

Original Research Article

Gerty MacDowell as Nausicaa in the Eponymous Episode of “Ulysses” by James Joyce

Lulzim Haziri

Masters Studies student of English Literature, University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo.

Corresponding Author: Lulzim Haziri, E-mail: lulzimhaziri7@hotmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received: July 19, 2019

Accepted: September 30, 2019

Volume: 1

Issue: 1

KEYWORDS

James Joyce, Ulysses,
Eponymous Episode, Modern
Period

ABSTRACT

This paper's study is about the novel of James Joyce's "Ulysses" on the subject topic of Gerty MacDowell as Nausicaa in the Eponymous episode. Its aim is basically dealing with the comparison of Joyce's Gerty MacDowell and Homer's Nausicaa emphasizing the importance of their interactions with Bloom and Odysseus and a careful examination of the text and comparison with Joyce's main source, The Odyssey. This study will show the comparison of Nausicaa and Gerty which proves to be unbelievably fundamental to Ulysses and significant to the "Nausicaa" episode. Additionally, Gerty, like Homer's Nausicaa, is the representation of a female character of the modern period.

Introduction

"Joyce founded no school; he developed an esthetic theory and practice as far as it would go; there was no further road that way. Delicacy of psychological perception had been developing in many ways and was being encouraged in many different quarters" (Daiches, 1994, p.1164). This paper's study is about the novel of James Joyce's "Ulysses" on the subject topic of Gerty MacDowell as Nausicaa in the Eponymous episode. Its aim is basically dealing with the comparison of Joyce's Gerty MacDowell and Homer's Nausicaa emphasizing the importance of their interactions with Bloom and Odysseus and a careful examination of the text and comparison with Joyce's main source, The Odyssey. This study will show the comparison of Nausicaa and Gerty which proves to be unbelievably fundamental to Ulysses and significant to the "Nausicaa" episode. Additionally, Gerty, like Homer's Nausicaa, is the representation of a female character of the modern period. Unlike in previous episodes where the similarities between The Odyssey and Ulysses are minimal or even complex, the Gerty-Nausicaa parallel is carefully detailed and sustained throughout Joyce's episode. Both Gerty and Nausicaa are concerned with marriage; imagine the 'dream' husband, and both reveal parts of their bodies. Both girls also think of the importance of cleanliness and the relation of marriage, and the detail of laundry forms a specifically strong correspondence between them. (McCarthy, 2010).

Literature Review

Ulysses is a supreme literary work. It is a dominant text of modernism, being radically experimental, difficult, challenging, in its technical and linguistic virtuosity, it is astonishing and sometimes baffling, and it is also a humorous, humane and moving novel. Metempsychosis (the transmigration of the soul) is a theme in Ulysses. The groundbreaking stream-of-consciousness style allows the reader not only to trace the actions, but also to follow the movement of his thoughts, to hear the inner timbre of his needs and desires, his joy and his despair. "Ulysses" is the Latin equivalent name of the Greek "Odysseus", the name of the wily warrior celebrated by Homer. It is, arguably, the single most influential novel of the twentieth century. It is divided in three sections and eighteen episodes. PART ONE has three episodes: 1. TELEMACHUS, 2. NESTOR, 3. PROTEUS PART TWO has twelve episodes: 4. CALYPSO, 5. LOTUS-EATERS, 6. HADES, 7. AEOLUS, 8. LESTRYGONIANS, 9. SCYLA AND CHARYBDIS, 10. THE WANDERING ROCKS, 11. SIRENS, 12. CYCLOPS, 13. NAUSICAA, 14. OXEN OF THE SUN, 15. CIRCE. PART THREE has three episodes: 16. EUMAEUS, 17. ITHACA and 18. PENELOPE

Methodology

This paper is about Part 2 of episode 13 of the James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. It is a comparison made of Gerty MacDowell and Homer's Nausicaa in the Eponymous episode. Joyce used as main source here the famous Homer's *Odyssey*. I will try to elaborate these comparisons in a short and concise way of course with examples from the book. Main source for this paper will be the book itself of *Ulysses*.

