Reading Penelope and Molly: An Intertextual Analysis

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Abstract

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This thesis takes an intertextual approach to Homer’s *Odyssey* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Intertextual analysis goes beyond examining the ways Joyce adopts Homer’s themes and characters in his own modern epic to also consider the ways in which a reading of *Ulysses* can affect one’s understanding of the *Odyssey*. Examining the reader’s role in the production and consumption of texts allows for a more realistic examination of how texts are actually processed. The focus of my interetextual analysis of both works is on the representation of women, particularly Penelope and Molly Bloom.
An Intertextual Analysis of the Representations of Women in Homer’s *Odyssey* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*

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Introduction: Intertextual Reading

Literary theories attempt to explain how meaning is created with and within literary texts. Is meaning created within the text or does its construction take place in the readers’ minds? It is likely that neither extreme succeeds in wholly answering the question of how meaning is created. Intertextual theory, however, offers an exciting explanation of how texts and the reader interact to create new meaning. Intertextual theory is a literary theory that explains the reading process and argues that meaning is created within the reader. “The concept of intertextuality,” argues John Frow, “requires that we understand the concept of text not as a self-contained structure” (45). A text itself has no meaning, except when a reader interacts with it. This emphasis on the reader as constructor of meaning can be disconcerting to some who expect the meaning to be gleaned directly from a text. But in order for a text to be understood, it must be interpreted; a reader must construct meaning out of the words and phrases.

Important to understanding intertextual theory is the idea that readers read many texts. Each reading of a text helps to build and recreate paradigms for understanding that a reader uses when interpreting later texts. Intertextual analysis explores the relationship between texts in the minds of readers and should be distinguished from influence study, “an author-centered and evaluative concept,” that seeks to explain the way a particular text influences an author’s writing of another text. Readers use this intertextual process, often unconsciously, every time they read.
A building metaphor in which the reader is described as a builder can be used to explain intertextual analysis. The reader will use the building blocks of two or more texts to create new meaning from both texts. Each text contributes blocks of different colors, shapes, and sizes to the new construction. From deconstructing each text, the new reader has also learned new ways of ordering and combining the pieces that s/he can apply to other texts; the reader has developed new paradigms to construct meaning. The pieces of both texts interlock in new ways to create meaning that could not be created from one text alone. The end result is a combination of many different blocks from both texts, with connections made by the reader cementing the structure.

This thesis is an intertextual analysis that explores the representation of women in two texts. I have selected to study Homer’s *The Odyssey* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* because both texts are continually cited in current literature and popular culture, though they were written many years ago. These mythic texts have become a large part of collective imagination and we often read these texts to help understand our world. Not only are the tales a part of our collective imagination, but so too are the characters. Odysseus is the glorious war hero on a long journey home and Leopold Bloom is the modern, perhaps less heroic, man on a journey home. But I am most interested in Homer’s Penelope and Joyce’s Molly Bloom and how these women shape our understanding of women even today.

My analysis will focus on the way in which faithfulness and the intelligence of women is represented in both texts. I have selected these aspects of my focus because evaluating these characteristics of both women is central to developing an understanding
of both tales. Penelope’s faithfulness is one of *The Odyssey*’s central concerns, as is her role in Odyssey’s vanquishing the suitors. Molly Bloom’s faithfulness is also explored in *Ulysses*, though from a different perspective as her unfaithfulness to her husband is made clear. Evaluating her intelligence, as compared to her husband Leopold, also plays a part in understanding Joyce’s epic. Too often in the past, these women have been read as objects on the sidelines of the real action in the lives of men. I wish to reclaim for women a place within our mythic imagination that is liveable, one that allows them to be seen not as the mere pawns of men, but as capable subjects themselves.

I will be consciously emphasizing the positive potential in the representation of both these women, in order to consciously emphasize the positive potential for all women.

Patrocino Schweickart describes women’s relationship to much of our literature:

> Androcentric literature is all the more an efficient instrument of sexual politics because it does not allow the woman reader to seek refuge in her difference. Instead, it draws her into a process that uses her against herself. It solicits her complicity in the elevation of male difference into universality and, accordingly, the denigration of female difference into otherness without reciprocity. (26)

By reading in a way that empowers these two women, I am finding a place in our literary history for myself and other women.
Faithfulness

The House of Atreus Story

The House of Atreus story, in its many forms, has a prominent position as one of the frames of the *Odyssey*. It is told and retold by several characters and each retelling has a specific purpose within the epic depending on both the speaker and intended audience. The retellings serve two main ends within the narrative: to inspire Telemachus to challenge the suitors and to encourage Odysseus' caution as he returns home. In order to spur Telemachus' challenge of the suitors, the earlier tellings of this story focus on Aegisthus’ role in Agamemnon’s death. The later references, as told to and by Odysseus focus on Clytemnestra's role. Marilyn Katz notes that “discussions of the use of the House of Atreus story commonly distinguish between its use in the Telemachy, where it is understood to apply to the young hero, and its development in the *nekyia* and following, where it takes on the character of the bad wife theme” (48). The bad wife theme instills a misogynistic world view in the hearers and readers of the *Odyssey*. Much of the intertextual importance of the House of Atreus story and Clytemnestra, of particular interest in my study, depends on this effect. Before addressing the effects of the House of Atreus story on the readers, however, I will first address the narratological purposes of its retelling in order to establish a foundation of its function within the epic.

The House of Atreus story appears early in Book 1, and is in fact the subject of the first dialogue. Homer describes Zeus' inability to "stop thinking about Aegisthus" (1:35). Though Telemachus is not present at this council of the gods and is therefore not
the intended audience of this particular retelling, this instance of the House of Atreus story fits with other uses in the Telemachy. Zeus condemns Aegisthus for not heeding the gods' warning “not to kill the man and marry his wife” and points to Orestes, Agamemnon's son, who paid “him back/ When he came of age and wanted his inheritance” (Homer 1: 44-46). The focus on Aegisthus and on Orestes’ revenge prepares the reader for Telemachus' own coming of age and challenge of the suitors wooing his mother. Athena's sympathetic interjection on Odysseus’ behalf, at the conclusion of Zeus’ speech, calls attention to Odysseus' difficulties and juxtaposes their stories. The similarities between Agamemnon's and Odysseus' positions will continue to be highlighted throughout the poem.

The House of Atreus story resurfaces as a frame for the events in Ithaca while Telemachus journeys to seek news of his father. Nestor is the first to narrate the events to Telemachus:

‘Of Agamemnon you have already heard,
Far off though you be, how he came home
And how Aegisthus plotted his grisly death
And then paid for it in a horrible way.
How good it is for a son to be left
When a man dies! Agamemnon's son
Avenged his death, killing his murderer,
The treacherous Aegisthus. You too, my friend—
For I see that you are handsome and tall—
Should be brave and strong, and win a name for yourself.’ (Homer 3: 212-21)

Noticeable in the first part of this speech is the complete omission of Clytemnestra; the seduction of Agamemnon’s wife is not mentioned even in passing. Instead, the focus is on killing Agamemnon to avenge the murder of a father. Clytemnestra’s role in this
tragedy will be glossed over in the versions Telemachus hears. This omission encourages Telemachus not to seek revenge on his mother, but on the suitors.

Nestor's elaboration of the House of Atreus story at Telemachus' request does mention Clytemnestra, but in a way that closely allies her to Penelope. This retelling of the tale focuses more on Clytemnestra’s seduction by Aegisthus than on Agamemnon’s murder:

‘While we toiled and sweated over there in Troy,
He relaxed in a corner of bluegrass Argos
Sweet-talking the wife of Agamemnon,
Noble Clytemnestra. At first she refused
The whole sordid affair. She had good sense,
And with her was a singer whom Agamemnon,
When he left for Troy, had strictly ordered
To guard his wife. But when the gods doomed her
To be undone, Aegisthus took the singer of tales
To a desert island and left him there
For the dogs and birds. And he led her off
Just as willing as he was, to his own house.’ (Homer 3: 290-301)

She, like Penelope, is described as intending to be faithful to her husband. But with fate working against her, she is eventually seduced by Aegisthus. The final phrase in this passage, “just as willing as he was,” is ambiguous (Homer 3: 301). It is not clear whether the antecedent of “he” is the singer or Agamemnon. If “he” refers to the singer who also opposes this affair, Clytemnestra continues to be faithful in spirit to her husband. However, if she becomes as willing as Agamemnon, Clytemnestra’s own guilt is clear.

Nestor, at the conclusion of this elaboration, reiterates Orestes’ role as avenger by describing the "funeral feast/ For his hateful mother and her craven lover” (Homer 3: 44-45). Telemachus is urged by this story to prevent the seduction of mother and murder of
his father by seeking revenge on the suitors for their wooing' of Penelope. But the extent of Clytemnestra’s responsibility is unclear in this passage. Nestor cautions, “So don't you wander long from home, my friend,/ Leaving your wealth behind and in your house/
Insolent men who might divide up your goods” (Homer 3: 348-50). Nestor's retelling of the House of Atreus story imposes many responsibilities on Telemachus: the prevention of his father's murder, the protection of Penelope's faithfulness to Odysseus, and the preservation of his own inheritance.

