At the end of the "Cyclops" episode, Leopold Bloom triumphantely defeats the one-eyed Citizen and rises as prophet of a new humanism, proposing a gospel of love for the twentieth century. Bloom's heroism may seem shamefully deflated by the "fall" that occurs in "Nausicaa." On Sandymount strand, Bloom masturbates to the tune of church bells and the noise of fireworks. Critics who interpret *Ulysses* as a mock-heroic novel often cite "Nausicaa" as prime evidence of Joyce's satirical purpose. But in a world of natural phenomena, Bloom's erotic stimulation is just as understandable as that of Rumbold's hanged man. Masturbation is a physical, unromantic response to Gerty MacDowell's flirtation—a seduction inspired by the florid prose of Dublin ladies' magazines.

Gerty springs, like a "smiling soubrette," from the fashion pages of the *Lady's Pictorial*, from the pulp fiction of the "Princess novelette," and from the advertising columns of the
Irish Times. Her embarrassing proximity to the females of popular literature may account for the fact that she is frequently dismissed by readers as a sugary and ephemeral caricature.

Much of the serious criticism devoted to “Nausicaa” centers on Gerty’s erotic culpability. Should we consider the young woman a seductive “nymph” or a virginal “nun”? Fritz Senn describes her as an “avatar of the temptress.” Mark Shechner suggests that Gerty represents “the narcissistic phase of Irish Catholic adolescence whose primary role in Joyce’s life and fantasies was to provoke desire and deny fulfillment.” If Gerty is a joke, she is nevertheless the *reductio ad absurdum* of a long line of virginal villains who are implied in her portrait.

Are we to believe that Gerty willfully seduces Leopold Bloom? Or is she the naive object of Bloom’s sexual exploitation, a woman more sinned against than sinning?

According to Fritz Senn, Gerty MacDowell may be Joyce’s autobiographical persona filtered through an ironic sex-role reversal. Senn points out that Gerty seems to possess all the sentimental, languishing, romantic tendencies that Joyce himself exhibited in his epistolary affair with Martha Fleischmann. Reportedly, Joyce once sent Martha a postcard “addressed from ‘Odysseus’ to ‘Nausicaa.’” Does the author want us to empathize with his fictional Nausicaa? Or is he using her satirically to exorcise the ludicrous traits of his own personality?

The answer to such speculation is necessarily ambivalent. Despite her narcissism and her vanity, Gerty MacDowell remains a sympathetic figure. Joyce parodies her willful self-deception; but he understands her foibles, and he respects her relentless compulsion to fictionalize experience. Like Leopold Bloom, and like Stephen’s Shakespeare, Gerty creates from the pain of personal loss. She consciously refashions her life in the mode of popular romance. She shares with Bloom a distaste for the brutal “world of men,” and she uses art to mitigate a reality that otherwise might prove intolerable.

To shield her wounded sensibilities, Gerty has withdrawn to the comforting shelter of feminine imagination. She is desper-
ately trying to like herself; and in an effort to mold a positive self-image, she compensates for bodily deformity by height­ened pride in physical attractiveness. What initially appears to be narcissism may also be interpreted as a bold defiance of isolation. Once we learn of Gerty’s lameness, we have to admire the bravado of her self-assertion in the competitive sexual market of 1904. In her heart, Gerty harbors a royal, fairy-tale personality: “Had kind fate but willed her to be born a gentlewoman of high degree in her own right and had she only received the benefit of a good education Gerty MacDowell might easily have held her own beside any lady in the land” (p. 348). Fate has cast a wicked spell on her frame. Only love can release her by revealing the innate spiritual refinement that will make Gerty desirable “for herself alone” (p. 358).

The poignant, satirical jest of “Nausicaa” is directed not against Gerty, but against the manipulative society of which she is a victim. The episode offers a striking parody of female socialization in the modern world. Joyce’s portrait of Gerty MacDowell, composed over fifty years ago, provides an incisive criticism of a media-controlled self-image.

Gerty has been reared on sentimental journalese, and her mind has been shaped by the clichéd rhetoric of Dublin fashion magazines: “It was Madame Vera Verity, directress of the Woman Beautiful page of the Princess novelette, who had first advised her to try eyebrowline which gave that haunting ex­pression to the eyes, so becoming in leaders of fashion, and she had never regretted it” (p. 349). The aim of Madame Verity’s commercial art is not “truth,” as her name would imply, but a simpering obfuscation of reality. Gerty has been sucked into a whirlpool of commercial fantasy that promises instant panacea. Relief is just a swallow (or a touch) away.

Had Gerty consulted the Irish Times on 16 June 1904, she would have been offered the wonders of “Beecham’s Pills,” a medicine “specially suitable for females of all ages” and a mandatory prescription for “every woman who values health.” She might have been allured by the more dazzling advertisement for “Carter’s Little Liver Pills,” guaranteed to cure “bili-
ousness, sick headaches, torpid liver, indigestion, constipation, yellow skin, dizzy, and furrows on the tongue.” Or she could have been seduced by a simple panacea such as “Mother Seigel’s Syrup,” a mixture promising relief from any troubling symptom. It is ironically appropriate that Gerty should be attracted to Leopold Bloom, whose career as an ad canvasser depends on public gullibility. The twentieth-century media provide opiates for the masses. Commercial art deceives, manipulates, and ultimately paralyzes.

Subjected to a daily bombardment by countless promises of feminine fulfillment, Gerty longs for the miracle drug or elixir that will transform her into Cinderella. She helplessly pines for the beautiful Prince Charming who will awaken her from adolescent obscurity. Gerty feels convinced that if she religiously makes use of all the products offered by Madame Verity and Woman Beautiful, she will surely succeed in attracting the man of her dreams, in achieving upward social mobility, and in gaining a vicarious identity through masculine approval.

 Needless to say, Gerty MacDowell is male-identified. And the paucity of masculine affirmation in her life intensifies her alienation. Her father is an alcoholic; Father Conroy a celibate; and Reggy Wylie has exhibited little affection since his days in short pants. In a society where males are enervated, impotent, or simply uninterested, male-identification may be disastrous.

Gerty’s monologue springs from the sentimental view of love parodied in “Cyclops”: Nausicaa “loves to love love” and is convinced that “this person loves that other person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody” (p. 333). Joyce described “Nausicaa” to Frank Budgen as an episode “written in a namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style with effects of incense, mariolatry, masturbation, stewed cockles, painters’ palette, chitchat, circumlocutions, etc., etc.” Gerty not only speaks, but thinks, in a “namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy” style.

