

**‘SOCIETY WITH A BIG ESS’: WHO’S TALKING ABOUT GERTY
MACDOWELL?**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

MARC SCHNEIDER

Submitted to the Undergraduate Research Scholars program at
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as an

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

Approved by Research Advisor:

Dr. Marian Eide

May 2017

Majors: English
Philosophy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTERS	
I. METHODS	6
What It First Was	6
How It Went at First	7
What It Became	16
II. A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE	17
III. WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?	20
Difficulties	20
Possibilities	21
Problems	21
IV. ATHENA AND JOYCE'S NARRATOR	25
CONCLUSION	30
WORKS CITED	31

ABSTRACT

‘Society with a big ess’: Who’s Talking About Gerty MacDowell?

Marc Schneider
Department of English
Texas A&M University

Research Advisor: Dr. Eide
Department of English
Texas A&M University

‘Nausicaa,’ the thirteenth episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, depicts Leopold Bloom, the novel’s hero, masturbating to the sight of a young woman named Gertrude MacDowell as she lounges about Sandymount Strand at sunset. The first half of the chapter is written in overly sentimental prose reminiscent of novels referenced within it, whereas the second half resumes Bloom’s stream-of-consciousness style familiar from earlier chapters. In light of the second part of the narrative, the first is sometimes understood as a parallel, as a product of Gerty’s internal dialogue. However, I maintain that what we are reading in episode 13 is the projection of Gerty’s consciousness as imagined by her society, which produces within her a masculine fantasy about herself. The narrative is from the perspective of Bloom, insofar as he represents the male imagination that determines social convention, and gives her a romantic desire for him.

INTRODUCTION

Joyce's *Ulysses* is widely esteemed as one of the most remarkable achievements in English literature due to, among other factors, its pioneering work in the stream-of-consciousness style. This style enables the novel to represent in unabridged, uncensored fashion what it is like for its characters to live in modern Dublin, Ireland. Episode 13 stands out because of its Victorian style and third-person narration, though these eventually transform and gather back into Bloom's consciousness when he concludes that Gerty is lame. Because of its sentimental style and skewed perspective, however, the narrative proves difficult to interpret. Even determining its origin turns out to be problematic when taking into account both its vulgar or popular understanding and its fairly sophisticated vocabulary.

The primary issue, then, arising from this episode is the identity of the narrator: who is telling this story? And what, then, does that tell us about the narrative's reliability and its meaning or significance? Understanding who or what is driving the narrative will help us distinguish fact from fiction in an episode fraught with masquerade and deception. The episode is written in what Joyce called a "namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto là!) style with effects of incense, mariolatry, masturbation, stewed cockles, painter's palette, chitchat, circumlocutions, etc. etc."¹ Many scholars thus read the narrative as free indirect discourse, meaning that Gerty's consciousness shapes the style, though not the narrative. However, Joyce himself, in response to his friend Arthur Power's inquiry into Bloom's encounter with Gerty,

¹Joyce, James. *Selected Letters*: 246. Edited by Richard Ellmann. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1976.

curtly stated, “Nothing happened between them.... It all took place in Bloom’s imagination.”²

This claim contradicts the notion that Gerty’s mind conditions the narrative, and suggests instead that it is fully determined by Bloom’s.

Interpretations vary considerably among Joyce scholars. For example, Timo Müller argues that Joyce’s Gerty is modeled less after Homer’s Nausicaa than after Samuel Butler’s version, which Butler posits as the representation of the poetess behind the entire epic of *The Odyssey*.³ Müller concludes that episode 13 satirizes Butler’s notion that an author cannot fully control her own narrative style, which Joyce proves himself quite capable of doing. Jeri Johnson, on the other hand, claims in her explanatory notes of *Ulysses* that the narrative is written in a free indirect discourse that constructs Gerty as feminine in the eyes of her masculine voyeur, Bloom.⁴ Contrarily, Suzette Henke argues that Joyce’s task in the episode is to characterize and deride the erotic fantasies of both sexes.⁵

So what do we make of this? How seriously should we take Joyce’s somewhat dismissive statement that the narrative is absolutely voyeuristic—that all of it takes place in Bloom’s imagination? I will demonstrate the weakness of three existing interpretations, explore the issues that arise from a voyeuristic interpretation, and propose an interpretation founded on evidence

² Power, Arthur. *Conversations with James Joyce*: 32. Edited by Clive Hart. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 1974.

³ Müller, Timo. “Gerty MacDowell, Poetess: Butler’s *The Authoress of the Odyssey* and the Nausicaa Episode of *Ulysses*.” In *Twentieth Century Literature* 55, no. 3 (2009): 378-92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25733419>.

⁴ Johnson, Jeri. “Explanatory Notes.” In *Ulysses*. 898-900. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. 2008.

⁵ Henke, Suzette. “Joyce’s Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Refashioned.” In *Papers on Joyce*, no. 10-11 (2004-2005): 85-104. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ejemplar/163669>. (Hereafter, NN followed by page number)

reconstructed from the novel. Our aim is to familiarize ourselves with the troubles of interpreting this episode's odd narrative voices, then to provide one possible approach through the novel's classical analogue, Homer's *Odyssey*.

Our overall theoretical framework is phenomenological, meaning that, through an inspection of this nuanced issue, we will consider some of the broad concerns of phenomenology—such as consciousness, language, and the phenomenal world. More specifically, by giving a Heideggerian reading of Joyce's narrative style, we will discover the way in which Joyce patterns the existence of his characters by repeatedly 'throwing' (in Heidegger's sense) them into a world that must be engaged and interpreted. Through a close textual analysis of the 'Nausicaa' episode, as well as a dialogue with the scholarship on this chapter and the characters of Bloom, Molly, and Gerty, we will form an understanding of Joyce's approach to these phenomenological themes in *Ulysses*.

