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Ulysses at 100

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Ulysses at 100

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Featuring Chris Ackerley, Vitor Alevato do Amaral, M. Teresa Caneda-Cabrera, Bradley D. Clissold, Luca Crispi, Stephen Dilks, Katherine Ebury, Cheryl Herr, Scott W. Klein, Onno Kusters, Peter Kuch, Ronan McDonald, Vicki Mahaffey, Katy Mullin, Stephen Ross, Enrico Terrinoni, David Thorburn, Joseph Valente, and Jolanta Wawrzyszka

The year 2022 marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Ulysses*.

The following reflections express different sentiments and thoughts about the novel that gave T. S. Eliot “all the surprise, delight, and terror that I can require.”¹

Homage to *Ulysses*: Beckett’s 110 Aspirins

Chris Ackerley

The lasting joy of *Ulysses* is its infinite capacity to tease. This note offers what Samuel Beckett might call a *teaser*, a tiny demented particular that makes an act of private homage to the *maestro di color che sanno*, to which I add a like triviality of my own. Towards the end of *Murphy*, Cooper tells Neary that a previous wife, Ariadne née Cox, is dead, having precipitated herself into the void by agency of 110 aspirins. Ariadne in Greek mythology, the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, is deserted by Theseus *auf* Naxos, and later kills herself. As such, she is a *type* of the deserted wife, aware of but undeterred by another, also abandoned by Neary, alive and presumably well, in Calcutta. But I ask: why 110 aspirins? An angel of the Lord came to my assistance, to effect a small epiphany, at lunch in a sawdust restaurant, with a creased and shabby menu that turned “~~€OLD MEAT SALAD~~” into “OLD CAT SALAD,” to conjure instanter Leopold Bloom’s misapprehension of “POST NO BILLS” in the mitey cheese chapter of *Ulysses* as “POST 110 PILLS.” Kino’s 11/- trousers, that buoyant advertisement visible to the canvassing eye, *Boylan’s trousers are down again*, Bloom’s “think no more” of that, the possibility of VD. And all is revealed.

But in retrospect.... In the *Little Review* pre-publication of “Lestry-

1 T.S. Eliot, “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,” *The Dial* (November 1923), p. 480.

gonians" (Jan. 1919, 29-30), the fear of VD ("loosen a button") was present, but there was no "POST 110 PILLS" injunction, and the 11/- trousers advertised on the skiff moored in the Liffey were not Kino's but Hyam's. Another small problem: it's Beckett's Belacqua who observes at the outset of "A Wet Night" that "Hyam's trousers are down again." Not Bloom. As I reconstruct the moment, the more convinced I am that Belacqua's comment and vague memories of the *Little Review* variant merged to create the crucial virtual link, "*Boylan's trousers are down again,*" which is not in *Ulysses* though its ghostly presence was, for me, at that moment in the restaurant. Beckett added the detail to *Murphy* not for the common reader but as private homage to Joyce; yet there is a curious satisfaction, call it the rationalist prurit, the intellectual urge to scratch the spot that itches, in resolving recondite anomalies. Which is not to disagree with Beckett, who insisted to Alan Schneider (1957) that his work was a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended, *ho no*), and those who preferred to 'ave 'eadaches 'among the 'overtones should provide their 'own 'aspirates. As for the "mity cheese": Bloom's pun reflects an awareness of the recent (August 1903) sensational short documentary film, *The Cheese Mites*, which was filmed through a microscope and depicts a gentleman put off his similar lunch when he holds up a magnifying glass suddenly to see the microscopic mites in his cheese sandwich. It is well worth the view: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wR2DystgByQ>

—University of Otago

The Enduring Relevance of Ulysses

Vitor Alevato do Amaral

Ulysses remains relevant because it is a positive literary work. It ends with a sonorous, erotic, bodily, uncensored "Yes." The novel that exhibits life's vicissitudes as they happen in one day (or a few hours less than this) leads us to the climax in that liberating word. And for all the complexity of *Ulysses* and the semantic possibilities found by Joyce critics in that capitalized "Yes," readers in general are invited to leave the novel to the sound of an encouraging message that echoes every morning to them, as if every new day were another June 17th. Yes, *Ulysses* does have a message. Or I should rather say "messages." It is not only an intricate intertext appealing to academics, but a book of fun, fit to any hands, eyes, ears: it resonates in any body open to it.