She perceives herself as a woman of “innate refinement” and “queenly hauteur,” “a fair specimen of winsome Irish girlhood.” She was pronounced beautiful by all who knew her
... Her figure was slight and graceful, inclining even to fragility but those iron jelloids she had been taking of late had done her a world of good much better than the Widow Welch's female pills and she was much better of those discharges she used to get and that tired feeling. The waxen pallor of her face was almost spiritual in its ivory-like purity...” (p. 348). Colorless and anemic, Gerty has the waxen pallor of a Greek nymph, a plaster saint, or the Catholic Virgin, “Tower of Ivory.” She dresses in “electric blue,” reminiscent of Mary and of the gods who drink electric light.

Gerty scorns the body, disdains eating in public, and would prefer a more lyrical diet: “she didn’t like the eating part when there were any people that made her shy and often she wondered why you couldn’t eat something poetical like violets or roses” (p. 352). Gerty bears a striking resemblance to the spiritualized nymph of “Calypso,” who protests in “Circe”: “We immortals, as you saw today, have not such a place and no hair there either. We are stonecold and pure” (p. 551). The nymph promises Bloom a respite from desire: “Only the ethereal. Where dreamy creamy gull waves o'er the waters dull’ (p. 552). Such languid virtue is contingent on sexual repression. Once threatened, the nymph draws a poniard and tries to dispatch Bloom. The plaster saint cracks, emitting a cloud of stench from her private parts. She proves to be the Janus-image of Bella Cohen, “mutton dressed as lamb” (p. 554). Similarly, the lamb-like Gerty can break out of her reverie to express envy, cattiness, or sheer ill temper. Erotic desire smolders beneath the surface of her romantic musings and finally explodes in pyrotechnic fury. Like Leopold Bloom, Gerty sustains herself through the copious creations of a fertile imagination. Bloom dreams of erotic titillation; Gerty yearns for spiritual passion. Both share a pathetic isolation from consummated physical love.

Caught in a trap of self-deception, Gerty MacDowell places naive faith in all the opiates her society has to offer: religion and poetry, eyebrowleen and romantic myth. In a “toilettable” drawer, she has stashed “her girlish treasures trove, the tortoiseshell combs, her child of Mary badge, the whiterose scent,
the eyebrowline, her alabaster pouncetbox" and her confession album with "some beautiful thoughts written in it in violet ink that she bought in Hely's of Dame Street" (p. 364). Like Mary Dedalus, the young girl collects trinkets and relics of a paralyzed past. She regards religion as a kind of cosmetic that assuages the harshness of reality. As a "child of Mary" sodalist, she is eligible to participate in the Lotus-rite earlier observed by Bloom in All Hallows Church: "Something going on: some sodality. Pity so empty. Nice discreet place to be next some girl.... Good idea the Latin. Stupefies them first" (p. 80). Popular culture and popular religion both offer "one way out" for a society that demands narcotic forgetfulness. Myth consumes the spirit and lays the weary heart to rest in a heavenly ideal. "'It would be like heaven. For such a one she yearns this balm summer eve'" (p. 352). The metaphysical power of that final, consummating kiss can never be described in words. The ecstasy of love, like divine beatitude, is ineffable. As the media assure Gerty, romance is the "one great goal" of every young girl's existence.

Brainwashed by popular literature, the ingenue is convinced that love should be "a woman's birthright," her chief preoccupation, and her final happiness. Hence Gerty's frustration at the difficulty of claiming a matrimonial heritage. She feels like a disinherited female, but she continues "hoping against hope" (p. 351). She pathetically makes use of the least sign of interest or affection to fire her romantic dreams: "Gerty MacDowell yearns in vain. Yes, she had known from the first that her daydream of a marriage... was not to be. He was too young to understand. He would not believe in love, a woman's birthright. The night of the party long ago in Stoers' (he was still in short trousers) when they were alone and he stole an arm round her waist... and snatched a half kiss (the first!) but it was only the end of her nose" (p. 351). Hence the source of Gerty's elaborate dreams of "weddingbells ringing for Mrs Reggy Wylie T. C. D."; of "expensive blue fox"; of love and marriage; of husband, home, and morning "breaky." That memory of Reggy's juvenile kiss seems to be one of the few
treasures in Gerty’s barren hope-chest. Like the Citizen in “Cyclops,” she fosters an inflated, romanticized perception of herself. She constructs “worlds” from words, gestures, a peck on the nose, and a vacation postcard. As Bloom later remarks: “She must have been thinking of someone else all the time. What harm? Must since she came to the use of reason, he, he and he. First kiss does the trick. The propitious moment. Something inside them goes pop. Mushy like, tell by their eye, on the sly. First thoughts are best. Remember that till their dying day” (p. 371).

Rejected by Reggy, the child-lover who has ceased to ride his bicycle in front of her window, Gerty yearns for an older man who will offer her both passion and compassionate understanding: “No prince charming is her beau ideal to lay a rare and wondrous love at her feet but rather a manly man with a strong quiet face who had not found his ideal, perhaps his hair slightly flecked with grey, and who would understand, take her in his sheltering arms, strain her to him in all the strength of his deep passionate nature and comfort her with a long long kiss” (pp. 351–52).

Like Stephen Dedalus, Gerty MacDowell has been deserted by an alcoholic “consubstantial” father. God, Leopold Bloom, and Father Conroy (“tree of forbidden priest” [p. 375]) all seem promising surrogates. She considers, but rejects, the carbuncly gentleman strolling along the beach: “She would not like him for a father because he was too old or something or on account of his face (it was a palpable case of doctor Fell) or his carbuncly nose with the pimples on it” (p. 354). Out of her own sense of isolation, Gerty turns to the dark stranger roaming the strand: “He was in deep mourning, she could see that, and the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face” (p. 357). With surprising accuracy, Gerty identifies Bloom as a grass widower. She intuits more about his mental state than even he will acknowledge. Gerty sympathizes with Bloom’s melancholy because she feels his pain. She is “heartbroken about her best boy throwing her over. . . . She had loved him better than he knew. Lighthearted deceiver and fickle like all his sex he
would never understand what he had meant to her” (p. 362). Gerty insists that she is “not a one to be lightly trifled with. As for Mr Reggy with his swank and his bit of money she could just chuck him aside as if he was so much filth and never again would she cast as much as a second thought on him and tear his silly postcard into a dozen pieces” (p. 362). Gerty unwittingly projects her own sense of rejection onto her “new conquest”: “Perhaps it was an old flame he was in mourning for from the days beyond recall. She thought she understood” (p. 364). As Bloom remarks, “When you feel like that you often meet what you feel” (p. 369).

