. Bones represent our mortality as they are a temporary vehicle for life, yet they also harbour a sense of permanence as they exist before consciousness in the womb, and after consciousness, in death. The tissues of the womb weave these ontological bones together along with sperm and ovum, forming the vortex or braid of creation which expands as it leaves the womb. The Nasa, according to Matallana-Pel[áez](https://www.cambridge.org/core/search?filters%5BauthorTerms%5D=Susana%20E.%20Matallana-Pel%C3%A1ez&eventCode=SE-AU), ‘embraced fractals as an ideal way to conceptualize multiform continuities or fluidity across different scales, dimensions, and systems’.[[271]](#footnote-271) Just as the Nasa’s Uma weaves the world into existence through *her* womb, Joyce weaves the *Wake* into existence through *the* womb, braiding the pages together using its complex, metaphorical and metaphysical tissues. These menstrual and reproductive tissues allow Joyce to conceptualise the *Wake*’s own multiform fluidities and dimensions, operating as a complex metaphor for the world and its multi-layered, changing form.

Examining these political and symbolic forms of weaving alongside the *Wake*’s reproductive and metaphysical undertones, an association emerges between fabric (material), womb (tissue), and text (texture). The Latin word ‘texere’ encapsulates this dynamic, harbouring multiple definitions as it describes a combination of tissue (bodily and material), texture (to weave or intertwine) and text (deriving from the Latin, *textus*, meaning the texture or style of the work). Vicki Mahaffey has previously explored these tripartite connections in relation to *Ulysses*, interrogating the simultaneous tessellation and friction between Stephen and Molly, the two ‘human margins’ of the text.[[272]](#footnote-272) Addressing the relationship between style, language, and textiles in ‘Penelope’, Mahaffey analyses how, when compared, Stephen and Molly fall ‘imperceptibly into caricature’, becoming ‘disturbingly one-sided embodiments of male and female tendencies as disseminated through Christian doctrine’ (he, the word; she, the material world).[[273]](#footnote-273) While Stephen ‘is preoccupied with language, the clothing of thought […] Molly prefers clothing, the “language” of flesh’.[[274]](#footnote-274) Associating man with the mind and woman with the body, these connections result in a dual phenomenology as Molly and Stephen form a textual ‘warp and weft’ through their opposing mind-body natures.[[275]](#footnote-275) Comprising of ‘comparable systems of signification’, clothing and language provide Joyce with a vehicle for articulating sociological and philosophical connections between people, evident as he uses the ‘interrelationships between language and cloth as coverings for and versions of thought and the body’.[[276]](#footnote-276)

Similar associations between text, womb, and weaving emerge throughout the ‘Mamafesta’ (I.5), ‘Washerwomen’ (I.8) and ‘Night Lesson’ chapters (II.2), all of which function as repetitions of the same event, figured in three divergent and progressive ways. When considered together, these three chapters form their own Vichian cycle, depicting a chronological move from chaos to civilization as the womb, an emblem of metaphysical and textual consciousness, becomes more visible with each chapter.

**THE WOMB AS TEXT: TEXT AS WOMB**

That was the prick of the spindle to me that gave me the keys to dreamland

(*FW*, 615.27-28)

Appearing in ‘The Revered Letter’ (1923), a section that originally formed part of the ‘Mamafesta’ before it was later removed and repurposed for the first draft of Book Four, the epigraph facilitates an instructional reading of speculum and womb in *Finnegans Wake.* In addition to forming a superficial reference to Sleeping Beauty, the ‘prick of the spindle’ forms another reference to a speculum examination, evident as a ‘spindle’ echoes the shape of a cervical canal, while the ‘prick’ recalls the pain and discomfort associated with gynaecological examinations. In this reading, ‘dreamland’ refers to the *Wake* itself, with its disorientating, idiosyncratic qualities, and frequent reference to the experience of sleep as the ‘humptyhillhead’, HCE, is ‘retaled early in bed’ (3.20, 3.17). In the previous chapter, I uncovered how Biddy offers us a ‘loan of a lens’ (or speculum) to aid our reading of the letter, examining how the medical metaphor of the speculum points the reader towards the phenomenological authority of the womb. Indicating that the origins of the *Wake* can be found between the genital ‘Lps’, a dual phenomenology emerges in the text as womb and penis created a shared authority. After entering the female body through the prick of the speculum, the letter, a microcosm of the *Wake* itself, can now be explored as a textual womb which is refigured in various metaphors throughout the ‘Mamafesta’, ‘Washerwomen’ and ‘Night Lesson’ chapters.

Associations between ‘Mamafesta’ and womb appear early in the chapter, most prominently in a section where the letter’s envelope is compared to women’s clothing. Asking whether any ‘usual sort of ornery josser, flat chested fortyish’ has ever ‘looked sufficiently longly at a quite everydaylooking stamped addressed envelope?’, the envelope is described as an ‘outer husk’, exhibiting ‘only the civil or military clothing of whatever passionpallid nudity or plague purple nakedness may happen to tuck itself under its flap’ (109.03-12). Revealing the envelope to be ‘feminine clotheiering’, it is declared to be a formal covering which conceals the origin of the letter: ALP’s ‘plump and plain’ naked female body (109.31). Amy Kenny articulates that the early modern period saw the womb ‘conflated with the female body’, and so under the ‘flap’ lies the female origin—the letter or womb—a vision of ‘plague purple nakedness’ concealed beneath the material envelope of clothing.[[277]](#footnote-277) Forming connections between the written text and the female body, this results in a direct association between letter and womb, figuring the womb as a weaver of metaphysical, textual, and reproductive origins.

Expanding on the dynamic between material letter, philosophical thought, and the female body, Joyce writes that ‘she was, after all, wearing for the space of the time being some definite articles of evolutionary clothing […] capable of being stretched, filled out’ (109.22-27). These garments prefigure the philosophical role of the laundry, which is later rinsed in the mother’s bodily waters by the washerwomen in I.8. The garments have metaphysical status, associated here with ‘space’, ‘time’, and ‘being’, while also documenting the evolution (‘evolutionary’) of man as they stretch and expand with wear. Joyce’s playful metaphors also echo the interchangeable role of clothing and language which Mahaffey highlighted in relation to *Ulysses*, where clothing and weaving provide equally useful metaphors for the production of knowledge and metaphysical thought. Clothing’s ability to be ‘stretched’ and ‘filled out’ encapsulates our expansion of consciousness throughout history as each stage of Vico’s historical cycle sees us move further from chaos and towards civilisation. Just as the present can only be understood through an examination of the past, chapters of the *Wake* are enlightened by reading across, and outside of, the text, as previous chapters and allusions inform our readings of later sections.

Within this womb-like structure, Joyce uses the ‘Mamafesta’ to explore the metaphysical authority of the *Wake*, seen firstly as ALP is described as ‘ambidextrous’, or double-sided. Joyce compares HCE to a ‘chimerahunter’ (in Greek mythology, chimera refers to a hybrid creature consisting of multiple animal parts), and ALP takes the form of the chimera, revealed as ‘she is ladylike in everything she does and plays the gentleman’s part everytime’ (107.11, 107.14, 112.16-17).[[278]](#footnote-278) By enacting both genders, a distinct marker of her fluidity as she embodies the Liffey, ALP’s female identity becomes blurred as her philosophical womb functions as a symbol of both man and woman. She defies gender boundaries through engaging with ‘male’ practices and reflects female writers of the early modern period as the letter engages with complex metaphysical ideas, documenting ‘the oldworld epistola of their weatherings and their marrying and their burying and their natural selections’ (117.27). The line refers to Vico through reference to his three sacred customs of religion (which arose out of God’s thunder), marriage, and death, followed by an allusion to evolution (‘natural selections’), which echoes the work of Darwin.[[279]](#footnote-279) By referencing these two evolutionary theories, Joyce reinforces the expansive nature of the letter, while also highlighting its relation to cyclicality. The letter is particularly aligned with the female cycles, embodied by the womb through its cycles of menstruation and gestation, and by water-cycles, as the orator of the letter (ALP) functions as an embodiment of the river Liffey. While the philosophical importance of these water-cycles will be thoroughly explored in the final chapter of thesis, here I am interested in the blurring of gender, which indicates that the letter has a doubled authority, written from two distinct phenomenologies. While the origin of the letter is female and womb-like, enigmatic, and hidden, the letter or history is carried forward and articulated by men—Shem and Shaun figures—who mimic the protruding, phallogocentric penis of the intellectual world.

A chimera can also take several forms, including part human, part animal. When considering this in relation to ALP’s dual role as ‘Biddy Doran’—the ‘kindly’ hen who at ‘the hour klokking twelve’ discovers ‘a goodish-sized sheet of letterpaper’ in a pile of rubbish—Joyce evokes the longstanding comparison between femininity and the subhuman (112.27, 112.09, 111.07-9). This comparison is typically used as a means of dehumanisation, argued by Caroline Tipler to be targeted at those lacking agency or originality, often resulting in an emphasis on their sexual and reproductive functions as they become ‘animalised’.[[280]](#footnote-280) This animalisation reduces women to a body and, just like an animal, female flesh is depersonalised and made fit for male consumption. This dehumanised flesh becomes a womb figure when reflecting on early modern theories of the female anatomy. As will be revisited in Chapter 4, in the eighteenth century the female body was labelled as leaky substance through women’s inability to control the fluids which emerged from their wombs, resulting in apprehension as the womb was Othered due to its unknowability.[[281]](#footnote-281) Playing into the animal quality of lacking agency, the uncontrollable ‘leakiness’ of women’s bodies led to doubts surrounding women’s ability to think rationally, figured by the letter as ALP’s voice is muddied and distorted. Amy Kenny furthers this by declaring that theories such as the wandering womb labelled the reproductive system as an ‘animal in an animal, able to impact the female body based on its own desires’, providing practitioners for with a discourse ‘for describing and constructing an interiority that was otherwise impenetrable to them’.[[282]](#footnote-282) Mapping ALP’s ‘animalistic’ womb onto the letter achieves a similar outcome, as these early modern associations highlight the letter’s sense of impenetrability through familiar markers of ‘Otherness’.

Despite these misogynistic associations, this dual animal-woman persona is subversive, reclaiming the womb or animal as a site of originality and independent thought through its obscurity. Emphasising ALP’s role as the orator of the *Wake*, Joyce’s use of the hen-come-female persona demonstrates, according to Laura Lovejoy, the ‘subversive potential of the trope of women-as-animal’, reminding us of the importance of context when it comes to considering ‘the deployment of female imagery for or against patriarchal narratives’.[[283]](#footnote-283) It is easy to assume that Joyce’s use of beastly imagery is a play on these dehumanising comparisons. However, when you examine the imagery in the context of the chapter, Biddy Doran stands as an important figure of maternal love and understanding, a paragon of motherhood who adopts the textual role of the all-knowing origin, emphasising her role as womb as ‘she just feels she was born to lay and love eggs’ (112.13-14). Joyce references the hen three times in notebook VI.B.6 (December 1923-Feburary 1924), providing some insights into Biddy’s role as a historical figure. The first of interest simply reads ‘lead kindly hen’, alluding to the opening line of John Henry Newman’s poem ‘The Pillar of the Cloud’, which states, ‘Lead, Kindly Light’ (1833). Associating Biddy with the metaphysical status of God—as a pillar of cloud was viewed to be indicative of the manifestation of God of Israel in the Torah—the poetic comparison emphasises Joyce’s later use of the line, where in 1.5 he writes, ‘Lead, kindly fowl! They always did: ask the ages’, before noting how ‘her socioscientific sense is sound as a bell, sir’ (112.09-12). The line asks us to revise human narratives to realise the historical and metaphysical potential of women and the womb, encouraging us to redefine our attitudes towards gender as women are redefined as leaders and socioscientific figures, while man becomes ‘dirigible’ and passive (112.19). The second genetic reference steers us back towards the letter, where upon finding the scraps of scripture in a ‘waste’s [or womb’s] oasis’, ‘to the shock of both, Biddy Doran looked at literature’ (112.27).

Returning, once more, to the use of ‘chimera’, Joyce reinforces ALP’s ‘beastly’ persona through the word ‘hunter’ as it highlights Biddy’s role as both predator and submissive prey. The line can thus be read in two ways: the first of which implies that ALP, the chimera, hunts. The second assumes that ALP, the chimera, is hunted. When examined mythologically, ‘the eternal chimerahunter Oriolopos’ refers to Orion, the legendary huntsman who threatened to rid the earth of all its wild animals. The Gods punished Orion for this threat, and he was killed and reformed as a constellation in the stars. Appearing at a point in the I.5 where Joyce discusses the writer’s allusive identity, as we hear of a ‘multiplicity of personalities inflicted upon the documents’, the reference to Greek mythology highlights the mystery behind the epistle, reflecting our own scholarly pursuits at tracing the author of the letter (107.24-5). Just as the ‘Mamafesta’ is incomplete, the legend of Orion is fragmented as we only have access to small pieces of the story, many of which are conflicting and lead to various speculations about the full version of the tale. Embodied only upon the celestial sphere, the act of ‘hunting’ for Orion’s constellation in the sky proves tricky and not always possible. Constellations only offer an outline of a person, animal, or object, functioning as mere hints and clues as to what they represent and never giving the observer a clear, objective picture. They also change in size or shape over time, evolving into new forms and producing new possibilities for interpretation. By reflecting this mutating and allusive structure, the ‘polyhedron of scripture’, found and composed by a hen/female chimera and hunted like the constellation and tale of Orion, begins to take a reproductive form. The letter expands and contracts according to readerly desire, just as the womb expands and contracts to accommodate new life. This echoes Joyce’s use of gestation in ‘Oxen’ where the womb is used as a metaphor for the creation of new ideas and thought. Carrying the bodily metaphor into the core structure of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce uses the womb as a convenient metaphor for topics of negation and growth, articulating the complex and ever-changing nature of the world, and the impossibility of fully tracing our own metaphysical origins.

While early drafts of I.5 clearly depict the ‘workings of ALP’s mind’, Dirk van Hulle notes that ‘the published version is enriched or impoverished by more external agents or elements’, seen as the distinctly female section, ‘The Revered Letter’ (1923), was later removed and repurposed for the first draft of Book Four.[[284]](#footnote-284) Elaborating on this, Van Hulle declares that in the early drafts,

Joyce introduces ALP by means of letter in defence of her husband, HCE. It is a stylistic introduction: ALP’s writing style is the first tool Joyce employs to define her as a character. By gradually removing the letter and eventually introducing a hen that finds the letter, Joyce makes a shift from directness to indirection, from ALP’s viewpoint to the hen’s.[[285]](#footnote-285)

Examples of this shift are found when comparing manuscripts. In the protodrafts, the letter has a sense of authorship, claiming to have been written ‘by an honest Woman of the world who can only tell the naked truth’ about her husband, once more associating ‘truth’ with the naked female body. Nevertheless, in later drafts, Joyce hides the line amongst a list of titles that speculate the letter’s possible authors, noting how, ‘the proteiform graph itself is a polyhedron of scripture’, and thus suggesting it was written by multiple scribes. The shift from ALP’s internal thoughts to the hen’s external perspective is reinforced by a move from singularity to multiplicity, refuting the idea of tracing the letter’s origins, or womb, by suggesting it was a product of more than one hand.

By displacing the chapter’s female voice with infiltrations of other sources, voices and histories, Joyce initially seems to be removing some of ALP’s autonomy, both perpetuating and highlighting the erasure of women from philosophical discourse as the letter’s content becomes somewhat ambiguous. This complicates ALP’s role as Biddy Doran by blurring the hen’s authoritative status. It is uncertain as to whether the Biddy is the letter’s writer, orator or finder, and any textual clues are often undermined or negated by the question of other possible scribes. However, on the other hand, the uncertainty behind the letter’s scribe in light of the dual authority of the text indicates that both men and women have had a hand in the letter’s creation. The double-gendered chimera signifies this double authority, figuring both womb and penis in its complexity. Van Hulle crucially highlights this conflation of genders, noting that at first there was no clear indication that ALP had not written the letter herself. At the time that ‘Joyce wrote the first few drafts of the letter in the “guiltless” copybook, that idea had not yet been introduced’, and it was here that,

Joyce first used the cognitive process he knew best (thinking on paper) to introduce the—then—new character of ALP by letting her write a letter (full of spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and nonsequiturs) characterising her as a loving wife with a rather chaotic mind.[[286]](#footnote-286)

Despite these early drafts, in the final manuscript the epistle is retrieved from a pile of rubbish by Biddy (or ALP) and left virtually unreadable (111.05). Shem has now been given the role of letter writer, confirmed by a line found in Book Four which reads, ‘letter, carried of Shaun, son of Hek, written of Shem, brother of Shaun, uttered for Alp, mother of Shem, for Hek, father of Shaun’ (420.17-9). To support these new claims, Joyce moves the ‘The Revered Letter’ to the end of Book Four in the final drafts of 1938,

Dear. And we go on to Dirtdump. Reverend. May we add majesty? Well, we have frankly enjoyed more than anything these secret workings of natures (thanks ever for it, we humbly pray) and, well, was really so denighted of this lights time (615.12-15).

Originally intended to function as an introduction to the epistle, this repurposed section works well in Book Four, aligning with ALP’s return to nature as she rushes into the arms of her ‘cold mad feary father’ on the final page of the text (628.01-2). Here, the ‘secret workings of natures’, or the womb, are upheld, as the river Liffey filters into the sea and ALP thus fades into ‘mememormee’, passing ‘The keys to’ her ‘Lps’, or female genitalia, onto the reader (628.14).

Perhaps Joyce’s intention was to simply exemplify history’s palimpsestic nature, where origins are continually rewritten and repurposed; however, the letter’s new and revised form echoes the complexities of the ‘matriarchive’, a term coined by Derrida that refers to the chronicling of important female works.[[287]](#footnote-287) William Sherman notes that archives are organised in a way that promotes ‘subtle exclusions of women’. Functioning as ‘points of origin which both preserve and order’, female works are often lost or filed under the woman’s marital surname, making it difficult to determine whether they were written by a female hand.[[288]](#footnote-288) When considering Joyce’s letter as an example of the failure to properly archive women’s works, a case of neglect is seen, where the letter is unkempt, the origin lost and the gender uncertain, highlighted by the ambiguity posed by ‘his (or her[’s])’ ‘ambidextrous’ nature (107.11-12). This is visible in *Finnegans Wake* as upon its creation the letter becomes associated with the penis, rather than the womb, as the origin is lost, and it is contracted into phallogocentric language. Despite the fact it is Biddy who finds the letter, Shaun (known as Kevin here) claims to have found it himself, as Joyce writes ‘but keepy little Kevin in the despondful surrounding of such sneezing cold would every have trouved up on a strate’ (110.32-33). Playing on the notion of finders keepers (‘keepy’), Kevin’s lie suggests a play on the matriarchive, as Kevin obscures Biddy from the picture and thus overrides womb’s role in the chapter, masking its importance from the reader. This is confirmed just prior to this, as Biddy is being observed ‘behaviourising strangely’ upon a pile of ‘copsjute’ or dung, when unexpectedly its ‘limon’ or soil threw up ‘a few spontaneous scraps of orangepeel’, declared to be the ‘last remains of an outdoor meal by some unknown sunseeker […] way back in his mistridden past’ (110.25-30). Likely referring to the finding of the letter, this is where the chapter moves onto an image of Kevin, and the scraps of orange peel are transformed into scriptures of high importance: a ‘strete’ (estreat, or true copy of the original), containing ‘patchpurple[‘s]’ or brilliant passages, which are only truly illuminated when in the hands of man (110.34, 111.02). This echoes Sherman’s discussion of the ‘subtle exclusions of women’ as the female authority of the letter is erased, or blurred, by Shaun’s male hand.

**WEAVING FROM THE WOMB**

Moving from the ‘Mamafesta’ to Book One Chapter Eight, the metaphorical nature of the womb becomes clearer in its depiction. Here, two washerwomen (embodiments of Shem and Shaun) stand over the river Liffey cleaning laundry while discussing the rumour surrounding HCE’s illicit exploits in Phoenix Park. The chapter opens with an O, signalling a move towards matriarchy and the female phenomenological perspective as the women discuss ALP’s elusive persona:

O

tell me all about

Anna Livia! I want to hear all

about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes, of course

(196.01-4)

The O is once again associated with the mother’s body here, recalling my bodily discussions of the typographical figure in Chapter 1. It is symbolic of ALP’s delta (or genital river mouth), as she takes the form of the river Liffey, visually represented as the triangular widening of the text mimics the widening of the riverbank, and thus the widening of the mother’s legs. Embodying the mother’s vagina or ‘muddy old triagonal delta’, the chapter’s circular (and triangular) opening associates the womb, fabric, and fluid with the rumour, as each intertwine to encapsulate the inability to attain complete metaphysical knowledge of the world (297.24). This is figured in the women’s claims to ‘know’ ALP. On the one hand, they ‘of course’ know Anna Livia, recognising her as a community figure as they discuss how her husband has been ‘minxing marrage and making loof’ (196.24). Nevertheless, this ‘knowing’ is superficial, describing a basic sense of familiarity as one washerwoman *knows* who the other is referring to. The word ‘minxing’ is also curious, evoking a sense of gender fluidity through its historical usage. ‘Minx’ was most often used towards women, harbouring misogynistic connotations as it was frequently used to refer to prostitutes, operating as another word for ‘whore’.[[289]](#footnote-289) In this instance, the use of ‘minxing’ refers to HCE and his infidelity in Phoenix Park, suggesting a ‘minxing’ (mixing) or conflation of gender roles as the washerwomen condemn HCE’s sexual behaviour. This sense of fluidity foreshadows my discussion in Chapter 4, where I examine how a sharing of bodily fluids between the figures of the text destabilises the dualistic nature of gendered phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*.