Joyce made *Ulysses*, and we have continued making *Ulysses* (and

Ulysse, Ulisse, Ulises, Ulisses, etc.) over the past 100 years. It is too big a work to belong to one language. It belongs to its readers anywhere and in any language. Let no one believe that the original *Ulysses* is (im)purer than any of its translations, that it is not a readers' (translators', scholars') construction. The establishment of any method or prerequisite for reading it is absurd. We make *Ulysses* by reading it creatively, and the novel has endured for 100 years because we continue doing so. As the result of a whole new way of writing, *Ulysses* has taught us a whole new way of reading. I believe that anyone who has really paid attention to the novel has become a different reader of literature.

—*Fluminense Federal University*

Ulysses at 100: The Shelter of the Unhoused Wanderer

M. Teresa Caneda-Cabrera

I write these lines after the invasion of Ukraine, in February 2022, while we are witnessing in Europe an ongoing war that is causing increasing numbers of casualties, destruction and displacement. The influx of refugees has originated one of the largest humanitarian crises in our recent history. Inevitably, this crisis calls to mind previous migrations and movements of refugees and, thus, re-inscribes the literary texts that resonate with “the memory of these migrations” within a new context in which the past becomes exceptionally and painfully contemporary (*U* 17.1916). “*Ulysses*, Trieste-Zürich-Paris 1914-1921” reads today as a heavy-laden epitaph on Joyce’s masterpiece which reflects back on the cyclical nightmare of (European) history. As T. S. Eliot expressed it, at a time when the war had wasted the essence of a cohesive civilization, which had been reduced to fragments and ruins, Joyce’s *Ulysses* represented, both in its form and content, the process of dislocation which affected a whole culture. It was only through a self-conscious mock-epic which parodied the master narrative of old unifying myths and languages that a modern writer such as Joyce would find a way of giving a shape to the futility of his contemporary age. Joyce, moreover, extends his exploration of disruption and dislocation to his unheroic wanderer Leopold Bloom, a representative “immigrant” figure: a second generation Irish-Hungarian Jew who is still perceived to be a foreigner by his contemporaries.

As is well known, Joyce wrote a substantial part of *Ulysses* displaced as a World War I refugee in neutral Zürich, the city where he was to return seeking refuge again and where he died on 13 January 1941. Anyone visiting

the place where Joyce is buried in the Fluntern Cemetery will discover, only a few steps away, the grave of writer and Nobel Prize winner Elias Canetti, a descendent of Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century. Born in 1905 in Bulgaria, where he spent his first six years speaking Ladino, the medieval Spanish the Jews had taken to the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain, Canetti turned to Vienna as the mental capital of all the other places where he had lived (Manchester, Lausanne, Zürich, Berlin), and it was from there that he emigrated to England fleeing from Nazism in 1938, via Paris, after Hitler's invasion of Austria. Exposed to numerous languages early in his life—Ladino, Bulgarian, German, English, and French—Canetti noted that “a language is a place”; to live was for him to exist between languages and places, thus being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, perpetually (dis)placed.

Joyce was, like Canetti, one of those exiles and emigrés whose impermanent, extraterritorial existence between languages and cultures provided him with a broader background against which to examine notions of origin and belonging. As a fragmentary, dialogical, hybrid, and polyglot text, *Ulysses* speaks of Joyce's compelling concern with the experiences of displacement and foreignness even when writing about his homeland. Foreignness is celebrated in *Ulysses* with Joyce parodying and mocking a large range of styles, registers, and speech patterns and, thus, avoiding to express himself in one single language. In its panoramic one-day flânerie through Dublin, *Ulysses* features a dozen foreign languages not only to build up motifs and themes but also for the purpose of characterization. Significantly, Leopold Bloom, cast as an Irish outsider in “Cyclops,” when his ambivalent identity is challenged by the Citizen's narrow perspective, appears later in “Ithaca” experiencing a moment of communion with Stephen as they both join in their concerns with the “points of contact” (*U* 17.745–46) between Hebrew and Irish: “What fragments of verse from the ancient Hebrew and ancient Irish languages were cited with modulations of voice and translation of texts by guest to host and host to guest?” (*U* 17.724–26). The desire to host and welcome the foreign *other* through language is also present in “Penelope,” through Molly's fantasies of a “linguistic affair” with Stephen: “I can tell him the Spanish and he can tell me the Italian” (*U* 18.1476). Likewise, in “Calypso,” Bloom imagines Molly as the heterogeneous outcome of an exotic mixture of foreign nationalities, a sort of hybrid translation which hosts a vast array of geographies and languages: “Spain, Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, the Levant” (*U* 4.211–212). Molly, for her part, evokes memories of her *other* past through fragmented and faded verbal reminiscences of her former command of the foreign tongue, Spanish, which are welcome, untranslated, both disrupting and

simultaneously embracing the dominant language of her stream of thought: “Como está usted muy bien gracias y usted see I haven’t forgotten it all I thought I had” (*U* 18.1471-73).