To compose this thesis, I have used library resources and databases provided by Texas A&M University. The process of composition has been one of trial and error, investigating various methods of interpretation, and altering the course of my research halfway through. I have invested much time and effort into familiarizing myself with the novel, which never fails to confound me. Even yet, I have been invited to present a version of this thesis at the annual North American James Joyce Conference, taking place this June at the University of Toronto.

The following will first explain the procedure by which I arrived at my method for interpreting the episode and why I am raising the questions I am raising, before turning to the interpretation itself. Not only will this first step help illuminate my current argument, but it will also more fully depict my research experience. The process of adjusting the investigation as

evidence is found is known as “emergent theory,” which is conceptually derived from what sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss call “grounded theory.”⁶ Despite the fact that I came to the text with certain expectations, I have allowed the evidence to bring me to the most plausible conclusions, rather than fabricating a preferred reading of the text.

Overall, I conclude that the style and mindset of the narrator are informed by Bloom’s voyeuristic vantage point, which is itself a moment in the formulation of social conventions conducted by Society’s masculine imagination. Athena of Homer’s *Odyssey*, since she is a manly goddess who is born from Zeus’s mind, parallels the nature and role of the transgendered narrator which conceals the masculinity of the social imagination by which it is produced. When we consider Athena’s “enchanted mist” in the *Odyssey*, we can think the narrator in terms of an ideological mist into which Gerty and Bloom are able to enter only by translating themselves through citational references to existing norms of femininity and masculinity.

⁶ Human, Sherrie E. "Emergent Theory." In *International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies*, edited by Stewart R. Clegg and James R. Bailey, 426. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008. doi: 10.4135/9781412956246.n148.

CHAPTER I

METHODS

This chapter will recount the development of the methodology as it evolved during the process of researching *Ulysses* as a whole before settling on episode 13 as our concentration.

What It First Was

My research began with the question: To what extent can James Joyce be classified as a phenomenologist? Phenomenology, put simply by Robert Sokolowski, is “the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience.”⁷ The central focus of Joyce’s fiction is human experience of daily life, and his stream-of-consciousness style illustrates his interest in the way phenomena present themselves to the human mind. Because Joyce occupies himself so profoundly with translating first-person experience into literature, there appears to me to be a connection (thematic, at least) between him and Edmund Husserl, who is considered the father of phenomenology and was working early enough to have influenced Joyce’s composition of *Ulysses*.

By closely analyzing the works of Joyce and understanding his writing within a framework of notable works in the field of philosophical phenomenology by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I planned to consider whether or not Joyce’s writings should be classified as phenomenological fiction. First, I would formulate a descriptive profile of 20th-century phenomenology, then compare it with a topical and stylistic understanding of Joyce’s work. This would position me to be able to answer the primary question

⁷ Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

of my research: Can James Joyce be properly described as a phenomenologist? Additionally, can style be understood as a philosophical method? In other words, is Joyce's pioneering work in stream-of-consciousness itself a contribution to theories of mind?

How It Went At First

In this section, we will consider examples of how *Ulysses* engages with phenomenological themes on several different levels. Following this general overview of the book, we will narrow our focus to the specific moment of Gerty's narrative. What follows is a compilation of blog entries that document the research leading up to my reading of episode 13, when I begin to think phenomenology in terms of Gerty's story and of projected images.

Protean Phenomenology

In the 'Proteus' episode (3), Stephen considers the visual theories of both Aristotle and George Berkeley, which, although very different, overlap at one key point--vision cannot reveal an object in itself. For Aristotle, an object of perception has a sensible form (diaphane) that modifies a subject's sensory modality. Plainly speaking, one is able to sense something because its perceptible qualities make an impression on his or her mind. The qualities of taste and smell are based in the substance of an object, whereas the visual qualities (e.g., color) are not; thus, one cannot see an object's substance.

George Berkeley agrees that an object cannot be seen in itself; yet, he thinks instead that we directly sense our ideas of objects. He even goes so far as to say that our ideas of things are all there is. In other words, there are no underlying "things in themselves" but only minds and their perceptions of things. This is why Stephen is afraid to open his eyes as he walks along Sandymount; his decision not to look at the world around him, according to Berkeley, will have

wiped it out of existence: “Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane. Basta! I will see if I can see”⁸. Of course, when Stephen opens his eyes, there is Sandymount, there is Dublin, there is the sea: “There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end” (*U*, 3.26-7).

During his sauntering on the beach, Stephen also meditates on Berkeley’s notion that visual perception is like watching a screen which is thought with the mind rather than seen with the eyes. Our ideas first appear flat or two-dimensional, then we add to them the illusion of distance: “The good bishop of Cloyne took the veil of the temple out of his shovel hat: veil of space with coloured emblems hatched on its field. Hold hard. Coloured on a flat: yes, that’s right. Flat I see, then think distance, near, far, flat I see, east, back” (*U*, 3.415-18).

