

## “I Eat; Therefore I Am”—Molly and Food

Hsing-chun Chou

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Chung Hsing University  
250 Kuokuang Road, Taichung 40227, Taiwan  
E-mail: [hcchou@dragon.nchu.edu.tw](mailto:hcchou@dragon.nchu.edu.tw)

### Abstract

Molly's streams of consciousness in "Penelope" are filled with food and eating, which make up a major and crucial part of the person "Molly Bloom" and present a detailed and realistic picture of her life. Food acts as a sign. The rights of entitlement to food signify the financial condition of a household. Moreover, it conveys to Molly private coded messages concerning Bloom, and enables her to make connections with her family, her past, and the community in Dublin. In taking part in various food-related activities, Molly also participates in the communal life of Dublin. Dietary practices thus constitute a part of the identity of Molly Bloom. She eats; therefore she is. Not entirely free from sociocultural constraints, Molly nevertheless reverses the traditional gender roles of man as consumer and woman as the consumed, savors the pleasures brought about by food and sexuality, and suggests the naturalness and inevitability of bodily functions engendered by food consumption.

**Key Words:** Molly Bloom, *Ulysses*, food, social practice, gender

## I. Prelude

Food sustains life, but the import of food for human beings, as is generally admitted, is never nutritional alone. Roland Barthes considers food to be “a sign” (1997: 22) which presents and signifies “an entire ‘world’ (social environment)” (23). What, when, where, how much, and with whom a person eats furnishes information concerning the person and the sociocultural context which shapes that person’s eating practices. Food, therefore, is “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior” (21). Echoing Barthes, Mary Douglas regards food as a code conveying messages expressive of social relations of “hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries” (1997: 36). People, for example, share meals with family and friends, but only have drinks with acquaintances. The difference between the sharing of meals and the sharing of drinks indicates “the line between intimacy and distance” (41). Douglas observes various patterns and rules in daily meals, concluding that “the ordered system which is a meal represents all the ordered systems associated with it” (53). Like Douglas, Carole M. Counihan sees food as a language: “In every culture, foodways constitute an organized system, a language that—through its structure and components—conveys meaning and contributes to the organization of the natural and social world” (1999: 19). Whether as a sign, a code, or a language, food offers significations beyond its survival function, revealing the consumer’s relationship with the outer world.

Food, indeed, is socioculturally significant: one’s dietary habits are never simply manifestations of individual behavior, but rather a reflection of the interaction between the individual and sociocultural forces. In the act of eating, one makes connections with the outside world—whether the consumed foodstuffs, the people who cultivate, sell, prepare, serve, or eat the same food, or the social environment in which one’s dietary habits and preferences

are established. "[A] powerful mode of mediation," eating, Elspeth Probyn argues, "joins us with others" (2000: 12). By the same token, Peter Farb and George Armelagos hold the view that eating functions as "the primary way of initiating and maintaining human relationships" (1980: 4) on account of its association with "virtually the entire spectrum of human activity" (3); they emphasize that to a large extent, food "is what holds a society together" (6). So closely linked with social relations is food that eating actually signifies identity.

Admittedly, one's identity is constructed in a sociocultural context as the same context determines one's dietary habits to a considerable degree. Shannan Peckham deems food and cuisines decisive factors contributing to personal and national identities (1998: 171-182). Gender, age, and class, Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr suggest, influence eating habits in fundamental ways (1988: 1). Farb and Armelagos posit that "what is eaten establishes one's social, religious, and ethnic memberships" (1980: 6); "our varied and peculiar modes of eating" thus function as the key to the understanding of "[c]ultural traits, social institutions, national histories, and individual attitudes" (4). Food, to be brief, is bound up with sociocultural significations that determine one's ethnic, religious, class, and gender identities, betraying the self's relationship with the outside world. Deborah Lupton rightly argues: "It is obvious that food habits and preferences are central practices of the self, directed at self-care via the continuing nourishment of the body with foods that are culturally deemed appropriate, constituting a source of pleasure and acting symbolically as commodities to present a persona to oneself and others" (1996: 15-16).

The rich implications associated with food and eating have attracted not only the attention of anthropologists like Douglas and Counihan and sociologists like Lupton, Charles, and Kerr; food studies have inspired and shed light on literary criticism since the 1980s, when scholars began to investigate food representations in literary works as they relate to issues of culture and identity

(Bevan, 1988; Heller & Moran, 2003; Schofield, 1989). As the quintessential epic of the body, James Joyce's *Ulysses* abounds in descriptions of bodily functions and corporeal themes; food, eating, and drinking, in particular, permeate *all* eighteen episodes of the novel, which itself, as Terry Eagleton comments, "is impossible to consume" for many (1998: 206). But what seems to be inconsumable is not the book itself, but rather the numerous representations of food and eating practices in *Ulysses*: despite the fruitful outcome of the Joyce industry in recent decades—postcolonial studies, gender studies, cultural studies, for instance—researches into the field of food and eating are in fairly short supply. For almost three decades, Lindsey Tucker's *Stephen and Bloom at Life's Feast: Alimentary Symbolism and the Creative Process in James Joyce's Ulysses* (1984) has remained the *only* book dealing with the theme of eating in Joyce. As the title suggests, Tucker examines Stephen's and Bloom's dietary practices and relates alimentary processes to creativity, comparing and contrasting food/life-denying Stephen with food/life-affirming Bloom, and concluding with the remark that Molly acts as "the living vessel," or "the source of all transformation mysteries" for creation (155). Apart from Tucker's book, a few recent articles do tackle the topic of Joyce and food, but their concerns are either with Joyce the writer or with the male protagonists.<sup>1</sup> In this article, my attention will turn from the male protagonists to the female one, Molly Bloom, and my focus will shift from creativity to food

---

<sup>1</sup> Despite its title, Ira B. Nadel's article "Molly's Mediterranean Meals and Other Joycean Cuisines: An Essay with Recipes" focuses on Joyce the gourmet rather than on Molly (2007: 210-222). Miriam O'Kane Mara's attention falls on Stephen Dedalus in the article "James Joyce and the Politics of Food" (2009: 94-110). Robert Gibb's "Cloacal Obsession: Food, Sex, and Death in 'Lestrygonians'" (1989: 268-273), Jaye Berman Montresor's "Joyce's Jewish Stew: The Alimentary Lists in *Ulysses*" (1995: 194-203), Vike Martina Plock's "Modernism's Feast on Science: Nutrition and Diet in Joyce's *Ulysses*" (2007: 30-42), and Lauren Rich's "A Table for One: Hunger and Unhomeliness in Joyce's Public Eateries" (2010: 71-98) center on Leopold Bloom.

and eating as they correlate to social practices and cultural meanings with regard to Molly's identity. What part does food play in relation to Molly's being? This simple question surely deserves more critical attention, considering the numerous recurrences of food items and dietary practices in Molly's interior monologue.

## II. Food, Sign, and Memory

The interior monologue in the "Penelope" episode is saturated with food items and images. If "Bloom's entire universe is imaged in terms of food," as Tucker claims (1984: 67), so is Molly's. To Molly's mind, food signifies to a considerable degree the financial condition of a household. The wife of a lower middle-class job-hopper, and she herself an amateur singer with an unstable income, Molly has to economize to live within their means, which, she complains, "all [go] in food and rent" (Joyce, 1986: 618). She confesses her desire to be lavish: "when I get it Ill lash it around I tell you in fine style" (618). However she wants to squander their meager resources on foodstuffs, she has to remain sensible: "I always want to throw a handful of tea into the pot measuring and mincing" (618). Without ample means, the Blooms have to "measure" and "mince" the quantity of tealeaves, unable to "throw a handful" into the teapot. The Blooms' financial condition may seem much better in comparison with the Dedaluses and other impoverished Dubliners, but they are far from well off. It is well known in economic postulation that the more a household budget goes to food and rent, the poorer the financial condition of the household. If an overwhelming majority of one's income is spent on food and rent, not much is left to discretionary disposal—Molly's words pinpoint this, which explains why she has to scrimp and save to maintain a lower middle-class life. Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke H. van Otterloo suggest that "the economic, social and political relationships in which they are

bound up” determine people’s “*entitlement* rights to food” (1992: 6; emphasis in original). Molly, a colonized, lower middle-class Irish-Jew, lacks the “entitlement rights” to extravagant foods. That Molly has to economize on foodstuffs is by no means a trivial complaint, but rather an important sign with profound social significations.