As a writer who spent most of his life speaking acquired languages and having to translate himself constantly when he moved across different European territories, Joyce calls attention in *Ulysses* to the inscription of the foreign in the native culture through the disruption of hierarchies and the estrangement of dominant values on different levels. In his early review, Eliot highlights the significance of *Ulysses* to its specific time and to the particular conditions of the modern age immediately before and after World War I. Yet, fate has had it that one hundred years later, at a time of unprecedented mass migration, exile, and enforced displacement, *Ulysses*, which was once the shelter of the modern unhoused wanderer, speaks powerfully today about the contemporary condition of homelessness whereby the enforced displacement of (foreign) asylum-seekers and refugees has become a state of being.

—*University of Vigo*

Quotidian Signs Taken in Joycean Wonder: A Note on Appreciative Values

Bradley D. Clissold

The 100-year *appreciation* of *Ulysses*—in both senses of *appreciation* as a recognition of its fictional merits and as a steady accrual of increasing literary values over time—highlights the novel as a type of investment, one made by Joyce (and his readers) with ever-proliferating returns. Joyce was a literary cognitive theorist who mapped patterns of mind function through the narrative language of *Ulysses*, especially the associative logics occurring self-consciously inside the heads of his embedded readers (“Bloom-hose dark eye read Aaron Figatner’s name. Why do I think Figather? Gathering figs I think.”). As this example evidences, *Ulysses* is a reader-response novel that repeatedly stages scenes of interpretive reception through its three principal readers, Stephen, Bloom, and Molly, and in doing so simultaneously teaches its own readers how to see/read/interpret Joycean. Indeed, Joyce was a constant prober of allusive depths in his daily life and an innovative creator of them in *Ulysses* where he defamiliarizes day-in-the-life Dublin to showcase the extraordinary lurking beneath the routine veneers of the ordinary. This literary combination of subject matter focusing specifically on the habitual everyday made strange, coupled with the novel’s evolving experimental forms and

its encyclopedic referential reach, profoundly increases the interpretive surface area available to readers, as well as the potential rewards for reading Joycean. However, what exactly does it mean to read in a Joycean manner? Rereading *Ulysses* answers this question as the novel consistently challenges conventional reading practices (especially the search for definitive interpretive closure) until these practices attune to the constant play of language, representation, and signification that characterizes the Joycean. This is why Jacques Derrida saw Joyce as a modernist predecessor he could subsequently shape and influence through deconstruction. He also famously insisted that there could never exist a Joycean “expert,” except maybe Joyce himself. While it would be difficult fun to try to define just what the Joycean is by way of quirky coincidences that produce juxtapositions of communicative significance, or what the Joycean means via the ludic concept of Derridean *différance*, to convey the concept, let me instead offer the following idiosyncratic examples from some of my own experiences seeing Joycean.

In the Spadina Station of the Metro, I experienced one of my first moments of Joycean awareness while reading an advertisement with the unfinished sentence, “If you’re the type of person who likes to read subway posters to the very end, we’re afraid you’re going to be very....” This advertisement, advertising advertising space in the Toronto underground, is one that Bloom as an ad canvasser would have appreciated (“Something to catch the eye”): it employs the modernist defamiliarization of everyday language through sentence fragmentation, and it provides an open-ended opportunity for interpretive closure through finding various words that fill the elliptical omission, such as “disappointed,” but that strategically are not limited to just one option. My Joycean sensibilities likewise trigger when I learn about anti-grams like “customers” (which remixes anagrammatically into “store scum”) and “a volunteer fireman” (which rearranges into “I never run to a flame”), or when I read a furniture sales advertisement offering at reduced price a bed-frame, a headboard, a boxspring and mattress, complete with “one night stand free.” I sense the Joycean perversely percolating in university campus posters advertising “Study Abroad” programs (“yes I said yes I will Yes”), as well as in the misprinted souvenir cups and plates that “Commemorate the Platinum Jubby of Queen Elizabeth II” instead of “Jubilee”—a timely typographical error offering symbolic postcolonial resistance by undermining the British monarchy’s authority (and seriousness) with a carnivalesque celebration of a seventy-year-old boob. Through the same interpretive Joycean filter, I listened to the story about the ex-British serviceman who had acted as a double-agent spying on his fellow British soldiers in India. Years later, when the Queen sent him a letter formally announcing that he had been award-