In the end, Stephen rejects Berkeley’s tenets by embracing a modified version of Aristotelian visual theory. He doubts that sight penetrates to objects in themselves, but embraces the idea that sound gives the subject access to the form of an object. Rather than holding that a perceived object substantially modifies the mind, however, Stephen’s approach is more phenomenological, meaning that he thinks that his mind interacts with (intends) the world that is always already conditioned according to the horizons within which it appears. This is demonstrated by the mental associations he makes with his surroundings, like when, for example, he thinks to himself, “If I fell over a cliff that beetles o’er his base, fell through the *Nebeneinander* ineluctably” (*U*, 3.13-4). The phrase “cliff that beetles o’er his base” is a quote from Hamlet. Therefore, through a literary allusion, Stephen perceives an entity within the physical world, namely, a cliff along the Sandymount Strand. Apparently, the horizons of

⁸Joyce, James. *Ulysses*: (*U*, 3.24-5). Edited by Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 1922. (Hereafter, *U* followed by episode and line number)

Stephen's consciousness are conditioned by his knowledge of literature. This is a theme we see throughout Joyce's work—that a person's perception of reality is framed by what they consume, whether physically, spiritually, or intellectually.

Synecdoche of Perception

By my count, there are at least three phenomenological hypotheses presented in episode 5 ('Lotus-Eaters'). We shall explore these in turn; the first we will call 'synecdoche' of perception and thought, the second is the role language plays in framing perception, and the third reads as a conjecture towards the materiality of thought. To begin, consider the use of synecdoche in the depiction of horses in the following passage:

Mr Bloom went round the corner and passed the drooping nags of the hazard. No use thinking of it any more. *Nosebag* time. Wish I hadn't met that M'Coy fellow.

He came nearer and heard a *crunching of gilded oats*, the gently champing *teeth*. Their full buck *eyes* regarded him as he went by, amid the sweet oaken *reek of horsepiss*. Their Eldorado. Poor jugginses! Damn all they know or care about anything with their long *noses* stuck in nosebags. Too full for words. Still they get their feed all right and their doss. Gelded too: a *stump of black guttapercha* wagging limp between their haunches. Might be happy all the same that way. Good poor *brutes* they look. Still their *neigh* can be very irritating. (*U*, 5.210-20, emphasis added)

Bloom's first-person experience of the horses consists of multiple, separate instances of noise, smell, and body parts, but never of one, complete presentation of the horses. Granted, there is a semblance of totality in the use of the words "nags," "brutes," and even "jugginses." However, since these work as pejoratives, they diminish the horses' stature in the eyes of Bloom and effectively castrate the typically menacing animals. The words fracture the expected image

of majestic horses, and yet, as plurals, they blur the distinction between each individual horse. Bloom's perception of the horses, then, is of blurred pieces, rather than of a definite totality.

Sokolowski, in describing the way we perceive a cube, writes, "I see the cube from one angle, from one perspective. I cannot see the cube from all sides at once.... The presently visible sides are surrounded by a halo of potentially visible but actually absent sides. These other sides are given, but given precisely as absent. They too are part of what I experience." (Sokolowski, 17). The whole is experienced through the perception of *only* one part. We perceive the 'unperceived' part of the cube indirectly through its being absent from view at a point in time. With different emphasis, the whole of a phenomena is *always* experienced through the perception of part of it. This means we cannot perceive one side of a cube without experiencing the whole thing. Thus, Bloom experiences the entirety of the horses as blurry halos of absent parts, though only perceiving and identifying one part at a time.

In the preceding example, Bloom's perception of the shabby, old horses framed his experience of them and caused him to see them as "poor brutes." Yet, Joyce demonstrates that the inverse—i.e., that language frames and shapes human perception and experience—is also true. For example, in the beginning of the 'Lotus-Eaters' episode Bloom muses, "Met her once in the park. In the dark. What a lark" (*U*, 5.13-4). Now, this is a simple example, but a principle can be drawn from this, an example among many, of how the mind of Bloom through free-association manipulates memories or perceptions according to the language, rhyme, or meter of his thought. He claims to have met a woman in the park. Perhaps it truly was during or nearing nighttime. But was it really an especially pleasant meeting, or is Bloom just playing with words

here? Is it not more likely that he cannot recall the character of the woman he greeted in the dark, and that his silly rhyme simply imposes a jocular disposition upon his vague memory of her?

Lastly, a subtle proposition of the materiality of thought is suggested when Bloom is calculating how many barrels of porter Lord Iveagh would have to sell in order to bring in one million pounds. (His answer is fifteen million.) At that moment, a train rumbles overhead, causing the imaginary barrels to behave as material, bumping and churning and bursting open inside Bloom's head (*U*, 313-17). This notion of ideas as physical objects within the mind resonates with an Aristotelian understanding of the mind. Aristotle claims that the mind is, like a lump of wax, formed into the shape of that which it perceives or conceives.

These passages provide three perspectives—again synecdoche of perception, language's role in framing experience, and the materiality of thought—on the human mind as conceived by Joyce.

Thrownness

Key to Martin Heidegger's way of thinking about human existence are notions of what are called 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*) and 'projection'. In *Being and Time*, after considering the qualities of being human (which he designates *Dasein*—'there-being'), he concludes that a central part of our existence is to care about our being. We are profoundly concerned with what it means to be human. Additionally, as *Dasein*, we are placed without our control into an unforeseen context, which turns out to be a world that deeply matters to us. This existential quality of *Dasein* is called 'thrownness,' which is an *a priori*, transcendental, preontological condition. That is to say, *Dasein* has always already been thrown into the situation in which she finds herself. In response, *Dasein* throws herself into action. Known as projection, this

fundamental part of *Dasein* is enacted through understanding the world. In short, *Dasein*, as a thrown-throw, happens upon herself within a world which she then interprets and responds to by enacting herself upon the world.

Joyce masterfully recreates this event in literature—narratively, stylistically, psychologically—by repeatedly throwing his characters and his reader without warning into a world that must time and again be engaged and interpreted. As in the ‘Aeolus’ episode, to take a very literal example, when Bloom, like Odysseus when his men open the Aeolus’s bag of winds, is thrown back into the press amidst a storm of activity:

“A bevy of scampering newsboys rushed down the steps, scattering in all directions, yelling, their white papers fluttering....

