

## Article

# “Sirens” by Joyce and the Joys of Sirin: Lilac, Sounds, Temptations

Andrey Astvatsaturov \* and Feodor Dviniatin \*

Faculty of Philology, Saint Petersburg University, Saint-Petersburg 199034, Russia

\* Correspondence: astvatsa@yandex.ru (A.A.); feodvin@yahoo.com (F.D.)

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the musical context of the works of James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov. Joyce’s *Ulysses*, one of the most important literary texts of the twentieth century, is filled with musical allusions and various musical techniques. The chapter “Sirens” is the most interesting in this context as it features a “musical” form and contains a large number of musical quotations. The myth of the singing sirens, recreated by Joyce in images and characters from the modern world, encapsulates the idea of erotic seduction, bringing threat and doom to the seduced. Joyce offers a new version of the sea world filled with music, creating a system of musical leitmotifs and lexical patterns within the text. Developing the themes of temptation, the danger that temptation entails, doom, uniting with the vital forces of the world, and loneliness, Joyce in “Sirens” reveals the semantics of music, showing the specific nature of its effect on listeners. Vladimir Nabokov, who praised *Ulysses* and devoted a lecture to “Sirens”, is much less musical than Joyce. However, he, like Joyce, also refers to the images of singing sirens and the accompanying images of the aquatic world. One of the central, meaning-making signs in his work is the “Sirin complex”, his pseudonym. This sign, which refers to a large number of pretexts, refers in particular to the lilac (siren’) and to the mythological “musical” sirens. As in Joyce’s work, sirens are present in his texts as mermaids and naiads, or as figures of seducers who fulfil their function and bring doom. Joyce and Nabokov are also united by the presence of recurrent leitmotifs, lexical patterns, and the presence of auditory impressions in their text that are evoked by the sound of the everyday world.

**Keywords:** Nabokov; Joyce; music; sound; poetics; myth



**Citation:** Astvatsaturov, Andrey, and Feodor Dviniatin. 2024. “Sirens” by Joyce and the Joys of Sirin: Lilac, Sounds, Temptations. *Arts* 13: 77. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts13030077>

Academic Editor: Dennis Ioffe

Received: 30 November 2023

Revised: 16 April 2024

Accepted: 19 April 2024

Published: 26 April 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

In this paper we will make an attempt to compare the artistic pursuits of James Joyce (1882–1941) and Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) in the context of their interest in music using those images and concepts that are inextricably linked to music. We are interested not in all the musical “subjects” in Joyce’s and Nabokov’s works, but only in those that allow us to compare the texts of both writers. Both Nabokov and Joyce refer to images of sirens and the accompanying aquatic imagery. Joyce in *Ulysses* creates modern versions of the myth of sirens and offers an understanding of music as seduction, while Nabokov constructs a complex autobiographical and associative subtext associated with the word ‘lilac’ (siren’). And importantly, each offers up fascinating language games in his respective text.

The theme “Joyce and music” has been repeatedly covered in literary criticism. Almost all the scholars of Joyce’s legacy have written about Joyce’s musicality, his early musical ambitions, and his fascination with classical music. To date, there have been a number of interesting works on the subject, notably books by Zack Bowen (1974, 1995), Michelle Witen (2018), Josh Torabi (2021), and some others. Musical allusions and quotations from operas permeate all of Joyce’s texts, from his early poetic experiments (*Chamber Music*) to *Finnegans Wake*. At the same time, the aspect of Joyce’s poetics which scholars define as “musical” underwent interesting changes throughout his creative evolution (Milian 2016). In the context of the discussion of possible musical overlaps between Joyce and Nabokov, we are primarily interested in Joyce’s main novel, *Ulysses*. We will focus more specifically on chapter 11, which in the draft version was called “Sirens” and became the most *musical* and *audial* episode in the novel.

The fabula of this chapter is dramatic. Around four o'clock in the afternoon near the bar of the Ormond Hotel, Leopold Bloom notices Boylan, his wife's lover, who just at that time is supposed to visit her for a love date. Bloom decides to follow him and enters the hotel bar where he has lunch with Richie Goulding. Other characters from *Ulysses*, Simon Dedalus, Lenehan, Ben Dollard, and Father Cowley, walk into the bar just before Bloom appears there. They are greeted by two charming young barmaids. Boylan very soon leaves for a date with Molly Bloom, and the other customers order drinks. Simon Dedalus and Ben Dollard then perform two vocal numbers; Simon Dedalus sings Lionel's aria from Friedrich von Flotow's opera *Martha*, and Ben Dollard sings the patriotic ballad *The Croppy Boy*. Bloom listens from the next room to their singing and then leaves the bar.

James Joyce himself defined the structural organization of this chapter as *fuga per canonem*. It is well known that this definition produced a serious controversy. For several decades scholars have been trying to answer the question of whether Joyce actually uses the structural mechanism of the fugue in the "Sirens" chapter, or whether it was just a spectacular metaphor. Stuart Gilbert, in his classic study *James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Gilbert 1930, p. 252), was one of the first to declare that Joyce in this chapter refers to the techniques of the fugue. Proponents of this idea have made many interesting and important arguments (Zimmerman 2002, pp. 108–18), discovering and analyzing Joyce's counterpoint technique employed in "Sirens" (Milian 2016, pp. 189–94) and treating the first part of the chapter as a prelude which comes before the fugue (Cole 1973, pp. 221–26; Lees 1984, pp. 39–54). At the same time, it has been suggested that Joyce in "Sirens" uses the sonata form, which is more in line with the novel narrative than the fugue. The chapter has been evaluated as part of a larger sonata (Smith 1972, pp. 79–92) or as a sonata of its own (Ordway 2007, pp. 85–96). Zack Bowen, in his work, called "Sirens" a "musical with an overture" (Bowen 1995, p. 29). In addition, a very reasonable hypothesis has been put forward that the structure of "Sirens" rather looks like an opera with an overture. Andreas Fischer (1999, p. 249), Walton Litz (1961, pp. 66–69), and some others called the first part of the chapter an overture. An important argument in its favor is the numerous references in "Sirens" to famous operas: Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment*, Leslie Stewart's *Floradora*, Flotow's *Martha*, Vincenzo Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, Julius Benedict's *The Bride of Venice*, M.W. Balfe's *The Rose of Castile*, and others. In the first, short part of the chapter, the main themes are set, in the form of individual phrases taken out of context, and in the second part the narrative unfolds, in which these phrases reappear.

Michelle Witen in *James Joyce and Absolute Music* sums up the long-running debate concerning the "Sirens" chapter, pointing out the weaknesses and strengths of different approaches and hypotheses (Witen 2018, pp. 119–25). Witen insists that Joyce's definition of the chapter (*fuga per canonem*) is not a metaphor and convincingly argues, taking into consideration Joyce's drafts and notes, that the author of *Ulysses* uses the double fugue structure in the chapter.

The episode is interesting because it ironically combines the different moods of the characters, different literary styles, the comic and the tragic, parodic romanticism, and parodic naturalism into a single musical sound (French 1978, p. 3).

Music in the "Sirens" chapter fulfils an important role. Numerous musical references and quotations are keys to the text and create important subtexts in the chapter. Music also acts as a sound that correlates with the characters' moods and experiences (Bowen 1974, p. 48). In addition, Joyce focuses here entirely on the audial, phonetic level of speech, developing the Romantic and Symbolist traditions. In addition, like the Surrealists, he tries to liberate the narrator's speech from the dictatorship of reason and partially relieve it of the need to signify something. This is why, in the first part, the narrator does not offer us a connected text, but individual phrases. Taken out of their context, they are almost meaningless. Moreover, their connection with the referent is weakened. The reader focuses on sound, on the level of phonemes, which according to Stephen Tifft organize the love life in the text (Tifft 2013, pp. 161–72). Joyce, as we see, tries to break the symmetry of the linguistic sign (Milian 2016, p. 192). That is why the chapter "Sirens" often becomes

a tempting object for poststructuralist criticism (Allen 2007, pp. 442–59; Attridge 1986, pp. 55–72).

Joyce in the “Sirens” actively uses means which are more characteristic of poetry than of prose (Bowen 1974, p. 47; French 1978, pp. 2–4): assonances, phrase repetitions, alliterations, onomatopoeia (Bowen 1974, p. 48), inversions, wordplay, nonsense words, combining words with similar sound, breaking the rules of grammar and syntax (Green 2002, pp. 488–89). Bowen also notes that in the chapter Joyce makes “many attempts at duplicating types of musical intonation, such as a staccato or a sustained effect” (Bowen 1974, p. 47). As we know, Nabokov started to develop some of these techniques in his earliest works. It is not by chance that Nabokov showed great interest in “Sirens”, noting these techniques and drawing attention in his lecture on *Ulysses* to the fact that Joyce designates by means of the technique of a musical leitmotif the presence of Boylan, who has left the restaurant for Molly, in the thoughts of Bloom, who is still sitting in the restaurant (Nabokov 1982, pp. 337–38). This artistic tool, noted by Nabokov, has been discussed many times by Joyce scholars. At this point it is important to mention, as Marilyn French does (French 1978, p. 2), the omnipresent narrator who sees all the events occurring simultaneously in different places and combines them, discovering the internal, non-obvious meanings. And, in addition, using the Wagnerian method of composition (Bowen 1995, p. 16; Milian 2016, p. 185; Torabi 2021, p. 123) to assign a leitmotif to an event or a character, Joyce creates a unified musical world, relating events and characters to each other through the way it happens in a piece of music. Nadya Zimmerman notes that “By using a musical form to represent the simultaneous actions of characters, Joyce offers a revolutionary model of narrativity in which events time, space, and action as sound does in music” (Zimmerman 2002, p. 109).

It should be noted that Joyce organizes imagery into systems of textual patterns (internal lexical chains, a kind of parallel plot) that permeate the entire text, overlapping and often intersecting. This technique, which we will later study in several examples, is also actively used in Vladimir Nabokov’s early and mature fiction.

Nora Elisabeth Lambrecht’s dissertation addresses a number of issues that are far removed from the subject of our article, but are extremely curious, in particular the role of the sounds in the novel (Lambrecht 2017, pp. 99–102) that Joyce (Stephen) designates as “dead noise”. The author of the article associates these soundings with the notion of ‘acousmatic’: “For dead noise—noise without a body to revive it, noise that no longer rings out from its source but has not for that been effaced—recalls an auditory concept from antiquity: acousmatic sound” (ibid., p. 110), such as “the player piano, radio, phonograph, and telephone” (ibid., p. 111). From this point on, the author moves on to the specific sounds in the “Sirens” episode: “This chapter, like the project of which it forms part, pushes against the tendency in both Weaver and Hepburn’s approaches to subsume noise either under the signifying star of a discipline such as music or under the banner of meaninglessness. Here, it is precisely the meaning of the non-musical, and precisely the murmurs, rumbles, and speeches—the lonely vocalisations of the city, the Irish political scene, and characters’ minds—that are worth following” (ibid., p. 114). Even sounds such as the famous “Pprrrrpffrrppffffffffffffff” can be comprehended, for example, by comparing it with a line from *Inferno*, XXI: ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta; however, Dante did not give an acoustic image, which differs him from Joyce: “Even Dante did not attempt to record the sound of the devil’s flatulence in his verse. Nevertheless, Joyce’s debt to Dante cannot be denied” (ibid., p. 115). In turn, this technique is continued in numerous episodes of the novel and juxtaposed with the phonetic techniques of the avant-garde.

Joyce’s “musicality”, which we have briefly outlined, has many different grounds. The continuity of music, and its correlation with flow, makes it, for high modernists, an effective means of organizing verbal material, which is intended to convey reality not as a set of static forms, but as a flow. The same applies to the complexity of human consciousness, which is a set of intense, heterogeneous sensations. Music turns out to be a successful form for representing the process of thinking (Green 2002, p. 488). At the same time, one should

not forget Joyce's total irony. Of course, Joyce, developing musical means in the narrative, tries to exhaust them, to bring the musicality of language to its limit, to parody it.