As a sign, food is rich not merely with social implications: It signifies the financial condition of a household on one hand, and discloses private coded messages on the other, so far as Molly is concerned. Bloom’s appetite, for example, is encoded with significant information: “he came somewhere I’m sure by his appetite anyway love it or not or he’d be off his feed thinking of her so either it was one of those night women” (Joyce, 1986: 608-609). Molly is correct: having a good appetite on 16 June 1904, Bloom does not fall in love with other women, though he does masturbate and ejaculate on the beach and visit the red-light district. Bloom’s refusal to eat certain foods also acts as a vital clue for Molly: “I’d know if he refused to eat the onions” (612). The bad breath caused by the consumption of onions can be a bother to many, not to mention one in love or attempting to attract the opposite sex. Commenting on people’s dislike for certain foodstuffs, Mennell observes that the “fear of bad breath” had “been behind many fussy nineteenth-century recipes for onions” (1996: 301). This fear of bad breath—which persists to this day—assists Molly in an interesting way: she can tell whether Bloom has an affair by his response to onions. In addition to his love life, food also allows Molly to decode Bloom’s personality. She recalls an incident that occurred in a train station:

the time going to the Mallow concert at Maryborough ordering boiling soup for the two of us then the bell rang out he walks down the platform with the soup splashing about taking spoonfuls of it hadn’t he the nerve and the waiter after him making a holy show of us screeching and confusion for the engine to start but he wouldn’t pay till he finished it the two gentlemen in the 3rd class carriage said

he was quite right so he was too hes so pigheaded  
sometimes when he gets a thing into his head. (Joyce,  
1986: 616)

In spite of "making a holy show" of "screeching and confusion," Bloom insists upon finishing the soup; the unrelenting attitude toward food reveals his persistent character, or, in Molly's word, "pigheadedness." One's reaction to food, as this occurrence indicates, is a manifestation of one's personality, and Molly makes use of the soup incident to investigate Bloom's character, which she deciphers with reference to food.

Whatever one's eating practices signify, food establishes relations. As mentioned previously, Molly decodes Bloom by means of food, which in a subtle sense links them to one another. Similarly, Molly establishes a connection with Milly via food. To exemplify her daughter's unruliness, Molly remarks that Milly "wouldnt even teem the potatoes for you" (Joyce, 1986: 630). Another food incident also illustrates Milly's impudence: "theres no use going to the fair with the thing answering me like a fishwoman when I asked to go for a half a stone of potatoes" (631). Furthermore, the combination of bad food and Milly's impudence puts Molly out of temper: "I gave her 2 damn fine cracks across the ear for herself take that now for answering me like that . . . because how was it there was a weed in the tea or I didnt sleep the night before cheese I ate was it" (631-632). Milly's impudence, together with Molly's likely consumption of the bad cheese, enrages the mother and leads her to slap the daughter as a punishment. Their parting is also foreshadowed by food: "the last plumpudding too split in 2 halves see it comes out no matter what they say" (631). Somewhat superstitious, Molly sees the split plumpudding as a sign of her separation with Milly. Not only does food connect Molly with her family, her relationships with others are established by food as well. She recalls an old friend writing to ask for a recipe: "Mrs Dwenn now what possessed her to write from Canada after so many years to know the recipe I had for pisto

madrileno" (624). Despite the time and space that separate them, the dish renews their connection. But connection is made not merely between persons. Pisto madrileno, as Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman annotate, is "[a] dish of tomatoes and red peppers in Madrid (Spanish) style" (1988: 619). The request, made from Canada to Molly in Ireland for a Spanish recipe, subtly relates the three lands with one another. As food signifies the traditions of a region, Molly inadvertently acts as a transmitter of sociocultural heritage: she "embodies" and "transmits the traditions of the Mediterranean" through the dish (Nadel, 2007: 211). More importantly, food links Gibraltar with Ireland, and bridges Molly's past and her present. She remembers her life in Gibraltar: "the smell of the sea excited me of course the sardines and the bream in Catalan bay round the back of the rock they were fine all silver in the fishermens baskets" (Joyce, 1986: 629). Then her streams of consciousness turn to her present life with Bloom in 7 Eccles Street: "I dont like being alone in this big barracks of a place at night I suppose Ill have to put up with it I never brought a bit of salt in even when we moved in the confusion musical academy he was going to make on the first floor drawingroom with a brassplate or Blooms private hotel he suggested" (629-630). The excitement in the past contrasts with the lonesomeness at present, the fine silver fish with the forgotten salt and Bloom the odd fish. Gibraltar and Ireland, the past and the present, enter into relationships in a peculiar but profound way by means of food.

As a matter of fact, food is deeply embedded in Molly's memories. Margaret Visser comments that food recalls the memories associated with it (1992: 29). Seeing human bodies as "assemblages" that connect "bits of past and present practice," Probyn argues that the tongue "may bring back fond memories" or "cause us to recoil in disgust" (2000: 17-18). In Molly's case, food evokes her streams of reminiscences, playing a central part in her recollections of the past. She remembers receiving a postcard from Hester Stanhope, dominating which is the mention of their food sharing: "will always think of the lovely teas we had together



scrumptious currant scones and raspberry wafers I adore" (Joyce, 1986: 621-622). This recollection brings Molly to remembrance of things past, or her happy days with Hester in Gibraltar: "I made the scones of course I had everything all to myself then a girl Hester we used to compare our hair . . . we were like cousins what age was I then the night of the storm I slept in her bed she had her arms round me then we were fighting in the morning with the pillow what fun" (622). Observably, food constitutes Molly's Gibraltar memories to a considerable extent, as she remembers the soldiers: "the unfortunate poor devils of soldiers walking about with messtins smelling the place" (623); or as she recalls Captain Grove, her father's friend: "drunken old devil with his grog on the windowsill catch him leaving any of it" (623). The soldiers are associated with "messtins" and the Captain with "grog" in Molly's mind. In actual fact, the "Penelope" episode begins with the mention of food and the memories of it. Molly's mistaken complaint of Bloom's request for breakfast in bed famously initiates the long interior monologue: "Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting for that old faggot Mrs Riordan" (608), a woman with "too much old chat in her about politics and earthquakes and the end of the world" (608). This famous beginning not only demonstrates in Molly's monologue the import of food, which evokes memories of days gone by and correlates her past with the present; that Molly's consciousness streams from the mention of food to the comment upon Mrs. Riordan's involvement in politics and religion also insinuates the close connection between food and sociocultural activities.

### III. Food and Social Practice

Alienation from other Dubliners seems to characterize

Leopold Bloom, as critics commonly observe; nevertheless, the Blooms do partake in the communal life of Dublin, as illustrated by their participation in a variety of feasting events: dinners, parties, and picnics. All these events could be regarded as forms of dining out, which “brings the individual—figuratively and literally—into the public arena and exposes him or her to the scrutinizing eye of the other” (Finkelstein, 1998: 214). More importantly, these events represent acts of commensality, which, Anna Meigs tells us, “corresponds to social communality” (1997: 103). One of the events Molly recalls is “the Glencree dinner” (Joyce, 1986: 617), an annual religious fund-raising dinner for charity (Gifford & Seidman, 1988: 161), whose participants include Lenehan, the parasite in “Two Gallants,” and the Lord Mayor Val Dillon. The delicious chicken impresses Molly: “I wished I could have picked every morsel of that chicken out of my fingers it was so tasty and browned and as tender as anything only for I didnt want to eat everything on my plate” (Joyce, 1986: 617). She is obliged to leave something on her plate to observe proper etiquette, especially when under the scrutinizing gaze of the public. Molly’s complaint notwithstanding, this anecdote shows that as contributors to the charity dinner, the Blooms take part in social and religious communality, being in direct contact with various members of the Dublin community. Molly also remembers “the choir party at the sugarloaf Mountain” at which Bloom “sprained his foot” (608) and another party held by the Comerfords: “the night coming home with Poldy after the Comerfords party oranges and lemonade to make you feel nice and watery” (620). Although the nature and details concerning these parties are not specified, it is clear that as husband and wife the Blooms always present themselves together so as to abide by the rules of social decorum, and that food plays a significant part in Molly’s recollections of such social events. Lupton has it that food serves to “strengthen group identity,” for sharing food “brings people into the same community,” making them “members of the same food culture” (1996: 25). Sharing food with other Dubliners, the Blooms *are* Dubliners, despite the

supposed alienation that results from their Jewish background.