RETURN OF BLOOM

Mr Bloom, breathless, caught in a whirl of wild newsboys near the offices of the *Irish Catholic* and *Dublin Penny Journal*, called:

—Mr Crawford! A moment!” (*U*, 7.954-63)

Consider as well Professor MacHugh’s recitation of John F. Taylor’s speech in the same episode. As Stephen notes, the Moses of Hebrew Scripture is thrown without his control into several drastically contrasting contexts: “Nile. / Child, man, effigy. / By the Nilebank the babemaries kneel, cradle of bulrushes: a man supple in combat: stonehorned, stonebearded, heart of stone” (*U*, 7.851-54). John F. Taylor’s speech shows how Moses, having been thrown, projects himself back into the world in order to reshape it:

—*But, ladies and gentlemen, had the youthful Moses listened to and accepted that view of life, had he bowed his head and bowed his will and bowed his spirit before that*

arrogant admonition he would never have brought the chosen people out of their house of bondage, nor followed the pillar of the cloud by day. He would never have spoken with the Eternal amid lightnings on Sinai's mountaintop nor ever have come down with the light of inspiration shining in his countenance and bearing in his arms the tables of the law, graven in the language of the outlaw. (U, 7.861-68)

In addition to these literary examples of *Dasein* as a thrown-throw, we must consider the role that Joyce's style, which varies from episode to episode (sometimes even altering within the episode), throws the reader into a new context over which she has no control. It is as though Joyce is challenging the belief that the reader determines her own entrance into and reading of the text; it is instead the case that the conditions of the novel determine the content of her reading.

Eat Him Pike Hoses

In Episode 8, 'Lestrygonians,' food biologically transforms its eater. According to a strand of theosophic thought, the residual soul of an eaten animal is imparted into the consumer of its flesh. This emulates the process of metempsychosis, wherein the soul of one animal transmigrates to another. Here are some examples of Bloom considering the idea that the food people or animals eat (or do not eat) has a physiological effect on them:

(U, 8.85-8) : "If you cram a turkey say on chestnutmeal it tastes like that. Eat pig like pig. But then why is it that saltwater fish are not salty? How is that?"

(U, 8.342) : "Uneatable fox. Pothunters too. Fear injects juices tender enough for them."

(U, 8.535-6) : "Don't eat a beefsteak. If you do the eyes of that cow will pursue you through all eternity."

(U, 8.544-7) : “I wouldn’t be surprised if it was that kind of food you see produces the like waves of the brain the poetical. For example one of those policemen sweating Irish stew into their shirts you couldn’t squeeze a line of poetry out of him.”

(U,8.650-701) : At Burton Restaurant, the men are grotesquely portrayed, as if they are animal eating from troughs.

(U, 8.744-6) : “Dignam’s potted meat. Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White missionary too salty.⁹ Like pickled pork.”

(U, 8.752) : “Yom Kippur fast spring cleaning of inside.”

(U, 8.925-30) : Bloom considers the eating and excreting habits of humans compared to the gods. “And we stuffing food in one hole and out behind.” What we eat and how we defecate demonstrates our inferiority to the gods, who eat ambrosia and drink nectar.

Therefore, according to Bloom, it must be the case that, “They have no” (U, 8.931).

If understood as a phenomenological insight, Joyce may be suggesting that consumption alters consciousness. That which is taken in (e.g. language, images, food) modifies how one experiences the world.

But how do we experience that which is happening outside ourselves? A concern of philosophers since the beginning of the Western tradition, this question is reconsidered in a fascinating way in ‘Sirens’—episode 11 of *Ulysses*. Joyce’s approach, in accordance with the form of this chapter, revolves around the structure of music. Music permeates both the world and

⁹ See Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.” Additionally, it is the consumption of Christ that makes the missionary salty: “For My flesh is real food, and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him” (John 6:55-6).

Bloom's consciousness. Bloom himself presents a theory of "musemathematics" (*U*, 11.830-37) and suggests that music is everywhere (*U*, 11.963-65), ideas which imply that the music's metaphysical properties allow its interpenetration of consciousness. Thus, the singing and piano playing of the saloon, the "taptapping" of the blind tuner, the jingling of Boylan's carriage, and other stimuli contribute to the dissolving away of any semblance of interiority. Indeed, some of these sounds, such as the jingling, occur outside of Bloom's range of perception, yet enter into his consciousness through his imagination. However, it is important to remember that the text is not confined to the description of Bloom's consciousness, but leaps in and out of its stream (though still wet after leaving it). This is evidenced in the approaching tap of the tuner's cane, a phenomenon which, though Bloom is unaware of it, incessantly interrupts the flow of his experience as it appears in the text.

Let us consider this in light of the following passage: "Sea, wind, leaves, thunder, waters, cows lowing, the cattlemarket, cocks, hens don't crow, snakes hissss. There's music everywhere. Ruttledge's door: ee creaking. No, that's noise" (*U*, 11. 963-65). What do we make of Bloom's hesitation to call the creaking of Ruttledge's door music? Apparently, Bloom denies that all sounds are music, but also believes that music is everywhere. Bloom can be taken as saying music can be heard anywhere if one listens intently to it like one does to music. Yet, the structure of this chapter implies Joyce's commitment to the idea that our experience of the world is musical. Music, classically defined, is sound organized in time. As Bloom says, "Time makes the tune" (*U*, 11.841). But what sound is not organized in time? Thus, since no sound is abstracted from its context nor from time itself, there is no such thing as random sound or mere noise.

