

Ulysses: Episode 11 Sirens

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Outline

1. *The Odyssey*
 - A. Connections to the epic
 - B. Comparative features
 - C. Similarities/differences
2. Events in the Episode
 - A. Specifically, discussing the setting and women
3. Molly & Boylan
 - A. Relationships with Bloom
 - B. Effects on others
4. Music



Odyssey Synopsis:

- Odysseus is forewarned by Circe of the Sirens
- Mythical women/nymphs/mermaids/creatures
- Their song is fatal
 - Singing to men, drawing their ships
- Shipwrecked on the rocks, dying of starvation
 - Heaps of bones on their land, flesh rotting on them
- Commands his men to plug their ears with wax
 - They tie Odysseus to the mast so he alone can hear it but not escape (hubris)
- Desperately strains against his bonds
- Odysseus and his men safely navigate past the Sirens

The Odyssey



Different renditions of Sirens



Barmaids

Bending, she nipped a peak of skirt above her knee. Delayed. Taunted them still, bending, suspending, with wilful eyes.

—*Sonnet!*

Smack. She set free sudden in rebound her nipped elastic garter smackwarm against her smackable a woman's warmhosed thigh.

—*La cloche!* cried gleeful Lenchan. Trained by owner. No sawdust there.

She smilesmirked supercilious (wep! aren't men?), but, lightward gliding, mild she smiled on Boylan.

—You're the essence of vulgarity, she in gliding said.

Boylan, eyed, eyed. Tossed to fat lips his chalice, drank off his chalice

Barmaids (cont'd)

- Attractive and flirtatious
- Tantalizing, capturing the attention of the men in the bar
 - 201-2: "That was exceedingly naughty of you, Mr. Dedalus told her and pressed her hand indulgently. Tempting poor simple males"
 - Recognizes but still susceptible
- Provocative, playful/frolicking
- Sirens imagery
 - 945: "the sea they think they hear. Singing. A roar... Well it's a sea"
 - 181-2: "O saints above! miss Douce said, sighed above her jumping rose. I wished I hadn't laughed so much. I feel all wet"
 - Allusion to Sirens (water, encouraging/overzealous)
 - 156-7: "By went his eyes. The sweets of sin. Sweet are the sweets. Of sin."
 - Understands the danger/sinfulness of the barmaids – alluring nonetheless
 - 1059 – "Hypnotized, listening. Eyes like that. She bent"

Bar Patrons as Sirens

- Dedalus:
 - 673: "a voice sang to them... Good, good to hear: sorrow from them each seemed to depart when first they heard"
 - Captivating, uplifting
- Dollard
 - 1145: "as good as ever you were"
 - 1148: "Most trenchant rendition of that ballad, upon my soul and honour it is"
 - Appreciated and beautiful
- All the men are singing, holding the bar in thrall and interest
 - Bloom listens too, but leaves before they are finished
- Molly Bloom as a Siren and contrasted with Penelope
 - TBD

Bloom and Odysseus

- Bloom/Odysseus can both relatively easily avoid confrontation
- Odysseus could just plug his ears like the rest of his men
 - Less risk (hubris)
 - Cannot bear to not hear the music
- Bloom could simply duck out the bar like he has each time he has seen Boylan in previous episodes
 - Bloom is similarly captivated by the music too
 - Like Odysseus, he wants to hear the music
 - Bloom lingers in the bar, watching/admiring the barmaids

Confrontation

- Less conflict relative to other obstacles in *Odyssey*
- Odysseus relatively easily maneuvers past a significant obstacle
 - Compared to Scylla, Polyphemus, etc.
 - All his men survive, the Sirens are ineffective
 - Even voluntarily puts himself in controlled danger (hubris)
 - Moves on to next obstacle on the way home