Telemachus also visits Menelaus on his journey seeking news of his father and hears from him different versions of Agamemnon’s death. Menelaus relates to Telemachus a version first told by Proteus. In this version of the story, there is no mention of Clytemnestra’s adultery nor of her role in Agamemnon’s death (Homer 4: 549-65). She is in fact completely absent from this tale. Even so, when Menelaus first tells Telemachus of Agamemnon’s death, he portrays Clytemnestra as solely responsible: “While I wandered through those lands amassing wealth/ My brother was murdered, caught off guard/ By treachery and the guile of his accursed wife” (Homer 4: 94-6). If the story Menelaus first hears did not blame Clytemnestra, why does he unequivocally blame her when speaking to Telemachus? This great discrepancy in assigning responsibility for Agamemnon’s death in the speech of a single person cannot be left unexamined.

To understand the discrepancies between these two stories, it is important to recognize the background of the speaker. Proteus, the source of the version which focuses on Aegisthus, tells the story from a less biased position than Menelaus.
Menelaus' own wife Helen, sister of Clytemnestra, infamously betrayed him and is often described as the cause of the Trojan War. Having suffered from the betrayal of his own wife, it is not difficult to conceive how this might taint his own interpretation of his brother’s death. I am not attempting to absolve Clytemnestra from all responsibility in Agamemnon’s murder with this suggestion, as other characters with less reason to be biased, such as Athena, also ascribe responsibility to her. Still, it is important to be aware of Menelaus' bias when evaluating Clytemnestra. John Winkler reminds us, "What we must learn to appreciate from the firm assertions of Odyssean characters is that when they make such assertions they are often jostling for position, extending their area of confidence a bit farther than the facts warrant, and that they are perfectly aware of unstated qualifications, alternate possibilities, and opposing views” (137). Winkler argues that we should be cautious in believing without question what is said by each character. I will use such caution as I examine the text. It is not inconceivable that Helen's betrayal of Menelaus has led him to a harsher interpretation of the wife’s role in Agamemnon's murder than facts may warrant.

As readers conscious of factors which may affect the speeches of the characters, we can evaluate their opinions more objectively. In this particular case, care in evaluating Menelaus' speech will prevent us from jumping to conclusions quickly concerning Clytemnestra’s guilt. Conscious reading will also be important in evaluating Agamemnon’s assertions regarding the faithfulness and guilt of women in general in the latter part of the poem. If we fail to be cautious in evaluating his statements, we may be seduced by his misogynistic rhetoric.
Odysseus tells Alcinous and his wife Arete about his encounter with Agamemnon’s shade. He relates how Agamemnon’s shade spoke to him and told the story of his own murder. Odysseus’ speech is designed to elicit the pity of his hearers, but exhibits certain factual inconsistencies. He begins, “Aegisthus was the cause of my death./ He killed me with the help of my cursed wife” (Homer 11: 420-1). The first part of his speech clearly emphasizes Aegisthus' role in his murder; Clytemnestra is merely the accomplice. As he concludes his story, his focus shifts:

‘But that bitch, my wife, turned her back on me
And would not shut my eyes or close my lips
As I was going down to Death. Nothing
Is more grim or shameless than a woman
Who sets. her mind on such an unspeakable act
As killing her own husband. I was sure
I would be welcomed home by my children
And all my household, but she, with her mind set
On stark horror, has shamed not only herself
But all women to come, even the rare good one.’ (Homer 11: 441-50)

In this portion, Clytemnestra is not described as an accomplice but the mastermind and doer of the murder. Agamemnon’s attention to Clytemnestra's role in the events leads to his attribution of shame to all women for the actions of a single one. Certainly, given his situation, one is not surprised by his evaluation of Clytemnestra and can easily understand his emotion.

Most of the epic centers on the telling and retelling of events by various narrators, in comparison to the action which takes center stage in the Iliad. Interpreting and evaluating the speeches is important if one truly wishes to understand the action of the epic, given the numerous apparent inconsistencies. I would concur with Winkler's argument:
I do not want to underestimate the temptation to read Agamemnon's universal suspicion of women as a controlling factor in the plot, but I would insist that a closer look at its location and articulation allows us to limit his generalized suspicion as a rhetorical exaggeration serving to characterize him individually. (139)

It is easy to allow pity, evoked by Agamemnon’s tale, to draw the reader into his generalized evaluation of women. Yet, careful reading and analysis allows for, even necessitates, a more balanced view of the events leading to his death.

The temptation to suspect women which Agamemnon initiates is prevalent throughout the text and becomes especially important as the reader attempts to understand Penelope's actions. I will later use the same guidelines in order to evaluate the representations of faithful and unfaithful women in *Ulysses*.

**Speaking of Helen**

Unlike Clytemnestra, whose character is described only through the speeches of others, Helen is represented both directly by the narrator and through speeches given by characters, including herself. These representations of Helen offer competing views of her faithfulness and the extent of her moral responsibility for her own actions. Helen's various representations must be examined carefully. Like the House of Atreus stories, they help establish the framework of possibilities for Odysseus’ return to Ithaca and eventual reunification with Penelope.

Telemachus encounters Helen and Menelaus during his search for news of his father. Before analyzing the representations of Helen, it is important to understand in what context these representations exist. Given that the focus of Book 4 is on the
relationship between a married couple, the context of Helen and Menelaus' relationship holds special importance.

There are several indications that the reunion of Helen and Menelaus has not been completely successful. Helene Foley suggests that “the presence of drugs at their court subtly express[es] uneasy relations in the domestic realm at Sparta” (74). Helen's drug of choice is particularly interesting. The narrator tells us:

Whoever drank wine laced with this drug
Would not be sad or shed a tear that day,
Not even if his own father and mother
Should lie there dead, or if someone killed
His brother, or son, before his eyes. (Homer 4: 236-40)

The extreme forgetfulness that this drug inspires seems somewhat dangerous, especially when compared to Circe's own potion “with insidious drugs/ That would make them forget their own native land” (Homer 10:253-54). The power of the drug to prevent grief over the death of a loved one is unnatural.

Beyond the possibly dangerous effect of the drugs, Helen's purpose in administering it seems doubtful. Just prior to the mixing of the drug in the wine bowl Menelaus makes a proposal, “So we will stop this weeping, and once more/ Think of supper. Let the servants pour water/ Over our hands” (Homer 4: 223-25). The narrator tells us Menelaus' suggestion is followed and the guests “reached out/ For all the good cheer spread before them” (Homer 4: 239-30). For what purpose then does Helen, “who had other ideas,” administer the drug (Homer 4: 231)? What are these other ideas?

Given the willingness to follow Menelaus' suggestion to put off their weeping, it seems unlikely that Helen is merely attempting to soothe their grief over the lost
Odysseus. The drug, “That stilled all pain, quieted all anger/ And brought forgetfulness of every ill,” is perhaps meant not merely to end the mourning for Odysseus, but also to effect the forgetting of Helen's role in the Trojan War (Homer 4: 234-35). Helen's speech, which directly follows the administration of the drug, also demonstrates this mixing between her desire to end the mourning for Odysseus and to absolve herself of guilt. She ends her tale of Odysseus' bravery:

…I rued the infatuation
Aphrodite gave me when she led me away
From my native land, leaving my dear child,
My bridal chamber, and my husband,
A man who lacked nothing in wisdom or looks. (Homer 4: 279-83)

The conclusion to this speech seems to exhibit a desire to smooth over Menelaus' anger just as the drug is administered to bring “forgetfulness of every ill” (Homer 4: 235).

Thus, the reunion of Menelaus and Helen seems somewhat incomplete. This strained relationship between Helen and Menelaus provides a possible model for the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus. The tension between Helen and Menelaus demonstrates how damaging any act of unfaithfulness on Penelope's part will be to her marriage.

The narrative of Helen's story, however, provides a more positive model for the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus. The role of Helen's story as a model for Penelope is reinforced by its numerous elements which will be reinforced in Odysseus' return to Ithaca. Odysseus enters, disguised “like a beggar” in both instances (Homer 4: 265).

Helen describes Odysseus' arrival in Troy:

‘I alone recognized him in his disguise
And questioned him, but he cleverly put me off.
It was only after I had bathed him
And rubbed him down with oil and clothed him
And had sworn a great oath not to tell the Trojans
That he told me, at last, what the Achaeans planned.
He killed many Trojans before he left
And arrived back at camp with much to report.’ (Homer 4: 268-75)

Helen's story easily becomes a tale of Odysseus' homecoming with the change of a few small details. Both stories do end in significant bloodshed at the hands of Odysseus. In Ithaca, however, Odysseus is not explicitly recognized by Penelope and the bath oath is carried out between Eurycleia and Odysseus. Though the details do not parallel exactly with Penelope's role in Odysseus' actual homecoming, this story does have the effect of providing a model of how Odysseus might be assisted in his return.

Helen's tale is immediately followed with Menelaus' response in the form of a story which offers a very different view of Helen's role in the war. Menelaus describes a different set of events involving Odysseus and Helen:

‘Listen to what he did in the wooden horse,
Where all the Argive chiefs sat waiting
To bring slaughter and death to the Trojans.
You came there then, with godlike Deiphobus.
Some god who favored the Trojans
Must have lured you on.
Three times you circled
Our hollow hiding place, feeling it
With your hands, and you called out the names
Of all Argive leaders, making your voice
Sound like each of our wives' in turn.
Diomedes and I, sifting in the middle
With Odysseus, heard you calling
And couldn't take it. We were frantic
But Odysseus held us back and stopped us.’ (Homer 4: 390-404)

In this tale, Helen's recognition of the Greeks proves to be quite dangerous. Her desire to reveal their identity threatens the success of their plan. Menelaus’ story offers a view of the possible dangers for Odysseus if Penelope should recognize him. It is interesting,
however, to remember that these stories are being told not to Odysseus, though he has experienced their events, but to Telemachus. The stories, taken together, make it clear that to put one's trust in woman is to take a risk. She may keep the secret, but if she speaks, she will threaten the hero's plan. Telemachus in his encounter with Helen and Menelaus is taught not to trust women.