The mythological basis of the chapter is the episode of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens: half-women, half-birds with a magic voice. The sirens sing sweetly, luring the seafarers to their island, where they kill them. Odysseus, aware of the danger, mutes his companions' ears with wax and tells them to tie him to the mast, warning them not to untie him in no case. And his ship sails safely past the island.

Joyce, creating a modern version of the Homeric stories, follows not the external side of the myth with events and occurrences, but the meanings and motives that he discovers in its foundation. He offers the reader different variations of these meanings, thus creating a system of modern versions of the myth and analytically dissecting it. The meanings and motifs involved include music, singing, seduction, flirtation, eroticism (this motif is absent in Homer's *Odyssey*), and finally, the danger that lurks in seduction. The superficial parallels of Homer's epic are apparent: the bar of the Ormond Hotel is the Isle of Sirens, and the two barmaids, Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce, are sweet-sounding sirens. Both of them, by Joyce's conception, signify the musical harmonies of scales. The sad melancholic Miss Mina Kennedy is a minor key (*Mina* is *minor*). Cheerful and energetic Lydia Douce (the Lydian scale) is major (Green 2002, p. 492). Not only do they appear as Homeric sirens, but also the singing Simon Dedalus and Ben Dollard. Accordingly, Bloom, as usual, acts as Odysseus, and the other visitors to the bar (Lenahan, Lydwell, Richie Goulding, etc.) listening to the singing act as his companions.

However, the text shows us that the parallels with Homeric myth prove to be more complex. In essence, "Sirens" consists of isomorphic episodes where the same situation of seduction is reproduced. It should be noted that Joyce, unlike Homer, does not have a clear distribution of roles into their respective pairs: the Sirens/Odysseus and his companions. The subject and the object of seduction, the seducer and the seduced, can change roles in the course of the narrative and, moreover, simultaneously act in two roles. In addition, the seducer in this situation, acting as a siren, should be, apparently, the performer (singer), and the seduced as the listener. But Joyce introduces some confusion here as well. The role of the seducer and the role of the singer in his case appear to be separated. The seducer is the listener and the seduced is the performer, and sometimes even both turn out to be performers.

This confusing situation arises immediately in the very first episode of the chapter, where Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce watch the Viceroy's cavalcade from a window. They act as sirens, trying to attract the attention of the passers-by. However, it is the cavalcade that becomes the source of music, and the barmaids listen to the sounds of hoofs: "Bronze by gold, Miss Douce's head by Miss Kennedy", over the crossblind of the Ormond bar the viceregal hoofs go by, ringing steel" (Joyce 1985, p. 256).

Here, it is important to consider the opposition that Michelle Witen discovers: immobility/movement. Immobility, according to Witen, is the subject of the fugue, while movement is its countersubject (Witen 2018, pp. 132–34). The world within Ormond is immobile, while the world outside the hotel is in motion. The barmaids and visitors in the hotel are motionless while the cavalcade, Bloom, and Boylan, when outside the hotel, move. They both become motionless when they enter the hotel and regain their mobility when they leave it. This opposition is inextricably linked to the Homeric plot. Odysseus and his companions are sailing past an island. The sailors are in motion relative to it, but Odysseus is immobile—he is tied to the mast. Thomas Gurke suggests that these lines of the episode refer to the famous legend given by Nicomachus of Gerasa who tells that Pythagoras, walking by a smithy, recognized in the sounds of hammer and anvil the consonance of the octave: "< . . . > the notion of metal and its 'steelyring' sound also conjures up the image of a blacksmith at his craft" (Gurke 2017, p. 321).

Another example of a barmaid-siren taking on the role of the listener can be found in the episode where they discuss the pharmacist, "an old fogey in Boyd's". Ms. Kennedy

plugs her ears to avoid hearing Ms. Douce (Joyce 1985, p. 258), becoming like the companions of Odysseus whose ears are covered with wax:

Sweet tea miss Kennedy having poured with milk plugged both ears with little fingers.

—No, don't, she cried

—I won't listen, she cried.

(Joyce 1985, p. 258).

This is a not uncommon example of Joyce's travesty of myth, its direct parody—the myth—is transferred to modern reality without change.

However, the parody of the scene does not end with this gesture. In this episode, the reader hears the voices of modern sirens:

Shrill shriek of laughter sprang from miss Kennedy's throat. Miss Douce huffed and snorted down her nostrils that quivered imperfectly like a snout in quest.

—O! shrieking, Miss Kennedy cried. Will you ever forget his goggle eye?

Miss Douce chimed in in deep bronze laughter, shouting:

—And your other eye!

(Joyce 1985, p. 285).

While Homer's voices of the sirens charm the travelers, the voices of Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce sound repulsive, which creates a parodic situation. Josh Torabi comments on this point: "Their 'song' is not melodic, lyrical or beautiful but sexual, animalistic, and cacophonous as the Sirens 'shriek,' 'pant,' 'laugh,' and so on" (Torabi 2021, p. 125).

As far as the travesty of the myth is concerned, the "Sirens" chapter contains another parody. Leopold Bloom, listening to Lionel's aria performed by Simon Dedalus, simultaneously manipulates a band from the package:

Bloom unwound slowly the elastic band of his packet. Love's old sweet sonnez la gold. Bloom wound a skein round four forkfingers, stretched it, relaxed, and wound it round his troubled double, fourfold, in octave, gyved them fast. (Joyce 1985, p. 273).

Bloom thus binds his hands together. When the singing ends, Bloom unties them and turns the elastic band into the musical string: "Bloom ungyved his crisscrossed hands and with slack fingers plucked the slender catgut thong. He drew and plucked. It buzzed, it twanged" (Joyce 1985, p. 276). By this means, Bloom is ironically related to Odysseus, tied to the mast, who listens to the singing of the sirens. Josh Torabi agrees with this interpretation (Torabi 2021, p. 123) and adds that this scene establishes a link between music and the myth, and that Bloom acts as a performer of his own musical part (*ibid.*, p. 123). What is important for us in this case is that Bloom is both a performer and a listener. V. M. Plock draws attention to this scene and suggests that Bloom performs "the Pythagorean sound experiment, by winding the string around his (tuning) fork fingers to simulate the production of an octave" (Plock 2009, p. 486).

Next, Bloom, walking down the street, sees "blessed virgins" in a window: "By Bassi's blessed virgins Bloom's dark eyes went by. Bluerobed, white under, come to me. God they believe she is: or goddess. Those today. I could not see". (Joyce 1985, p. 258). Bloom associatively recalls the statues of ancient goddesses in the museum and his erotic interest in them. Consequently, in this episode "blessed virgins" appear as a variation of sirens, as a source of seduction. The lexical and musical pattern blew—bloom—blue—flue, to which Scott Ordway draws attention (Ordway 2007, p. 91), reveals itself here. This pattern first appears in the first part of "Sirens": "Blew. Blue bloom is on the" (Joyce, p. 254). The verb "blew" refers to Simon Daedalus "musically" blowing his flute pipe: "He blew through the flue two husky fifenotes" (Joyce 1985, p. 260). The adjective "blue", used in relation to Bloom, will later be used with a different meaning in relation to Boylan, and thus will connect both characters: "Sparkling bronze azure eyed Blazure's skyblue bow and eyes"

(Joyce 1985, p. 265), “Dandy tan shoe of dandy Boylan socks skyblue clocks came light to earth” (Joyce 1985, p. 281).

In a scene where Simon Dedalus is talking to Miss Douce, the barmaid tells him that she has recently been to the sea and spent whole days on the beach:

—Gorgeous, she said. Look at the holy show I am. Lying out on the strand all day.

Bronze whiteness.

—That was exceedingly naughty of you, Mr. Dedalus told her and pressed her hand indulgently. Tempting poor simple males.

(Joyce 1985, pp. 259–60).

Miss Douce is denoted here as a seductress, and the seaside setting, the beach, relates her to a siren or sea maiden. Her whiteness is also a source of seduction; it is associated in the text with the whiteness of the female body that attracts men, which Bloom reflects on. In recounting her time lying on the beach, Miss Douce flirts with Simon Dedalus, thus acting as a seductive siren. Miss Douce is not the singer or a musician; the musician in this episode is Simon Dedalus, with whom she flirts. His pipe is transformed into a flute: “Forth from the skirt of his coat Mr. Dedalus brought pouch and pipe. Alacrity she served. He blew through the flue two husky fifenotes” (Joyce 1985, p. 260).

Next, Lenehan enters the bar, looking here for the seducer Boylan. He begins to flirt with Miss Kennedy, acting as a comic seducer, and at the same time his speech, with which he attracts the attention of the barmaid, resembles singing. However, she, like the companions of Odysseus, does not respond to this singing:

Girlgold she read and did not glance. Take no notice. She took no notice while he read by rote a solfa fable for her, plapping flatly:

—Ah fox met ah stork. Said thee fox too thee stork. Will you put your bill down inn my troath and pull upp ah bone?

He droned in vain. Miss Douce turned to her tea aside.

(Joyce 1985, p. 261).

Lenehan will very soon repeat his attempts, but on Miss Douce:

—The dewdrops pearl. . .

Lenehan’s lips over the counter lisped a low whistle of decoy.

—But look this way, he said, rose of Castile.

Jingle jaunted by the curb and stopped.

She rose and closed her reading, the rose of Castile: fretted, forlorn, dreamily rose.

(Joyce 1985, p. 263).

Lenehan again appears as a seducer, but Miss Douce also appears as a seductress. They both become sirens, each with their own musical part: Miss Douce hums, and Lenehan makes a melodious whistle. It is also important that the seducer, Boylan, who has not yet appeared in the hotel bar, is inconspicuously present in this episode through metonymy. He is designated by the musical leitmotif as a character with an unchanging musical accompaniment. “Jingle” is the jingle of the carriage on which he arrives.

The mention of a beautiful musical performance that mesmerizes listeners occurs in the episode where Miss Douce tells of a blind tuner who played the piano wonderfully in the hotel bar:

—The tuner was in today, Miss Douce replied, tuning it for the smoking concert and I never heard such an exquisite player.

—Is that a fact?

—Isn’t he, miss Kennedy? The real classical, you know. And blind too, poor fellow. Not twenty I’m sure he was.

—Is that a fact? Mr. Dedalus said.

He drank and strayed away.  
 —So sad to look at his face, Miss Douce condoled.  
 (Joyce 1985, p. 262).

The blind tuner acts in this case as a singing siren, and his listeners, mesmerized by the beauty, are like sailors attracted by the voice of sirens. Among them is Miss Douce, who feels pity for the tuner. It might seem that there is no motive of seduction or eroticism in this episode. However, Miss Douce's display of pity correlates with the episode where she, listening to the ballad *The Croppy boy* and feeling pity for her character, simulates the act of masturbation by stroking the handle of a beer pump:

On the smooth jutting beerpull laid Lydia hand, lightly, plumply, leave it to my hands. All lost in pity for croppy. Fro, to: to, fro: over the polished knob (she knows his eyes, my eyes, her eyes) her thumb and finger passed in pity: passed, reposed and, gently touching, then slid so smoothly, slowly down, a cool firm white enamel baton protruding through their sliding ring.

(Joyce 1985, p. 285)

In this way, the feminine pity Miss Douce displays toward the tuner is rendered as eroticized.

The episode where Simon Dedalus looks at the piano and tries to play it is also interesting in this context:

Upholding the lid he (who?) gazed in the coffin (coffin?) at the oblique triple (piano!) wires. He pressed (the same one who pressed indulgently her hand), soft pedaling, a triplet of keys to see the thicknesses of felt advancing, to hear the muffled hammerfall in action.

(Joyce 1985, p. 262)

The piano, which the tuner played and which Simon Dedalus plays, acts in this case as a source of mesmerizing music, as a siren, and at the same time as an object of Simon Dedalus's erotic attraction. Simon Dedalus lovingly inspects the instrument and strokes the keys in exactly the same way that he stroked Miss Douce's hand in an earlier episode. It is important that in this episode Joyce introduces for the first time the motif of death, the doom that sweet music brings: the piano is described by the narrator as a coffin. This motif is further developed in the episode where the visitors listen to the ballad "The Croppy Boy". Another inanimate object that acts as a siren is a tuning fork, forgotten by the blind tuner. The visitors listen to its beautiful sound.