Results and discussion Episode 13

Nausicaa

The Episode 13: Nausicaa, (part II), opens with the relation with the Odysseus of the Book 5, Odysseus leaves Calypso's Island of Ogygia from the previous episode Calypso, where he is harassed by Poseidon and ends up drifted on the beach in the land of the Phaeacians, generous seafaring people. Odysseus lies sleeping on the shore of Scheria, exhausted after swimming for two days in spite of a storm wrecking his raft. In Book 6, he is eventually discovered by the Princess Nausicaa and her handmaidens who have come to do some laundry while some were playing ball. Odysseus awakens from the event of a lost ball and where his appearance frightens the girls except Princess Nausicaa. Once Odysseus approaches to her and gazes at the princess beauty as if she were a Goddess, his presence is successfully approved by the King, he stayed there for a year, then eventually Odysseus wishes to get back home, so the king arranges his return to Ithaca. (Gifford, Seidman, 1974, p348). The sources of James Joyce's "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses* in Homer's sixth book of the *Odyssey* are events that happen in the beginning of the chapter. In addition, applying to Homer's figures and occurrence to a modern setting, Joyce also uses his "Nausicaa" episode on themes found in Homer's sixth book. Gerty MacDowell's encounter with Leopold Bloom displays many similarities with Nausicaa and *Odyssey*. (Miskin, 2007, p 2).

'The summer evening had begun to fold the world in its mysterious embrace...' (*Ulysses*, p 312).

The most clearly evident similarities between Homer's *Odyssey* and Joyce's "Nausicaa" episode appear in the Homeric symbols Joyce seizes. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus first notices the princess Nausicaa and her maidens after she *"threw her ball off line and missed, and put it in the whirling stream—at which they all gave such a shout, Odysseus awoke"* (Fitzgerald, 1998, p 126). Similarly, Gerty and her friends were aware of Bloom after the twins accidentally kick the ball towards Bloom. After this Cissy calls Bloom asking him to throw back the ball to her but he tosses it towards Gerty where his full attention goes towards Gerty, *"the gentleman in black who was sitting there by himself came gallantly to the rescue and intercepted the ball"* (*Ulysses*, p321). Likewise, *Odyssey* catches Nausicaa's attention, and also the resemblance of Cissy Caffrey and Edy Boardman, who are jealous of Gerty of her beauty but proud that they do not have a leg like Gerty, they play the role of the handmaidens in Homer's epic, which identities and significance are unknown. (Gifford, Seidman, 1974, p348). Jealousy is noted in Edy who teases Gerty about her past lover and upbraid the flirtation of Gerty and Bloom.

'Gerty smiled assent and bit her lip. A delicate pink crept into her pretty cheek but she was determined to let them see so she just lifted her skirt a little but just enough and took good aim and gave the ball a jolly good kick and it went ever so far and the two twins after it down the towards the shingle. Pure jealousy of course it was nothing else to draw attention on account of the gentlemen opposite looking. She felt the warm flush, a danger signal always with Gerty MacDowell, surging and flaming into her cheeks.'

"Till then they had only exchanged glances of the most casual but now under the brim of her new hat she ventured a look at him and the face that met her gaze there in the twilight, wan and strangely drawn, seemed to her the saddest she had ever seen" (*Ulysses*, p322).

Also, a symbolic matter is that Odysseus and Bloom are the first men that Nausicaa and Gerty face after they have entered womanhood. Nausicaa and Gerty picture Odysseus and Bloom as their *"dreamhusbands"* because they are strangers upon which the young women exploit their fantasies. Nausicaa imagines that she will find a husband *"somewhere else"* other than her country, since *"none of our own will suit her, though many come to court her."* (Fitzgerald, 1998, p301-302). Like Nausicaa, Gerty sees Bloom as the perfect lover she desires and *"could see at once by (Bloom's) dark eyes and his pale intellectual face that he was a foreigner, the image of the photo she had of Martin Harvery, the matinee idol."* (*Ulysses*, p 323).

Gerty symbolizes herself as the Virgin Mary, a source of spiritual refuge and object of devotion, she shows off her underwear to excite Bloom's desire and pleasure. She devotes herself to him as she forgets about Virgin Mary and turns into a sexual object of erotic devotion. (McKenna, 2002, p 68). Just as the 'bazaar' fireworks started and all turned to see the blazing sky, Gerty was already occupied by Bloom's sexual attention directed at her *'She looked at him a moment, meeting his glance, and a light broke in upon her.'* (Ulysses, p330). She begins to excite herself and by leaning back as if to watch the fireworks, she reveals her leg, and notices his facial expressions during the act *"His hands were working and tremor went over her. She leaned back far to look up where the fireworks were and she caught her knee in her hands so as not to fall back looking up and there was no-one to see only him and her when she revealed all her graceful beautifully shaped legs like that, supple soft and delicately rounded."* (Ulysses, p330) allowing Bloom to reach a full satisfaction of masturbatory sexual climax at the same time the fireworks blast in the sky:

'And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind blank and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of rain gold hair threads they shed and ah! O so lovely, O, soft, sweet, soft!' (Ulysses, p331).