On closer inspection, the word ‘know’ outlines the various dualities at play in the chapter, signifying multiple levels of understanding as the threads of the laundry begin to weave a complex web of ideas. Despite the ‘washerwomen’s’ declaration that they ‘know by heart the places [HCE] likes to saale’, their wavering statements, such as ‘whatever it was they threed to make out he thried to two in the Fiendish park’, makes it clear they only grapple with fragments of the tale. Joyce’s use of ‘whatever’ emphasises the washerwomen’s lack of certainty, giving the rumour an all-encompassing quality as it suggests it has no clear limits or boundaries (196.14-15, 196.09-11). This is furthered by the washerwomen’s questions, which range from ‘who blocksmitt her saft anvil or yelled lep to her pail?’ to ‘was his help inshored in the Stork and Pelican against bungelars, flu, and third risk parties?’ (197.11, 197.18-20). Harbouring no clear focus, the expansive nature of the questions suggests the women are far from locating the origin and truth of the rumour, appearing to loosely grapple around the topic, rather than pinpointing a clear narrative. ‘Know’ here thus becomes indicative of ‘knowledge’, and the laundry thus becomes a metaphor for the loose threads of the rumour, prefigured by the ‘Mamafesta’s’ conflation between clothing and envelope. Joyce makes these material metaphors clear from the chapter’s opening, seen in the washerwomen’s instructions to ‘look at the shirt of him!’ as they attempt to make HCE’s ‘private linen public’ (196.11, 196.16).[[290]](#footnote-290) In this reading, the line discussing what they ‘threed to make out he thried’ to do in Phoenix Park is reframed as ‘tried’ becomes linguistically associated with thread. This indicates that the women are engaging in an act of weaving, combining different metaphysical warps and wefts to reach the origin of the rumour.

At first, the laundry appears to be directly associated with HCE, framing him as the origin which the women attempt to uncover. Yet, on closer inspection, the laundry functions as a reflection of the ‘Mamafesta’. The threads of the laundry are symbolic of the textual weave of the letter, acting as visual and tangible fragments of the rumour. Just as the ‘Mamafesta’ takes the form of a ‘polyhedron of scripture’, mimicking our muddy understanding of the past through its textual holes, the washerwomen’s dialogue similarly forms a discussion of metaphysical and historical origins. Through their act of washing, the women make HCE and ALP’s ‘private linen public’, or pubic, as fluid and womb––mapped here onto river and delta—stand as vessels for representing our inability to ever grasp the whole (hole) of the rumour, and complete metaphysical understanding. In both chapters, ALP is framed as the linguistic and bodily origin of the text, functioning as a symbol of metaphysics as she represents unattainable knowledge. While in the ‘Mamafesta’ ALP is the orator or origin of the letter, in 1.8 the letter is refigured as bodily metaphor, visible as ALP’s reproductive waters are used to wash clean the clothing that mimics an ever-regressing past: a garment, according to Catherine Bernard, which is ‘worn threadbare by time’.[[291]](#footnote-291)

Joyce’s intertwining of the maternal (ALP) and material (weave) is fitting due to its important etymological history. The word ‘material’, previously ‘materialis’ in late Latin, is derived from the word ‘māteria’, which refers to ‘matter’ in the physical, tangible sense of the word. Māteria, or matter, first alluded to ‘wood’ or ‘substance’ as it described that which was distinct from the mind or spirit and occupied space in the world. Most intriguing is that the linguistic root of matter and material is ‘mӑter’, which refers to the origin or source, and most importantly, the mother. Originating from the same linguistic source, mother and matter/material operate as reflections of one another. While the mother forms the reproductive system of the living world through the development and formation of the foetus, matter forms the reproductive system of the material world, giving form to physical objects.[[292]](#footnote-292)

Considering the ‘Washerwomen’ chapter in light of these etymological and philosophical continuities between women and weaving, the act of cleaning laundry in the Liffey can thus be interpreted metaphorically. Following the discovery of a scrap of what appears to be Biddy’s letter, which highlights the overlay between chapters as we are instructed to ‘Essonne inne!’ or listen in, what can be seen is ALP’s call for a new vagina after the birth of her three children, Shem, Shaun and Issy. She declares that she ‘*badly want[s] a brand-new bankside’* phonetically insinuating the backside while metaphorically alluding to the opening of the female reproductive system through the two ‘banks’, or labia, which sit on either side of ALP’s delta or O. The ‘*putty affair*’ that ALP has is ‘*wore out*’ and ‘*much-altered*’ by her ‘*camel’s hump*’ or ‘*jointspoiler*’ (pregnancies), and she needs to ‘*feale the gay aire*’ of ‘*saywint up her ambushure*’, a note which appears to have been translated from Joyce’s notebook entry, reading: ‘get some fresh sea air up my hole’ (VI.B.6.077b (*r*)). Betty Underbill affirms that it was a long-held custom for Arab women to ‘pack the vagina with salt’ for the first week after childbirth, due to the belief that it would ‘restore the vagina to its nulliparous state and to add to the husband’s sexual pleasure. ALP’s desire to feel the salty, sea wind up her ‘hole’ in the context of childbirth thus forms a multicultural allusion to the custom of maintaining an ‘unspoiled’ vagina after bearing children.[[293]](#footnote-293)

ALP’s apparent desire to tighten or rejuvenate her ‘ambushure’, or *embouchure*, the French for river mouth, is then interrupted by the washerwomen’s gossip, who attempt to move beyond superficial knowledge, figured by the vagina or ‘bankside’, towards a deeper discussion of origins through the image of the womb. The passage echoes the chapter’s opening as one woman declares ‘Onon! Onon! tell me more Tell me every tiny teign’, yet it marks a move into a closer examination of ALP as ‘tell me all about Anna Livia’ is substituted for discussion of even ‘tiny teign’ (thing or part) of her river delta (river Teign) (201.21). Here, Joyce fleshes out the fabric of ALP’s womb through a detailed description of insemination: ‘I want to know every single ingle. Down to what made the potters fly into jagsthole. And why were the vesles vet. That homa fevers winning me wome’ (201.21-24). Approaching the question of origins through wanting to know every ‘single ingle’ (detail), the washerwomen ask what made the potters (a reference to sperm, reiterated as HCE is later dubbed the ‘father of otters’) fly into the ‘jagsthole’, which alludes to ALP’s womb through its association with a German tributary, Jagst (214.12). Why were the vessels of the womb (or sperm) wet, they ask, before declaring that homa (home, or Homer) ‘fever is winning me womb’. Home sickness is creating a desire to return to the origin or womb, or a desire to know the womb, as it holds the key to the metaphysical questions of the *Wake* and the details of HCE’s exploits which the women are trying to unpack. Joyce is also playing on Samuel Butler’s *Authoress of the Odyssey*, in which Butler (likely satirically) declares that ‘it was not till I got to Circe that it flashed upon me that I was reading the work, not of an old man, but of a young woman’.[[294]](#footnote-294) Positing that Homer was a woman shifts our understanding of the textual authority of the *Odyssey* and in turn reframes our reading of this reference to Homer in *Finnegans Wake*. Because the *Odyssey* is one of the oldest known works of literature that we have access to, this once again recalls the question of origins, blurring the question of who has authority over our origins through a conflation of gender. The hen’s discovery of the letter as ‘Biddy Doran looked at literature’, alongside the ‘Mamafesta’s’ status as the origin of the *Wake* or a condensed version of the text, aligns ALP with the figure of Homer, and in turn her body becomes the Odyssean origin and the key to understanding this history. By referring to ALP’s blood vessels or the womb-as-vessel, Joyce introduces a new sense of flesh and tissue to the womb which is absent from the ‘Mamafesta’, surpassing the literary trope of womb as hole or negated space, and instead portraying it a complex reproductive system. The conflation between letter, rumour, and womb is reflected in the washerwomen’s scrubbing on the laundry in the mother’s delta, and the investigation spirals outwards as the rumour, or womb-er, becomes symbolic of our earlier, metaphysical origins.

Bridging the distinction between life, art, and knowledge through its association with ALP’s reproductive waters, the Liffey functions as a site of maternal and material creation, facilitating the production of metaphysical thought through the philosophical warp and wefts that emerge from the tissue of the mother’s womb. The womb weaves together human matter (sperm and ovum), giving it form through gestation and childbirth. Upon leaving the body, this human matter becomes a vessel of knowledge, in the sense that we grow up to be conscious beings, capable of metaphysical thought. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce plays with these links between the womb and knowledge, evident as the mother’s uterus (the river Liffey) becomes symbolic of metaphysical thought itself. The shedding of tissue from ALP’s menstrual cycle forms represents the philosophical material which is woven into comprehension by the washerwomen. On a superficial level, this is figured as a quest to get to the bottom of the rumour, embodied by the tissues of ALP’s shedding womb which leave traces of the origin without revealing its full form. Uncovering the origin of the story is an act of philosophical pursuit. The women use the mother’s womb to wash clean the blurred rumour regarding HCE, while the tale also takes on macrocosmic meaning, depicting the human pursuit to comprehend our own metaphysical existence by continually tracing our origins.

In their dialectical pursuit of the tale, the washerwomen thus echo the path of the philosopher in gaining metaphysical understanding. ALP stands as the origin, or spring of enigmatic knowledge, while the women follow the path of Socratic philosophers, attempting to locate life’s origin through dialogue. At the end of the chapter, their quest is fulfilled as they become tree and stone (‘Telmetale of stem and stone!’) signifying that the women have gained a higher understanding of metaphysics as they take their final philosophical form (216.03). The tree/stone proverb came to fruition through Plato’s work, where Socrates declares to Phaedrus that ‘the men of their time, who lacked your modern sophistication, were simple-minded enough to be quite satisfied with messages from an oak or a rock if only they were true’.[[295]](#footnote-295) Forming a commentary on the reader’s willingness to listen to anything or anyone willing to shed some clarity on the narrative, the washerwomen’s transformation into a tree and a stone highlights our own foolishness in the quest of Wakean knowledge.

Most importantly, the tree/stone metaphor associates the washerwomen with Shem and Shaun, ‘stem and stone’, who frequently assume the form of ‘stonrngens’ and ‘tramtrees’, ‘auldstane eld’ (stone, elm) and ‘the augustan peacebetothem oaks’ (5.31, 21.05, 53.15). Tracing the origins of the *Wake* by rinsing the letter clean in ALP’s bodily waters, the washerwomen’s (Shem’s and Shaun’s) attempt to comprehend the rumour also forms a direct reflection of ‘Night Lessons’. While in I.8 Shem and Shaun become two washerwomen who stand on either side of the Liffey’s banks, scrubbing the tissues of the mother’s womb in an attempt to ‘know’ the origin, in II.2 the twins similarly attempt to lift the veil of the mother’s skirt in order to view her womb and get a peek at their own metaphysical beginnings. Establishing further correlations between womb and knowledge, as the chapter develops the washerwomen declare that they ‘Can’t hear with the waters of. The Chittering water of’ as the banks of the river expand (215.31). The further they get from the delta, or womb, the more difficulty they have engaging in a philosophical dialogue, because as the banks widen, so do the mother’s legs, indicating they are further from the origin or womb.

**THE COSMOLOGICAL WOMB**

While in the ‘Mamafesta’ the womb is internal and impenetrable, in the move from the ‘Letter’ to the ‘Night Lesson’ the womb becomes cosmological and all-encompassing, demonstrating its expansive quality through a comparison between womb and universe. As explored in Chapter 1 of this thesis, II.2 naturally invites commentary on the philosophical possibilities of the womb. Shem, Shaun and Issy participate in a set of teachings in an attempt to comprehend complex metaphysical questions of knowledge. The chapter centres around philosophy, being, and the question of origins, embodied primarily by ALP’s womb or ‘muddy old triagonal delta (287.24). Central to the chapter’s loose plot is Shem and Shaun’s attempt to comprehend the riddle of the mother’s ‘trickkikant’ by lifting her skirt to ‘see her good’ (297.24). However, this proves difficult, articulated by a geometric exercise as the children are asked to show that the,

median, hce che ech interecting at royde angles the parilegs of a given obtuse one biscuts both the arcs that are in curveachord behind (283.32-284.04).

As noted by Lucia Boldrini, the proposition is impossible, demanding us ‘to draw a median line that intersects at right angles the obtuse angle of an isosceles triangle’, even though the ‘only possible median of an obtuse angle will form two equal angles that can only be acute’.[[296]](#footnote-296) Most intriguing is the pairing between the mathematical equation and an image of sexual desire. The proposition maps out an explicit image of the parents engaging in intercourse: while the twins try to solve how the father, ‘hce’, intersects or ‘interects’ his ‘erect’ phallus at right angles between the pair of legs of a given obtuse, the obtuse angle refers to ALP’s ‘muddy old triagonal delta’.

Joyce’s conflation of mathematics and female genitalia culminates in a Euclidean diagram, which forms a contradiction because while the figure is Euclidean, the womb is not. Emerging in the middle of Shem’s daydream as ‘he gazet’ sleepily through the ‘lazily eye of his lapis’, the diagram is multifunctional, expanding across multiple bodies of knowledge (fig. 4, appendix 4). ‘Lapis’ refers to lapis lazuli, a deep blue metamorphic gemstone reflective of Joyce’s own eye colour. However, the allusion to his ‘stones’ or eyeballs also doubles as a reference to testicles through slang, implying a duality between the male body and phenomenology as the eyeballs become a play on eyes *and* balls. In addition to its testicular shape, the figure also takes the form of a womb. Depicting a well-known Euclidean proof used in geometry, the diagram reiterates the chapter’s mathematical teachings as the twins use the theorem to comprehend the mother’s genitalia or uterus. The two overlapping circles visually represent the ovaries while the central triangle embodies womb, labia, and vulva, marked by the letters ‘A α’, ‘L λ’ and ‘P *π*’ (293.12).

Beginning with ‘the lazily eye of his lapis’, the diagram firstly represents the eyes through which Shem sees the ‘Vieus Von DVbLIn’ (views of Dublin) (293.11-12). Echoing the viewing slot of a peep show through its binocular shape, the diagram has a voyeuristic feel as it leads the eye to the mother’s womb. Peep shows often used stereoscopes to view their erotic scenes, a device which uses two slightly offset images of the same picture simultaneously to create an allusion of a single three-dimensional image (fig. 5, appendix 5). Joyce visualises this in the figure through the two triangles which represent the womb or viewing object. Sitting between the binocular circles or eyes, the triangles both depict the same image of the mother’s womb through their identical equilateral shape, slightly differentiated through the corresponding letters. Echoing a stereoscope as the doubled images come to represent a singular image, the diagram demonstrates how methodical optical devices have been used to enhance sexual titillation, forging unusual links between desire, knowledge, and logic.

Through this visual aspect, the diagram represents, according to Vicki Mahaffey, both the ‘object of perception [the womb] and the means of perception [the eyes]’, resulting in the twins’ Euclidean study forming a ‘contemplation of themselves’ as they question their own subjective phenomenology.[[297]](#footnote-297) This adds a philosophical complexity to the image by deconstructing notions of Cartesian dualism. The male and female, who at first appear opposed as the twins’ mathematical minds analyse the sensory female body, are equalised through the introduction of vision and daydreams. The twins become sunk in their senses, losing ‘the balance of [their] minds’––or the reason-led ‘objective conception of the visual universe’––as they are unable to ‘in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre’ (293.06-293.31-32). This ‘line’ represents the supposed difference between men and women in their ability to practice philosophy, as the former has historically been associated with reason, the latter, emotion.[[298]](#footnote-298) While the gendered dichotomy between reason and emotion will be fully explored in Chapter 4, in the context of fluidity, here Joyce plays on this dynamic. Issy’s footnotes are sexually charged and associated with the passions, seen in declarations such as, ‘I’d like his pink’s cheek’ and ‘my six is no secret, sir’, while the twins are more logical and mind orientated, embodied by Joyce’s use of capitalisation which makes them appear more formal and declarative: ‘URGES AND WIDERURGES IN PRIMITIVE SEPT’ (268.fn5, 273.fn7, 267.r1). Despite these historical assumptions that reason triumphs emotion when it comes to the pursuit of knowledge, Issy’s playful footnotes play a crucial role in the chapter’s metaphysical discussion. She operates as an interlocutor who uses the female body for metaphysical leverage. By blurring the distinction between the two gendered ‘realities’ through a descent into the senses, Joyce implies that men are equally sensory beings and both genders are equally capable of practicing philosophy, captured by the diagram as the ovarian circles also double as testicles. The conflated male and female reproductive organs thus hint at an alternative and multi-gendered approach to the phenomenology of the text and the production of philosophical thought. The visual element of the image embodies this dual phenomenology as the two eyes cross over to meet in the middle, creating a space for the supposedly mathematical male mind and the sexualised female body to meet. Taking this dual perspective as an instruction of how to approach the philosophy of the *Wake* through the lens of multiple genders (and therefore multiple phenomenologies), the reader’s approach to *Finnegans Wake* encounters a radical shift as a consideration of the medical (or gynaecological) metaphor is once more emphasised as ‘The keys to’ the genital ‘Lps’, or origins, of the *Wake*’s interrogation of metaphysics (628.15).

Joyce’s use of the Greek (α λ *π*) and Roman (ALP) alphabet also plays on the simultaneous singularity and doubleness of the diagram. The figure is singular on account of its individuality, differing from all other Euclidean propositions because it is framed by the body of the mother, ALP. By mapping the mother’s womb onto geometry, the diagram is transformed from a recognised mathematical figure into a literary event, releasing the diagram from its logical, mathematical boundaries as it is left open to interpretation. I use the term ‘literary event’ in light of Derek Attridge’s elucidations, where he articulates that singularity is generated,

by a configuration of general properties that, in in constituting the entity (as it exists in a particular time and place), go beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture’s norms, the norms with which its members are familiar and through which most cultural products are understood. […] Strictly speaking, therefore, singularity […] is not a property but an event, the event of singularizing which takes place in reception.[[299]](#footnote-299)

By adding the algebraic letters of ‘A, L and P’ and ‘α, λ, *π*’ to the familiar Euclidean proposition, Joyce introduces, in the words of Attridge, ‘otherness into the sphere of the same’ as they simultaneously stand as markers of the mother, ALP.[[300]](#footnote-300) Associating the diagram with the body of the mother, the figure thus operates outside of the ‘familiar laws’ of Euclidean mathematics as the body attaches itself to mathematical logic. In this sphere, the ‘pre-programmed’ expectations of readers who are familiar with Euclidean geometry are disarmed, as the diagram becomes both singular (mathematical) and double (literary) in its representation. This doubleness allows the diagram to surpass its mathematical context, collapsing the ridged boundaries of the proposition and opening it up to cosmology and philosophical thought.

Joyce’s use of the Greek and Roman alphabet also forms a destabilising body through its linguistic and scientific associations. While the roman letters stand as steadfast markers of the mother, in the Greek alphabet ‘P’ is not *pi* but *rho*, undermining the diagram’s association with ALP as it makes an ‘R’ sound rather than a ‘P’ sound. Demonstrating the fragility of meaning and interpretation as the ‘P’—originally a clear marker of ‘Plurabelle’—revels in its own plurality, the image forms an elitist play on words as only certain readers will be aware that ‘P’ is not the capital of ‘Pi’. Furthermore, the letters also scientifically depict the dynamic between singularity and expansion. A (*alpha*), refers to the ‘first’ or ‘primary’, reinforcing the image of singularity as the Euclidean womb is associated with origins and originality. The enigmatic origin is then further obscured by L (*lambda*) and P (*rho*). While *rho* refers to density, the measurement of matter to volume, *lambda* refers to the cosmological constant, the energy density of space and its expansion. Einstein introduced the cosmological constant in 1917 as an alternative to his theory of general relativity, which declared that the universe would either contract or expand. The cosmological constant was introduced to balance the consensus that the universe was static. It was a ‘fudge factor’, used to make sense of the accepted understanding of cosmology in the early 1900s. Despite Einstein’s initial calculations, he later declared the cosmological constant to be the ‘biggest mistake of his life’, disregarding the theory in 1931 when Edwin Hubble confirmed that the universe was constantly expanding with zero cosmological constant.[[301]](#footnote-301)

Joyce’s association between scientific error and the mother’s womb is curious. It reinforces the associations between uterus and text, as the scientific error embedded in the diagram mimics the continuous linguistic errors of the *Wake*. These errors operate dualistically, appearing in the form of ‘mistakes’ as the various misspellings and illogical structures of the *Wake* undermine general literary logic, while this error also operates as a form of wandering—a state of erring—where the text expands across time and space through allusions to different fields, before returning, briefly, to the core plot. In a more complex reading, the cosmological constant is now often associated with dark energy, an enigmatic phenomenon, responsible for accelerating the expansion of the universe.[[302]](#footnote-302) Just as no one can fully comprehend the womb as well as the metaphysics which are metaphorically embodied by the womb’s ineffability, no one is able to fully conceive of the universe, because its vast expanse is immeasurable. By figuring origin, density, space, and expansion within the three corners of the mother’s spatial womb, Joyce not only associates the female body with dark matter or unobtainable knowledge, enacted by the womb through our inability to reach the origin, but also reveals its philosophical and metaphysical potential through its distinct unknowability. The womb embodies the vast expanding universe of the *Wake*, acting as a metaphorical vehicle of the unknown and the misconceptions that arise in the development of knowledge. The womb represents both a space of negation—the dark textual space that is always eluding the reader’s comprehension—and a site of complexity, as the womb’s intricate layers of tissue and muscle embody the continual expansion of knowledge that comes with reading and interpreting the *Wake*.