As Simon Dedalus tries to play the piano, Bloom discerns a tobacco advertisement that depicts a smoking mermaid, a version of a siren:

Wise Bloom eyed on the door a poster, a swaying mermaid smoking mid nice waves. Smoke mermaids, coolest whiff of all. Hair streaming: lovelorn. For some man. For Raoul. He eyed and saw afar on Essex bridge a gay hat riding on a jaunting car.

(Joyce 1985, p. 262)

What is important here is not only the image of the sea maiden, whose purpose is to lure and seduce sailors, but the very form in which this image is presented—an advertisement that is designed to seduce the buyer. The conjunction "For Raoul" that emerges in Bloom's mind is a quote from the erotic novel *Sweets of Sin*, which Bloom bought at the Merchant's Arch Passage. This novel is about seduction and adultery. Bloom recalls the novel, thinking about adultery, feels a secret pleasure, and projects it onto his relationship with Molly. And then, as a living realization of his fantasy, Boylan, his wife's lover, whom he notices in a passing carriage, appears. Boylan is represented metonymically (gay hat).

In the next episode a salesgirl flirts with Bloom: "Winsomely she on Bloohimwhom smiled. Bloo smi qui go. Ternoon" (Joyce 1985, p. 262). She acts as a seductress, but Bloom

remarks to herself, “Think you’re the only pebble on the beach?” The reference to beach refers to the sea world to which the sirens belong.

Miss Douce flirts with the seducer Boylan, who shows up at the hotel bar: “He touched to fair Miss Kennedy a rim of his slanted straw. She smiled on him. But sister bronze outsmiled her, preening for him her richer hair, a bosom and a rose” (Joyce 1985, p. 263). The musical theme is introduced here by the mention of a rose on her breast. The rose refers to the opera *The Rose of Castille*, the melody from which she is humming. Boylan, looking at her, thus appears as Odysseus.

Boylan remains in the role of Odysseus and Miss Douce in the role of the siren as she flirts with him and slaps her garter. Boylan inwardly responds, just as Odysseus did, and, like Odysseus, rushes on, leaving the bar.

All further narrative development in this chapter follows the model we have described: each episode features flirtation, usually combined with a musical theme, and characters appear as sirens or sailors. Key episodes in the chapter include Simon Dedalus’ performance of Lionel’s aria from Flotow’s opera *Martha* and Ben Dollard’s performance of the ballad “The Croppy Boy”. Dedalus and Dollard perform as sirens while the audience turn out to be sailors. Leopold Bloom, a modern-day Odysseus, has a special role here. He listens to all the music coming from the bar, even the sound of the seashell, enjoys it, feels the erotic seduction of the atmosphere in the bar, but does not allow himself to be drawn into the musically erotic world, realizing that this world carries the threat of destruction, “the dissolution of subjectivity” (Witen 2018, p. 177), and death.

The imagery system that forms the musical and erotic atmosphere of the chapter is connected with everyday life, with naturalistically painted comic realities of modern life (French 1978, p. 3). At the same time, the chapter contains numerous references to the sea world, where the singing sirens dwell. The word “sea” is repeated many times in the chapter and also appears in various combinations, forming a regularly recurring musical leitmotif or pattern: seahorn (Joyce 1985, p. 279), seagreen (ibid., p. 267), seascape (ibid., p. 270), seaweed (ibid., p. 280), seaside (ibid., p. 280), seasmiling (ibid., p. 280). In addition, Joyce creates an internal pattern in the chapter, built on a chain of words similar in sound: sea—see—thee—seat—think—singing—greasy.

Outside the hotel, Bloom keeps an eye on Boylan, fearing that he will spot him:  
Between the car and window, warily walking, went Bloom, unconquered hero.  
**See** me he might. The **seat** he sat on: warm. Black wary hecat walked towards  
Richie Goulding’s legal bag, lifted aloft, saluting.

—And I from *thee*. . .

(Joyce 1985, p. 263)

This episode combines two sound games: “window—warily—walking” and “see—seat—sat—thee”. It is the second one that interests us in this case. Here, together with the verbs “see” and “sat” and the pronoun “thee”, the noun “seat” appears. This is the seat warmed by Boylan, which will be mentioned several times later in the chapter in the form of an adjective: “sprawled, warmseated, Boylan impatience” (Joyce 1985, p. 268). “Atrot, in heat, heatseated. Cloche. Sonnez la. Cloche. Sonnez la” (ibid., p. 275). All these derivatives refer us not only to the word “seat”, but also to “sea”, immersing Boylan in the sea element, in the world of the Sirens.

The adjective “greasy” occurs in the text when the two sirens, Ms. Douce and Ms. Kennedy, recall the “old fogey in Boyd’s”.

—O greasy eyes! Imagine being married to a man like that! she cried. With his bit of beard!

Douce gave full vent to a splendid yell, a full yell of full woman, delight, joy, indignation.

—Married to the greasy nose! she yelled.

(Joyce 1985, p. 259)

The narrator then uses a false storyline move: “Married to Bloom, to greasebloom” (Joyce 1985, p. 259). The move is false, since the sirens are not discussing Bloom. But it is important to note here the word-hybrid “greasebloom” connecting the words “greasy”, “sea”, and “Bloom”. The word “sea” appears twice in this complex hybrid. In this case, Bloom, as a modern Odysseus, is associated with the sea world. In the final chapter the narrator shortens this hybrid, leaving only “sea” and the character’s surname and putting two variants next to each other: “Seabloom, greasebloom viewed last words” (Joyce 1985, p. 289). Thus, the adjective “greasy” appears in the verbal chain associated with the sea. Josh Torabi notes: “< . . . > the amused barmaid’s depiction of Bloom’s ‘greasy eye’ on to his ‘greasy nose,’ culminating in the cadence repetition and a trill: ‘married to Bloom, to greasebloom,’ denotes a reference to the sea as domain of the Sirens and a uniting of the sea image with Bloom and subsequently Odysseus” (Torabi 2021, p. 125).

To this chain and play of sounds are added the words “think” and “singing”, which correlate with “sea” in a number of episodes, such as in the scene where Bloom reflects on the shell listeners: “The sea they think they hear. Singing”. (Joyce 1985, p. 280).

The world of the sea in the chapter is not limited to mentioning the sea and playing with this word. Joyce makes extensive use of marine imagery. Curiously, he never once mentions sirens as half-woman half-birds. They are present in the text as archetypes behind characters and inanimate objects that are associated with music, temptation, and danger. However, he wittily dissects the Homeric image of half-woman and half-bird by presenting women and birds separately. The women are the singing Miss Douce and Molly Bloom, as well as Miss Kennedy. In turn, the birds are also mentioned in the chapter. The musical giggling of Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce is described as “high piercing notes” (Joyce 1985, p. 258). In turn, the image of the bird is also associated with the notes that give birth to the melody when Simon Dedalus plays the piano: “A duodene of birdnotes chirruped bright treble answers under sensitive hands” (Joyce 1985, p. 263).

In Bloom’s recollection, when he is talking to Richie Goulding, two singing birds, a thrush and a starling, appear:

Richie cocked his lips apout. A low incipient note sweet banshee murmured: all. A thrush. A throistle. His breath, birdsweet, good teeth he’s proud of, fluted with plaintive woe. Is lost. Rich sound. Two notes in one there. Blackbird I heard in the hawthorn valley.

(Joyce 1985, p. 271)

Ben Dollard then compares Simon Dedalus, who sang Lionel’s aria, to a thrush: “—Seven days in jail, Ben Dollard said, on bread and water. Then you’d sing, Simon, like a garden thrush” (Joyce 1985, p. 275). When Bloom listens to Ben Dollard, an image of a bird sitting hatching in a nest appears in his mind: “Bird sitting hatching in a nest. Lay of the last minstrel he thought it was” (Joyce 1985, p. 282). By dividing the image of the siren into the image of a woman and the image of a bird, Joyce wittily plays with the myth, dissecting it and trying to reveal its inner foundations.

Without directly mentioning or using the image of the siren, Joyce at the same time refers to the image of the mermaid, which is also used by Vladimir Nabokov. It is widely known that in European tradition sirens were often described as sea maidens with fish tails. The first metonymic reference to a sea maiden in the chapter seems somewhat unexpected; Simon Dedalus, associated with the singing siren, fills his pipe, which acts as a musical instrument, with the hair of a mermaid: “Yes. He fingered shreds of hair, her maidenhair, her mermaid’s into the bowl” (Joyce 1985, p. 260). Here we get the impression, deliberately induced in the reader by Joyce, that this is the hair of Miss Douce, who has just told him that she spent whole days lying on the beach, thus acquiring the appearance of a mermaid that seduces men. However, her next mention brings certainty to the episode. Bloom looks at an image of a smoking mermaid on a tobacco advertisement, the same tobacco that Simon Dedalus stuffs into his pipe:

Wise Bloom eyed on the door a poster, a swaying mermaid smoking mid nice waves. Smoke mermaids, coolest whiff of all. Hair streaming; lovelorn. For some man. For Raoul. He eyed and saw afar on Essex bridge a gay hat riding on a jaunting car. It is. Again. Third time. Coincidence.

(Joyce 1985, p. 262)

The mermaid on the advertising poster creates a situation where both form and meaning are seduction. The advertisement entices buyers, and the mermaid with loose hair is meant to seduce sailors. And in Bloom's mind, by association, he immediately recalls the book *Sweets of Sin*, about seduction and adultery, which he bought for Molly, and whose content he relates to his own life.

In the final of the chapter, the young blind tuner walks past an advertising poster with a mermaid:

A stripling, blind, with a tapping cane came taptaptapping by Daly's window where a mermaid hair all streaming (but he couldn't see) blew whiffs of a mermaid (blind couldn't), mermaid, coolest whiff of all. (Joyce 1985, p. 288)

The blind young man does not see the mermaid and does not succumb to possible temptation, like the deafened companions of Odysseus, who do not hear the sirens and do not experience their charms. Here again the mermaid's loose hair is mentioned, and in the next fragment Bloom, who has already left the bar, the island of the sirens, remembers Molly's loose hair: "Molly in her shift in Lombard street west, hair down" (Joyce 1985, p. 288). Molly's loose hair relates her to a mermaid, enticing both Boylan and Bloom. Note that Molly has another feature of a mermaid (siren). She is a singer and performer of love arias and duets. At the beginning of the novel, she informs Bloom that she is going to sing the part of Zerlina from the duettino of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (Don Giovanni tries to seduce Zerlina in this episode) and *Love Old Sweet Song* by James Lynam Molloy and Graham Clifton Bingham. Thus Joyce, while ignoring the canonical image of the siren, still uses the image of the mermaid, associating her with the novel's main female character.

The indirect presence of the sirens in the chapter is indicated by an important topos associated with their world. It is the rocky island where they dwell. The image is presented in the novel in the form of its mundane version—the counter behind which the sirens, Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce, stand: "They cowered under their reef of counter, waiting on footstools, crates upturned, waiting for their teas to draw" (Joyce 1985, p. 257).

The rock associated with sirens appears in the text when Simon Dedalus recalls the siren Molly Bloom, born on Gibraltar: "From the rock of Gibraltar. . . all the way" (Joyce 1985, p. 268). The word "rock" is mentioned several times in the chapter, but in other meanings, and here Joyce offers a language game. He turns the word "rock" into a leitmotif and by collecting all its possible meanings he creates a linguistic pattern within the text.

"Rocky thumbnails" are mentioned as early as in the "overture" of the chapter. This combination of words is repeated in the main part, where the reader learns that the owner of rocky thumbnails is Simon Dedalus, appearing both as a sailor with whom Miss Douce flirts and as a siren when he plays the piano or performs Lionel's love aria: "Into their bar strolled Mr. Dedalus. Chips, picking chips off one of his rocky thumbnails" (Joyce 1985, p. 259).