What It Became

When I wrote about episode 13 in the upcoming entry, my advisor and I agreed that focusing specifically on this episode would be more manageable and critically engaging. Therefore, I altered the course of my research from whether Joyce is a phenomenologist to the guiding assumption that episode 13 is written from Bloom's perspective. Though I presumed that my idea had never before been considered, I eventually discovered that Jeri Johnson had postulated the same reading in the explanatory notes to the Oxford University Press edition of *Ulysses*. This led me to search the novel for evidence to contradict her, which I did indeed find. Things had suddenly become interesting. As I scoured the secondary literature on this episode, I could not find a satisfactory answer to the question of the narrator's identity. This provided an impetus to examine the narrative without pretense, and to arrive at what I consider to be the most viable understanding of the narrative voice.

CHAPTER II

A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

The difficulty provided by an unclear narrative point of view is an uncertainty regarding what is really happening. If the identity or the perspective of a narrative voice remains ambiguous, how much more, therefore, does the veracity or significance of its story remain indeterminable. It is crucial for understanding episode 13, in which Joyce emphasizes the issue of narrative control, to determine, if possible, the perspective of its narrator. With the final blog entry on December 1, 2016, I decided to focus on episode 13 and the literary criticism regarding that episode, rather than tackling Joyce's work as a whole.

Duplicitous Narrator

Prior to line 771, wherein Bloom suddenly concludes that Gerty MacDowell has a defected leg, the narrative of episode 13 appears to be more or less organized according to Gerty's perspective. Following Bloom's deduction, the narrative seems to relocate and reorient its perspective according to Bloom's point of view. A plausible reading is that an omniscient narrator in this moment moves from the consciousness of Gerty to that of Bloom. This is possible, since it happens in other parts of the novel (esp. between Stephen and Bloom in the Aeolus episode). Yet, one can make the argument that reading it in this way ignores the exaggerated and cliché tone, which describes Gerty as overly romantic and smitten with Bloom, the mysterious and supposedly seductive stranger.

Instead, we have on our hands a duplicitous narrator—duplicitous in the sense that it is unreliable, but also double-sided. This means that the perspective is not relocated, but only

reoriented. In other words, what we are reading in the lines that describe Gerty's thoughts (or the descriptions of clothes, food, the ocean, etc.) is a narrative originating from Bloom's perspective. Bloom's fantasy projected onto Gerty forms the lens through which we see her (this mode of Gerty I will designate as 'Gerty' in quotes). This notion of 'Gerty' is supported by her fixation on Bloom's eyes. Below are some examples:

(*U*, 13.411-5) : "His eyes burned into her as though they would search her through and through, read her very soul. Wonderful eyes they were, superbly expressive, but could you trust them? People were so queer. She could see at once by his dark eyes and his pale intellectual face that he was a foreigner..."

(*U*, 13.495-6) : "...he never took his eyes off of her..."

(*U*, 13.512-3) : "She could almost see the swift answering flash of admiration in his eyes that set her tingling in every nerve."

(*U*, 13.651-2) : "If she saw that magic lure in his eyes there would be no holding back for her."

(*U*, 13.688-9) : "The eyes that were fastened upon her set her pulses tingling."

Thus, not only is 'Gerty' remarkably attracted to Bloom, but the effect his eyes have on her is described as invasive and as the source of her lust. Bloom's fanciful gaze penetrates into 'Gerty,' stimulates her, and engenders her reciprocation. My depiction of this process as sexual is purposeful, since Bloom is having imaginary intercourse with her. Joyce's portrayal of this lecherous act as naively romantic recalls the misery of Bloom's sex life (or lack thereof), which is exacerbated by the fact that Molly is having an affair.

In light of our overall conclusions of this paper, the phrase, "If she saw that magic lure in his eyes there would be no holding back for her," (*U*, 13.651-2) supports the notion that the

space into which Gerty and Bloom can project themselves is composed of a script of cultural norms. “The eyes that were fastened upon her set her pulses tingling” (*U*, 13.688-9). Only if Bloom acts can Gerty react. They communicate exclusively through the translation of themselves into prescribed behaviors that act as signs, as a limited language of erotic interest and capitulation. “She could see at once by his dark eyes and his pale intellectual face that he was a foreigner...” (*U*, 13.414-5). Bloom’s representation of himself with the language of desire within the public space causes Gerty to misread his appearance and to attribute to him a desirability he would not otherwise possess. Conversely, the narrator attributes to Bloom supernatural insight based on Gerty’s fascination with and surrender to her idea of him: “His eyes burned into her as though they would search her through and through, read her very soul” (*U*, 13.411-2). Although both characters are provided a fixed role in the drama, Bloom’s position is of subject and Gerty’s of object. The only means for their entrance into the discourse is if they put on the established masculinity and femininity of their cultural setting.

CHAPTER III

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE?

In order to understand the implications of the narrative point of view, we need to consider first the difficulties in determining it, then the possible interpretations presented by the secondary literature, and lastly, and finally the problems facing each of these interpretations.

Difficulties

Why is identifying this episode's narrative point of view especially problematic? For one thing, it is asymmetrically divided; its voice changes from third-person to first-person when it shifts perspectives between Gerty and Bloom. The first narrative, which focuses on Gerty, appears to be from her perspective but is written in the third-person. The second, which turns to Bloom, resumes the style that we recognize from earlier episodes as Bloom's internal voice. In short, Bloom is given a subject position, while Gerty is not.

Because the reader never gains direct access to Gerty's mind, it may be reasonable and straightforward to posit the voice as free indirect discourse. This reading maintains that the style, but not necessarily the content, is derived from Gerty's consciousness, that embedded in the third-person narrative are Gerty's thoughts and feelings, and though Gerty's voice is ultimately presented not by her, but by the narrator, it is still her voice.

