What Tiresias Has Missed—Prophecy in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*

ENG 493: Honors Thesis

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Preface

"Joyce cannot be read. He can only be reread."

—Qtd. Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth*

The experience of studying Joyce is filled with—quoting Professor Marc Conner—blood, sweat, and tears. I began this journey knowing only a few short stories from *Dubliners* in the fall of 2008, when I took Professor Conner’s Modern Irish Literature: “The World of James Joyce.” After the term, I could not describe the kind of feeling this Irish writer gave me. It was a more personal feeling than I had ever felt for any literature or schoolwork. I loved the crushing power of Joyce’s prose, his humanity, his humor, and the humbleness of his characters; and I almost melted reading his poetry. I felt I was not finished with his works. Although now I understand that I may never be finished with his works, looking back at this past year, I am grateful that I was able to study more extensively Joyce’s *Ulysses* with Professor Conner. I am grateful, after all the sleepless nights and the countless moments of epiphany, to say that studying Joyce has brought me so much joy.

I started the project by attempting to compare and contrast *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. The topic that interests me the most is both works in relation to prophecy and Tiresias in Greek mythology. But after a term, I decided to work on Joyce only. I was curious about the “mythic method” that T. S. Eliot describes in his famous essay, “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth” and the function of classical mythology in a modernist work. It seemed to me that myth has the ultimate control over the characters and events in Joyce’s book, and that this cosmic
connection reveals certain truth about Joyce, Homer, and the world at large. In particular, the power of prophecy transcends time and space, and is largely beyond my comprehension. I hope that through this project, I shall be able to connect a few dots and decipher a few messages that Joyce seems to convey, and understand a little deeper the concept of prophecy within the world of Ulysses.

Several secondary sources have been extremely important to my thesis. Marcel Detienne’s book *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, a reading suggested by Professor Kevin Crotty, helps me understand the power of prophecy, memory, and truth in ancient Greece; Harry Blamires’s *The New Bloomsday* book guides me through the plot when Joyce’s language is difficult. Richard Ellmann’s biography and his *Ulysses on the Liffey* give me a better grasp of Joyce’s work as a whole: I have always been in love with his narrative, while his deep understanding and appreciation of Joyce have given me the enlightenment at all the right moments. However, it is not until very late in the process when I read part of Maria Tymoczko’s book *The Irish Ulysses* did I realize, after all this time of tracing my way back to Homer, that Joyce is, above all, Irish. His Irishness is omnipresent in the book, but I knew very little about it. If I could begin the process all over again, I would probably look into the Irish tradition much earlier in the research.

My first chapter is devoted into the definition of “prophecy.” I attempt to find the right and proper scope within which the Joycean prophecy rests. It turns out to be threefold: the meaning includes poetic inspiration, second sight, and the power of realization, or its efficacy. While Stephen Dedalus is certainly the inspired poet, Joyce gives Bloom all these three powers.
Being an Irish Everyman empowered with the complete prophetic power from beyond, he is indeed the man-god that Joyce intended to portray. Bloom then holds the key to his own fate; whether or not he will turn the lock depends on him. The second chapter discusses time and the relations among the past, present and future. Joyce strongly suggests the cyclical nature of time in his book, one that will make a resolution much more attainable. My third chapter is dedicated to finding a connection between memory and prophecy. It is this last step that completes the cycle conceptually, which shows that the power of prophecy can still have its place in a modern world. I conclude by taking one more look at Joyce’s stand on “free will” versus “predestination,” and I shall respect his choice of leaving the ending open, while attempting an interpretation of this choice.

Finally, I would love to give my heartfelt thanks to Professor Marc Conner, who has gone through tremendous trouble to help me write this thesis—this project would not have existed if it were not for him, nor would I have made it if it were not for his help and encouragement along the way. It has been one of my very best experiences, and I cannot describe how much this has meant to me. I would also love to thank Professor Jim Warren, who agrees to be my second reader, and, through our delightful conversation in March, has given me great guidance on the structure of the thesis as well as writing a thesis in general. Last but definitely not the least, I would love to thank Professor Kevin Crotty in the Classics Department. From the first time I sought his help on Tiresias in October 2009, to the last time in early April 2010, we have had several two-hour-long conversations about prophecy, Greek Mythology, and Joyce’s Ulysses. He
has been very patient with my questions, and has been extremely resourceful. I have learned so much from his insights, and have tremendously enjoyed each of our conversations.
I. Prophecy: Inspiration, Second Sight, and Action

From the moment James Joyce establishes a correspondence between his modern epic *Ulysses* and Homer's *Odyssey* of long ago, he has inevitably set his work within the immense power of prophecy. In Homer's *Odyssey*, which exists in a form of "sung speech," humans are only a vessel for the gods' will: the deities control the mortals while always planning and manipulating their path in life. In turn, humans turn to the immortal for prophecy, a second sight that sheds light on the future, to learn about their fate whenever their next step in life is unclear. Telemachus and Menelaus seek Proteus for information about Odysseus, and Odysseus consults Tiresias in Hades on his hard homecoming. As a result, the concept of prophecy pervades the *Odyssey*. Inheriting the Homeric construction of homecoming, Joyce, too, treats prophecy in his work. But he does so with a modernist approach. In Joyce, there is no such prophetic figure, or a verified correspondence with such a figure, as Tiresias; however, Joyce's "Bloomsday" is indeed full of prophetic elements that Richard Ellmann calls the "secret messages" in his book *Ulysses on the Liffey*: Boylan's letter to Molly, the Greek word "metempsychosis" that both Bloom and Molly reiterate during the day, the interactions between Bloom and the cat; the cloud, the sun, the "wild waves"; Bloom's dreams (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 35-36). In this Joycean epic, one can hardly find an actual prophecy, but the prophetic power is omnipresent.

The definition of "prophecy," in a traditional sense, is threefold. Its first meaning relates to poetic inspiration. Nora Chadwick defines "prophecy" in such a way in her book *Poetry and Prophecy*: 
Prophecy is the expression of thought, whether subjective or objective, and of knowledge, whether of the present, the future, or the past, which has been acquired by inspiration, and which is uttered in a condition of exaltation or trance, or couched in the traditional form of such utterances. Poetry, it has been said, is the record of the happiest and best moments of the best and happiest lives. (Chadwick, xi)

Thus Chadwick has established a correspondence between poetry and prophecy. According to her definition, a prophecy must be “uttered,” and mostly in the form of poetry. But this “poetry” is to be heard rather than read in the Homeric tradition, and is fundamentally musical (Chadwick, 1). Marcel Detienne, in his book *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, calls this specific kind of poetry the “sung speech”: “… a common noun, *mousa*, is represented at the secular level by the Muse of the Greek pantheon. … *mousa* … means speech that is sung, or rhythmic speech” (Detienne, 40). Therefore, the Greek word *mousa* connects the divine powers of the Muses to the “sung speech,” prophecy. Meanwhile, the Oxford English Dictionary also defines “prophecy” as “the action or practice of revealing or expressing the will or thought of God or of a god; divinely inspired utterance or discourse” (“Prophecy”). This divine inspiration is also reflected in the Irish traditions, as Maria Tymoczko addresses the concept in her book *The Irish Ulysses*: “Clearly, literary genres… are closely related to the tradition of the poet as visionary; they reinforce the view that the poet’s second sight… is related to the poet’s role as a mediator between the human world and the [Irish] otherworld” (Tymoczko, 184-85). This “Irish otherworld,” in the Celtic belief, is “the source of all wisdom and especially of that occult wisdom to which humanity
could not (except in a very limited degree) attain” (Tymoczko, 179). Therefore, poetry is connected to the “sung speech,” which is a speech inspired by the diviner and associated with the prophetic power, sung or delivered by the poet. Thus the first meaning in the word “prophecy” is complete. Both the OED definition and Tymoczko’s remarks suggest that this kind of prophecy stands between the gods and the mortals: through poetry, it is a message inspired by the gods and sent to the mortals in a musical or rhythmic form.

