

Nymphs/Nymphets/Lolitas in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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This article is the outcome of the curiosity that has led its author to penetrate far along the secret, intricate, tortuous, and, at times, tragedy-strewn paths of the woods of female adolescence in Joycean narrative. So as to be able to undertake such a journey of regression to an immortal fictitious past, readers would do well to follow the nymphs of *Ulysses*. During the initial stage of the peregrination, travellers might well spot those divine and immortal creatures through the sights of the voyeur-narrator's viewfinder, becoming infatuated by those sensual "lovely seaside girls" (*U* 4.443), just as Bloom does in "Nausicaa" or Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's *Lolita*: "those lovely, maddening, thin-armed nymphets".¹

The first nymph² we are given an account of is referred to as "Calypso" in the fourth chapter of *Ulysses*, the name in Greek being a synonym of "veil" or "hiding" (*Odisea*, V, l. 1228, p. 122).³ In Homer's epic poem, the hero tells Alcinous of his sufferings and refers to the nymph as "la engañosa Calypso de lindas trenzas, terrible diosa. . ." (*Odisea*, canto VII, l. 245, p. 147) ["the deceitful Calypso with her lovely tresses, formidable goddess"]. The modernist version of Calypso seems to be embodied in the plump figure of Molly Bloom and her ambiguous nature, the decadent nymph and the wrinkled mermaid. Other female variations of the nymph and mermaid prototypes found throughout the novel are the young feminine characters who may be best understood as instances of the metamorphosis of Mrs. Bloom, thereby exemplifying the phenomenon of "Metempsychosis" (*U* 4.375), as explained in Bloom's inaccurate definition of the terms and in his reply to Molly's question. As an example by which to clarify to his wife the meaning of "metempsychosis," Bloom chooses the mythological creatures under discussion here as references: "What they called nymphs" (*U* 4.376-77). The next allusion to these creatures is explicit in the mediocre painting hanging in the Blooms' bedroom:

The Bath of the Nymph over the bed. Given away with the Easter number of *Photo Bits*: splendid masterpiece in art colours. . . . Not unlike her with her hair down: slimmer. . . . She said it would look nice over the bed. Naked nymphs: Greece. (*U* 4.369-73)

This representation of the nymph as a domestic “kitsch” model, not without a frisson of the pornographic about it, constitutes the idealised feminine beauty for the couple. This classical icon of the nymph frames their sexual repression, as well as their fantasies of maturity, through the silent contemplation of their intimacy. *The Bath of the Nymph* has its counterpart in the image of “the picture of halcyon days where a young gentleman . . . was offering a bunch of flowers to his ladylove . . . through her lattice window” (*U* 13.334-7), by means of which Gerty’s juvenile passions and fantasies are likewise projected.

Bloom’s repressed consciousness is absorbed into the silence of the painting of “The Nymph” as a visual image. By contrast, this representation is transformed into that of a full character in “Circe”, which translates verbally the anti-hero’s hallucinations among “[f]aces of hamadryads” (*U* 15.3341). “Circe” stands for Mr. Bloom’s subconscious and helps to reveal his obscurely feminine *alter ego*, together with suggestions concerning his supposedly ambiguous adolescent past: “In my presence. The powderpuff. . . . And the rest” (*U* 15.3402).

Nevertheless, the confirmation of the probable nymphal quality of Molly Bloom is provided in “Penelope,” where she explicitly remembers her fiery youth when she was 15 and 16 years old in Gibraltar, in 1886: “May yes it was May when the infant king of Spain was born” (*U* 18.781), a reference to Alphonse XII. Her memories are triggered by the recalling of her daughter’s birthday (15 years old, June 15), (*U* 18.415). Milly is another absent nymph, silent, out of sight, passive, and exiled in Mullingar, working in a photographer’s business.⁴ The reader knows little about her adolescent charms, which are silenced in the novel, except for the fact that she writes a letter to her father telling him about her potential, and older, suitor, Bannon, pieces of information that arouse all sorts of fears and anxieties in her parents. For all that, it is Leopold Bloom who seems to be the more concerned, dwelling on the consequences of his daughter’s flamboyant outburst, although, at the same time, a feeling of envy, associated with their lost youth, does indeed overwhelm both parents: “Saucebox” (*U* 4.423), “Coming out of her shell” (*U* 4.422), “Sex breaking out even then” (*U* 4.295). Milly is recalled as having played the role of the little seducer with “Poor old

professor Goodwin" (*U* 4.291). Bloom passes judgement on his precocious daughter's nymphal attributes and on her power to manipulate other men: "Attract men, small thing like that" (*U* 13.923), "Me have a nice pace" (*U* 13.927). Milly's father draws attention to the transformational capacity of children, and to the naturalness with which they impersonate roles, just at the time when he finds himself contemplating Gerty and Cissy, and their companions on the beach, a state of regression that takes him back to Milly's childhood and adolescence (*U* 13.896-7). Interspersed with the passive contemplation of other adolescent female characters, the absent daughter becomes a ghost figure who brings into sharp focus her parents' lost youth. It is upon these urban nymphs that Bloom projects his particular *Paradise Lost*, along with his wife, as she yearns for her irretrievable youth in Gibraltar in the midst of the phantasmagorical figments and spectres of first love. The theme of resurrection, or "reincarnation", as well as that of the constant ghostly presence of a first love, is a recurrent subject in Joyce, as is reflected in *Dubliners*, and in "The Dead" in particular. In fact, it is this hypothesis which, in Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), provides the justification for the unceasing pursuit of young girls as the mature man's obsession, according to the point of view of the narrator whose life seems to be overshadowed by the presence of Annabel, his first adolescent love now dead, as he finds himself "incarnating her in another" (Nabokov 15).