A second, not unrelated difficulty in interpreting the first part of the episode is that our perception of Gerty is at every instant mediated through an array of popular discourses. Not only is her narrative written in overly sentimental prose reminiscent of Victorian-era popular fiction, it is also littered with cliché, euphemism, superstition, and obscure colloquialism. The fact of the

matter is that, even if we do situate the source of Gerty's narrative more or less within her consciousness, her voice is so clouded by references to external discourses that we cannot definitively reach the 'real Gerty.'

Possibilities

The secondary literature on this episode considers three primary interpretations: free indirect discourse, Bloomian projection, and omniscient narrator. Free indirect discourse maintains that the style, but not necessarily the content, is derived from Gerty's consciousness, that embedded in the third-person narrative are Gerty's thoughts and feelings, and though Gerty's voice is ultimately presented not by her, but by the narrator, it is still her voice.

What I call the theory of Bloomian projection claims that no 'real Gerty' exists in the narrative at all. Rather, the Gerty we read about is a projection of Bloom's imagination onto the Gerty MacDowell who sits on the beach. This claim decisively contradicts the notion that Gerty's mind conditions the narrative, and suggests instead that it is fully determined by Bloom's.

The third approach is the suggestion of an omniscient narrator satirizing Victorian style. I believe that, in themselves, these theories cannot adequately explain where the voice is coming from, why the voice includes copious references from other discourses, nor how both Gerty and Bloom project images of themselves and of one another into the narrative.

Problems

Jeri Johnson claims that the narrative is written in free indirect discourse that constructs Gerty according to a femininity defined by the masculine voyeur. In agreement with Joyce's statement that it all took place in Bloom's imagination, Johnson understands Gerty's thought as Bloom's fantasy. The issue with this interpretation is that, while classifying the narrative as

Gerty's free indirect discourse, which implies a certain amount of subjectivity and narrative control on her part, it claims at the same time that the discourse constructs Gerty as an object. Furthermore, a stringent interpretation of the narrative as Bloom's fantasy cannot account for certain empirical facts. For example, the narrator knows Gertrude MacDowell's full name. But, in the 'Ithaca' episode, Bloom shows that he does not know this when he recalls that "his magnetic face, form and address had been favourably received during the course of the preceding day by... a maid, Gertrude (Gerty, family name unknown)" (*U*, 17.1845-8). This, among other counterexamples, contradicts the notion that the encounter takes place entirely in Bloom's imagination.

On the other end of the spectrum, Margot Norris understands the narrator as a sort of 'phantom' constructed by Gerty's imagination that describes Gerty as she would like to be, or as she would like to be perceived by others; therefore, Gerty is her own fantasy.¹⁰ The narrator is described as a phantom because this term depicts the way in which a societal ideal of beauty and propriety haunts Gerty. She believes it exists but does not understand it; she only knows that she desires to achieve it.

Both of these interpretations conceive the narrative voice as a form of free indirect discourse. Timo Müller, however, argues that the episode is simply not written in this fashion. He insists that, because the narrative portrays Gerty as a bland, uneducated girl (one who could not produce such a voice and vocabulary), this prose must be the product of an omniscient narrator that parodies the Victorian style. Furthermore, the argument that the narration is shaped by Gerty's consciousness is, in fact, circular; it imputes a certain personality onto the impersonal

¹⁰ Norris, Margot. *Joyce's Web: The Social Unraveling of Modernism*: 169-70 Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992.

narrator, identifies that same personality within the narrative (i.e., in Gerty), and decides that Gerty therefore must be the narrator. Müller concludes that Joyce's actual aim in 'Nausicaa' is to critique the notion that an author does not have full control of the narrative.

Suzette Henke, in the first of two essays on the 'Nausicaa' episode, emphasizes a mutual projection between Bloom and Gerty.¹¹ In this view, Bloom not only uses Gerty for his erotic titillation, but also functions as an "erotic *tabula rasa*" onto which Gerty inscribes her own romantic fantasies. In her second essay, Henke expands this notion to say that Joyce's primary task in the episode is to expose and deride the societal fantasies of both sexes (NN, 97). Yet, keep in mind that the mutual projection of fantasy between Bloom and Gerty is undoubtedly asymmetrical, as Gerty remains confined within a masculine narrative that enforces her passivity. Gerty is effectively suspended as an object, whereas Bloom freely enters into the position of a subject in the later part of the episode.

Bernard Benstock further explains the asymmetry between Gerty and Bloom—not in terms of object and subject, but in terms of cover and content.¹² Whereas Gerty's prose attempts oblique explanation through polite euphemism, Bloom plainly states his first impressions. Understanding this distinction is crucial to interpreting not only the two voices, but also the transition between the two—which occurs as an interruption of a deliberative ellipsis by Bloom's abrupt revelation regarding Gerty's lameness. Benstock contends that Gerty's narration

¹¹ Henke, Suzette. "Gerty MacDowell: Joyce's Sentimental Heroine." In *Women in Joyce*. 132-49. Edited by Suzette Henke, Elaine Unkeless. Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press. 1982. (Hereafter, SH)

¹² Benstock, Bernard. *Narrative Con/Texts in Ulysses*: 163-4. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1991.

obscures painful realities (such as her own loneliness), while Bloom's tends to invent them without substantial evidence (such as the claim that Gerty is crippled).