In addition to the dinner and parties mentioned above, Boylan's treat of the fish supper also crosses Molly's mind: "the night he gave us the fish supper on account of winning over the boxing match of course it was for me he gave it" (Joyce, 1986: 639). This incident significantly reveals the crucial role food plays in celebrations: food brings forth pleasure and satisfaction, and hence is indispensable to celebratory events. Winning "a cool hundred quid" over the "Keogh-Bennett match" (261), Boylan shares his delight with the Blooms by treating them to fish supper. Yet there is more behind this treat. Counihan declares that "eating together is a sign of kinship, trust, friendship, and in some cultures, of sexual intimacy as well" (1999: 13). As the organizer of the concert tour in which Molly participates, Boylan wants to intensify the trust and friendship between them. But more importantly, their sexual intimacy grows as well: Molly admits that it was *for her* that Boylan gave the supper. In this respect, the celebration is twofold: of his winning over the boxing match, and of his seduction of Molly. The ambiguity of food can be detected here: food may establish relationships on the one hand (Molly and Boylan), but it may also violate relationships on the other (Molly and Bloom, Bloom and Boylan). While commensality brings the Blooms into the Dublin community, it also invites a third party into their wedlock.

A less formal form of commensality is the picnic. John Burnett considers the essence of the picnic to be "informality and freedom from conventional constraint"; he argues that the growing popularity of picnics in Victorian times resulted in part from a "reaction to the etiquette required of domestic dinner-parties" (2003: 32). By the same token, Julia Csergo sees the picnic as "an informal meal associated with relaxation, freedom, a pause and pleasure" (2003: 139), "a hedonistic pastime—a moment of shared pleasure centring on a meal eaten in a natural setting" (155). Visser, too, observes "[t]he impromptu aspect," "the informality," "[t]he general feeling of relief from normal constraints," and "a thrilling

reversal of normal rules” in picnics (1992: 151). So correlative with informality and pleasure is the picnic that it used to be associated with immorality in France, as Csergo informs us (2003: 151). In “Penelope,” Molly weighs the idea of having a picnic to add pleasure to her monotonous life: “or a picnic suppose we all gave 5/- each and or let him pay it and invite some other woman for him who Mrs Fleming and drove out to the furry glen or the strawberry beds” (Joyce, 1986: 629). The Furry Glen and the Strawberry Beds are two popular scenic recreation areas frequented by Dubliners (Gifford & Seidman, 1988: 624). As Molly’s plan goes, Boylan can pay for the expenses, and old Mrs. Fleming, a charwoman who helps Molly with household chores, can go together to keep Bloom company. The arrangements for the picnic are by no means haphazard or inconsequential, but rather sexually suggestive. Molly had just consummated her affair with Boylan the previous evening. While the liaison could take place only in a private arena, the picnic allows them to take pleasure in each other’s company in the open. Interestingly, she permits herself to make merry in the picnic, but tries to keep Bloom away from pleasure by pairing him with Mrs. Fleming—as she replaced the youthful maidservant Mary Driscoll with the old charwoman to isolate Bloom from the possibility of seduction. In spite of its deep-rooted association with pleasure, the picnic, Molly complains, is not entirely free from constraints: “for example at that picnic all stayed up you cant do a blessed thing in them in a crowd run or jump out of the way” (Joyce, 1986: 622). Molly’s complaint suggests that corsets are imposed upon women to restrain their bodies and thus to preclude the possibility of debauchery during picnics. In fact, another picnic was mentioned in an earlier episode, “Calypso,” the episode in which the Blooms make their debut. Milly writes to Bloom: “We are going to lough Owel on Monday with a few friends to make a scrap picnic. . . . There is a young student comes here some evenings named Bannon . . .” (54). With the mention of the picnic and the remark of the young student Bannon, it is natural that Bloom should be anxious, for it is too

easy to envision Milly's impending loss of virginity: "Will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can't move. Girl's sweet light lips" (55).

The social implications of dietary practices are consequential not solely in different forms of commensality. Saturated with sociocultural significations, food itself is a gift, a commodity, or an object for exchange. Food exchanges have been practiced long enough to "develop and express bonds of solidarity and alliance . . . parallel to exchanges of sociality" (Meigs, 1997: 103). But food as a gift or an object of exchange is more than an expression of social communality. Marcel Mauss thus interprets a gift: "To give something is to give a part of oneself . . . a part of one's nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence" (as cited in Meigs, 1997: 102). The gift, in short, corresponds to the giver. In "Penelope," Molly recollects a Christmas parcel from the grocer Larry O'Rourke: "the old mangy parcel he sent at Xmas a cottage cake and a bottle of hogwash he tried to palm off as claret that he couldnt get anyone to drink" (Joyce, 1986: 618). Sending an "old mangy parcel" as a gift, Larry represents an old mangy grocer who sells low quality products—e.g., stout "as flat as a pancake"—and for that reason "makes his money easy" (618). Receiving from Larry a shabby parcel, Molly receives a part of Larry's stingy spiritual essence; she is hence discontent with the gift. Another gift obviously pleases Molly better: the gift from Boylan for the delay of the rendezvous. As Molly recounts: "like the messengerboy today I thought it was a putoff first him sending the port and the peaches first and I was just beginning to yawn with nerves thinking he was trying to make a fool of me when I knew his tattarrattat at the door he must have been a bit late" (615). To apologize for his lack of punctuality, to tease Molly, to heat up the rendezvous, or as a foreplay preceding their sexual intercourse, Boylan sends a gift before he shows up, as most of the gallants would do. Erotically described in "The Wandering Rocks" (187), Boylan's purchase of the fruit bespeaks the lecherous nature of the purchaser and is therefore appropriate for the occasion: he consumes the peachy Molly first, and then

enjoys the port with her. But there is more behind this sending of gifts. Gift exchange, according to Jacques Derrida, signifies the conclusion of a pact in ancient Greece: “Polycrates had concluded a *xenia* (pact) with Amasis and . . . they sent each other presents” (2000: 29). Boylan’s gift, in this light, suggests the near completion of his sexual contract with Molly, who, in accepting the present, acquiesces in the contract; she then offers up her body as the gift in exchange, and thus concludes the pact between them.

#### IV. Food and Gender

Whatever the significance of the food, and whatever social practices are encoded in food-related activities, dietary behavior is tightly bound up with gender. Anthropologists and sociologists assert the inseparable connection between gender and eating. Charles and Kerr, for example, state that gender determines one’s dietary practices (1988: 1). Tobias Döring, Markus Heide, and Susanne Mühleisen contend that “cooking and eating may define group and gender identities” (2003: 2). Pat Caplan regards “food as a marker of difference,” arguing that gender “‘make[s] a difference’ to eating patterns” (1997: 9). Men and women, indeed, are expected to perform different roles to fulfill sociocultural expectations, which, as a general rule, weigh more upon women than men. This partly explains why food occupies Molly’s mind more often than it does Bloom’s.