Ironically, Gerty does understand the pathos of Bloom’s state of mind, though she misinterprets the circumstances of his grief: “the face that met her gaze there in the twilight, wan and strangely drawn, seemed to her the saddest she had ever seen” (p. 356). The additional presence of baby Boardman, a “picture of health,” eleven months old and shrieking syllables that approximate “papa,” may serve to remind Bloom of still another loss suffered eleven years earlier.

Gerty is one of the few characters in the novel who accepts Bloom as he is. She remains entirely oblivious of his Jewishness. Gerty speculates about his nose, “a'qiline' or ‘slightly retroussé,’” but she never associates it with the “bottlenosed” breed scorned by the Citizen. She elevates Bloom to the sublime status of “her dreamhusband, because she knew on the instant it was him. . . . She was a womanly woman . . . 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. Then mayhap he would embrace her gently, like a real man, crushing her soft body to him, and love her, his ownest girlie, for herself alone” (p. 358).

Gerty turns to Bloom for both amorous approval and paternal solicitude. Safe in the “sheltering arms” (p. 351) of her father-love, she no longer need fear rejection for “that one shortcoming” (p. 364). Intuitively, Gerty knows that no cosmetic will ever sufficiently compensate for her lameness or give her an equal chance on the marriage market. Physical deformity has
jeopardized her amorous "birthright." As she struggles to emulate the ideal "womanly woman," Gerty must assure herself that "love laughs at locksmiths" (p. 364). Nothing is impossible in the realm of true romance. Surely a magical dreamhusband will unbind her from the chastity belt of lameness.

Gerty MacDowell takes refuge in the "dreamy, creamy" Platonic sphere of adolescent fantasy. Joyce tempts us to think of her as a virginal nymphette, a sweet young Lolita barely out of undies: "As for undies they were Gerty's chief care and who that knows the fluttering hopes and fears of sweet seventeen . . ." (p. 350). But Gerty is no longer an adolescent. We are prepared to accept her as a starry-eyed teenager. Joyce teases us, then deflates our expectations by adding, "though Gerty would never see seventeen again" (p. 350). She will be "twenty-two in November" (p. 352), the same age as Stephen Dedalus. Gerty has reached her majority. She should be "womanly wise," but is not. In Dublin of 1904, Gerty MacDowell is fast on the decline toward old maidenhood. Despite elaborate dreams of matrimony, she is still un kissed (or half so), unwedded, and unbedded.

Occasionally, grouchy and vindictive "spinster-like" traits break through Gerty's romantic façade and reveal another side of her personality. The young woman thinks of the "exasperating little brats of twins" as "little monkeys common as ditchwater. Someone ought to take them and give them a good hiding for themselves to keep them in their places" (p. 359). She envies Cissy, who runs with "long gandery strides": "It would have served her just right if she had tripped up over something accidentally on purpose with her high crooked French heels on her to make her look tall and got a fine tumble" (p. 359). Gerty dismisses Edy Boardman as an "irritable little gnat . . . poking her nose into what was no concern of hers" (p. 360), "like the confounded little cat she was" (p. 362). "Sister souls showing their teeth at one another" (p. 369), Bloom observes.

With intermittent sadistic lapses, Gerty retreats to a spiritu-
alized notion of her "beau ideal." "Art thou real, my ideal?" asks "that poem that appealed to her so deeply that she had copied out of the newspaper she found one evening round the potherbs" (p. 364). The reader is led to suspect that very few of Gerty's romantic ideals approach reality. Considering the paucity of her amorous experiences in the past (a peck on the nose and a sign from a bicyclist), one can assume that 16 June 1904 will be a landmark in her imagination. She has proved, perhaps for the first time, that she can attract and arouse male sexual interest: "And while she gazed her heart went pitapat. Yes, it was her he was looking at and there was meaning in his look. His eyes burned into her" (p. 357). Gerty's heightened emotion corresponds to Bloom's tumescence. She palpitates with excitement, then imaginatively elaborates on the scene. Gerty is so starved for love that several fantasies crowd in at once. She regards the stranger as a devil whose eyes burn into her: he spiritually seduces and scorches her with his gaze. He resembles a matinee idol and a foreigner. And his "pale intellectual face" (p. 357) may suggest the conquering "pale Galilean" of Swinburne's verse. Like Christ, "he had suffered, more sinned against than sinning" (p. 358). Gerty, the Blessed Virgin Nausicaa, star of the sea and refuge of sinners, longs to take him to her bosom in a sympathetic embrace. She recalls Father Conroy's confessional forgiveness, and she wants to forgive Bloom; but she cannot pardon the "exasperating little brats of twins" for noisily quarreling.

Gerty has so confused religious and erotic sentiment that choir music from the Catholic benediction service provides a fitting background for her titillating striptease: "The choir began to sing Tantum ergo and she just swung her foot in and out in time as the music rose and fell" (p. 360). As the music rises, so does Bloom; and so do Gerty's skirts. Her foot simulates the piston and cylinder movement of the sexual act, and the young seductress takes vicarious pleasure in Bloom's agitation. The two reenact the primal temptation between Eve and the Serpent in the Garden of Eden: "He was eyeing her as a snake eyes its prey. Her woman's instinct told her that she had raised
the devil in him” (p. 360). Gerty innocently blushes at the euphemistic reference to Bloom’s erection. But she quickly sublimates physiological fact to allegorical interpretation: “His dark eyes fixed themselves on her again drinking in her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine” (p. 361). In her mind, she is not Eve but the Virgin Mary receiving adoration.

Gerty, however, is less innocent than she will admit: “because she knew about the passion of men like that, hot-blooded, because Bertha Supple told her once in dead secret and made her swear she’d never about the gentleman lodger that was staying with them out of the Congested Districts Board that had pictures cut out of papers of those skirtdancers and highkickers and she said he used to do something not very nice that you could imagine sometimes in the bed. But this was altogether different from a thing like that because there was all the difference because she could almost feel him draw her face to his and the first quick hot touch of his handsome lips” (pp. 365-66).

