

## **“The Appetite as Voice”: Gerty, Food, and Anorexia**

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### **Abstract**

One's dietary habits are never simply an individual behavior, but rather a reflection of the interaction between self and sociocultural forces. In this respect, one's dietary practices serve as a language to express one's relationship with the outer world. A woman's appetite is thus an important expression of her identity, which had been strictly regulated and controlled in the Victorian era. In *Ulysses*, Gerty's attitudes toward food represent the pathological relationship between women and eating within the anorexic milieu of Victorian culture, a culture which associated femininity with parsimonious appetite, debility, and spirituality, hence contributing to the prevalence of anorexia nervosa as a female disorder in Victorian times. Gerty may not be a confirmed case of anorexia, but her dietary behavior reveals several symptoms of the disorder, which was related to both gender and class identity. Shaped by Victorian bourgeois culture, Gerty's appetite suggests the widespread impact of anorexia nervosa on females.

### **Keywords**

*Ulysses*, Gerty MacDowell, appetite, anorexia nervosa, fasting, femininity