When father Cowley remembers the time when Bloom was in a tough financial situation, he says "—I knew he was on the rocks" (Joyce 1985, p. 267). The word "rocks" also appears in the meaning of candy: "By Graham Lemon's pineapple rock, by Elvery's elephant jingly jogged" (Joyce 1985, p. 271). Boylan passes by them as if passing a rocky island on his way to the siren—Molly. The musical accompaniment of "jingly jogged" is the jingling of his carriage.

Bloom, remembering how seductive his siren-wife looked when he was telling her about Spinoza and realizing, years later, the pointlessness of that conversation inwardly exclaims: "Philosophy. O rocks!" (Joyce 1985, p. 283). Finally, "rocks" is used as a verb in

Bloom's reflections on the boundless power that women-sirens have over the world: "Her hand that rocks the cradle rules the. Ben Howth. That rules the world" (Joyce 1985, p. 287).

Joyce, as we see, creates a chain (a pattern) within the text that overlaps with other chains.

A similar pattern is created around another marine image of a seashell. The image first appears in the chapter "Proteus", where Stephen Dedalus is walking along the seashore. He closes his eyes and hears shells crunching under his feet: 'Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crunching wrack and shells' (Joyce 1985, p. 42). In the "Sirens" the image appears at the very beginning of the chapter where the "reef of counter" is described: "Miss Douce half-stood to see her skin askance in the barmirror gildedlettered where hock and claret glasses shimmered and in their midst a shell" (ibid., p. 257). The shell is noticed by Boylan, looking at the siren Miss Douce, who flirts with him: "His spellbound eyes went after, after her gliding head as it went down the bar by mirrors, gilded arch for ginger ale, hock and claret glasses shimmering, a spiky shell, where it concerted, mirrored, bronze with sunnier bronze" (ibid., p. 265). Soon, the shell is mentioned again, and the reader learns that it was brought by Miss Douce from her trip to the sea: "And look at the lovely shell she brought" (Ibid., p. 279). Joyce adds the prepositional verb "shell out" to the pattern, when Bloom says to himself: "Fellows shell out dibs" (ibid., p. 284). In this context, the danger of flirting, which entails the loss of money to the one being seduced, is implied.

While in "Proteus" the shells that Stephen tramples over make dead mechanical sounds, in the "Sirens" chapter the shell becomes a musical instrument. Its sound gives birth to seductive melodies, which visitors to the bar listen to at Miss Douce's request. Moreover, the shell becomes a polysemous symbol with a wide field of associations that literary tradition and popular science offer. These associations have been discussed in detail in Stefan Helmreich's article "Seashell Sound. Echoing Ocean, Vibrating Air, Brute Blood" (Helmreich 2012–2013). Nineteenth-century poets (W. Wordsworth, D. G. Rossetti, Ch. H. Webb) urged listening to seashells which reproduced the voice of the sea: the sound of waves. The narrator of the "Sirens" chapter, in conveying the collective feelings of the characters who put the shell to their ears, follows this tradition by explaining that they hear "the plash of waves, loudly, a silent roar" (Joyce 1985, p. 280). Joyce also follows the scholar tradition, which Stefan Helmreich (Helmreich 2012–2013) discusses in his article correlating the seashell and the ear. Looking at Miss Douce, Bloom reflects: "Her ear too is a shell, the peeping lobe there" (Joyce 1985, p. 280). Bloom goes on to express the common belief that the music of the shell is the sound of blood moving in the ears, "The sea they think they hear. Singing. A roar. The blood is it" (Joyce 1985, p. 280). This concept, as Helmreich notes (Helmreich 2012–2013), became popular in the late nineteenth century and was apparently known to Joyce. More significantly, however, in this episode Joyce makes the important point that the listener is addressed to himself and can, as we have already noted, act in two roles at once: a listener and a performer. The same is true of the seducer—they often find themselves in the role of the seduced. It is important to note that the shell in the "Sirens", together with its music of the sea or the music of raging human blood, carries seduction. By displaying the shell, Miss Douce flirts with the visitors of the bar. And here the meanings that Helmreich cites, referring to Susan Gubar, are quite possible: the shell is associated with Venus and female genitalia. In this way, the shell combines music and seduction.

The semantics of music are revealed by Joyce in two musical episodes in the chapter. In the first, Simon Dedalus performs Lionel's aria from Flotow's opera *Martha*; in the second, Ben Dollard sings the patriotic ballad "The Croppy Boy". Zack Bowen analyses in detail the inclusion of both arias in the text of "Sirens" (Bowen 1995, pp. 46–57, 62–67) and shows how they correlate with Leopold Bloom's psychological state of mind.

The narrator in both cases focuses specifically on the listeners, laying bare the nature of the impact of the musical performances on them. Michelle Witen rightly observes that "musical pieces <...> chart Bloom's psychological progression". (Witen 2018, p. 180) In addition, the music is narrativized and musical signs are recoded, transforming into visual images revealed in the characters' inner speech.

It is significant that in these two episodes Joyce unites the experiences of the characters, offering us a collective reaction and revealing, on the one hand, stereotypical, generalized experiences (reaction to sentimental music), as Marilyn French rightly points out (French 1978, p. 8), and on the other hand, that deep hidden area of the human self which is common to all.

As Simon Dedalus and Father Cowley prepare to perform Lionel's aria from *Martha*, Richie Goulding and Bloom discuss another aria—Elvino's aria "Tutto e sciolto" (All is lost) from Act II of Vincenzo Bellini's opera *La Sonnambula*. It is an aria of despair, sadness, and betrayed feelings: Elvino caught his bride Amina in Count Rodolfo's bedroom, which she had accidentally entered in a state of somnambulism. The aria's melody is whistled by Richie Goulding, and Bloom recalls the opera's content and projects it onto his own life. The narrator makes Elvino's aria, written in the minor key, the aesthetic, musical correlate of Bloom's inner state (blue Bloom). Bloom experiences his wife's infidelity and feels sadness, loneliness, and alienation from life. In turn, Lionel's aria, composed in the major key, is also a musical correlate of Bloom's state of mind, but it suggests a slightly different, more optimistic mood associated with the hope of winning back his beloved. In this way, the narrator shows us a certain contradictory nature of Bloom's emotional state, combining despondency and optimism, despair, and hope. Jon D. Green rightly writes in this regard: "Bloom is caught on the horns of a painful dilemma: whether to pursue Boylan and thwart the consummation of their secret love or to remain and find another outlet for his betrayed passion. His ambivalent emotion of yearning, resignation and despair are expressively captured by the contrasts between the two arias performed by Richie Goulding's whistling and Simon Dedalus's singing" (Green 2002, p. 492).

Simon Dedalus' singing begins, and the narrator immediately describes the collective perception of the music, revealing its explicit and hidden meanings: "Braintipped, cheek touched with flame, they listened feeling that endearing flow over skin limbs human heart soul spine" (Joyce 1985, p. 272). Music appears as a flow that permeates the human body and all material forms. It is described as life in its becoming. This description of the flowing music refers us to numerous episodes within *Ulysses*, where the idea of life as a continuous flow is brought forward, in particular to the chapter "Lestrigones", where Bloom looks at the advertisement on the barge, on the river: "How can you own water really? It's always flowing in a stream, never the same, which in the stream of life we trace. Because life is a stream" (Joyce 1985, p. 153). Music opens up that territory of the primordial, where life originates; that is why for Bloom it is imbued with eroticism:

—Full of hope and all delighted. . .

Tenors get women by the score. Increase their flow. Throw flower at his feet. When will we meet? My head it simply. Jingle all delighted. He can't sing for tall hats. Your head it simply swirls. Perfumed for him. What perfume does your wife? I want to know. Jing. Stop. Knock. Last look at mirror always before she answers the door. The hall. There? How do you? I do well. There? What? Or? Phial of cachous, kissing comfitsin her satchel. Yes? Hands felt for the opulent.

(Joyce 1985, p. 273)

Bloom's experiences are invaded by the musical theme of Boylan (jingle), who has set off in a jingling carriage to visit his wife. Then, there is the theme of his epistolary mistress Martha Clifford, to whom he is about to write a letter. Bloom recalls the words from her letter (What perfume does your wife wear?). The music thus opens up secret erotic desires in Bloom's mind, and he imagines with the masochistic pleasure of a cuckold the meeting between Boylan and Molly (How do you? I do well. There?) and recalls a phrase from the erotic adultery novel *Sweets of Sin* (Hands felt for the opulent). Zack Bowen notes: "However, Bloom is aroused and unable to repress thoughts of Molly and Blazes's lovemaking. As the music progresses, the sensual aspects of it overwhelm Bloom, and it becomes no longer music, but the act of love that Molly and Blazes are carrying out" (Bowen 1995, p. 47).

As Simon Dedalus sings and Lionel's passion in the aria builds up, the eroticism of the music increasingly takes hold of Bloom and he is sexually aroused by the music: "Tipping her tepping her tapping her topping her. Tup. Pores to dilate dilating. Tup. The joy the feel the warm the. Tup < . . . > Language of love" (Joyce 1985, p. 273).

Bloom's sensations move to the rhythm of eroticized music, and Bloom imagines sexual intercourse. Stuart Allen notes: "Bloom's body seems to match the music's (erotic) crescendo, defeating any attempt at more gentlemanly and disinterested observation" (Allen 2007, p. 450).

The performance of Lionel's final aria is described by a parodic narrative relating the music to the sexual act and its happy conclusion:

- *Come!*

It soared, a bird, it held its flight, a swift pure cry, soar silver orb it leaped serene, speeding, sustained, to come, don't spin it out too long long breath he breath long life, soaring high, high resplendent, aflame, crowned, high in the effulgence symbolic, high, of the ethereal bosom, high, of the high vast irradiation everywhere all soaring all around about all, the endlessnessnessness. . .

—To me!

Siopold!

Consumed.

Come.

(Joyce 1985, pp. 274–75)

It is important here that Joyce again builds a lexical pattern in his narrative by choosing words close in sound, *flood*, *flow*, *flower*, to which we venture to add the surname of the composer whose aria is performed, not mentioned in the novel: Flotow.

Throw flower at his feet.

(Joyce 1985, p. 273)

Flood of warm jamjam lickitup secretness flowed to flow in music out, in desire, dark to lick flow invading. (Joyce 1985, p. 273)

Flower is mentioned several times in the chapter. It is the rose on Miss Douce's breast and is the assumed name Bloom uses to sign a letter to Martha Clifford (Henry Flower).

The flow of music through the listeners reveals in them that common sphere, the deepest level, where they are indistinguishable. That is why Joyce does not separate the names of the listeners with commas, showing their unity: "The voice of Lionel returned, weaker but unwearied. It sang again to Richie Poldy Lydia Lidwell also sang to Pat open mouth ear waiting to wait" (Joyce 1985, p. 274). The narrator then combines their first and last names in a new order, assigning one character's last name to another: Gould Lidwell, Pat Bloom. In the final performance, a lexical hybrid appears in the text, combining the names of Simon Dedalus and Leopold Bloom: "Siopold" (Joyce 1985, p. 275). This episode can be read not as an engagement with the life-giving forces of life, but as a situation in which the characters, under the influence of primitive music, experience collective emotions and lose their identities (Witen 2018, p. 183).

There is another important meaning in the chapter that music and singing reveals to Bloom. Music and singing appear as deception. The motif of deception and disguise is present in Flotow's opera *Martha*, where the protagonist pretends to be a peasant woman. Bloom, listening to Simon Dedalus singing Lionel's aria, characterizes him as a deceiver, singing wrong words: "Singing wrong words. Wore out his wife: now sings" (Joyce 1985, p. 273). The deception here is not only due to the fact that Simon Dedalus sings a text that does not correspond to his real life. Zack Bowen, interpreting Bloom's words, reminds us that *Martha* was written originally in German, while Simon Dedalus sings Lionel's aria in English: "Bloom recognizes that the words Simon sings are not the ones that normally go with Flotow's melody when he says, 'singing wrong words'" (Bowen 1995, p. 45).