Joyce’s *Ulysses*, in the context of this definition, is a highly poetic and musical book. Both Bloom and Molly sing a few tunes to themselves during the day, while in fact Molly is a professional singer. During Bloom’s wanderings, “La ci darem” is always in his head; in the “Penelope” episode, Molly continually hums “Love’s Old Sweet Song.” But it is in the “Sirens” episode that Joyce fully explores this “sung speech,” the musical and poetical element of prophecy. In the concert room, Bloom hears music with several other companions. The song is “All is lost now.” A mantra in this song is the word “come,” which is also at the climax of the song: “Come...!” (U 11. 744). In fact, this sound is reminiscent of an early poem in Joyce’s *Chamber Music*: poem 21¹ (Joyce’s order). In this poem, Joyce plays with the sounds “combing”

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¹ Silently she’s combing,
   Combing her long hair,
   Silently and graciously,
   With many a pretty air.

   The sun is in the willow leaves
   And on the dappled grass
   And still she’s combing her long hair
   Before the lookingglass.
and "coming," "hair" and "air" and alludes to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The speaker beseeches the woman to "cease to comb out"—cease combing and come out—while the woman is a reluctant and passive, silent figure with a head of "long hair." The "long hair" symbolizes the lyre—both a musical instrument and a constellation that symbolizes Boylan and that Bloom and Stephen will observe in the "Ithaca" episode—while the action of "combing" resembles that of playing the lyre. The "many a pretty air" both comes from the woman's singing as that of Molly's, and from the sound of the lyre. This connection returns in the "Sirens" episode. Bloom contemplates:

I pray you, cease to comb out,
Comb out your long hair,
For I have heard of witchery
Under a pretty air,

That makes as one thing to the lover
Staying and going hence,
All fair, with many a pretty air
And many a negligence. (Joyce, Poems and Exiles, 27)
image also hints the presence of Boylan and his on-going seduction with Molly: in this regard, he is the “Orpheus” figure that lures Molly, “Eurydice,” out of her marriage. But this very myth prophesies their outcome: that Boylan will eventually fail and Molly will return to her marriage.

On the other hand, in a more poetic sense, Stephen Dedalus is the poet in the book, who therefore bears the function as the divinely inspired prophet. In the “Proteus” episode, Stephen walks along Sandymount strand while contemplating time, space, the universe, the permanent reality and the changing “signatures” of the world. He describes the world as the “ineluctable modality of the visible” and the “ineluctable modality of the audible” (U 3. 1, 13). Harry Blamires provides a reading of these expressions in *The New Bloomsday Book: A Guide Through Ulysses*:

The revelation of that reality reaches us under the changing, limited modes of the visible and the audible, within the dimensions of the spatial and the temporal… Stephen’s starting-point is that things are presented to us under the shifting mode of their visibility. It is the *signatures* of things, rather than their reality, which our minds receive through eyesight. … Stephen closes his eyes to study what experience is like when the mode of visibility is excluded; then, in the darkness, notes how the mode of audibility asserts itself in the tapping of his stick and of his feet, the crackling and crushing of shells and pebbles and sand beneath them. In these sounds rhythm emerges and pattern is born. (Blamires, 14)
As a poet and prophet, Stephen realizes that “the signatures” of the world are mere deception, and thus seeks reality (or truth) under the disguise of the audible and the visible. By closing his eyes, he isolates the audible from the visible and examines the sounds. This signifies that he undergoes the process of poetic inspiration, while the “sounds” are the message of inspiration from beyond. In so doing, he reaches the heart of poetic inspiration and therefore prophecy.

During this temporary blindness, Stephen completes the process of being inspired and delivering the message to the mortals in a rhythmic speech: “Won’t you come to Sandymount, / Madeline the mare?” (U 3. 21-22) At this state of inspiration, Stephen is aware of his power himself. He notes: “Rhythm begins, you see. I hear” (U 3. 23). The rhythmic speech is the same as the sung speech, as Detienne states in his book (Detienne, 40). Stephen’s hearing when blind is like “seeing” with his ears, in the same way Philomel sings after losing her tongue (Ovid, Metamorphoses, VI), and Tiresias “sees” after losing his sight. Therefore, Stephen’s expression, “the ineluctable modality of the audible” has another twist from Blamires’s interpretation: it corresponds to prophecy in the form of sung speech.

In a more general sense, Bloom is also a poet: the poet of life. Bloom appreciates the earthly and fleshly life far more than Stephen; he uses both science and humor to ponder and comprehend the world. For instance, he contemplates the physics concept of weight: “What is weight really when you say the weight? Thirtytwo feet per second per second. Law of falling bodies: per second per second. They all fall to the ground. The earth. It’s the force of gravity of the earth is the weight” (U 5. 43-46). Indeed, he spends the entire day in a state of being half comprehending, half confusing; half right, half wrong. But he does enjoy, for his own
amusement, immersing himself in the massive amount of knowledge that he is yet to consume. He thinks about such questions as: “Would he [the corpse of Dignam] bleed if a nail say cut him in the knocking about?” (U 6. 432-33) and “Do fish ever get seasick?” (U 13. 1162). It is his unique curiosity and profound enjoyment in life that makes Bloom poetic. Moreover, Bloom does make literary efforts. Early in the morning, he thinks of jotting down Molly’s random words as a form of poetic creation:


Bloom does not need the highly educated and sophisticated metaphysical ideas that Stephen pursues in order to enjoy himself. To Bloom, the simple trivia in life is by itself sufficiently beautiful. This shows his ability to draw significance from the insignificant, and to see beauty even through the ugly, which is the essential power of a poet of life.

Further, Bloom has also ventured a verse to send to Molly on the Valentine’s Day in the year of their engagement. In the “Ithaca” episode, he recalls:

What acrostic upon the abbreviation of his first name had he (kinetic poet) sent to Miss Marion (Molly) Tweedy on the 14 February 1888?

Poets oft have sung in rhyme

Of music sweet their praise divine.
Let them hymn it nine time nine.

Dearer far than song or wine.

You are mine. The world is mine. (U 17, 410-16)

The question refers to Bloom directly as the “kinetic poet.” In this poem, Bloom speaks of the poets that compose the “sung speech” that “praise” the “divine.” This “laudatory speech” is precisely the kind of “sung speech” used in prophecy (Detienne, 40). Bloom’s simple and lovely acrostic genuinely presents himself, Poldy, before his love Molly. Blamires remarks that Molly is the one that “de-lionizes” Bloom, “knocking the ‘Leo’ out of his name” (Blamires, 27); but Bloom’s poem shows that he himself humbly did so before Molly long ago. As Ellmann puts it in his biography James Joyce, “People lionized him but he would not roar” (Ellmann, JJ, 7)—so he may as well be de-lionized. Ellmann refers to Joyce himself, but his anti-hero Leopold Bloom has the same temperament. Indeed, the de-lionization of Bloom does not make him less of a hero because he is already an Everyman, the poet of life.