Due to the vast cosmological potential of the womb, the twins struggle to comprehend the female form within the ridged framework of the Euclidean proof. Ciaran McMorran attests that the ‘straight lines, equilateral triangles, perfect circles and other representations of “perfection”’ fail to accommodate ‘the irregular forms which appear on ALP’s variably curved bodily and terrestrial surfaces’.[[303]](#footnote-303) To counteract this, Joyce uses the womb to challenge the Euclidean method of visualising the world by alluding to the ‘non-Euclidean geometries of Giordano Bruno, Henri Poincaré and Bernhard Riemann’ throughout ‘Night Lessons’, interrogating ‘the presumption that Euclidean geometry is the only straight and narrow path to an objective conception of the visual universe’.[[304]](#footnote-304)

Joyce’s undermining of Euclid’s approach is evident through frequent references to Lewis Carroll, which appear throughout the lesson in the form of ‘Wonderlawn’s lost us for ever’ and ‘A liss in hunterland’ (270.20, 276.f12). Recalling Joyce’s use of ‘chimerahunter’, ‘Hunterland’ instantly forms a predatory image by conflating the book’s title (Wonderland) with Carroll’s rumoured paedophilia, adding an additional layer of mockery by positioning him as a ‘hunter’. Of most interest is a reference located in the passage following the diagram, as Joyce writes the ‘copynkgink strayedline AL (in Fig., [in] the forest) from being continued, stops ait Lambday’ […] One of the most murmurable loose carrollaries ever Ellis threw his cookingclass’ (294.02-4, 294.07-8). First operating as an allusion to geometry through the mathematical reference­­ ‘corollaries’ alongside ‘AL’ and ‘Lambday’ (Alpha to Lambda), the line signals that the mother’s body has ‘strayed’ from the straight lines of Euclidean geometry, preventing our understanding of ALP’s ‘Fig., in the forest’ from ‘being continued’. Fig is another form of sexual slang used by Shakespeare to mean vagina, while forest alludes to pubic hair, often described as an area of thick vegetation: a forest.[[305]](#footnote-305) In this context, the ‘con’ in ‘continued’ can be read as an allusion to the mother’s cunt, deriving from the Shakespeare’s pun on conscience in ‘Sonnet 151’, which reads that ‘Love is too young to know what conscience is;/ Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love?’.[[306]](#footnote-306) Shakespeare associates the ‘cunt’ with knowledge or conscience through its connections to love. When someone has sex, they gain knowledge of the cunt or ‘con’ (con-science). This sexual knowledge translates to philosophical knowledge or consciousness here, evoking a dynamic between knowing, knowledge, and the body through the association between knowing the ‘cunt’ (con) and obtaining consciousness or knowledge.[[307]](#footnote-307) It is fitting that Joyce once again refers to the cosmological constant through reference to ‘Lambday’, once again associating knowledge of the ‘cunt’ with our knowledge of dark matter, as both lie outside of a logical, Euclidean understanding of the world. This is further cemented using ‘Carrolaries’, which doubles as a reference to Carroll, who was highly supportive of Euclid to the extent that he even published a play titled *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (1879), which defended a Euclidean approach to mathematics. In his text, Carroll examines thirteen contemporary geometry studies before denouncing them as inferior, or equal to, Euclidean theories, concluding with a fictional statement from Euclid in which he declares, ‘let me carry with me the hope that I have convinced you of the importance, if not the necessity, of retaining my order and numbering, and my method of treating straight Lines, angles, right angles, and (most especially) Parallels’.[[308]](#footnote-308) This recalls the image of the HCE’s ‘parilegs’ intersecting ALP at ‘royde angles’, further suggesting that Carroll’s book was a source and inspiration for the chapter’s mathematical complexities.

Despite the conviction with which Carroll writes *Euclid and his Modern Rivals*, when it came to his more fantastical literature his style appears to contradict his beliefs, articulated by Gillian Beer as she notes how even though ‘as Dodgson, Lewis Carroll was a devout Euclidean. As Lewis Carroll, Charles Dodgson stepped across these boundaries’.[[309]](#footnote-309) This is evident in *Alice in Wonderland,* where Carroll abandons ‘measurable’ depictions of space and time in favour of non-conventional modalities. The Hatter’s watch is ‘two days wrong!’ and only ‘tells the day of the month’, while keeping in good terms with ‘Time’ means ‘he’d do almost anything you liked with the clock’.[[310]](#footnote-310) Wonderland’s troubled space-time operates outside of Euclid’s three-dimensional geometry, relating more closely to the *Wake*’s style as bodies become polysemic through Alice’s shrinking and growth. Debating how to get through the tiny door to Wonderland, Alice comes across a small cake labelled ‘EAT ME’ and consuming it causes her to open ‘out like the largest telescope that ever was!’, as she grows taller.[[311]](#footnote-311) An illogical variety of objects and consumables cause these changes in size. Picking up a fan dropped by the white rabbit results in Alice ‘shrinking rapidly’, dropping the fan ‘just in time to save herself from shrinking away altogether’, while the caterpillar later tells Alice that a large mushroom will allow her to adapt her size.[[312]](#footnote-312) One side of a mushroom causes Alice to grow taller, the other side, shorter, as she attempts find right balance to bring ‘herself to her usual height’.[[313]](#footnote-313) Linearity, logic, and the way the body occupies space is thus disruptive and boundless in Wonderland, reflective of the *Wake* as its figures are slippery and ever-changing, operating outside of a human understanding of space and time. Like Joyce, Carroll locates this obscure worldview both within—and in relation to—the female body, as Alice becomes a vehicle for the experience of the illogical and inexpressible. *Finnegans Wake* operates similarly as the female body becomes celestial in its representation, providing Joyce with a cosmic vessel for articulating that which lies outside of human comprehension.

Like Alice’s continuous shrinking and growth, in the *Wake* ALP, HCE and their three children become a variety of personas and objects that dramatically differ in form and species. The parents frequently transform during intercourse, taking the form of a geometric equation in ‘Night Lessons’ as HCE intersects ‘at royde angles the parilegs of a given obtuse’, while later becoming ‘lamp’ and ‘wick’, as well as ‘wicket’ and ‘ball’ in Book III, Chapter 4 (583.31-4). The children follow a similar pattern. Shem and Shaun merge into tree and stone (‘auldstane, eld’), ‘Mookse’ and ‘Gripes’, and the ‘Ondt’ and ‘Gracehoper’, while Issy is fluctuates between a small cloud, ‘nuvoletta’, and ‘Iseult’, among other personas (21.05, 151.15, 414.20-21, 157.08, 398.29). Splitting the space-time continuum open, the *Wake*’s reflections of Carroll’s boundless Wonderland positions mathematics as a limited means of comprehending the world, as logic is discarded in favour of plurality (583.31). By noting, then, how ‘one of the most murmurable loose carrollaries ever Ellis threw his cookingclass’, Joyce thus plays on the disparity between Carroll’s ideals, highlighted as he is both ‘murmurable’ (murmuring) and ‘loose’ with his beliefs, because one piece of his literature undermines the other. This results in ‘Ellis’, a substitution for Alice and indicative of mathematician A. J. Ellis, throwing their ‘cookingclass’ in frustration as the twins’ struggle to grasp the mother’s anatomy within the incompatible lines of Euclidean geometry. Finally, Joyce’s masculine substitution of ‘Alice’ for ‘Ellis’ encourages a further collapse in binaries between male and female and the references to Carroll thus become a linguistic representation of the diagram, conflating male and female bodies within the boundaries of mathematics. In this transition from female to male, Joyce introduces a sense of violence to the image as Alice looking ‘through’ the looking glass becomes ‘Ellis threw his cookingclass’. In the context of the chapter, this articulates Shem and Shaun’s frustration as they struggle to trace the origins of the mother’s womb within the diagram. While Alice is able use the looking glass as a tool for seeing, made clear in the original proposition in Joyce’s use of ‘through’, Ellis is frustrated by the optical instrument, seen in the transition from proposition to verb as ‘through’ becomes ‘threw’. Taking the lens to be a speculum, this suggests that Shem and Shaun are unable to, or refuse to fully comprehend the female body out of frustration, rendering the speculum useless as they toss it aside.

Using the womb as a vehicle for articulating complex and unknown knowledge, metaphysics in *Finnegans Wake* thus harbours a dual phenomenology, whereby male and female are levelled through the sexual anatomy. While the penis—indicative of the *Wake*’s use of male philosophy—is protruding and unconcealed, immediately clear to the reader’s eye through clear references to key male philosophers, female philosophy operates differently, figured by the womb, as it internal and hidden. As explored in the previous chapter, the Joycean womb requires tools to view the full potential of female phenomenology in the text, as the womb forms a bodily metaphor for the parts of metaphysics which remain incomprehensible to us, the textual gaps which form both a site of negation and a site of complexity through our inability to untangle them. Within these boundaries, weaving and gynaecology form means of unravelling these threads, as the speculum forms an alternative optical lens through which to locate the threads of ALP’s philosophical womb, woven together by obscurity. These weaves form spirals which expand and develop with each turn of the *Wake*’s textual cycle, standing parallel to the clear, masculine Vichian cycle which forms part of the *Wake*’s skeletal structure. Reading the womb across chapters—seen here though a tripartite reading of the ‘Mamafesta’, ‘The Washers at the Ford’ and ‘Night Lessons’—reveals a slow progression of the womb as a microcosmic metaphor for the rumour, to the womb as a complex tool for articulating the expansive nature of the universe. Just as the biological womb expands and contracts to accommodate new life, the Joycean womb expands and contracts to accommodate the *Wake*’s multiple levels of meaning and investigation, becoming a symbol for parts of the unknown as it rests on the boundary between life and death; between sleeping and waking. After establishing how a female phenomenology emerges through medical and philosophical examinations of the female body in *Finnegans Wake*, while also demonstrating how this phenomenology operates alongside the pre-established male authority of the text, the fourth and final chapter of this thesis will now illuminate how a sharing of bodily fluids in *Wake* results in a conflation of gender and authority, destabilising the dualistic authority—or phenomenology—of the text.

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# CHAPTER FOUR: HYDROFEMINIST AUTHORITIES

Perhaps the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality, from the cyclically regulated flows that emanate from woman’s bodies, but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented peculiarities of the male body […] men have functioned as if they represented masculinity only incidentally or only in moments of passion and sexual encounter, while the rest of the time they are representatives of the human, the generic “person.”

(Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*).[[314]](#footnote-314)

The female body has frequently been characterised as being fluid or watery. In 4th century BCE Hippocrates described woman’s flesh as ‘porous’, observing that the female body differs from the male body in that it absorbs more water.[[315]](#footnote-315) These spongey correlations were later used to determine a woman’s philosophical and bodily agency. Discussing perceptions of the humoral body in the early modern period, Amy Kenny posits that ‘women were typically considered phlegmatic, which produced a cold moist temperament and was elementally connected to water’.[[316]](#footnote-316) This watery image was later associated with bodily functions: because ‘women differed from their male counterparts in producing menstrual blood and breastmilk, their bodies were characterized as leaky vessels through a shameful overproduction of fluids’.[[317]](#footnote-317) This ‘excess’ of bodily fluid set the female body in opposition to the ‘perfected’ male form. Seemingly unable to control their own bodies, women were deemed to have a lack of bodily agency, sunk in emotion (leaky and tearful) rather than reason (dry and stoic), resulting in a skewed perception of their capacity to practice philosophy.[[318]](#footnote-318)

In more recent years, feminist theory has worked to question and reposition the porous female form, levelling the male and female bodies (both normative and non-normative) through a recognition of shared fluidity.[[319]](#footnote-319) Highlighting that ‘there are virtually no phenomenological accounts of men’s bodily fluids, except in the borderline literatures of homosexuality and voyeurism’, Elizabeth Grosz postulates why men have traditionally rejected fluidity outside of moments of ‘passion’, suggesting that it is perhaps not fluidity itself that the patriarchy ‘abhors’, but rather what ‘elicits horror’ is the notion that fluidity can move in multiple directions. This invites the possibility of ‘being not only an active agent in the transmission of flow [fluid] but also a passive receptacle’.[[320]](#footnote-320) Rather than favouring one of these observations over the other, the masculine rejection of bodily fluids can be twofold. It encompasses both this fear of passivity, as fluid moves through and between bodies, in addition to highlighting the trained social disgust towards bodily fluids themselves. Grosz articulates both of these things through the work of Julia Kristeva and Mary Douglas, positing that the abject—Kristeva’s terming of that which lies outside of social and moral rules or norms—is not that which is dirty or impure about the body.[[321]](#footnote-321) ‘Nothing in itself’, as Douglas has argued, ‘is dirty’, rather dirt ‘is that which is not in its proper place, that which upsets or befuddles order.’[[322]](#footnote-322) Kristeva thus declares the abject to be that which is ‘a threat to our reality’, because

there looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.[[323]](#footnote-323)

Out of place and uncontainable, female bodily fluids unsettle the patriarchy, whereas male fluids are perceived as contained and controllable within the limits of sexual pleasure and bodily need. The straight white cis man has been deemed the apex and social norm, while those who do not fit this scenario have had to adjust according to their varying degrees of not fitting. The notion of ‘not fitting’ recalls my previous reference to Sara Ahmed’s question of ‘use’ in the introduction, as well as my discussion of Caroline Criado-Perez’s *Invisible Women* in Chapter 2, both of which highlight the precarious position of women in society. Grosz, Kristeva, and Douglas illuminate the reductive nature of this stance on female fluidity, providing fertile ground for male fluidity to be uncovered and dissected. The aim here is not to erase or underplay female fluidity, but rather to reposition porosity as something that is inherently human, rather than gendered. This erases the sense of fear and negativity which has historically surrounded the female fluid body. Flow is a mutual transaction between bodies, connective, rather than passive, in its movement. It forges new philosophical perspectives by destabilising historical associations between containability and reason, while also deconstructing the notion that philosophical ideas are produced by the individual, rather than the collective.

This chapter functions as a reorientation of the fluid body in Joyce’s work, exploring the phenomenological implications of this liquid connectivity by demonstrating how Joyce’s subversion of leaky stereotypes uncovers a collaborative, dual authority of the text, which questions historical representation and metaphysical thought. Previous chapters of this thesis have sought to establish and uncover female phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*. This is apparent in Chapter 1, where I drew attention to the authorial potential of the O in the context of the female body, as well as twinned chapters 2 and 3 which further establish the potential of this phenomenology through a gradual unveiling of the Joycean speculum and womb. This chapter furthers these explorations by illuminating how this female authority operates alongside the pre-established male authority of the *Wake*, through an examination—and reorientation—of fluid bodies in Joyce’s work.

Gendered modes of thought are also challenged by scientific and ecological examinations of the watery body. The human body is comprised of up to 65% water, which serves four primary functions: regulating temperature, acting as a lubricant for the joints, mediating metabolic reactions, and operating as a vehicle for transportation by moving oxygen and nutrients to the cells as water forms the main component of blood.[[324]](#footnote-324) These functions are of course not unique to the female body and take place regardless of sex, undermining the image of the watery woman by evidencing that fluidity is a condition of being. In fact, women typically harbour less water than men, with a bodily average of 50-55% water compared to 60-65% in men, due to muscle storing more water than fat.[[325]](#footnote-325) I briefly touched on Joyce’s association between ‘Penelope’ and fat in Chapter 1 through an examination of the Joycean O as fat cell. Here, the scientific correlation between fat and water tells us that early assumptions of the ‘leaky’ female form were based on fluids visible to the human eye—breastmilk, menstrual blood, urine, and tears—rather than the body as a whole. Gendered assumptions based on what is outwardly visible are also ingrained into the field of Joyce studies, historically rendering *Finnegans Wake* a male-dominated text through its embrace of the male philosophical mind.

Most intriguing is the perceived correlation between fluidity and thought. While early philosophers such as Hippocrates posited that an excess of fluid prohibited reasoned thought, medically, the opposite is true. Dehydration has been proven to directly impact our ability to think clearly. Recent studies indicate that a loss of just 2% of your bodyweight in fluid has an impact on cognition, resulting in difficulty holding attention, as well as impaired decision making and motor coordination.[[326]](#footnote-326) Although, of course, these hydration levels differ from the natural levels of fluid found in the human body, it demonstrates the illogical nature of these stereotypes.[[327]](#footnote-327) On the whole, it is thus dry, rather than excessively fluid, bodies that cannot think clearly.

Joyce challenges these gendered oppositions in *Finnegans Wake*, muddying the reductive distinction between fluid and non-fluid bodies through a continual flux of gender. Rather than continue the early modern and enlightenment tradition of situating the ‘leaky’ female body in opposition to the supposed rational and philosophical male form, the *Wake*’s male bodies continually slip into this leaky feminine sphere, reflecting more recent attitudes in queer theory towards the fluidity of gender as they bare their ‘breastpaps to give suck’ and make ‘woman squash’ in a series of complex biological transitions (480.14, 386.09-10). Joyce alludes to complex metaphysical conundrums within these fluid boundaries, using the dynamic and regenerative potential of bodily fluids to encapsulate the slippery and dynamic nature of philosophical thought. In this reading, the leaky Wakean body becomes a shared site of connection between the male and female characters rather than a diversifying force, resulting in a shared ecology of bodily thought which dissolves the boundaries between the self and Other.

In an ecological sense, bodily boundaries are in a continual process of deconstruction, rejecting an anthropocentric view of the world as the human and non-human are levelled through a blurring of human, animal, and environment. This concept is explored by Stacy Alaimo in her ecocritical theories of trans-corporeality, as she describes how the ‘human is always inter-meshed with the non-human world’.[[328]](#footnote-328) Defining trans-corporeality as a ‘materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments’ Alaimo’s theories form a structural base for rejecting the idea of the Anthropocene, particularity in regards to water.[[329]](#footnote-329) The perception that our bodies are interconnected with the flow and agency of the environment is especially important when considered in relation to thought. In *Finnegans Wake*, thought mimics our relationship with nature. Ideas are liberated from the individual and instead portrayed as a result of a shared, collective act which stretches across history, gender, and time as thought and knowledge becomes fluid.

To reorientate the fluid bodies of the *Wake*, I begin by illuminating the porosity of the male body in Joyce’s work, exploring the phenomenological implications of this liquid connectivity by demonstrating how Joyce’s subversion of leaky stereotypes uncovers a collaborative, dual authority of the text. I then examine how this blurring of gender and bodily fluids encourages a shared and watery philosophy in *Finnegans Wake*, forming connective spaces which operate as metaphors for history and metaphysics. To demonstrate this, the chapter will comprise of four sections. The first draws on Astrida Neimanis’s theory of hydrofeminism: a posthuman, feminist phenomenology which explores connections between watery bodies and bodies of water through an ecocritical lens. Providing a valuable framework for interrogating gendered phenomenology in Joyce’s text, I use Neimanis’s theory to analyse the fluid bodies of the *Wake* through a close reading of the Prankquean episode in I.1. By examining images of menstruation and urination in *Finnegans Wake*, this section establishes the relationship between the female body, ‘leakiness’, and hidden knowledge. Following this will be a threefold comparative analysis of male fluidity in *Finnegans Wake*. I initially interrogate how, in ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ (II.4), the four male judges become philosophical emblems of the Prankquean through the transitional scenes of urination, challenging a ‘unique’ female ‘leakiness’ through a shared sense of bodily connectivity. This will then be explored in tandem with the images of male breastfeeding that permeate ‘Yawn’s Inquest’ (III.3). Here, I draw on theories which outline the sexual and philosophical potential of breastmilk to determine its significance in relation to metaphysical thought, and how this is reflected in the text. I also examine the overlapping bodily ecologies of man and woman in *Finnegans Wake*, alongside the ecotones—defined by Astrida Neimanis as ‘transition areas between two adjacent but different ecosystems’—which lie between the bodies in the text.[[330]](#footnote-330) In *Finnegans Wake*, these eco-philosophical connections become visceral and literal, represented in both the fluidity of male and female bodies, and in the transformative spaces which lie between the text’s figures, as Joyce works to destabilise the traditional boundaries between bodies. As such, this chapter frames the *Wake* as a satirical text which explores both the slippery, fluid nature of philosophical knowledge and phenomenological perception, the creative potential of bodily fluids, and the absurdity of social laws which dictate who has authorial agency.

**LEAKY ECOLOGIES: HYDROFEMINISM AND BODILY CONNECTIVITY**

In Joyce studies, the topic of water has recently been subject to scholarly debate. In *Eco-Joyce*: *The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce* (2014)—a collection of essays centred around Joyce’s engagement with ecocritical thought—Bonnie Kime Scott interrogates Joyce’s association between women and water in *Finnegans Wake*. Arguing that ‘“nature”, like “gender” is a cultural construction’ which evolves with time as our perception of society and thought develops, Scott marks an association between water and the fluidity of knowledge.[[331]](#footnote-331) Rather than bring male fluidity into this sphere, as I will do here, Scott subverts negative interpretations of Joycean femininity-as-nature. She notes how the association between ALP, Issy, and ALP’s mother has ‘frequently been glossed as female competition, rather than life cycle’, reflecting the ‘critical current’ of the text and larger social attitudes towards women as they are viewed as competitors rather than allies.[[332]](#footnote-332) Scott reframes this by stating that ‘as a female-centred cycle, [ALP’s] may occasionally seem to offer an escape from patriarchy’ rather than fall into the same habits of female oppression, forming a tight network of women connected by a shared sense of fluidity.[[333]](#footnote-333) Establishing a foundation for reading Joyce’s complex use of water in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Scott’s analysis allows for further theoretical readings of Joyce’s watery subjects. While Scott draws from more foundational approaches to ecofeminism, reflecting briefly on the work of Carol Gilligan, Greta Gaard, and Donna Haraway by highlighting their respectively psychological, queer and posthuman approaches, in this chapter I consider contemporary associations between women and water through the newer lens of hydrofeminism, examining how negative connotations of the leaky female body cannot just be subverted, but also levelled by bringing the male body into this sphere.

In recent years, sociological and philosophical approaches to water have been explored and theorised more than ever before. Water’s potential has been stretched to accommodate the fluidity of thought in the context of a more developed understanding of gender and human/ non-human hydrofeminist relations. Hydrofeminism is a fairly new concept, emerging in 2012 though Astrida Neimanis’s work *Hydrofeminism:* *or, on becoming Bodies of Water*. Discussing the vast capacity of water, Neimanis articulates that it is a conduit and a ‘mode of connection’ between humans.[[334]](#footnote-334) In constant motion, water forms a ‘planetary archive of meaning and matter’, providing a means of ingesting and preserving the past within the boundaries of the human body, only for us to later return the daily medications and chemicals back to the ‘cistern’ (or toilet), along with the ‘meanings that permeate those materialities’.[[335]](#footnote-335) Water functions like a ceaseless historical archive, containing the excretions of the world’s historical grand narratives as it harbours the parts of the self that people would rather render invisible. Retaining ‘our anthropomorphic secrets’, there is something inherently metaphysical about water.[[336]](#footnote-336) It stands as both a vacuum and preserver of the past, slippery and ungraspable in its liquid state.

Neimanis subverts the negative leaky connotations which have historically been attributed to the female form by examining the generative potential of hydrofeminism. Articulating that ‘the desire of water to shape-shift and facilitate the new persistently overflows any attempt at capture’, Neimanis asks ‘is not “woman” similarly uncontainable?’, after all,

“woman’s” beings/ becomings in these texts are not determined in advance—even as she may be, like water, temporarily dammed by dominant representations and discourse. As watery, woman is hardly (statically, unchangeably) “essentialist.” She too becomes the very matter of transmutation.[[337]](#footnote-337)

Rather than reduce women to a patriarchal representation of the female body, water liberates the female form through these uncontainable boundaries. Neimanis reframes fluidity as a positive trait, subverting the historical oversimplification of the female body by highlighting its progressive, or transmutational, potential. In this sense, water’s unstable structure accommodates the evolutionary nature of the mind and body, depicting a more accurate representation of the self by highlighting its regenerative nature.

