Weaving a Textual Web: Homer, Joyce, and Molly Calypso Penelope Bloom

Tecendo uma rede textual: Homero, Joyce e Molly Calypso Penelope Bloom

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Abstract: *In James Joyce's* Ulysses*, numerous playful allusions to Homer's* Odyssey *are combined with a variety of onomastic and etymological games that invite consideration especially of the portrayal of Molly Bloom and her husband Leopold Bloom.*

Keywords: *James Joyce's* Ulysses*; textual games; Homeric allusions; literary onomastics; literary etymology.*

Resumo: *Em* Ulisses*, de James Joyce, numerosas alusões lúdicas à* Odisseia *de Homero são combinadas com uma variedade de jogos onomásticos e etimológicos que convidam à consideração, especialmente, do retrato de Molly Bloom e seu marido Leopold Bloom.*

Palavras-chave: Ulisses *de James Joyce; jogos textuais; alusões homéricas; onomástica literária; etimologia literária.*

The most famous chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is undoubtedly the final one, consisting of the uninterrupted late-night bedroom reverie of Molly Bloom, presented in the form of a 36-page-long monologue, largely unpunctuated, largely unworried by grammatical niceties, and startlingly forthright about matters digestive and sexual. Joyce once notoriously asserted that he had included so many enigmas and puzzles in *Ulysses* that it would keep the professors busy for centuries. Published in 1922, the novel has certainly kept the professors (among many others) busy for very close to a first century by this point, and its multileveled fascination shows no signs at all of diminishing. The title *Ulysses* immediately evokes the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, known as Odysseus in Greek and later as Ulysses in Latin, and one iconic episode among many in the *Odyssey* has the hero's faithful wife Penelope, thinking her husband surely dead after

ISSN1518-0581 | eISSN2595-8127 | DOI 10.37389/abei.v23i1.192598
Received: 09/02/2021 | Accepted: 13/02/2021

twenty years away from home, reluctantly agreeing to marry one of many suitors when she has finished a particular task of weaving, but postponing that day by unweaving by night what she has woven by day. One notable element among many in Joyce's intricately structured novel is that it famously weaves a textual web of literary references to and resonances of the *Odyssey*, and the present paper examines some of the multiple interwoven threads in that web as they relate, essentially playfully, to the narrative presentation of Joyce's Penelope, namely Molly Bloom.

Homer's *Odyssey*, composed about 700 BC, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, composed more than two-and-a-half millennia later, both centre on the protracted wanderings of a central protagonist. The ten-year maritime wanderings of Homer's protagonist, Odysseus, king of Ithaca, following on ten years already as a participant in the Trojan War, are reflected in the eighteen-hour Dublin wanderings of Joyce's protagonist, the mild-mannered Leopold Bloom, a not very successful canvasser for newspaper advertisements, a Jew regarded with quite considerable hostility by some of his fellow Dubliners. Since Joyce's own day, readers of Ulysses have agreed by common consensus to refer to the eighteen numbered chapters of the novel by titles that allude to Homer's *Odyssey*. Six of the eighteen chapters, for example, are named for male figures from the *Odyssey* ("Telemachus", "Nestor", "Proteus", "Aeolus", "Cyclops", and "Eumaeus"), and six are named for female figures ("Calypso", "Scylla and Charybdis", "Sirens", "Nausicaa", "Circe", and "Penelope").

Joyce used these titles when the chapters were first published individually in *The Little Review*; he omitted them and used numbers instead when the novel appeared in book form in 1922. He teasingly made sure, however, that they would become part of readers' responses to the text by providing each of two friends, Carlo Linati and Stuart Gilbert, with a set of detailed Homeric correspondences (Levine 132-33) – though the two were not insignificantly different in a number of details, very possibly as part of his avowed strategy to keep the professors busy for generations. Some editions of *Ulysses* resurrect the Homeric titles in a table of contents, but whether they are actually present on a contents page or not, they constitute overt invitations to detect playful resonances of the world of the *Odyssey*.