The second meaning in prophecy, different from Chadwick’s definition, is second sight: the ability to see and predict the future. As the OED defines, “prophecy” is “the action of foretelling or predicting the future; prediction, prognostication; an instance of this, a prediction” (“Prophecy”). This meaning implies that the future is predestined and somehow predictable, so it that is not beyond comprehension. Joyce’s efforts of leaving the ending of his story open indicates that he wants to break free from this aspect of prophecy. He does not want to provide a full resolution for his major characters, Bloom, Molly, or Stephen; and no one really knows for certain what will happen on June 17th of 1904. He also deliberately omits the Tiresias figure in
the "Hades" episode to be rid of the prophetic guidance for Bloom. However, as Thomas Lorch argues in his essay "The Relationship between Ulysses and The Waste Land," Bloom himself is the Tiresias figure in Hades. He observes:

... Bloom resembles Tiresias in certain important ways. Far more than Stephen, Bloom is the outside observer who sees everything; and Joyce insists upon portraying him as the "womanly man," (p. 493) the character in whom man and woman are in some sense united. By means of the character of Bloom, Joyce brings together all the characters in Ulysses in somewhat the same way that Eliot merges and unites his characters in Tiresias. (Lorch, 124-25)

Thus, Bloom becomes the "seer." He is gifted with the immense power of second sight. In the "Ithaca" episode, Joyce describes Bloom's "visual sensation": "He saw in a quick young male familiar from the predestination of a future" (U 17. 780). This directly suggests that Bloom is the outsider and seer who is able to see the predestination of another person. In so doing, Joyce ineluctably provides an implicit answer to the relationship between Molly and Bloom: that the absence of a prophetic figure empowers Bloom with his own "second sight" that ultimately leads Bloom back to Molly.

This process of transforming and empowering Bloom takes place in the "Hades" episode. Tymoczko maintains that Bloom "returns relatively unchanged" after the funeral (Tymoczko, 201)—although this is somewhat true compared to the drama he will go through in "Circe," her statement overlooks the significance of the transformation in "Hades." Here, the absence of Tiresias suggests an absence of Hades itself, an absence of afterlife, and an absence of
resurrection. Moreover, the placement of this chapter in the book—the third one that involves Bloom and the sixth over all—is also significant. Ellmann suggests a pattern in the construction of *Ulysses*: “I shall propose that in every group of three chapters the first defers to space, the second has time in the ascendant, and the third blends (or expunges) the two” (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 19). Therefore, the sixth chapter is the last of the second trio that mixes time and space, life and death. Ellmann comments on the significance of this chapter: “Joyce chose to place at this point the descent to Hades, which was pivotal for Odysseus as well, since it was in Hades that he learned his eventual fate and that of his companions” (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 46). Thus, Dignam’s funeral is where Bloom, the Joycean Tiresias, “sees” with his second sight and gains profound insight into his own fate. Unlike Tiresias, when Bloom is empowered with the second sight, he uses it to materialize the living world with a sense of humor. The quote, “I am the resurrection and the life,” does not touch Bloom’s heart, nor that of the dead (6. 670-73). As Bloom’s thoughts wander, he relates death only with the dysfunction of the heart and the body: “Broken heart. A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day. One fine day it gets bunged up: and there you are. Lots of them lying around here: lungs, hearts, livers. Old rusty pumps: damn the thing else” (6. 673-76). No soul attached, and therefore there is no afterlife. A heart is, “after all,” a pump. The living world touches one’s heart, gives one passion, love, hope, disappointment; it provides one with a full-blooded life. But after everything that one has experienced, after all the gallons of blood “pumped,” the heart is doomed to get “bunged up”: pump no more, and all is gone.
However, even in this “darkened” space, death mingles with life. Bloom imagines:

“Whispering around you. Would you like to see a priest? Then rambling and wandering. Delirium all you hid all your life. The death struggle” (6. 846-48). On the one hand, Bloom’s mind seems to talk directly to the person before the last moment has come, envisioning the moments after death. On the other hand, addressing the dead as “you” makes this communication more present and personal, as if at the moment in the deathchamber, the dead can hear the speaker; as if the dead is unwillingly taking a rest while the people around are disturbing her. The observation, “Well, it is a long rest,” sounds unbearable and burdensome, making the person about to take the “rest” tired of it even before it starts. But with all of these unpleasant sufferings ahead, “Bam! He expires. Gone at last. People talk about you a bit: forget you” (6. 853-54). The verb “expires” suggests that this moment is pre-destined and unavoidable, that the amount of time is set since the beginning, and this is the moment of expiration. The colon between “people talk about you” and “forget you” indicates that “talking about you” is only a formality before “forgetting you,” and that there is no transitional period between them. These observations of Bloom set the tone for the entire book about “that other world,” that dreadful place which both Joyce and Bloom try to deny. In the meantime, “that other world” also alludes to the “Irish otherworld” in Tymoczko’s book, a world of occult wisdom. Afterall, Bloom is undeniably in the cemetery; he is in that other world. And he, too, undeniably gains wisdom from this place: his realization of a “fullblooded life” he is yet to live with Molly. It is this tension with “that other world” that prophesies and eventually empowers him to return to Molly.
The immense power of prophecy has another characteristic: its efficacy—the promise that the prophecy will be realized. The Greek verb *krainein* describes this aspect of the word, which is, in fact, the third meaning of “prophecy.” It means “to accomplish, or, to realize” (Detienne, 71). Detienne contends:

> The principal and most important aspect of this type of speech [the magicoreligious speech, or, the sung speech inspired by the diviner] is efficacy, expressed in Greek by the verb *krainein*, a word invariably applied to all modalities of such speech. (Detienne, 70)

Since this “magicoreligious speech” is a form of prophecy, it inevitably has the power to produce a result—or, to realize, *krainein*. This word “realize,” is twofold: it entails both second sight—“to make real to the mind”—and action—“to give real existence to something” (“Realize”). The former overlaps with the second meaning of “prophecy,” while the latter reveals the third meaning, the efficacious power of the mantic speech. In this context, Stephen’s expression, “the ineluctable modality of the visible,” connects this meaning with the “sung speech” in the first part of the definition and makes them a coherent whole. The “ineluctable modality of the visible” is a visual reminiscence of its counterpart, the “ineluctable modality of the audible” because it corresponds to prophecy in the form of gesture and action, a silent but active form of “speech.” Therefore, even though Stephen’s prophetic role is largely confined to the scope of poetic inspiration, and he is not so much of an action-taker, his moral insight also contributes to the notion of prophecy as a whole.
However, it is Bloom that Joyce truly provides with the power of realization, which in turn, gives him the complete prophetic power. In Joyce, both poetic inspiration and the power of second sight contribute to Bloom’s action, which functions as the immense force that will ultimately realize his return. Detienne contends that realization is the power of the gods, a power that more closely relates to the “action” part of “realize”:

[The gods] can “realize” or “accomplish” their own desires, just as they can “realize” a wish expressed by the mortals. The gods possess the privilege to “desire and accomplish” (noēsai te krēnai te): Apollo “realizes through his speech,” and Zeus “realizes” everything. This is the domain of the irrevocable—as well as the immediate, for “swift is the doing and short the road when a god sets his mind to a thing.” (Detienne, 70)

Although paired with “accomplish,” “realize” suggests action, it is not quite clear whether a god “realizes” because he “makes it happen,” or because he “sees that it is going to happen” due to the ambiguity of speech. When Joyce gives his hero this power of the gods, he embodies both meanings in it. In the “Hades” episode, Bloom contends, “[in] the midst of death we are in life” (U 6. 759). While the traditional aphorism says “In the midst of life we are in death” (Gifford, 111), Joyce’s modern hero, Bloom, draws insight from his own experience—the funeral—and reverses the aphorism. In this way, he “realizes” the truth of the present and foretells the future: a future in which he is not only physically in life but also decides to actively live his life with Molly. Meanwhile, this action of foretelling the future also conveys the “action” meaning of “realize”: Bloom will indeed make his own observation come true by leading his life,
so that while he is in the midst of death, he is indeed in life. Ellmann also comments: “Warm fullblooded life is no paradise. But Ulysses is strengthened in convictions about death and life, determined to go on: ‘Well, I am here now’” (Ellmann. *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 52). Therefore, Bloom is given poetic inspiration, second sight, and the power of realization: he is a complete prophet. And like Odysseus, he is a complete man: he is a father, a son, a husband, a lover, a companion, a warrior, and King (Ellmann, JJ, 435). With the prophetic powers, he is indeed the man-god, the Outis-Zeus of the twentieth century. Thus in Joyce’s modern Dublin, life mingles with death, insight with prophecy, past with future, and human with the gods.