In keeping with such a thesis, it could be argued that Bloom, from within his anodyne and mediocre existence, also projects the infatuating spell cast by his first sexual encounters in Howth with a young Molly upon the voyeuristic contemplation of girls such as Gerty, Cissy and Edy Boardman in "Nausicaa," reported and framed as it is by this same narrator's filmic narrative technique. These young female Dubliners can be seen as multiple doubles of the mythical nymphs which are identifiable with Molly and her daughter. All these girls, as in the case of most of the characters and objects belonging to the novel, will be metamorphosed into renewed identities in "Circe" in a kind of "bloomean . . . metempsychotic" process. All these nymphs, objects of seduction for Bloom, share common elements. For example, Molly and Milly liked to write letters to themselves when they were young, Milly being associated with "[p]utting pieces of folded brown paper in the letterbox for her" (*U* 18.284-5), while imagining that a mature man maintains a correspondence with her. Likewise Molly addresses letters to herself in Gibraltar, a clear confirmation of her solitude and her narcissistic adolescent individualism (*U* 18.698-9). Letter-writing is the vehicle for the liberation of a repressed self, while also acting as a communicative

link with forbidden paradises, as exemplified by Bloom's pseudo-erotic, obscene correspondence with Martha Clifford.⁵

Another link which helps us to interrelate these nymphs is achieved stylistically. For example, Bloom highlights the colour blue as a distinctive feature associated with his daughter, and with Gerty in "Nausicaa" (*U* 13.108) or (*U* 13.199): "Her pale blue scarf loose in the wind with her hair" (*U* 4.435-6). Gerty and her female companions represent the real visualization of abstract entities, as revealed in the eulogizing of youth proclaimed in Boylan's song, which is performed by Milly's boyfriend, as we know from Milly's letter to her father: "Those lovely seaside girls" (*U* 4.442-3). These, when all is said and done, are nothing less than modernist mermaids, versions of the nymph myth.

The other nymphs that could be defined as mythical specimens of this type, according to the precepts of Greek mythology, are the young barmaids / mermaids in "Sirens," Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy, although they do not fully correspond to the prototypical pattern being considered in this discussion. On the other hand, Molly is clearly regarded as belonging to the prototypical category, since she is invoked as a mermaid in "her shift in Lombard street west, hair down" (*U* 11.1238-9), when Bloom sees "a poster, a swaying mermaid smoking" (*U* 11.300). Bloom even finds "shreds of hair, her maiden hair, her mermaid's, into the bowl" (*U* 11.222-3). It would seem that any character, object, word, or situation experienced by Bloom becomes reminiscent of Molly, who is idealised in terms of her glorious past youth as a siren or as a nymph.

Dublin, like Gibraltar, is a kind of pastoral Arcadia wherein all its female inhabitants seem to absorb Bloom's attention by means of an intriguing defocalisation technique that ironically enhances Molly as the novel's centre of attention. Molly's other nymphal replicas may be exemplified by reference to the figure of the young maid that her husband observes at the butcher's shop in the morning: "Pleasant to see first thing in the morning" (*U* 4.172-3). Her limbs (as in Gerty's case) and appealing youth are praised by Bloom: "Strong pair of arms" (*U* 4.150). It is worth pointing out here that women's limbs are appreciated in the descriptions of nymphs in Homer's *Odyssey*, as in the case of Nausicaa: "Y Nausicaa, de blancos brazos dió comienzo a la danza." (*Odisea*, canto VI, l. 101, p. 133). ["And white-armed Nausicaa set the dance a'goin'"]. Gerty is endowed with a similar feature in "Nausicaa": ". . . and felt her own arms that were white and soft just like hers." (*U* 13.341-2). Bloom's servant neighbour has "moving hams" (*U* 4.172) and "vigorous hips" (*U* 4.148), but the taste for the "New blood" (*U* 4.149) of this apparently

inoffensive, repressed urban vampire is also emphasized.⁶ Moreover, references to women's limbs is a constant feature of Homer's epic, due in part to the possible sexual connotations they generate, in keeping with a classical canon of beauty. Ino is referred to as "la de hermosos tobillos, la hija de Cadmo que antes era mortal dotada de voz..." (*Odisea*, V, l. 33, p. 125) ["the one with fine ankles, daughter of Cadmus, once a mortal gifted in voice"]. These allusions can be linked with the person of Gerty in "Nausicaa," whose feet and ankles are appreciated by Bloom throughout the period of his visual and visionary contact with her, and especially since these were the parts of the body that supposedly decent women were able to exhibit within the Catholic environment of the Dublin of 1904, known for its atmosphere of sexual repression. The errant Dubliner points out the importance of enjoying what is not fully and explicitly shown, i.e., the hidden, the silenced parts of the female body: "Darling, I saw, you, I saw all" (*U* 13.936).

The same sensual power emanating from limbs is alluded to in Nabokov's *Lolita*, where Humbert feels attracted to Lolita's way of walking or to Annabel's legs: "Her legs, her lovely live legs" (Nabokov 14). The sensual nature of Lolita's limbs also emerges when she is observed playing sports as an innocent child: "My Lolita had a way of raising her bent knee at the ample and springy start of the service cycle. . ." (Nabokov 231). This fascination with the girl at play has its counterpart in the allusion to the Greek nymphs who used to play ball games in the form of a ritual dance, as recounted in Homer's *Odyssey* (*Odisea*, VI, l. 100-2, p. 133). Likewise, a version of such games is performed by the young Sandymount group in "Nausicaa," as well as in Nabokov's novel:

Saw her going somewhere...Why does the way she walks—a child, mind you, a mere child!- excite me so abominably?... A faint suggestion of turned in toes. A kind of wiggly looseness below the knee prolonged to the end of each footfall. (Nabokov 41)

Worthy of note is Molly's singular reference to her feet in "Penelope", as if she had some sort of physical problem, a factor that would link her with Gerty's physical disability in "Nausicaa," "and but for that one shortcoming" (*U* 13.649-50), known beforehand by the narrator and revealed openly to Bloom and the reader only in the middle of the chapter (*U* 13. 771). But in spite of such a handicap, the limbs of the female play an important role in the voyeuristic relationship, especially since they bring into play the matter of sexual arousal, given their association with

movement: “. . . and perhaps he could see the bright steel buckles of her shoes if she swung them like that with the toes down” (*U* 13.424-5). The potential interaction of eroticism and imperfection is also the subject of comment by Molly, who states the following: “Boylan talking about the shape of my foot he noticed at once even before he was introduced . . . I was wagging my foot” (*U* 18.246-8); “I saw his eyes on my feet” (*U* 18.256-7); “how did that excite him because I was crossing them when we were in the other room first he meant the shoes” (*U* 18.259-61). It would seem that either women’s feet, ankles or knees are worthy of the hero’s praise as a sign of the adoration of, as well as the deference shown toward, female characters, as is exemplified in Homer’s epic: “éste dudó entre suplicar a la muchacha de lindos ojos abrazado a sus rodillas o pedirle desde lejos” (*Odisea*, VI, ll.42-3, p. 134) [“...the man in question was torn twixt imploring the maiden as he clung to her knees or begging her from afar”]; “Y mientras esto cavilaba, le pareció mejor suplicar desde lejos con dulces palabras, no fuera que la doncella se irritara con él al abrazarle las rodillas” (*Odisea*, VI, l. 20, p.134) [“While pondering this, the aptness of plying her with sweet words from afar crossed his mind lest the maiden become angered by his clinging to her knees”]. Gerty, like Penelope or Molly, is also viewed by the narrator as a young girl “with patrician suitors at her feet” (*U* 13.102-4). In the case of the fragmented nymphs of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, such references to possible defective limbs within this catalogue of young women’s traits may be considered as a parody of the classical Greek canon of beauty.