Throughout *Ulysses*, as in his other works, Joyce indulges in etymological and onomastic play on his characters' names. The etymologies of the Homeric names involved, though in many cases vigorously disputed by scholars, also more than occasionally suggest playfully interesting onomastic linkages to Joyce's characters. The title itself, *Ulysses*, overtly casts Bloom in the role of Odysseus. The "Cyclops" chapter, for example, has Bloom, as a very reasonable man, attempting to defuse the rabidly one-sided anti-English bigotry of a loud-mouthed Guinness-drinker in a Dublin pub, thus playfully echoing Odysseus's blinding of the monstrous, murderous, and one-eyed Cyclops in the *Odyssey*.

But there are other characters who are briefly and likewise playfully also cast in the role of *Ulysses*. One of them is an anonymous chimney sweep, for example, who with his long brushes carried carelessly over his shoulder nearly blinds the acerbic narrator of "Cyclops" (*U* 12.2-3), thus teasingly casting the sweep (who is never heard of again) very momentarily in the role of *Ulysses* and the rancorous narrator in that of another Cyclops. Another quasi-*Ulysses* is the yarn-spinning sailor D.B. Murphy in the "Eumaeus" chapter, whose tall tales playfully reflect the tall tales Homer's Odysseus sometimes finds it necessary to tell. Murphy's tall tales urgently invite disbelief – possibly even including his claim that his "little woman", another Penelope, is still faithfully waiting for him at home after his seven years sailing the seven seas (*Ulysses* 16.419-20).

Several characters in *Ulysses*, that is to say (Bloom, the sweep, Murphy), may be cast as parodic transfigurations of a single character in Homer (namely Odysseus). Conversely, and this brings us to Molly Bloom, a single character in *Ulysses* (namely Molly) may be cast as playfully reflecting qualities of several characters in Homer – and in Molly's case these include *all* of the several female figures identified by the chapter names "Calypso", "Scylla and Charybdis", "Sirens", "Nausicaa", "Circe", and "Penelope". Almost all these Homeric characters are beautiful, like Molly – and several of them are downright monsters. The aspects of Molly's character that are playfully suggested by the text may be regarded as *hypothetically* seen through her husband's eyes, the central reason for whose protracted absence from his home, trudging the streets of Dublin, is his painful awareness of Molly's plan to receive an afternoon admirer, the notorious womanizer Blazes Boylan, in the Blooms' own family bed.

Molly shares something else with various mythological figures. Mysterious origins are a common feature of the protagonists of many myths and legends, and Molly's origins are interestingly veiled on both sides of her family. Leopold Bloom, of mixed Hungarian, Irish, and Jewish origins, grew up in Dublin; Molly Bloom, of mixed Spanish, Irish, and Jewish origins, grew up in the much more exotic location of Gibraltar, a British outpost at the southernmost tip of Europe, only a dozen or so miles from the nearest point of Africa, and particularly noted for its gigantic Rock. Molly Bloom was born Marion Tweedy, daughter of the Irish soldier Brian Tweedy, who served in the British Army at Gibraltar in the mid-1880s (*Ulysses* 15.784). Tweedy's military rank is mentioned several times – and is presented as a matter of considerable doubt. Bloom remembers meeting "the old major" (*Ulysses* 12.1108) after Tweedy leaves the army and returns to Dublin, and he relates in conversation that Molly was the daughter of "Major Brian Tweedy" (*Ulysses* 16.1441-42); the unnamed narrator of the "Ithaca" chapter likewise refers with ever increasing deference to "major Brian Tweedy" (*Ulysses* 17.55-56), "major Brian Cooper Tweedy" (*Ulysses* 17.1420), and "the late Major Brian Cooper Tweedy,

Royal Dublin Fusiliers, of Gibraltar" (*Ulysses* 17.2082-83). Bloom promotes him to an even higher rank in the "Circe" chapter as "Majorgeneral Brian Tweedy" (*Ulysses* 15.778-79). Molly's late-night memory of her father's duties as including the drilling of troops (*Ulysses* 18.766-67), however, and another character's memory of him as "the old drummajor" (*Ulysses* 11.508) make it much more than likely that he was in fact merely a sergeant-major, not of officer rank at all, a likelihood supported by his daughter Molly's relatively uneducated use of English.