Life mingles with death in more ways than one. Although Bloom does not believe in the afterlife, Hades and the living world find a way to co-exist and collaborate. Bloom thinks of the dead bodies and their chemical composition:

> I daresay the soil would be quite fat with corpse-manure, bones, flesh, nails.

> Charnelhouses. Dreadful. … Of course the cells or whatever they are go on living. Changing about. Live for ever practically. Nothing to feed on feed on themselves. (U 6. 776-82)

Bloom’s mind focuses solely on the physical, soulless corpse, but it is precisely this focus that leads him to believe in the continuation of life after death. Because human bodies are made of chemical elements just like everything else, and those chemical elements will always remain in this world and recompose, the dead will indeed “live for ever practically,” only in different forms. Being practical is a key characteristic in Bloom the Irish Jew, the businessman. But at this moment, the practical comes face-to-face with the spiritual. While he is a man in the looming
advertisement industry who does not believe in "reincarnation," Bloom accidentally convinces himself that there is at least some truth to it, although for reasons very different from the Greeks'. Thus, while Bloom denies it, the undying nature is present. It is not in some other realm of existence, Joyce implies; rather, it is here now in this world: in fact, this world is the afterlife and undying nature.

Stephen, too, shares this insight of the endless process of decomposing and recomposing human bodies, and connects it to a poet's own identity. He expounds in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode: "As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, ... from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image" (U 9. 376-78). Stephen realizes the same cyclical nature of human life that Bloom ponders earlier during the funeral: that our bodies consist of but chemical elements, or "modules." But his more articulate phrasing, "weave and unweave," also alludes to Penelope's weaving and unweaving at home while she awaits her husband. This poetic allusion, in turn, anticipates an enduring and persistent strength in the story, later to be realized in the relationship between Molly and Bloom. It further gives a more synthesized understanding of the term "prophetic" within the scope of Ulysses. When speaking of "prophetic elements," it is the signs that respond to the anticipations, and general directions that are suggested in a cosmic way, that truly count. Although Joyce leaves an open ending, his efforts of revealing the cosmic connections among people and events certainly suggest that he weighs the power of prophecy when considering the resolution in the book.
The spatial collapse between the living world and the eternal world gives rise to the temporal collapse of the past, the present and the future. This implies that these three times are not independent from each other, and that the past has an impact on the future. The next chapter examines the relations among the past, the present, and the future. That the past determines, or at least impacts the future provides an answer to Bloom’s relationship with Molly: her recalling of their engagement on the mountain already becomes an affirmation for Bloom’s eventual return, the underlying justification of which is in the “Hades” episode. Bloom thinks of all the dead of Dublin: “How many! All these once walked round Dublin. Faithful departed. As you are now so once were we” (U 6. 960-61). The last sentence suggests that life is an ever-evolving cycle, evolving yet also constantly circulating. This unchangeable theme that carries the past into the future confirms the predictability of the future according to the past. Between these two voices is “Faithful departed.” If a departure is faithful, then one can expect the return, like that of Bloom to Molly, and Molly to Bloom.
II. "Time makes the tune"—On Time, Memory, and Cyclicity in *Ulysses*

"Yesterday is History, Tomorrow a Mystery, Today is a Gift. That's why it's called the Present."

—Exact Source Unknown

“But while we looked into the future, we were completely under the power of the past."

—Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past"

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—Eliot, "Little Gidding"

Time, as a concept married to that of prophecy, is a crucial element throughout *Ulysses*. Joyce assigns every episode, except for "Penelope," to a specific hour, signifying the passage of time. Bloom’s watch symbolically stops at half past four when Molly allegedly cheats with Boylan, indicating that events are always associated with time. His watch therefore marks the time of infidelity, while its stopping is a violation of time that mirrors Molly’s violation of their marriage. And yet time is ever passing. It is the immense force that consumes the present and constantly turns the future into the past. In the "Lestrygonians" episode, Bloom remarks before he takes a bath: “Always passing, the stream of life” (U 5. 563). The “stream of life” here refers to time, time that brings life and happiness but also takes them away. However, in *Ulysses*, a Joycean repetition of a Homeric epic, time is also cyclical. Not only does Joyce demonstrate the
cyclicity of time by devoting his entire book to revive *The Odyssey* as well as Greek mythology at large, but he also emphasizes this within the scope of his book. In the “Hades” episode, Bloom contends: “In the midst of death we are in life. Both ends meet” (U 6. 759-60). Later in the “Nausicaa” episode, Bloom observes: “The year returns. History repeats itself” (U 13. 1092-93).

This chapter explores the cyclicity of time in *Ulysses* and its significance. As Woolf observes in the epigraph, the symmetric, equivalence relationship between the past and the future explicitly gives the past an immense power to influence the future. By demonstrating that time is cyclical, Joyce gestures an incredibly positive outcome for his characters and implies that the old will eventually return anew.

The relations between the past and the future with respect to the present are symmetric. In the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode, Stephen thinks of Shelley and expounds the relationships among past, present, and future:

In the intense instant of imagination, when the mind, Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be. (U 9. 381-85)

This “intense instant of imagination” is the present as only in the present can imagination occur and the present only occurs for an instant. Shelley’s quote shows that only the present, the intense instant, can inspire life and make life happen. Moreover, this instant divides the stream of time into three parts: past, present, and future. The “is” between “that which I was” and “that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be” equates these two parts. Therefore in
Stephen’s thoughts and in Shelley’s words, the past equals the present and the future. Stephen further clarifies this view by saying that the future is “the sister of the past,” which implies that they hold equal positions with respect to the present. More importantly, it suggests that there are similarities between the future and the past, and that they resemble each other. As the last sentence of Shelley’s quote states, in the future, one may see herself as the future self seen from this present moment. The word “reflection” also hints symmetry: a symmetry between the future and the past seen through the present. It is the past that mirrors the future while the mirror is the present.

Donald E. Morse, in his essay “‘The Days of Time’: Overcoming Isolation in Ulysses,” offers a similar view of this relationship. He quotes Heraclitus in stating that “you cannot enter the same river twice” (Morse, 83), which resembles Bloom’s thought, “Returning not the same,” in the “Nausicaa” episode (U 13. 1103-04), and Stephen’s thought of the same mole on an ever-changing body (U 9. 378-80). Morse further expounds this view about time in the “river-metaphor”:

… “the way up and the way down are one and the same.” That is: as we move up the river of time into the future we are in the process of bringing that future into the present since only there can it be experienced. Similarly, if we go down the river into the past we also through memory bring that into the present.

(Morse, 83)

In this way, Morse not only confirms Shelley’s statement that the future (the way up) and the past (the way down) are indeed the same, he also explains the reason. They are the same in the
sense that both exist only through the activities that take place in the present: recalling through memory and anticipating through prophecy. Therefore, Morse’s statement reinforces the idea that the past and the future mirror one another. In addition, the imagery of the “river” implies that time, like the water, exists in its entirety, undividable and continuous.