In sum, in these accounts, free indirect discourse fails as an interpretation because the narrative, itself sophisticated in its own way, portrays Gerty as unsophisticated. It may be argued that the technique mediates Gerty's thoughts through a more sophisticated voice; however, this requires the reader to prefigure Gerty's consciousness prior to the consideration of evidence—effectively begging the question. Gerty does not have her own voice, as this interpretation suggests, but is given one. Second, the theory of Bloomian projection cedes Bloom with a questionable amount of authorial control. A stringent interpretation of the narrative as Bloom's fantasy cannot account for certain empirical facts. Third, the interaction between Gerty and Bloom is plainly characterized by deception and misperception; more is, in fact, concealed than is revealed. The narrator should therefore not be classified as omniscient. It is impersonal only in the sense that it is genderless (rather than being identifiable with a particular character in the narrative). Being prescribed and limited by certain presumptions about masculinity and femininity, the narrative is ideological. We might think of the narrator as its own character, a personality emerging from its surrounding social conditions.

CHAPTER IV

ATHENA AND JOYCE'S NARRATOR

This now leads us to our approach on the issue, by way of *The Odyssey*—the ancient Greek epic of which *Ulysses* is a modernist parody. Odysseus (Bloom's analogue) meets Nausicaa (Gerty's analogue) in book 6 after he is marooned on the island Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, who are Nausicaa's people.¹³ Nausicaa—under the influence of Athena, who appears to her in a dream and tells her she needs to wash her clothes in order to attract possible suitors—comes to the river with her handmaidens. After Odysseus wakes up, he persuades Nausicaa to lead him to her father, Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians. In book 7, Athena cloaks Odysseus in a “heavy mist” (*O*, 180) so that he can pass unseen through the city to the palace, although Odysseus remains unaware of his own disguise.

I propose that the narrator of Joyce's ‘Nausicaa’ can be best understood as an analogue to Athena, whose double-function—i.e., manipulating Nausicaa's dream and cloaking an unaware Odysseus—we will call ‘haunting.’ Athena (a female goddess) is in some versions of the myth born from the head or mind of Zeus (a male god), and she emerges from Zeus's skull fully adorned in armor and armed for battle—born for traditionally masculine activities. All in all, Athena, as an androgynous divinity who is born from a manly mind, represents Joyce's unsexed or transgendered narrator that disguises Society's masculine imagination from which it emerges.

¹³ Homer. *The Odyssey*: 168-80. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books. 1996. (Hereafter, *O* followed by the page number)

In order to illuminate this perspective, let us borrow from and reshape Margot Norris's notion of the narrator as a phantom constructed by Gerty's imagination (Norris, 169). Rather than originating in Gerty, the narrator is an ideological mist that emerges from social conditions within the novel. These conventions and expectations—unintelligible, unachievable ideals of beauty and propriety—haunt Gerty. They prescribe specific behaviors, and Gerty complies to, and even excels in, these prescriptions. Gerty, to borrow from Suzette Henke, "...tentatively constructs a filial subject position by subjugating herself to the rhetoric of her culture's dominant ideologies" (NN, 88). Social conventions briefly appear within the narrative itself, for example, when Gerty fantasizes about a non-sexual relationship with the married Bloom: "They would be just good friends like a big brother and sister without all that other in spite of the conventions of Society with a big ess" (*U*, 13.665-6). Gerty imagines violating several sets of social conventions or expectations in turn by befriending a married man without having an affair, but 'Society with a big ess' quickly narrates away from this possibility.

The social narrative situates Gerty and Bloom in relation to one another as product and consumer. Instead of resisting the role of a consumable product, Gerty, as Henke writes, "willingly colludes in her own victimization because she has already been seduced by a mass-market economy that defines her body as a vendable commodity" (NN, 95). Bloom, too, willingly assumes the role as consumer. They both become performers acting out a predetermined drama. They remain unaware that their whimsical and seemingly spontaneous performance is, in fact, prescribed and driven by social apparatuses.

The narrative is such that both Gerty and Bloom can only enter into it by translating themselves according to a prescribed code of femininity and masculinity. Bloom notes after the encounter that “it was a kind of language between us” (*U* 13.944). Gerald L. Bruns explains:¹⁴

“...[T]he language between Gerty and Bloom is metaphorical—a game that allows experience to occur in the absence of any warrant for it.... [Metaphorical statements] are statements that fit (or disclose) the world we inhabit without being logically true or false. Metaphorical statements cannot stand by themselves or on their own authority but require a special construction—a support language that remains implicit like a context or background, without which we might never make sense of anything” (Bruns, 581).

What we have identified as the source of the narrative, this ideological mist, operates as the narrator by providing a citational space into which Bloom and Gerty project their genders through various cultural signs. Social convention forms the implicit language that harbors the gendered constructions that Gerty and Bloom embody during their metaphorical conversation. For one, Gerty’s sensual performance, Dominika Bednarska argues, is a volitional complicity to her objectification for the sake of acquiring a subject position within the social discourse.¹⁵ “Gerty’s character,” she writes, “recognizes the ways in which female sexuality has been constructed, and she is determined to enter into that discourse...” (Bednarska, 78). In order to appear in the ideological mist (i.e., the narrative), Gerty must be dissipated and condensed into the sign of an erotic commodity.