The sexual connotations of nymphs’ feet are explored by Humbert Humbert, as one of the many examples used by this American Professor of European Literature to parody the stylistic techniques of mediocre authors such as his counterpart, Quilty, or even himself, while employing his own lofty, artificial literary style to carry out that same parody. The narrator of *Lolita* focuses on the sensual power transmitted by a nymph’s feet. For example, he confesses to feeling attracted to “Lola the bobby-soxer . . . losing her slipper, rubbing the heel of her slipperless foot in its sloppy anklet, against the pile of old magazines. . .” (Nabokov 59).

The list of other possible nymphs in *Ulysses* could be expanded so as to include all those female creatures that walk the streets of Dublin, or who remain silent, hidden, observed only in photographs, such as “that dirty bitch in that Spanish photo he has nymphs” (*U* 18.563-4), whose sensuality Molly refers to as part of the recreation of herself in “Penelope”.

However, youth is not the only trait that endows a character with the distinction of being credited as a nymph. In fact, and not without a

certain degree of irony being involved, Molly is featured as possessing some of the sensual attributes associated with nymphs, at the age of 34, even if it is through the “method of denigration and subtraction” used shrewdly by Bloom to discredit his wife.⁷ This interpretation of Bloom’s attitude toward Molly allows for the emergence of a different perspective on the over-emphasized qualities of kindness and apparent innocence with which this average man is usually associated, while the cunning of his negative comments casts doubt upon his admiration for his spouse, thereby reinforcing his main character trait, that of being a liar and teller of tales, one which he shares with Odysseus.

Such a way of going about things, based on false admiration and devotion, as well as on a method of “subtraction,” comes to fruition and is given confirmation in Bloom’s taste for the passive contemplation of girls, who are like ghostly spirits, deconstructed versions of an idealised young Marion. Bloom’s deceitful nature may be compared to the Greek hero’s craftiness when praising the nymph Nausicaa during his return journey to Ithaca, comparing her to his wife, Penelope, for whom he supposedly yearns so much: “. . . sé muy bien cuánto te es inferior la discreta Penélope en figura y estatura al verla de frente, pues ella es mortal y tú immortal, sin vejez” (*Odisea* V,l. 216-7, p. 122) [“Having thee before me, indeed I know how inferior to thee is Penelope in frame and stature to the unbecoming Penelope, she being mortal after all, and thou immortal, free from aging”]. Immortality and youth are the supreme nymphal qualities the hero wishes to enjoy for himself, as a way of mitigating the effects of his own aging. Nevertheless, *Ulysses*, from the perspective of a work of realism, reveals this average man’s contradictions, i.e. Bloom’s, in the multiple passages in which Molly’s superior condition is underlined, as also occurs in Homer’s epic: “Bad policy however to fault the husband. . . . That’s where Molly can knock spots off them. . . . Just compare for instance those others” (*U* 13.966-970). Such inconsistencies within the stream of Bloom’s consciousness portray human nature as a web of contradictory variances, a consequence of the inevitability of betrayal being lodged at the core of human relationships.

Although feminine youth is exalted both by Bloom and Odysseus, as far as Joyce’s reinterpretation of Homer’s *Odyssey* is concerned, not only the ‘puberty vs. age’ issue may be seen as a legitimate factor contributing to the definition of a woman as a nymph, a source of reassurance for Molly Bloom, therefore, given her maturity and her yearning for the past. Consequently, it becomes necessary to impose limitations on the ways of defining certain female characters as nymphs,

especially in response to the sources of classical literary archetypes.⁸ In addition, some other contemporary literary variations regarding the nymph myth should be taken into account so that the true nature of such a creature can be fully acknowledged, such as the one proposed by Humbert, the main character and first-person narrator of Nabokov's *Lolita*. This pederastic narrator parodies the classical prototype and redefines the mythic archetype so as to create a new category, "the nymphet". Yet, such francophile etymological deference shown toward pubescent objects of desire, together with all the references to pederasty in History, as well as to the practise of it by literary figures such as Dante or Petrarch (Nabokov 19), are all used by the male character as critical support for his attempt to legitimize not only his sexual tastes, but also, something which is much more disturbing and controversial at the centre of such relationships, the multi-referentiality of affection. Nabokov may have found some sources for *Lolita's* characterization in the nymphs of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a question which may be clarified by giving consideration to Leopold Bloom's contemplation of the girls in "Nausicaa" as a way of mirroring frustration, fantasy, or a banished imaginary world. Humbert's definition of a nymph in *Lolita* reads thus:

These chosen creatures I propose to designate as "nymphets". . . . Between those age limits, are all girl-children nymphets? Of course not. Otherwise, we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholets, would have gone insane. (Nabokov 16)

Some parallelisms with Joycean and Homeric nymph sources may be established,⁹ identifiable in the metamorphic transformations of "Gerties" and "Mollies" into "Lolitas."¹⁰ Such a process, which includes the foregrounding of sexual connotations, as well as connotations of grief, is associated with the young protagonist's name, with the "the tender anonymity of this name with its formal veil" (Nabokov 52), as manifested in the names "Dolores" and "Carmen," (Nabokov 59), just two of the many given to *Lolita* by Humbert. It should not be forgotten that Molly is also recalled and alluded to in Bloom's reference to the name of "Dolores" in "Sirens": "Under a pear tree alone patio this hour in old Madrid one side in shadow Dolores she Dolores" (*U* 11.733-4). Consequently, it could be argued that girls, or women, share those exceptional feminine qualities referred to above, and contained in Nabokov's narrator's definition, depending on the nature of the voyeur's gaze, affected partly by the factor of his aging, rather than on the intrinsic