Joyce, too, shows in his book that memory and anticipation both exist in the present, where the past and the future co-exist. In the “Nausicaa” episode, Bloom muses: “Mary, Martha: now as then” (U 13. 805-06). Although both names refer to sisters of Lazarus in the Biblical context (Gifford, 90), “Mary” is also a variation of “Marion,” Molly’s official name, and “Martha” is the name of Bloom’s pen pal, who currently desires to develop a deeper relationship with Bloom. Thus, “Mary” represents Bloom’s past passion, while “Martha” constitutes a current one. Therefore, the two names bring together the past and the present. Even though in Bloom’s thoughts, “then” refers to his past time with Molly, it is by itself an ambiguous word that refers to a specified time either in the past or the future (“Then”). This slight degree of ambiguity, then, brings the future into the picture. So semantically, Joyce suggests that both the “past” and the “future” are as if they are “now”: they coexist in the present. Similarly, Bloom later contemplates in the same chapter: “She kissed me. Never again. My youth” (U 13. 1102). Both events, “she kissed me” and “my youth,” are in the past, and are neither true now nor will be in the future. That is, the “never again” in the middle applies to both: it both projects itself forward and backwards, which forms a visual representation of the trajectories from the present to the past and the future. Similarly, in the “Calypso” episode, Bloom recalls: “Lips kissed, kissing, kissed” (U 4. 450). The “kissed” on both sides are past tense, while the “kissing” in the middle is in
present tense. This construction substitutes the future with the past, which implies the resemblance and similarity between the future and the past. But more importantly, it shows that the ever-passing time exists in a circle and both ends meet: having passing the present, one plunges into the past.

The similarity between the past and the future shows that through the present one can see all the other parts of time. Saint Augustine also concludes in his discussion of the nature of time:

... one might perhaps say: “There are three times—a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.” For these three do exist in the mind, and I do not see them anywhere else: the present time of things past is memory; the present things present is sight; the present things future is expectation [or anticipation]. (273) (Morse, 87)

The mind is a consciousness of the present, in which the past and the future coexist. Therefore, the present becomes a forge in which both the past and the future are dismantled and reformed into a coherent whole. This is because recalling the past through memory has a prominent influence on the present, which in its turn, influences the future. Even fragmented memory can tell the truth about both one’s past and things that are unchangeable in the person throughout time: things that are therefore predictable about her. This is because the way one recalls things in the past shows what that person deems important, about what she cares, and with what she identifies. Israel Rosenfield’s comments on the continuity of memory and dynamics of the present: “Memories are not fixed but are constantly evolving generalizations—recreations—of the past, which give us a sense of continuity, a sense of being, with a past, a present, and a future.
They are not discrete units that are linked up over time but a dynamically evolving system (76)" (Qtd. Morse, 88). It is therefore the constant interaction between memory and the present moment, as well as their mutual influence on one another that shape the future. Morse continues to explicate this idea and agrees with Jorge Luis Borges in this aspect of memory. He expounds:

... Bloom and Molly—and, of course, Joyce—share with Jorge Luis Borges the view that memory—the bringing of fragments of the past into the on-going, often rushing present—is always and of necessity a partial recovery which while it does not take place in “an ideal time present,” does indeed take place:

Those odds and ends of memory are the only wealth that the rush of time leaves to us.

We are our memory,

we are this chimerical museum of shifting forms,

this heap of broken mirrors. (“Cambridge”) (Morse, 86)

The kissing on the Hill of Howth, the rhododendron, and the engagement that both Molly and Bloom repeatedly recall during the day are both in the past, and are no longer true in the present. But as Morse and Borges observe, they did undeniably happen, and they do happen again now in their minds. Borges’s poem reveals the significance of memory, a concept that deserves further examination in the third chapter: Molly may have an affair, and Bloom may have been wandering; but the passage of time takes away those things from life after all, and memory is the only thing that continues to exist, which shapes their unchanging identities under the mask of the
“shifting forms.” The “heap of broken mirrors” in Borges’s poem suggests the fragmented reflection of the past, but these fragments’ being what we are now makes them a coherent whole.

Thus indeed, we are our memory: we are what we remember. This is twofold: on the one hand, our very identities shaped from the past make us choose the fragments that we want to remember; on the other hand, and more importantly, the fragments that we choose along the passage of time continue to shape our identities, which, as a result, remain in the process of an on-going transformation. Therefore, in this forge that is the present, memory shapes one’s future and is the reason why the future is predictable. Morse remarks:

“In a man’s single day are all the days / of time,” as Borges rightly maintains in his poem, “James Joyce” and Bloomsday is a day during which is recreated through memory all the days that are past and through expectation is anticipated all the days which are to come as seen in the very warp and woof of the novel.

(Morse, 87)

With this, Morse suggests that memory is the opposite of “expectation,” a word that means the action of “looking forward to as one’s goal or motive;” and the action of “regarding [something] as about to happen” (“Expect,” “Expectation”). But in Ulysses, “expectation” is also associated with prophecy. Stephen contends: “Beware of what you wish for in youth because you will get it in middle life” (U 9. 451-52). Thus Stephen the poet and prophet clearly and decisively declares that what one expects will come true later in life. Meanwhile, Morse also implies that the Bloomsday, as “the very warp and woof of the novel,” has implicitly projected the days to come. This notion in a temporal sense parallels Joyce’s belief that “In the particular is contained the
universal” in the spatial sense, as he told Arthur Power in 1922 (Conner, Handout, Autumn 2008).

Memory creates a kind of continuity from the past to the present, which implies the acknowledgement and acceptance of the difference between “now” and “then.” The recollections of the past give one a sense, or even a misconception, that the present is still traversing through the same tunnel, in the same direction as the past, even though the truth may not be so. But this very recollection hints that one succumbs to the less satisfactory present and turn to the past. In Ulysses, Molly and Bloom are both well aware of the fact that what is in their memory is discontinued at the present. Molly commits adultery on this day all together, while Bloom sighs in the “Lestrygonians” episode after remembering his long kiss on Howth Hill: “Me. And me now” (U 8. 917). The period in between separate the past and the present, which shows discontinuity; the first “Me” is capitalized while the second lower-cased, stylistically resembling Bloom’s change in status. The past is a monosyllable, describing a time when Bloom is confident, lionized, and kissed; the present, however, begins with an iamb, which is mundane, weak, and indecisive. It is this discontinuity—Molly’s adultery and Bloom’s juxtaposing the past and the present—that shows their acknowledgement and acceptance of the present. This acceptance is significant and reconciles with the present. Morse remarks:

... Ulysses offers not the easy promise of immediate reconciliation—the clown was not Bloom’s son—or reunion—the coin never returned—but the more difficult affirmation and acceptance of all that has gone before that has led to
this present as seen in “the bed of conception and of birth, of consummation of marriage and of breach of marriage, of sleep and of death” (731). (Morse, 90)

It is this acknowledgement of the present, the acceptance of the discontinuity that has led Bloom and Molly to a different future: a future that will truly depart from the present and towards a better place—a place where they have been in the past but have never fully comprehended. They may still not comprehend this place fully yet—or ever; but every time they return, they understand a little more about themselves, and about each other.