Neimanis furthers her hypothesis by detailing the porousness of our bodies, positing that in our ‘ocular-centric’ culture, some partially permeable membranes, like our skin, give ‘the illusion of impermeability’, and yet ‘we perspire, urinate, ingest, ejaculate, menstruate, lactate, breathe [and] cry’ in the process absorbing and releasing the world around us.[[338]](#footnote-338) This exchange of bodily fluids breeds connectivity between bodies. The germs that lie in our exhaled breath are passed from human to human, while the liquid parts of ourselves, such as sperm, blood, and breastmilk, hold the potential to impregnate others, grow life, and to feed our children. Bodily fluids also harbour specific connotations by operating as emotional indicators that provide tangible evidence of our body’s psychological state. Tears (often combined with rheum) signal intense happiness or sadness, while perspiration and urine are linked to anxiety and fear. Bodily fluids operate in tandem with the brain, becoming receptacles of thought as they express our perception and relation to the external world.

Drawing out from Neimanis an even clearer sense of both female and male fluidity within and beyond Joyce’s work therefore enables me to develop a new ontological view of the relationship between self and Other – between male and female philosophical authority, and between the body and its surroundings. Through this lens our bodies operate like ecosystems; biological communities connected and enhanced by the fluid, or water, that traverses through and around our bodies. The space between these Wakean bodies form ‘ecotones’, which have philosophical potential according to Neimanis, acting as markers of ‘fecundity, creativity, transformation; of becoming, assembling, multiplying; of diverging, differentiating, relinquishing’.[[339]](#footnote-339) This transformative space makes way for a shared bodily phenomenology to emerge between the unstable genders of the *Wake*.

In both *Finnegans Wake* and the broader philosophical field, a dissection of these watery bodies has unifying potential, hypothesised by Neimanis as she asks, ‘if the fluids of otherwise gendered bodies were acknowledged rather than effaced, how might such attentiveness amplify the creative—and even ethical and political—potential of these bodies?’.[[340]](#footnote-340) The crux of examining fluidity lies in not only dismantling the patriarchal modes of thought which define the female body as leaky, uncontrollable, and unreasoned, but also in the act of bringing other bodies into this watery sphere. Rather than creating ‘essentialist’ fissures between the male and female (or ‘normatively reprosexual and nonreprosexual’) bodies, Neimanis argues that ‘such aqueous body-writing might invite all bodies to attend to the water that facilitates their existence, and embeds them within ongoing cycles of aqueous fecundity’.[[341]](#footnote-341) All bodies are connected by water because all bodies share the same necessity for water. Regarding only one type of body as fluid is reductive or ‘essentialist’, because it fails to account for the true biological workings of the human body as ‘water flows through and across difference’.[[342]](#footnote-342) By arguing that new spaces of creative and political potential can emerge by acknowledging, rather than effacing, the fluidity of the male body, Neimanis’s hydrofeminist thought provides a new means of analysing liquidity and gender in Joyce’s text. It enables a subversion of the reductive patriarchal associations between women and fluidity that have been previously highlighted by those such as Kime Scott, while also facilitating an exploration of the Joyce’s play on male fluidity.

**ULYSSEAN WATER CYCLES**

This chapter has been prefigured by explorations of fluidity throughout this thesis. In Chapter 2, I explored how, in ‘Oxen of the Sun’, Joyce uses gestation and reproductive fluids as metaphors for the production of thought. Later in Chapter 3, I dissected the fluidity and slippery nature of the female productive system to unveil a gradual unearthing of the metaphysical womb in *Finnegans Wake,* doing so in light of ALPs role as the river Liffey. Smaller inflections of fluidity have also been discussed, evident in Chapter 1 where I explored references to Molly’s menstrual flow in ‘Penelope’, as well as looking at how ALP and Issy’s water cycles function in relation to the womb/tomb parallel. Water and fluid thus permeate Joyce’s work in multiple forms. In *Ulysses*, Joyce’s female characters initially appear to fall into typical patterns of female fluidity. They are frequently associated with menstruation, gestational fluid, and water, something which is particularly evident in ‘Penelope’ where Joyce details a variety of bodily fluids. Molly muses that women have ‘too much blood up in us’, while also recalling the ‘white thing coming from’ her during a previous trip to the gynaecologist. These images evoke a feeling of leakiness, supplemented by Molly’s disjointed thoughts about being given ‘oranges and lemonade’ at Comeford’s party, that ‘make you feel nice and watery’ and her notion that she used to give a friend just enough gossip to ‘make her mouth water’.[[343]](#footnote-343) Despite the episode’s initial appearance, the notion that female fluid is free-flowing and uncontainable in ‘Penelope’ is complicated and undermined by the episode’s form. Derek Attridge’s observes that the connection between Molly and ‘flow’ is often misjudged, noting that the episode is in fact associated with earth, rather than water, apparent in Joyce’s declaration that the episode ‘turns like the huge earthball slowly and evenly round and round spinning’. Later, Attridge posits that while ‘related metaphors of rivers, streams, and liquids—and of the barriers they pour over—occur in almost every attempt to characterise the style of the episode’ the lack of punctuation and narrative structure does not align Molly with watery ‘flow’. Instead, ‘the sense of unstoppable movement ignoring all conventional limits is derived from the language, not as it supposedly takes shape in a human brain, but as it is presented (unknown to Molly) on the page’.[[344]](#footnote-344) Flow suggests something unconstrained and moving without limitation, however, ‘Penelope’ both linguistically and visually refutes a sense of flow. Bodily fluids enter the narrative sporadically, suggesting that the episode is uncontainable as water slips through the cracks of Molly’s language.

The sporadic depiction of Molly’s bodily functions evokes the patriarchal assumption that women are unable to regulate their fluids. These prejudices emerge from Molly’s own thoughts, where she labels women as having ‘too much’ blood up in them.[[345]](#footnote-345) This implies that Molly harbours a sense of uncertainty over her own bodily functions, reinforced as she recalls visiting the gynaecologist about the ‘white thing’ emerging from her genitals. The word ‘thing’ conjures an image of something alien and abject, whereas Molly is referring to female discharge, a natural bodily process which takes place as the vagina self-cleans. This misrepresentation is upheld by the gynaecological visit itself, which is permeated by words such as ‘smelling’, ‘filthy’, and ‘offensive’, evoking the sense that even normal female bodily fluids are unclean and repulsive. They are to be hidden away and dealt with in private.[[346]](#footnote-346) Molly’s description of her bodily processes suggests that she has been conditioned to regard her fluids as dirty, operating in contrast to male fluidity as she claims she ‘wouldn’t even bother to iron out the mark’ of either Bloom or Boylan’s ‘spunk on the clean sheet’, because seeing his own bodily fluids would ‘satisfy him’.[[347]](#footnote-347) While male fluid is regarded as normal, operating within the regulated social boundaries of sexual pleasure, women’s fluids are viewed as intrusive and uncontrollable, interrupting and destabilising Molly’s ‘flow’ as she is continually reminded of her bodily processes. Fluid interruptions also indicate a sense of private relief when Molly is reminded by her body that she is not pregnant. This results in a paradoxical desire for fluidity, as a lack of menses functions as an indicator of pregnancy. Water or fluid here is not geographically located nor stable: it is boundless and bursting, coupled with Joyce’s Linati schema were he aligns ‘Penelope’ with ‘fat’ and a ‘milky hue’.[[348]](#footnote-348) Both the substance and the colour are frequently associated with women and the female reproductive system (when regarded in a normative sense), indicating a sense of slipperiness in ‘Penelope’ that works in opposition to flow as the chapter’s fluids do not sustain the development of thought but rather limit it.

Joyce’s depiction of bodily fluids in *Ulysses* also extends to the dynamic between ‘fluid’ and ‘non-fluid’ bodies. This is particularly evident in ‘Ithaca’, where Joyce asks, ‘did it flow?’ in response to Bloom turning on the faucet.[[349]](#footnote-349) The response—yes—is followed by a lengthy description of Dublin’s waterworks, tracing the water source back to ‘Roundwood reservoir in county Wicklow’, which has a ‘cubic capacity of 2.400 million gallons’.[[350]](#footnote-350) Cost, gradient, distance, and volume are outlined in an meticulous fashion, and everything related to the process of percolating water ‘through a subterranean aqueduct’ is illuminated down to its social, economic, and political implications.[[351]](#footnote-351) These *Ulyssean* water cycles are technological and object-orientated, tracing the process of filtration down to the smallest minutiae. A series of measurements highlights this methodical approach to water, seen as Joyce documents the ‘22 statute miles’ between Roundwood reservoir and the ‘26 acre reservoir’ Stillorgan. The water travels at a ‘gradient of 250 feet’ to the city boundary, and the South Dublin Guardians are said to have been convicted of a ‘wastage of 20,000 gallons per night’.[[352]](#footnote-352) These numerical descriptions suggest that, at this point in *Ulysses*, Joyce is more concerned with water’s infrastructure, rather than its poetic, metaphysical potential. The connection between water and knowledge appears to be controlled and scientific here, failing to encompass the full flexibility and progression of water and thought.

Despite its apparent rigidness, Joyce’s approach to water in ‘Ithaca’ is remarkably complex and explorative, interwoven with the womb and the male body. Greg Winston details some of these complexities in an exploration on the connection between water and urban planning in ‘Ithaca’. Beyond highlighting the feat of engineering that Joyce documents through his exploration of the Varty waterworks, outlined above, Winston also confronts the political and social tensions that arise from the new development. Winston declares that, in ‘Ithaca’, Joyce’s ‘treatise on water shifts suddenly from infrastructural wonders to the social consequences of the new water supply’. He notes now,

the remainder of the episode shows how water can be not just a source of power and conflict but also a levelling factor for a more cohesive and unified community. Through the main characters’ awareness of water and their connection to it, and to each other, Joyce suggests the potential for restoration of social unity and ecological harmony.[[353]](#footnote-353)

These two threads of conflict and harmony gradually unravel throughout the episode. Beginning with the former, when the question is posed, ‘what in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier, returning to the range, admire?’ Bloom responds with ‘its universality’.[[354]](#footnote-354) However, his examples are short-sighted as he commends both water’s ‘democratic equality’ and the ‘vastness in the ocean of Mercator’s projection’.[[355]](#footnote-355) Both of these observations are curiously reductive. The Mercator map depicts a skewed, colonial, perception of the world and its geographical boundaries, seen as Western continents, such as Europe, are made to appear bigger than they are, whilst Africa is shrunken in size, framing the world with a Eurocentric view of reality which relies on an outdated paradigm of colonialisation and Westernisation.[[356]](#footnote-356) Furthermore, the claim that water has ‘democratic equality’ is naïve. The commodification of the world’s fresh water sources has left the division of water unequal, meaning that fresh water is no longer a free-flowing source, but something which has been used as political and economic leverage.[[357]](#footnote-357) The irony of Bloom filling up his kettle from the Dublin tap, which, minutes before, has been politically defined by failure, ‘wastage’, and ‘acting to the detriment of another section of the public’, illuminates Joyce’s depiction of political corruption as well as water’s ‘wasted’ potential at this point in the episode. Water remains patriarchal and contained here, operating only outside of the male body where it can be restricted and controlled; its flow is measured down to the smallest detail.

A further thread of conflict and harmony emerges through the distinction between ‘fluid’ and ‘non-fluid’ bodies, apparent through Stephen and Bloom’s divergent approaches to water. When asked what he admires about water, Bloom is marked as a ‘waterlover, drawer of water’ and ‘watercarrier’, further emphasised at the end of ‘Lotus Eaters’ where he enjoys a bath, feeling the ‘cool enamel’ and ‘gentle tepid stream’, while he lies ‘naked, in a womb of warmth’.[[358]](#footnote-358) Throughout both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, water is inherently intertwined with women, fertility, and motherhood, something I will shortly explore in detail through an examination of the fluid dynamic between ALP, Issy, and the Prankquean. Women are depicted as embodiments of rivers (in the case of ALP) and distinctly intertwined with the sea in Joyce’s work, seen in ‘Proteus’ through Stephen’s musing that ‘tides, myriadislanded, within her, blood not mine, oinopa ponton, a winedark sea’.[[359]](#footnote-359) These ‘womanly’ tides have been previously explored by scholars such as Danica Igrutinović and Bonnie Kime Scott, the latter of whom notes the correlation between the tides and the female body, as ‘they are also internal, menstrual, periodic’.[[360]](#footnote-360) These correlations are particularly emphasised in ‘Ithaca’ through references to the moon in the context of the female menstrual cycle. One question asks, ‘what special affinities appeared to him to exist between the moon and woman?’, with Bloom responding in a lengthy paragraph which includes her ‘constancy under all her phases, rising and setting by her appointed times, waxing and waning’ and ‘her potency over effluent and refluent waters’.[[361]](#footnote-361) The line offers a rewriting of the misogynistic connection made between the moon and women which I discussed in Chapter 1, associating female cycles with a sense of ‘constancy’ rather than unpredictability. In addition, the relevance of Bloom’s observations lies not only in the way they establish a rich connection between women, womb, and water, but in how they also enable us to comprehend Bloom and Stephen’s differing approaches to water. Bloom’s contentment in the bath, as well as his admiration of water in ‘Ithaca’, indicates that he seeks comfort in the womb. Although his relationship with his mother, Ellen Higgins, remains largely undocumented in the text—aside from brief discussions of lineage, and one short appearance in ‘Circe’, where she emerges ‘*in a pantomime dame’s stringed mobcap, crinoline and bustle*’)—Bloom’s welcoming of fluidity suggests an affinity between mother and son.[[362]](#footnote-362)

While Bloom welcomes fluidity, Stephen rejects it. Stephen harbours a chronic fear of water, further outlined in ‘Ithaca’ when he refuses Bloom’s offer to wash, claiming he is a ‘hydrophobe’ who has a distrust for the ‘aquacities of thought and language’.[[363]](#footnote-363) This distrust of water simulates the male distrust of bodily fluids, rejecting the notion that the rational ‘male’ body can productively exist alongside the ‘passive’ nature of fluidity, because this passivity is seen as a threat. This threat is manifested in Stephen’s hydrophobia, where he conceptualises his guilt over his mother’s death as a fear of drowning.[[364]](#footnote-364) Joyce’s association between grief and drowning is familiar because society frequently conceptualises grief through the metaphor of water: grief comes in waves. It ebbs and flows. You can be surrounded by a sea of grief, you can drown in it, or wade through it. Water thus metaphorically captures an excess of emotion or the inability to stabilise and process this grief. This drowning is reflected metaphorically throughout *Ulysses* as men are often framed as being drowned by their emotions. For example, in ‘Hades’, the funeral of Paddy Dignam sees the attendees ‘drowning their grief’ as the ‘mourning coaches’ draw up.[[365]](#footnote-365) In ‘Circe’, Corny Kelleher (the undertakers assistant at Dignam’s funeral) appears, recalling a bet where one of two men lost ‘two quid on the race’, resulting in him ‘drowning his grief’ by going ‘on for a go with the jolly girls’.[[366]](#footnote-366) The correlation between feminine water and male emotion reverberates throughout the text, adding nuance to Stephen’s complicated relationship with his mother. In Stephen’s case, his guilt over his mother’s death is further represented by the water or fluid of the womb.[[367]](#footnote-367) Michael Zimmerman articulates that,

mother love is a literal or figurative enwombing for Stephen […] the mother’s love for the child in her womb—the literal fusion of placenta, amniotic fluid, and foetus—reappears in her love for the child at her breast, where there is a oneness between her milk and the sucking mouth.[[368]](#footnote-368)

While I will return to the connective potential of breastmilk later, here the fluid ‘wombing’ of the child—in this case Stephen—evokes a sense of male fluidity which is eradicated at birth as the child leaves the mother’s womb.[[369]](#footnote-369) On the one hand, this sense of longing is defined by feelings of protection, safety, and love through a fusion between mother and child. For Stephen, motherly love is one of the only certainties in his life and he harbours a deep longing to return to this state of absolute connection with his mother. However, on the other hand, this longing to return is marred by feelings of guilt over letting his mother down, resulting in the safety of the amniotic fluid being reconstructed as a fearful, drowning force.

In ‘Ithaca’, water is therefore not passive, but active, reflecting its geographical position as an island surrounded by the Ionian Sea, known as one of the most seismic regions in the world.[[370]](#footnote-370) Through these complex relationships between mother and son, female bodily fluids (and in turn, water) are refigured as an active and powerful substance, rather than a passive liquid. They harbour the potential to fuse and connect humans, seen in the bond between mother and son that still has a psychological hold over Stephen long after his mother’s death. This is also observed in Bloom and Stephen’s shared consumption of the cocoa in ‘Ithaca’, where they drink ‘Epps’s soluble cocoa’ in ‘jocoserious silence’.[[371]](#footnote-371) Serving as a marker of hospitality and friendship, the shared act of drinking the beverage unites the two men in a moment of shared contemplation. This results in an intimate moment of silence, causing Bloom to reflect on his connection to Stephen as he considers ‘how many previous encounters proved their preexisting acquaintance’.[[372]](#footnote-372)

The connective potential of bodily fluids, as well as these conflicting relationships with water, is fully realised at the end of the episode, where a joint act of micturition provides Stephen and Bloom with a brief sense of unity. Standing under the ‘heaventree of stars’ both men lie silent and deep in thought, mediating on metaphysical questions concerning the sky’s constellations.[[373]](#footnote-373) Their eyes then meet, and ‘first Stephen, then Bloom, in penumbra urinated, their side contiguous, their organs of micturition reciprocally rendered invisible by manual circumposition’.[[374]](#footnote-374) This synchronised act of urination evokes a shared sense of fluidity between the two men, forging a sense of connection—both emotional and metaphysical in nature—as they consider the boundaries of life and death through the earth’s ‘celestial sign[s]’.[[375]](#footnote-375) There is still a hesitation in this fluid bonding, as their ‘flow’ is mapped mathematically. Joyce notes how the ‘trajectories of their, first sequent, then simultaneous, urinations were dissimilar’. Bloom’s is longer and ‘less irruent, in the complete form of the bifurcated penultimate alphabetical letter’, while Stephen’s is higher and ‘more sibilant, who in the ultimate hours of the previous day had augmented by diuretic consumption an insistent vesical pressure’.[[376]](#footnote-376) Evoking a paradoxical sense of containment as each act of micturition is compared and dissected, the mathematical mapping briefly maintains a sense of division between Stephen and Bloom, disrupting their moment of unity by observing their urinary differences.

Despite this mathematical depiction, Bloom and Stephen’s shared act of urination becomes immeasurable when mapped onto their musings on cosmology. This act of cosmological alignment is first established as Bloom and Stephen leave the house, entering ‘silently’ into the ‘doubly dark’ evening, where they are met with the sight of a ‘heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit’.[[377]](#footnote-377) Rather than simply observe the scene, they become a part of it, transitioning into heavenly bodies as, according to Joyce they become ‘wanderers like the stars they gaze’.[[378]](#footnote-378) This transitioning is foreshadowed by Bloom’s identification as ‘water-carrier’ earlier in the episode, which translates to *Aquarius* in Latin, a constellation lying in the southern sky.[[379]](#footnote-379) Both men then ‘simultaneously’ observe ‘a star precipitated with great apparent velocity across the firmament’ indicating a shared intellectual perspective or phenomenology.[[380]](#footnote-380) Urine facilitates philosophical creativity here, enabling a new sense of psychological connectivity between bodies, while also allowing for a more in-depth metaphysical contemplation of the atmosphere as two divergent brains, briefly, become one. Aligning with Neimanis’s observation that water—or fluid—traverses difference, Bloom and Stephen’s urinary streams evoke a sense of shared, yet reluctant, male porosity, partially deconstructing the patriarchal view of men as watertight beings. David Todd’s discussions on astrology help to further synthesize these connections. He articulates how in 1609 Galileo refined early versions of the telescope to reveal ‘anew the universe to mankind’, in turning putting ‘new life’ into astrology.[[381]](#footnote-381) With the development of the telescope and the application of it ‘to the instruments with which angels are measured’, man, for the first time ‘had begun to find out that by accurate measures of the heavenly bodies, their places among the stars, their sizes and distances, he could attain to complete knowledge of them and so conquer the universe’.[[382]](#footnote-382) Nevertheless, Galileo ‘soon realized the insufficiency of the mathematical tools with which he worked—how unsuited they were to the solution of the problem of three bodies (sun, earth, and moon) under the Newtonian law of gravitation’.[[383]](#footnote-383) In the context of the chapter, Galileo is referenced just prior to Stephen and Bloom’s act of urination, where the question: ‘which various features of the constellations were in turn considered?’ is answered with a reference to ‘the independent synchronous discoveries of Galileo, Simon Marius, Piazza, Le Verrier, Herschel, Galle’.[[384]](#footnote-384) Amongst these considerations of the constellations we find the episode’s characters:

of similar origin but of lesser brilliancy which had appeared in and disappeared from the constellation of the Corona Septentrionalis about the period of the birth of Leopold Bloom and of other stars of (presumably) similar origin which had (effectively or presumably) appeared in and disappeared from the constellation of Andromeda about the period of the birth of Stephen Dedalus, and in and from the constellation of Auriga some years after the birth and death of Rudolph Bloom, junior, and in and from other constellations some years before or after the birth or death of other persons.[[385]](#footnote-385)

By placing Bloom and Stephen amongst the constellations they now ponder and thus rendering them heavenly bodies, Joyce introduces an alternative interpretation. Here, in their silence, Bloom and Stephen appear to gain complete knowledge of one another, conquering, if only briefly, their conflicting emotions through the connective and metaphysical potential of bodily fluids. Like Galileo’s telescope, the mathematical applications of the chapter are not enough to fully comprehend Stephen and Bloom, and it is only through emotion that a level of mutual understanding emerges in a moment of metaphysical and interpersonal clarity. The sharing of male bodily fluids, alongside the homoerotic undertones of the moment, leads to a cosmological and expansive ending to a chapter which appears rigid with structure. Joyce’s emancipation of ‘Ithaca’ from its tight structure, aligns the episode with Homer’s Ithaca, which is often characterised as ‘rugged’ or rocky.[[386]](#footnote-386) This rockiness is due to both Ithaca’s geographical landscape, and the chaos imposed on the household by the suitors. Upon Odysseus’s return to Ithaca (which is echoed by Stephen and Bloom’s emotional homecoming), Odysseus and his son, Telemachus, reconnect through the slaughter of the suitors, introducing harmony back into the household. Like in Joyce’s ‘Ithaca’, this moment of reconnection and return is framed by bodily fluids, visible through the graphic descriptions of the bloody slaughter. The reader observes the ‘fear drain[ing] the colour from their cheeks’ as a suitor ends up with blood gushing ‘from his nostrils in a turbid jet’, before another man leaps at Odysseus with a ‘blood-curdling shout’.[[387]](#footnote-387) The scene then ends with Odysseus weeping and sobbing as ‘a sweet longing came on him’ when he sees his old maids, resulting in a moment of emotional contemplation triggered by the bloody slaying of the suitors. In *Ulysses*, Joyce adds a philosophical element to this emotional homecoming. The moment of fluid connection between Stephen and Bloom, which appears just prior to ‘Penelope’, creates a sense of boundlessness which emerges from male fluidity, facilitating an act of philosophical creativity as this small moment is reflected out beyond the body and into the universe.