Helen and Menelaus' stories may offer different paradigms for Penelope's role in Odysseus' return, but they do share an interpretation of Helen's ability to control her actions. Both stories stress the role of the gods in determining her actions. Helen blames Aphrodite for leading her away and Menelaus suggests that “Some god who favored the Trojans/ Must have led you on” (Homer 4: 395-96). The assertions that the gods caused Helen's infidelity is what allows Helen and Menelaus to live together, though their relationship remains strained.

Even so, there is evidence within the Odyssey that readers should not attribute Helen's unfaithfulness to the gods, but should instead see her as morally responsible. Zeus expresses frustration in Book 1 over such delegation of responsibility to the gods: “Mortals! They are always blaming the gods/ For their troubles, when their own witlessness/ Causes them more than they were destined for!” (Homer 1: 37-39). Katz describes how such statements in the Odyssey set it apart from Homer's Iliad. Katz argues that “…in the Iliad Helen's own actions and intentions are morally irrelevant, since she is not, from the point of view of the heroic code, a morally free agent” (16-17). Katz points out however that “Helen is herself regarded as “a moral agent" in the Odyssey (40). If we judge Helen as capable of moral decisions, she does not earn a reputation as a
faithful wife. But, if the *Odyssey* allows us to see women as moral agents who are held responsible for their actions, where the *Iliad* does not, the *Odyssey* also allows its female characters to earn their praise when their actions deserve.

The moral agency which Helen exercises in the *Odyssey* certainly opens the possibility for women to have important and meaningful roles within the epic. Yet, the responsibility this moral agency brings is great, especially when one considers how a woman's morality is evaluated. As I have demonstrated, a woman's morality is subject to interpretation by many different speakers, nearly all of whom are men, who act as judges. So, while the women may seem to exercise greater agency, they are still in many ways subjected to the opinions of men.

*Penelope Rich, Poor, Stayathome*

Before examining the multiple representations of Penelope, the central figure whose faithfulness is the subject of much of the epic, I will move to Joyce's *Ulysses* and the representations within this text of faithfulness. This chronological jump is fully intentional. I will demonstrate how a reading of the various representations of faithfulness in *Ulysses* can alter the interpretations of Penelope's faithfulness in the *Odyssey*. There are several references in *Ulysses* to the Greek Penelope. These references demonstrate her reputation as it exists long after Homer's time. But Joyce alters her reputation with numerous references to a subsequent Penelope whose reputation is quite different. Roland Barthes observes that “language is never innocent: words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new
meanings” (16). I will first examine the modern Penelopes, then apply these representations to a new reading of the *Odyssey*’s Penelope.

"SOPHIST WALLOPS HAUGHTY HELEN SQUARE ON THE PROBOSCIS. SPARTANS GNASH MOLARS. ITHACANS VOW PEN IS CHAMP” (Joyce 148).

This imaginary headline above a portion of Stephen Dedalus' conversation with Mr. Deasy about Penelope's merits and reputation announces a rewriting of the ancient Greek story. The headline refers to a book written by Antisthenes, *Of Helen and Penelope*. The professor notes that in this book “he took away the palm of beauty from Argive Helen and handed it to poor Penelope” (Joyce 148-9). This rewriting is not significant merely for its praise of Penelope—for that she does receive in the *Odyssey*—nor for its insistence that faithfulness be valued above, or even replace beauty as the ideal feminine virtue. Rather, what is said about Antisthenes himself is important for qualifying this new judgment. Mr. Deasy notes, “It is said of him that none could tell if he were bitterer against others or against himself” (Joyce 148). A tacit connection between bitterness and valuing faithfulness to the extreme exists in this depiction of Antitheses, who focuses more on refraining from negative behaviors than on positive attributes.

Stephen Dedalus seems to ally himself with Antisthenes’ argument, but makes numerous suggestions that later “Penelope’s” were not as faithful as the original. In a rather complicated description of one of Shakespeare's liaisons, Stephen begins: “Antisthenes, pupil of Gorgias, [...] took the palm of beauty from Kyrios Menelaus’ brooddam, Argive Helen, the wooden mare of Troy in whom a score of heroes slept, and
handed it to poor Penelope” (Joyce 201). “Poor” becomes the epithet in Stephen's mind for Homer's faithful Penelope. Dedalus’ slide from Homer's Penelope to Lady Penelope Rich reveals a slip in his own mind from a woman renown for her faithfulness to a woman known for her sexual liaisons.

Stephen, however, ends his speech with a different Penelope: “And the gay lakin, Mistress Fitten, mount and cry O, and his dainty birdsnies, Lady Penelope Rich, a clean quality woman suited for a player, and the punks of the bankside, a penny a time” (Joyce 201). Suddenly, Penelope joins the ranks of prostitutes with Helen. Her name has also changed. “Several nineteenth-century scholars,” Gifford suggests, “assumed that [Lady Penelope Rich] was the 'dark lady' of Shakespeare's sonnets” (Gifford 153). This “dark lady” was described by some, “none of them with any known basis in fact,” to have been involved with some sort of liaison with Shakespeare (Gifford 153). This “Penelope Rich” seems to be the opposite of “Poor Penelope,” her promiscuity in sharp contrast to the latter's famed faithfulness.

The distinctions between the two Penelope's fade at certain instances within *Ulysses*. The narrator in “Aeolus” juxtaposes the two after the professor’s summary of Antisthenes’ story: “Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich” (Joyce 149). “Penelope Rich” might refer to Homer’s or Shakespeare's Penelope. Homer's Penelope might be called “Penelope Rich” since she has just been handed the palm of beauty. “Penelope Rich” also makes an obvious allusion to Lady Penelope Rich. Also, Buck Mulligan later asks, “But all those twenty years what do you suppose poor Penelope in Stratford was doing

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1 Gifford notes that this lost book argued Penelope was more beautiful than Helen on account of her virtue.
behind the diamond panes?” (Joyce 202). Mulligan combines characteristics of both Penelope’s: the “twenty years” and the “poor” epithet refer to Homer's Penelope and Stratford refers to Shakespeare's Penelope. The effect of this question, as in “Aeolus” is to make both the faithful and the whore Penelope one.

The unification of the diverse Penelope's within the text is a symptom of what seems to occur in Stephen's own mind. Stephen exhibits a fixation on the sexual faithfulness of women. Stephen suggests that Ann Hathaway Shakespeare was unfaithful to her husband, “Where there is a reconciliation,” he observes, “there must have been first a sundering” in response to a question if he believed she was unfaithful (Joyce 193). This piques the interest of his companions who “had thought of her, if at all, as a patient Griselda, a Penelope stayathome” (Joyce 201). Ann Hathaway becomes interesting to Stephen's companions only at the suggestion that she has been unfaithful.

But before one deems her "a boldfaced Stratford wench," it is important to recognize the propensity of certain men, Stephen especially, to find evidence of unfaithfulness in a woman (Joyce 191). Stephen, I would argue, values faithfulness by aligning himself with Antisthenes. But, the evidence of Penelope's faithfulness is constantly undermined in his imagination by thoughts of Lady Penelope Rich. Stephen demonstrates a certain misogynistic tendency in his ability to find evidence of sexual impropriety in nearly every woman. Still, as the professor suggests about the same effect in Antisthenes, this may stem from bitterness against himself (Joyce 148).
Stephen's view of female faithfulness helps to frame the reader's encounter with Molly Bloom, but it is Leopold Bloom's imagination which has the potential to most shape the reader's interpretation of her. Richard Pearce asks:

...by the time we reach the last episode, Molly has been framed by the quest stories of Stephen Dedains and Leopold Bloom, and her image has been shaped by the aggregate male view. So we might ask the deliberately ambiguous question: how does Molly look through the male gaze? (10)

This question, I would argue, applies to the women in both the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses*.

“Through the male gaze,” the reader has been led to suspect Molly's faithfulness. We know that she has had a sexual encounter with Blazes Boylan, but we do not know the extent of her unfaithfulness. Stephen's ponderings on Penelope and Ann Hathaway have the effect of predisposing the unconscious reader to suspect the faithfulness of all women. Leopold's consideration of his wife's infidelity, if trusted too easily, can lead the reader to overestimate Molly's unfaithfulness.

*Molly's Infidelity*

Just as Stephen seems to find evidence of sexual promiscuity in every woman, so too Bloom believes Molly to have had sexual encounters with many of the men she has known in her life. He lists:

Assuming Mulvey to be the first term of his series, Penrose, Barteli d'Arcy, professor Goodwin, Julius Mastiansky, John Henry Menton, Father Bernard Corrigan, a farmer at the Royal Dublin Society's Horse Show, Maggot O'Reilly, Matthew Dillon, Valentine Blake Dillon (Lord Mayor of Dublin), Christopher Callinan, Lenehan, an Italian organ grinder, an unknown gentleman in the Gaiety Theatre, Benjamin Dollard, Simon Dedalus, Andrew (Pisser) Buke, Joseph Cuffe, Wisdom Hely, Alderman John looper, Dr Francis Brady, Father Sebastian of Mount
Argus, a bootblack at the General Post Office, Hugh E. (Blazes) Boylan and so each and so on to nolast term. (Joyce 731)

Yet, Molly's monologue tells us that her relationship with Mulvey was not consummated with sexual intercourse and her sexual relationship with d'Arcy consisted merely of a kiss on the stairs. Bloom, however, assumes all these men to be his predecessors in Molly's bed. If the reader does not carefully check the names on Bloom's list, it is easy to put faith into this catechism and believe Bloom's list demonstrating Molly's infidelity. This fact checking might be easy for a reader to overlook, suggests Pearce, who notes “it took scholars half a century of careful reading to discover that Molly was not promiscuous, for Boylan was her first adulterous lover” (45). For fifty years, readers and scholars overlooked the fact that nearly all of the novel is told from Stephen and Leopold's biased points of view. The persuasiveness of Leopold's gaze permitted the extent of Molly's promiscuity to be grossly exaggerated.