It is typical of the games played in *Ulysses* that Tweedy's middle name, Cooper, suggests a punning reference to his time in Gibraltar, for the Greek name of Gibraltar, *Calpe*, has been said to derive from the noun *kalpê*, meaning a "cup" and referring to the cup-shaped Bay of Gibraltar as seen from the sea – and the Greek noun is etymologically related to the Low German *kup*, a wooden "tankard", and the occupational name *Kuper*, a maker of such vessels (Buck 348-49; Hanks 140). The name Tweedy, finally, which punningly suggests the weaving of cloth, may also be read as parodically suggesting the mingled strands of Molly's birth, since tweed is "a wool-and-cotton fabric usually with two colours combined in the yarn" (Gilbert 142-43). Molly's mixed origins even on her father's side might also be inferred from the onomastic fact that the name *Brian* is Irish, *Cooper* is English, and *Tweedy* suggests Scottish ancestry.

As for her mother, Molly seems to know little more about "my mother whoever she was" than that she had a "lovely name" (*Ulysses* 18.846), the exotically alliterative "Lunita Laredo" (*Ulysses* 18.848), and she later suggests that Lunita was of Spanish and Jewish origins (*Ulysses* 18.1184). Bloom's assumption that Molly owes her southern looks to a Moorish strain in her ancestry – "It's the blood of the south. Moorish" (*Ulysses* 13.968-69) – contributes a further layer of uncertain relevance to Lunita's origins – and thus also to Molly's.

Lunita ("little moon") is a given name used in Spain by both Christians and Jews, and it has been proposed that the Spanish novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novella *Luna Benamor* (1909) may have suggested the name Lunita. That story relates the ill-starred love affair of Luna, a beautiful Sephardic Jew, known as Lunita, "the Belle of Gibraltar", and a young Spanish diplomat posted to Gibraltar (Herring 126-40). At least one prominent Jewish family in turn-of-the-century Gibraltar, meanwhile, was called Laredo (Laredo 1978). That family name derives from the place name Laredo, which derives in turn from a Late Latin *glaretum* ("rocky beach") – and the Spanish town of Laredo in question is a popular bathing place on the Bay of Biscay best known for its annual Battle of Flowers carnival (Zubillaga Gutiérrez). Molly's mother's family name thus very economically manages to produce no fewer than five playful resonances: first, to suggest Lunita's Spanish, Jewish, and possibly Moorish origins; second, to serve as an onomastic anticipation of Molly's flower-named husband,

Bloom, who also uses the alias Henry Flower; third, given the quasi-musical composition of the name (*la, re, do*), to anticipate Molly's career as a professional singer; fourth, to evoke the Rock of Gibraltar, surrounded by its beach; and fifth, to anticipate, as we shall see, Bloom's self-satisfying pleasures focused on a particular rock on the beach of the "Nausicaa" chapter.

Lunita's own true origins, however, and her history, remain entirely veiled. Critics have concluded that she is in all likelihood a prostitute – and have suggested that in consequence even Tweedy's paternity is less than certain (Raleigh 18, 20). Whether Molly's parents were ever legally married, a highly unlikely possibility; whether her mother simply abandoned her; how likely it was in British army circles in the 1870s and eighties that a serving soldier not of officer rank would or could single-handedly raise a daughter of the regiment: these are all questions whose answers are likewise veiled in darkness. Molly and her mother, indeed, are both, in one sense or another, ladies of the night: Molly's bedroom reverie takes place in the middle of the night, Lunita's name and very likely her profession associate her with the darkness of the night.

We first encounter Molly herself in humorously presented mythological guise in the fourth chapter of *Ulysses*, the chapter known as "Calypso", which also imparts the information that Bloom and his wife reside at number 7 Eccles Street in Dublin. Joyce undoubtedly chose the particular street address because his university friend John Francis Byrne once lived at that address, where Joyce himself had been a visitor. But he also seized on the particular street number, seven, because Homer's Odysseus is held captive for seven years on the mythical island of the beautiful and amorous nymph Calypso. While Homer's Calypso is eventually ordered by the gods to release Odysseus, pining for home, and let him proceed on his troubled voyage towards his native Ithaca, Bloom has been kept in more or less happy thrall by his own domestic Calypso, the beautiful Molly, since their marriage almost sixteen years ago.