Women, undeniably, have long been responsible for food preparation, while men have acted as food consumers. Joan Jacobs Brumberg clarifies the import of food for women in the Victorian bourgeois family: “Offering attractive and ample food was the particular responsibility and pleasure of middle-class wives and mothers,” who took food as an expression of love (2000: 136). It is noteworthy that food preparation was both a woman’s “responsibility” and “pleasure.” In other words, a woman was expected to express love to her family by means of food—and to

delight in doing so. Brumberg's analysis may focus on the Victorian bourgeois family, but it is applicable to women of all times and classes. Gerty MacDowell may serve as an instructive example. The stereotypical exemplar of Irish womanhood in "Nausicaa," Gerty intends to "care for [her future husband] with creature comforts" (Joyce, 1986: 289) by serving him delicious food, which contributes to the "feeling of hominess" that "a mere man like[s]" (289). The preparation of meals was deemed so fundamental that a woman's failure to perform this duty may generate violence from the man (Ellis, 1985: 164), as Ada Farrington in "Counterparts" fails to leave her husband's dinner at home before she goes to the church, leading—indirectly at least—to the son's abuse by the father (Joyce, 1996: 97-98). More often than not, the food preparer is synonymous with the feeder. Nick Fiddes points out that women have traditionally limited their own food intake to better provide for the men and children, especially in times of want (1991: 158). The association of women with food preparation and provisioning is so deep-rooted that even Molly fits the role, however unconventional or even transgressive she may be in many other respects. Surely, it is Bloom who prepares breakfast on the morning of 16 June 1904, and Molly does not spell out in her interior monologue whether or not she cooks that day, yet Molly seems to be primarily responsible for food preparation in the household, as the many recollections concerning cooking in the episode demonstrate. In fact, Mennell et al. define cooking as the preparation of "a main meal, typically a 'cooked dinner,'" which is held to be women's responsibility (1992: 101). According to this definition, Bloom may be the preparer of breakfast (though it remains a textual mystery as to how often he performs the task and how long he has been performing it), yet it is Molly who takes charge of cooking, which she resents immensely. Dismissing the maid Mary Driscoll, Molly reflects: "better do without them altogether do out the rooms myself quicker only for the damn cooking and throwing out the dirt" (Joyce, 1986: 609). Among the exhausting housework affairs, cooking seems to be one of the most

detestable to Molly. This offers an explanation as to why she complains about, and resists, Bloom's request for breakfast: "Im to be slooching around down in the kitchen to get his lordship his breakfast while hes rolled up like a mummy will I indeed did you ever see me running Id just like to see myself at it show them attention and they treat you like dirt" (640). Molly has a good reason to complain. Apart from being an expression of love, food, for many Victorian and Edwardian women, was inseparable from "work and drudgery" (Brumberg, 2000: 175). "Food preparation," Brumberg declares, "was a time-consuming and exhausting job in the middle-class household, where families no longer ate from a common soup pot" (175). If she does prepare breakfast for Bloom from the next day on, Molly is obliged to cook one more meal—or to drudge at one more tiring job—each day. In spite of her complaint, Molly admits nevertheless that women are responsible for cooking, as well as clothing, child-rearing, and menstruation: "whoever suggested that business [menstruation] for women what between clothes and cooking and children" (Joyce, 1986: 633). And yet, to seduce and impress Stephen, she considers serving him breakfast: "I could have brought him in his breakfast in bed with a bit of toast . . . I could do the criada . . . Im his wife" (641). Molly's associations turn from serving food, to being a maid, and then a wife. In other words, she seems to endorse the notion that women are obligated to serve men with food—or at least that the duty of cooking falls upon the women.

If women are assigned the role of food service, and men the part of food consumption, in the Dublin community, Bloom's preparation of breakfast undoubtedly speaks for his feminization. Rhian Ellis's survey shows that many men regard performing household tasks "as an affront to their masculinity and their authority in the household" (1985: 169). This aptly explains why men stay away from the kitchen—traditionally regarded as feminine territory. It is uncertain whether Bloom helps with other household chores or not, but he enters the kitchen and prepares breakfast for Molly, himself, and the cat on 16 June 1904. Not



only does he take no offense at food preparation, but he delights in it and prides himself on his expertise: "he thinks he knows a great lot about a womans dress and cooking mathering everything" (Joyce, 1986: 619). In spite of her critical attitude toward his presumed expertise and her complaint about his lack of masculinity ("he was too beautiful for a man" [612]; "I wish hed even smoke a pipe like father to get the smell of a man" [619]), Molly is fond of Bloom carrying breakfast upstairs: "I love to hear him falling up the stairs of a morning with the cups rattling on the tray and then play with the cat" (628). Bloom's feminization actually amuses Molly, who enjoys his serving of breakfast. Although she cooks the main meals in the household, the traditional gender roles are reversed in the Bloom family in the morning. When Bloom asks for breakfast, this reversal of gender roles returns to normal, which dissatisfies Molly: "he starts giving us his orders for eggs and tea and Findon haddy and hot buttered toast I suppose well have him sitting up like the king of the country" (628). Molly associates the Bloom who demands breakfast with a king giving orders, or rather a tyrant exploiting his subject: "then tea and toast for him buttered on both sides and newlaid eggs I suppose Im nothing any more . . . man man tyrant as ever" (635). Preparing Bloom's breakfast reduces her to "nothing," whereas the one making the request is exalted to the rank of a king. Molly's complaint reveals the hierarchical relationship between server and consumer—she dislikes being at the bottom of the hierarchy all the time. Notorious for her inconsistency, Molly is unexceptionally contradictory in terms of food preparation. She resents cooking, but admits that it is a woman's duty. Nevertheless, she complains about it when the need arises to prepare an additional meal, and sees the person who issues the command as a tyrant. This contradiction may be derived from the fact that she has internalized dominant ideology in spite of her transgression and unconventionality. Or conversely, we may argue that dominant ideology is so powerful and influential that even a woman as transgressive as Molly fails to resist entirely its impact and

domination. Her contradictions notwithstanding, Molly's monologue makes it clear that responsibility for cooking falls on women—and that the Blooms deviate from tradition, at least in the morning.

But women are not simply responsible for food preparation: they may serve as food themselves. Women's bodies, in the processes of pregnancy and lactation, provide nutrients to the fetus and the baby. As Caroline Walker Bynum points out, "Woman was food because breast milk was the human being's first nourishment—the one food essential for survival" (1997: 150). On account of this, "[m]any assumptions in the theology and culture of Europe identified woman with flesh and with food" (1988: 275). Echoing Bynum, Brumberg argues that the bodies of women functioned as a source of food; examples include "mystical women [who] exuded oil from their fingertips, lactated even though they were virgins, and cured disease with the touch of their saliva" (2000: 47). Bynum's and Brumberg's discussions center on medieval women, but the association of women with food has persisted to even this day. In *Ulysses*, Molly's body is often associated with food. Tucker remarks that Molly acts as "both food and word" for the novel (1984: 145). Indeed, Molly often comments upon women's bodies in terms of foodstuffs, and she likens her thighs to a peach: "I bet he never saw a better pair of thighs than that look how white they are . . . how soft like a peach" (Joyce, 1986: 633). Literally, her body *is* food, as she breastfeeds both Milly and Bloom: "I had a great breast of milk with Milly enough for two . . . he said it was sweeter and thicker than cows then he wanted to milk me into the tea" (620-621). Milkwoman incarnated, Molly nourishes her daughter and her man. But unlike the milkwoman in "Telemachus," she offers more than milk: "I made him spend once with my foot . . . we had that rum in the house to mull . . . when he asked to take off my stockings lying on the hearthrug" (614). Molly drinks the mulled rum with Bloom, excites him with her body, and has him consume her. In fact, Molly has been "food" to Bloom long before their marriage. To spend more quality time with her, Bloom implores

her to make an excuse for her lateness returning home: "father waiting all the time for his dinner he told me to say I left my purse in the butchers and had to go back for it what a Deceiver" (615). Bloom turns into the "butcher" who deprives another man of his food (or rather food preparer) and consumes the meat himself. The association of women with food is so deep-rooted that Molly has surely internalized it. For her, to attract a man is to become his feast. Unsurprisingly, she writes her scenario this way when she considers giving Bloom one more chance and being reunited with him: "I might go over to the markets to see all the vegetables and cabbages and tomatoes and carrots and all kinds of splendid fruits . . . then Ill throw him up his eggs and tea . . . Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him" (641). Food plays the most significant part in Molly's scenario of reunion with Bloom. She plans to go food shopping, serve him with breakfast, *and* offer up her carnality for his consumption to pronounce her affirmation of him as her partner.