Bloom acknowledges that husbands may play a role in their wives' infidelity. Reflecting on the affair between Katherine O'Shea and Parnell, he argues:

Whereas the simple fact of the case was it was simply a case of the husband not being up to the scratch with nothing in common between them beyond the name and then a real man arriving on the scene, strong to the verge of weakness, falling a victim to her siren charms and forgetting home times. (Joyce 650)

He suggests that if a husband does not fulfill his responsibilities, a wife may lead to adultery. This suggestion implicitly assigns some guilt to himself for Molly's affair with Boylan. Molly concurs with Bloom's assignation of responsibility to the husband, and muses “ive a mind to tell him every scrap and make him do it in front of me serve him right its his own fault if I am an adulteress” (Joyce 780). The responsibility of both
spouses in maintaining the marriage is recognized in *Ulysses*; I will later demonstrate that this responsibility is assigned to women alone in the *Odyssey*.

As Bloom comes to terms with Molly's liaison with Boylan, he seems to find women's non-exclusive sexuality humorous. He smiles:

“To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be the first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeating to infinity. (Joyce 731)

Even though he can smile at this, he fails to recognize that it is he himself who repeats this series of partners. Though we do not see Bloom in the midst of an adulterous affair, he certainly looks at many other women and has an encounter of sorts with Gerty MacDowell. Leopold fails to consciously acknowledge the pattern of his own infidelity.

Leopold's hypocrisy and failure to recognize how his wife's behavior repeats his own is emphasized with the hidden letter motif. Bloom repeatedly considers the letter from Boylan that Molly hides beneath her pillow. He knows that it is a tool used by the pair to arrange their encounter. Not until Molly remarks in her monologue that Leopold has used a very similar trick is his hypocrisy brought to the reader's attention. Molly remembers, “the day before yesterday he was scribbling something a letter when I came into the front room for the matches as if something told me and he covered it up with the blottingpaper pretending to be thinking about business so very probably that was it to somebody who thinks she has a softy in him” (Joyce 739). Neither spouse outwits the other, but Molly does not seem to hold different standards for herself and for her husband.
If the reader does not carefully evaluate Bloom's claims regarding Molly's infidelity or does not take into consideration Bloom's own actions, he or she may be led to side with Bloom and miss the more balanced view of the couple's relationship offered by the text. The same application of equal standards should be applied to the Odyssey as well in order to fully understand the way in which Penelope’s faithfulness is represented. Without careful reading that takes into consideration the position of the speaker passing judgment, a woman’s faithfulness begins to depend less on her own actions and more on the perceptions of those with the power to speak.

**Background for Interpreting Penelope**

Penelope's faithfulness and her marriage to Odysseus are the objects of much discourse within the Odyssey which shapes the reader's imagination of her character. But in addition to the talk about Penelope's faithfulness, we as readers witness her actions firsthand and can use this as evidence as we try to understand Penelope. Penelope has been variously interpreted by critics as an eternally faithful wife, a flirtatious woman enjoying the attentions of the suitors, and as one who attempts to choose the best option among many. These many interpretations of Penelope's character exist because the reader receives many contradictory accounts of Penelope's behavior: from Telemachus and Odysseus, the people they meet, and the poet himself. Penelope's own actions, as represented by Homer, seem to alternately indicate her longing for Odysseus' return and her intention to remarry. In order to develop my own reading of Penelope, I will first examine her as an object of discourse. The way she is described by various characters
has great influence on the ways in which her later actions may be interpreted. As I have previously done, I will evaluate the speaker and audience in each situation in order that the full effect of each description of Penelope might be more fully understood. Later, I will examine her first hand appearances within the text.

Telemachus, as he comes of age in Ithaca, has the opportunity to evaluate Penelope's faithfulness long before Odysseus' return. His evaluation of Penelope's faithfulness is based on his first hand witness of her actions which he then interprets using the information he gains from various conversations about Penelope and fidelity. Previously, I described the text's treatment of Helen and her actions both in Sparta and during the Trojan War and its effect on the reader's expectations for women. Telemachus is taught by his interactions with Helen and Menelaus the supposed dangers of trusting women. After his journey, then, we may understand this distrust of his own mother as a product of his understanding of these teachings.

Yet, even before Telemachus leaves Ithaca to search for news of his father he is encouraged to be distrustful of Penelope, or at the very least, distrustful of her situation. It is made clear in several instances that Penelope's situation is threatening his inheritance. Athena, disguised as Mentes, suggests that Telemachus allow his mother to remarry. Athena offers this advice after witnessing the situation in Odysseus' household, which Telemachus describes:

‘All of the nobles who rule the islands—
Doulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus—
And all those with power on rocky Ithaca
Are courting my mother and ruining our house.
She refuses to make a marriage she hates
But can't stop it either. They are eating us
Out of house and home, and will kill me someday.’ (Homer 1: 263-69)

Athena will encourage Telemachus to remedy this situation by suggesting that he “marry off [his] mother” (Homer 1: 310). In this way, Telemachus is taught to fear less his mother's remarriage than her indecision, as it is the latter which is depleting his inheritance.

Antinous, one of the leaders of the suitors, acknowledges the depletion of Telemachus' inheritance. He blames not Penelope's faithfulness to the memory of her husband, but her leading on of the suitors for the situation. He tells Telemachus:

'It's not the suitors
Who are at fault, but your own mother,
Who knows more, tricks than any woman alive.
It's been three years now, almost four,
Since she's been toying with our affections.
She encourages each man, leading us on,
Sending messages; But her mind is set elsewhere.’ (Homer 1: 294-300)

Telemachus' response to Antinous' blaming Penelope for the situation indicates that he does not hold her accountable in the same way. In fact, he tells Antinous:

‘I will never tell my mother to leave.
As for you, if you don't like it,
If this offends your sense of fairness,
Get out of my house!’(Homer 1: 151-54)

Yet even if the reader sides with Telemachus and chooses not to blame Penelope for the situation in Ithaca, serious questions about her role in the events have been raised. Antinous, trying to defend his own actions, may have fabricated Penelope's encouragement of the suitors. But this statement is not refuted by Telemachus’ response, so the reader may develop doubts of Penelope’s faithfulness to Odysseus. A reader
should be careful in allowing these doubts, raised by the not-so-trustworthy Antinous, to influence too greatly later interpretations of Penelope's actions.

Most of the evaluations of Penelope that Odysseus hears will be much more positive than Antinous'. Odysseus learns of the situation awaiting him in Ithaca from Teresias, who tells him:

‘…and you shall find
Trouble in your house, arrogant men
Devouring your wealth and courting your wife.
Yet vengeance shall be yours.’ (Homer 11:114-18)

Though Teresias does not mention Penelope's role in these events, Odysseus learns from both his mother and Agamemnon that Penelope remains faithful to him. His mother assures him, “Oh, yes indeed, she remains in your halls,/ Her heart enduring the bitter days and nights/ But, the honor that was yours has not passed to any man” (Homer 11:182-84). Odysseus' mother, telling of the events in Ithaca, casts no doubt on Penelope's faithfulness.

Agamemnon, on the other hand, even as he assures that Penelope has been and will be faithful, urges Odysseus to be cautious revealing himself to Penelope. Clytemnestra's betrayal of Agamemnon explains, at least in part, his tendency to suspect Penelope. He warns Odysseus:

'So don't go easy on your own wife either,
Or tell her everything you know.
Tell her some things, but keep some hidden.
But your wife will not bring about your death,
Odysseus, Icarius' daughter,
Your wise Penelope, is far too prudent.’ (Homer 11: 458-641)
Agamemnon's own experiences cannot fully account for encouraging Odysseus to be cautious with Penelope for he knows she will not betray her husband as Clytemnestra betrayed him. The inconsistencies of this speech must be explored if one is to understand Odysseus' approach to his wife and his views of her faithfulness.