The second performance of the episode is Ben Dollard's rendition of the patriotic ballad "The Croppy Boy" in the Carrol Malone version. It clarifies a number of meanings that the music and singing encapsulate. Here lies the motif of deception followed by doom, a motif that refers to the Sirens: an Irish patriotic youth confesses to an English officer, his enemy, thinking he is before a priest. The ballad itself, meant to evoke patriotic feelings, is filled with hatred, sorrow, pain, remorse, pity. Joyce narrativizes the ballad's melody, conveying its hidden mood:

The voice of dark age, of unlove, earth's fatigue made grave approach and painful, came from afar, from hoary mountains, called on good men and true. The priest he sought. With him would he speak a word.

(Joyce 1985, p. 282)

The gloomy musical intonations of the ballad echo in Bloom's mind with thoughts of loneliness and the death of his son: "I too, last of my race. Milly young student. Well, my fault perhaps. No son. Rudy" (Joyce 1985, p. 283). Josh Torabi notes: "< . . . > the singing of Ireland's 'native doric,' 'The Croppy Boy,' also tempts Bloom to distraction and to reflect on the fact that he is the 'last of his race,' more apt, of his name, due to the untimely death of his only son, Rudy, a running theme in the novel" (Torabi 2021, p. 127).

However, even the narrativized mournful musical mood of the ballad is combined with eroticism. Longing and sorrow are only a cover masking erotic excitement. Bloom is once again an attentive listener, grasping the very essence of the music. But in this case music is likened not to a sexual act, but to its substitutes: voyeurism and masturbation. It is significant that this time Joyce does not use the image of the flow of music/life connecting people. Here it is precisely the loneliness, the isolation, the alienation of man from life-forms, the erotic concentration of man on himself, which is inextricably linked to voyeurism and masturbation. Bloom recalls Molly, to whom he feels attracted: "She looked fine. Her crocus dress she wore lowcut, belongings on show" (Joyce 1985, p. 283). The expression belongings on show refers us to the episode where Bloom recalls Ben Dollard, whom he associates with erotic power, and how Molly laughed at him: "Trousers tight as a drum on him. Musical porkers. Molly did laugh when he went out. Threw herself back across the bed, screaming, kicking. With all his belongings on show" (Joyce 1985, p. 269). Remembering Molly, Bloom acts as a voyeur, looking at Miss Douce: "Bronze, listening, by the beerpull gazed far away. Soulfully. Doesn't half know I'm. Molly great dab at seeing anyone looking" (Joyce 1985, p. 283) Beerpull should be interpreted as a phallus. This analogy is confirmed by the following fragment:

On the smooth jutting beerpull laid Lydia hand, lightly, plumply, leave it to my hands. All lost in pity for croppy. Fro, to: to, fro: over the polished knob (she knows his eyes, my eyes, her eyes) her thumb and finger passed in pity: passed, reposed and, gently touching, then slid so smoothly, slowly down, a cool firm white enamel baton protruding through their sliding ring.

(Joyce 1985, p. 285).

The patriotic song is accompanied by the act of masturbation, which is in this case a natural response to it. What is important here is that Joyce demonstrates imitation of imitation, as masturbation is an imitation of sexual intercourse, and stroking the pump is an imitation of masturbation. This imitation of masturbation directly correlates to the music. The pity, the grief for the murdered boy, the somber sound of the song, takes on a somewhat perverse erotic meaning.

It is interesting to note that this episode interested Henry Miller, an ardent admirer of Joyce, and he also drew a parallel between the perception of music and masturbation. In the text accompanying his book of watercolors *Insomnia or the Devil at Large* (Miller 1974), he, following Joyce, describes a music bar full of customers where the singer Hiroko Tokuda performs. Miller uses the motifs of the chapter "Sirens", associating music with seduction and flirtation, behind which is the danger of death. Miller characterizes the music bar as a

hall of masturbation: “If, as Victor Hugo said, ‘the brothel is the slaughterhouse of love,’ then the piano bar is the gateway to the hall of masturbation” (Miller 1974, p. 24).

Joyce reduces the sublime pathos of music by likening it not only to masturbation and voyeurism, but also to urination:

Oh, look we are so! Chamber music. Could make a kind of pun on that on that. It is a kind of music I often thought when she. Acoustics that is. Tinkling. Empty vessels make most noise. Because the acoustics, the resonance changes according to how the weight of the water is equal to the law of falling water.

(Joyce 1985, p. 281)

The pun wordplay that Bloom reflects on is the ironic correlation between Mozart’s *Chamber Music* and the chamberpot. Molly’s pot is mentioned in the fourth chapter of *Ulysses*: “The book, fallen, sprawled against the bulge of the orange-keyed chamberpot” (Joyce 1985, p. 66). Molly’s urination reminds Bloom of the sound of Mozart’s music. V. M. Plock observes that the analogies drawn by Bloom reveal his and Joyce’s familiarity with Helmholtzian resonance theory: “Obviously, Bloom is aware that sound, when traveling through empty vessels, is transmitted and amplified and that an empty cavity, due “to its extensive surface, is better adapted to convey the agitation” or to maximize the resonance and the transmission of sound waves <...>” (Plock 2009, p. 489)

Thus, music and singing in *Ulysses*, being formed by motifs, lexical chains, and wordplay, carry the following meanings: erotic seduction, the unity of man and the world, the loneliness of man, deception, threatening life, and also correlates with voyeurism, masturbation, and urination.

Unlike Joyce, Nabokov is considerably more modest in involving musical themes and imagery in the fabric of his works. Some literature on the topic “Nabokov and music” exists, but imply the limited scope of the relevant field of research (Buhks 2000; Bugaeva 2000; Platek 2003; Lavrova and Shcherbak 2015; Afanas’ev 2019). We can confidently assert that Nabokov’s perceptuality was primarily visual. The principle of motive and verbal patterns, which was largely discussed in the previous part of the article, unites Joyce’s and Nabokov’s poetics, and here the younger colleague might have picked up and developed some of the semantic and formal impulses of the pretext.

The possible influence of Joyce on Nabokov, and the direction and scope of this influence, have, of course, been discussed many times, including by Nabokov himself. When addressing such topics, it is necessary, among other things, to keep in mind the peculiarities of Nabokov’s intertextual tactics (cf. Dviniatin 2006). These tactics involve the frequent inclusion in the recipient text of single signs (names, rare words/signs, and images) taken from the source, as well as parody and a tendency to contaminate different sources, including those quite distant from each other in literary historical, stylistic, and ideological terms; special attention should be paid to the elements that are actualized in Nabokov’s texts without the influence of the source. Moreover, Nabokov grasped and originally developed the principles of the “Russian semantic poetics” (Levin et al. 1974). Summarizing the experience of scholars who studied this poetics, T.M. Nikolaeva (Nikolaeva 1987) pointed out the special role of the bilaterality of the linguistic sign and the bilaterality of linguistic cross-links in the aspects of meaning and substance (sound): “Because all hangs together—shape and sound, heather and honey, vessel and content” (Nabokov 1970, p. 158).

In Nabokov’s work, at least in his late, most complexly organized Russian texts, the SIRIN sound–musical complex is one of the key elements. Perhaps it may even be regarded as the central sign, originating from the pseudonym “Sirin” under which Nabokov published his Russian books and fulfilling the function of self-representation. This pseudonym is explained, despite the abundance of versions and indirect motivations, primarily through its correlation with the bird Sirin of the Russian old book and folk tradition (spiritual poems, texts of the 17th century, lubok, and, later, paintings by V. M. Vasnetsov, and lyrics by A. A. Blok), the name of which directly goes back to the Greek sirens.

The introduction of one's name into the text or its playful integration (proper name, surname, pseudonym) was typical for authors of the first third of the 18th century and of the 19th century (Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Gogol. . .). One such case was mentioned and commented on by F. K. Godunov-Cherdintsev in *The Gift*. Assuming the presence of a sphragida (implicit signature) in the text of *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (the name of the author in this reading would appear to be *Khodyna*) A. Chernov remarkably refers to Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (Chernov 1986, p. 287), in which the composition of the famous epic song of the 12th century is attributed to a certain "prince of Khodyna". The Russian modernists of the 20th century, Nabokov's immediate predecessors, primarily the post-symbolists, associated the integration of a name in the text with building one's poetic reputation (Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Mayakovsky, Tsvetaeva). Summarizing the practice of Nabokov's predecessors, we can assert that (a) it was common for the authors of the mentioned epoch to integrate their names and play with them in the text, (b) they sometimes did it not for the sake of endowing the text with special autobiographical meanings, but to increase their presence in the text, and (c) they often focused on the audial and sound-symbolic features of their names, using them to create anagrams or construct puns.

Nabokov's poetics are generally autobiographical, and if some of the author's traits are occasionally found in the characters of his texts, who are usually considered to be quite distant from the author, it is all the more reasonable to assume similar treatment of the author's name. A collection of character names mentioned in Nabokov's texts, representing a full or partial anagram of the name Vladimir Nabokov, is given by D. Stuart: Blavdak Vinomori, Vivian Badlook, Vivian Darkbloom, Vivian Bloodmark. . . (Stuart 1978, pp. 111–12). Pekka Tammi continues this list, pointing out that Vivian Darkbloom in the English text of *Lolita* turns into *Vivian Damore-Block* in the Russian translation, adding to *Vivian Culmbrud* from one of Nabokov's Russian poems, etc. (Tammi 1985, pp. 324–25). Tammi raises the question in the broad context of authorial presence in Nabokov's texts (the relevant chapter of his monograph is called "AM [Author's Metatext]-Baring: Use of the Nabokovian Persona"). Here the crucial idea that "in the final analysis any word uttered in fictive discourse can draw attention to the authorial dimension beyond the range of the utterer" (Tammi 1985, p. 327) is expressed. For narratological analysis, this is indeed a more than serious question: how can a novel, simplistically speaking, "written on behalf" of some Herman or Humbert Humbert, contain a play on Nabokov's name or certain facts from his life, if for Herman or Humbert Humbert Nabokov is insignificant and does not actually exist in the world where many of these characters act? Discussing the cases when the "presence of the author's persona is overtly manifested in the fictive discourse" (Tammi 1985, p. 314), P. Tammy concludes that "What is rather happening here is that while the overt 'voice' in narrative is that of a fictive speaker at the same time his discourse becomes pervaded by allusions to a higher textual level that is no longer in the speaker's control. In this sense, at last, the author cannot be taken to 'speak' or 'appear' in the artificial world of the fiction, but he still manages to establish his control over the text in a manner that cannot be overlooked in a narratological analysis" (Tammi 1985, p. 319). Thus, the use of or playing with his name in the text is characteristic of Nabokov, regardless of whether it is the surname *Nabokov* or the pseudonym *Sirin* (and, looking ahead, we can say that in Russian texts the pseudonym *Sirin* is used more often).

The following passage from *Despair* plays a key role in the discussion of this situation:

За комнату он не платил месяцами или платил мертвой натурой,—какими-нибудь квадратными яблоками, рассыпанными по косой скатерти, или малиновой сиренью в набокой вазе с бликом.

(Nabokov 2004b, p. 415)

He was always behind with his rent, and when he did pay it, he paid it in kind. In still life to be precise . . . square apples on a slanting cloth, or phallic tulips in a leaning vase.

(Nabokov 1966, p. 31)

This context was noted as early as 1977 by Jane Grayson (Grayson 1977), and it was fully and correctly characterized (Grayson discusses the relationship between the English translation of *Despair* and the Russian text): “The Russian version contained a pun upon Nabokov’s surname and his pen-name Sirin. . .” (Grayson 1977, p. 66). The same context is cited in 1985 by Pekka Tammi, together with the ambiguous pun from *Ultima Thule*: “< . . . > А отец его, Илья Фальтер, был всего лишь старшим поваром у Менара, повар ваш Илья на боку”. P. Tammi also mentions Shirin and Vladimirov from *The Gift* and the pseudonym of the hero in *Look at the Harlequins!* “V. Irisin” (Tammi 1985, pp. 325–27). The discussion of the key example of “lilacs in the nabokoi vase” (siren’ v nabokovoj vase) was returned to in 1992 by J. V. Connolly (1992, p. 157), who particularly emphasized the *nabokaja vaza*. He also adds another explicit example from *Despair*:

“A second example occurs in chapter 4, when Hermann describes his path to his second meeting with Felix. He writes: ‘Svernuv s bul’vara na bokovuiu ulitsu’ < . . . > (‘I turned into a side street’ D 79). In both of these cases Nabokov has encoded a variation of his name into the very building blocks of his unsuspecting character’s manuscript” (Connolly 1992, p. 157).