Despite its expansive qualities, this act is still enigmatic as ‘Ithaca’ concludes with the notion that the reader, like astrologists, cannot know everything about these heavenly bodies. Despite the vast detail of the episode, the small emotional and personal circumstances of Bloom and Stephen remain vastly unexplored, yet this moment implies that enigma is a necessary condition of life: as life remains a metaphysical and scientific complexity. What we do see are several possibilities: Bloom partially gets the son he feels in absence, while Stephen briefly gains a father figure he has so desperately searched for. The chapter is a cosmological homecoming through the convergence of opposites, echoing the Homeric homecoming of *The Odyssey*.

**WAKEAN WATERCYCLES: RIVER, CLOUD AND URINE**

While Ulyssean water systems are explorative and diverse, the *Wake*’s water systems are more complicated and bodily, operating in tangential rhythm with the female bodily cycles of menstruation, digestion, and childbirth. Unlike in *Ulysses*, where fluid female bodies are distinct and individual, in *Finnegans Wake* they are made geographical, aligning with Neimanis’s hydrofeminism by facilitating a connection between the human and the non-human. These Wakean watercycles have philosophical and phenomenological undertones, paralleling a network of philosophical conundrums which undergo a process of filtration and renewal as the *Wake* progresses. They operate in tandem with the Ulyssean cycles, subverting the manmade perception of water described in ‘Ithaca’ by rendering Wakean water as an uncontainable force.

In the most basic reading, the women of the *Wake*, ALP and her daughter Issy*,* form an intricate water cycle, connecting land, sea, and air through a cycle of flooding, precipitation, and river flow. In the ‘Washerwomen’ (I.8) chapter, Joyce centres around two women scrubbing laundry over the river Liffey, mixing gossip and rumour about HCE with questions regarding ALP’s identity. Lengthy descriptions of ALP depict her willow-like hair which falls to her feet like ‘waterweed’ and ‘meadowgrass’, covering her ‘little mary’ and ‘lippeleens’, while ‘bracelets’, ‘anklets’, ‘armlets’, and amulets’ made of ‘cobbles’, ‘pattering pebbles’, ‘Irish rhunerhinerstones’ and shells decorate her body (207.02-7). Illustrating ALP’s intertwinement with nature as the linguistic descriptions of her mineral jewels resemble the sound of water trickling down the Liffey, the chapter has led to considerable analysis on the mother’s role as river and origin. For example, Shari Benstock demonstrates how the ‘washerwomen, working on the banks of the River Liffey, hear Anna Livia’s story in the water as she flows by’, while ALP ‘negotiates a space between the two voices that echo and invite her’.[[388]](#footnote-388) Benstock later articulates how the opening of the chapter, ‘O tell me all about Anna Livia’, ‘marks [ALP’s] absence, a death-knell of invocation’ as she does not get to ‘tell’ her own narrative, but rather is ‘told’ by the washerwomen.[[389]](#footnote-389) Signalling ALP’s role as invisible orator, Benstock’s analysis of I.8 positions ALP as the ‘essence’ of the *Wake* by highlighting the importance of the mother in the creation of the text.

ALP is also a connecting force in the wider textual geography of the *Wake*. Primarily embodying the river Liffey, ALP is the driving life force of the text who forms a macroscopic embodiment of the world’s rivers, oceans, and streams, all connected by a singular water cycle. The Liffey is plural in its geographical representation, reflecting of a multitude of worldly rivers such as the ‘meanderthalltale’ (Meander, Greece), ‘hanguest or hoshoe’ (Hoang-Ho, China), ‘Danubierhome’ (Danube, Hungary) and ‘O nilly’ (Nile, Egypt) (19.25, 63.22, 181.06, 332.30). ALP’s liquid state embodies a sense of shared globalisation not fully realised in *Ulysses*’s water systems, uniting the figures in the text through their shared watery forms. The rivers that run through the *Wake* represent the continual expansion of the text and its figures, made boundless through a polysemy that is reflected in a continual cycle of flow, flooding and precipitation. On the one hand, the human commodification of water is realised through the conflation between the body and water, emphasising how water is both intertwined with, and shaped by, the human body. On the other hand, there is an ecological shift as the source of Dublin’s waterflow is merged with the mother, the origin of human life. This sense of connectivity recalls Neimanis’s hydrofeminist approach, where Joyce’s lengthy list of allusions to the world’s rivers proves to be a uniting force between the self and the ecological Other. ALP becomes an archetypal and watery reflection of everywoman, emphasised by her multilingual, and multi-geographical positioning in the text. Her fluidity is a representation of all female fluidity; she is both a body of water, and the body from which other watery women emerge.

Echoing this wateriness is ALP’s folklore counterpart, the Prankquean, introduced halfway through the first chapter of the *Wake*. Spanning just three pages of the text (21.05-23.15) but with her impact felt across the book, the Prankquean’s tale tells the story of her encounter with Jarl van Hoother. After arriving at van Hoother’s doorstep, where she ‘pulled a rosy one and made her wit [urinates] foreninst the dour’, the Prankquean asks ‘why do I am alook alike poss of porterpease?’, only to be refused entry and the door shut in her face. Angered by the refusal, the Prankquean snatches van Hoother’s son, Tristopher, and ‘rains rains rains’ (runs, runs, runs). The Prankquean has Tristopher trained by ‘four owlers masters’ who convert him into a Lutheran, or Protestant. She then returns with Tristopher, this time ‘nipping a paly one’ as she once again urinates against the door before repeating a slightly altered version of her question to Jarl Van Hoother, now asking for ‘two poss of porterpease?’. History repeats itself and the Prankquean has the door ‘Shut!’ in her face once more, so she switches Tristopher for Hilary, the other twin, and once again runs for the hills. This time the ‘four larksical monitrix’ convert Hilary to Christianity, before the Prankquean returns for a final time to pose her question. She picks ‘a blank and lit out’ in ‘front of the arkway’, asking this time for ‘three poss of porterpease?’. Now threatening to take van Hoother’s ‘dummy’ (daughter) and slipping inside the castle, van Hoother is forced to give in and falls to the sound of Vico’s thunder, facilitating ‘the whole of the polis’ as a city emerges from his remains.

The Prankquean’s question functions as a riddle, harbouring a double-veiled meaning as it symbolises our enigmatic questioning of the development of history. When closely examined, each part of the riddle references a different Wakean figure, reminding us that this history operates on a microcosmic and macrocosmic level. ‘Two peas in a pod’ refers to the twins, Shem and Shaun, and their visual similarity to their parents ‘*why do I* [ALP] *and a poss of porter* [HCE] *look as alike as two peas in a pod* [the twins]’. A ‘pot of porter’ and ‘pease’ or ‘pee’ is suggestive of HCE’s drunken act of watching two women urinate in Phoenix Park. This is reinforced by the word ‘poss’ which recalls the act of washing clothes in a ‘poss-tub’, echoing the washerwomen and their speculation of history, or the rumour in 1.8. ‘Alike’ then echoes the Greek for ‘Alice’, indicative of Alice Liddle who I explored as an Issy figure in Chapter 3. Considering these allusions alongside the Prankquean’s acts of urination—captured in the riddle as posse functions as another term for waterfall ‘why do I look alike a waterfall’—the Prankquean and her riddle become symbolic of the complex and enigmatic nature of the past. Similarities emerge between the Prankquean’s acts of urination and ‘the great flood’ of Genesis that wiped out any prior historical documentation. Operating as an act of divine de-creation in which the historical slate is wiped clean and our origins are further lost to the past, the great flood is refigured in the Prankquean’s urination as she becomes a representation of the parts of history that have been unintentionally unrecorded by those in power. Forming a complex, literal representation of Neimanis’s argument that water retains our anthropomorphic secrets, the Prankquean represents the fluid and uncertain parts of our identities, choosing to highlight these missing histories through frequent acts ‘flooding’ and a repetitive, unsolvable riddle.

In addition to the Prankquean’s historical connotations, she is also a highly embodied figure, encapsulated by her name as it harbours multiple sexual associations. The word ‘prank’ is used by Shakespeare in *Othello* to mean sexual caper. Iago uses the term to declare that Desdemona is sexually and morally corrupt, attesting that,

In Venice they do let God see the pranks

They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience,

Is not to leave’t undone, but keep’t unknown.[[390]](#footnote-390)

This provokes Othello’s jealousy by suggesting Desdemona would commit adultery without guilt. ‘Quean’ is similarly defined as a ‘hussy’ or prostitute, deriving etymologically from the Middle English, ‘quene’, meaning a low-born woman.[[391]](#footnote-391) The combination of derogatory slang results in a bodily title imbued with sexual connotation. These erotic undertones are reinforced by the Prankquean’s association with pissing, seen as ‘our weewee mother’ ‘pulled a rosy one and made her wit foreninst the duor’ in I.1 (598.34, 21.15-16). Like ‘prank’ and ‘quean’, urination has sexual connotations frequently associated with women. Urolagnia—sexual excitement at the sight of urination—is both associated with the Prankquean and reflective of HCE’s voyeurism in Phoenix Park, where he is rumoured to have spied on three young women ‘making water’. HCE is figured in Book One as a ‘stoker tempted by evesdripping against the driver who was a witness as well?’ (89.01-2). Eve here embodies the sinful nature of the act, while HCE spies on the two girls, who double as Prankquean figures, and fantasises about them ‘dripping’ or urinating against his ‘driver’. The ‘driver’ refers to HCE’s penis as ‘pile-driver’ is a form of nineteenth century sexual slang for the phallus. This is used later in the *Wake* in the context of condoms through a reference to ‘laboursaving devisers’, where Joyce writes ‘come on all ye goatfathers and groanmothers, come all ye markmakers and piledrivers, come all ye laboursaving devisers’ (585.14-16). By establishing that the driver, or penis, acts as a ‘witness as well’, Joyce plays on HCE’s sexual voyeurism as he engages in an act of urolagnia, where the act of looking is ‘driven’ by desire in a mind-body (penis) connection. Thought becomes intrinsically linked to bodily function here, and the Prankquean’s bodily fluids become markers of sexual desire, sin, and hidden knowledge, strengthening the enigmatic nature of her riddle through an association between female fluid and elusive metaphysical understanding. The desires of the male brain are mapped onto the female body, and the Prankquean is reflected into the alleged rumour of the text.

Finally, the Prankquean’s ‘rosy’ liquid also doubles as a reference to menstruation, noted by Faith Steinberg as she articulates how the Prankquean’s sequential act of pulling a ‘rosy one’ and nipping ‘a paly one’ before finally picking ‘a blank’ is indicative of the lessening of the menstrual flow (moving from red, to pink, to clear) (21.15-16, 22.03-27). Throughout the text, the Prankquean is associated with a variety of identities and personas, including the Irish pirate Grace O’Malley, who was defiant and dismissive of gender roles; Lilith, the primordial ‘she-demon’ who was said to be the first wife of Adam; and Isolde, from the tale of Tristram and Isolde. Comparing the Prankquean to Queen Maeve (Medb) of Connaught—a powerful figure in Irish mythology who was said to intoxicate men with her sexual prowess—Steinberg measures how both figures are associated with menses, urination, and sexual power. Like the Prankquean who ‘rain[s], rain[s] rain[s]’ through the three stages of menstruation, Maeve is said to have created a ‘body of water’ by urinating and menstruating into ‘“three great dykes” dug for her by Fergus (her favoured sexual partner) during “The Last Battle”’.[[392]](#footnote-392) Maeve, according to Steinberg, is a ‘typologically fundamental component of the Prankquean; both are aggressive, highly sexual women, and micturition is an integral part of their characters’.[[393]](#footnote-393) This comparison marks the frequent association between powerful female figures, bodily fluids, and sex, something which translates into the figures of ALP and Issy through their roles as river and cloud, and their sexually dominant natures. The story of Maeve subverts traditional notions of fluidity-as-weakness, operating in line with Neimanis’s theoretical approach as the myth frames watery bodily functions as a source of female strength.

Issy, the youngest of the three Wakean women, represents the renewal and continuation of these bodies of water and the development of philosophical thought. As I highlighted in Chapter 1, Issy functions as a little cloud, ‘Nuvoletta’, who dissipates into the larger bodily figure of ALP as she ‘reflects’ (turns into a raindrop) ‘for the first time in her little life’ and falls ‘into the river that had been a stream’ (159.06, 159.10). While I previously outlined how this marks the philosophical association between womb and tomb, here the passage also forms a reflection of the Prankquean. Issy often imitates the ‘wee wee mother’—a pun on the Prankquean’s association with micturition—through her own acts of defiance. This intricate connection is particularly prevalent in II.1, the ‘Twilight Games’ episode, where a fusion between children’s games and sexual play takes place. Shem and Shaun, now Glugg and Chuff, attempt to win the approval of Issy and her seven friends who frequently multiply to become twenty-eight leap year girls. They play a game of Angels and Devils, where a blindfolded Shem attempts to guess the colour of the girls’ underwear, with ‘holiodrops’ (heliotrope) forming the answer to the riddle (235.05). Glugg (Shem) ends up getting ridiculed and mocked by the girls after three incorrect guesses, while Chuff (Shaun) becomes a figure of female infatuation, resulting in a chapter which revolves around sexual anxiety and the female body

Rather than provide answers, the reference to ‘heliotrope’ further complicates the passage due to its spectrum of meanings. Heliotrope alludes to an orientation in space, a colour spectrally closest to violet, a dance, and a star-shaped petal formation, to name just a few. Heliotrope also harbours watery connotations when examined in conjunction with the rainbow girls, with the Latin word, *heliotropium*, meaning to turn towards the sun.[[394]](#footnote-394) When considering this act of turning in relation to Issy’s role as precipitation—as Issy reveals the colour of her underwear by lifting her skirt and letting the sunlight in—the result is a rainbow, as rain droplets and sunlight interact. These associations are reinforced through a reference to Issy’s ‘rainbow huemoures’, indicating the emergence of the rainbow girls who embody Issy’s split identity. The correlation between Issy and the rainbow girls has been further articulated by Katherine Ebury, who asserts that ‘Issy, like her father, proves to have a highly divisible self: her core is white light (like the Prankquean), which breaks down prismatically in 28 coloured pieces, the rainbow girls’.[[395]](#footnote-395) When considered in a figurative sense, this suggests that Issy turns her heliotrope underwear towards the sun, shedding literal and figurative light on the riddle, as she pulls up her skirt to reveal her underwear. It also reveals the twins’ sexual desire as they embody the sun which Issy turns towards, emphasised as the sun is typically perceived to be male because it operates in 24-hour cycles like the male hormones, while the moon is deemed to be female as it operates in 28-day cycles, which is indicative of the menstrual cycle (and the rainbow girls).[[396]](#footnote-396)

The riddle is unusually posed by Issy rather than Shem here, echoing the Prankquean’s riddle in I.I where she asks, ‘why do I am alook alike of poss of porter-pease?’ (21.18-19). Issy and her accompanying rainbow girls form a reflection of the Prankquean both numerologically and metaphysically. The girls personify the Prankquean’s menstruation as there are twenty-eight of them in total, indicative of the average length of the menstrual cycle. Like the Prankquean, Issy and her accompanying girls also takes the form of riddlers, posing complex questions of the universe to the *Wake*’s male characters. However, while Shem’s riddle of the universe—‘when is a man not a man?’—is quickly and easily solved, seen in the declaration ‘when he is a –– yours till the rending of the rocks –– Sham’, the female riddles remain indecipherable (170.5, 23-24). Considering this in a philosophical sense, the *Wake*’s male figures represent our complex, yet limited epistemological understanding of the world, while the women stand as ineffable representations of the world’s unsolved metaphysical and cosmological problems, the knowledge which lies outside of human comprehension.

**THE MALE ECOLOGY: GENDERBENDING AND URINATION**

After outlining the complex role of fluid bodies in *Ulysses* and the *Wake*, I can now explore how Joyce undermines gendered assumptions regarding fluidity, using the body to encapsulate the slippery nature of history, phenomenology, and thought. In II.4, the ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ chapter, HCE is on the floor of his tavern, drunk and dreaming. He is surrounded by the pub’s patrons—now the four male judges (here, historians), Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—who, according to Joseph Campbell are ‘consuming the life-substance of their host—and not only eating and drinking him out of house and home but tearing apart with their talk the garment of his reputation’.[[397]](#footnote-397) This act of consumption reflects religious folklore, echoing Christ’s allegorical characterisation as a female pelican. According to this lore, as a pelican’s young begin to grow, they strike their parents in the face and in return are killed by the mother. The mother then laments the young for three days, before striking her breast and bringing the young back to life with her blood.[[398]](#footnote-398) The pelican is referred to later in the *Wake*, through the line ‘you must exterra acquarate to interirigate all the arkypelicans’, aligning with pelican with fluidity through the reference to ‘aqua’ (acquaeate), and ‘irrigate’ (interirigate), both of which simultaneously reference the earth (601.33-34). The pelican thus operates as a liminal symbol for the collision between earth and water—fluid and non-fluid bodies—furthered by the linguistic conflation between pelicans and ark (‘arkypelicans’), a distinct reference to Noah’s ark and the great flood, which appears throughout the ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ chapter. Mirroring Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross, the allegory illuminates how life is sustained through the breast (or bodily fluids) of Christ, while also echoing his resurrection. This allegory is reflected in the chapter as the four evangelists (the young pelicans), or historians, are sustained through a sharing and releasing of bodily fluids, resurrecting lost phenomenological perspectives of the world as bodily water acts as a ‘planetary archive of meaning and matter’ according to Neimanis.

Adding to this renewal of history is a confusion of gender. ‘The big four’ undergo a series of biological transitions as they move between embodying the four ‘masters’ and the four ‘beautiful sister misters’, destabilising a patriarchal worldview by calling male authority, and fluidity, into question, while also undermining the idea that fluidity is a singularly female trait (393.17). This takes place through a fluid discussion of each judge or historian, particularly apparent in the passage on Matthew as Joyce describes how

they were all so sorgy for poorboir Matt in his saltwater hat, with the Aran crown, or she grew that out of, too big for him, of or Mneposs and his overalls, all falling over her in folds – sure he hasn’t the heart to pull them up – poor Matt, the old perigrime matriarch, and a queenly man (392.16-20).

A continual swapping of pronouns takes place here through an interchanging of ‘his’, ‘she’, ‘him’, ‘his’, ‘her’ and ‘he’, followed by a declaration that Matt is a ‘matriarch’ and ‘queenly man’. Echoing the developmental nature of Vico’s cyclical history, the four passages show a development of gender, where the lines become more blurred, and a shared sense of connectivity emerges as the chapter progresses. Through this act of genderbending, the judges become representations of a missing female history. Matthew’s professorial title is reinforced through a reference to the four ‘gynecollege histories’, which implies that those who are assumed to have an authority over history—namely historians and researchers who reside within colleges—are now female (389.09). Bodily fluids—urine in this case—come to represent the knowledge which has slipped away from memory and been ‘returned to the cistern’, as Neimanis frames it, while also facilitating a newly emerging history of the past as the phenomenological perspective becomes simultaneously male and female. This blurring of male and female body parts is accompanied by references to ‘pater familias’ or a patriarch, which later translates into ‘materfamiliarias’, clearly indicating this change in authority (386.13, 391.10). This provides a new perspective on the relationship between self and Other, while also aligning with Neimanis’s theory that acknowledging the fluids of all gendered bodies can enhance the creative, ethical, and political potential of these bodies. Through this interchange, a dual authority emerges, enhancing the phenomenological complexity of Joyce’s historical structure, by challenging and shedding light on historical inequalities.

This first emerges as the four men act as peeping toms inside a ‘nasty cubbyhole’, ‘spraining their ears, luistening and listening to the oceans of kissening, with their eyes glistening’ as they watch HCE’s obscure dream sequence unfold (386.10, 384.18-20). The authorial figures then transform into the ‘four dear old heladies’, who create ‘four farback tumblerfuls of woman squash (urine) as their ‘mouths’, or vaginas, are ‘making water’ (386.09-11). Conflating the drunken pub scene with the female anatomy, the act of metamorphosis is accompanied by a sequence of four ‘(up)[s]’ which initially suggests that the judges have hiccups:

Johnny. Ah well, sure, that’s the way (up) and it so happened there was poor Matt Gregory (up), their pater familias, and (up) the others and now really and (up) truly they were four dear old heladies (386.12-15).

On closer inspection, the iterations further highlight the judges’ newly acquired vaginas, as they each get ‘(up)’ after squatting to urinate with their genital ‘mouths’. On the one hand, this conflation of gender enables men to slip into the fluid sphere, surpassing the notion that male bodily fluids only exist within ‘normal’ and controlled boundaries as they are mapped onto the female body and made uncontainable within the context of drinking. On the other hand, these acts of genderbending result in the chapter’s phenomenological authority becoming blurred as they flicker between bodies, leading to a dissolution of authorial boundaries, as a shared, and partially united, perspective arises.

In addition to illustrating an unstable authority, the series of biological transitions also emphasize a queering of history, highlighted by Joyce’s declaration that we are located in ‘Miracle Squeer’ (384.10). Forming a brief allusion to Oscar Wilde’s childhood home which is situated in Merrion Square, Dublin, the line further implies that sex and gender boundaries are blurred as we enter an alternative historical territory. In the context of the four judges’ roles as historians, the line also implies that their gender transitions provide them with an alternative view on the grand narratives of the past. The move from squatting to standing indicates a move from the female to male body, and thus a shift in phenomenological perspective indicated in the move between patriarchy and matriarchy. While male bodies are granted a sense of fluidity through becoming female, female bodies are provided with a historical authority as the male phenomenological perspective is reframed.