“nymphal” nature of the object of contemplation, even though both halves of this relational equation tend to become interactive.¹¹ As for Gerty in “Nausicaa,” she plays the role of the passive object of desire who is aware that she is also the object of contemplation. However, her characteristics do not fit the nymphal profile completely. As a result, the episode at Sandymount comes to be seen as a parodic, and pathetic, reinterpretation of the classical episode described in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where the nymph Calypso is presented as an active controller of the situation: she subjects the Greek hero to a seven-year period of captivity. Contrastively speaking, Gerty’s youth identifies her as a borderline case with regard to the nymphal, keeping in mind Humbert’s elucidation as mentioned above: “. . . sweet seventeen (though Gerty would never see seventeen again)” (*U* 13.172-3). She does not respond either to the ideal of physical perfection, given that Bloom perceives her body in fragmented form, while her lameness acts as a source of frustration and disappointment as far as his experience of ecstasy is concerned. Thus, such physical incompleteness, together with non-fulfilment of the requirements of the prototypical nymphal pattern, would seem to justify the establishment of a link with the case of Molly, a decadent nymph immersed in her maturity. This female character could be considered as the reply to Humbert’s question in *Lolita*: “A propos: I have often wondered what became of those nymphets later” (Nabokov 21). Molly Bloom exemplifies their decadence, therefore, while, at the same time, there is no doubting that she was one of those nymphs, one who livened up that dull place called Gibraltar. As a way of bringing this chain of suggestions to a close, it must be remembered that it is the ghost of lost youth that permeates her night in “Penelope”.

Another prevailing element that may be seen to unite these two pseudo-nymphs of Dublin town, Gerty and Molly, is the fact that the former may be the same age as Molly was when she first had sexual intercourse with Bloom in Howth, an experience recalled throughout the novel by her husband. Mrs Bloom was 19 when her daughter Milly was born. Early motherhood destroys nymphic qualities, as occurs in the case of *Lolita*’s and Molly’s birthgiving being accompanied by frustration, since such an event aborts the continuity of their outstanding past attributes. Regardless of their future misfortunes, these young girls shared a common past of precociousness in matters of seduction and perversion, as manifested in their relationships with mature men. For example, Molly Bloom reminisces about an ambiguous relationship with Mrs. Hester Stanhope and her husband, when she was 15 in “Gib” (*U* 18.617.) The matter of age difference is also applicable to the case of that same strange

couple who might reproduce the pattern of their relationship in the young, attractive and lonely girl, Molly, who recalls them in “she didn’t look a bit married just like a girl he was older than her wogger he was awfully fond of me” (U 18.623-5). The nature of the bond of affection uniting this triad remains a mystery. In spite of such ambiguity, we know through Molly’s stream of consciousness that Mrs. Stanhope wrote her a letter after Molly had left the colony in which she addresses her as “Doggerina” (U 18.613). Other references to dogs are explicit in her writing and seem to be relevant in their relationship: “have just had a jolly warm bath and feel a very clean dog” (U 18.615). The possible zoophilic tendencies marking the attitude adopted toward the adolescent Molly are reinforced in the latter’s intimate comments when she points out that “he used to break his heart at me taking off the dog barking in bell lane” (U 18.634-5). Being confused about her exact age at that time, “what age had I then” (U 18.641), she is able to look back on the ludic aspect of such an ambiguous relationship, as revealed in the reference to “the night of the storm I slept in her bed she had her arms round me” (U 18.641-2). Voyeurism, as paralleled in the relationship at a distance between Gerty and Bloom at the seaside in “Nausicaa,” was certainly one of the games shared by Molly and the Stanhopes: “he was watching me whenever he got an opportunity” (U 18.643). At the same time, Molly also feels attracted to this mature man: “he was attractive to a girl in spite of his being a little bald” (U 18.648-9). She confesses having considered the possibility of engaging in a relationship with him, which is what reveals her to be a potential antecedent of Nabokov’s *Lolita*, although moral restraints were at work upon the Gibralterian nymph: “it wouldn’t have been nice on account of her but . . . I could have stopped it in time” (U 18.651-2).

The same provocative infantile games are practised by *Lolita* and Humbert in Nabokov’s novel, such as the first spontaneous, innocent kiss she gives her stepfather (Nabokov 66). This kind of playfulness on the part of Molly as an adolescent nymph in Gibraltar is aimed at triggering Mr. Hester’s jealousy: “I lent him afterwards with Mulvey photo in it” (U 18.655). The same degree of complicity is achieved in the relationships shared by all three couples (Bloom / Gerty; Molly / Mr.Hester; *Lolita* / Humbert) who tend to find pleasure in playing within limits. The environment of the wild sea, or the anonymous privacy of motels in *Lolita*, helps these sexually repressed characters to liberate their forbidden desires, as occurs in the case of Gerty, or in the case Molly and Mr. Hester during their silent farewell: “I remember that day with the waves and the boats . . . he didn’t say anything he was serious I had the

high buttoned boots on and my skirt was blowing” (*U* 18.668-70). Molly puts down the monotony and dullness of her life at that time to her being without the Hesters (*U* 18.676), while sexual games seem to be a way of filling the void and the silence. Molly develops such a marked nymphal aura, characterized by a high degree of sensuality, precisely because she grows as a solitary young girl, without friends of her age, surrounded by older patriarchal figures who project upon her their idealised gaze in relation to female attributes:

Captain Groves and father talking about Rorkes drift and Plevna and sir Garnet Wolseley and Gordon at Khartoum lighting their pipes for them everytime they went out drunken old devil . . . trying to think of some other dirty story to tell up in a corner but he never forgot himself when I was there sending me out of the room. (*U* 18.690).

The sense of isolation characteristic of the British colony is compensated for by means of these pseudo-platonic relationships between adults and youngsters. For example, Molly will also arouse Floey Dillon’s father’s interest in her as a reminder of his past: “her father was an awfully nice man he was near seventy” (*U* 18.721-2). In fact, Molly’s relationships with her first lovers, Mulvey and Gardner, were lived fully on the borders of the forbidden, in the out-of-limits paradises of Gibraltar, at a time when she behaved as a real seducer: “I knew more about men and life when I was 15 than they’ll all know at 50” (*U* 18. 887-8). Molly’s nymphal quality is also voiced by her father, who considers the tempting qualities of his daughter in terms of an instrument by which to attract possible suitors (*U* 18.892-3), in the same manner as Bloom considers Milly’s sexual appeal, at the age of 15.