Confrontation

- Bloom finally faces Boylan
 - But doesn't speak to him
- Bloom writes a response to Martha
 - Doesn't seem to be as interested anymore
- The men are drinking and singing wildly
 - A blur of music and activity
 - Bloom does not join in
- Bloom admires the barmaids and sees the prostitute
 - Doesn't interact with either
- Question: Is there a lack of climax or confrontation when Bloom leaves the bar/when the episode ends?
 - Or, is this a step closer to confrontation than we've previously seen by Bloom? (Episode 12)

Events in the Bar



Characterization of Women

- Allusions to the sirens that suggest that women are dangerous and untrustworthy:
- Explicit comparisons of women to the sirens:
 - "... her maidenhair, her mermaid's" -p. 215
 - "... a swaying mermaid smoking mid nice waves." -p. 216
 - "... mermaid hair all streaming. ." -p. 237
- An allusion to the danger the sirens pose:
 - "I knew he was on the rocks, he said. The wife was playing the piano in the coffee place on Saturdays for a very trifling consideration and who was it gave me the wheeze she was doing the other business?" -p. 221

Characterization of Women

(cont'd)

- Women as temptresses, as enacting performances to beguile men:
 - "Bending, she nipped a peak of skirt above her knee. Delayed. Taunted them still, bending, suspending, with wilful eyes." -p. 219
- Phallic imagery, and again, women as temptresses bent on leading men to their downfall:
 - "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. With cock with a carra." -p. 235
- "A frowsy whore with black straw sailor hat askew came glazily in the day along the quay towards Mr. Bloom." -p. 23

Setting

- The ways in which the environment of the episode--the bar--informs the content:
- Fragmentary speech--particularly right at the very beginning of the episode--is suggestive of drunkenness, a failure to communicate in a meaningful way:
 - "Impertinthe thnthnthn" -p. 210—
 - Repeated several times; likely a corruption of "impertinent insolence."

Ormond Hotel



Setting (cont'd)

- Sexual innuendoes are made, which is fitting because the episode takes place in a bar, after all. The references to sex lend a rowdy, colloquial tone to the episode:
 - "All flushed (O!), panting, sweating (O!), all breathless."
 - "I wish I hadn't laughed so much. I feel all wet."--sexual but also references the sirens
 - "O, miss Douce! miss Kennedy protested. You horrid thing!
 - And flushed yet more (you horrid!), more goldenly."--all on p. 214
 - "Tenderness it welled: slow, swelling, full it throbbled. . .Throb, a throb, a pulsing proud erect!" --225
- "Consumed.Come."-p.227
 - Are the barmaids all-consuming? Is "Come" a reference to ejaculation?
- "Lidlydiawell"-p. 228
 - Is this a sexual joining of people, and of words, too?

Layering of Experience

- Layering of experiences, can be compared to the noisy chaos of the bar
- Leopold buys paper on which he will write to Martha, but at the same time, he notices Boylan's car, which triggers obsessive feelings about Molly and him.
 - Two sheets cream vellum paper one reserve two envelopes when I was in Wisdom Hely's wise Bloom in Daly's Henry Flower bought."
 - "He eyes and saw afar on Essex bridge a gay hat riding on a jaunting car. It is. Again. Third time. Coincidence."-p. 216-7.

Layering of Experience

(cont'd)

- Leopold is about to write to Martha when the song of the same name begins. The song also reminds him of the first time he met Molly. The two women always seemed to be interspersed.
 - "Martha" it is. Coincidence. Just going to write. Lionel's song. Lovely name you have. Can't write. Accept my little pres. Play on her heartstrings pursestrings too: She's a. I called you naughty boy. Still the same: Martha. How strange! Today."
- "First night when first I saw her at mat Dillon's in Terenure. Yellow, black lace she wore. Musical chairs. We two the last. Fate."-p. 226
- "I too. Last of my race. Milly young student. Well, my fault perhaps. No son. Rudy. Too late now. Or if not? If still." -p. 234
- The line from the song about The Croppy Boy being the last of his race causes Leopold to consider that he himself has no one who will pass on his family name.