Nancy Felson-Rubin argues that the 1st nekyia is told from Odysseus's point of view and with his own interests in mind. She reasons that “Agamemnon of Book 11 is a creature fashioned by Odysseus to suit his purposes of winning safe and cautious convoy from the Phaiakians. It is in his interest, as teller of his own ADVENTURES, to make Agamemnon in the Underworld suspect even Penelope, of potential betrayal” (Felson-Rubin 163-64). While I would agree with Felson-Rubin's assertion that Odysseus may have exaggerated Agamemnon's suspicion of Penelope of his retelling of the conversation in the Underworld, I would also like to reiterate my argument that Agamemnon's function within the poem as a whole is to encourage suspicion of women. This effect of Agamemnon's distrustful beliefs is not limited to when Odysseus recounts Agamemnon's speeches. In the 2nd Nekyia, having heard the news of the suitors' slaughter, Agamemnon reiterates his suspicion of women:

‘…What a mind she has,
A woman beyond reproach! How well Penelope
Kept in her heart her husband, Odysseus.
And so her virtue's fame will never perish,
And the gods will make among men on earth,
A song of praise for steadfast Penelope.
But Tyndareus' daughter was evil to the core,
Killing her own husband, and her song will-be
A song of scorn, bringing ill-repute
To all women, even the virtuous.’ (Homer 24: 201–10)
This speech is not recounted by Odysseus, but rather the narrator. As such, Felson-Rubin's assertion that Odysseus is solely responsible for Agamemnon's suspicion of seems unlikely, though the hero very likely used this suspicion to his advantage.

Athena points out Odysseus’ unjustified suspicion of Penelope. The goddess tells Odysseus:

‘Any other man come home from hard travels
Would rush to his house to see his children and wife.
But you don't even want to hear how they are
Until you test your wife, who,
As a matter of fact, just sits in the house,
Weeping away the lonely days and nights.’ (Homer 13: 344-49)

In this speech, Athena makes Odysseus' suspicion of Penelope seem unnecessary and undeserved—even a bit cold-hearted. Given Eumaeus' first-hand account of Penelope's faithfulness: “Yes, she's in your house, waiting and waiting/ With an enduring heart, poor soul,/ Weeping away the lonely days and nights,” Odysseus’ caution hardly seems justified (Homer 16: 41-3).

Yet, the reader is not allowed to so simply escape suggestions that Penelope should be approached cautiously by her returning husband. Athena also tells Odysseus:

‘Odysseus, the master tactician—consider how
You're going to get your hands on the shameless suitors,
Who for three years now have taken over your house,
Proposing to your wife and giving her gifts.
She pines constantly for your return,
But she strings them along, makes little promises,
Sends messages—while her intentions are otherwise.’ (Homer 13: 390-96)

The effect of these contradictions in the advice given to Odysseus by Agamemnon and Athena is that the reader becomes unsure whether Penelope should be trusted. The meanings of Penelope’s actions become unclear—does she intend to remarry or will she
remain faithful to Odysseus? It is in this unsure state that the reader must approach Penelope and attempt to interpret her actions.
Intelligent Women

Penelope: Faithful, Cunning, Or Both?

Penelope's actions are difficult to interpret not only because the other characters make many contradictory judgments of her, but also because her own intentions are not made clear by the poet. Sheila Murnaghan explains that “Penelope's motives during the second half of the poem are difficult to assess because the poet is generally uncommunicative about her thoughts, as he is not about Odysseus’, leaving us to deduce her state of mind from outward gestures and speeches” (104). The concealment on Homer’s part of Penelope’s intentions calls for greater attention given his relative openness about the motives and plans of other characters. Murnaghan explains the poem’s exclusion of Penelope’s intentions by suggesting “that the literary or interpretive difficulties surrounding the presentation of Penelope represent the poem’s indirect testimony to problems inherent in the social world it portrays, problems involving issues of power and gender” (104). The level at which these “problems involving issues of power and gender” operate extends not only within the reality described in the poem, but in the reality of the poem itself. The Odyssey challenges the epic tradition of the Iliad by moving the focus of the action from the battlefield to the hearth. Yet in order that the epic's focus remain on our epic hero, Odysseus, the reader must not become too distracted by Penelope’s actions and intentions. The exclusion of most of Penelope’s thoughts and actions ensures Odysseus’ place as the center of focus.
This is not to suggest that Penelope’s actions cannot be interpreted. In fact, I will argue that special attention must be paid to her actions and intentions in order for the conclusion of the poem to make sense. A reader’s interpretation of Penelope’s actions must rely on her actions and speeches. But as Murnaghan suggests, “it is not clear whether those speeches are to be taken at face value” (104). Penelope is consistently described by the narrator as wise, circumspect and calm. Her actions in the second half of the poem must be interpreted as if she were in this calm, circumspect state of mind since the reader receives no reliable information that she is otherwise. Her actions and speeches cannot always necessarily be taken at face value, since we are constantly reminded of her foresight, though her thoughts are not revealed to the readers.

Penelope earns her reputation in the poem not through her beauty, like Helen, but through her mind. Just as Odysseus is not the traditional epic hero, Penelope’s representation is not wholly traditional either. Katz describes how traditional understandings of Penelope’s character focus on only one attribute—her faithfulness. But Katz also makes the important point that “Penelope’s kleos comprises both her constancy and cleverness. It includes both the beauty, probity and skill that make her an exemplar of her sex” (5). I would go beyond Katz's statement to assert that Penelope's kleos does not only include her cleverness, but her reputation for constancy depends upon her cleverness. I will prove that Penelope’s constancy is only possible because of her cleverness by examining her actions and speeches while keeping in mind the epithets repeatedly used to describe her: wise, circumspect, and calm.
Readers do not witness firsthand the single act for which Penelope is most well-known and which plays a large part in the explicit representation of her cunning. However, Antinuous does describe how Penelope set up her trick of the loom to delay marriage with the suitors: “Every day she would weave at the great loom,/ And every night she would unweave by torchlight./ She fooled us—for three years with her craft” (Homer 2: 113-15). Penelope’s ability to delay the suitors for three years is a significant achievement. Antinuous’ introduction to his description of this trick, “Here’s just one of the tricks she devised,” clearly implies that she has used others to delay remarriage (Homer 2: 101). This evidence of Penelope’s cunning and ability to devise effective tricks must not be forgotten when we meet her again in the second half of the poem. In fact, the readers must be conscious of her special abilities in order to avoid being tricked by Penelope themselves.

Many of the difficulties interpreting Penelope's actions arise because it is not made explicitly clear when she first recognizes Odysseus. The key questions for me are: at what point does Penelope have suspicions that the beggar is Odysseus in disguise, how does she test those suspicions, and what actions does she take having gained knowledge of his identity? My choice of questions clearly suggest that I believe Penelope recognizes Odysseus before he chooses to reveal himself after the slaughter of the suitors. Although Homer does not explicitly acknowledge her recognition of Odysseus until he reveals himself, he offers enough evidence that she had already recognized him so that it becomes the most plausible possibility. The effect of Homer’s reticence on Penelope’s intentions is that the reader is left in a position similar to that of Odysseus: we know his
identity, but do not know for certain if she sees beyond the disguise. It is interesting to note that Helen twice recognized Odysseus in disguise, once appearing like a beggar like he does when he arrives in Ithaca. Might not his own wife then also be able to see through Odysseus' disguise?

I would argue that Penelope does in fact suspect that the beggar is Odysseus and seeks to confirm her belief through tests of her own design as well as careful observations. One of the first suggestions of Odysseus’ return that Penelope receives is Theoclymenus’ prophecy, which he addresses directly to her. Theoclymenus says:

‘I swear, by this table of hospitality,
And by Odysseus' hearth, to which I have come,
That this same Odysseus, mark my words,
Is at this moment in his own native land,
Sitting still or on the move, learning of this evil
And he is sowing evil for all the suitors.
Such is the bird of omen I saw
From the ship, and I cried it out to Telemachus.’ (Homer 17: 165-72)

Penelope’s response, “calm and circumspect” is hopeful but brief. Her composed reaction to this exciting prophesy suggests she is carefully guarding her emotions.

The second favorable sign Penelope receives is Telemachus’ sneeze. Her son’s sneeze is the confirmation of her hope that “if Odysseus should ever come home,/ He and his son would make [the suitors] pay for this outrage” (Homer 17: 587-88). Penelope’s reaction to this omen is extremely positive. She tells Eumaeus, “Didn’t you see my son sneeze at my words?/ That means death will surely come to the suitors,/ One and all. Not a single man will escape” (Homer 2000 17: 593-95). I am not suggesting that Penelope at this point recognizes Odysseus and that her recognition of him is confirmed by these omens. Instead, I believe these instances help to prepare Penelope by encouraging her to
watch more closely for signs of her husband. The reader must not forget Penelope’s positive reactions to these omens when later attempting to understand her actions.

Penelope’s actions in Book 18 seem to be in contrast with the state of mind one might imagine her to be in having received the numerous omens in Book 17. Her appearance before the suitors, which is incongruous to the state of mind the readers have been shown her to be in, is justified by Athena's intervention:

And now the Grey-eyed One put into the heart
Of Penelope, Icarius' wise daughter,
A notion to show herself to the suitors.
All of a sudden she wanted to make their blood pound—
And to make herself more worthy than ever
In the eyes of her son, and of her husband. (Homer 18: 167-72)

It is clear that the inspiration to appear before the suitors comes from Athena, but the feelings described in the latter half of this excerpt seem to describe Penelope's personal experience of Athena’s inspiration. That Penelope desires to “make herself more worthy than ever/ in the eyes of her son, and of her husband” suggests that on some level she understands his current presence in Ithaca (Homer 18: 172). If her husband were not already present in Ithaca, Penelope’s response to Athena’s inspiration would not involve making her appear better in Odysseus’ eyes. The reference to the eyes of her husband is the poet’s subtle suggestion of the extent of Penelope’s knowledge.