The ingenue deliberately exposes herself and takes pleasure in Bloom’s arousal. Good Catholic that she is, Gerty recognizes her “sin” and absolves herself in advance: “Besides there was absolution so long as you didn’t do the other thing before being married . . . , and besides it was on account of that other thing coming on” (p. 366). With a voice sounding suspiciously like Molly Bloom’s, Gerty argues that all sins can be forgiven in confession; and besides, it’s “only natural” to feel sexual desire at the time of menstruation. Bloom seems to share Gerty’s opinion: “Near her monthlies, I expect, makes them feel ticklish” (p. 368). “Devils they are when that’s coming on them. Dark devilish appearance” (p. 369). And he realizes that Gerty is fully aware of his excitation: “Did she know what I? Course. Like a cat sitting beyond a dog’s jump” (p. 371).

Our heroine is determined to preserve her chastity and not to “do the other thing before being married.” She feels nothing but contempt for prostitutes and “fallen women”: “From everything in the least indecent her finebred nature instinctively recoiled. She loathed that sort of person, the fallen women off the accommodation walk beside the Dodder that went with the
soldiers and coarse men, with no respect for a girl’s honor, degrading the sex” (p. 364). Gerty wants a Platonic relationship, free of physical contact, and her wishes are granted. This “fair, unsullied soul” shares Bloom’s passion, but she preserves her virginity intact. Spiritual masturbation may be as close as Gerty ever comes to sexual expression. Beneath her romantic dream of matrimony lies a virginal terror of the sexual act: “No, no: not that. They would be just good friends like a big brother and sister without all that other in spite of the conventions of Society with a big ess” (p. 364).

Leopold Bloom is still an “unconquered hero,” “a sterling man, a man of inflexible honour to his fingertips” (p. 365). He has proved to be Gerty’s ideal, “her all in all, the only man in all the world for her for love was the master guide” (p. 365). Bloom assures the young girl of her sexual attraction, but he makes no physical demands. He “knows what a woman is” and respects the privacy of her solipsistic dreamworld.

Bloom is the perfect Platonic lover: like a chaste courtier, he pierces his lady with nothing more dangerous than a burning gaze. In fact, he resembles the Renaissance lover depicted in an almanac picture that Gerty has tacked up on the wall of an unmentionable place: “the picture of halcyon days where a young gentleman in the costume they used to wear then with a three-cornered hat was offering a bunch of flowers to his ladylove with oldtime chivalry through her lattice window. You could see there was a story behind it” (p. 355). Gerty’s image of perfect devotion is “oldtime chivalry,” a gesture of sacerdotal obeisance that sublimates erotic aggression. The “ladylove” is tucked safely behind a lattice window: she symbolically accepts flowers, but not defloration. The courtier submits to the spiritual reign of his beloved, to whom he offers the ideal praise of asexual devotion.

In actuality, Gerty’s dreams of feminine power and masculine docility are controverted everywhere in the Dublin environment of 1904. Irish society assures power to males from infancy to old age. In a culture that tacitly approves of masculine aggression, “boys will be boys” (p. 347). The golden rule
of male permissiveness forces girls and women to be "feminine" and constantly to mollify incipient violence. Tommy and Jacky Caffrey mimic war games and play raucously on the shore. Whether the "apple of discord" be a sand castle or a rubber ball, females must arbitrate disputes and minimize the destructive effects of anger. The woman's role is to smooth over "life's tiny troubles," to kiss away "the hurtness" (p. 347), and to assuage the unpleasantness of castor oil with a placating gift of syrup and brown bread. When male violence is sanctioned, the female must assume the complementary role of eternal placebo. ("Of course they understand birds, animals, babies. In their line" [p. 371]). Tommy Caffrey displays his burgeoning manhood by throwing a temper tantrum and appropriating a rubber ball: "The temper of him! O, he was a man already was little Tommy Caffrey since he was out of pinnies" (p. 353). Like a miniature war general, Tommy "wins the day" by bullying Cissy into snatching the toy from baby Boardman. "Anything for a quiet life" (p. 353), Cissy explains. She tries to restore "halcyon days" at whatever price.

Even the "young heathen," baby Boardman, has already learned the power of intimidation. His "infant majesty" is "most obstreperous" (p. 357) and can be appeased only by a surrogate female teat from a suckingbottle. This "perfect little bunch of love . . . would certainly turn out to be something great, they said" (p. 357). But no such promises of grandeur await Cissy Caffrey, Edy Boardman, or Gerty MacDowell. Cissy sometimes rebels against her female role by acting the part of a tomboy or playing transvestite games. The only alternative she can envision is that of a masculine woman who usurps phallic power, complete with burned cork moustache, cigarette, and the sadistic right to flagellate the effeminate. Prefiguring Bella Cohen, "Madcap Ciss" expresses a desire to spank the "gentleman opposite" on the "beetoteetom": "Give it to him too on the same place as quick as I'd look at him" (p. 353).

Gerty, in contrast, would never be sufficiently brazen to challenge male authority. Only once does the source of her
“pentup feelings” reveal itself. Conscious of the men’s temperance retreat concluding nearby, Gerty muses that her home life might have been different “had her father only avoided the clutches of the demon drink, by taking the pledge or those powders the drink habit cured in Pearson’s Weekly” (p. 354). Gerty sublimates the hostility she feels toward her father by lamenting the ravages of alcohol, “that vile decoction which has ruined so many hearths and homes. . . . Nay, she had even witnessed in the home circle deeds of violence caused by intemperance and had seen her own father, a prey to the fumes of intoxication, forget himself completely for if there was one thing of all things that Gerty knew it was the man who lifts his hand to a woman save in the way of kindness deserves to be branded as the lowest of the low” (p. 354). The young girl witnesses her father’s acts of domestic violence and recoils at the spectacle of masculine brutality. She retreats into the sentimental rhetoric of domestic virtue: “Poor father! With all his faults she loved him still” (p. 354). But she has few compunctions about looking elsewhere for a surrogate to replace her inebriate Oedipal figure.