The name Calypso is derived from the Greek verb *kalyptô* ("I hide, I veil"), and scholars consider her to be so called because, true to her name, she hid (*ekalypse*) Odysseus on her mythical island. Hiding neither her charms nor her amorous intentions, she also provides a humorous parallel reference to Molly, who has a framed illustration entitled *The Bath of the Nymph* hanging over her bed (*Ulysses* 4.369), and who is planning an amorous encounter that same afternoon. The mythological Calypso, moreover, as daughter of the Titan Atlas, is associated (like Molly) with both rocks and Gibraltar, for the Atlas Mountains on the African side of the Straits of Gibraltar are named for the mythological Atlas, condemned by an angry Zeus to spend an eternity holding up the sky on his shoulders.

Molly in suggested guise as Calypso, daughter of Atlas, provides a parodic link between Atlas and her soldier father, Brian Tweedy, constrained by military duty to keep earth

and sky asunder in Victorian Gibraltar on behalf of the British empire. There also sixteen-year-old Molly plays the role of Calypso to young Lieutenant Harry Mulvey (*Ulysses* 18.779) – another quasi-Ulysses figure – entertaining him with alfresco erotic pleasures on the Rock of Gibraltar before allowing him to proceed on his maritime way, in a ship appropriately called the H.M.S. Calypso (*Ulysses* 18.837). If Greek *kalpê* means "cup", meanwhile, it is playfully appropriate that Joyce's "Calypso" opens with Molly still in bed, hiding a letter from her lover under her pillow, while Bloom prepares her morning cup of tea (*Ulysses* 4.14).

Homer's Odysseus encounters in passing two other females who use their beauty to more immediately threatening ends than Calypso. Homer's Sirens are beautiful but dangerously seductive creatures in female form who employ their musical rather than their physical charms for the destruction of passing sailors, leading them to founder on maritime rocks by the distracting beauty of the songs they hauntingly sing. The Sirens of the *Odyssey* are associated both with rocks and with the power of song – as is Molly Bloom, born on the Rock of Gibraltar and now a well-known professional singer.

The two Dublin barmaids of the chapter "Sirens" in *Ulysses*, Miss Lydia Douce and Miss Mina Kennedy, who as barmaids in a notoriously bibulous Dublin practice their own arts of encouraging pleasurable self-destruction, are Joyce's humorous versions of these dangerous divas. Stuart Gilbert observes that the name sirens derives from two Semitic roots signifying "the song of enthralment" (250), and the chapter "Sirens" is intricately constructed on musical principles. Gilbert also noted the musical connotations, appropriate for the chapter, of the names Lydia (as in the Lydian mode) and Mina (as in a minor key) (254n).

The name Lydia Douce combines exoticism and sweetness. The given name Lydia, of Greek origin, originally meant a woman from Lydia, once a kingdom in far-off Asia Minor (Hanks 814), while the family name Douce was originally a nickname deriving from the Latin *dulcis*, meaning "sweet" (Hanks 182). Appropriately for the mythological context of the sweetly singing but ultimately murderous sirens of the Odyssey, however, etymology suggests that Joyce's pair combine sweetness with more ominous characteristics. For the name Kennedy derives from the Irish *Ó Cinnéidigh*, "descendant of Cinnéidigh", where the personal name refers either to someone whose head (Irish ceann) is, martially, "armoured, helmeted" or – like Medusa, perhaps – to someone whose head is strikingly "ugly, horrible" (MacLysaght 176; Hanks 339).

While Molly appears in "Calypso", she is not present in "Sirens", nor is she present in the chapter "Scylla and Charybdis", featuring a free-flowing literary debate in the National Library. The debate and the chapter both take place under the ominous sponsorship of two mythological monsters. Frank Budgen reports Joyce's comment that "the Aristotelean and

Platonic philosophies are the monsters that lie in wait in the narrows for the thinker" (109), and here the rock that is Aristotle and the whirlpool that is Plato are represented respectively by the twin monsters Scylla and Charybdis.