These transitionary acts accommodate an emerging sense of genderqueerness, which disorientates the patriarchal power structures that have determined history’s recorded past. In one example of the chapter’s historical gender liberation, Joyce briefly alters the past by referencing the ‘statue of Mrs Dana O’Connell’, a conflation of Mother Dana and Dublin’s statue of Daniel O’Connell, the great Irish emancipator and liberator. In Celtic mythology, Mother Dana (or Danu) is declared to be the original Goddess, an origin or ‘all knowing deity’, who birthed and breastfed all the gods, providing them with their divine knowledge and wisdom.[[399]](#footnote-399) While the connection between Dana and breastfeeding will be unpacked later in this chapter, Dana’s fluid connotations also extend to water, as her name is the Scythian word for river. Signalling a fluid move from patriarchy to matriarchy, the statue’s altered form is a brief enactment of what our cities and landscapes would possibly depict if gendered power structures were reversed and altered, signally a return to matriarchal Ireland. Reimagining the statue of an Irish emancipator, Dana is an example of the chapter’s emancipation of women’s bodies, as female history—and bodily fluids—are celebrated as authorial symbols. Mother Dana is also referred to by Stephen in *Ulysses* through the declaration that ‘as we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies […] from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image’.[[400]](#footnote-400) This image becomes more prevalent in the context of ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’. Here Joyce is achieving both: unweaving history through interrogating the historical assumptions surrounding male and female body, as he simultaneously weaves a dual authority of the text through a evoking shared sense of fluidity. This recalls Neimanis’s hypothesis that fluidity or water operates as a ‘mode of connection’ between humans as it destablises the boundaries between the self and Other. The historical oversimplification of the fluid female body is challenged here as the male body is brought into the sphere, challenging the concept of a singularly phenomenological authority.

To further explore how this fluidity operates, it is useful to return to the four old men and their observations of the past. From the cubbyhole, the judges observe HCE’s recollection of the story of Tristan and Isolde, remembering ‘who made the world and how they used to be at that time in the vulgar ear cuddling and kiddling her, after an oyster supper in Cullen’s barn’ (384.36-385.01). The line has clear sexual connotations: ‘oyster supper’ evokes an image of oral sex, through both an oyster’s debated label as an aphrodisiac—as they are said to increase sexual potency and libido—and through the notion that diving for pearls (produced from the soft tissue of an oyster) is slang for cunnilingus.[[401]](#footnote-401) This is substantiated as the chapter’s wider sexual focus is iterated in the opening lines, seen through Joyce’s word play on ‘mistlethrushes’ (thrush) and ‘all the birds of the rockbysuckerassousyoceanal sea’ (suck, ass, anal), which, when coupled, indicate that the chapter directly engages with the female anatomy and fluidity through the judges voyeuristically witnessing multiple acts of cunnilingus (384.03-4). The chapter’s engagement with female fluidity enhances this. Allusions to sex and sensuality are accompanied by watery references to the ‘ocean’ and ‘sea’, indicative of ALP’s salty presence which implies that these male bodily fluids are emerging within a distinctly female sphere. ‘Wattarfalls’ and ‘watering’ mouths appear throughout, making the chapter slippery and fluid in its queer execution. (383.22, 386.04). While the men listen or observe the act of cunnilingus taking place, a sharing of female knowledge occurs, whereby the men are able to temporarily adopt a female phenomenology which grants them a sense of fluidity. Rather than associating female fluidity with a lack of bodily autonomy, the sharing of female bodily fluids instead highlights the female body’s regenerative and transgressive potential through its association with metaphorical knowledge.

The act of cunnilingus also prefigures a later observation, where the ‘big four’ witness ‘the passing of the key of Two-tongue Common, with Nush, the carrier of the word, and with Mesh, the cutter of the reed, in one of the farback, pitchblack centuries when who made the world’ (385.04-7). Forming the first question of Catechism, ‘who made the world’ calls God into a state of uncertainty. Like ‘oyster supper’, the ‘passing of the key of two-tongue common’ (Tutankhamun), evokes a similar image of oral sex through direct reference to the tongue, and through a mythological reference to ancient Egypt. Tutankhamun’s tomb was discovered in 1922 when the entrance to the Amun Ra pyramid was uncovered, the same year Joyce began writing of *Finnegans Wake*. [[402]](#footnote-402) The news was widely important and would have likely piqued Joyce’s interest, potentially explaining the frequent allusions to the Egyptian pharaoh in *Finnegans Wake*. In turn, the mythological ‘Resurrection of Osiris’ depicts one of the first recorded examples of oral sex. To offer a brief outline: Osiris—the Egyptian God of fertility—was despised by his jealous brother Sep, who wanted to usurp Osiris’s throne. One evening Sep constructed a plan to murder his brother by convincing him that if he could fit inside the wooden chest he had made, Osiris could keep it. The chest had been made to fit Osiris’s body perfectly, so when he stepped inside, he was trapped by Sep and thrown into the river Nile, the chest now doubling as a coffin. After days of searching, the chest was finally found by Osiris’s wife, Isis, who reclaimed Osiris’s body and hid it from Sep. However, Sep soon found the body and dismembered it, disseminating fourteen pieces across the world to ensure he was unable to be reincarnated. Isis attempted to retrieve Osiris’s body parts and was successful in finding all parts but his penis. She reassembled the body and fashioned a new penis out of clay to resurrect her husband, where she ‘blew’ life back into Osiris’s body by sucking it. Osiris was brought back from the dead, yet was changed, instead coming back as the judge of death in the Hall of Two Truths.[[403]](#footnote-403)

The myth of Osiris is originally detailed in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, a source used heavily by Joyce when writing *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce’s use of the book (or books, as there are multiple, overlapping versions) was first highlighted by Frank Budgen, in an essay titled ‘Joyce’s Chapters of Going Forth by Day’, where he notes that ‘many philosophies flit mothlike with characteristic words across the page of *Finnegans Wake*, and ancient ritual books and compilations, particularly the Norse *Edda* and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, are constantly recurring themes’.[[404]](#footnote-404) In 1959, James Atherton then elaborated on Joyce’s use of the *Book of the Dead*, noting specifically that ‘the scattering of the parts of the body of Osiris has many echoes in *Finnegans Wake*’.[[405]](#footnote-405) Finally, John Bishop offered a detailed reading of the intertextuality between *Finnegans Wake* and the *Book of the Dead*, declared that ‘only a close examination of the Book of the Dead itself will provide more detailed answers to larger questions that any reader is likely to have about much that he meets in the *Wak*e’.[[406]](#footnote-406)

The myth of Osiris is clearly mapped onto the first chapter of the *Wake*, where Finnegan (HCE), having fallen into a great slumber or death, is forced back into his coffin before the mourners then witness his dismemberment. These parallels are confirmed by allusions to Osiris, as Joyce writes

O may the priest of seven worms and scalding tayboil, Papa Vestray, come never anear you as your hair crows wheater beside the Liffey that’s in Heaven! Hep, hep, hurrah there! Hero! Seven times thereto we salute you!’ (26.06-10).

In the *Book of the Dead*,Osiris was known as the wheat god. In his life he put a stop to barbarism by introducing the Egyptians to wheat, barley, and other grains, while in his death, Osiris fed the beatified as they lived upon his wheat filled body.[[407]](#footnote-407) Both the fertility of Egypt and the production of wheat is dependent on the annual flooding of the Nile, once again highlighting the importance of fluidity (water) in the process of regeneration and growth. This also once more aligns HCE with Osiris as he lies beside the Liffey in ‘Heaven!’, with wheat flowing from his head like ‘hair’. Declaring that ‘Seven times thereto we salute you!’, the line forms an allusion to Osiris’s dismemberment because seven times two (‘thereto’) equals fourteen, the number of pieces that Osiris’s was torn into by his brother Sep. From here, HCE’s ‘whole bag of kits’ (body parts) can be seen ‘where you flung them that time’ as his ‘heart is in the system’ and his ‘head is in the tropic of Copricapron’ exemplifying one version of the myth where Osiris’s organs are scattered throughout the heavens. Osiris, or HCE, calls out for ‘metherjar’ (echoing another name for Isis, Methyr), the ‘salvation boat’ who ‘performed upon thee’ (gave him oral sex as a means of resurrecting him) (26.10-19).

Returning to Joyce’s reference to ‘two-tongue common’, it functions as a clear allusion to Osiris, reinforcing the complex images of fluidity, gender, and knowledge that permeate the chapter as the roles are reversed. Oral sex is performed on the female body in an attempt to resurrect the metaphysical origin—found between the legs of a woman—and thus recover the knowledge and history that has been lost to time and prejudice. Forming a linguistic echo of Tutankhamun, ‘two-tongue common’ recalls Osiris through both a simple reference to Ancient Egyptian history, and through Tutankhamun’s own homage to Osiris, as he was embalmed and mummified with an erection to honour the god of fertility.[[408]](#footnote-408) Additionally, the line recalls the Hall of Two Truths—a two-tongued common—where Osiris would decide the fate of dead by measuring their heart against the weight of a feather, alluded to on the previous page of the *Wake* through the line, ‘*Without ever winking the tail of a feather’* (383.12). The line thus implies that, in *Finnegans Wake*, these images of shared fluidity and oral sex lead us to the hall of absolute ‘truths’, a place where historical fact and fiction are reconfigured. Together then, the image of an ‘oyster supper’, coupled with the ‘passing of the key of two-tongue common’, form a retelling or reconstruction of history through the uncovering of an alternative, female phenomenology. The ‘keys’ to knowledge (origins) can once again be found between the female lips ‘lps’—both genital and oral—before it is passed, linguistically, between the male tongues in a sharing of bodily fluids. This destabilises the gender binaries which associate bodily fluids with a lack of autonomy and authority, instead reinforcing a communal and double (two-tongued) authority of the text. In line with Neimanis’s work, the dual ecologies of man and woman in the text are thus blurred and sustained by a sharing of fluid. Through a blurring of gender, Joyce demonstrates how ‘water flows through and across difference’, undermining a singular authority of the text as one gender balances out the other through a sharing of fluids.

Joyce’s fluid rewriting of history continues with the symbolic reoccurrence of the number 1132*.* In the first book of the *Wake*, 1132 is used to specifically reference a missing gap in history, noting how in ‘1132 A.D. Two sons at an hour were born until a goodman and his hag’ (14.11-12). This recounting of history is prefigured by a fissure or silence ‘(Silent.)’ in the annals, because ‘somewhere, parently, in the ginnandgo gap between antediluvious and annadominant the copyist must have fled with his scroll’ (14.06-18). Referencing the Ginnunga-gap which, in Norse mythology, alludes to the primordial abyss that ‘preceded the creation of the world’, the line has curious connotations as it indicates a missing gap in the documents which means our depiction of history will always be fragmented.[[409]](#footnote-409) Of course, historical fragmentation takes place with every recounting of the past, as our retellings can only ever be partial and bias. However, the reference also alludes to the intentional fissures, as the ‘copyist fled’ with his scroll. This implies that Joyce is referring to the missing histories which have purposely erased by social power structures; the histories of those most oppressed by these structures. This re-emerges in the ‘Brideship and Gulls’ chapter as 1132 appears numerous times, seen in the form of ‘the elevation of one yard one handard and thartytwo lines’, and the ‘official landing of Lady Jales Casemate, in the year of the flood 1132’ (389.24-25, 387.22-23).[[410]](#footnote-410) Indicating the presence of intentional historical fragmentation, a sense of fluidity arises through 1132’s association with the ‘universal flood’, highlighted in the previous section where I discussed the associations between the biblical flood and the Prankquean’s acts of urination. When considering this in relation to Astrida Neimanis’ hydrofeminist approach, there is a suggestion that water—‘the great flood’ or urination—holds the key to this history, both in terms of its wiping the slate clean (resulting in a missing gap or origin prior to the earth’s beginning) and in holding the secrets of the past within its watery boundaries. Just like water, the fluid female bodies of the *Wake* also hold these secrets, forming an unknown origin—the silent centre—which continually marks the impossibility of obtaining complete knowledge

The space between these gendered bodies operates as a phenomenological ecotone. Described as a site of transition between two ecological communities, ecotones between two habits or spaces are often richer and more diverse in species than each of the two separate communities. When considered in relation to the fluid bodies of the *Wake*, the space where these bodies overlap signifies a richness in phenomenological perspective, further highlighting the necessity of making philosophy and history a shared community practice as it results in more enhanced perspectives and knowledge. In *Finnegans Wake*, these spaces take place in a dissolution of binaries, as knowledge is always in the process of becoming, refuting clear definition as it is at once nothing and everything. This is evident in ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ as an act of transformation takes place: a queering of history, of gender, and of phenomenology. Bodily fluids bridge the liminal ecotone between genders, the middling richness which provides the text with spaces of transformation. Here, urination and oral sex, represent a sharing of bodily fluids between genders, resulting in a destabilisation of male historical authority as the male body enters the fluid sphere. By bringing men into this watery flood—rather than merely exemplifying men as the ones who document it—Joyce questions our approach to history, marking the importance of embracing these missing fluidities, complexities, and unfinished ends to reach a greater understanding of our origins.

**‘LAID BARE HIS BREASTPAPS TO GIVE SUCK’: BREASTMILK, THE MALE PAP, AND COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE**

In a later part of the *Wake*, female fluids continue to symbolise a nourishing of the Wakean mind. The genderbending acts of urination are reinforced through allusions to male breastfeeding, resulting in a further levelling of the fluid body. This alternative approach to fluidity is evident in III.1, ‘Yawn’s Inquest’, which takes a similar form to ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’. Here Shaun, now Yawn, is dreaming and undergoing an inquest by the four judges, who are now ‘psychomorers’ (or soul-fools) working their way through the layers of Yawn’s brain. Each layer of Yawn’s unconscious, according to William York Tindall, ‘contains a member of the family’, with HCE being the deepest and ‘most difficult to bring to light’ as the judges attempt to underpin the crux of the *Wake* itself.[[411]](#footnote-411) Rather than an exploration into history and its absences, Joyce is concerned with phenomenological perspective here. Each progression into a different layer of Yawn’s brain reveals a different member of the family’s view on HCE’s misconduct in Phoenix Park, resulting, in parts, in a confusion of gender as the layers of the brain overlap and cause a conflation of characters. In the previous section I outlined how urine marks the watery, wasted, potential of history as it stands as planetary archive of experience and meaning, shaped, and defined by those in power. Here, breastmilk’s ability to be consumed, coupled with its association with the development of the body and brain, results in it representing the process in which knowledge is consumed and formed. Breastmilk thus functions as a symbol of knowledge, uncovered in ‘Yawn’s Inquest’ as the chapter’s multiple phenomenological perspectives are nourished through the symbol of the breast.

Before exploring the complexity of breastfeeding in *Finnegans Wake*, it is necessary to first trace its public perception. Breastmilk has long been symbolic of health, nutrients, and knowledge. It is the one bodily fluid widely deemed fit, recommended even, for consumption. According to Barbara Formis, in ‘its maternal substance, milk is simply miraculous: it comes already sterilized, at the perfect temperature, it is ingested through the process of sucking and consists of carbohydrates, lactose, water, minerals, vitamins, proteins and lipids’.[[412]](#footnote-412) Both familial and strange in its bodily presence, milk is also inherently political. In our current climate, mothers are demonised for publicly breastfeeding their children, stemming from the sexualisation of the female body which deems this natural act to be too intimate and inappropriate for public eyes.[[413]](#footnote-413) Meanwhile, those who choose not to breastfeed—or rather cannot—are made to feel like they are failing their children by relying on formula.[[414]](#footnote-414)

Breastfeeding’s economic and political nature was also prominent in the early modern period, where breastmilk’s place in society was equally complicated, yet more publicly shared. Breastmilk became a commodity—a form of cultural and economic currency—as it could be bought or sold to feed babies and the elderly due to its naturally nutritious nature.[[415]](#footnote-415) Breastmilk was also frequently associated with knowledge, emerging from the correlation between its nutritious content and early infant development. Early modern families were cautious when hiring wet nurses, as they believed that language was absorbed through the milk. It was therefore essential to hire the right wetnurse for your child, so as not to ‘taint’ them.[[416]](#footnote-416) References to the act of sucking in language from the mother or wetnurse’s milk are found in multiple sources. The seventeenth-century French ecclesiastical historian, L.E. Du Pin, declares that ‘it is beyond all dispute, that at *Hippo*, and in other *African* Cities, *Latin* was the general language they suck’d with their Mother’s Milk; because St. *Augustin* says of himself, that he had got the *Latin* Tongue by the kind Expressions of his Nurses of *Tagasta*, where he was born’.[[417]](#footnote-417) This is also referred to by James Shirley in *The Dukes mistris* (1638), where he asserts how ‘here we sucke this language/ And our milke together’.[[418]](#footnote-418) Believed to possess the ability to teach language through absorption, milk harbours philosophical power, operating in parallel to language and thus providing an alternative vehicle for expressing metaphysical and phenomenological thought.

The importance of choosing the correct wetnurse was also intertwined with gender and politics. According to Berit Åström, it was imperative that the nurse’s own child be of the same sex, because ‘milk intended for a boy would make the girl spritelier’, with ‘a man-like Virago’ whereas the milk intended for a girl would make ‘a boy more effeminate’.[[419]](#footnote-419) Even the distribution of breastmilk, a natural substance used to sustain life, was regulated due to the fear it would influence masculinity and femininity. Breastmilk was also a point of contention in early modern Ireland, as Gaelic-speaking wet-nurses were associated with the degeneration of the Anglo-Irish language. Edmund Spenser warns of the ‘dangers’ of using a Gaelic wet-nurse in *A* *View of the State of Ireland*, where he notes how the child will ‘draw into themselves, together with their Suck, even the Nature and Disposition of their Nurses’.[[420]](#footnote-420) Recalling the fears that a wet-nurse’s milk could influence the temperament of the baby, in Ireland, an additional layer of fear is added in light of its colonial context. Spencer argues that the ‘evil Customs of fostering and marrying with the Irish’ need to be most carefully ‘restrained’, because from this a third evil emerges, ‘the Custom of Language’.[[421]](#footnote-421) This is elucidated by Clodagh Tait, who articulates that the dynamic between fosterage, wet-nurses, and breastfeeding led to a fear of the ‘creeping corruption of Irish manner and language’, and ‘observers expressed concerns that English children with Gaelic fosterers or nurses would forget their allegiance to the crown and take on the manners and customs of their foster-families’.[[422]](#footnote-422) These cultural and colonial concerns highlight that great power, and therefore great danger, was believed to lie in the breastmilk, as it is intimately bound up with theories of knowledge, language, and identity.

In addition to its cultural connotations, breastmilk’s primary role is nourishment. Operating as a source of food, milk harbours metaphysical connotations through its connection to the senses. In describing the sexual politics of milk, Barbara Formis highlights the relationship between food and thought, breastmilk and metaphysics. Formis posits that ‘one could argue that food is for somaesthetics what the body in general is for pragmatist aesthetics and phenomenology: a pivotal point that articulates a series of entangled relationships between living beings’.[[423]](#footnote-423) While phenomenology functions as a framework for comprehending our conscious experience of the world, somaesthetics underpins our bodily experience of the world. Milk, according to Formis, ‘incarnates the potentiality of a nutritional facility that would not be synonymous with naivety and ignorance, but rather the key to a clairvoyant and absolute knowledge. Milk is the symbol of the fountain of life, of the uninterrupted flow of wisdom.’[[424]](#footnote-424) Formis goes on to declare that ‘to ingest science as the newborn swallows milk, with the same deep reflective consciousness and apparent lack of physical effort, would be the dream of any poet, philosopher or writer.’[[425]](#footnote-425) Milk thus functions as a metaphor for complete metaphysical knowledge, offering the perfect nutritional balance for the development of the brain and the development of thought. Emerging from the origin of life (or more specifically, the breast of the mother), milk is passed between humans like liquid knowledge, functioning as a philosophical fluid which provides the infant with all the nutrients needed to grow, think, and thrive.

Milk has also been used to theoretically explore the connection between the female body and authority. In the ‘Laugh of the Medusa’, Hélène Cixous aligns women’s writing (the textual) with the body (the fluid), famously remarking that ‘a woman is never far from “mother”’, not in terms of parental roles and childbirth, but rather as a ‘source of goods’.[[426]](#footnote-426) There is always within a woman, according to Cixous, ‘at least a little of that good mother’s milk. She writes in white ink’.[[427]](#footnote-427) Aligning women’s writing with a sense of female authority or phenomenology, breastmilk becomes a form of liberation from the phallogocentric restraints which limit a female writer. To break free of these restraints ‘women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnatable language that will wreck partitions’.[[428]](#footnote-428) In the context of Cixous’s urge to get women to write, the claim that women function as a ‘source of goods’ as they are ‘never far from “mother”’ lends itself to a commentary on the creative and metaphysical potential of the female body. A woman’s potential to reproduce emulates their textual capacity to write, echoed in Joyce’s ‘Oxen of the Sun’ as gestation and childbirth functions as a metaphor for producing new and original thought. Writing from the body with ‘white ink’ suggests that women harbour the ability to creatively free themselves from the limitations of phallogocentric language, resulting in the expression of a unique phenomenology that creates new and engaging ways of thinking about and approaching the world. As will shortly be explored, in *Finnegans Wake* this white ink also provides liberation for the male figures, releasing them from the essentialist constraints of gender as it enables them to embrace fluidity and develop their metaphysical understanding of origins. Just as white ink or breastmilk becomes a means of freeing woman from the phallogocentric constraints of writing, the female body frees the male mind from the constraints of a singular, gendered phenomenology in *Finnegans Wake*, emphasising Astrida Neimanis’s hypothesis that fluidity is a shared and connective substance.

Cixous’s ‘white ink’ also contains philosophical connotations. Women write in white ink—they occupy the white space of the page, the unspoken tongue which lies outside of the black, phallogocentric ink, marked by the O in *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses* which puts a black textual ring around the white space—capturing, if only briefly, the white ink of woman. As explored in Chapter 1, by marking bodily fluid as something female, white, yellow, milky, and fatty in appearance in ‘Penelope’, Joyce is able to briefly occupy and observe this white phenomenological space. At first, this intrusion feels like a colonisation of the female body, yet on further inspection it blurs the phenomenological authority of the text, making space for the male, female, and genderqueer body to harbour an authorial position in the text as they merge with the traditional male power structure. These textual spaces operate for the reader as much as they operate for the writer, functioning as a means of navigating the intrusive metaphysical holes and enigmas of the Joycean text.