In addition to Bloom, Molly acts as food to other male Dubliners oftentimes. She recalls the Glenree dinner: "that sponger [Lenehan] he was making free with me after the Glenree dinner coming back that long joults over the featherbed mountain after the lord Mayor looking at me with his dirty eyes" (Joyce, 1986: 617). Lenehan and the Lord Mayor have a good feed of chicken, nuts, and other foodstuffs at the fund-raising dinner, and then feast on Molly, who serves in a sense as their dessert. Boylan banquets on Molly in a similar context: "when I was in the D B C with Poldy laughing and trying to listen I was waggling my foot we both ordered 2 teas and plain bread and butter I saw him looking . . . and I saw his eyes on my feet going out through the turning door he was looking when I looked back" (613). When Molly consumes tea, bread, and butter, Boylan devours her feet with his eyes, as the Lord Mayor fastens his gaze on her at the Glenree dinner. But she takes delight in being food to Boylan, as she does to Bloom: she intends to enlarge her breasts to have

Boylan suck them. Molly relates her idea: “yes I think he made them a bit firmer sucking them like that so long he made me thirsty . . . Ill get him to keep that up and Ill take those eggs beaten up with marsala fatten them out for him” (620). She plans to feed on “eggs beaten up with marsala” to “fatten” her breasts, so as to make her body more appetizing to please and seduce the adulterer. Her body, as mentioned earlier, functions as a gift that concludes the pact of adultery. Receiving Boylan’s present of fruit and wine, she gives her body in exchange, and thus becomes a dainty repast for the adulterer’s consumption. Nevertheless, women as food could suggest that they are prey to be hunted and injured. Molly recalls Boylan biting her nipples: “theres the mark of his teeth still where he tried to bite the nipple I had to scream out arent they fearful trying to hurt you” (620). However she delights in being consumable to Boylan, Molly dislikes being hurt, which probably leads to her final renouncement of the brutal Boylan. Austin Briggs comments that to be woman in the masochistic male fantasy of the “Circe” episode is to serve breakfast, or be served up like “a dish on the menu” (2007: 201). Throughout “Penelope,” or more correctly the entire Joycean text, women have played the parts of food server *and* food item—whether Molly, the milkwoman in “Telemachus,” the shop assistant in “The Wandering Rocks,” or the barmaids in “Sirens.”

Transgressive as she is, Molly does not simply reiterate the association of women with food, though; more importantly, she reverses the gender roles of men as consumer and women as the consumed. She reflects that men take pleasure from women’s body, yet she takes pleasure from Boylan’s: “like some kind of a big infant I had at me they want everything in their mouth all the pleasure those men get out of a woman I can feel his mouth . . . I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I feel all fire inside me” (Joyce, 1986: 621). Like a nursing mother, Molly nourishes the big infant Boylan with her body, but Boylan is also food—or fuel—to Molly, setting her afire and giving her “what [she] badly wanted to put some heart up into

[her]" (624). Molly, indeed, often relates men to food. She associates the penis with the sausage: "I tried to draw a picture of it before I tore it up like a sausage or something" (620). The banana, too, is taken as a substitute for the penis: "he wanted to touch mine with his for a moment but I wouldnt let him . . . after I tried with the Banana" (625-626). Implicitly at least, food takes the place of sexual intercourse on account of her fear of impregnation by Mulvey. Like the aforementioned men who consume food and women simultaneously, Molly also feasts on food and men at the same time: "the man with the curly hair in the Lucan dairy thats so polite I think I saw his face before somewhere I noticed him when I was tasting the butter so I took my time Bartell dArcy too . . . when he commenced kissing me on the choir stairs . . . he was pretty hot for all his tinny voice" (614). Molly tastes both butter and the curly-haired man in the dairy, and this repast reminds her of Bartell D'Arcy's "hot" kiss, another repast for her. Molly admits that she loves kisses ("theres nothing like a kiss long and hot down to your soul almost paralyses you" [610]), but what she really desires is perhaps the probability of *tasting* the kisser: "he put his tongue in my mouth his mouth was sweetlike young" (625). Tasting the "sweetlike young" mouth, Molly is not the passive recipient of Mulvey's kiss, but rather the agent who actively consumes the man as food, or at least a counterpart to the man that consumes. As Boylan sucks her nipples and Bloom drinks her milk, Molly intends to do something similar: "I often felt I wanted to kiss him all over also his lovely young cock there so simple I wouldnt mind taking him in my mouth if nobody was looking as if it was asking you to suck it so clean and white . . . even if some of it went down what its only like gruel or the dew theres no danger" (638). She identifies the statue with a handsome young poet, i.e., Stephen Dedalus. In other words, she longs to suck a handsome man's penis and drink his semen, and in so doing transgresses social norms and reverses traditional gender roles by acting as the consumer and seeing men as food.

## V. Food, Sexuality, and the Body

Whether women or men serve as food, food and sexuality are closely interrelated. Robert Gibb asserts that food for Bloom acts as a surrogate for sex and Molly (1989: 268-273). This assertion seems to be applicable to Molly to a certain degree, as she “tried with the Banana” (Joyce, 1986: 626) instead of the penis. Tucker argues that Molly “almost always” recalls food “in connection with some male encounter or flirtation”; her “association of food and eating with interesting men seems to suggest that the taking in of food is associated with the taking in of love and of life” (1984: 147). For Molly, undeniably, food nourishes her being as sex enriches her life; the two are inseparable and indispensable. Jaye Berman Montresor observes “many instances throughout *Ulysses* where food and a woman’s body merge in a single image,” declaring that “[t]he connection between sexual and culinary consumption is longstanding in western culture” (1995: 200). Indeed, food activities have long been associated with sexual practices in Western culture, as the preparation and consumption of food could be “highly sensual and sometimes sexual” (Probyn, 2000: 59). Alimentary appetite could thus correspond to sexual appetite. Whether alimentary or sexual, women’s appetites have been restricted for centuries. In her study of fasting Victorian girls, Brumberg points out that appetite functions as “a barometer of sexuality”: “Throughout the medical and advice literature an active appetite or an appetite for particular foods was used as a trope for dangerous sexuality” (2000: 172). For this reason, women had to be extremely cautious “about its expression and its control” (172), for “food was an analogue of the self” and food choice “a form of self-expression,” and the displays of appetite indicated the want of self-restraint and the lack of self-control (175). Correlative with sexuality, in short, women’s culinary appetites are regulated and restricted. A woman with a good appetite is therefore considered sexually active, unfeminine, and transgressive. This properly

explains Gerty's hesitancy to consume food: she asserts her dislike for "the eating part" (Joyce, 1986: 289) in spite of her expertise in cooking.

Numerous instances in "Penelope," including several mentioned previously, demonstrate the intimate connection between food and sexuality. Molly indeed associates food and eating with "the taking in of love and of life," as Tucker argues (1984: 147)—only more explicitly. Blackberry juice, for example, is directly linked with sexuality: "they always want to see a stain on the bed to know you're a virgin . . . a daub of red ink would do or blackberry juice no that's too purply" (Joyce, 1986: 633). Blackberry juice may serve to fake virginity—though on second thought she rejects the idea owing to the wrong color. If food could be utilized by a woman to testify her innocence, it could surely be taken to indicate her guilt. Molly dismisses Mary Driscoll by reason of food matters: "it was all his fault of course ruining servants then proposing that she could eat at our table on Christmas day if you please O no thank you not in my house stealing my potatoes and the oysters 2/6 per doz going out to see her aunt if you please common robbery so it was . . . her aunt was very fond of oysters" (609). Yet what really infuriates Molly is not Bloom's proposal of commensality on Christmas day or the maidservant's alleged stealing of foodstuffs for her aunt, but rather Bloom's supposed affair with the maid: "I was sure he had something on with that one" (609). Oysters are believed to be aphrodisiac. Mary's pilfering of oysters does not simply signify her theft of food from the mistress, but rather her theft of her man—or sexuality—and "that was enough for [Molly] a little bit too much" (609): she could not bear to have the maid steal her oysters, let alone her man—a kind of "food" equally indispensable to her. Food and sexuality are so closely related that Bloom refuses food when Molly refuses sexual intimacy: "when I wouldnt let him lick me in Holles street one night man man tyrant as ever for the one thing . . . wouldnt eat any breakfast" (635). Molly repulses Bloom's licking, i.e., his sexual consumption, resulting in his rejection of actual foodstuffs. To have him have his

breakfast, she has to become his food first: “I thought I stood out enough for one time and let him” (635). Bloom’s rejection of breakfast, paradoxically, enables him to consume what he desires—albeit to Molly’s displeasure.