Other examples which contribute to the account of Molly’s mature sexuality as a girl in Gibraltar are related to her exhibitionism, given her keen awareness of being an object of desire when observed. Her recollections are echoed in *Lolita*’s exhibitionist behaviour toward her stepfather and protector, Humbert, as is exemplified by their first encounter at her mother’s house: “From a vantage point (bathroom window) saw Dolores taking things off a clothesline... After a while she sat down next to me . . . and began to pick up the pebbles between her feet” (Nabokov 41). Molly Bloom, for her part, enjoyed herself being an exhibitionist:

. . . with the little bit of a short shift I had up to heat myself I loved dancing about in it then make a race back into bed Im

sure that fellow opposite used to be there the whole time watching. (U 18.919-921)

References of this sort reveal the blending and overlapping of narrative time in Molly's present and past. But Molly also plays the role of the observer: "when I got up on the sofa cushions to see with my clothes up" (U 18.664-5). The allusions to Molly's body and clothes, "my shift drenched with the sweat" (U 18.662-3), may be seen to act as intertextual trigger mechanisms that allow bridges to be established with, for example, "Calypso" in Homer's *Odyssey*: ". . . y ella la ninfa, vistió una gran túnica blanca, fina y graciosa, colocó alrededor de su talle hermoso cinturón de oro y un velo sobre la cabeza. . ." (*Odisea*, V, l.228, p. 122) ["and she the nymph delicate and gracious, donned a splendid white tunic, placed a girdle of gold around her slender waist and a veil over her head"]. In the physical contact involving Humbert and Lolita there are just "(pyjamas and a robe) between the weight of two sunburnt legs" (Nabokov 59). This young "nymphet" also appears in Humbert's poem in *Lolita*, a composition penned in a flamboyant literary style, a variant of Gerty's artificial style, as well as of her frivolous ideals, both of which are parodied in the narrator's prose in "Nausicaa". Professor Humbert's descriptive poem reads thus: "Dolores Haze / hair: brown. Lips: scarlet / age: five thousand three hundred days / Profession: none, or 'starlet'" (Nabokov 255).

As far as Molly Bloom is concerned, there is a longing for the lost nymphal attributes that are now revealed in her daughter: "they all look at her like me when I was her age" (U 18. 1036). She confirms her identity as a nymph, comparing herself to the protagonist of *Bath of the Nymph*, so there can be no doubt about it: "would I be like that bath of the nymph with my hair down yes only shes younger . . . nymphs used they go about like that" (U 18.562-3). Gibraltar is the paradise of "[nymphs] naked as God made them" (U 18.440-1). Moreover, the colony seems to have had a reputation for promiscuity, liberal attitudes and illegal commerce during the nineteenth century.¹²

Accordingly, all these contemporary nymphs may be viewed as fatalistic creatures that infatuate their *voyeur* voyagers, like Odysseus's sirens enchanting travellers on their way back to Ithaca. Leopold Bloom puts the blame on these young girls as a way of justifying his acts: "Dress up and look and suggest and let you see and see more and defy you if you're a man to see that and, like a sneeze coming, legs, look, look and if you have any guts in you"(U 13.993-5). He calls Gerty a "little wretch" (U 13.1102), while no sense of guilt accompanies his behaviour.

Similarly, his attitude toward the female condition is full of stereotypical ideas and gender-based clichés, a contribution to the mitigation of his faults: “They don’t care. . . . Go home to nicey bread and milky and say night prayers with the kiddies” (*U* 13.853-5). Bloom loves to contemplate a fragmented feminine body, as if it were a cubist painting: “. . . see her as she is spoil all” (*U*13.855); as does Humbert in *Lolita*. The Literature Professor feels admiration for certain parts of his young beloved’s body which are never described in detail, his way of simulating a kind of pseudo-moral restraint. This could also be related to the myth of the sirens who, as mythological figures, are half-human, their hidden human parts having been metamorphosed into the physical nether parts of animals.¹³ Nevertheless, Bloom expresses the desire to possess a full representation of his wife, but not as she is in the present, but rather as she was when young (*U* 13.1091-2), a reminder of Gabriel Conroy’s thoughts in “The Dead”: “If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude”.¹⁴

Throughout “Nausicaa” Bloom reiterates his attraction for young girls, as Humbert does in Nabokov’s *Lolita*, although, at the same time, foregrounding the girls’ implicit participation in this mutual visual relationship. Allusions to menstruation (*U* 13.777-8), micturition (*U* 13.713-4), and to their willingness in matters of sexual complicity help Bloom to initiate a new class of relationship which can help him to ward off maturity, loneliness and a fear for old age: “O sweet little, you don’t know how nice you looked. I begin to like them at that age. Green apples” (*U* 13.1085-6) and “The new I want” (*U* 13.1104). Frustration, alienation, and a sense of having lost Molly and Milly cause him to project his fantasies upon these young girls, who function as substitutes for an idealized past. From the standpoint of Bloom’s patriarchal theories, the precursors of these *Lolitas* are “little chits of girls, height of a shilling in coppers, with little hubbies” (*U* 13.975-6), or “blushing bride[s]” (*U* 13.977-8) married to rich old men, or “Pretty girls and ugly men marrying” (*U* 13.836-7), manifestations of the myth of “Beauty and the beast” (*U* 13.836-7). In Nabokov’s novel we read: “. . . beast and beauty—between my gagged, bursting beast and the beauty of her dimpled body” (Nabokov 59). Here, vulgar and commonplace considerations with regard to female identity are expressed in a tone of paternalistic condescendence. Gerty also projects her illusions, dreams and fantasies upon this mature and unknown man, managing to captivate Bloom for a while, in the same manner as Nausicaa or Calypso manage to enthrall Odysseus. Difference in age between the partners concerned

seems to be the first requirement for the establishment of a prototypical pattern involving the nymph and her faun.¹⁵

Other possible resemblances between “Nausicaa” and Homer’s epic,¹⁶ in the case of the nymphs and their relation with the figure of the hero, have to do with Gerty as a young maid being abandoned and rejected by her boyfriend, a state of affairs which contrasts with Nausicaa’s future wedding in Homer’s epic poem. Odysseus prays to the gods so that they might provide her with a husband and a home (*Odisea*, VI, ll. 82-83, p. 136). These wishes have their counterpart in Gerty’s dreams of marriage with that mysterious mature man on the beach: Bloom. As for Nausicaa, she fantasizes about the errant traveller: “Ojalá semejante varón fuera llamado esposo mío habitando aquí” (*Odisea*, VI, p. 138) [“If only such a man, dwelling here with me, were known as my husband”]. In spite of such claims, both nymphs possess a strong spirit of independence and, in this sense, Nausicaa, as an unmarried woman, is called “la no sometida” (*Odisea*, VI, l. 228, p. 137) [“the untameable”], while Gerty reveals the contradictions that go with her age since, as a young, rebellious woman, also of independent spirit, she proclaims her idealism: “Come what might she would be wild, untrammelled, free. . .”(U 13.673).