Returning to ‘Yawn’s Inquest’, I can now unpack how these shared authorities emerge in the context of breastmilk. When Yawn is questioned by the four old men about his relationship with HCE, the father is depicted as an emblem of Christ known as ‘Ecce Hagios Chrisman!’ (Behold the holy Christ man), who lays ‘bare his breastpaps to give suck’ (480.14-15). Recalling the image of the pelican as the bird dashes its breast to feed its young, the line associates HCE with the allegory and thus positions him as a godly figure who has adopted female body parts. This is reinforced through multiple allusions to other religions, teachers, and rulers, which associate HCE’s new appendages with intellectual and social development. HCE is compared to Hep (also known as Hap, or Hapi) here when the Judges observe ‘Hep! Hullo there’ before questioning ‘Whu’s he? Whu’s this lad, why the pups?’ (480.18-19). Forming a further interrogation into the origins of the rumour and the origins of life, Hep is the androgynous ancient Egyptian God who is said to have had a fake beard and large breasts, which symbolise his fertilisation of the land through the great annual flooding of the Nile.[[429]](#footnote-429) Another mention of Hep in I.1 suggests that his fertilizing breasts bring enlightenment, as HCE is referred to as ‘Hep, hep hurrah there! Hero! Seven times thereto we salute’, once more recalling Hep and his breasts, while also alluding to Buddhism through the number seven (26.09). The numerical significance of this is due to Buddhism having seven stages of enlightenment.[[430]](#footnote-430) Drawing a connection between Buddha’s enlightenment and Hep’s fertilization of the land through his breasts, Joyce’s reference suggests a fertilization or enlightenment of the male mind through the figure of the breast. This hypothesis is emphasized as the line also serves as a reference to Hatshepsut, a female ancient Egyptian pharaoh, erased from the history annuals by her successors, possibly on account of her gender.[[431]](#footnote-431) The mythological context sheds light on the reference to his ‘pups’, referring to Hatshepsut occupying an authorial position which is typically occupied by a man, a role which is reversed in the chapter through a conflation of bodies. When considering this in relation to the images of genderbending and the reframing of historical authority in ‘Bride-ship and Gulls’, the breasts indicate a similar conflation of authority here. Just as the reference to Hep suggests that the breastfeeding pap enlightens those who feed from it, as milk provides knowledge, fertilisation, and wisdom, HCE’s new ‘paps’ signal that he has reached metaphysical enlightenment.

To further this, HCE’s new bodily form echoes Mother Dana, once more recalling ‘Bride-ship and Gulls’ chapter through its allusion to ‘Mrs Dana O’ Connell’. Highlighted in the previous section, Dana is said to have been the mother goddess, who breastfed and raised all the gods. She is also associated with the land, embodied in Ireland’s ‘Paps of Anu’ (or Danu), a pair of mountains shaped like breasts, located in Killarney and inferring, according to Sharon Paice MacLeod, Danu’s ‘connection with fertility and abundance’.[[432]](#footnote-432) Joyce refers to these ‘earthly’ breasts on multiple occasions in the *Wake*, appearing in the form of the ‘two breasts of Banba’ and ‘non paps of nan’ (325.24, 583.22). Their mountainous form echoes HCE’s role as a personification of the Dublin landscape, seen as the ‘humptyhillhead’ lies with his ‘Head-in-Clouds’ as he takes on the form of ‘Howth Castle and Environs’, functioning as a reflection of Danu’s body (3.20, 18.23, 3.03). Similarities also emerge between Mother Dana and ALP, beginning with simple phonetic wordplay through the reference to the Paps of Anu, as ‘Anu’ or ‘Ana’ echoes ‘Anna’. Theories about the origins of Danu’s name include a ‘connection between the deity names Danu and Don as well as a widespread group of river names, perhaps indicative of an early origin or widespread occurrence’.[[433]](#footnote-433) Recalling ALP and the network of rivers which emerge from her watery body, Joyce’s references to Danu enhance the fluidity of Joyce’s text, which aids the progression of metaphysical thought in the *Wake*. MacLeod asserts that ‘the association of female divinities or divine figures with bodies of water, including rivers, is widely attested in Celtic tradition’.[[434]](#footnote-434) It is curious, then, that the image of Danu’s breasts is imprinted onto the Irish landscape, which is frequently associated with the male form in *Finnegans Wake*, thus merging both her and ALP’s watery nature with the male land. Given Danu’s metaphysical and mythical connotations, by mapping her breasts onto HCE’s body, Joyce implies a connection between breastfeeding and a fertilisation of the mind, suggesting that the reader is moving towards uncovering the metaphysical origins of life, rumour and text.

These images of male breasts are accompanied by a further conflation of gender, which unlocks the full metaphysical potential of the chapter. As the layers of Yawn’s brain unfold, ALP begins to speak through the mouth of Shaun, when her triangle delta is mapped onto his mouth: ‘Capilla, Rubrilla and Melcamomilla! Dauby, dauby, without dulay!’ (492.13-14). Describing Shaun’s transformation into ALP as he develops red hair (Latin: ruber capillus) and breasts (Latin: mamilla), which hold spiced milk (Latin: melca) with a chamomile and honey-like taste (Latin: comomilla, mel), he (now ALP) begins to describe the tale of the rumour. Evoking another instance of genderbending as ALP’s female figure is mapped onto the male body, an exchange of knowledge is once again performed through the female body as ALP and HCE once again take the form of Isis and Osiris: ‘Irise, Osirises! Be they mouth given unto thee!’ (493.28). Just like in ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ and ancient Egyptian myth, ALP once again attempts to revive her husband through oral stimulation, however, here ALP’s attempts are literary rather than sexual as she recalls the rumour through the mouth of Shaun. ALP declares she will ‘confess to his sins and blush me further’, speculating that ‘it may be that he puts his pennis in the sluts maschine’ of ‘both the leginntimate lady performers of display unquestionable’ (495.23-25).

Discussing a similar instance in the ‘Shem the Penman’ episode (I.7), where ALP and Shem overlap through a sharing of bodily fluids (as he writes with the mother’s urine), Shelly Brivic poses the notion that the overlapping of mother and son corresponds to

D. W. Winnicott’s idea that a mother creates a protective field around a child in which he or she can expand mental boundaries. For thousands of years, it was believed that a man could only think imaginatively if a women enfolded him; such women were called muses. The liquid margin in which the child overlaps with the mother, described near the end of the *Wake* by the phrase “[s]wimming in hindmoist” (627.03), is the area in which emotions are felt. The secretion of the sex organ reproduced the sensation of floating in the womb, which may be one of the main effects that make it crucial interface of sexuality.[[435]](#footnote-435)

A similar thing takes place here between ALP and Yawn. Here, ALP makes a protective field around Yawn as her female form is mapped onto his male body, enabling an expansion of his mental boundaries or phenomenology as he accesses the perspective of another. The image of the male and female breast signifies a shared sense of enlightenment, as the male is temporarily granted mental expansion through adopting the body of woman. Like the transference of knowledge seen in ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ through a sharing of bodily fluids through oral sex, here the sharing takes place through breastmilk, as one bodily ecology is mapped onto another. This act of bodily connectivity becomes further intwined with breastfeeding as ALP’s speech progresses, indicating that she is bringing enlightenment with her ‘Ural Mount’ (Ural Mountain or oral mountains) as:

Or, but, now, and, ariring out of her mirgery Margery watersheads and, to change that subjuct from the traumaturgid for once in a while and darting back to stuff, if so be you may identify yourself with the him in you, that fluctuous neck merchamtur, bloodfadder and milkmudder, since then our too many of her, Abha na Lifé, and getting on to dadaddy again (494.16, 496.22-28).

The reference to the ‘bloodfadder and milkmudder’ alludes to Lugaid Loígde, known as ‘Lugaid of the Calf Goddess’, who reared his two sons, Aed and Laegaire, by breastfeeding them. According to legend, he gave milk to Laegaire and blood to Aed, aligning with early modern concerns of breastfeeding, as the different sustenance determines each son’s temperament, with Aed marked by fierceness and Laegaire by thrift.[[436]](#footnote-436) The image depicts a conflation of ALP and HCE, as she can ‘identify [herself] with the him in [her]’, indicating that she has enwombed him to reveal the truth of the Phoenix Park incident. ALP forms this bodily connection by urinating through her ‘watersheads’ or ‘Vulva!’, which leads into a full outline of the *Wake*, as ALP speaks through Shem, who simultaneously embodies HCE (496.23, 482.08). In both ‘Bride-Ship and Gulls’ and the ‘Inquest of Yawn’, a fluid enwombing thus takes place, where the female body is mapped onto the male body through a conflation of gender and bodily fluids, resulting in a transference of knowledge, or an expansion of phenomenological perspective as the creative potential of a dual authority is unlocked. Here bodily fluids, such as urine, breastmilk, and menstrual blood, form the connective ecotones between these bodies which enable these spaces of creativity to emerge, operating as metaphors for history and metaphysics and thus reflecting Neimanis’s notion that water ‘stands as a planetary archive of meaning and matter’.

As explored in this chapter, Joyce uses images of genderbending and bodily fluids to exemplify the impossibility of moving through the world as a self-sustaining individual. Instead, as explored by Astrida Neimanis’s concept of hydrofeminism, human relationships sustain us in the world, both physically and intellectually, and the fluid connections between bodies become complex structures for the development of thought and society. This operates both metaphorically and literally in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce brings the male body into the typically ‘female’ fluid sphere, reorientating the boundaries between gender, philosophy, and fluidity through a dissolution of binaries. What can thus be garnered by reading *Finnegans Wake* through the framework of Neimanis’s hydrofeminist theory is that water is fundamentally essential to being, and an understanding of shared watery bodies can accommodate new philosophical readings of the relationship between the self and Other. By examining the bodies of the *Wake* as regenerating ecologies, and the space between them as malleable phenomenological ecotones, a new reading of Wakean philosophy emerges.

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# CONCLUSION:

Use is defined as cultivation. Land that has not been cultivated becomes wasteland, unused, and thus available to be appropriated.

(Sara Ahmed, *What’s the Use?).* [[437]](#footnote-437)

Reflecting, once more, on Sara Ahmed’s discussions on use, this thesis has been an attempt to transform a piece of the *Wake*’s uncultivated land, recalling Ahmed’s notion that ‘space must be rearranged to accommodate the bodies it was not designed for’.[[438]](#footnote-438) As I have demonstrated, these uncultivated spaces can be seen and repurposed by re-orientating our view of how the *Wake* can be used. Through an investigation of gynaecological and medical motif in Joyce’s work, I have illuminated how close readings of the O, speculum, womb, and fluids in the *Wake* can uncover original and productive ways of reading female authority in Joyce’s text, reframing our understanding of Joyce’s use of metaphysics, through the emergence of a dual, philosophical phenomenology. By using the female body as a complex metaphor for the enigmatic nature of our metaphysical origins, Joyce grants the women of the *Wake* an underlying sense of authority which runs parallel to the pre-established male phenomenology of the text and adds further complexity to the *Wake*’s pluralities. Rather than attempt to ‘solve’ the *Wake*’s meaning, the purpose of this thesis is to highlight the creative and philosophical potential of these gynaecological readings, building on the vital work that has come before, while also making way for further readings of gender, sexuality, and feminism within the Joycean text.

My primary motivation for this thesis was driven by my own female phenomenology. When I attended my first International James Joyce Symposium in 2016 (as a desk volunteer in my second year of university), I was surprised by the closeness of the community. Six years on, this same sense of collegiality remains, yet Joyce studies has also revealed itself to be unsafe for female scholars, particularly—but of course not limited to—those who are young and in precarious positions. This leads me to return to what I briefly highlighted in the introduction, regarding the open letter. When the #MeToo movement was reignited in 2015 through the Harvey Weinstein allegations, it had a ripple effect, causing people across the globe to come forward about the abuse they had witnessed, or experienced, within their workplace. The same thing occurred in the Joyce community in 2018, when a group of ‘concerned Joyceans’, wrote an Open Letter detailing the imbalance of power and abuse that was prevalent within the community. The letter asked for a call for ‘meaningful’ action to ‘reduce the incidents of sexual harassment, inappropriate behaviour, and even assault at conferences, workshops, summer schools and any other events affiliated with the community’.[[439]](#footnote-439) While important steps have been taken to prevent further harm, apparent through the new codes of conduct issued for conferences and summer schools, as well as the reinstatement of the ‘Women’s Caucus’ at the International James Joyce Symposium, abuses of power are still rife within the community.

When I returned from the Dublin Symposium last year, I felt deflated. I was deep into writing a thesis which highlighted the value in uncovering female authority in *Finnegans Wake*, yet it still felt like little worth was being placed upon the real women of the Joyce community. I reflected on the experience in my conference report for the *James Joyce Literary Supplement*, noting how ‘female scholars are being overburdened by a moral duty to keep others safe, making what should be a celebration of scholarship, an emotionally fatiguing experience’.[[440]](#footnote-440) In an attempt to regain a sense of power in a situation which can, at times, feel depressingly futile, I turned to Sara Ahmed’s work on complaint to further reflect on my own positionality and responsibility as a scholar. Complaint is now necessarily abundant within Joyce studies: it emerges over shared coffees, through email, and through the whispers and warnings which now permeate the conference spaces. Not all of these complaints are verbal. If you look hard enough, they can be seen in the body: in a moment of eye contact or in an act of moving away. Complaint is also felt in the absence or withdrawal of scholars.

Since starting this PhD in 2019, I have been mentally cataloguing stories of complaint within the community. They feel like small reminders of collegiality and female authority: indicators of an underlying safety network which is trying to address the imbalance of power. In response to the Open Letter, *The Modernist Review* wrote that ‘fear is a potent tool that prevents all too necessary conversations’, while highlighting that we ‘need to strive for more transparency, better support networks and direct accountability’.[[441]](#footnote-441) At the (virtual) International James Joyce Symposium in 2021, Zoe Miller concluded her paper on sexual violence in ‘The Dead’ by reminding us of the Open Letter and its call for safer conditions for women in the community. In 2022, Casey Lawrence wrote an article titled ‘The Whisper Network Won’t Protect Your Students’, detailing her own experience of harassment within the community, while articulating that ‘if sexual harassment, assault, and other abuses — including misogyny and abuses of power — are allowed to continue at Joyce events, our field, like many in the hard sciences, will continue to hemorrhage promising female scholars, leaving the echo-chamber door shut tight behind them’.[[442]](#footnote-442) The most recent act of complaint can be found within the *James Joyce Quarterly*, where an unnamed author under the pseudonym of Molly Bloom wrote a piece titled ‘To Certain Male Joyceans’, which discusses sexual harassment within the community in the style of ‘Penelope’. ‘Molly’ laments, ‘you are my friends but you are salting the field we loved where we grew knowledge and understanding and laughter together’, later reflecting on how,

the world is coming apart unimaginable things are happening there are no jobs women are working for love not money everyone is sick Russia has invaded and is killing people every day yes and our little bloomin world is sickening too in its own way.[[443]](#footnote-443)

Offering a powerful reflection on the impact that abuse and harassment is having on the field of Joyce studies, ‘Molly’s’ statement is a fresh reminder of the way Joyce’s work can be used to address these structural problems.

This may seem like an unusual end to a thesis, but this work has been driven and shaped by these instances of complaint. Certain parts of the work have been influenced by citational absence, as there are names which I have tried to avoid citing, resulting in me adopting alternative intellectual pathways. I am also deeply aware of the citational absences in the field: the critical ghosts of the essays and monographs which will now never be written, because those who would have, left. I think of these citational ghosts as Os, reflective of Joyce’s own use of the typographical figure which stands as a marker of an absent phenomenology, uncultivated land which is now left to be shaped by those who remain in the field. This thesis has also been intentionally structured around the work of Sara Ahmed, due to her efforts to confront and expose the problematic structural power dynamics which exist within academia. Intersectional and rigorous in her analysis, Ahmed’s work has helped me to reframe my own readings of Joyce’s work, enabling me to reconsider phenomenological questions of authority, as well as teaching me to question how and why we use Joyce’s texts.

The purpose of these reflections is not to evoke a sense of bleakness, but rather the opposite. Things can appear futile, but it is important to remember that change is gradual, and collective complaint is a powerful tool against the institutional walls which are designed to protect those with power. After all, ‘it takes time for the world to acquire a new shape’, Ahmed writes.[[444]](#footnote-444) When you move beyond the sense of powerlessness, you can find glimpses of hope. This can be seen in the networks of care which have been formed as a means of survival and protection. It can also be seen in a move towards more inclusive and expansive readings of Joyce, evident at the 2022 Symposium through the emergence of papers concerned with readings of sexuality, race, disability, and gender, which signalled a further intersectional shift in our interpretations of the text.

In her keynote for the Symposium, Katherine O’Callaghan posed a vital question regarding the future of Joyce studies, asking us to reflect on what the field might look like in 100 years. If there is a continuation in the drive towards facilitating a safer environment for female scholars, the hope is that things may not feel so uncertain. While it feels like little has changed since the publication of the Open Letter in 2019, Ahmed’s elucidation of complaint offers an alternative view, as she highlights that,

you can’t always tell, you don’t always know, what a complaint makes possible. But from complaint we learn how possibility is not plucked out of thin air. Possibility comes from intimacy with what has thickened over time. You might be chipping away at the old block, those structures, that wall, the barrier, and all you seem to have done is scratched the surface. That scratching is learning. […] We cannot always perceive the weakening of structures until they collapse. When structures begin to collapse, the impact of past efforts becomes tangible. Impact is a slow inheritance.[[445]](#footnote-445)

With this in mind, this thesis is my small act of complaint—a chip, a scratch—because I often feel powerless in the community, and because I believe that the female body should be respected and valued, both inside and outside of Joyce’s work.

# APPENDIX

**Fig. 1**—*An Anatomical Dissection Being Carried out by Andreas Vesali*(*c.* 1543), *Wellcome* (Wikimedia Commons).

A picture containing text, old, plaque, vintage

Description automatically generated

**Fig. 2**—Anon, *Sims’s Vaginal Speculum* (*c.* 1845), (Wikimedia Commons)

A drawing of a snail

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

**Fig. 3**—Anon, S*péculum de madame Boivin* (*c.* 1825), (Wikimedia Commons)

**![A close-up of a stethoscope

Description automatically generated with medium confidence]()**

**Fig. 4**—James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* *293* (*c.* 1939)

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**Fig. 5**—Anon, *Holmes Stereoscope (*c. 19th), *NCC Photographic Archives, <https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/ncm/2013/10/21/artifact-of-the-month-holmes-stereoscope/>*



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11. See, for example: Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico’s Science of Imagination* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1981); Donald Phillp Verene, *James Joyce and the Philosophers at* *Finnegans Wake* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2016); and John Bishop, *Joyce’s Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake* (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Parts of this summary of Vico can be found in my own essay: Laura Gibbs, ‘In the *Wake* of Trauma: Exploring Exilic Identity Through James Joyce’s Use of Narrative Fetishism’, in *Joyce Studies in Italy: The Joys of Exile*, ed. by Franca Ruggieri (Rome: Anicia, 2018), p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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27. Margaret Solomon, *Eternal Geomater: The Sexual Universe of Finnegans Wake* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1969), p. viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Solomon, *Eternal Geomater*, p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Margot Norris, *The Decentered Universe of Finnegans Wake: A Structural Analysis* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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31. Burgess, *A Shorter Finnegans Wake*, pp. i-ii. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Laurent Milesi, ‘Toward a Female Grammar of Sexuality: The De/Recomposition of “Storiella as She is Syung’, *Modern Fiction Studies: Feminist Readings of Joyce*, 35, 3 (Autumn, 1989), 569-86 (p. 570). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
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34. While I previously highlighted Hélène Cixous’s involvement in the movement, this second-wave was also pioneered by bell hooks, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem, among others. The second-wave created a new context in which readers could engage with Joyce’s work, resulting in an influx of publications on Joyce and feminism, such as: Suzette Henke’s edited collection, *Women in Joyce* (1982), Vicki Mahaffey’s *Reauthorizing Joyce* (1988), as well as articles such as Marilyn French’s ‘Women in Joyce’s Dublin’ (1988) and Karen Lawrence’s ‘Compromising Letters: Joyce and Women’ (1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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38. Mahaffey, ‘Joyce and Gender’, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, ‘The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave’, *Science and Society*, *Marxist-Feminist Thought Today,* 69, 1 (Jan., 2005), 56-91 (p. 56). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
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41. Core voices in the third-wave feminist movement include bell hooks, Judith Butler, Naomi Wolf and Rebecca Walker. While the former three are known for their theoretical work on gender, social power, beauty standards and race, Walker is an activist who pioneered discussions on race, politics, culture, and gender. Walker also co-founded the Third Wave Fund, which supports trans, queer, intersex individuals, and women of colour to become activist leaders through the provision of resources. Third-wave feminism was also fuelled by punk subcultures such as Riot grrrl, which combined punk music with politics and feminism, addressing issues of rape, patriarchy, racism, abuse, classism, and female empowerment through the genre.