Subsequently, the interest in the pseudonym *Sirin* and its usage in Nabokov’s texts has only increased. First of all, it is necessary to name the list of interpretations by B. Ostanin, who examined Nabokov’s pseudonym in the context of the discourse on super-compressed poetic structures (Ostanin 1997a, pp. 300–2): “Further analyzed [ . . . ] a mini-poem by V. Nabokov / /V. SIRIN, / /better known to the general public as his literary pseudonym”.

What follows are twenty-two lines of interpretation of the pseudonym *Sirin*. Some of them may well be called “etymologies” in the sense that these parallels and associations already existed, including for Nabokov himself, at the time he chose his pseudonym, while other associations appeared later. Arranging the examples, Boris Ostanin (Ostanin 1997b, pp. 298–302) sometimes combines items that are not quite similar as in case with the bird *Sirin* and the publishing house *Sirin*; the publishing house, of course, was named after the bird, but it could have influenced the choice of pseudonym independently. An opposite example of putting similar items in two different groups can be observed in case with *iris* “rainbow” and *iris* ‘iris’ rainbow girl (butterfly).

Subsequently, the discussion was continued, and F. Dviniatin (2001) put forward the notion of Nabokov’s “Sirin text” (in accordance with the notion of “text” developed by V. N. Toporov and his successors as a discrete system of thematically marked contexts in different works, forming a unified whole). In this case, we mean Nabokov’s works in which, in special, semantically loaded places, we observe references to Sirin, lilacs (*siren*’), sirens, etc., and their phonetic transformations or derivatives, as well as foreign-language equivalents. In addition, the formation of Nabokov’s contexts that seem not to feature any “Sirin” components, may involve pretexts which contain elements of this complex.

In this group the first place belongs to the lilac (*siren*’). It is mentioned in the first paragraph of *Ultima Thule*: “Remember the time we lunched at the hotel managed by Falter near the luxuriant, many-terraced Italian border, where the asphalt is infinitely exalted by the wisteria, and the air smells of rubber and paradise?” (Nabokov 2008, p. 500) The paragraph with its theme of the mixing of industrial-technical and natural-floral odors, may resonate with the echoing lines of Akhmatova’s “smells of gasoline and lilacs” (*benzina zapah i sireni*’). The paragraph also reminds Mandelstam’s *Tennis*: “and lilacs smell of gasoline” (“i siren’ benzinom pahnet”). The presumed genesis was later confirmed: in Nabokov’s story *Gods*: “The air is faintly redolent of gasoline and lindens” (Nabokov 2008, p. 45). This genesis of the context is complicated by pretext from Don Aminado’s *Goroda i Gody* (Cities and Years): “In terrible stone New York/Smells of chewed rubber, /Fumes of asphalt And gasoline breath” (“В страшном каменном Нью-Йорке/Пахнет жеваной резиной, /Испареньями асфальта И дыханием бензина”) (a row of asphalt, rubber, gasoline). The other pretext is *The Artist* (Hudozhnik) by Alexander Blok: “Is the whirlwind from the sea? Or do the Sirins of Paradise/Sing in the leaves” (“С моря ли

вихрь? Или сирины райские/В листьях поют”). One more pretext is a poem by Nikolay Klyuev: “Where the enamel paradise and the Sirin/Sings on a painted branch” (“Где рай финифтяный и Сирина/Поет на ветке расписной”) (montage of paradise and the Sirin). One can also remember lines from the poem *Waves* (Volny) by Boris Pasternak: “We were in Georgia. Let us multiply Need by tenderness, hell by paradise” (“Мы были в Грузии. Помножим Нужду на нежность, ад на рай”) (the theme of multiplication of contrasts, among which is paradise). In the story *Vasily Shishkov*, Nabokov mentions “Turgenev’s sinel” (Nabokov 2019, p. 571); *Sinel* refers, among other meanings, to *siren’* (lilacs) (*sinel’*, a synonym/double for lilacs, which occurs in Russian texts of the first half of the 19th century). Among Turgenev’s references to lilacs, Shishkov, in whose deliberately tasteless rhymes the *arbor* (*besedka*) is mentioned, may have had in mind the context from *Fathers and Sons*: “The arbour has taken well <...> because acacia and lilacs are good guys, do not require care”. (Вот беседка принялась хорошо <...> потому что акация да сирень—ребята добрые, ухода не требуют). And the main pretext—from Turgenev’s *Senilia*—about a peasant woman who, after her son’s death, finished eating her expensive salt-salted soup, is complicated by a fragment from Chekhov’s *Sakhalin Island*, in which a child-killer convict “cried bitterly, then wiped her eyes and asked: “Can you buy some sour cabbage?” (“горько плакала, потом вытерла глаза и спросила: ‘Капустки кисленькой не купите ли?’”). In the poem, “Irregular iambs the poor olive” (“*bednaya oliva*”) is mentioned first, then the “lily in the ravine” (*liliya v ovrage*), and since Nabokov realizes (commenting on *Eugene Onegin*) that the lilac (*siren’*) is an “emancipated relative of the utilitarian olive”, the olive and the lily (cf. the consonance of French *lilas* and English *lilac*; the poem is clearly alliterated by the soft *l’*) encodes lilac (*siren’*) in meaning and sound, which is indirectly evidenced by a number of additional subtexts. There are quite a few such examples.

Nabokov’s jealous sensitivity to possible transformations of the image or name of Sirin is reflected in surreptitious verbal thrusts: he can respond to Akhmatova’s “Or already bright-eyed, gentle Sirin” (“*Il’ uzhe svetlookaya, nezhnaya Sirin*”) with similar gendershift’s, inventing (*The Gift*) the poetess Anna Aptekar and the writer Shahmatov. Pushkin’s *Surin* (*Queen of Spades*) incited Nabokov to invent his parodic doppelganger *Pyshkin* (Nabokov 1963, p. 294).

Apart from the sound of the word “siren” and its audial associations the sirens should have attracted Nabokov’s attention due to the very content of the image. The sirens belong to the number of fictional supernatural creatures that motivate (in various combinations) otherworldliness, femininity, and the miraculous to a greater or lesser extent. Their relatives are mermaids (Collins 2005; Sommers 2009, etc.), nymphs, salamanders, and others. References to such imagery can be found in Nabokov’s works from both the Russian and American periods.

Perhaps the leading role belongs to the *mermaid* (*rusalka*), and it is she who turns out to be closely and remarkably connected with the *sirens*. This is, of course, the ending of Pushkin’s *Rusalka*, which Nabokov composed for the anticipated second volume of *The Gift*.

Nabokov wrote the poem “*Rusalka*” (“*Mermaid*”) in 1919, in which allusions to Lermontov’s “*Rusalka*” are discernible (sound-focused writing typical for Lermontov is so evident in Nabokov’s “*Rusalka*”: “She stretches out her palms and catches the moon: /will sway, sway, and sink to the bottom” (Ладони простерла и ловит луну: /качнется, качнется и канет ко дну) (Nabokov 2004a, p. 498).

Its meter (amphibrachium tetrameter in couplets with masculine rhyming) refers to the tradition of which Pushkin’s *Black Shawl* was a part and contained, like its pretext Zhukovsky’s “*Vengeance*” (“*Mschenije*”), aquatic imagery: “In the Danube waves he threw their bodies” (В дунайские волны их бросил тела); this is a kind of prologue to the mermaid theme in his work. Subsequently, it will be continued.

Priscilla Meyer notes: “Nabokov chronicles how dryads and naiads have surfaced repeatedly throughout literary history, tangled in the trees or exotic flowers bred by mis-translation” (Meyer 1988, p. 128). The mermaid, if we abstract from her other features, is a transitional image from a silent naiad to a siren with her mesmerizing singing. P.

Meyer, speaking on Nabokov's *Bachmann*, points out: "The story is set in rain and fog, into which Bachmann's mistress, Madame Perov, goes in search of him in the 'dark dreadful quarter. . . under slanting streams of black rain' < . . >. She spends the night with Bachmann and the next day is found dead with an expression of happiness on her face. Bachmann combines qualities of the mermaid and the Erlking, tempting a soul to leave this world for the next in a river or forest setting. In the romantic tradition, it is art, in this case music, that is his agency like the beautiful songs of classical sirens" (Meyer 1988, p. 189).

As for the sirens themselves, the poetic polysemy on the verge of homonymy of *siren* (mythological character) and *siren* (horn) has its own history in Russian poetry.

The designation *sirène* was given to the acoustic device by its inventor Baron de la Tour in 1819 to signify its ability to emit sounds underwater. The National Corpus of the Russian language gives the first example of the use of this word in 1904, in Blok's poem "Seaside" ("Vzmor'e"): "Splash of distant seas, /Voices of ship's sirens" ("Переплески далеких морей, /Голоса корабельных сирен"), (in prose—in A. S. Suvorin's diary four years earlier). Blok further used the word *siren* as a sign of the technological, urban theme. Thus, in two poems, written on the same day (11 February 1910) and deliberately synonymously varying the same perceptual–existential complex, the parallel contexts are ". . . sang to me with the siren of love/The motor that flew through the night" (" . . . пропел мне сиреной влюбленной/Тот, сквозь ночь пролетевший, мотор"), и "The automobile sang in the distance/To the victorious horn" ("Автомобиль пропел вдали/В рожок победный").

It is noteworthy that the mythological sirens and their later variations have left but a barely noticeable trace in Russian poetry. The most resonant contexts seem to be represented in M. N. Muravyev's recognized masterpiece "To the Goddess of the Neva" ("Bogine Nevy"): "Fast chariot run/You do not crush the smooth waters, /And the sirens around the queen/Hurry to join the round dance" ("Быстрой бегом колесницы/Ты не давишь гладких вод, /И sireны вокруг царицы/Поспешают в хоровод"). It is also represented in G. R. Derzhavin's ode *On the Insidiousness of the French Revolt and in honor of Prince Pozharsky* (Na kovarstvo francuzskogo vozmushcheniya i v chest' knyazyza Pozharskogo) in an address to Treachery: "When you laugh, you are a siren;/When you cry, you are a crocodile" ("Когда смеешься—ты сирена;/Когда ты плачешь—крокодил"). The line later gave rise to sporadic comparisons of *sirens* and *crocodiles* as we notice in N. I. Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Guerrera*, (1803): "I thought that all Sirens, all Crocodiles" (Я считал, что все Сирены, все Крокодилы).

In his lectures on Joyce, Nabokov briefly retells, with quotations, the episode that interests us:

In the course of chapter 8 three people are sensed approaching, before they actually enter: the Ormond Hotel: Bloom, Boylan, and the blind youth coming back for his tuning fork. The tap of his approaching stick on the sidewalk—his leitmotiv—is heard midway through the chapter, and these taps can be traced here and there, increasing on the next pages—tap, tap, tap—then four taps repeated. His tuning fork lying on the piano is noticed by Simon Dedalus. He is sensed coming by Daly's shop window and finally "Tap. A youth entered a lonely Ormond hall".