Thus, Eliot’s lines from “Little Gidding” in the epigraph capture this view well: it is precisely the “faithful departure” that Bloom and Molly take from each other that teaches them acceptance and love, and will eventually lead to their return. Morse expounds:

[Molly], too, brings this incident [on the Hill of Howth] forward into the “dynamically evolving” present of her soliloquy but like Bloom she does so without nostalgia and without trying to reify the past. Yet the very process modifies and changes the present leading to her affirmation of the persistent power, endurance, and will to love. (Morse, 92)

Molly’s persistence, endurance and will come from the cyclicity of time. The phases of the moon, in this case, resemble the cyclical nature of time, and parallel the “phases” of Molly. In the “Ithaca” episode, Bloom contemplates the similarities between the moon and a woman:

What special affinities appeared to him to exist between the moon and woman? Her antiquity in preceding and surviving successive tellurian generations: her nocturnal predominance: her satellitic dependence: her luminary reflection: her
constancy under all her phases, rising and setting by her appointed times, waxing and waning: the forced invariability of her aspect: her indeterminate response to inaffirmative interrogation: her potency over effluent and reflu ent waters: her power to enamour, to mortify, to invest with beauty, to render insane, to incite to and aid delinquency: the tranquil inscrutability of her visage: the terribility of her isolated dominant implacable resplendent propinquity: her omens of tempest and of calm: the stimulation of her light, her motion and her presence: the admonition of her craters, her arid seas, her silence: her splendor, when visible: her attraction, when invisible. (U 17. 1157-70)

This extensive comparison between the moon and the woman provides Bloom the prophet a solid ground upon which he shall anticipate Molly's returning to her marriage. At the center of this ground is her "constancy under all her phases." Delightfully, Bloom sees through the ever-changing phases of the moon and grasps its unchanging principle: its cycle. This understanding makes his acceptance of Molly's present state much easier because like the moon, Molly will sure restore her earlier form of existence: all she needs is a new phase. In fact, this "new phase" may as well have come on this night: Molly menstruates. It signals a new start for the couple, and the fact that Boylan does not make her pregnant—which Molly used to worry (U 18. 1123)—implies that he is now history.

Molly's last seven words also resemble her "phases" and complete the cycle. As she recalls her engagement with Bloom sixteen years ago, she remembers every single detail. She cannot help her joys when she relives the moment: "yes I said yes I will Yes" (U 18. 1608-09).
Earlier in the book, Joyce seems to draw one’s attention to the “last seven words” several times (U 5. 403-04; 11. 1275; 16. 1737-38), which hints the significance of these seven words. Even though her recollection is in the past, Molly does use a distinct “will” that projects the future. This word clearly shows her “persistent power, endurance, and will to love” as Morse demonstrates in his essay, without nostalgia or dwelling on the past. The words are written in a linear form, which resembles the passage of time. Grammatically, “I said” is in the past tense, while “I will” in future tense; they therefore represent the past and the future, respectively, in the stream of time, separated by the middle “yes” that is the present. The first and final “yes,” then, join hands to make both ends meet, and the cycle is finally complete. The future will indeed plunge into the past while the past becomes the future. Molly has the last words of the book, and she demonstrates that her answer has always been “yes,” and will always be “yes”—it is her “constancy under all her phases.”
III. "My willpower! Memory!"—On Memory and Prophecy

"History... is just one damned thing after another." —Arnold Toynbee

This is the use of memory:

For liberation—not less of love but expanding

Of love beyond desire, and so liberation

From the future as well as the past.

—Eliot, "Little Gidding" from the *Four Quartets*

Memory plays an important role in Joyce’s creation of literature. He once said to Frank Budgen: “Imagination is memory” (Ellmann, JJ, 661n). Indeed in Joyce, everything comes from his life that is restored in his memory. Ellmann expounds: “[Joyce] surrounded himself with people who were mostly not known: some were waiters, tailors, fruitsellers, hotel porters, consierges, bank clerks”; he filled his books with “the thousands of phrases garnered mostly from undistinguished friends” (Ellmann, JJ, 6). His *Ulysses*, in a way, is due to his enduring memory and love of Homer’s *Odyssey*. Consequently, memory is also a crucial element in *Ulysses* itself. In a way, on this Bloomsday, Bloom and Molly most intimately relate to each other through memory. During Bloom’s wanderings, his thoughts constantly return to his past relationship with Molly: their engagement, their intimacy, their trivia; he also repeatedly thinks of Rudy, Milly, metempsychosis, Boylan, and all the other things that relate to Molly. Similarly, Molly’s thoughts also wander around these same subjects, with Bloom at the very center. Their communication is internalized, and memory serves as the medium for their conversations.
Marcel Detienne, in his book *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, provides a construction that ultimately links memory with the power of prophecy. Joyce’s *Ulysses*, in the meantime, closely corresponds to this construction. This chapter begins by examining the relationship among memory, truth, and oblivion, and further explores the stability of memory in relation to time. Because memory makes a complete knowledge and a coherent world possible, it is the foundation of prophecy.

The relation among memory, truth, and oblivion is a triangular one. Particularly, memory is the opposite and complementary to oblivion. In classical tradition, oblivion is associated with death, and memory with life. Detienne contends:

Oblivion, or silence, represents the rearing up of the power of death in the face of the power of life, Memory, the mother of the Muses. Behind praise and blame is the fundamental pair of antithetical powers, *Mnemosynē* and *Lēthē*. A warrior’s life is played out between these two poles. The master of praise

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(Detienne, 128)
decides whether a man “should not be hidden beneath the black veil of darkness” or, on the contrary, that silence and oblivion should be his lot; whether his name should shine in dazzling light or instead be consigned forever to darkness. (Detienne, 47-48)

The relationship between Mnemosynē and Lēthē, Memory and Oblivion, are thus established. But the word “oblivion” also brings ambiguity to this relationship because it means both the state of forgetting and being forgotten, void and death (“oblivion”). In the “Hades” episode of Ulysses, Bloom thinks of the circumstances of the dead: “People talk about you a bit: forget you. Don’t forget to pray for him. Remember him in your prayers” (U 6. 853-454). The dead cannot remember because he only has pieces of “lungs, hearts, livers” (U 6. 676); and he will soon be forgotten by the living as well—he is indeed in oblivion. The absence of memory becomes a key characteristic of the dead; it constitutes a void. On the other hand, the fact that the living will not remember the dead signals that they are in oblivion too. Therefore, “the Irishman’s house is his coffin” (U 6. 821-22); and therefore, the living world and the eternal world inevitably collapse in Dublin, even though Bloom’s conscience reemphasizes “don’t forget” and “remember” to pray for the dead. As the opposite and complement to “oblivion,” “memory,” then, signifies remembrance and thus life. Further, the word “oblivion” also means “to abandon, regard as in the past” (“oblivion”). This implies that “memory,” as its opposite, corresponds to the will and persistence to hold on to the past, and therefore life—like Bloom’s recollections during the day, and Molly’s soliloquy during the night. The fact that they still both have such vivid memory of their past shows that their relationship is still alive.
The contrast between *Mnemosyne* and *Lethë*, life and death, is further consolidated by the two rivers in Hades, to which Joyce also alludes in his book. Detienne explains the ritual of consulting Trophonius:

... he [the person requesting help] was taken to the oracle. Before entering, however, he paused at two neighboring springs, called *Lethë* and *Mnemosyne* after the two religious powers that dominated the inspired poets’ system of thought. The water from the first spring obliterated the memory of human life, while the water from the second allowed the individual to remember everything he saw and heard in the other world. (Detienne, 63)

Joyce incorporates these two rivers in his *Ulysses*, while suggesting a counter-intuitive connection between the two: that oblivion is the cure. In the “Lotus Eaters” episode, Bloom contemplates: “Lourdes cure, waters of oblivion... Blind faith. Safe in the arms of kingdom come. Lulls all pain. Wake this time next year” (U 5. 365-68). Originally, the lotus in Homer’s *Odyssey* is a food that makes people forget their way home and desire to stay where they are (Gifford, 84). With this allusion in mind, Joyce’s “Lotus Eaters” is an episode of a drugged state, but one that potentially reconciles with Bloom’s problematic present. In this monologue, Bloom explicitly connects the waters of oblivion—waters of death and forgetfulness—with “cure.” It is indeed a “blind faith” that links hope with just about anything. It is the drugs, or the waters, that make one temporarily forget the past, and thus forget the pain; but the effect does not stop there.
In the hope of skipping the present and plunging into the future, Bloom thinks of sleeping through the entire year. It seems, then, that the dreams function as the drug. Detienne demonstrates that even deceptive dreams have truth in them:

... on the Island of Dreams *Apatē* faces *Alētheia*. There can be no prophetic *Alētheia* without a dose of the *Apatē* contained in “sweet and deceptive” dreams.