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42. See: Sarah K. Burgess, ‘Between the Desire for Law and the Law of Desire: #MeToo and the Cost of Telling the Truth Today’, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 51, 4 (2018), 342-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. ‘An Open Letter to the James Joyce Community’, *The Modernist Review* (2019) <https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/2019/01/15/an-open-letter-to-the-james-joyce-community/ > [accessed 15January 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Casey Lawrence ‘#MeToo is Nothing New’, *Dublin Review of Books* (2019), <https://drb.ie/articles/metoo-is-nothing-new> [accessed 15 January 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Over the past ten years, the rising conversations around race, trans-rights, and sexuality have introduced further complexity into Joycean scholarship. Notions of queer identity and transfeminisms have been slowly emerging within the field, resulting in scholarship such as Emma Heaney’s *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Transfeminine Allegory* (2017), and Oriana Pascuci’s ‘Modernist Sex-Change on Paper: Gender Markers in Joyce’s “Circe” and Woolf’s *Orlando*’ (2016). While there is a still a lacuna in the field’s exploration of intersectional identities, the recent 2022 International James Joyce Symposium evidenced the emergence of further diverse approaches. In particular, Casey Lawrence’s paper on genderbending and queerness in the ‘Mamaluja’ sketch of *Finnegans Wake* and Zoë Henry’s paper on race and withholding in *Ulysses* and the work of Nella Larsen’s ‘Quicksand’, both offered insight into the explorative potential of Joyce’s work. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Sara Ahmed, *What’s the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham: Duke UP 2019), p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ahmed, *What’s the Use?*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Richard V. Chase, ‘*Finnegans Wake*: An Anthropological Study’, *The American Scholar*, 13, 4 (Autumn, 1944), 418-26 (p. 418). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Chase, ‘*Finnegans Wake*: An Anthropological Study’, pp. 418 and 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ahmed, *What’s the Use?*, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Donald Phillip Verene, *James Joyce and the Philosophers at* *Finnegans Wake* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2016), pp. 105-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2017), p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ahmed, *What’s the Use?*, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. This work appears in a forthcoming publication: Laura Gibbs, ‘Gendered Authorities: Joyce’s “Nightlessons” and the Correspondence Between Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes’, *European Joyce Studies* (2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Vicki Mahaffey, ‘Nausicaa’ in Catherine Flynn, ed., *The Cambridge Centenary Ulysses: The 1922 Text with Essays and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2022), pp. 474-82 (p. 474). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. by J. N. Findlay (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. xxiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Logical Investigations*, p. xxiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1963), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Space, here, is referring to one’s geographical, social, and economic position in the world, the way a body occupies space in relation to others. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Iris Marion Young, ‘Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality’, *Human Studies*, 3, 2 (April, 1980), 137-56 (p. 139). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Iris Marion Young, ‘Throwing Like a Girl’, p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Iris Marion Young, ‘Throwing Like a Girl’, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, pp. 157-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Laura Lovejoy, ‘The Bestial Feminine in *Finnegans Wake*’, *Humanities,* 6, 58 (2017), 1-15 (p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Lovejoy, ‘The Bestial Feminine in *Finnegans Wake*’, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Although in this thesis I have tried to introduce a wider, more inclusive reading of the bodies which exist in *Finnegans Wake*, I am deeply aware of the limitations of my own readings. I too have had to be selective in my analysis, meaning there is still much more to be done to explore the full potential of these characters, particularly regarding race, gender, and sexuality. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Katherine O’Callaghan, ‘“behush the bush to. Whish!”: Silence, Loss, and “Finnegans Wake”’, *European Joyce Studies,* 24 (2016), 140-52 (p. 144). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. O’Callaghan, ‘Silence, Loss and “Finnegans Wake”’, p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. O’Callaghan, ‘Silence, Loss and “Finnegans Wake”’, p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. O’Callaghan, ‘Silence, Loss and “Finnegans Wake”’, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. O’Callaghan, ‘Silence, Loss and “Finnegans Wake”’, p. 141-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Sara Ahmed, *What’s the Use?: On the Uses of Use* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2019), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See Vicki Mahaffey’s outline of this in Vicki Mahaffey, ‘Nausicaa’, in Catherine Flynn, ed., *The Cambridge Centenary Ulysses: The 1922 Text with Essays and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2022), pp. 473-519 (p. 474). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. James Joyce, *Ulysses*: *The 1922 Text*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 167 and 732. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 167-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 731. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 732. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Joyce*, Ulysses*, p. 38.

    Scarlett Baron explores this ‘cable’ as a complex metaphor for intertextuality, in her book: Scarlett Baron, *‘Strandentwining Cable’: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Suzette Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi, ‘Holes’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2019) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/holes/> [accessed 15 March 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Casati and Achille, ‘Holes’, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. In Hebrew and Christian culture, seven signifies endings or completeness, while eight signifies a new beginning or rebirth. For more on this, please see: Maurice H. Farbridge, *Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism* (Oxon: Routledge, 1923), 134-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 694 and 714. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Diane Tolomeo, ‘The Final Octagon of “Ulysses”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 10, 4 (Summer, 1973), 439-54 (pp. 439 and 441). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1982), p. 554. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Nicola Ivy Spunt, ‘Ontotropology: Disfiguration and Unreadability in James Joyce’s “Ulysses”, *Oxford Literary Review*, 33, 1 (2011), 1-20 (p. 2). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Suzette A. Henke, ‘Joyce’s Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Refashioned’, *Papers on Joyce*, 10/11 (2004-2005), 85-103 (p. 94). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Suzette A. Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of* *Desire* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. William Shakespeare, ‘The Tragedy of Richard the Third’,in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1299-1381, (p. 1360-1, IIII.4.87-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 697, 699 and 719. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 732. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1987), p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. John Cook, *An Anatomical and Mechanical Essay on the Whole Animal Oeconomy* (London: W. Meadows, 1730), p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Katherine Dauge-Roth, ‘Femmes lunatiques: Women and the Moon in Early Modern France’, *Dalhousie French Studies*, 71 (Summer, 2005) 3-29 (p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 719 and 730. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. This association is of course now reductive and exclusionary, as some transmen and non-binary people menstruate and reproduce, and while some transwomen will experience pre-menstrual symptoms from hormone therapy, such as mood fluctuation and sore breasts, but will not experience the bleeding part of the menstrual cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Katherine Mullin, ‘Menstruation in “Ulysses”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 46, 3/4, *Joyce and Physiology* (Spring-Summer 2009), 497-508 (p. 504). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Mullin, ‘Menstruation in “Ulysses”’, p. 504. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Mullin, ‘Menstruation in “Ulysses”’, pp. 504-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Mullin, ‘Menstruation in “Ulysses”’, p. 505. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Stuart Gilbert, ed., *The Letters of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber: 1957), p. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Maud Ellmann, ‘“Penelope” Without the Body’, *European Joyce Studies: “Penelope” and the Body* (2006), 97-108 (p. 98). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 705, 707, and 714. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 725, 730, 702, 701, and 708. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. See: Sunni L Mumford, Jorge E Chavarro, Cuillin Zhang et all., ‘Dietary Fat Intake and Reproductive Hormone Concentrations and Ovulation in Regularly Menstruating Women’, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 103 (March, 2016), 868-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
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120. Maurice Blanchot, ‘Inspiration’, in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), np. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 540. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 541. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 539. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Joyce, *Ulysse*s, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 565. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 687. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 60-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Erwin R. Steinburg, ‘Reading the Vision of Rudy Reading’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 36, 4 (Summer, 1999), 954-62 (p. 954). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. These gynaecological symbols will be fully elucidated in Chapters 2 and 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Maurice Blanchot, ‘Literature and the Right to Death’, in *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), pp. 300-44 (p. 301). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology, and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
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139. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. William Shakespeare, ‘Romeo and Juliet’, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1675-1743 (p. 1700, II.2.9-10); William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, p. 89 [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 47, 133, and 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Karen Lawrence, *Who’s Afraid of James Joyce?* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Blanchot, ‘Literature and the Right to Death’, p. 330. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Blanchot, ‘Literature and the Right to Death’, p. 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. The complex anatomy of the womb will be fully explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
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149. Slote, ‘Needle’s in the Camel’s Eye’, pp. 70-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
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151. Nicholas Venette, *The Mysteries of Conjugal Love Reveal’d* (London: n. pub, 1720), p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Venette, *The Mysteries of Conjugal Love Reveal’d*, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Venette, *The Mysteries of Conjugal Love Reveal’d*, p. 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Of course, these early modern perceptions are not scientifically accurate. Sex is determined by a combination of chromosomes at the moment of fertilisation. Girls have two XX chromosomes, while boys are made up of XY chromosomes. Also, sex does not determine gender.

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157. Maurice Blanchot, ‘Inspiration’, in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 161-3 (p. 164). [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
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159. Farbman, *The Other Night*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
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165. Sophie Corser*, The Reader’s Joyce*, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
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173. Joyce*, Ulysses*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume V (1900-1901): The Interpretation of Dreams II and On Dreams,* ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), p. 525. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
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190. Caroline Criado-Perez, *Invisible Women*, p. XII. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
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193. Ornella Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp. 50-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
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     The term ‘accoucheurs’ derives etymologically from the French *accoucher*, meaning to aid a woman in labour (arising from the word *coucher*, which translates to go to bed or lay down). Meanwhile, French female midwives are known as *sage*-*femme* translating to wise woman. Men preferred to go by the term accoucheur rather than male-midwife, because they were also practitioners who incorporated midwifery into their other set of skills. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Moscucci, *The Science of* Woman, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
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205. See: Durrenda Ojanuga, ‘The Medical Ethics of the “Father of Gynaecology” Dr. J Marion Sims’*, Journal of Medical Ethics*, 19, 1 (March 1993), 28-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. J. Marion Sims M.D., *The Story of My Life*, ed. by H. Marion Sims M.D (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886), p. 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Autumn Stanley, *Mothers and Daughters of Invention: Notes for a Revised History of Technology* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995), p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Donald Todman, ‘A History of the Caesarean Section: From Ancient World to the Modern Era’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* (2007), 357-71 (p. 358). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London: n.pub., 1603), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Christopher A. Faraonee, ‘Magical and Medical Approaches to the Wandering Womb in the Ancient Greek World’, *Classical Antiquity*, 30, 1 (2011), 1-32 (p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Joyce’s intrigue in medicine was fuelled by a series of personal ailments, such a constant stomach pain, and an eye disease (caused by inflammation and pressure) which spanned almost forty years and led to cataract and glaucoma. The combination of these resulted in multiple surgeries comprising of ‘iridectomies, sphincterotomy, capsuletomy, and a removal of cataracts’, as documented by JB Lyons.

     Plock, Joyce, *Medicine, and Modernity,* p. 3.

     J. B. Lyons, *James Joyce and medicine.* (Dublin: Dolmen Press; 1973), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. In addition to J. B Lyons’s and Vike Martina Plock’s medical approaches to Joyce’s work, other medical humanities scholarship on Joyce include works such as: Sidney Monas, ‘Literature, Medicine, and the Celebration of the Body in Rabelais, Tolstoi, and Joyce’ (1990), Fergus Shanahan, ‘Medicine in the Age of “Ulysses”: James Joyce’s Portrait of Life, Medicine, and Disease on a Dublin Day a Century Ago’ (2006), and Cleo Hanaway-Oakley’s forthcoming work, *James Joyce and Non-Normative Vision*. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The 1922 Text*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008), pp. 366 and 407. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Phillip F. Herring, ed., *Joyce’s Ulysses Notesheets in the British Museum* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1972), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Suzan Bazargan, ‘Oxen of the Sun: Maternity Language, and History’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 22, 3 (Spring, 1985), 271-80 (p. 274). [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. David B. Leitao, *The Pregnant Male as Myth and Metaphor in Classical Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Mary Fissel, ‘Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in Aristotle's Masterpiece’, *William and Mary Quarterly,* 60, 1, (2003), 43-74 (p. 43). [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Both of these styles have been noted by Don Gifford in *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce*’s *Ulysses*, rev. and expanded ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p. 439. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Joyce, *Ulysses,* p. 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 390. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Udo Benzenhofer, ‘Joyce and Embryology: Giulio Valenti's “Lezioni Elementari di Embriologia” as a Source for “Oxen of the Sun”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26, 4 (Summer, 1989), 608-11 (p. 608). [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Plock, *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity*, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. ‘Embryological Chart for “Oxen of the Sun”’, *The Morgan Library and Museum* (n.d.) <https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/ulysses/embryological-chart-oxen-sun> [accessed 4 April 2021]. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 390. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Karl Ernst von Baer, ‘On the Genesis of the Ovum of Mammals and of Man’, trans. by Charles Donald O’Malley, *Isis*, 47, 2 (June, 1956), 117-153. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce’s Ulysses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Joyce*, Ulysses*, pp. 372 and 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. The use of chloroform during labour was introduced to obstetrics in 1857. This was met with religious opposition by those who believed that, in the bible, ‘pain was a foreordained penalty’ of childbirth and, as such, anaesthesia should not be used to remedy this pain. In ‘Oxen of the Sun’, the description of Mrs Purefoy’s difficult birth suggests she is still conscious and suffering through her labour.

     See, Claude Edwin Heaton, ‘The History of Anesthesia and Analgesia in Obstetrics’, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 1, 4, *Anesthesia Centennial Number* (October, 1946), 567-72 (p. 568). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*,p. 4. For more on this, please see: Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. by J. M. Bernstein (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Sight is the highest of the senses according to Aristotle, who declared in *Metaphysics* that ‘we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all other senses. The reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions’. Found in: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. by Hugh Tredennick, vol. 17 & 18 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1933), p. 3 (980.a22). [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Gordon Bowker, *James Joyce: A Biography* (London: Orion Publishing, 2011), p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1985), p. 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, pp. 244-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. The Socratic method takes the form of a series of questions fired in quick succession at an opponent, in an attempt to poke holes in their critical thinking. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Plato, *Theaetetus* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2014), p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Philip Kitcher, *Joyce’s Kaleidoscope: An Invitation to Finnegans Wake* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Katherine Ebury, ‘Beyond the Rainbow: Spectroscopy in *Finnegans Wake* II.2’, *Joyce Studies Annual* (2011), 97-121, (p. 98). [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Ebury, ‘Beyond the Rainbow’, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Ebury, ‘Beyond the Rainbow’, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Jupiter, or Jove, was known as the God of sky and thunder. The sound of lightening triggered belief in a higher power, resulting in the creation of religion: Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, third ed., trans. by David Marsh (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Terri Kapsalis, *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Ren Descartes, *Treatise of Man*, trans. by Thomas Steele Hall (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972), p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. See, for example Langford Reed’s dubious biography, *The Life of Lewis Carroll* (London: W & G Foyle, 1932), p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. William Shakespeare, ‘The Tragedy of King Lear’ in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 2004-2080 (p. 2059, IIII.5.130-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language: A Glossary* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. ‘Uterus’, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2023) < https://www.britannica.com/science/uterus> [Accessed 1 April 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language*, pp. 69, 72, 270, 223, 237, 250, and 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. ‘Anastamosis’, *Cleveland Clinic* (2023) <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/24035-anastomosis> [accessed 1 April 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. By fractal, I am referring to the *Wake*’s basic, reoccurring plot, which re-emerges in multiple forms throughout the course of the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and Other Works*,trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures,* p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures,* p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Books 1-8*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard UP: 1977), pp. 327 and 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. William Shakespeare, ‘The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus’,in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1616-1674 (p. 1636, 2.3.34). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Shakespeare, ‘Titus Andronicus’, p. 1642 (2.4.41-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. There is an important change from weaving to embroidery here, perhaps reflective of the class and status associated with these textile acts in the move from Ancient Greece to Early Modern Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. The Philomel myth is later referred to by T. S Eliot in *The Waste Land* to reinforce his themes of sorrow and revenge: ‘As through a window gave upon the sylvan scene / The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king / So rudely forced: yet there the nightingale / Filled all the desert with inviolable voice’.

     T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Susana E. Matallana-Peláez, ‘Desalambrando: A Nasa Standpoint for Liberation’, *Hypatia*, 35, 1 (Winter, 2020), 75-96 (p. 78). [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Matallana-Pel[áez](https://www.cambridge.org/core/search?filters%5BauthorTerms%5D=Susana%20E.%20Matallana-Pel%C3%A1ez&eventCode=SE-AU), ‘Desalambrando’, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1982), p. 554. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Matallana-Pel[áez](https://www.cambridge.org/core/search?filters%5BauthorTerms%5D=Susana%20E.%20Matallana-Pel%C3%A1ez&eventCode=SE-AU), ‘Desalambrando’, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Vicki Mahaffey*, Reauthorizing Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce,* p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, pp. 146-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Amy Kenny, *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. ‘Chimera’, *Britannica* (2023) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chimera-Greek-mythology> [accessed 22 March 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. See Darwin’s work on natural selection in: Charles Darwin, *Origin of the Species: A Variorum Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Caroline N. Tipler, ‘Dehumanizing Representations of Women: The Shaping of Hostile Sexist Attitudes Through Animalistic Metaphors’, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28, 1 (2017), 109-118 (p. 110). [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Kenny, *Humoral Wombs*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Kenny*, Humoral Wombs*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Laura Lovejoy, ‘The Bestial Feminine in *Finnegans Wake’,* *Humanities,* 6, 58 (2017), 1-15 (p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Dirk van Hulle, ‘Editing the *Wake*’s Genesis: Digital Genetic Criticism’, in *James Joyce and Genetic Criticism: Genesic Fields*, ed. by Genevieve Sartor (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018), pp. 37-54, (p. 53). [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Dirk van Hulle, ‘Editing the *Wake*’s Genesis’, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. van Hulle, p. 52 [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language*, p. 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. The phrase ‘don’t air your dirty laundry in public’ derives from the French proverb, ‘*Il fault laver son linge sale en famille*’ (meaning, ‘one should air one’s dirty laundry at home’). An early English use of the phrase is seen in Anthony Trollope’s, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), through the line ‘there is nothing, I think, so bad as washing one’s dirty linen in public’. See: Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset, Two Volumes* (London, n.pub., 1867), Vol II, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Catherine Bernard and Graham Swift, ‘An Interview with Graham Swift’, *Contemporary Literature*, 28, 2 (1997), 217-31 (p. 218). [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. ‘Material’, *Online Etymology Dictionary* (2022) <https://www.etymonline.com/word/material> [accessed Feb 2022]. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Betty M. L. Underhill, ‘Salt-Induced Vaginal Stenosis of Arabia’, *The British Journal of Obstetrics and Gyneacology*, 71, 2 (2005), 293-298 (p. 293). [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Samuel Butler*, The Authoress of the Odyssey: Where and when she wrote, who she was, the use she made of the ‘Iliad’, and how the poem grew under her hand*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (London: Jonathon Cape, 1922), p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Plato, *Phaedrus and The Seventh and Eighth Letters,* trans. by Walter Hamilton (Aylesbury: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Lucia Boldrini, ‘Among Schoolchildren: Joyce’s ‘Night Lesson’ and Chaucer’s Treatise on the Astrolabe’ in *Intersections, Interferences, Interdisciplines: Literature with Other Arts*, ed. by Haun Saussy and Gerald Gillespie (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 35-46 (p. 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Kenny, *Humoral Wombs,* p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. George Gamow, *My World Line: An Informal Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 1970), p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. See: Gianfranco Bertone, ‘History of Dark Matter’, *Reviews of Modern Physics*, 90 (October-December 2018), pp. 1-31 (p. 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Ciaran McMorran, *Joyce and Geometry* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2020), p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. McMorran, *Joyce and Geometry*, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language*, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Williams, *Shakespeare’s Sexual Language*, pp. 78 and 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Lewis Carroll, *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Gillian Beer, *Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), pp. 62-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, pp. 15-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women 1-2*, ed. and trans. by Paul Potter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2018), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Amy Kenny, *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cham: Palgrave, 2019), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Amy Kenny, *Humoral Wombs*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. This is emphasised by Joyce in ‘Circe’, where Mina Purefoy, the woman who gives birth in ‘Oxen of the Sun’, is dubbed the ‘Goddess of unreason’, as she lies ‘naked’ and ‘fettered’, with ‘a chalice resting on her swollen belly. See: James Joyce, *Ulysses*: *The 1922 Text*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 556. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. My own approach to the phenomenology of bodily fluids has been influenced by philosophers and theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Elisabeth Grosz, and Astrida Neimanis. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. ‘What does Blood do?’, *National Library of* *Medicine* (2019) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279392/> [accessed 10 March 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. ‘The Science of Hydration’, *British Nutrition Foundation* (2021) <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthy-sustainable-diets/hydration/?level=Health%20professional> [accessed 10 March 2023]. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Nathalie Pross, ‘Effects of Dehydration on Brain Functioning: A Life-Span Perspective, *Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism*, 70, *8th* *Hydration for Health Annual Scientific Conference June 29th 2016*, Evian, France (2017), 30-37 (p. 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Sex has, however, been shown to influence sensitivity to the mood-altering effects of dehydration, with male adults experiencing no mood-altering affects, while women experience a variety of ‘adverse changes’.

     Pross, ‘Effects of Dehydration on Brain Functioning’, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 2010), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Stacy Alaimo, ‘State of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* 19, 3 (Summer 2012), 476-93 (p. 476). [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Astrida Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water’, in *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice*, ed. by Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni, and Fanny Söderbäck (New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 2012), pp. 85-100 (p. 93). [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Bonnie Kime Scott, ‘Joyce, Ecofeminism and the River as Woman’, *in Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, ed. by Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin (Cork: Cork UP, 2014), pp. 59-66 (p. 59). [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Scott, ‘Joyce, Ecofeminism’, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Scott, ‘Joyce, Ecofeminism’, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, pp. 90-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Neimanis, ‘Hydrofeminism’, p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 705 and 695. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Derek Attridge, ‘Molly’s Flow: The Writing of “Penelope” and the Question of Women’s Language’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 35, 3, *Special Issue: Feminist Readings of Joyce* (Autumn, 1989), 543-65 (p. 544). [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Joyce, *Ulysses,* p. 719. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 720. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 730. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Joyce, *Ulysses,* p. 739. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 623. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 623. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 623. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 624. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Greg Winston, ‘“Aquacities of Thought and Language”: The Political Ecology of Water in *Ulysses*’, in *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, ed. by Robert Brazeau and Derek Gladwin (Cork: Cork UP, 2014), pp. 136-58 (p. 154). [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 624. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 624. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. For more on this, please see: John Q. Stewart, ‘The Use and Abuse of Map Projections’, *Geographical Review*, 33, 4 (October, 1943), 589-604. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Please see: Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, *Blue Gold: The Battle Against Corporate Theft of the World’s Water* (Oxfordshire: Taylor and Francis, 2017), particularly: pp. 79-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 624 and 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Bonnie Kime Scott, *James Joyce*: *Feminist Readings Series*, ed. by Sue Roe (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987) p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 654. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Stephen’s fear of water has developed over time. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen finds comfort and a sense of freedom in water, evident at the end of Chapter 4, when he observes a girl ‘alone and still, gazing out to sea’ who has ‘the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird’. Here, Stephen’s view of the girl is distinctly intertwined with the sea as ‘long, long she suffered his gaze then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot’. This moment triggers an epiphany for Stephen, observed as he exclaims ‘Heavenly God!’ in an outburst of ‘profound joy’, before ‘singing wildly to the sea’. Stephen’s interactions with, and observations of, the sea here confirm that his hydrophobic behaviour is a more recent development, triggered by the death of this mother.

     James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Guild Publishing, 1978), pp. 150-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 562. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. In ‘Telemachus’, Stephen says to Buck Mulligan, ‘you saved men from drowning’, to emphasise that while Mulligan is brave enough to save Haines from his nightmare, Stephen is unable to do so. The line is said by Stephen with a sense of ‘growing fear’, reinforcing the notion that Stephen equates Mulligan’s lack of fear around water as a sense of strength.

     Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Michael Zimmerman, ‘Stephen’s Mothers in “Ulysses”: Some Notes for the Autobiography of James Joyce’, *Pacific* *Coast Philology*, 10 (April, 1975), 59-68 (p. 59). [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
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385. Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 653. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
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387. Homer, *The Odyssey*, pp. 288-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
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389. Benstock, ‘Apostrophizing the Feminine’, p. 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
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