The translation into sign conceals the interlocutors from one another and even from themselves. Their performance is a masquerade that would be rendered indecipherable without

¹⁴Bruns, G. L. “What’s in a Mirror: James Joyce’s Phenomenology of Perception.” In *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 49 no. 3, 2012, pp. 573-588. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/jjq.2012.0031

¹⁵Bednarska, Dominika. “A Crippled Erotic: Gender and Disability in James Joyce’s ‘Nausicaa’.” In *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 49 no. 1, 2011, pp. 73-89. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/jjq.2011.0115

the mediation of social conventions; as Bloom says, “See her as she is spoil all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music ” (*U* 13.855-6). Bednarska contends that the disguise of Gerty’s lameness, which she frantically promotes by excelling in formulas of femininity, is her method of entering the sexual discourse from which she is otherwise excluded because of her disability. Yet, more is concealed in her translation into erotic sign than her disability, which (if it is indeed factual and not merely Bloom’s rash conclusion in the dark) disqualifies her from the narrative no more than the simple nature of the performance. John Bishop¹⁶ notes that Gerty’s narrative which aspires to her singularity is at the same time written in an imitative, conventional style “heavy with implications of mass production” (Bishop, 205). The reality that Gerty could be replaced in her position by any other young woman so that any middle-aged man might ogle her from a distance proves that no essential Gerty or Bloom appears in the narrative, but what appears instead is a disguise of each.

Within the narrative itself, the encroaching twilight is symbolic of the omni-pervasive, yet hidden social conditions that color reality in an unnoticed, yet increasingly muddy hue. Bloom, when it is finally too dark to see clearly asks himself: “Were those nightclouds there all the time? Looks like a phantom ship. No. Wait. Trees are they. An optical illusion. Mirage. Land of the setting sun this” (*U*, 13.1076-8). Furthermore, twilight, the threshold between day and night, is the physical representation of the subliminal border that obscures and mutates cross-gender vision. Once the darkness at last takes Bloom’s vision, he is left only with his sense of smell, by which he perceives Gerty’s perfume (*U*, 13.1007).

¹⁶ Bishop, John. “A Metaphysics of Coitus in ‘Nausicaa.’” In “*Ulysses*”--*En-gendered Perspectives*, edited by Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum, 185-209. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.

The perfume, representing the invisible, yet poignant influence of an individual's expectation for another, surrounds Bloom and reminds him of his wife, Molly. Bloom knows and accepts that he is limited by the narrative of social convention to mere spiritual adultery with Gerty. To quote Henke once more: "[Bloom] retreats from the visual, oculo-centric economy dominant in the first section of the episode and, stimulated by the scent of Gerty's cheap heliotrope perfume, meditates on the sensuous pleasures of olfactory seduction" (NN, 96). Sight and smell, then, are the proper distinctions between the first and second narrative perspectives. Yet, the narrator remains 'Society with a big ess.' It is the darkness that in the end surrounds Bloom as he becomes unintelligible to himself. Bloom, here indistinguishable from the narrator, remains unwilling, or unable, to acknowledge what he is. With a stick he writes in the sand—to Gerty, or perhaps to no one at all—"I... AM. A." before slowly erasing it with his boot (*U*, 13.1255-68).

CONCLUSION

By allowing the results to guide the trajectory of the research, we have come to conclusions that do not answer the original question. However, the course of this research has shown that my first questions were not specific or critically engaged enough to yield honest insight into the text. Rather than penetrating the text, my first question of whether Joyce can be considered a phenomenologist nearly restrained me from asking critical questions. Because I was willing and encouraged to experiment with a multiplicity of approaches, this made for a rich engagement with the text and the secondary literature.

We have determined that the three interpretations of the narrative voice of ‘Nausicaa’ supplied by scholars are insufficient. Thus, we have posited that the voice finds its origin in the social conditions of the novel which generate the phenomenological horizons of the narrator and the characters. Joyce’s *Ulysses* can be understood as phenomenological fiction in that it limits what is depicted according to horizons of possibility and it patterns the existence of its characters by incessantly throwing them into these horizons. Every event or encounter, though unforeseeable and irreducible, occurs within a fixed paradigm that informs its intelligibility. We have shown this in microcosm by analyzing the narrative point of view in episode 13. Emerging from the conventions of Society, the narrator here is that into which Gerty and Bloom project caricatures of themselves and is thus that which obscures them from one another and even from themselves. This ideological mist saturates what they are, so that the reader is presented with a narrative featuring Victorian condensations of femininity and masculinity that are denoted by the names of Gerty and Bloom.

WORKS CITED

- Bednarska, Dominika. "A Crippled Erotic: Gender and Disability in James Joyce's 'Nausicaa'." In *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 49 no. 1, 2011, pp. 73-89. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/jjq.2011.0115
- Benstock, Bernard. *Narrative Con/Texts in Ulysses*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1991.
- Bishop, John. "A Metaphysics of Coitus in 'Nausicaa.'" In "*Ulysses*"--*En-gendered Perspectives*, edited by Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum, 185-209. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- Bruns, Gerald. L. "What's in a Mirror: James Joyce's Phenomenology of Perception." In *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 49 no. 3, 2012, pp. 573-588. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/jjq.2012.0031
- Henke, Suzette. "Gerty MacDowell: Joyce's Sentimental Heroine." In *Women in Joyce*. 132-149. Edited by Suzette Henke, Elaine Unkeless. Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press. 1982. (SH)
- . "Joyce's Naughty Nausicaa: Gerty MacDowell Refashioned." In *Papers on Joyce*, no. 10-11 (2004-2005): 85-104. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ejemplar/163669>. (NN)
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books. 1996.
- Johnson, Jeri. "Explanatory Notes." In *Ulysses*. 898-900. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. 2008.
- Joyce, James. *Selected Letters*. Edited by Richard Ellmann. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1976.
- . *Ulysses*. Edited by Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 1922.

Müller, Timo. "Gerty MacDowell, Poetess: Butler's *The Authoress of the Odyssey* and the Nausicaa Episode of *Ulysses*." In *Twentieth Century Literature* 55, no. 3 (2009): 378-92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25733419>.

Norris, Margot. *Joyce's Web: The Social Unraveling of Modernism*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992.

Power, Arthur. *Conversations with James Joyce*. Edited by Clive Hart. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 1974.

Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.