Beauty and mortal danger are once again linked, even if only parodically. Scylla, once a beautiful maiden in one version of the legend, was transformed into a six-headed monster who barked like a dog, inhabited a cavern on the side of a massive rock on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina, and preyed on unwary passing mariners, seizing one in each of her six mouths and devouring them, her rocky position linking her to the Sirens. Her name, Greek *Skylla*, derives, according to some authorities, from a Semitic root, *skoula*, meaning "rock" (Gilbert 81), while for others it derives from the Greek verb *skyllô* ("I rend, I mangle") (Graves 408). While it would be excessively unfair to characterize Molly Bloom as a render of men, she is certainly associated with rocks, more specifically with both the Rock of Gibraltar and Dublin's Howth Head – while one of her favourite exclamations is "O, rocks!" (*Ulysses* 4.343).

Sailors through the Straits of Messina were faced with the life-threatening dilemma of navigating between two monstrous dangers, avoiding both Scylla on the Italian shore and Charybdis on the Sicilian shore. The alternative to Scylla, Charybdis was a monster who lived not on but under a rock on the coast of Sicily, later rationalized as a dangerous whirlpool, opposite the mainland Italian rock of Scylla. While the derivation of the name Charybdis is unknown, Graves suggests the meaning "sucker down" (386), appropriately for a whirlpool – and the similarity to the Greek adjective *charôpos* ("bright-eyed") suggests an onomastic link to the Sirens, beautiful but bad. The association of both monsters with rocky locations is once again readable as suggesting a playful link to Molly Bloom.

Leopold and Molly Bloom have not had full sexual relations since the early death ten years ago of their infant son Rudy, who lived for only eleven days (*Ulysses* 17.2280-81). At least partly in response to this situation, Bloom, under the assumed name Henry Flower, is carrying on a half-heartedly flirtatious correspondence with a lady who claims to be called Martha Clifford, though that name may also be a pseudonym. The anticipated dangers of navigating a safe course between Molly and Martha are humorously reflected in the challenges of a voyage between Scylla and Charybdis – a choice that is also obliquely hinted at in the case of the two musical Sirens Lydia Douce and Mina Kennedy, the former onomastically sweet and the latter onomastically dangerous.

The role of Homer's Nausicaa, beautiful daughter of the king of Phaeacia, is played in Joyce's chapter "Nausicaa" by the winsome damsel Gerty MacDowell, who lives in a dreamy world of cheap romantic fiction in which she herself is the heroine, awaiting the longed-for arrival of her hero in shining armour. "Like the nude nymph on the Blooms' bedroom wall", as

David Hayman felicitously puts it, "Gerty is a figment of the male imagination even in her own eyes" (84). Homer's Nausicaa is a nobly-born young lady of exemplary virtue who discovers a storm-tossed, exhausted Odysseus washed up naked on a beach – and rather than abandoning him to his own devices she immediately takes him to her father and mother for their help. Her name, however, Greek *Nausikâa*, is generally construed as meaning "burner of ships" (Graves 401), from *vaus* ("ship") and *kaiô* ("I set on fire"). Onomastically, at least, that is to say, Homer's Nausicaa is thus not only a virtuous and charitable beauty but also potentially a destroyer, like the beautiful Helen of Troy, whose face notoriously launched a thousand ships – and sank many of them.

Homer's Nausicaa is exemplarily modest; Joyce's is a flirtatious temptress. Homer's Odysseus, stripped naked by the power of the waves, modestly conceals his private parts when addressing Nausicaa; Joyce's Nausicaa, perched on a rock by the seashore and leaning over further and further backwards ostensibly to watch a nearby fireworks display, is at considerable pains to expose her girlish underwear for her Ulysses, her hero at last arrived – namely, at some distance in the gathering dusk, a surreptitiously masturbating Bloom. Gerty's name, as it happens, is a pet form of "Gertrude", a name that combines the elements *gēr* ("spear") and *þrūþ* ("strength") (Hanks 768). Gerty, that is to say, for all her maidenly winsomeness, is onomastically cast as a spear-wielding warrior, a render of men. Seductively perched on her rock, she evokes not only Homer's Nausicaa, but also, though certainly humorously, the man-eating Scylla. Sentimentally casting the self-satisfying Bloom in the role of dark romantic hero, and failing to notice what he is actually doing, she provides a distorted reflection of Molly Bloom's much more earthy anticipation of the afternoon arrival of the notoriously manful Boylan.