Other shared features which emerge in relation to the matter of physical description may also be pointed out, as in the case of the reference to Nausicaa’s untidy clothes, which contrasts with Gerty’s concern with outward appearance. It is in this way that an indirect allusion to Homer’s *Odyssey*, with its basis in parody, is generated. Athene calls Nausicaa “indolent,” while she demands that the latter go off to wash her clothes in the river (*Odisea*, VI, l. 26-9). Nevertheless, in keeping with the characterization of adolescent stereotypes, Gerty tends to be quite presumptuous, as is Lolita in Nabokov’s narrative. The characterization of both girls is achieved not only by reference to the type of fashion magazines and facile reading material they enjoy, but through the narrator’s linguistic style, which imitates the frivolity associated with the adolescent universe. For example, as far as Humbert is concerned, Lolita’s attractiveness, ironically, lies in her interest in the same type of publications of which Gerty is also fond. Lolita is “[a] modern child, an avid reader of movie magazines . . . [and] an expert in dream-slow-ups”(Nabokov 49), in contrast to the narrator as an intellectual steeped in an academic and European training. In this sense, the contrast constitutes a metaphor for the clash between European culture and that of contemporary America. Yet, Lolita, in spite of the possible criticism that may be levelled against her, is not subjected to the effects of the parodic

tone of the narrator of “Nausicaa” when dealing with Gerty. Lolita is exonerated by her charmed observer, who prefers not to express disapproval of her superficial attributes, which are clearly a consequence of the influence of pulp fiction and advertising. It is this kind of disapproval that could just as easily be directed against Joyce’s nymphs, according to the description of them offered in “Nausicaa,” or against the true nature of Molly as an adolescent in Gibraltar, to which only incomplete access is allowed:

And neither is she the fragile child of a feminine novel. What drives me insane is the twofold nature of this nymphet. . . , a kind of eerie vulgarity, stemming from the snub-nosed cuteness of ads and magazines pictures, from the blurry pinkness of adolescent maidservants in the Old Country. . . . (Nabokov 44)

Both female characters also share the same physical features, hair colour being one. While Lolita is said to have “brown curls” (Nabokov 48), it is the perception of real time sequences by an impressionistic narrator that would seem to give rise to the appreciation that is offered of the changing tones of Gerty’s hair. At one moment we are told of it being “dark brown with a natural wave in it” (*U* 13.116-7), while, at another moment, the narrator alludes to how “a daintier head of nutbrown tresses [had never been seen until then]” (*U* 13.510).

In an allusion to classical catalogues of female physical attributes, facial traits are given descriptive emphasis, as in the case of Gerty and Lolita’s eyes: “I composed a madrigal to the soot-black lashes of her pale-gray vacant eyes. . .”(Nabokov 44). Such idealization may suggest a connection with the praising of Gerty’s “Greekly perfect” beauty (*U* 13.89), while in keeping with the precepts of “Madame Vera Verity” (*U* 13.109-110), “Gerty’s [eyes] were of the bluest Irish blue, set off by lustrous lashes and dark expressive brows” (*U* 13.107-8). These nymphs, as scaled-down, provincial Madame Bovary(s), find in trivial literature a way of escaping from provincial “paralysis” into other worlds. Magazines and the world of advertising constitute the filter through which their dreams slip. Reading was considered an extremely dangerous activity for women, according to those nineteenth-century critics who thought that coming into contact with imaginary worlds could expose women to the risks entailed in hysteria and schizophrenia.¹⁷

Other physical attributes include Nausicaa’s references to her white arms and eyes, she being “joven de hermosos ojos” (*Odisea*, VI, l. 113, p. 133) [“a young maiden with beautiful eyes”]. Gerty is praised for her

“ivorylike purity” (*U* 13.88). Cissy Caffrey is also “a girl lovable in the extreme” (*U* 13.35), who has “gipsylike eyes” (*U* 13.36), when seen up close by the narrator, a reference which may be sensed as a recalling of Molly’s “Moorish eyes” (*U* 13.114-5), as well as of her mother’s exoticism. Sight is the vehicle that provides the communicative frame for these illicit relationships which are experienced via the senses. Bloom observes Gerty and her frolicsome companions from a distance, while Odysseus is in a more passive position, since he is the one being observed: “Fuese entonces a sentar a lo lejos junto a la orilla del mar, resplandeciente de belleza y de gracia, y la muchacha lo contemplaba” (*Odisea*, VI, ll. 234-5, p. 138) [“So did he go far hence to sit on the shoreline, splendid in his manliness and elegance, and the maid continued to contemplate him”]. Nausicaa has a more active role in Homer. She addresses the hero, while Gerty and Bloom never speak to each other in “Nausicaa”, since intermediary voices (those of Cissy and Edy Boardman, together with the twins’ baby talk) are depended on as the way of manifesting the verbalization of their most anodyne thoughts.¹⁸ That is why the allusions to the senses of sight and sound acquire such relevance, since they can be understood as a way of covering over the frustration caused by the absence of real physical intercourse associated with the sense of touch. Smell is the other relevant sense to which allusion is made in the “Nausicaa” episode, as manifested in Bloom’s reference to the pervasive smell of roses which, in turn, connects Gerty with that mysterious episode involving the roses she brought to Father Conroy, who is celebrating a religious activity at the same time in Sandymount Church. Bloom is capable of distinguishing Molly’s smell: “. . . know her smell in a thousand” (*U* 13.1024). In “Penelope”, Molly also confesses her sexual attraction for curates and their incense smell (*U* 18.118-120). All these indirect links, apparently disconnected, which bridge back to the smell of roses may be envisaged as the way of shedding light upon the riddle of a possible obscure episode experienced by Gerty, who is infatuated with Father Conroy, to whom she confesses her mysterious and ambiguous sins, and by whom she is forthwith freed through pardon: “. . . when she told him about that in confession” (*U* 13.453-4). The fact that the narrator turns back the focus back to Gerty’s past crush on the priest may be considered a cunning retrospective technique which is employed as a way of hinting at the parallelism between the furtive, quasi-sexual, voyeuristic encounter with Bloom on the beach and the riddle of the hushed up, murky episode involving Father Conroy. It could be deduced that the narrator wants us to see Gerty as an experienced nymph, as far as men are concerned, thereby exposing

corruption's blurred limits. Gerty and Bloom's visual flirtation is simply veneer, the reflection of how a more morbid and possibly ambiguous situation is being implicitly pointed out by the narrator in the mentioning of Gerty's visit to the priest, when she probably brought the same flowers to which reference is made in the simultaneous action going on at Father Conroy's place. Those flowers are destined to be burnt as a possible symbolic act of redemption for sins committed in the past: "... one of the candles was just going to set fire to the flowers" (*U* 13.554-5). It is the apparently insignificant "canary" (and not the cuckoo), together with the reference to the flowers, that sheds light on these indirectly disclosed relationships, connecting past and present:

... clock but they had a clock she noticed on the mantelpiece white and gold with a canarybird that came out of a little house to tell the time the day she went there about the flowers for the forty hours' adoration. ... (*U* 13.461-3)

It is the bird-in-the-clock's accusatory singing of "Cuckoo" in "Nausicaa" at this particular moment in the present that triggers the retrospective connections with darkness, signalling thereby Gerty's repressed memories. At the end of the chapter, the narrator focuses on the apparently trivial canary clock, which leads us into a consideration of the possibility that Gerty's knowledge of the world, together with a sensibility capable of striking a chord with Bloom's singular nature (whatever it may consist of, having to do with pederasty even, and not merely adultery, as has been traditionally suggested), may well have its origins in her past experience with an adult. Thus, found subsumed within the allusion in the present to the canary are the reverberations of a dark secret in Gerty's stream of consciousness:¹⁹

... because it was a little canarybird that came out of its little house to tell the time that Gerty MacDowell noticed the time she was there because she was as quick as anything about a thing like that, was Gerty MacDowell, and she noticed at once that that foreign gentleman that was sitting on the rocks looking was

Cuckoo. ... (*U* 13.1299-1304)²⁰

Bloom's current infatuation with girls detonates memories of Molly's nymphal past in Gibraltar. Bloom is not merely jealous of Molly's supposed adulterous affair with Blazes Boylan. As he contemplates Molly's nymph sisters, Gerty MacDowell and Cissy, on the beach, what

makes him jealous is her past and her Spanish background as a nymph, described and reported from the standpoint of his perspective, the potential antecedent of a similar perspective in *Lolita*. Mr. Bloom now sees himself as one of those mature men who fell in love with a pubescent Molly Bloom in the colony, a version of this being reproduced later, from the perspective of Molly, in “Penelope” as coda:

Gibraltar. Looking from Buena Vista. O’Hara’s Tower. The seabirds screaming. Old Barbary ape that gobbled all his family. Sundown, gunfire for the men to cross the lines. Looking out over the sea she told me. Evening like this, but clear, no clouds. I always thought I’d marry a lord or a rich gentleman coming with a private yacht. *Buenas noches, señorita. El hombre ama la muchacha hermosa.* Why me? Because you were so foreign from the others. (*U* 13.1204-1210)

The fatal and illicit attraction Odysseus, Bloom, and Humbert Humbert feel toward their nymphs is, in part, due to the fact that extreme physical solitude, or a sense of inner loneliness in these heroines and their admirers, contributes to the development of sexual fantasies which act as compensatory mechanisms by which feelings of loss can be countered. For example, Alcinous’s daughter remains indifferent when she is on her own, while the pensive Gerty finds herself separated from the play of the other nymph: “Temblorosas se dispersan cada una por un lado. . . . Sola la hija de Alcínoo se quedó” (*Odisea*, VI, l. 140-1, p. 134) [“Excited they part, each in a different direction. . . . The daughter of Alcinous remained alone”]. Gerty, as a wanderer absorbed in her woes, distances herself from her companions as a way of defining her own limits as a person. Solitude is what brings together both victim and victimizer within such interdependent relationships. For example, Lolita apparently has no way of escape, no alternative, since she is completely on her own. Once she decides to free herself from Humbert, in the name of her love for an idealised Quilty, her choice brings terrible consequences in its wake. Humbert Humbert is struck by her mature rhetorical statement: “You know, what’s so dreadful about dying is that you are completely on your own.” (Nabokov 284).

To conclude, the nymphs of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Nabokov’s *Lolita* are reinterpretations of their classical originals, which reveal the characterization of females in terms of a deconstructed and fragmented identity, especially in those cases concerned with the exploration of the years of youth, a period in which both body and mind stand halfway

between childhood and maturity, between innocence and corruption. This liminal form of existence finds its correspondence in the nature of those mythological creatures that are trapped somewhere between their human and animal dimensions.

Notes

¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000) 21. All future quotations will be documented parenthetically.

² By “nymphs” I understand the following: “Young maidens in classical mythology, minor female divinities of nature, woods, groves, springs, streams, rivers, etc. They are young and beautiful maidens and well disposed towards mortals. They were not immortal, but their life span was several thousand years. Particular kinds of nymphs were associated with the various provinces of nature . . . [and include] dryads; hamadryads; naiads; nereids; oreads.” See J. J. Cooper, ed., *Brewer’s Book of Myth and Legend* (Oxford: Helicon, Cassel Publishers, 1992).

³ All references to Homer’s *Odyssey* are from the following Spanish translation. Homero, *Odisea*, Ed. y trad. José Luis Calvo. Letras Universales (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987). All quotations of extracts from Homer’s *Odyssey* are the author’s own translations from the above Spanish edition.

⁴ For a discussion of the reasons for Milly’s absence from the Bloom household, and of the hints of incest arising from it, see Jane Ford, “Why is Milly in Mullingar?” *James Joyce Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1977) 436-49.

⁵ For an explicit visual recreation of the power of obscene language in the love-letter writing involving James Joyce and his wife Nora Barnacle, see the film based on Brenda Maddox’s biography of Nora Joyce: Pat Murphy, dir. *Nora* (Momentum Pictures, 2001).

⁶ The vampire, according to medieval Bestiaries, stands for black magic associated with the Devil. It is also a symbol of the transmigration of the soul, alluded to in “Calypso,” and a link to the presence of the bat in “Nausicaa,” an animal that not only represents a vampire, but also the transmigration of Bloom’s soul, within what may be considered a modernist parody of vampirism. As a way of compensating for his age, Bloom usurps Gerty’s youth through voyeurism. An obvious point of reference in any account of vampirism is Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), where the search for eternal youth is one of its most relevant themes: “Stoker’s Count Dracula was a composite figure derived from Vlad the Impaler and the Countess Báthori, who was arrested in 1610 for murdering girls. It was her habit to wash in the blood of her several hundred girl victims in order to maintain her skin in a youthful condition.” See Cooper 295-6.