The speech Penelope makes during her appearance before the suitors is often read as evidence of her developing belief that Odysseus will not return to Ithaca and the beginning of her preparations to remarry. I, however, would suggest an alternative reading, more consistent with the favorable omens Penelope has just received that will help to make her later actions more coherent as well. Penelope tells the suitors:
‘And this much is true: when Odysseus left
He clasped my right hand in his and said to me:
‘I do not think, my wife, that all the Greeks
Will return from Ilion safe and sound.
They say the Trojans are real warriors,
Spearmen and bowmen, and they drive chariots,
Which can turn the tide in any battle.
So I do not know whether the god of war
Will send me back or if I'll go down
There in Troy. So everything here is in your hands.
Take care of my father and of my mother
As you do now, or even more, when I am gone.
But when you see your son a bearded man,
Marry whom you will, and leave this house.’
So he spoke, and it's all coming true.’ (Homer 18: 280-94)

Her speech suggests that she has given up hope on Odysseus’ return. By convincing the suitors that she is preparing to remarry, Penelope is able to encourage them to bring her gifts as repayment for the goods they have consumed in her house while wooing her.

Katz argues “the scene in Book 18 is clearly constructed as if it represented an acknowledgement on Penelope's part of her readiness to remarry, and this decision has generated significant difficulties in the interpretation of Penelope's character” (87).

Interpretation of this scene, I would agree, can be difficult particularly because it seems to show us a Penelope who is not tirelessly faithful, but one who has given up. This certainly is how her actions are interpreted by the suitors. But Homer, through Odysseus’ reaction to Penelope’s appearance, opens the possibility for other interpretations of her actions. The narrator reveals:

She spoke, and Odysseus, the godlike survivor,
Smiled inwardly to see how she extracted gifts,
From the suitors, weaving a spell upon them
With her words, while her mind was set elsewhere. (Homer 18: 305-8)
Odysseus’ happy reaction seems incongruous with Penelope's expressed intention to remarry. Uvo Holscher argues that Odysseus’ happy reaction to Penelope’s announcement of plans to remarry is “not because he suspects she is lying, but because he is there and will intercept her!” (135). But if this were true, why would the narrator suggest that Penelope’s own “mind was set elsewhere” (Homer 18: 308)? Holscher unconvincingly explains that “the other intentions’ she has in mind are not a secret plan, they are the feelings in her heart” (135). But “the feelings in her heart,”—her aversion to remarriage—is made clear when Penelope tells the suitors, “There will come a night when a hateful marriage/ Will darken my bed, cursed as I am, my happiness/ Destroyed by Zeus” (Homer 18: 295-97). Her speech then, does not hide her aversions to remarriage as Holscher suggests, but some other plan she is weaving.

Penelope makes this appearance and speech before she has had the opportunity to interview the beggar for news of Odysseus. If she truly believed that remarriage were inevitable, her interview of the beggar would hardly be necessary. However, if she believed Odysseus to be near or have already arrived in Ithaca, the interview with the beggar would be a necessary means to learn more about his whereabouts.

During the interview, Penelope tells the beggar, “Now I feel I must test you, stranger/ To see if you really did entertain my husband/ And his godlike companions as you say you did” (Homer 19: 232-34). The beggar shows that he has either an uncanny memory or that he has a special relation to Odysseus when he recalls in great detail Odysseus’ cloak and brooch. The narrator describes her reaction to his convincing descriptions: “She recognized the unmistakable tokens Odysseus was giving her” (Homer
Again, there is the underlying suggestion that Penelope knows more than the narrator explicitly tells us. In her cunning way, Penelope then teases Odysseus by feigning despair:

But I will never welcome him
Home again, and so the fates were dark
When Odysseus left in his hollow ship
For Ilion, that curse of a city. (Homer 19: 81-84)

Considering the many signs she has received of Odysseus’ impending return and the confirmation she has just heard of the beggar’s acquaintance with Odysseus, her sudden despair is inexplicable.

Penelope’s speech takes on new meaning if the reader recognizes that Penelope is disguising her thoughts and emotions just as Odysseus is disguising his identity. Just as she was able to feign a certain state of mind to extract gifts from the suitors, she is able to extract more information from Odysseus with this speech. To quiet her despair, the beggar promises Penelope that Odysseus “is very near, and will not be away long/ From his dear ones and his native land” (Homer 19: 330-31). Though during this interview Penelope seems to exhibit continued signs of despair, she is carefully observing the beggar and becoming more convinced of his true identity.

Penelope, however, remains cautious. She does not openly recognize Odysseus. Nancy Felson-Rubin argues that Penelope remains cautious throughout the second half of the epic in order for her to be able to carry out a diverse set of plots. Should the beggar turn out to be Odysseus, she has positioned herself favorably by helping him. Should Odysseus never return, she has maintained the opportunity for remarriage with one of the
suitors (Felson-Rubin). I do believe, though, that Penelope is most active in enacting the plot in which Odysseus, the beggar in disguise, gets revenge on the suitors.

Penelope’s identification of the beggar as Odysseus is revealed through a particularly interesting slip-of-the-tongue. To honor the traveler who has just supplied news of her husband, she orders her maid:

Eurycleia, rise and wash your master’s—that is,  
Wash the feet of this man who is your master's age.  
Odysseus’ feet and hands are no doubt like this now,  
For men age quickly when life is hard. (Homer 19: 388-91)

Penelope has just let slip that she recognizes, or at least strongly suspects, the beggar is really Odysseus. But even her method of covering her slip reveals her ability to recognize how Odysseus might look after his twenty-year absence.

To end the interview, Penelope offers two very revealing pieces of information to the beggar, whom she has obviously now placed much trust in. First, Penelope tells him of her dream in which an eagle kills her beloved geese. The eagle then speaks to her:

‘Take heart, daughter of famed Icarius,  
This is no dream, but a true vision  
That you can trust. The geese are the suitors,  
And I, who was once an eagle, am now  
Your husband come back, and I will deal out doom,  
A grisly death for all of the suitors’ (Homer 19: 599-604)

Penelope qualifies the message of this dream—the certainty of Odysseus’ revenge on the suitors—by suggesting that it cannot be trusted. But before her qualification of the dream, she again receives from the beggar assurances that it will come true. If she truly does not believe in the meaning of the dream/visions, there is no plausible justification for her to share it with the beggar.
Despite her feigned loss of hope, Penelope is encouraged by the beggar’s assurances and tells him of her plans to propose the contest of the bow. Felson-Rubin points out that “Like a skilled chess player, Penelope knows when she proposes the contest that she is choosing a move that will fit into more than one strategy or plot trajectory” (178). Should the signs of Odysseus’ return prove untrue, the contest of the bow will either prove all the suitors unworthy or help her to select a suitable new husband. Should the beggar prove to be Odysseus, as I believe Penelope now strongly suspects, she has given him foreknowledge of the contest so that he may devise a plan to his advantage. Penelope’s proposal of the contest of the bow must be understood in the context of the signs which she last received. These signs insist that she is operating, with due caution, in the belief that the beggar is Odysseus in disguise.

Penelope’s final cunning trick, which also serves like each of her others to best ensure her faithfulness to Odysseus is the bed trick. Penelope’s caution after Odysseus and Telemachus have slain the suitors confuses Eurycleia, Telemachus, and Odysseus. But to the reader, who has constantly been reminded by the narrator of her cautious and circumspect nature, it should not come as a surprise that she has one final test for Odysseus. Penelope tells Eurycleia to bring out the bed Odysseus himself built. This command outrages Odysseus:

‘By God, woman, now you’ve cut deep.  
Who moved my bed? It would be hard  
For anyone, no matter how skilled, to move it.  
A god could come down and move it easily,  
But not a man alive, however young and strong,  
Could ever pry it up. There’s something telling  
About how that bed’s built, and no one else  
Built it but me’ (Homer 23: 189-96)
Odysseus’ outrage confirms his identity for Penelope who can now “finally let go” (Homer 23: 212).

Penelope has tricked even the wily Odysseus. She explains her intentions in the process:

‘…Don’t hold it against me
That when I first saw you I didn’t welcome you
As I do now. My heart has been cold with fear
That an impostor would come and deceive me.’ (Homer 23: 221-24)

Penelope’s guard is finally down and we may take her speech, at last, at its face value. All of her efforts, speeches, and tests make sense as the reader and Odysseus realizes that her recognition of the beggar had to be kept secret, even from Odysseus in order that she might be the truly faithful wife. Penelope's faithfulness depended on her cunning and foresight. But to those not let in on her thoughts until the end, her actions appeared intended not to ensure her faithfulness but to speed her remarriage.

**Weaving Plans: Penelope and Athena**

Penelope’s success in the *Odyssey* depends on her weaving. The trick of the loom shroud works for several years, but when it is discovered Penelope must weave a new plan. Penelope weaves a plan, using the beggar who she suspects is really Odysseus, to rid her house of the suitors. The complexity of the plan is immense, it is woven so delicately that one almost cannot see the threads placed by the artist. Penelope, not Odysseus, is the mastermind whose plan ensures the reunion between husband and wife. Odysseus’ foresight in this project is limited; he only follows the advice of Athena, waits
for the events to unfold, then enacts the role Penelope has prepared for him. Foley attributes the success of Odysseus’ return to Penelope, who “achieves this uneasy victory by a woman’s weapons: her Athena-like intelligence, her weaving, and her power to order the household” (62).