By far the longest chapter in Ulysses, almost one hundred and fifty pages long, is the nightmarish "Circe". Homer's Circe, who like his Calypso inhabits a mythical far-away island, is a beauty and a weaver, just as Homer's Penelope is a beauty and a weaver. She is also a witch-goddess, whose Greek name, *Kirke*, more obviously than its anglicized version, is from a feminine form of the Greek *kirkos* ("hawk"), appropriately in view of her rapacious relations with men, whom she uses her magical powers to seduce and turn into swine. The role of Circe is played in *Ulysses* by Bella Cohen, a brothel keeper in Dublin's Nighttown, briefly visited by Bloom before returning to his home. In the course of the weary Bloom's ensuing nightmare, Bella (whose name means "beautiful") metamorphoses into a vicious male sadist, Bello, who humiliates Bloom sexually and otherwise, transforming him momentarily into a squealing self-disgusted pig.

The "Circe" chapter in *Ulysses* actually conflates elements of two episodes in the *Odyssey*. In one episode, Homer's Odysseus manages to outwit Circe's attempt to turn him

into an animal, subsequently lives with her in sexual harmony on her magic island for a year, and even has two sons with her before pursuing his interrupted journey homewards. In another episode, he visits the Greek Underworld, the sad grey realm of Hades where the spirits of the dead disconsolately remember and unendingly regret the former days of their life on earth. Bloom correspondingly journeys in the "Circe" chapter into the sad grey depths of his own subconscious mind, reliving or anticipating all the actual and possible sadnesses, failures, and humiliations of his life. One of these griefs is of course the sexual encounter of Molly and Boylan, graphically representing for the humiliated Bloom his enduring marital failure. His own timid infidelities with Martha (if only by letter) and with Gerty (if only at arm's length) also have their Homeric antecedents, namely Odysseus's lengthy dalliance first with the beautiful Calypso and later with the beautiful Circe, each on her magical island.

As one element of Joyce's onomastic game-playing throughout *Ulysses*, Bella Cohen's name provides distinctly interesting resonances other than Homeric. First of all, the name Cohen links to Bloom himself, who is Jewish, since it is frequently a Jewish name, deriving from Hebrew *kohen* ("priest"). Second, it links extratextually, and humorously, to Joyce's own wife Nora Barnacle, since, oddly enough, both the names "Cohen" and "Barnacle" are used in Ireland as anglicized versions of the Irish name *Ó Cadhain*, meaning "descendant of Cadhan". The personal name Cadhan, meanwhile, is from the Irish noun *cadhan*, meaning a "wild goose" or a "barnacle goose", an appropriately avian link to the hawkish Circe. Other than this onomastic game, Molly Bloom's character, moreover, is clearly based largely on that of the redoubtable Nora Barnacle, who came from the city of Galway in the west of Ireland, and Galway, with its various Spanish associations as a seaport, "is Gibraltar without the sun" (Maddox 166, 275).

Molly herself, who gets the last word – more than 20,000 words, indeed – in the final chapter, "Penelope", is of course cast as a parodic version of Homer's Penelope, the unswervingly steadfast wife who patiently waits for her wandering hero husband, absent for twenty years, to return from the wars. The origins of the name Penelope (Greek *Pênelópê*) appear to be pre-Greek, and an ancient tradition already suggested an association with a pre-Greek noun *penelôps*, the name of an unspecified kind of bird, possibly predatory, and thus providing an avian link to Circe – as well as, entirely serendipitously for Joyce's humorously teasing purposes, to Nora Barnacle.