As early as in the *Odyssey*, truthful and deceptive dreams are closely associated. The latter emerge from the ivory gate, bringing “words without realization” (*epe' akraanta*), while the former come from the gate of horn and “realize reality” or “accomplish the truth” (*etuma krainousi*). (Detienne, 84)

This “dose of *Apatē*” is Bloom’s wanderings, his knowledge and acceptance of Molly’s lover, and his being carried away by Gerty MacDowell and Martha Clifford. But his “blind faith” tells him that he will return; his departure is justified because he will undoubtedly return. This deceit also lies in Bloom’s hope of dreaming away the year—it is in the sweetness and deceptiveness of the dreams that he may reconcile with his marriage. But as Morse remarks, the memory-imagination-dream figures into the present moment that eventually changes the present. To a similar effect, Gerty MacDowell also “daydreams” of her perfect husband in the “Nausicaa” episode, when she does not have one. The narrator remarks:

The very heart of the girlwoman went out to him, her dreamhusband, because she knew on the instant it was him. If he had suffered, ... or even, even, if he had been himself a sinner, a wicked man, she cared not. ... There were wounds that wanted healing with heartbalm. She was a womanly woman not like other
flighty girls unfeminine he had known, those cyclists showing off what they hadn’t got and she just yearned to know all, to forgive all if she could make him fall in love with her, make him forget the memory of the past. (U 13. 430-39)

Indeed, Gerty constantly dreams of her unreal, “dreamhusband” as the dose of deception that lulls her into the sweetness and decency of a false present. She does not want to dwell on his past, especially if he used to sin. She believes that if they can lose their memory, an action symbolized in mythology by drinking the waters of oblivion, she will be happily in love. In this case, oblivion becomes the “heartbalm” Gerty craves; forgetfulness is the way to forgive. When she wonders, “Art thou real, my ideal?” (U 13 645-46), the answer may be “no,” but to Gerty this answer is no longer important.

On the other side of the triangle is the equivalence relation between memory and truth. On at least three levels, these two concepts are equal and interchangeable. Detienne remarks:

*Alētheia* is a kind of double to *Mnēmosynē*. The equivalence between the two powers is borne out on three counts: equivalent meanings (*Alētheia* and *Mnēmosynē* stand for the same thing); equivalent positions (in religious thought *Alētheia*, like *Mnēmosynē*, is associated with experiences of incubatory prophecy); and equivalent relationships (both are complementary to *Lēthē*).

(Detienne, 65)

This equivalence relationship can be illustrated through Molly’s first word. In the “Calypso” episode, Leopold Bloom first asks his wife, Marion “Molly” Bloom, if she wants anything for breakfast: “You don’t want anything for breakfast?” (U 4. 55). Molly’s response, which is also
her first uttered word in the book, is a sound: “Mn” (U 4. 57). While a more common reading of this sound / word is a “Yes / No” (Blamires, 27), which links to Bloom’s initial interpretation as “No” (U 4. 58) and Molly’s final “Yes” (U 18. 1609), these two letters are also the first two letters of “Mnēmosynē,” or Memory. This implies that the first thing Molly ever attempts to utter in her half-slumber, half-conscious state relates to memory, and, as Joyce later shows, so do most of the things she utters for the rest of the day. Thus, this initial sound marks the significance of the function of memory, while setting off the Bloomsday as a day of both the present and the past, where present (sight) and past (memory) intimately relate to each other. David Weir, in his essay “What ‘Mn’ Means,” also makes the same connection for Molly’s “Mn,” although he does so from the English language perspective. He remarks: “…the letters themselves remind the reader that English words beginning with the Greek mn have to do with memory (as in ‘mnemotechnic’—U 15. 2385 and passim)” (Weir, 481). Throughout this day, Molly never has a chance to finish the word “Mnēmosynē,” and she never will; but neither will memory itself be finished. Molly and Bloom are still making more memory in their life: the process is on-going like the river Liffey. Therefore, through the lives of Molly and Bloom, their memory lives. It is not in the past; it is present and ever-present: it is truth, Aletheia. In this sense, the future, existing in the form of prophecy, is also in this “stream of memory” because it, too, will faithfully become memory and is indeed truth; it is not yet memory only from the present point of view. As Stephen recalls Shelley’s remarks: “… that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be” (U 9. 382-85). This shows that
the future is only the future relative to the present; it is the past compared to time even more ahead of it and as our consciousness of the present moment moves forward, we shall regard more time in the future as the past.

Having established the triangular relation among memory, truth, and oblivion, it is this truth (\textit{Aletheia}), then, that describes the fundamental characteristic of prophecy. Detienne contends:

\textit{Aletheia} occupied a place of great importance in the realm of mantic speech (or prophecy). Evidence shows that the authority of mantic knowledge and pronouncements was derived from a particular concept of the truth. In the \textit{Homeric Hymn to Hermes}, the ancient deities assigned to Hermes by Apollo are the Bee-Women who go everywhere, making all kinds of things “happen”: endowed with a mantic knowledge, they speak \textit{Aletheia}. The oracle of the Isemion is known as the \textit{alēthēs} seat of diviners. When Tiresias refers to his knowledge, he speaks of his \textit{Aletheia}. (Detienne, 54)

In the early twentieth century, Joyce connects this \textit{Aletheia}, a truth that transcends time and space, with the physics of the celestial bodies that reveal the close relationship between truth and prophecy. This attempt of his is particularly deliberate in the “Ithaca” episode. In fact, Joyce himself explains to Budgen his intention:

I am writing \textit{Ithaca} in the form of a mathematical catechism. All events are resolved into their cosmic physical, psychical etc. equivalents, e.g., Bloom jumping down the area, drawing water from the tap, the micturition in the
garden, the cone of incense, lighted candle and statue, so that not only will the
reader know everything and know it in the baldest coldest way, but Bloom and
Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they
gaze. (Ellman, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 156)

The movements of the celestial bodies are cyclical and predictable through mathematics. Joyce’s comparing Bloom and Stephen to those “heavenly bodies,” then, implies the cyclical and predictable nature of their paths in the past, present, as well as the future.

Just as the distance between any two stars at any moment can be described and calculated mathematically, Joyce calculates the relationship between Bloom’s age and Stephen’s at different times:

What relation existed between their ages?

16 years before in 1888 when Bloom was of Stephen’s age Stephen was 6. 16 years after in 1920 when Stephen would be of Bloom’s present age Bloom would be 54. In 1936 when Bloom would be 70 and Stephen 54 their ages initially in the ratio of 16 to 0 would be as 17 ½ to 13 ½, the proportion increasing and the disparity diminishing according as arbitrary future years were added, for if the proportion existing in 1883 had continued immutable, conceiving that to be possible, till then 1904 when Stephen was 22 Bloom would be 374 and in 1920 when Stephen would be 38, as Bloom then was, Bloom would be 646... (U 17. 446-55)
The repetition of the number “16,” apart from its coinciding with the date, June 16th 1904, among its other significance, clearly shows Joyce’s attempt to seek patterns among the numbers—even though this “pattern” here results from Joyce’s deliberate repetition of the same relationship. Joyce’s “baldest coldest” narrative shows one mathematical fact: that the absolute difference between Bloom’s age and Stephen’s is constant, and therefore this difference will continue to decrease in its significance in relation to their actual age, as time passes. This constant value, in its turn, symbolizes the unchangeable truth, or Alētheia, that makes prophecy possible in the first place.