Penelope tells the beggar how she has managed to remain faithful and maintain her household using a weaving metaphor. “My suitors press on and I weave my wiles” (Homer 19: 149). In this instance, her shroud trick having already been discovered, Penelope refers to devising new tricks. Odysseus himself recognizes Penelope’s intelligence when he “smiled inwardly to see how she extracted gifts/ From the suitors, weaving a spell upon them/ With her words, while her mind was set elsewhere” (Homer 18: 305-08). Weaving as a metaphor for intelligence allows for the intellectual abilities of Penelope to be highlighted in a special way; her intelligence is described in away uniquely female in ancient Greek culture. The weaving metaphor allows the reader to recognize Penelope’s cunning, and to notice how in her own way, Penelope uses her intelligence in her own way.

Penelope is not the sole female figure described partaking in the intellectual activity that weaving becomes in the Odyssey. Athena’s role in making preparations for Odysseus’ return is also described in terms of weaving. Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom and crafts, provides an example of female intelligence and cunning like Penelope that is equal to Odysseus. Upon Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, Athena tells him, “…now I’ve come here, ready to weave/ A plan with you” (Homer 13: 314-15). Athena will be
the artisan weaving the plan for Odysseus’ success; he will be the executor. Odysseus later, having been told of the suitor's activities, says:

‘Ah, I'd be heading for the same pitiful death
That Agamemnon met in his house
If you hadn't told me all this, Goddess.
Weave a plan so I can pay them back!’ (Homer 13: 314-15)

His dependence on the goddess in this instance is interesting; it shows how closely connected the female is to the cunning. The *Odyssey* insists that females as well as males be recognized for their intelligence.

The hero depends on the plans of the female figures upon his return. Athena works openly with him and Penelope secretly weaves her own plan for his success. Odysseus’ return to Ithaca and reunion with his wife can be attributed not to his own cunning, but to that of Athena and Penelope whose abilities outshine Odysseus’ in these final scenes. Yet, because their abilities are more subtly expressed using the weaving metaphor, a sphere of work reserved for women, the effect is somewhat less threatening to Odysseus’ reputation. The work of Athena and Penelope takes place in the background, allowing Odysseus’ own efforts in fulfilling their plans to be foremost in the reader’s attention.

*Molly*

That Penelope and Athena provide matches equal to Odysseus’ cunning is clear; however, *Ulysses* does not so forcefully insist that Molly be recognized for her intelligence. It is possible to read her final monologue as a sort of hysterical rambling that only perpetuates unfavorable female stereotypes. Pearce, however, notes that “some
feminists argue that hysteria is a positive form of assertion against being trapped in male plots by the male gaze” (53). If we approach “Penelope” from this perspective, one open to seeing her complex monologue in a positive light, the possibility of seeing Molly as an intelligent being becomes very real. Recognizing the intelligence of Athena and Penelope in the *Odyssey* took effort; so too may recognizing Molly’s intelligence.

For much of the novel, the reader learns about Molly Bloom almost exclusively from the perspective of her husband Leopold. There is a notable instance near the beginning of the novel which seems to set the tone for a male interpretation of Molly’s intelligence. Molly asks Leopold to help her with a word she does not recognize in the book she’s reading. Leopold later remembers her bumbling pronunciation of *metempsychosis*, “Met him pikehoses she called it till I told her about the transmigration” (Joyce 154). The reader can chuckle with Leopold at Molly’s juvenile mispronunciation and her comical response to Leopold’s definition of the word: “Oh rocks! Tell us in plain words” (Joyce 154). Because this incident is twice told in the novel, from the third person when it first occurs and in the first person when Leopold remembers the incident, it has particular strength in shaping the reader’s evaluation of Molly’s intelligence.

Less memorable, but equally important, is Leopold’s train of thought just after his remembrance of the morning’s events. Leopold acknowledges, “She’s right after all. Only big words for ordinary things on account of the sound” (Joyce 154). Molly’s intelligence might be doubted when she does not understand the word *metempsychosis*, but her unfamiliarity with the word is more likely the result of receiving less education because she is a woman, than a lack of natural intelligence. Leopold recognizes his
wife’s intelligence, in fact, as he continues this train of thought with the following memory: “She used to say Ben Dollard had a base barretone voice. He has legs like barrels and you’d think he was singing into a barrel. Now, isn’t that wit? They used to call him Big Ben. Not half as witty as calling him base barretone” (Joyce 154). Though Molly clearly does not have the educated intelligence that is mainly the property of men in her society, she clearly possesses her own style of intellectual ability.

Molly’s unique style can be seen even in her brief witticism on Ben Dollard’s “base barretone voice”. Molly seems to combine words and ideas in a provocative way. A more sustained example of Molly’s wit is evident in Joyce’s final chapter. The tone of the final chapter is very much like her description of Ben Dollard’s voice. The reader must only remember Leopold’s recognition of her language abilities, despite her mispronunciation of *metempsychosis*, when interpreting her words.

The structure of Molly’s monologue is particularly interesting. Pearce observes that “her monologue, or dialogue, like the narrative of the hysteric, follows the laws of its own desire and constitutes itself out of their free play” (53). One can see at a glance how Molly’s monologue might be interpreted as the narrative of a hysteric; though it is 45 pages long, it is divided into only eight long paragraphs or “sentences” and contains no punctuation. It seems to be Molly’s stream-of-consciousness unrestrained by the rules of grammar and punctuation. The reader, without punctuation remarks acting as speed-bumps, may be tempted to read this final section at a break-neck pace. Yet engaging with the whirlwind that is the final chapter in Joyce’s novel can be exhilarating. The abundance of ambiguous pronouns allow for numerous, rich interpretations. The quick
shifts in theme and subject also are fodder for an interesting psychological reading of Molly Bloom’s character.

Both Molly’s wit and the structure of the final chapter seem to take on a particularly “female” form. Both are based on a process of creation through combination. Molly’s “base barreltone voice” phrase combines two words base and tone to create new meaning. Her final chapter combines what most men would use punctuation to divide—sentences and clauses—to again create new meaning. Kimberly Devlin has also pointed out that Molly’s combination of various female stereotypes also creates new meaning. Devlin argues, “A weaver and unweaver of identity itself, Molly dons multiple recognizable masks of womanliness, appropriating femininity in many familiar forms” (81). I find Devlin’s description of Molly as a “weaver” intriguing, especially given the nature of my project. Combined with our understanding of Penelope’s intelligence in terms of her weaving abilities, this suggests that both Penelope and Molly possess particular intelligences, one that might even be thought of in “female” terms.

I argue this though, with caution. By “female” I do not mean to argue that their intelligence is a direct result of their sex. Rather, I am trying to distinguish this particular form of intelligence, which values creation of new meaning, from the analytical (i.e. breaking into parts) intelligence embodied by Leopold. This difference in intellectual styles can be seen by comparing the “Penelope” to “Ithaca,” in which Leopold breaks apart his day with a methodological catechism. Take for example:

What did Bloom do at the range?
He removed the saucepan to the left hob, rose and carried the iron kettle to the sink in order to tap the current by turning the faucet to let it flow. (Joyce 670)

The terms male and female intelligence, as I have used them, are not intended to refer to or be assumed to be connected to the gender of the person they describe. Rather, the terms are a means of distinguishing between the two types of intelligence.

Not all critics agree, however, that “Penelope” embodies a particularly “female” intelligence. Ewa Ziarek, in fact, calls the final chapter a “male fantasy of the female body” (272). Ziarek urges us to remember that “Penelope” springs from the imagination of a man, not a woman. The final chapter begs the question, does Joyce succeed in capturing the reality of a woman’s experience or is Molly’s monologue his fantasy of the other? Ziarek argues that “As an alternative site of male self-elaboration, the female body could appease the modernist nostalgia for a more authentic way of being and for the structure of experience rooted in memory” (270). Much of the novel focuses on Leopold’s wandering through Dublin. Is “Penelope” just his fantasy of nostalgic remembrance or is it a true female alternative to the male narrative?

Devlin offers an appropriate frame to analyze the function of the final chapter with her description of the different functions of female masquerade and female mimicry. She argues:

The distinction between female masquerade and female mimicry allows women’s interactions with representations of the feminine to take contrasting forms: on the one hand, women may assume and internalize those culturally determined images passively and unconsciously; but on the other hand, they can appropriate them ironically, manipulate them from an internal critical distance. (Devlin 80-1)
Both female masquerade and female mimicry involve putting on various culturally determined images of femininity. Is Joyce merely masquerading as a woman in “Penelope” or is this conscious mimicry of the cultural images of femininity? At what level might mimicry take place: only in Joyce’s writing or perhaps also in Molly’s character?

It is difficult to ascertain Joyce’s intentions in allowing Molly to frequently contradict herself. It is possible he meant for her to be read as a simple-minded woman or perhaps as a complex embodiment of many different femininities. In this section, however, I will explore how a reader can actively create a new paradigm for understanding Molly’s contradictions. My analysis is guided by Annette Kolodny, who argues, “For insofar as literature itself is a social institution, so too, reading is a highly socialized—or learned—activity. What makes this so exciting, of course, is that it can be constantly relearned and refined, so as to provide either an individual or an entire reading community, over time, with infinite variations of the same text” (Kolodny 178). Molly’s complex and contradictory monologue can be read from a new frame, one that allows its rich possibilities of meaning to be uncovered.

