

Title: To Wake or Not to Wake from History's Nightmare:
Exorcising the Maternal Abject in James Joyce's
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and *Ulysses*

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Abstract: Throughout Stephen Dedalus' twinned *bildungsroman*-like trajectory across James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, a clear obsession emerges as an enduring trope in Stephen's consciousness: the proper status of his relationship to his mother, May Dedalus. Notably, through evocative and grotesque imagery, by turns, related to bodily fluids and disease, Stephen's memories of his mother bear a sustained connection with the abject element of bodiliness. This paper takes a Kristevan approach to the abject and its relation to memory, along with insights from Kleinian maternal object-relations psychoanalysis, to argue that Stephen's struggle to assimilate his ambivalent feelings towards the memory of his mother signifies a larger modernist oscillation between nostalgia for the past and a drive to self-differentiate from the past into a new future, a future that will necessarily destroy the past's hold on the cultural mandates of the new moment. In this oscillation, this paper posits that a specifically gendered struggle emerges to engage ethically with the abjected "other" of the past while also preserving its own formal independence in modernism's apprehension of its own sense of abjection as a radical aesthetic movement in relation to a hegemonic "home" culture. This paper ultimately aims to trace a specifically feminine psychodynamic in relating to the matrix of cultural heritage as a central element of thinking about aesthetic production in the modernist moment and as a potential model for connecting modernism's energies to similar dynamics in later postcolonial fiction.

Bio: Jessica Kim is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of English and a Presidential Fellow at the University of Notre Dame. Her research interests lie in British, Irish, and Anglophone modernism, the novel, feminist and queer theory, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial theory. She is specifically interested in interrogating gendered approaches to cosmopolitanism, minority, and racial difference, as well as the development of a radical aesthetics related to the representation of abject identities, in British, Irish, and transnational modernist fiction. More broadly, she is also interested in investigating formal and political relationships between British modernist and postcolonial writing.