A well-known later folk etymology for the name Penelope proposes a combination of Greek *pênê* ("web") and *ôps* ("face"), construed as meaning "with a web (*pênê*) over her face (*ôps*)" (Graves 404), thus "the veiled one", implying one whose true purposes are hard to decipher – and thus providing a link also to Calypso. Not only is Molly's maiden name Tweedy

entirely appropriate for Penelope's role as a weaver (Gilbert 142-43), Andreas Palme notes that even Molly's married name, Bloom, just as appropriate for a weaver, contains the noun *loom* (221). The name of the magical herb *moly* that Odysseus gives to his men to protect them from the wiles of the spell-weaving Circe also punningly resonates, as many critics have noted.

Listening in the small hours of the morning to the finally returned Bloom's carefully edited account of his day, Molly lies "in the attitude of Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with seed" (*Ulysses* 17.2313), though not Bloom's, after her encounter with Boylan. As Stuart Gilbert put it in his pioneering 1930 study of *Ulysses*, Molly, regarded under her symbolic aspects, is "a trinity of personages: Penelope, Calypso and the Earth herself, Gaea-Tellus" (95). She is both the Calypso from whom Bloom as Odysseus departs in the morning and the Penelope to whom he returns at night. It is indicative of the intricacy of Joyce's web-weaving, meanwhile, that if Molly is evocative of Greek *Gea* or Latin *Tellus*, the earth goddess, her mother Lunita's name evokes the moon goddess, Greek *Selene* or Latin *Luna*.

Homer's Penelope is celebrated above all for her marital steadfastness. In her husband's twenty-year absence, she is besieged by no fewer than 108 increasingly aggressive suitors noisily clamouring for her hand – not to mention for possession of her husband's rich estates as king of the island of Ithaca. Penelope holds them at bay by finally agreeing to choose one of them to wed when her weaving of a particular funeral shroud is finished – but famously outwits them all by unweaving by night what she has woven during the day. Homer's Odysseus arrives home, even after twenty years, to a completely faithful wife. Early readers of Joyce's novel saw Molly Bloom, on the other hand, as a very far from faithful wife – one who seemed on the evidence of her own late-night monologue to have in fact slept with an indefinitely large number of men over the years. This opinion seemed to be supported particularly by a list of no fewer than twenty-five assumed lovers compiled by Bloom himself (*Ulysses* 17.2133-42). Only gradually did readers come to realize that Bloom's lengthy list – some of the inclusions in which are "quite ludicrous" (Kiberd 249) – merely reflects various painfully experienced "twinges of Bloomian jealousy" (Kenner 142) over the years. Molly certainly sleeps with Boylan, but whether she ever slept with anybody else other than Bloom remains entirely uncertain. Bloom's exaggerated and masochistic list, as it happens, also has its own quasi-Homeric source, for Penelope's vaunted steadfastness in the Odyssey is radically questioned in a comic ancient countertradition that Penelope, far from steadfast, in fact slept not just with one or two of the suitors but with all 108 of them.

Homer's Penelope is a weaver, Homer's Circe is a weaver, James Joyce is a weaver who weaves a textual web of Homeric allusions, and Joyce's reader is likewise encouraged to be a weaver who weaves an interpretive web around available textual facts. Molly Bloom is of course

not really a monster, and Bloom of course does not really think of her at any point as being a monster – but Joyce's reader is encouraged to see the recurrent appearance of female monsters in Homer's *Odyssey*, onomastically recalled in Joyce's *Ulysses*, as parodically relevant to a beleaguered Bloom's hypothetical reflections on his marital situation. In the "Circe chapter we see a Bloom not actually experiencing but portrayed as if experiencing, as if in a nightmare, soul-shaking visions of self-doubt and self-humiliation. Joyce's weaving of the particular Homeric threads we have been considering here encourages his weaver readers to weave a Bloom as if still in thrall to the witch-goddess Circe, as if continuing to experience such nightmarish Circean possibilities. Given his calmly undramatic nature, Bloom will undoubtedly recover eventually, and perhaps even relatively soon, from the passing trauma of this particular day. Bloom's Bloomsday, after all, ends with him climbing gratefully, without recriminations or histrionics, into his wife's warm bed once again, a latter-day *Ulysses* returned without drama to Ithaca, his odyssey over, and, for the moment at least, all well with the world.

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