Bloom and Boylan are not only sensed coming—they are sensed going. Boylan, after talking horses with Lenehan, drinking a slow, syrupy sloe gin, and watching coy Miss Douce imitate a ringing clock by smacking her garter against her thigh, impatiently leaves, heading for Molly, but with Lenehan starting to go with him to tell him about Tom Rochford. As the drinkers continue in the bar, and the eaters in the restaurant, his jingle jaunty jingle is sensed receding both by Bloom and the author < . . > The jingle even imposes itself on Bloom's stream of thought in the hotel as he is composing a letter in return to Martha: "Jingle, have you the". The missing word is; of course, *horn*, for Bloom is mentally following Boylan's progress. In fact, in Bloom's feverish imagination he has Boylan arrive and make love to Molly sooner than he actually does < . . > (Nabokov 1982, pp. 337–38)

Two songs are sung in the bar. First Simon Dedalus, a wonderful singer, sings Lionel's aria "All is lost now" from *Martha*, a French opera with an Italian libretto by a German composer von Flotow, 1847. The "All is lost now" nicely echoes Bloom's feelings about his wife. In the adjacent restaurant Bloom writes a letter to his mysterious correspondent Martha Clifford in as coy terms as she had used to him, enclosing a small money order. Then, Ben Dollard sings a ballad "The Croppy Boy" <...>

As Bloom views a picture of the Irish patriot Robert Emmet in Lionel Marks's window, the men in the bar begin to talk of him and to give a roast to Emmet just as the blind youth arrives. They quote "True men like you men", from a poem "The Memory of the Dead" (1843) by John Kells Ingram. The italicized phrases that accompany Bloom's internal difficulties represent Emmet's last words, which Bloom sees under the picture <...>. (Nabokov 1982, p. 339)

The most reliable and promising case of Nabokov's orientation to the eleventh episode of *Ulysses* has been identified by Neil Cornwell (Cornwell 2005, p. 1) and belongs to the relatively late American period of Nabokov's work: these are possible subtexts of the "Sirens" in the name and partly in the image of Lolita from the novel of the same name. The connection between sirens, nymphs, and nymphets becomes more than a contingent assumption when we take into consideration the aria from *Floradora*. Not only does it contain the name "Dolores" associated with South Seas which are of some importance to Lolita, but it also has a history of production involving young actresses.

Another case also belongs to late American Nabokov: the sisters Aqua and Marina Durmanov from *Ada*, whose names clearly refer to the water and sea elements and who are thus similar to the twin aquatic maidens of episode eleven. More prominent is Aqua, with her fluid, water-colored madness, and she is similar to Anna Livia Plurabelle of *Finnegans Wake*, whose name in turn echoes the names of the barmaids: Anna Livia, Mina, and Lydia.

Of all the motif nests, imagery series, and narrative techniques used in episode eleven, the motif of seduction ("seduction" is a constant word in Nabokov's vocabulary) and deception leading to failure and sometimes death seems to be the one that Nabokov uses most frequently. Recently, one of the co-authors drew attention to this knot of problems again by the example of the story *Details of Sunset* (Katastrofa) (Astvatsaturov 2022), which, on the one hand, uses a narrative structure and figurative series that go back to Ambrose Bierce's story *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (the lying deathbed delirium), while also featuring an episode with an element that can be related to the noose from the pretext. In this episode, the character tries to seduce potential customers into making a purchase by fiddling with a tie. Here, we observe the recurring ambiguity highlighted in the prior analysis concerning Joyce: in one episode, the character resembles a siren, yet within the context of the text, he undergoes a destructive temptation and experiences repeated deception and self-deception. Similar to the siren, Herman lures and ultimately destroys Felix (Despair), all the while grappling with his own harmful self-deception. Additionally, he is likely deceived by those close to him, a fact he either fails to recognize or, less probably, chooses not to acknowledge. The name of his wife—Lida, Lydia—noticeably echoes the name of Lizaveta Ivanovna (the direct literary heir of Karamzin's *Poor Lise*) from *The Queen of Spades*, whose hero is called Hermann, but at the same time it is also the name of one of Joyce's sirens. The motifs of seduction and deception are evident in the plots of *King, Queen, Knave* and *Laughter in the Dark* (Camera Obscura), the heroines of which, hardly by chance, bear the echoing names of Martha and Magda. The obvious difference—and perhaps a deliberate contrast—in the plots and character arrangements of these two "German" novels, which play with motifs of popular culture, is that Kretschmar, the hero of the later one, really succumbs to the temptation of the "siren" and perishes, whereas, in *King, Queen, Knave*, the plot of temptation and death is clearly inverted; Martha, who at first seems to be a "siren", is herself possessed by self-deception, which leads to her demise. However, for *Laughter in the Dark*, this substitution in perception is also characteristic: Kretschmar's temptation is entirely visual (which finds correspondence in the silent movie he observes

with the accompaniment of the piano) and this is entirely consistent with the roles of vision, spectacle, and literal and figurative blindness in the motive structure of this novel.

The three novels are united by the adventurous elements of the plot and interact to different degrees with genres or genre schemes of the criminal or “vampiric” type, which feature the figures of the seductress and destroyer (note that some aspects of the behavior typical of such characters are willingly reproduced by Joyce’s barmaids). The motifs of seduction and deception, however, are also noticeable in the Nabokov novels of the Russian period, which are completely different in tone and plot: only there they are connected not with a criminal plot and a dangerous woman, but primarily with the dissatisfaction of the characters, hopelessness, and the search for a way out. Memory or coincidence suggests the possibility of something better (analogous to temptation), and occasionally such a sign may indeed lead in the right direction, like the dress seen by Fyodor Konstantinovich in *The Gift* (but even so it turns out to be a deception, only in this case a happy one). Usually, the hope at least does not come true (Molignac in *Glory* or the whole torture sequence of hopes and disappointments staged by the infernal analogs of the sirens in *Invitation to a Beheading*). In this case, which, apparently, should be called the best, it is not the deviation from the path that leads the hero to death, but the path itself (*The Luzhin Defense* or *Glory* in which, however, chess or the watercolor above the bed also appear as signs dictating the hero’s path—an analogy of temptation which may not be benign but which is at least not demonic. But sometimes the deceived hero commits acts that lead him to his doom.

This pattern can be observed in Nabokov’s stories in the plot structure of *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* analyzed by A. A. Astvatsaturov (Astvatsaturov 2022). Mark, a character in *Details of Sunset*, perishes when he jumps out of a streetcar (analogous to a ship being abandoned), and Ivanov, a character in *Perfection*, dies after he plunges into the sea. These two examples contain imagery that clearly corresponds with the image of sirens’ victims. At the same time, the character in Bierce’s story is already immobilized and powerless at the moment of death; the evasion and the water element appear only in his delirium; they are not caused by error or temptation, as in the myth of the sirens or in both of Nabokov’s stories.

All too often, one may be under the impression that a whole set of images, words, and sounds surrounds an unspoken word or an unnamed subject in Nabokov’s texts. Thus, in the rather short story *Torpid Smoke* the meditating hero hears *the noise of a car (siren)* (Nabokov 2008, p. 397). He sees in reality “*a mermaid’s hand was applied from the outside to the ripply glass of the door*” (Nabokov 2008, p. 398), *hand of his sister* (glass as water), and in a vision he sees as well “*the distant seas*” (Nabokov 2008, p. 396), “*a stretch of water, say, and a black promontory*” (Nabokov 2008). He recalls the image of the Inconnue de la Seine (the Parisian drowned woman, cf. Nabokov’s poem of the same title from the same time, cf. Johnson 1992).

In general, as has been repeatedly noted, the importance of the auditory is considerably inferior to that of the visual in Nabokov’s work. Music and singing seem to receive the greatest share of neglect. Nabokov despises opera for its vulgarity (especially the librettos of operas based on Pushkin’s plots). However, Nora Buhks’s subtle analysis (Buhks 2000, pp. 453–66) places the accents differently: it is shown that the story *The Return of Chorb* refers not only to the myth of Orpheus as such, but also to the opera tradition—Telemann, Gluck, Haydn. In *Laughter in the Dark* there are possible references to the latest German opera, and Tchaikovsky is not only denied but also played with. Songs are ridiculed for their totalitarian “choral” beginning or for the same tastelessness.

Kiyoko Magome, before her discussion of Nabokov’s “musico-literary microcosm” (Magome 2020, pp. 295, 304), which includes the short stories “*Sounds*”, 1923, and “*Music*”, 1932, and *Nabokov’s Quartet*, consisting of “*An Affair of Honor*”, 1927, “*Lik*”, 1939, “*The Vane Sisters*”, 1951, and “*The Visit to the Museum*”, 1939, gives a summary of the data about Nabokov’s characteristic perception of music, focusing on his autobiographical writing and a late interview, as well his son’s comments and special neuroscientific research (Magome 2020, pp. 296–98). The observations of all of the cited authors are unanimous: Nabokov

'ha[d] no ear for music', up to amusia. Like Nabokov himself, Victor, the protagonist of *Music*, fails to "concentrate on listening" and shifts from sounds to visual impressions, such as "reflections of hands [of a pianist] in lacquered wood" (Magome 2020, pp. 301–4). The analyses of *Nabokov's Quartet* reveals the decisive role of stage performances (but not music as such): "An Affair of Honor"—the duel scene in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*; "Lik"—Borodin's *Prince Igor*; "The Vane Sisters"—the performance of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (through the name "Sybil Vane"); "The Visit to the Museum"—Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Magome 2020, pp. 305–9). Moreover, all four stories [...] are confined to the larger frame of [...] a musical quartet [...], dynamic microcosm with no clear center (ibid., p. 309).

The story *Cloud, Castle, Lake* (the protagonist's vision is contrasted with the vulgar and ultimately aggressive singing of his fellow travelers) and the novel *Invitation to a Beheading* (a series of operatic and pseudo-operatic episodes in a continuous disgusting performance by the jailers) are marked by a visible combination of musical motifs. The protagonist of the story *Music* is deprived of hearing and musical attention. The story progresses in spite of the music being played, and yet at the very end there is a mention of the *Kreutzer Sonata*, which establishes an important pretext—however, literary, not musical (Leo Tolstoy's story). Only in Nabokov's *Bachmann* (with the almost parodic-sounding surname of the protagonist and his operatic role of a "mad musician") does the whole story include not even music itself, but concertizing and partly composing. And yet the words "Stop those sounds! Enough, enough music!" in Nabokov's world do not refer to sounds as such: birdsong and natural sounds in general (it is no coincidence that in Joyce's episode Nabokov emphasizes the clattering of the blind man's stick, the tinkling of the carriage), inner echoes, and auditory hallucinations occupy a worthy place here.

Nabokov describes various phantom noises in his texts. In the short story *Perfection* he mentions a pounding in the heart; in *The Gift*—a pounding in the chest and in the ears; in *Terra Incognita*—a buzzing in the ears; in *Torpid Smoke*, *Laughter in the Dark*, *The Christmas Story*, *An Affair of Honour*, *Despair* and *Invitation to a Beheading*—ringing in the ears; in *The Return of Chorb*, *The Potato Elf*, the *Glory*—noise in the ears. All of these noises are auditory phantoms. Far more often, however, his texts contain optical effects involving visual distortion (Grishakova 2002). This is why the lessons of Bierce, in whose narrative visual effects appear, are more natural to him than the narrative experiments of James Joyce, which appear in *Ulysses*.

Here is a characteristic example. Fyodor Konstantinovich in *The Gift* imagines his father's Ulysses-like wanderings in Tibet (he himself is here the analog of Telemachus), gets into his role, writes on his behalf (or on behalf of the indivisible unity of himself and his father):

"In this desert are preserved traces of an ancient road along which Marco Polo passed six centuries before I did: its markers are piles of stones. Just as I had heard in a Tibetan gorge the interesting drum-like roar which had frightened our first pilgrims, so in the desert during the sandstorms I also saw and heard the same as Marco Polo: 'the whisper of spirits calling you aside' and the queer flicker of the air, an endless progression of whirlwinds, caravans and armies of phantoms coming to meet you, thousands of spectral faces in their incorporeal way pressing upon you, through you, and suddenly dispersing".

(Nabokov 1963, p. 136)

"The whisper of spirits" is close in such a frame to the topicality of the sirens (the luring sound signal, the enigmatic personification of its bearer). Toward the end of the quoted fragment, visual imagery triumphs.