Gerty offers herself on the altar of amorous devotion as a compensatory gift to her new father-lover, Leopold Bloom. Scornful and defiant of her physical progenitor, of Reggy Wylie, and even of her lifelong religious training, she becomes the holocaust burnt as a priapic offering during the pyrotechnic festival of heat and light. “She would make the great sacrifice. . . . Come what might she would be wild, untrammelled, free” (pp. 364–65). Gerty suppresses shame and modesty in order to share the “wonderment” of physical intimacy with Bloom: “Whitehot passion was in that face, passion silent as the grave, and it had made her his. . . . His hands and face were working and a tremor went over her. She leaned back far to look up where the fireworks were and she caught her knee in her hands so as not to fall back looking up and there was no one to see only him and her when she revealed all her graceful beautifully shaped legs. . . . and she seemed to hear the panting of his heart” (p. 365). The young girl feels herself “trembling in
every limb from being bent so far back he had a full view high up above the knee no-one ever not even on the swing or wading and she wasn’t ashamed and he wasn’t either to look in that immodest way like that because he couldn’t resist the sight of the wondrous revealment half offered” (p. 366).

Both Bloom and Gerty seem to experience erotic fulfillment, though Gerty’s spiritual orgasm may be a wishful projection of the male authorial imagination: “She would fain have cried to him chokingly, held out her snowy slender arms to him to come, to feel his lips laid on her white brow the cry of a young girl’s love, a little strangled cry, wrung from her, that cry that has rung through the ages. And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads” (pp. 366–67). “My fireworks,” thinks Bloom. “Up like a rocket, down like a stick” (p. 371).

Joyce is obviously satirizing the disjunction between Bloom’s highly physical response to the scene and Gerty’s religious interpretation. As “Nausicaa” shifts its parallactic perspective, Bloom is chided by an inflated narrative voice attuned to the parodic excesses of “Cyclops”: “What a brute he had been! At it again? A fair unsullied soul had called to him and, wretch that he was, how had he answered? An utter cad he had been. He of all men!” (p. 367). But such outworn, sentimental ethics are no longer appropriate to the mores of contemporary society. Bloom’s reaction to Gerty’s deformity may be self-indulgent, but it is far from callous: “Jilted beauty. A defect is ten times worse in a woman. But makes them polite. Glad I didn’t know it when she was on show. Hot little devil all the same. . . . Anyhow I got the best of that” (p. 368). Bloom’s thoughts correspond to physical detumescence, and they expose uncensored layers of postorgasmic reflection. Unlike Gerty MacDowell, Bloom does not confuse compassion with passion. He knows that the two are separate, discrete emotions, conflated in popular “soap opera” journalism, but distinct in real life. “See her as she is spoil all. Must have
the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music” (p. 370).

Masturbation may be a “‘Mulligan’ solution to sexual frustration. Yet Bloom’s “‘bird in hand’ has harmed no one; nor has he violated his own humanitarian ethic of love, the ‘‘opposite of hatred.” Bloom pities Gerty as she limps away: “Poor girl! That’s why she’s left on the shelf and the others did a sprint” (pp. 367–68). And he realizes that some kind of personal communication has taken place in their erotic encounter: “Still it was a kind of language between us” (p. 372). Like Gerty, Bloom perceives a redemptive mutuality in the experience, despite his smug feeling that he has gotten the best of the bargain: “Cheap too. Yours for the asking. Because they want it themselves. Their natural craving” (p. 368). Both Bloom the “seducer” and Gerty the “temptress” have shared a brief moment of intimacy that allows temporary escape from sexual isolation.

In the “Circe” episode, Gerty limps forward onto the stage, displaying “‘coyly her bloodied clout.’” She accuses Bloom of a perverse act of psychological defloration: “‘You did that. . . . When you saw all the secrets of my bottom drawer. . . . Dirty married man!’” (p. 442). The assertion involves a pun on Gerty’s underwear and reminds us of the sacramental “‘toilettable drawer’ stuffed with adolescent mementoes. But Gerty adds candidly: “‘I love you for doing that to me’” (p. 442). The young girl’s unconscious admits what her waking mind would never acknowledge. She has experienced an initiation into womanhood, and she feels grateful to her voyeuristic lover for untying the knot of virginity. Bloom fancifully speculates: “‘Virgins go mad in the end I suppose’” (p. 368).

Both participants in the afternoon drama are “thankful for small mercies” (p. 368). Bloom feels flattered that Gerty “‘saw something in him,’” though he cannot imagine what. “‘Sooner have me as I am than some poet chap with bearsgrease, plastery hair lovelock over his dexter optic’” (p. 369). He senses the young woman’s need for tenderness and privacy: “‘Gently does it. Dislike rough and tumble. Kiss in the dark and never tell’” (p.
Gerty is attracted to Bloom for much the same reason that Molly found him handsome years earlier: "Why me? Because you were so foreign from the others" (p. 380).

In Joyce in Nighttown, Mark Shechner culls from "a number of sly, circumstantial hints" that Gerty's cameo appearance in "Circe" might label her a professional prostitute. The theory is playful, but unfounded in the text. Gerty MacDowell is no more (and no less) a whore than Molly Bloom, Josie Breen, or the Princess Selene—all of whom arise as specters in Nighttown. Leopold Bloom has mentally deflowered the nymph of his fantasy, and his psyche registers the impact. Gerty accuses him of voyeuristic rape, but she delights in her erotic victory over the dark, enchanting stranger. Bloom's id may label Gerty a prostitute and Lipot Virag a pimp; but one is a technical virgin and the other is dead. Neither phantasm has a "real" identity in the Dublin night world.

Gerty MacDowell is far more than a pornographic pin-up for Leopold Bloom. In "Nausicaa," Gerty soars to ecstasy with the rockets and with Bloom. She proves that she can arouse, titillate, and satisfy masculine desire. As the new "blessed virgin" and votary of Dame Fashion, Gerty shows mercy to an impotent gentleman who worships at her shrine. She is paid the final tribute of Bloom's silent ejaculation: "For this relief much thanks" (p. 372).