ed the Order of the British Empire for what he now considered shameful military work, he wrote down next to the acronym OBE, “Other Bastard’s Efforts,” and mailed the modified letter back to the Palace posthaste by way of refusal (“clamn dever”). When I experience these language-based, often ironic, epiphanies, I know I am seeing the Joycean at work and, most importantly, at play. Once committed to seeing the Joycean vibrating all around you in daily life, always committed (and joycefully so). In fact, it becomes *Ueslysses* to fight against it.

—*Memorial University of Newfoundland*

New Insights into The Genesis of *Ulysses*

Luca Crispi

Eighteen copybook drafts of *Ulysses* were discovered at the start of the twenty-first century that have profoundly altered our understanding of how Joyce wrote the novel and have thereby redefined our understanding of how to read the work in process and in print. When the so-called Quinn “Circe” manuscript appeared at auction in 2000, no new drafts of *Ulysses* had come to light in over forty years. It was a remarkable discovery, but it wasn’t really a surprise; all we had to do was take Joyce at his word when he claimed to have rewritten the episode nine times. The National Library of Ireland’s acquisition of the manuscript for one million dollars made international headlines. The following year, another newly discovered *Ulysses* manuscript came up for auction. It was a complex draft of “Eumaeus” that Joyce had started in Trieste and continued to rewrite in Paris; the various strata of writing could often be distinguished by the differently colored inks Joyce used. It was acquired by an anonymous collector, making it the only *Ulysses* draft in private hands. But nothing could have prepared the Joyce world for the enormous cache of manuscripts that the NLI acquired by private treaty from the Léon family via Sotheby’s London for 12.6 million euros. The amount may seem extraordinary, but so too is the collection’s research potential. Among much else, it contains sixteen previously-unknown drafts of various episodes of *Ulysses*, thereby doubling the number of holograph manuscripts of the novel known to survive. Some of them fill in gaps in what we already knew about the genesis of *Ulysses*; for example, we now have a relatively complete manuscript record of how Joyce wrote “Oxen of the Sun.” But there were many exceptional surprises as well. A new manuscript proves that Joyce had written a version of “Sirens” much earlier than we had previously thought, and with-

out the episode's distinctive stylistic innovations. There is also a fragmentary version of "Proteus" that confirms that Joyce usually began by writing non-sequential blocks of finely wrought texts that he only subsequently assembled into the narratives that are familiar to us from the published work. Four new notebooks have also substantially extended what we know about how Joyce constructed his texts from decontextualized lexical units that he gathered from his eclectic readings and stored away, sometimes for years, before they entered the textual stream of *Ulysses*.

But the most dramatic change in our understanding of the genesis of *Ulysses* is focused on the three "Nostos" episodes. Along with the new "Eumaeus" draft, we now have earlier drafts of both the "Ithaca" and "Penelope" episodes. Together they have transformed previous hypotheses about Joyce's creative practice and the evolution of his aesthetic vision of the work. While he only wrote these manuscripts in Paris, they prove that he had already conceived the experimental styles of final episodes much earlier, presumably in 1916 as he claimed to John Quinn. They have prompted us to sweep aside the simplistic and reassuringly reductive view that *Ulysses* progressed steadily from an earlier to a middle, and then finally to a late stage. We now have a more complex understanding of the genesis of *Ulysses* as an interwoven process of incremental phases, in which a narrative or stylistic advance in one episode could directly impact the development of a seemingly unrelated scene or episode. By showing us what the work was at various intermediary stages, Joyce's manuscripts also allow us to explore what *Ulysses* could have been, and thereby better understand what it in fact became. Genetic literary criticism embraces a multiplicity of perspectives and will continue to foster a broad range of readings and interpretations for the next hundred years and more.