A large part of understanding how Molly’s monologue fits within the larger narrative—as complement or alternative to—depends on making sense of its many contradictions. Devlin notes that “Molly’s well-known contradictions [...] often lead to the critical assessment of her as ‘illogical’” (83). Such assessments assign Molly to the stereotypically female role as the unintellectual. If the reader sees her contradictions as the product of a simple, female mind, there is little hope for reading her monologue as
something more than just a male fantasy of the female. The reader, however, might understand Molly’s contradictions to be as Devlin suggests, “very much the result of her role as role player, of her ability to strike various poses of womanliness and to parrot various attitudes toward social myths and institutions” (83). Such a reading of “Penelope” allows Molly to act with the images of femininity presented to her from a critical distance. This might, in fact, constitute a particularly “female” intelligence that is a match for Leopold’s.

One contradiction within Molly’s monologue is her stance on corsets. Early in “Penelope” she seems to be merely reciting advertising texts:

one of those kidfitting corsets I'd want advertised cheap in the Gentlewoman with elastic gores on the hips he saved the one I have but that's no good what did they say give a delightful figure line 11/6 obviating that unsightly broad appearance across the lower back to reduce flesh my belly is a bit too big. (Joyce 750)

Molly is, in this passage, the perfect consumer of female beauty ideals. She recites advertising text without mediating questions that might distance herself from its ideas. According to Devlin, this might be seen as an example of female masquerade. In the fourth sentence, however, Molly seems more critical of the usefulness of these feminine undergarments. She has a frustrated tone as she remembers, “whoever invented them expecting you to walk up Killiney hill then for example at the picnic all staysed up you cant do a blessed thing in them in a crows run or jump out of the way” (Joyce 755). While Molly is herself aligned in many ways with her culture’s ideals of beauty, her recognition of the impracticality of achieving that ideals shows she is capable of considering them from a critical distance. When the consumer Molly admits wanting to
buy the newly advertised corset, she is participating in the objectification of her body. She, however, maintains some subjectivity by later questioning the function of such garments. She is capable of both masquerade and mimicry.

In Molly’s contradictory feelings towards corsets is revealed her recognition of women as objects for men. Laura Mulvey notes, “In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” (442). It is important to note that Molly sees women as playing that role as object. This is revealed in a number of instances where she describes feminine figures as the object of the male gaze. Even the most objectified representation of the feminine in Molly’s monologue—nude female statues—are imagined by her to be playing a role. Thinking of her own breasts, she imagines, “theyre supposed to represent beauty placed up there like those statues in the museum one of them pretending to hide it with her hand” (Joyce 753).

Even the statue in Molly’s experience, aware of its status as object for the male gaze, plays a role (feigned modesty) in reaction to inspecting eyes.

Molly plays a number of roles herself within “Penelope.” There are several instances where she acknowledges playing coy or feigning an exaggerated sexual innocence. Molly remembers a sexual encounter she had as a young girl with an officer named Mulvey: “Oh yes I pulled him off into my handkerchief pretending not to be excited but I opened my legs I wouldnt let him touch me inside my petticoat” (Joyce 760). Her actions are contradictory; she allows herself to pleasure Mulvey but refuses to
let him see her aroused. Molly keeps that handkerchief and remembers smelling it after
the officer leaves. Clearly, she is aroused by the encounter.

Molly seems to feign virginal innocence, even when she clearly lacks it, because she feels it is desired by men. She thinks: “they always want to see a stain on the bed to
know you’re a virgin for them that’s troubling them they’re such too you could be a widow
or divorced 40 time over a daub or red ink would do or blackberry juice no that’s too
purply” (Joyce 769). For Molly, appearances are most important. It seems that she does
not see the outward signs as expressive of an inner reality. Her musings suggests that
neither does she believe men expect more than these outward appearances.

Although there are many instances like those shown above when Molly plays the
innocent virgin, there are other times when she takes on the role of seductress as well.
“A young boy would like me,” Molly imagines, “I’d confuse him a little alone with him if
I were I’d let him see my garters the new ones and make him turn red with looking at him
seduce him” (Joyce 740). In this instance, Molly subverts what Mulvey describes as “In
a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between
active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the
female figure, which is styled accordingly” (442). Molly assumes the active gaze and
turns it back on the now passive male. No longer is she the innocent virgin; she becomes
the seducer controlling the progress of the seduction.

Is Molly just fulfilling various male fantasies, acting alternately as the innocent to
be seduced and the temptress? The role of her character in the novel seems to do
something more than be another site for the realization of male fantasy. There are several
instances where she openly questions her role in male-female sexual relations. Once she asks, “whats the idea making us like that with a big hole in the middle of us like a Stallion driving it up into you because thats all they want out of you” (Joyce 742). She also thinks, “nice invention they made for women for him to get all the pleasure but if someone gave them a touch of it themselves theyd know what I went through with Milly” (Joyce 742). Molly questions sexual practices and childbirth, revealing her feelings of inequality and men’s roles in creating these circumstances.

Out of all these contradictions and competing images of femininity, Molly builds a new subjectivity for herself. Devlin creates an even longer list of femininities that Molly performs:

Venus in Furs, the indignant and protective spouse, the jealous domestic detective, the professional signer, the professional seductress or femme fatale, the teenage flirt, the teenage naïf, the unrepentant adulteress, the guilt-ridden adulteress, the narcissistic child, the exasperated mother, the pining romantic, the cynical scold, the female seer/fortuneteller […], the frustrated housewife, the female confidant and advisor, the female misogynist, et cetera, et cetera. (81-2)

While I have not dedicated space in this paper to exemplifying all these roles, listing them allows the reader to see the many contradictory parts Molly plays. “Molly Bloom is all these femininities,” Devlin also argues, “and hence none” (82). This is an important point: Molly’s performance of all these femininities precludes her from being any one of them.

Judith Butler’s “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” can be used to further understand how Molly’s monologue deconstructs the idea of a feminine core. Describing how the fiction of expressive gender is created, Butler argues, “…acts,
gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (417). Molly performs a number of feminine identities; one needs only to glance at Devlin’s list to realize the great number she gives in her monologue. Each of these identities, the “teenage naïf” or “unrepentant adulteress” seems to reveal some internal core of Molly’s being. This meaning, however, Butler argues, exists only on the surface—only in Molly’s play. For Butler, “gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is imitation without origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect—that is in its effect—postures as an imitation” (418). Thus, Molly’s performances reveal that all of the femininities themselves are nothing more than performances; she mimics no original, unless the “original” be understood as a performance itself.

The possibilities that Molly’s deconstruction of expressive gender open are immense. By revealing that she has no true gender identity and beyond that, that no true gender identity exists outside performance, Molly escapes the traditional limits of “woman”. Her character reveals that identity to be nothing more than a performance, though a powerful performance of which many are unaware. The possibilities scripted by her as woman by cultural expectations are shown to be unnatural.

Though I have argued that it is difficult to know Joyce’s intentions when writing “Penelope”, it is clear that he was aware of a changing social status for women. In a conversation with Arthur Power, Joyce observed:

‘The purpose of The Doll’s House for instance, was the emancipation of women, which has caused the greatest revolution in our time in the most
important relationship there is—that between men and women; the revolt of women against the idea that they are mere instruments of men.’ (Power 35)

Given the importance Joyce places on the relationship between men and women, it is highly probable that it would figure prominently in his modern epic. Molly Bloom embodies this great revolt. Her particularly female monologue uses the very images that function as tools to objectify her as the material woven into her own personal revolution and she proves to be much more than the “mere instrument” of men.
Conclusion

Taking an intertextual approach to Homer’s *Odyssey* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* has taught me about the way a reader combines information from various texts to create complex understandings. Texts, even those written in different languages thousands of years apart, can be connected in the minds of readers. My understanding of the women in both the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses* was shaped as I read and reread both texts.

More specifically, reading Joyce’s Molly has forced me to rethink Penelope. In *Ulysses*, I was able to locate specific instances in the text when various characters’ evaluations of Molly Bloom had the potential to color my understanding of her character. Leopold’s long list of her supposed previous lovers, for example, prejudiced me to believe she led a more promiscuous life than a close reading of her monologue suggests. This encouraged me to see the ways that male voices within a text can shape to a large extent a reader’s understanding of female characters.

This realization encouraged me to reread the *Odyssey* more carefully. In subsequent readings, I was more attentive to the ways in which Penelope was represented by Homer, especially though the speeches of other characters. I sought a fairer understanding of her function within the epic that accounted for her many representations. Like Molly, Penelope might be described as playing a number of different roles: the grieving wife, cunning temptress, protective mother, naïf, and cautious, ever-faithful wife. Penelope, like Molly, is all of these women and cannot be reduced to a single representation.
Reexamining the roles these two women play has forced me to consider more carefully the role of women in these male-centered texts. Both Penelope’s and Molly’s roles in their respective texts seem to have grown in importance since my first reading. They are not merely the wives Odysseus and Leopold come home to; they are complex female characters who have a specific and necessary function in both texts. Penelope’s faithfulness and the possibility of treachery against her husband add suspense to the epic. The competing representations of her leave the reader guessing her intentions and next action. Molly’s fidelity is also at issue in *Ulysses*. Though the reader does learn that she has an adulterous affair with Blazes Boylan, the reader must reconcile that knowledge with information about Bloom’s own infidelity. *Ulysses* allows the reader to experience the thoughts of the stay-at-home wife, an experience denied to readers of the *Odyssey*.

Intertextual reading requires that one constantly revise one’s understanding of texts as new texts are read and processed. In the above examples, I have demonstrated how my reading of *Ulysses* influences my understanding of the *Odyssey* and vice versa. It is important to remember that intertextuality does not work linearly, but cyclically. Reading and interpreting is thus an ongoing process that allows the reader to continually create new meaning.
Works Cited


Works Consulted