At the end of the episode, Bloom is still uncertain about his male ego, and he fails to go beyond the vapid assertion of "I. . . Am. A" (p. 381) to an affirmation of personal identity. Once again, Joyce challenges us to fill in the blank: "I am a man?" "A lover?" "A human being?" "A fool?" Fritz Senn points out that there is "a faint adumbration of a Jehovian I AM THAT I AM" and reminds us that AMA is one form of the Latin verb, "to love." But as we later learn in "Ithaca," Bloom, like Ulysses, is "Everyman" and "Noman." In the role of "Everyman," he can be every ghost lover that has haunted the dreams of Gerty MacDowell. Because he is "Noman," Bloom offers an erotic tabula rasa on which the fantasies of love and romance can be etched by Gerty's fictional imagination.
Bloom has given pleasure both to Gerty and to himself. As Richard Ellmann declares, "masturbation enables him to return to his usual solicitude for other creatures. . . . For the first time in literature masturbation becomes heroic. It is a way of joining ideal and real, and while simplistic or vulgar, it is not negligible. It brings Bloom back to goodwill and away from indifference. He leaves behind Narcissus drowned in the pool." 9

The act of onanism releases Bloom from a prison of sexual frustration. It provides physical relief, as well as psychological compensation. By some cosmic coincidence of gravitational fields, Molly's magnetic attraction to Boylan has interrupted the mechanism of Bloom's watch: "Very strange about my watch. Wristwatches are always going wrong. Wonder is there any magnetic influence between the person because that was about the time he. Yes, I suppose at once. Cat's away the mice will play. . . . Back of everything magnetism" (pp. 373–74). Time has stopped at half past four, "half past kissing time," as a mocking reminder to Bloom that "his waterworks were out of order" (p. 361). Cissy's pun reflects the dysfunction of both timepiece and codpiece. "Was that just when he, she?" Bloom wonders (p. 370). The coincidence of the watch ushers in the shock of recognition that Bloom has so carefully been holding at bay: "O, he did. Into her. She did. Done" (p. 370). The staccato rhythm of his prose simulates rapid sexual excitement, and the climactic finality of the word "done" seals Bloom's fate as a cuckold. But it also reminds us of the end of "Sirens" and the association of "done" with the release of digestive gas. Here Bloom achieves another kind of relief. Unconscious repression of Molly's adultery has weighed on his psyche like a knot of uncomfortable gas. In a flash of recognition, Bloom imagines the act of copulation, digests the information, and acknowledges Molly's infidelity. Psychic pressure explodes in a moment of personal honesty that lifts the burden of emotional denial. Masturbation has given Bloom the courage to imagine Boylan and Molly "doing it," and voyeurism offers a key to understanding. "Aftereffect not pleasant. Still you have to get rid of it someway. . . . The strength it gives a man. That's the
secret of it” (p. 370). “Back of everything magnetism . . . .
Tip. Woman and man that is. Fork and steel. Molly, he . . . .
Tip. Have to let fly’” (p. 374). Bloom’s searing candor becomes
more poignant later in the episode, when he thinks: “I am a fool
perhaps. He gets the plums and I the plumstones” (p. 377).
“Eating off his cold plate’” (p. 370). Masturbation, an apparent
escape from anxiety, has brought Bloom back to a recognition
of conjugal inadequacy: “Think you’re escaping and run into
yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home. . . .
The young are old. His gun rusty from the dew” (p. 377).

In his meditation on time, space, and magnetism, Bloom
thinks of time in Aristotelian terms as the “motion of matter”:
“Earth for instance pulling this and being pulled. That causes
movement. And time? Well that’s the time the movement
takes’” (p. 374). He confronts the paradox of cyclical temporal-
ity and linear age: nature repeats itself, but the youth of the
individual slips away ineluctably. The stream of life moves
onward as “the year returns. History repeats itself . . . . Life,
love, voyage round your own little world” (p. 377). Attempts
to recapture the past are necessarily doomed to futility: “Tired I
. . . Returning not the same. . . . The new I want. Nothing
new under the sun” (p. 377). “Love, lie and be handsome for
tomorrow we die” (p. 381).

There is little question that Bloom’s escapade has restored his
humanitarian sentiment. “Goodbye, dear. Thanks. Made me
feel so young” (p. 382). His reminiscences of his daughter are
tender, loving, solicitous, and calm—though they seem to be
suffused with grim thoughts about nausea, death, and children
getting lost. “Don’t know what death is at that age. . . . But
being lost they fear” (p. 379). Bloom is magnanimous in his
attitude toward the brawling Citizen: “Suppose he hit me. Look
at it other way round. Not so bad then. Perhaps not to hurt he
meant” (p. 380).

By the time Bloom turns to write a message in the sand, his
ego has dwindled to a thin, humble, ephemeral thread. “All
these rocks with lines and scars and letters” (p. 381) might
bear some philosophical message, if only we possessed the key to nature's hieroglyphic scrawlings. They might even provide an ontological answer to the eternal, haunting question, "What is the meaning of that other world" (p. 381). Alone on the beach, Bloom senses the helplessness of the individual to write words that will contribute to metaphysical understanding. The tools he possesses—a bit of a stick and paper from an old copybook—are entirely incongruous and of little help to the task at hand. Bloom is reduced to imprinting his ego on sand. He knows that like all the signs of human endeavor, this too is "useless" and will be "washed away" (p. 381).

Bloom writes "I . . . AM. A." and then gives up. "No room. Let it go" (p. 381). He cannot define himself in the face of an overwhelming, engulfing cosmos. Perhaps there is no room in the universe for Bloom's being-there, his existential Dasein. He realizes that all human life is built on sand, and that in the end, "all fades" (p. 381)—life, love, existence, and ego. The conclusion of "Nausicaa" may signal Bloom's conversion to the non-egoic, cosmic sense of self that he will later embrace in "Ithaca." Perhaps he is beginning to understand the stoic need to let go of his claims to conjugal appropriation and egocentric privilege. In a "half dream" he muses: "And she can do the other. Did too. And Belfast. I won't go. . . . It never comes the same" (p. 382).

As Joyce suggested in a letter to Frank Budgen, masturbation may be the herb "moly" that protects Bloom from the assaults of Bella Cohen in Nighttown. Onanism liberates Bloom from erotic obsession, so that he can achieve a heroism that is both literally and figuratively self-actualizing. Molly's coition with Boylan has been just as infertile as Leopold's voyeurism. Molly enjoys Blazes as a bed partner, and Bloom takes pleasure in Gerty as a visual accomplice in masturbation. Bloom empties his seed on the sand; Boylan expels his on the bed sheet. Both men are technically guilty of onanism, for in both cases, the spilled seed is wasted for procreation.
“Look at it other way round” (p. 380).