—*University College Dublin*

***Ulysses* and Civil Rights**

Stephen Dilks

Joyce began *Ulysses* in 1907 but did the main work of composition between 1916 and 1922. Setting aside the Homeric scheme, we see that the book explores Ireland's consciousness as it negotiated civil rights in the face of oppressive colonial, nationalist, and patriarchal definitions of identity between the Easter Rising and the formation of the Irish Free State. Through Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom, Joyce expresses a comprehensive understanding of Ireland's potential as it prepared to escape British

rule, suggesting ways for Ireland and the Irish to define themselves beyond rigid dualisms, emphasizing post-Independence liberation from ALL oppressive structures, not just those represented by Britain. This is why we still read and teach the book.

In the first section of the book, Dedalus questions the authority of the Roman Catholic church, rejects Haines, an English Hibernophile, refuses to be a lackey for Deasy, an anti-Semitic apologist for the Protestant invasion of Ireland, and subverts the English language in response to his immediate context, a beach that invokes the pre-English formation of Dublin. He later turns Nelson's pillar into a comic celebration of "Dear Dirty Dublin," undermines Shakespeare as a "capitalist shareholder," shows disdain for "uninvited" colonial soldiers, and chooses homelessness over the Martello Tower, a physical symbol of "the imperial British state." Stephen thus asserts his agency as an Irishman and a "freethinker," refusing to be pinned down, emancipating himself from religious, colonial, domestic, pecuniary, and intellectual bonds.

For his part, Leopold spends the day dealing with *ad hominem* attacks that range from the unintentional to the vitriolic to the violent. But, faced with slights and insults and anger that expose the colonial legacy of insecurity and racism, he persists in espousing pacifist, inclusionary understandings of personal, social, and national identity: "A nation is the same people living in the same place." Because he models a free-flowing identity, Bloom is a threat to those who live according to neat identifications, from Menton, with his casual disdain ("What is he?"), to "the citizen," with his exclusionary Fenianism (Bloom is "neither fish nor flesh"). By following the "stream of life" and accepting that "No one is anything," Bloom is free from imposed categories, surrendering himself to whatever happens, whether marital betrayal, insults to his father and his heritage, erotic flirting, a surrealist trial, or destructive drunkenness. Free of imposed categories, Bloom inspires the Irish Free State to free itself from the damaging, prejudicial stereotypes that tend to characterize postcolonial politics.

Molly is more dangerous than either Stephen or Leopold because she is even more emancipatory. Molly's unabashed confessions and urges directly challenge the strangely purist and exclusionary mythology of "Cathleen Ni Houlihan" ("no strangers in our house"). With her sacred femininity and rigid nationalism, this iconic Irish character doomed the new nation to prescriptive and restrictive laws designed to repress women and those defined as non-Irish." Embracing her sexuality in ways that are decades ahead of her peers, Molly demonstrates a level of personal, linguistic, and social freedom that breaks extant codes creating the potential for Ireland to be an emancipated space defined by interculturalism and transnationalism.

—*University of Missouri–Kansas City*

Ulysses and ‘Ordinary’ People

Katherine Ebury

While the popular culture and newspaper discourse version of *Ulysses* is as a forbidding work, in which reading the book is more like a marathon or more like medicine, in its centenary year I have been thinking of how the book endures because of the relationships it facilitates between people. Joyce’s book in itself is generous and full of warm feeling, giving generations of readers the (true) impression that everyday life has meaning and that the way we treat each other matters. My students sometimes tell me that the book might be “elitist” as part of their initial struggles with it, and I fully understand that first response. But as a first-generation university student and now a first-generation academic, I can tell them what the book has meant to me as a way into history in which “small fry” people, like my own family since time immemorial, are valued and seen in their rich interconnectedness. While Joyce’s own life was far from ordinary, the achievement of *Ulysses*, for me, is the way it includes, the way it reaches out and makes new relationships between ordinary readers and helps us understand our lives better. As Stephen reflects in “Scylla,” “Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves.”

Bloomsday is of course the monument to all that Joyce means to us, but for those of us who care about the book, the interpersonal connection that I’m talking about happens every day of the year. In the past few years, we have sadly lost many excellent senior scholars of *Ulysses*, and I am always touched to see the heartfelt tributes to them recording their place in the Joyce community—and I know that this book has governed my most important friendships and relationships for nearly twenty years. I know too that it will continue to do so for the rest of my life. In that sense, the centenary is very special, but so is every ordinary day.