Eventually, Gerty sees a bat flying above her; she leaves behind a handkerchief as a thanking token for Bloom, as she walks away Gerty's limp catches Bloom's attention and prompts to consider her disability, nonetheless Bloom still finds her attractive among the other girls.

'She half smiled at him wanly, a sweet forgiving smile that verged on tears, and then they parted...She walked with a certain quiet dignity characteristic of her but with care and very slowly because Gerty MacDowell was. . ' (Ulysses, p332).

Joyce presented in the 'Nausicaa' episode the first feminine female mind. Gerty's point of view is presented in the third-person hybrid narrative also partly presented in the first person. Gerty's words are filled with the words of cultural discourses and contradictions of virginity and temptress, refuge of sinners and sexy poses of nudity, specimen of purity and product of cosmetics, devotion to love, romance, and hater of nearly all living things. Moreover, Gerty is mostly represented objectively in the third person, her thoughts intervene with fashion and romance novels, as she dreams of Bloom to devote to her with realistic love and pleasure, also wishes Bloom to be her *"dream husband."* (Ulysses, p330). Gerty's sexuality is clearly misinterpreted as weak, pitiable, and only important in reference to the male sexuality (Bloom's). However, these oversimplified conclusions overlook the aspects of Gerty's situation that bears logical reasoning for the search of a husband.

Gerty is symbolized as the 'romantic lover that shows magical copula that promises a holy healing, a transubstantiation of disabling physical impairment into romantic and fetishist value.' (Henke, 2004-2005, p89).

1. GERTY MACDOWELL AS NAUSICAA IN THE EPONYMOUS EPISODE OF "ULYSSES"

While neither Gerty nor Bloom achieves any 'realistic' love in the "Nausicaa" episode, they both experience an intense meaningful connection which eventually weakens to some point. Gerty knows that she is attractive to Bloom and capable of stimulating him, by satisfying her desires. Bloom achieves the sexual release he has been waiting all day, after his masturbation, and he is physically satisfied.

While both Odysseus and Bloom admire Nausicaa's and Gerty's physical beauty, neither views the young women as potential lovers, but instead are reminded of their wives. Additionally, with Odysseus and Nausicaa also experience a meaningful connection which helps relieve their feelings of isolation. Odysseus desires to be reunited with Penelope in Ithaca, just as Bloom turns his thoughts to Molly. Nausicaa left to find herself a suitable husband. (Miskin, 2007, p 3). Like Bloom and Gerty, they are on different paths and are separated, but briefly manage to find quite comfort in each other of what they desire. It is worth the mention that while Nausicaa and Gerty are helped emotionally through Odysseus's and Bloom's affirmation of their desirability, Nausicaa's and Gerty's contribution to Odysseus and Bloom is physically comforting rather than emotionally encouraging. However, despite these differences, the contributions of Nausicaa and Gerty to Odysseus and Bloom and the benefits they receive in exchange are equally significant. 'Nausicaa' episode shifts its focus to Bloom's stream of consciousness monologue. Bloom, a mostly silent observer, standing near the sea wall, and lost in his mind with his own contradictions, becoming a masturbator, his masturbation is symbolized to be heroic. It is considered that Bloom confronted his manhood after being questioned in the previous episodes. By the end of a long day, after many provocations, pains and problems, Bloom merely sought a harmless "relief". Yet, the

narrative never enters into Gerty's first person narrative, and because the narrative voice changes to Bloom's after Gerty leaving. The fact that the narrative perspective shifts instantly the moment after it is revealed that Gerty is lame:

"Tight boots? No. She's lame! O!... Mr. Bloom watched as she limped away. Poor girl! That's why she was left on the shelf and the others did a sprint. Thought something was wrong by the cut of her jib. Jilted beauty... Glad I didn't know when she was on the show. Hot little devil all the same. Wouldn't mind..." (Ulysses, p 332).

The third person narration had continued right until the disclosure of Gerty limping. At that point, Bloom's voice immediately takes over. It could be that once the reality of her lameness revealed, the fantasy is over. Instead, even after his masturbation, the stylized feminine language does not appear to scatter. (McCarthy, 2010). The last comparison of the encounters in the conclusion of the stories between the characters is the leaving moment of Nausicaa with Odysseus, and Bloom with Gerty. In *The Odyssey*, Nausicaa says to Odysseus as he leaves *"Fare well, stranger; in your land remember me who met and saved you. It is worth your thought"* (Odyssey, p493) He responds, *"Be there and all my days until I die may I invoke you as I would a goddess, a princess to whom I owe my life"* (Odyssey, p 495). In *Ulysses*, however, as Gerty stands to leave, Bloom continues in a more sentimental tone to the ending of their companionship *"Their souls met in a last lingering glance and the eyes that reached her heart full of strange shining, hung enraptured on her sweet flowerlike face. She half smiled at him, wanly, a sweet forgiving smile, a smile that verged on tears, and then they parted."* (Ulysses, p 332).