In “Oxen of the Sun,” Joyce satirically decries the sins of onanism and contraception that encourage “copulation without population” (p. 423). He facetiously bids that “all Malthusians go hang” (p. 423) and mourns the loss of “those Godpossible souls that we nightly impossibilise. . . . For, sirs, . . . our lust is brief. We are means to those small creatures within us and nature has other ends than we” (p. 389).

In the Holles Street maternity hospital, Bloom encounters the Janus-image of Gerty MacDowell’s sentimental romanticism. Here, once again, is the aggression inspired by male bonding—the threatening camaraderie of “Cyclops,” now applied to sexuality. Machismo is the watchword of the chapter, from Theodore Purefoy’s stud performance to Mulligan’s vocation as “Fertiliser and Incubator” of willing Dublin dames.

For the Trinity medical students, sex entails masturbation à deux. The act is a physical “coming together,” stripped of spiritual “at-onement.” Sex is reduced to phallic friction—a mechanical piston-and-cylinder action performed in the context of penile prowess. The medical Dicks and Davys are just as narcissistic as Gerty MacDowell. Locked in the prison of male egotism, they deny themselves the possibility of human warmth, affection, or compassion. Bloom is glaringly out of place in this boisterous crowd, and his alienation from the younger men further serves to define his androgynous sensibility.

Stephen uses the model of physical reproduction as a paradigm for artistic creation: “In woman’s womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the post-creation” (p. 391). The young man makes fun of the Catholic doctrine of “virgin birth” that attributes the conception of Christ to the infusion of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (“C’est le pigeon, Joseph” [p. 41]). Like Léo Taxil,
Stephen and the medicals prefer the bawdy, un-biblical theory that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Panther, a Roman centurion. The choice is between Scyllan superstition and Charybdian materialism.

Ironically, Stephen denies the possibility of “virgin birth” at the same time that he demands the right to aesthetic parthenogenesis. At this point in the narrative, he clings to the ideal of autoerotic art. He wants to create by divine infusion, without “coming together” with the real world of men and women. He fears returning to the foul rag and bone shop of the heart, for he is convinced that he will merely encounter solipsistic images of himself: “If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep” (p. 213).

Like Gerty MacDowell, Stephen wants to retreat to a “heavenly ideal” where “there are no more marriages, glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself” (p. 213). Mulligan earlier suggested another solution to chastity, a “honeymoon in the hand.” So far, Stephen’s literary production has been limited to “a capful of light odes” (p. 415) inspired by literal or by figurative masturbation. (His Portrait villanelle is written after a wet dream: “O what sweet music! His soul was all dewy wet” [PA 217]; and the “Proteus” poem has been cribbed from Douglas Hyde [p. 132]). He seems unaware that his own “Shakespeare theory” implies a need for the genius to be deflowered, “gored” by the tusk of experience, before he can create from the ripe potential of a fertile consciousness. The anima of the artist is metaphorically female and must be fertilized by painful congress with the “world without as actual” (p. 213).

Oxen are appropriate symbols for the barren braggadocio of the medicals, and the sacred cattle provide an ironic commentary on a chapter that ostensibly champions the glories of physical procreation. An ox is a castrated bull, and the medical Dicks are young bulls who spiritually castrate themselves by refusing personal commitment. In a letter to Frank Budgen, Joyce described the idea behind “Oxen” as “the crime committed against fecundity by sterilizing the act of coition.” The
episode, however, is chiefly concerned with emotional, rather than with physical, prophylaxis. Joyce identified the crime as "fraud" in the formal sense of "breaking a vow." The young men may "impossibilise" the "Godpossible souls" denied embodiment by contraception. But their true sin involves ego­tism—the failure to mitigate a masculine, aggressive persona with feminine sentiment, or to honor vows of amorous attachment. They have embraced life as "a beastly thing and nothing else" (p. 8), to which callous hedonism is a suitable response. The comedy of their banter arises from impersonal brutality. By refusing troths of love, they cut themselves off from the ability to feel, denying the faculty that makes both passion and compassion possible.

Stephen's association with the medical students is a coition that remains barren. It implies male bonding that ignores the anima and excludes androgynous feeling. "Coming together" with the oxen leaves the poet aesthetically sterile and bereft of spiritual progeny. Joyce, in his schema for the chapter, figuratively describes Bloom as the "spermatozoon" that will fer­tilize Stephen's consciousness. Out of the union of poet and "womanly man," a new artistic vision may be fashioned.

Stephen has made the mistake of turning solely to his literary forefathers for inspiration. Not a single female writer proves worthy of emulation in the "Oxen" episode. Like the Holles Street refectory, the world of literary tradition suggests an exclusively male heritage. After a long gestation and a difficult birth, the literary "word" is born with the utterance of "Burke's." Is it any wonder that the offspring ushers in the misshapen discourse of slang and pidgin English? Out of a homophiliac environment springs a word that perpetuates male camaraderie in a world of booze and phallic prowess.

Stephen has searched so long for his spiritual roots that he momentarily gives way to the temptations of alcohol, paralysis, and ribald jest. Not until the next episode will he respond to Leopold Bloom, the "transubstantial" father who will intro­duce Stephen to the "real world" from which all genuine creation arises. Bloom, for his part, has already begun to regard
the young man with pity and to consider him a surrogate son: "Leopold that had of his body no manchild for an heir looked upon him his friend's son and was shut up in sorrow for his forepassed happiness and as sad as he was that him failed a son of such gentle courage . . . so grieved he also in no less measure for young Stephen for that he lived riotously with those wastrels and murdered his goods with whores" (pp. 390–91). Leopold "bore fast friendship to sir Simon and to this his son young Stephen . . . Ruth red him, love led on with will to wander, loth to leave" (p. 388). "Now he is himself paternal and these about him might be his sons. Who can say? The wise father knows his own child" (p. 413).

In "Oxen," Joyce satirically celebrates the god Bringforth, a vengeful dio boia who "in a very grievous rage . . . would presently lift his arm and spill their souls for their abuses and their spillings done by them contrariwise to his word which forth to bring brenningly biddeth" (p. 396). Fundamentalists like the Purefoys, who go forth and fruitfully multiply, can hardly be considered a Joycean ideal. Theodore Purefoy, by presenting Mina with "hearty annuals," has reduced her to perpetual broodmare. Continual pregnancy is one way to insure female chastity and to certify paternity. But it substitutes animal reproduction for a more humane spousal relationship. Both Theodore and Mina sacrifice individual creativity for the good (or the peril) of the species. They mindlessly continue to copulate and to populate, with the same gesture of mechanical automation that impels the medical students to frictional excitation.