Similarly, a question later in the episode further connects the lives of Bloom and Stephen to the “heavenly bodies.” This question and answer involves a celestial sign:

What celestial sign was by both simultaneously observed?

A star precipitated with great apparent velocity across the firmament from Vega in the Lyre above the zenith beyond the stargroup of the Tress of Berenice towards the zodiacal sign of Leo. (U 17. 1210-13)

As Blamires suggests, the Lyre symbolizes Boylan and the Leo symbolizes Bloom, while the star is Molly (Blamires, 226). Moreover, the Coma Berenices symbolizes Molly’s hair—Gifford contends:

... so called after the legend that Berenice... pledged her hair to Aphrodite on the condition that her husband, Ptolemy III, return safely from a military expedition; when he did return, she sacrificed her beautiful head of hair, and it
was translated into the heavens to commemorate the intensity of her love.

(Gifford, 586)

This hair image becomes more significant because of Bloom’s repetitive mentioning of Molly’s hair during the day. Joyce seems to use the Coma Berenice as a tribute to Molly. Seen with Joyce’s earlier poem #21 (Joyce’s order), “Silently she’s combing” in his Chamber Music, and its allusion to Orpheus’s lyre (mentioned in Chapter I), this heavenly image juxtaposes Molly’s betrayal and her faithfulness. But the star’s ineluctably crossing the sky from the Lyre to Leo, its path mathematically irreversible, signifies the cosmic truth (Alētheia) that Molly will return, a truth that is also ineluctable. The meaning and power of Alētheia, then, transcend time and space, which in turn makes Mnēmosynē a crucial factor in the world of prophecy. Because memory and truth are equivalent and they both relate to oblivion, there has been established a triangle structure among the three: “Alētheia is ... at the center of a configuration structured around the major opposition between memory and oblivion” (Detienne, 87).

Since Mnēmosynē, and therefore also Alētheia, correspond to the power of life, while Lēthē, or oblivion, corresponds to death, memory becomes an escape from time, or a power against the passage of time. Detienne contends:

In the Platonic theory of knowledge, the opposition between the plain of Alētheia and the plain of Lēthē mythically represents the opposition between the act of anamnēsis—an escape from time, a revelation of immutable and eternal being—and the error of Lēthē—human ignorance and forgetfulness of the eternal truths. (Detienne, 121-22)
Since Ἰννεσσοῦκε lies within the plain of Ἀλεθεία, this idea is also consistent with Morse’s remarks about memory’s function to bring the past into the present and thus changes the present.

As a power that can internally reverse the passage of time, memory is indeed an escape from time, which is the reason the mnemonic power of the poet is equivalent to that of second sight and of prophecy. The rhododendron on Howth Hill is like the shooting star Bloom sees in the “Ithaca” episode, appears only once in the past; but being present in the “joint account in Bloom and Molly’s memory bank,” as Classics scholar Kevin Crotty puts it (Crotty, Oct 2009, Lexington), it becomes “immutable” and “eternal.” Thus, as opposed to the linearity of oblivion, time, and death, memory corresponds to intemporality and stability:

> At the level of sung speech, memory thus has two meanings. First, it is a gift of second sight allowing the poet to produce efficacious speech, to formulate sung speech. Second, memory is sung speech itself, speech that will never cease to be and that is identified with the being of the man whom the speech celebrates.

(Detienne, 48-49)

This “twofold” meaning of memory brings together the definition of prophecy and the significance of memory in its relation to prophecy. The second part of this meaning, in fact, gives Molly’s first word one more twist: “Mn” not only resembles the beginning of “Μνεμοσυνή” and therefore corresponds to memory, it also signifies that Molly is Mnεμοσυνή herself, the goddess of memory, mother of the Muses. So she sings the “sung speech,” as she continually hums “Love’s Old Sweet Song” in her soliloquy, and never ends the song: “loves sweet sooooooooooong...” (U 18. 877). Her sounds, “Frseeeeeeeeeeefrong,” resemble
the fluidity of the river; even her “yes’s” echo the “hissing” of the water (Crotty, Oct 2009, Lexington). Thus, Molly as Mnēmosynē is the river Liffey, as is “Anna Livia Plurabelle” in Finnegans Wake. In this particular sense, memory is ever-present in the stream of life that incorporates the past, present, and the future.

In such a way, the significance of memory is clear: it incorporates the concept of prophecy and its relation to the passage of time, and makes the world a coherent whole. Detienne sums up this complex yet important relationship:

They [Mnēmosynē and Lēthē] are intelligible only in the context of thought obsessed by individual salvation and the problem of the soul in relation to time. At this level of thought, memory is not simply a gift of second sight that allows one to grasp the totality of past, present, and future; even more important, it is the terminus of the chain of reincarnations. Memory’s powers are twofold. As a religious power, it is the water of Life, which marks the end of the cycle of “metensomatoses”; as an intellectual faculty, it constitutes the discipline of salvation that results in victory over time and death and makes it possible to acquire the most complete kind of knowledge. (Detienne, 122)

The “totality of past, present, and future” indicates that memory is a comprehensive form of knowledge, rather than fragmented, which reflects Joyce’s ability and effort to see through the surface of Bloom and Molly’s fragmented language and knowledge to reach a coherent whole.

More importantly, as the “terminus of the chain of reincarnations,” memory finally demonstrates
the cyclicity of life: at the end of changing about and moving forward, there is memory. It is both the end and the beginning of this “chain”: the cycle is complete, and the future is only part of it.

Furthermore, this “complete knowledge” afforded by memory indicates the coherence of time and history, and prophecy presupposes this coherence (Crotty, April 2010, Lexington). In this regard, Bloom’s sense of justice figures into the relation between prophecy and coherence. In the “Cyclops” episode, when Bloom argues with the citizen, the citizen asks him: “Are you talking about the new Jerusalem?” (U 12. 1474). Bloom solemnly answers: “I’m talking about injustice” (U 12. 1475). This is one of the few moments during this day when Bloom, the womanly man, faces a challenge and stands up to it. He continues to explain: “...Force, hatred, history, all that. That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is really life. ... Love, ...the opposite of hatred” (U 12. 1481-85). As Odysseus and the old hero Halitherses both understand the significance of the omens of a bird (Homer, 20), Bloom, thus, understands the importance of justice that is the foundation for a coherent world and that love is the element that makes justice possible. Therefore, not only Bloom “remembers” the truth, Aletheia, but this truth is also “what is right,” or “just.” He becomes, in Detienne’s words, the “king of justice,” and the “master of truth” (Detienne, 62). Gifted with both the prophetic power and the power of realization, Bloom holds the “male key” that finally inserts the “unstable female lock” (U 17. 1215-17), which “prefigures sexual reunion” (Blamires, 226), while the confirmation of this “insertion” is Molly’s final “Yes.” Hence, the Homeric journey is complete, and the prophecy of the hero’s return is realized.
**Afterward**

In a book full of cosmic connections, Joyce curiously leaves his ending open. On the one hand, he hints that his characters will rise in the morning of June 17th 1904 and repeat their wanderings; on the other hand, Joyce has planted substantial evidence that hints Bloom and Molly’s final reunion. Perplexing it may seem, this is Joyce’s efforts, in the face of the overwhelmingly unknown future, to draw patterns from the known past and reconcile with the problematic present, in the hope to find a future that falls coherently into this existing pattern.

Indeed through this Bloomsday, Joyce shows how strong this possibility is for Bloom and Molly to reunite based on the past. Thus, even in the early twentieth century, when a mere promise from Tiresias may no longer suffice, one could not help but wonder: what could possibly stop the moon from becoming full again?
Works Cited