Despite the unpleasantness in the aforementioned recollections, food usually correlates to sexuality more pleasingly in Molly’s memories, especially when she recalls men: “Mulveys was the first when I was in bed that morning and Mrs Rubio brought it in with the coffee . . . I had it inside my petticoat bodice all day” (Joyce, 1986: 624-625). Mulvey’s letter reaches her with the coffee, and she has the letter inside her bodice, i.e., close against her breasts. Coffee, as Brumberg informs us, is among the list of foods Victorian girls were cautioned against because it stimulated their sensual rather than moral nature (2000: 172). The juxtaposition of coffee, letter, and bodice foreshadows the sensuality of their outing: “I liked him like that moaning I made him blush a little when I got over him that way when I unbuttoned him and took his out and drew back the skin” (Joyce, 1986: 626). After she seduces Mulvey, Molly blows a bag and explodes it: “I was a bit wild after when I blew out the old bag the biscuits were in from Benady Bros and exploded it Lord what a bang . . . I wanted to fire his pistol” (626). In spite of her refusal to be penetrated for fear of being impregnated, Molly has Mulvey ejaculate while she herself experiences the kind of sexual arousal similar to orgasm: she does, in a sense, “blow” the man and have his “pistol” fired. What is noteworthy in this sensual account, however, is the bag she blows, which used to fill with biscuits. Very likely, she consumes the biscuits before feasting on the man, taking pleasure in both. Food is associated with sexuality again: alimentary and sexual imagery merges in her consciousness. Molly’s recollection of Boylan also abounds in food: “he smelt of some kind of drink not whisky or stout . . . Id like to sip those richlooking green and yellow expensive drinks” (610-611). Boylan’s smell reminds Molly of expensive drinks, which she would like to taste. Consciously or not, Molly likens the man to a drink, both of which she desires a sip.



And she does taste both: "we took the port and potted meat it had a fine salty taste yes because I felt lovely and tired myself . . . it like iron or some kind of a thick crowbar standing all the time he must have eaten oysters I think a few dozen . . . I never in all my life felt anyone had one the size of that to make you feel full up he must have eaten a whole sheep after" (611). Once again, food consumption is linked with sexual consumption: Molly and Boylan gratify their culinary craving after satisfying their carnal appetite. So virile is Boylan that Molly supposes he must have eaten the aphrodisiac oysters, and so huge is his size that he, appetitive as a beast, must be able to eat a whole sheep afterwards.

It is noteworthy that Molly and Boylan gorge on Plumtree's potted meat after their sexual intercourse. Many critics have explored the significance of the potted meat in the Joycean text. Tucker, for example, regards the meat as "the emblem of Boylan's potency" (1984: 137). By the same token, Mark Osteen argues that the potted meat "functions as a metonymy of Boylan throughout the novel" (1995: 119). Meat has been long associated with sexuality in Western culture. Julia Twigg pronounces that meat has been "[r]einforced by the language of carnality—of the flesh and fleshlyness," hence highly "associated with the stimulation of lust" (1985: 24). Besides the potted meat, Molly's recollection of the soldier in Gibraltar sufficiently demonstrates this affiliation: "that disgusting Cameron highlander behind the meat market . . . when I was passing pretending he was pissing standing out for me to see it . . . always trying to show it to you" (Joyce, 1986: 620). The soldier shows his penis to Molly "behind the meat market"—an incident connecting animal flesh with carnal appetite. The association of meat with carnality results—partly at least—in the polarization of foodstuffs. As Bynum asserts, "The history of Western cooking . . . suggests that 'heavy' food, especially meat, was seen as more appropriate for men and lighter food for women, in part because meat had, for a thousand years, been seen as an aggravator of lust" (1988: 191). In fact, Victorian and Edwardian women, particularly adolescent girls, were restricted in their meat

consumption owing to its common association with sexuality. Brumberg makes it clear: “No food (other than alcohol) caused Victorian women and girls greater moral anxiety than meat. The flesh of animals was considered a heat-producing food that stimulated production of blood and fat as well as passion. Doctors and patients shared a common conception of meat as a food that stimulated sexual development and activity” (2000: 173). Molly’s robust appetite and her consumption of meat (as well as alcohol) suggest her carnality—or her deviation from the traditional feminine ideal of asexuality.

In spite of her violation of convention, Molly, as mentioned earlier, does not shake off sociocultural constraints completely. She thinks about the need to limit her food intake: “my belly is a bit too big Ill have to knock off the stout at dinner” (Joyce, 1986: 618). Molly considers giving up the stout at dinner to conform to the ideal size of feminine beauty. Numerous critics have investigated societal control over the female body. In her study of anorexia nervosa, Brumberg examines “the distinctive social and cultural contexts in which young women have chosen to refuse food” (2000: 7). Susan Bordo delves into women’s obsession with their “unbearable weight” in Western culture, seeing the body as “a *practical*, direct locus of social control” (2003: 165; emphasis in original). This “social control” manifests itself to a certain degree in Molly, who reflects on food limitation to obtain a thinner body, but then dismisses the idea: “am I getting too fond of it . . . the thin ones are not so much the fashion now” (Joyce, 1986: 618). Molly’s notorious inconsistency is evident here: if the thin body is out of fashion, she will not consider losing weight or using “antifat” methods and commodities such as the “breathing exercises” and “those kidfitting corsets . . . obviating that unsightly broad appearance across the lower back to reduce flesh” (618). This contradiction notwithstanding, Molly commits a breach of standardized feminine ideal: neither slender nor nonappetitive, she is too fond of food to sacrifice alimentary pleasure and conform to social norms—judging from her liking for food and her good

appetite on 16 June 1904. Convincing herself that a thin body is no longer fashionable, Molly unknowingly reveals her preference for food over a slender body, despite her internalization of dominant ideology to some extent. She internalizes yet deconstructs the ideal of femininity, in a manner of speaking. Ambiguously, food consumption as a means of social control over the body could serve as a weapon for those being dominated: "take that Mrs Maybrick that poisoned her husband for what I wonder in love with some other man . . . white Arsenic she put in his tea off flypaper wasnt it" (613). As the one responsible for preparing food in the house, Mrs. Maybrick is able to poison her husband's food in order to free herself to search for love. Food, paradoxically, becomes the means of liberating herself from the padlock of wedlock and obtaining independence from her husband—though it results in her condemnation.

Whether as a means of social control, or as a weapon for obtaining freedom, food, after entering the human body and being digested, would certainly end up as bodily waste. For many bourgeois women, however, this could be a problem. As Brumberg declares:

The naturalness of eating was especially problematic among upwardly mobile, middle-class women who were preoccupied with establishing their own good taste. Food and eating presented obvious difficulties because they implied digestion and defecation, as well as sexuality. . . . Concern about these bodily indelicacies explains why constipation was incorporated into the ideal of Victorian femininity. . . . Some women "boasted that the calls of Nature upon them averaged but one or two demands per week." (2000: 175)

This fear of bodily functions is illustrated by Gerty in "Nausicaa." The mention of the bottom—suggestive of sexuality and defecation—embarrasses her (Joyce, 1986: 290), and the lavatory is euphemistically referred to as "that place," the act of relieving oneself as "[going] there for a certain purpose" (291). Unlike Gerty,

Molly feels comfortable with bodily indelicacies: “I like letting myself down after in the hole as far as I can squeeze . . . I always used to know by Millys when she was a child whether she had worms or not” (634). The act of defecation does not disconcert her; nor does excrement itself disturb her. Rather, she seems content with and enjoys the moment of defecation, and sees excrement as an indicator of health. Not only does she feel at ease with mentions of bodily functions, she tends to link food activities and bodily indelicacies. Molly relates her waste material to food: “if not I suppose Ill only have to wash in my piss like beeftea or chickensoup with some of that opoponax and violet” (618). Her urine, with which she might wash her face if Bloom fails to bring her lotion, is likened to beeftea and chickensoup. In making the comparison, Molly connects the upper end of the alimentary canal with the lower end. The thought of food actually accompanies her to the chamber pot: “I bet he never saw a better pair of thighs than that look how white they are . . . how soft like a peach easy . . . O Lord what a row youre making like the jersey lily easy easy O how the waters come down at Lahore” (633). She compares her thighs to a soft and juicy peach and lets her water spill in the pot. Menstruation, moreover, is associated with food as well: “this bloody pest of a thing . . . were such a mixture of plum and apple” (642). What is discharged from the lower body pole, Molly seems to suggest, must come from what enters the mouth; the two are closely related.