Conclusion

The story's focus is on the women in particular Gerty and Nausicaa, and on sexual compassion referred to in episode 13. In both *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, two strangers meet by chance and are able to find unexpected comfort in one another. Both novels have the most common features among other episodes in *Ulysses*. So, James Joyce's *"Nausicaa"* in Homer's *Odyssey* shows "details of the human capacity for kindness and understanding, even in the most unlikely of situations" (Miskin, 2007, p. 5). Odysseus and Nausicaa experience a meaningful connection which helps relieve their feelings of isolation as Gerty and Bloom do in episode 13. Odysseus wishes to be reunited with Penelope in Ithaca, and Nausicaa to find herself a suitable husband. Like Bloom and Gerty, they are separated from what they desire, but briefly manage to find a measure of comfort in each other. Odysseus affirms Nausicaa's beauty, confessing *"never have I laid eyes on equal beauty in man or woman. I am hushed indeed"* and praises her desirability as to be a future wife by telling her, *"one man's destiny is more than blest—he who prevails and takes you as his bride"* (Odyssey, p 171).

James Joyce has respectively presented the feminine interior monologue to his novel, as he narrates Gerty in the third person, whereas in the second part of the episode, the narration is followed by Bloom's stream of conscious monologue. Doubtlessly, 'Nausicaa' is one of the most interesting episodes of *Ulysses* as a result of the episode's straightforward treatment of sexuality and pornography, which provoked censors to have the completed novel banned from entry into the United States. James Joyce put female sexuality together in a graphic way and Bloom's masturbation caused the book to be banned because of its expressively sexual straightforwardness. From Joyce's point of view *Ulysses* was not pornographic but eventually it was elaborated in 1932, and later was not judged to be pornographic for the reason that the descriptions of sexuality in it were not an excitement to a sexual activity but a humour and respectfully pathetic aspects of representation of the episode 'Nausicaa'. Finally, I would like to conclude that *Ulysses* is the comedy of multiple identities. To the question: "What is significant in human experience?" Joyce seems to answer: "Nothing and everything. It all depends on how you look at it. I shall present a picture of a slice of life so organized that you will see this: I, as the objective artist standing outside all human commitments, will be able to show all of human history contained in my once carefully patterned set of events, for the significant is also the insignificant, the trivial is the heroic, and the familiar the exotic, and vice versa: it is a matter of point of view, and the artist has all points of view because he has no point of view" (Daiches, 1994, p1163). It is a daring and at the same time supremely logical view of art; no one else pursued the logic as far as Joyce did. "Ulysses, of course, is a divine work of art and will live on despite the academic nonentities who turn it into a collection of symbols or Greek myths. I once gave a student a C-minus, or perhaps a D-plus, just for applying to its chapters the titles borrowed from Homer while not even noticing the comings and goings of the man in the brown macintosh. He didn't even know who the man in the brown macintosh was. Oh, yes, let people compare me to Joyce by all means, but my English is pat ball to Joyce's champion game". (Vladimir Nabokov)

References

- [1] Daiches. David, (1994). "A Critical History of English Literature"-Volume II, The Restoration to the present day, Revised Edition, Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, London.
- [2] Joyce, James. (2010). *Ulysses*, Wordsworth Classics Editions Limited, Chap.13, p.312-346.
- [3] Miskin, Lauren.(April 2007) A "GREEKLY PERFECT" Heroine: James Joyce's Gerty MacDowell and Homer's Nausicaa, journal of student scholarship, Faculty Sponsor: Lee Harrod, Department of English, vol. ix, p.1-
- [4] Homer. (1998). *The Odyssey*. Trans.Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- [5] Gifford, Don, Seidman, Robert J. (1974). "Ulysses Annotated", Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce's "Ulysses" (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974), University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.
- [6] Blamires, Harry. (1996). "The New Bloomsday Book", A guide through Ulysses, third edition, Oxen: Routledge (in the imprint of Taylor & Francis Group).
- [7] McCarthy, Simone. (2010). *Nausicaa*, The Modernism Lab, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA.
- [8] McKenna, Bernard. (2002). "James Joyce's *Ulysses*: a reference guide", Greenwood Guides to Fiction, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London.
- [9] Henke, Suzette (1982). "Joyce's Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Refashioned. "Gerty MacDowell: Joyce's Sentimental Heroine," published in Women in Joyce.