⁷ See Francisco García Tortosa, Introduction, in James Joyce, *Ulysses*, trans. Francisco García Tortosa and María Luisa Venegas Lagüens, Letras Universales (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000) xci.

⁸ The presence of nymphs in classical literature is frequent. Reference may be made to the Nereids, since their nature seems to be relatable to that of Gerty and her friends in “Nausicaa” through the links that may be established with the nymph of that same name and her female companions in Homer’s epic. Lolita in Nabokov’s novel shares with Doris the same eye colour. It is Ivor H. Evans who reminds us of the relationship between the Nereids, the sea nymphs of Greek mythology, the fifty daughters of Nereus, and “grey-eyed” Doris. The best known of them are Amphitrite, Thetis, and Galatea. Milton refers to another, Panope, in his *Lycidas*. And the names of all the nymphs will be found in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen, Book IV*, c.xi, 48-51. See Ivor H. Evans, ed., *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (London: Wordsworth, 1993) 751-2.

⁹ For a reference to Vladimir Nabokov’s relationship with James Joyce during the Paris years, see Vladimir Nabokov, *Habla Memoria*, trans. Enrique Murillo (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994) 11. The Russian-American author refers here to Gisèle Freund: *James Joyce in Paris: His Final Years*.

¹⁰ I draw here on the following definition: “Lolita, n. M20. The main character in a novel (1958) of the same name by Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977); A sexually precocious schoolgirl”. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, vol. 1, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

¹¹ In a further example of intertextuality in the case of the contemplation of a nymph, symbolically mutilated / dissected like an insect by her victimizer in this case, and within a genre that explores the control of power in social and personal relations, John Fowles’ *The Collector* may be used as a subject of study (London: Vintage, 1998). Frederick Clegg, the kidnapper, compares his captive Miranda to a “mermaid” (Fowles 9). The same subject of the young woman who is made captive by a paternal figure (a mirror version of the Nausicaa theme, that of the nymph who captures the hero) is developed in Benito Pérez Galdós, *Tristana*. 1987. Madrid: Editorial Gredos. In this novel the reference to imperfect female limbs, paralleled in Gerty’s lameness in “Nausicaa,” may be interpreted as a metaphor of fragmented femininity. Mutilation of the female body may also be seen as representing the limitations placed upon Tristana’s freedom, associated with notions of castration and incomplete sexuality, a phenomenon which is also recognizable in Joyce’s novel in Gerty’s lameness, as well as in Molly’s passivity in remaining in bed all day. It should be noted that in Nabokov’s *Lolita*, there are polysemic references to lameness, as is the case of Lolita being called by Humbert [“Lo, little limp Lo!”] (Nabokov 159) or the reference to the attractive vulnerability of her limbs [“. . . a freak blow on the ankle which made her gasp . . . and then, jumping on one leg”] (Nabokov 286). See also Italo Svevo, *La novella del buen vecchio e della bella fanciulla*, Giorgio Barberi-Squarotti, ed (Lungro Marco, 1997).

¹² It would seem relevant here to point out that Prosper Mérimée's Carmen goes to Gibraltar precisely with the aim of obtaining money from a British officer in exchange for her sexual favours. Some common features shared by Carmen and Molly could be derived from this possible textual influence on Joyce's characterization of Molly Bloom. Reference may also be made to Lunita Laredo's unknown past, as a sensual, provocative woman possibly involved with British military personnel. See Prospero Mérimée, *Carmen*, trad. y ed. Luis López Jiménez y Luis Eduardo López Esteve, Letras Universales (Madrid: Cátedra) 164-66.

¹³ Sirens constitute a type of nymph with the body of a bird and a female human head, and not with a fish tail, although this is the most frequent way or representing. For paintings and reproductions of sirens as fish and birds, see Joseph A. Kestner. "Before *Ulysses*: Victorian Iconography of the Odysseus Myth", *James Joyce Quarterly* (28.3) 565-594. Within the tradition of the fairy tale, see Hans Christian Andersen. *The Little Mermaid*. Here the siren has to sacrifice her voice in exchange for human limbs if she wants to marry the prince. According to the Spanish author Espido Freire's interpretation of the story, with regard to the phenomenon of the symbolic fish tail, the siren's exchange may be considered an error that makes explicit her incapacity and her fear of not being accepted as she really is. See Espido Freire, *Primer Amor* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2000) 106.

¹⁴ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000) 211.

¹⁵ It is worthy of note that the masturbation episode in "Nausicaa" in *Ulysses* may contain visual reminiscences of Debussy's adaptation of the same mythological setting in the musical composition entitled *L'Après Midi d'un Faune*, part of the Russian ballet performed in 1916 at the Paris Opera House, during which the celebrated dancer Vaslav Nijinsky masturbated on stage, surrounded by his nymphs, thereby causing a public scandal.

¹⁶ For an exhaustive study of the Homeric parallelisms in Joyce's novel, see Manuel Almagro Jiménez, *James Joyce y la Épica Moderna: Introducción a la lectura de "Ulises"*. (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1985).

¹⁷ See Barbara Leckie, "Reading Bodies, Reading Nerves: 'Nausicaa' and the Discourse of Censorship", *James Joyce Quarterly* (34.1/2) 65-85. For a complete overview of "Nausicaa" criticism with regard to Joyce's novel, see Garry Leonard, "The Virgin Mary and the Urge in Gerty." *Studies in Literature* (23) 3-23. For a specific study of Gerty's characterization, see also Suzette Henke, "Gerty MacDowell: Joyce's Sentimental Heroine", in *Women in Joyce*, eds. Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982).

¹⁸ Gerty's companions, with their loud voices, noisy ball games and babies, constitute the visualization of the repressed selves of Gerty and Bloom. For this interpretation, see Jen Shelton, "Bad Girls: Gerty, Cissy and the Erotics of Unruly Speech", *James Joyce Quarterly* (34.1/2) 87-102.

¹⁹ Perhaps this interpretation of the possible offence to a “nymph” could be derived from an incident that Nora Joyce lived through as an adolescent, which involved being abused by a priest. This episode from the past came to obsess James Joyce. For an explicit report on this biographical detail, see Brenda Maddox, *Nora. A Biography of Nora Joyce* (London: Minerva, 1989) 28-29.

²⁰ For an historical revision of the literary allusions to the cuckoo, and its associations with cuckoldry, see Ivor H. Evans, ed., *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Phrase & Fable* (London: Wordsworth, 1993) 285-6.