Marie Bouchet, revisiting the well-known topic of Nabokov's synesthesia, suggests "rappeler une distinction cruciale entre synesthésie neurologique (telle que celle de Nabokov) et synesthésie «littéraire», ou métaphorique (Bouchet 2015, p. 4). The analysis of the latter becomes the main content of the article. Not reducing to or characterizing synthetic writing

as metaphorical writing, Bouchet points to such figures as hypallage and zeugma (ibid., p. 5): it can be noted that the hypallage itself is a metonymic figure, but its content can be inherently metaphorical, like “the slow snake of a brilliant belt in Lolita, cf, her silent hands” (ibid., p. 26). The erotic substrate of Lolita and Ada leads to the fact that the themes of synesthetic complexes are often based on topics of desire and intimacy. The role of diegesis sounds in synesthesia may even be inferior to smells and tastes, but phonetic structure of text “saves the honor” of sonic component of reality, f.e., evil, loving, long fingers belonging to two different young demons (ibid., p. 22; cf. loving, long → be-longing).

Thus, Nabokov, as well as James Joyce, is attracted to the central image of sirens, both in terms of sound, which he has repeatedly used, and in terms of substance, mythological, and motivic content. Along with the string of naiads and mermaids, with siren'-lilac and their further associations (all of them in one way or another refer to the pseudonym Sirin), the plot of seduction and deception plays a leading role in his works. In its context there is a convergence with the leading device of Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (hallucinations, doom). Direct references to music and singing, intertextual connections along these lines are noticeably fewer. Sound and music are realized predominantly as instrumental, not thematic, elements, as features of Nabokov's poetic (both verse and prose) word.

Joyce's and Nabokov's attitudes to music were different. Joyce knew music well and loved it. His characters listen attentively to music, talk about it, reflect on it, discovering hidden meanings in musical language. Joyce likens music to an inner stream of life, uniting all material forms and characters. Melodies and musical parts become Joyce's correlate of psychological states of his characters, including collective states, which makes it the force that destroys individuality. Nabokov in turn was indifferent to music; in particular, he was skeptical about opera, while Joyce so highly appreciated it. Despite these different attitudes to music, the same motifs that in Joyce's texts are inextricably linked to music and are, in fact, its formulas: seduction, deception, and ruin, appear regularly in Nabokov's texts. Joyce and Nabokov explain music through the image of sweet-voiced sirens. Joyce in *Ulysses* works carefully with the Homeric myth, interpreting it in the context of music and creating modern versions of it. For him, a siren is, on the one hand, a role which his characters play, and, on the other hand, a word, a sign that enters into associative relations with other signs. Moreover, as we show in this article, Joyce actively engages with aquatic imagery and generates associative lexical chains around the words 'sea', 'rocks', and others. Nabokov uses a similar strategy. He does not work with the Homeric myth, but creates an interesting chain 'sirens'—'siren' (*lilac*) with various derivatives of these words in a number of texts. This chain plays an important role in his texts, particularly for the reason that he adds to it the word 'Sirin', his pseudonym, signifying Nabokov's hidden presence in his text. Thus, the musical motif is found in the work of both writers in the game of signs they create in their texts.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, A.A. and F.D.; methodology, A.A. and F.D.; software, A.A. and F.D.; validation, A.A. and F.D.; formal analysis, A.A. and F.D.; investigation, A.A. and F.D. resources, A.A. and F.D.; data curation, A.A. and F.D.; writing—original draft preparation, A.A. and F.D.; writing—review and editing, A.A. and F.D.; visualization, A.A. and F.D.; supervision, A.A. and F.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Afanas'ev, Oleg. 2019. Rol' muzyki v realizacii idei absurda v romane V. V. Nabokova "Priglasenie na kazn'". *Filologicheskie Nauki* 12: 7–12.
- Allen, Stuart. 2007. "Thinking Strictly Prohibited": Music, Language, and Thought in "Sirens". *Twentieth Century Literature*. Winter 53: 442–59.
- Astvatsaturov, Andrey. 2022. The Bridge and Narrativization of Vision: Ambrose Bierce and Vladimir Nabokov. *Arts* 11: 89. [CrossRef]
- Attridge, Derek. 1986. Joyce's Lipspeech: Syntax and the Subject in "Sirens". In *James Joyce: The Centennial Symposium*. Edited by Morris Beja, Philip Herring, Maurice Harmon and David Norris. Urbana: University of Illinois Publishing, pp. 55–72.
- Bouchet, Marie. 2015. "Sounds have colors, colors have smells": Synesthésie et métaphore dans les textes poétiques nabokoviens. *Synesthésie/Synaesthesia* 36: 113–26. [CrossRef]
- Bowen, Zack. 1974. *Musical Allusions in the Work of James Joyce*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Bowen, Zack. 1995. *Bloom's Old Sweet Song: Essays on Joyce and Music*. Gainesville: University of Florida.
- Bugaeva, Lubov. 2000. Nabokov i muzyka: Ob odnom muzykal'nom eksperimente pisatelya. *Nabokovskij Vestnik* 5: 101–11.
- Buhks, Nora. 2000. Les fantômes de l'opéra dans les romans de Vladimir Nabokov. *Revue des Études Slaves* 3–4: 453–66. [CrossRef]
- Chernov, Andrey. 1986. Poeticheskaya polisemiya i sfragida avtora v "Slove o polku Igoreve". *Issledovaniya "Slova o polku Igoreve" Leningrad* 1986: 270–93.
- Cole, David. 1973. Fugal Structure in the "Sirens" Episode of *Ulysses*. *Modern Fiction Studies* 19: 221–26.
- Collins, Emily. 2005. Nabokov's *Lolita* and Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. *Nabokov Studies: International Vladimir Nabokov Society and Davidson College* 9: 77–100. [CrossRef]
- Connolly, Julian. 1992. *Nabokov's Early Fiction*. Cambridge: Patterns of Self and Others.
- Cornwell, Neil. 2005. *Ulysses and Lolita*. *James Joyce Broadsheet* 71: 1.
- Dviniatin, Feodor. 2001. Pyat' pejzazhej s nabokovskoj siren'yu. *Nabokov: Pro et Contra* 2: 291–314.
- Dviniatin, Feodor. 2006. Nabokov, modernizm, postmodernizm i mimesis. *Imperiya N. Nabokov i nasledniki. Moskva* 2006: 442–81.
- Fischer, Andreas. 1999. Strange Words, Strange Music: The Verbal Music of 'Sirens'. In *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*. Edited by Sebastian Knowles. New York and London: Garland, pp. 245–62.
- French, Marilyn. 1978. The Voices of the Sirens in Joyce's *Ulysses*. *Journal of Narrative Technique* 8: 1–10.
- Gilbert, Stuart. 1930. *James Joyce's "Ulysses": A Study*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Grayson, Jane. 1977. *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Green, Jon. 2002. The Sounds of Silence in "Sirens": Joyce Verbal Music of the Mind. *James Joyce Quarterly* 39: 489–502.
- Grishakova, Marina. 2002. Visual'naya Poetika Vladimira Nabokova. *Novoje Literaturnoje Obozrenije* 54: 205–28.
- Gurke, Thomas. 2017. Pythagorean Parallaxes in "The Dead" and *Ulysses*. In *Parallaxing Joyce*. Edited by Penelope Papparunas, Frances Ilberger and Martin Heusser. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, pp. 300–16.
- Helmreich, Stefen. 2012–2013. Seashell Sound. Echoing Ocean, Vibrating Air, Brute Blood. In *Cabinet*. Available online: <https://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/48/helmreich.php> (accessed on 12 December 2023).
- Johnson, Barton. 1992. "L'Inconnue de la Seine" and Nabokov's Naiads. *Comparative Literature* 44: 225–48. [CrossRef]
- Joyce, James. 1985. *Ulysses*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in Association with The Bodley Head.
- Lambrecht, Nora Elisabeth. 2017. *The Art of Noise: Literature and Disturbance 1900–1940*. Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, USA, October.
- Lavrova, Svetlana, and Nina Shcherbak. 2015. Vyzrazimye i nevyrazimye elementy muzykal'nogo i literaturnogo yazykov: Roman "Ada" Vladimira Nabokova i novaya muzyka. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Iskusstvovedenie* 2: 19–33.
- Lees, Heath. 1984. The Introduction to 'Sirens' and the 'Fuga Per Canonem'. *James Joyce Quarterly* 22: 39–54.
- Levin, Yury, Dmitry Segal, Roman Timenchik, Vladimir Toporov, and Tatyana Civ'yan. 1974. Russkaya semanticheskaya poetika kak potencial'naya kul'turnaya paradigma. *Russian Literature* 7–8: 47–82.
- Litz, Walton. 1961. *The Art of James Joyce: Method and Design in "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake"*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Magome, Kiyoko. 2020. "Vladimir Nabokov's Musico-Literary Microcosm: "Sounds", "Music", and Nabokov's Quartet". In *The Five Senses in Nabokov's Works*. Edited by Marie Bouchet, Julie Loison-Charles and Isabelle Poulin. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 295–312.
- Meyer, Priscilla. 1988. *Find What the Sailor Has Hidden. Vladimir Nabokov's "Pale Fire"*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Milian, Patrick. 2016. Bronze by Goldenhair: Music as Language in Chamber Music and "Sirens". *Joyce Studies Annual* 2016: 175–205.
- Miller, Henry. 1974. *Insomnia or the Devil at Large*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 1963. *The Gift*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 1966. *Despair*. New York: Vintage International New York.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 1970. *Poems and Problems*. New York and London: McGraw-Hill.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 1982. *Lectures on Literature*. Edited by Fredson Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 2004a. *Sobranije sochinenij russkogo perioda v pyati tomah*. Sankt-Peterburg: Simpozium, T. 1.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 2004b. *Sobranije sochinenij russkogo perioda v pyati tomah*. Sankt-Peterburg: Simpozium, T. 3.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 2008. *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov/Preface and notes by D. Nabokov*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. 2019. *Polnoje Sobranije Rasskazov*. Sankt-Peterburg: Azbuka.
- Nikolaeva, Tatyana. 1987. Edinicy yazyka i teoriya teksta. *Issledovaniya po strukture teksta. Moskva* 1987: 28–57.

- Ordway, Scott J. 2007. A Dominant Boylan: Music, Meaning and Sonata Form in the “Sirens” Episode of “Ulysses”. *James Joyce Quarterly* 45: 85–96. [CrossRef]
- Ostanin, Boris. 1997a. Ravenstvo, zigzag, trilstnik, ili O trekh rodah poezii. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* 23: 298–302.
- Ostanin, Boris. 1997b. Sirin: 22 + 2. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* 23: 298–302.
- Platek, Yakov. 2003. *Tri izgnannika... (Vladimir Nabokov, Iosif Brodskij, Aleksandr Solzhenicyn): Portraits v muzykal'nom inter'ere*. Moskva: Kompozitor.
- Plock, Vike Martina. 2009. Good Vibrations: S'irens,' Soundscapes, and Physiology. *James Joyce Quarterly* 46: 481–96. [CrossRef]
- Smith, Don Noel. 1972. Musical Form and Principles in the Scheme of “Ulysses”. *Twentieth Century Literature* 18: 79–92. [CrossRef]
- Sommers, Elena. 2009. Nabokov's Mermaid: “Spring in Fialta”. *Nabokov Studies: International Vladimir Nabokov Society and Davidson College* 12: 31–48. [CrossRef]
- Stuart, Dabney. 1978. *Nabokov. The Dimensions of Parody*. London: Baton Rouge.
- Tammi, Pekka. 1985. *Problems of Nabokov's Poetics: A Narratological Analyses*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Tift, Stephen. 2013. The Love-life of Phonemes. In *Joycean Unions: Post-Millennial Essays from East to West*. Edited by R. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Mecsnober. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 161–72.
- Torabi, Josh. 2021. *Music and Myth in Modern Literature*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Witen, Michelle. 2018. *James Joyce and Absolute Music*. London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- Zimmerman, Nadya. 2002. Musical Form as Narrator: The Fugue fo the Sirens in James Joyce's “Ulysses”. *Journal of Modern Literature* 26: 108–18. [CrossRef]

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.