For Molly, food consumption usually leads to bodily functions—a phenomenon natural enough yet considered indelicate by many. She recalls the aftermath of the Comerfords’ party: “the night coming home with Poldy after the Comerfords party oranges and lemonade to make you feel nice and watery I went into 1 of them it was so biting cold I couldnt keep it” (Joyce, 1986: 620). The oranges and lemonade she consumes have filled her bladder, inducing a need to relieve herself. The meal she consumes after sexual intercourse with Boylan ends with a bodily phenomenon, too: “that was a relief wherever you be let your wind go free who

knows if that pork chop I took with my cup of tea after was quite good with the heat" (628). The pork chop gives Molly gas and causes her to break wind. Once again, food connects the upper end of the alimentary canal, the mouth, with the lower end, the anus. It is noteworthy that food is not the only factor that contributes to the expulsion of intestinal gas: "Ill change that lace on my black dress to show off my bubs and Ill yes by God Ill get that big fan mended make them burst with envy my hole is itching me always when I think of him I feel I want to I feel some wind in me better go easy" (628). Molly wants to "show off" her breasts to attract Boylan, thinking of whom gives her an itchy vulva and intestinal gas. As mentioned previously, Molly tends to associate food with sexuality, which is linked with bodily indelicacies here. In other words, food, sexuality, and bodily functions are closely related in Molly's mind. When she decides to give Bloom one more chance for reunion, the three elements mix together in her scenario:

Ill just give him one more chance . . . I might go over to the markets to see all the vegetables and cabbages and tomatoes and carrots and all kinds of splendid fruits all coming in lovely and fresh . . . Id love a big juicy pear now to melt in your mouth like when I used to be in the longing way then Ill throw him up his eggs and tea . . . I suppose hed like my nice cream too . . . Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him . . . if he wants to kiss my bottom Ill drag open my drawers and bulge it right out in his face as large as life he can stick his tongue 7 miles up my hole as hes there my brown part . . . Ill let him do it off on me behind . . . Ill tighten my bottom well and let out a few smutty words smellrump or lick my shit or the first mad thing comes into my head . . . O but I was forgetting this bloody pest of a thing. (641-642)

To give Bloom one more chance is to go food shopping, prepare him breakfast, and feed him with her own carnality. Bodily waste, grotesquely, emerges as verbal food in the foreplay or seduction, while the "bloody pest" of menstruation ends the scenario. Food

consumption, sexual desire, and bodily functions, Molly seems to imply, are *all* fundamental and essential aspects of humanity, inseparable from one another—thus their coexistence in the important scenario of reunion. “God knows its not much doesnt everybody only they hide it” (642), Molly asserts. Her words highlight the long-term repression of sexuality in Western culture: repressed because of its association with the debased animal nature of humanity. Although she refers to sexuality in particular, Molly likely also has in mind dietary consumption and bodily functions: “everybody” takes part in these natural and indispensable daily practices, yet “hides” them owing to their supposed indelicacy and disreputable nature—for women especially, as sociocultural constraints weigh more heavily on women than men in a patriarchal society.

## VI. Conclusion: Molly and Food

“Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food,” claim Carole M. Counihan and Penny van Esterik in their introduction to *Food and Culture* (1997: 1). Observably, Molly’s streams of consciousness in “Penelope” are filled with food and eating, which make up a major and crucial part of the person of “Molly Bloom” and present a detailed and realistic picture of her life. Food acts as a sign of the household’s financial condition and entitlement rights to food. Moreover, it conveys to Molly private coded messages concerning Bloom, and enables her to make connections with her family, her past, and the Dublin community. In taking part in food-related activities, such as different forms of commensality and gift exchange, Molly—as well as Bloom—participates in the communal life of Dublin. Dietary practices thus constitute the identity of Molly Bloom. She eats; therefore she is. Unlike Gerty the “specimen of winsome Irish girlhood” (Joyce, 1986: 286), who delights in preparing food but dislikes “the eating part . . . that made her shy” (289), Molly loathes cooking but

enjoys dietary consumption and savors the pleasures that accompany food and sexuality—particularly given the intimate associations between the two. Not entirely free of sociocultural constraints, Molly nevertheless reverses the traditional gender roles of man as consumer and woman as the consumed, and suggests the naturalness and inevitability of bodily functions engendered by food consumption.

It is important that Molly decides to be reunited with Bloom and cook breakfast for him. She also considers having the fairy cake, which reminds her of the seedcake she mouthfed Bloom before her acceptance of his proposal: "those fairy cakes in Liptons I love the smell of a rich big shop at 7 1/2d a lb or the other ones with the cherries in them and the pinky sugar 11d a couple of lbs of those . . . I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth" (Joyce, 1986: 642-643). This seedcake/seduction/proposal scene precludes the Blooms' matrimonial life: Molly mouthfeeds Bloom with the seedcake, he sows his "seeds" in her womb, and Milly is conceived as a consequence. Recalling this scene at the end of her interior monologue, Molly seems to imply the positive aspect of their future, testified to by her decision to prepare Bloom his breakfast with a couple of eggs. Eggs, as Tucker argues, "blend fertility with nurturing" (1984: 148), hence symbolic of reproductive capacity and new life. As the first meal of the day, breakfast is similarly suggestive: "breakfast, the breaking of the fast, signifies in ritual terms the end of a period of sterility" (146)—that is to say, the beginning of a new day or new life. However, as Molly is notorious for her inconsistency, it remains a textual puzzle as to whether she would cook the breakfast the next day. Briggs, for example, points out the uncertainties surrounding the Blooms' breakfast on 17 June 1904 (2007: 195-209). Whether or not Molly will cook the next morning may remain a Joycean textual puzzle never to be resolved, but what is equally noteworthy is the change on her food shopping list—or more precisely, the change of her food preference.

Interestingly and curiously, Molly's food obsessions in

“Penelope” turn from meat to fish, and finally to vegetables and fruit. Among the eight unpunctuated sprawling sentences in the episode, meat plays the major part in the first few sentences, especially when she recalls Boylan. But as the monologue progresses, Molly’s thoughts gradually turn from meat to fish. When she considers going food shopping the next day in the sixth sentence, fish preoccupies her mind:

that lovely fresh place I bought I think Ill get a bit of fish tomorrow or today is it Friday yes I will with some blancmange with black currant jam like long ago . . . only for the bones I hate those eels cod yes Ill get a nice piece of cod . . . Im sick of that everlasting butchers meat from Buckleys loin chops and leg beef and rib steak and scrag of mutton and calfs pluck the very name is enough or a picnic . . . yes with some cold veal and ham mixed sandwiches. (Joyce, 1986: 629)