Molly and Boylan



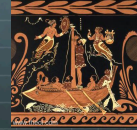
Above: Leopold and Molly Bloom

Molly (as a Siren)

- Molly is discussed and characterized in this and previous episodes
- Molly as a Siren
 - Her singing that draws men to her
- Molly's allure is emphasized by the other men
 - Particularly the men in the bar, like Lenehan
 - Always also talk about her voice
 - Seems that they are therefore drawn to her because of this
- Originally what drew Boylan to her
 - Linked to Molly's singing with his jingling car
 - He is the music that represents Molly
 - His car jingles as he leaves to go and see her

Bloom and Molly

- 180 – "Married to Bloom, to greaseabloom"
- Bloom seemingly less affected by her voice as the other men are
- His thoughts act as the ropes do for Odysseus
 - His thoughts of the death of his son
- Memories of when he and Molly were happy
 - Contrasted with her current attitude toward him
- Molly as a contrast to Penelope



Boylan

- Bloom follows Boylan to the pub
 - 457: "Bloom heard a jing, a little sound. He's off. Light sob ob breath Bloom sighed"
- Boylan arrives at Ormund
 - 340 – "See the conquering hero comes"
- Bloom arrives
 - 341-2 – "warily walking, went Bloom, unconquered hero"
- Rather than run away from him, actually gets up the courage to follow him
 - Uncharacteristic of Bloom, has ducked out whenever he has seen Boylan
- Molly and Boylan consume his thoughts
 - Following him seems to make this worse
 - Thinks about Molly throughout the chapter
 - Emotional when Boylan leaves
- Martha now bores him
 - Molly has an outside relationship of her own
 - One that is far more immediate than Bloom's is with Martha

Music



Music

- Bar comes alive with sound
 - 159-62: "They threw young heads back, bronze gigglegold, to let freely their laughter, screaming, your other, signals to each other, high piercing notes. Ah, panting, sighing, sighing, ah, fordone, their mirth died down." "One rapped on a door, one tapped with a knock, did her knock Paul de Kock with a loud proud knocker with a cock carracarrarra cock. Cockcock." (986-988)
- 668-9: "Braintipped, cheek touched with flame, they listened feeling that flow endearing over skin limbs human heart soul spine."

Music (cont'd)

- Jingling and jangling - lyrical language
 - "It is a kind of music I often thought when she. Acoustics that is. Tinkling. Empty vessels make the most noise. Because the acoustics, the resonance changes according as the weight of the water is equal to the law of falling water. Like those rhapsodies of Liszt's, Hungarian, gipsyeyed. Pearls. Drops. Rain. Diddleiddle addeaddle ooddeoodle. Hissss. Now. Maybe now. Before." (980-985)

Repetition of Sounds

- Repetition - use of refrains
- 156-157: "The sweets of **an**. Sweet are the sweets. Of **an**."
- 190: "The sweets of **an**."
- 1040: "The sighing voice of sorrow sang. His **an**."
- 1087-1088: "naughty Henry with letter for Mady, with sweets of **an** with frillies for Raoul with met him pike hoses..."
- 815-819: "George Lidwell told her really and truly; but she did not believe. First gentlement told Mina that was so. She asked him was that so. And second tankard told her so. That That was so. Miss Douce, miss Lydia, did not believe: miss Kennedy, Mina, did not believe."

The Math of Music

- The mathematics of music (229)
- 830-831; 834-837:
- "Numbers it is. All music when you come to think. Two multiplied by two divided by half is twice one. Vibrations: chords those are...Museumathematics. And you think you're listening to the etherial. But suppose you said it like: Martha, seven times nine minus x is thirtyfive thousand. Fall quite flat. It's on account of the sounds of it."

Music Almost Anywhere

- 962-964: "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."
- 1052-1055: "What do they think when they hear music? ...That's music too. Not as bad as it sounds. Tootling. Brasses braying asses through uptrunks. Doublebrasses helpless, gashes in their sides. Woodwinds mooing cows. Semigrand open crocodile music hath jaws. Woodwind like Goodwin's name."

END of Sirens