Throughout "Oxen," Joyce scatters examples of perverted fatherhood—of paternal powers frustrated or abused. Phallic prowess can wreak havoc in the lives of others. Consider the consequences of potency in Ulysses: a three-day session of torture on the bed of parturition. "Three days imagine groaning on a bed with a vinegared handkerchief round her forehead, her belly swollen out! Phew! Dreadful simply! Child's head too big: forceps. Doubled up inside her trying to butt its way out blindly, groping for the way out. Kill me that would" (p. 161). Mina
Purefoy is immolated on the altar of history, and her belly suitably becomes the altar on which a Black Mass is celebrated in "Circe."

From Stephen’s musings, we know that the bed of conception is identical with the beds of birth and of death: "Bridebed, childbed, bed of death" (pp. 47–48). And because Bloom has witnessed both a birth and a death resulting from copulation, he is loath to initiate a process that might end in parental anguish and filial loss. We are born, suffer, and die in violence: "The aged sisters draw us into life: we wail, batten, sport, clip, clasp, sunder, dwindle, die: over us dead they bend" (p. 394). And when human suffering adheres to the spectacle of infant mortality, the experience of absurdity becomes too blatant to warrant deliberate collusion. Psychologically, Bloom refuses to abet the enemy death, though his protest entails abstinence from the rites of fertility.

Bloom is genuinely distressed by Stephen’s flippant mockery of sex, and he even ventures to object to the young man’s blasphemy: "In a recent public controversy with Mr L. Bloom . . . he [Stephen] is reported by eyewitnesses as having stated that once a woman has let the cat into the bag (an esthetic allusion, presumably, to one of the most complicated and marvellous of all nature’s processes, the act of sexual congress) she must let it out again or give it life, as he phrased it, to save her own" (p. 420). Bloom’s discomfort at Stephen’s joke is a function of his own repressed fear of "putting the cat into the bag." He does not want to be responsible for the cat coming out again—for the agonies of labor and delivery, or for the disappointment of frustrated parenthood.

Bloom is so in touch with the anima, the "female" aspect of his psyche, that he has psychosomatic headaches during Molly’s menstrual period, and he tries to imagine her experiences of pregnancy and parturition. Although he feels the desire to "have a baby" (and does so in a "Circean" fantasy of multiple births), he finds phallic aggression so distasteful that he is unwilling to cause his wife (or anyone else) the futile pain of childbirth. Molly, too, reveals negative feelings about gestation.
in "Penelope": "nice invention they made for women for him
to get all the pleasure but if someone gave them a touch of it
themselves theyd know what I went through with Milly . . .
Mina Purefoys husband . . . filling her up with a child or twins
once a year as regular as the clock . . . not satisfied till they
have us swollen out like elephants" (p. 742). Molly practices a
primitive form of birth control in her affair with Boylan and is
determined not to risk "having another," "not off him
[Boylan]" (p. 742).

In the theological argument that transpires in "Oxen,"
Bloom champions fetal rights. He supports the Catholic doc­
trine that would spare the life of a newborn child, rather than
that of the mother. He facetiously remarks: "it was good for that
Mother Church belike at one blow had birth and death pence"
(p. 390). Bloom's "dissembling" statement reveals his anguish
at the death of Rudy; and it implies that sexual union might
inadvertently result in the sacrificial death of the female. Eros
could be linked, in morbid horror, to Thanatos. Bloom is appar­
cently agitated, and he may even feel startled by his own willing­
ness to choose fetal survival over the "warm, fullblooded life"
of his spouse.

Because Bloom cannot dissociate Thanatos from Eros, he
relinquishes both at once. And in so doing, he allies himself
with a new, sympathetic vision of reality that provides a cosmic
definition of heroism. Bloom has forfeited filial and conjugal
ownership to become an "androgynous" artist, taking the
whole of humanity under his wing. As we learn in "Ithaca," his
mind is populated with pseudo-scientific schemes for the bene­
fit of mankind. He can envision a world in which human beings
refrain from killing, in which a social utopia fulfills the eco­
nomic needs of every man and woman, and in which a love
based on agape might be possible.

At this point in Ulysses, physiological procreation has been
sublimated to the more significant demands of spiritual re­
newal. Joyce the artist celebrates all those seminal possibilities
of consciousness that have not been actualized by historical
event. His fiction glorifies the birth of Stephen Dedalus and
Leopold Bloom into a new awareness of themselves as poetic makers of human life. In Joyce's schema for "Oxen," Bloom may indeed function symbolically as the spermatozoon that fertilizes Stephen's embryonic growth in the English literary tradition. At the end of the episode, both Stephen and Leopold prepare to be reborn—Stephen as son to Bloom and nascent fashioner of the aesthetic word, and Bloom as spiritual father to Stephen and compassionate father to all mankind.

4. According to Mark Shechner, "Joyce was playing in this chapter, but the game involved his own erotic propensities, his libidinal clichés. . . . The chapter is an act of exorcism that affirms an old commitment even while denying it" (Joyce in Nighttown, p. 161).
7. Shechner, Joyce in Nighttown, p. 165.
8. Senn, "Nausicaa," pp. 281, 294-95. Gifford and Seidman interpret the passage "just as it reads: 'I am A' (the first letter of the alphabet). Also: I am alpha (the first letter in the Greek alphabet) hence, the first or the beginning." They suggest that the assertion reflects the Lord's statement in Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Notes for Joyce, p. 331).
9. Richard Ellmann, Ulysses on the Liffey, p. 133. In contrast, Stanley Sultan declares that "the masturbation at the center of the chapter is not merely a pathetic and sordid act but a representation, on every level of meaning, of Bloom's self-defeat and self-destruction. . . . Bloom is far more pathetic than when he feels frustrated, ashamed, and helpless; for he is depressed, resigned, and spiritually broken" (The Argument of "Ulysses," p. 264).
11. Ibid., 139.
12. Joyce declared in his letter to Budgen that "Bloom is the spermatozoon, the hospital the womb, the nurse the ovum, Stephen the embryo" (Letters, 1:140).