Although she seems to contradict herself once again in thinking about having “some cold veal and ham mixed sandwiches” in a picnic, this passage is not as contradictory as it appears: Molly seems to suggest that meat is for the picnic, while fish is for home consumption. In other words, fish is to be consumed at home with Bloom—and she significantly mentions her preference for fish to meat. In spite of its “exalted status” (Lupton, 1996: 28) as “the most highly prized of food” (Twigg, 1985: 21), red meat, according to Lupton, “has the potential to repulse and disgust, and approaches taboo”; it holds the “connotations of lust, animal and masculine passion, strength, heartiness and energy,” as well as “contamination, decay, anger, violence, aggression” (1996: 28). White meat, on the other hand, “derives not from intelligent mammals but from less elite animals” such as “chickens, turkeys and fish” (109), and hence lacks the attributes associated with red flesh. Therefore, meat suits men better, whereas women could dine on fish. Boylan’s treat of the fish supper, in this light, seems appropriate in a conventional yet



somewhat insulting sense: Molly, a female, and Bloom, a feminized man, deserve a less exalted, less masculine meal. But fish bears different significances to the Jew: it forms "an important part of the Jewish diet" and "is thought to be prolific . . . especially eaten by women during pregnancy and . . . eaten frequently on Friday before Sabbath" (Tucker, 1984: 87). Despite its importance in Jewish meals, fish is nevertheless considered to be a light and hence feminine food, as the Jew is thought to belong to an emasculated race, a "mixed middling" (Joyce, 1986: 277), or a "half and half" that is "neither fish nor flesh" (263). Molly's declaration of her preference for fish seems to be more than a trivial and insignificant remark in passing. Consciously or not, she associates Bloom with fish—and Boylan with meat—and acknowledges her endorsement of Bloom. At the near end of the episode, however, Molly's thoughts turn once again—to vegetables and fruits this time, as illustrated by the passage quoted at the end of the previous section. As Lupton posits, "vegetables have the meanings of purity, passiveness, cleanliness, femininity, weakness and idealism" (1996: 28). In this way, we may conclude that Molly's food obsession inclines toward the feminine as her monologue progresses, with her focus moving from meat to fish, and then to vegetables and fruits. In other words, Molly may appear unconventional or even transgressive with regards to her hearty appetite and meat consumption, but close scrutiny and attention to context, nevertheless, reveals that Joyce seems to make his female protagonist less transgressive and more feminine at the end. We might put it another way: within the restrictive and conventionalized context of Irish milieu, Joyce's Molly Bloom has displayed her own unruly and untraditional aspects concerning food consumption in spite of internalizing the dominant ideology.

## References

- Barthes, R. (1997). Toward a psychosociology of contemporary food consumption. In C. M. Counihan & P. van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (pp. 20-27). New York: Routledge.
- Bevan, D. (Ed.). (1988). *Literary gastronomy*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Bordo, S. (2003). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Briggs, A. (2007). Breakfast at 7 Eccles Street: *Oeufs sacher-masoch?* In S. D. G. Knowles, G. Lernout, & J. McCourt (Eds.), *Joyce in Trieste: An album of risky readings* (pp. 195-209). Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Brumberg, J. J. (2000). *Fasting girls: The history of anorexia nervosa*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Burnett, J. (2003). Eating in the open air in England, 1830-1914. In M. Jacobs & P. Scholliers (Eds.), *Eating out in Europe: Picnics, gourmet dining and snacks since the late eighteenth century* (pp. 21-37). Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Bynum, C. W. (1988). *Holy feast and holy fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bynum, C. W. (1997). Fast, feast, and flesh: The religious significance of food to medieval women. In C. M. Counihan & P. van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (pp. 138-158). New York: Routledge.
- Caplan, P. (1997). Approaches to the study of food, health and identity. In P. Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity* (pp. 1-31). London: Routledge.
- Charles, N., & Kerr, M. (1988). *Women, food and families*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Counihan, C. M. (1999). *The anthropology of food and body: Gender, meaning, and power*. New York: Routledge.
- Counihan, C. M., & van Esterik, P. (1997). Introduction. In C.

- M. Counihan & P. van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (pp. 1-7). New York: Routledge.
- Csergo, J. (2003). The picnic in nineteenth-century France: A social event involving food: Both a necessity and a form of entertainment. In M. Jacobs & P. Scholliers (Eds.), *Eating out in Europe: Picnics, gourmet dining and snacks since the late eighteenth century* (pp. 139-159). Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Derrida, J. (2000). *Of hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond* (R. Bowlby, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Döring, T., Heide, M., & Mühleisen, S. (Eds.). (2003). *Eating culture: The poetics and politics of food*. Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- Douglas, M. (1997). Deciphering a meal. In C. M. Counihan & P. van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (pp. 36-54). New York: Routledge.
- Eagleton, T. (1998). Edible écriture. In S. Griffiths & J. Wallace (Eds.), *Consuming passions: Food in the age of anxiety* (pp. 203-208). Manchester, UK: Mandolin.
- Ellis, R. (1985). The way to a man's heart: Food in the violent home. In A. Murcott (Ed.), *The sociology of food and eating: Essays on the sociological significance of food* (pp. 164-171). Aldershot, UK: Gower.
- Farb, P., & Armelagos, G. (1980). *Consuming passions: The anthropology of eating*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Fiddes, N. (1991). *Meat: A natural symbol*. London: Routledge.
- Finkelstein, J. (1998). Dining out: The hyperreality of appetite. In R. Scapp & B. Seitz (Eds.), *Eating culture* (pp. 201-215). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Gibb, R. (1989). Cloacal obsession: Food, sex, and death in "Lestrygonians." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, 10, 3-4: 268-273.
- Gifford, D., & Seidman, R. J. (1988). *Ulysses annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Rev. ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Heller, T., & Moran, P. (Eds.). (2003). *Scenes of the apple: Food and the female body in nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's writing*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Joyce, J. (1986). *Ulysses: The corrected text*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Joyce, J. (1996). *Dubliners: Text, criticism, and notes*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lupton, D. (1996). *Food, the body and the self*. London: Sage.
- Mara, M. O. (2009). James Joyce and the politics of food. *New Hibernia Review*, 13, 4: 94-110.
- Meigs, A. (1997). Food as a cultural construction. In C. M. Counihan & P. van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader* (pp. 95-106). New York: Routledge.
- Mennell, S. (1996). *All manners of food: Eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present* (2nd ed.). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Mennell, S., Murcott, A., & van Otterloo, A. H. (1992). *The sociology of food: Eating, diet and culture*. London: Sage.
- Montresor, J. B. (1995). Joyce's Jewish stew: The alimentary lists in *Ulysses*. *Colby Quarterly*, 31, 3: 194-203.
- Nadel, I. B. (2007). Molly's Mediterranean meals and other Joycean cuisines: An essay with recipes. In S. D. G. Knowles, G. Lernout, & J. McCourt (Eds.), *Joyce in Trieste: An album of risky readings* (pp. 210-222). Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Osteen, M. (1995). *The economy of Ulysses: Making both ends meet*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Peckham, S. (1998). Consuming nations. In S. Griffiths & J. Wallace (Eds.), *Consuming passions: Food in the age of anxiety* (pp. 171-182). Manchester, UK: Mandolin.
- Plock, V. M. (2007). Modernism's feast on science: Nutrition and diet in Joyce's *Ulysses*. *Literature and History*, 16, 2: 30-42.
- Probyn, E. (2000). *Carnal appetites: FoodSexIdentities*. London:

Routledge.

- Rich, L. (2010). A table for one: Hunger and unhomeliness in Joyce's public eateries. *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2010: 71-98.
- Schofield, M. A. (Ed.). (1989). *Cooking by the book: Food in literature and culture*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Tucker, L. (1984). *Stephen and Bloom at life's feast: Alimentary symbolism and the creative process in James Joyce's Ulysses*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.
- Twigg, J. (1985). Vegetarianism and the meanings of meat. In A. Murcott (Ed.), *The sociology of food and eating: Essays on the sociological significance of food* (pp. 18-30). Aldershot, UK: Gower.
- Visser, M. (1992). *The rituals of dinner: The origins, evolution, eccentricities, and meaning of table manners*. New York: Penguin Books.

## 「我吃故我在」：莫莉與飲食

周幸君

國立中興大學外國語文學系  
40227 台中市南區國光路250號  
E-mail: hcchou@dragon.nchu.edu.tw

### 摘 要

莫莉在〈潘尼洛普〉一章的意識流動當中充滿了飲食；飲食構成了「莫莉·布盧姆」其人主要且重要的一部分，也呈現了一幅描繪其生活既細膩又寫實的畫作。食物乃是一種符號。對食物的資格權可顯示家庭的財政狀況。此外，食物也提供莫莉有關布盧姆的個人訊息，並且讓她與家人、過去、都柏林社區作一連結。參與種種飲食活動使莫莉得以投入都柏林的社區生活。飲食行為因此構成了莫莉·布盧姆的主體。「她吃故她在。」儘管並未完全拋開社會文化之束縛，莫莉仍然顛倒了傳統上男性等同消費者而女性等同消費品的性別角色，品嚐食物與性慾帶來的歡娛，同時暗示消耗食物所引發的身體機能乃是自然且必然之現象。

**關鍵詞：**莫莉·布盧姆、《尤利西斯》、食物、社會實踐、性別