—*University of Sheffield*

The Impact that *Ulysses* Has on People

Cheryl Herr

Thinking about *Ulysses* in the context of its centenary has whisked me back to my first encounter with the book, as a graduate student in Weldon Thornton's seminar. That long ago, there was certainly less Joyce scholarship to revel in, and I recall wanting to read everything that had been written about *Ulysses*, to know that material intimately, to be able to draw on all the earlier insights while developing my emergent sense of how this big fiction works. The earliest writers on Joyce seemed to me adventurous and kind of heroic: hadn't Tindall taught a class using a single copy chained to a dictionary stand? I've continued, from time to time, to impose on myself the discipline of returning to previous phases of Joyce scholarship with an eye to what is being reinvented and what is arguably new. For me, that critical dialectic helps to animate the text, to keep it shimmering and sparkling. Then there's a further dynamic that's often been mentioned by Joyceans—the way that *Ulysses* plays with the reader's lifeworld experiences. At first, we might feel cowed by Joyce's erudition, but soon we glimpse ourselves in what Stephen, Bloom, and Molly think and do. Owing to Joyce's distinctive deployment of semantic, syntactic, and other ambiguities—a strategy that stimulates much of the textual phenomenology—a reader often develops an uncanny relation to the text and finds that their experiences transform what's happening in Joyce's world.

For me, a big part of the fascination of *Ulysses* has been that we think we have grasped it, and *then* it eludes our grasp in unpredictable ways. It's not just that we ask new questions and discover new topics to probe, although that surely and gloriously happens. *Ulysses*, this epic of the body, uncannily exerts the energy of a muscular living entity that toys with the reader just beyond but also in tandem with the bodies of scholarship and life experiences that we build up and pass through. The narrative continues to reinvigorate what's written about it, both in the distant past and in 2022. *Ulysses* and its sometimes pompous, sometimes wrongheaded, sometimes acute progeny have amassed both a lineage and a stake in all its readers' futures.

—*University of Iowa*

Ulysses and Aesthetic Traditions

Scott W. Klein

Readers come to *Ulysses* through different aesthetic frameworks. Some understand the novel as a high-water mark in Irish literature and culture. Others think of it as the greatest 20th century “English” novel. I first came to *Ulysses* from a third perspective, with interests in both the great European realist novels of the 19th century and in the 20th century avant-gardes across the arts—the music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, the painting of the Cubists, the theater of the absurd. *Ulysses* appealed to all of these apparently opposed interests. Like the novels of Balzac and Dostoyevsky, *Ulysses* creates a fully-fleshed imaginative city, a Dublin as variegated and driven by individual economics and philosophic concerns as the preceding authors’ Paris and Petersburg. At the same time, its linguistic invention and virtuosity—as well as its incursions into fantasy in chapters such as “Cyclops” and “Circe”—allied it with some of the stylistic and poly-stylistic innovations emerging in Joyce’s contemporary continental Europe. *Ulysses* drew from these innovations, providing impetus as well for much later twentieth-century painting, music, and literature that would, often with explicit acknowledgement to Joyce’s influence, appear after its publication.

In this regard *Ulysses* may be unique in literary history. It stands at a crossroads between two apparently opposed aesthetic traditions. It looks backwards—to the classical epic, to the nineteenth-century novel—while also looking forward to the possibilities inherent in the use of radical style, not just in narrative but in the arts writ large. Remarkably, it manages to look both backwards and forwards without subordinating one of its Janus faces to the other. Rather than placing realism and stylistic innovation at loggerheads, it uses stylistic extremity as a tool towards the construction of its novelistic vision of nuanced human psychology. *Ulysses* has endured, I think, because it manages to blend these often-contradictory aims: like no other novel, it appeals both to readers who seek a traditional novelistic narrative, as well as to those who seek the aesthetic pleasures of provocative formal innovation—and implicitly suggests that there is no real distinction between the two.

—Wake Forest University

“Give Us a Squint at that Literature, Grandfather” (*U* 16.1669): On First Looking into Joyce’s *Ulysses*

Onno Kusters

Too much has been made of the Homeric backdrop to *Ulysses* as a starting point for first-time readers in trying to understand what’s going on in the novel. Too often the term “Homeric parallels” is invoked in linking characters to models originating in the *Odyssey*. For first-time readers of *Ulysses*—and let’s face it, most first-time readers of *Ulysses* will remain first-time readers of *Ulysses*—the Linati and Gorman-Gilbert schemas are a hindrance rather than a help: they help in losing sight of the novel-as-a-novel. Particularly Joyce’s insistence on suggesting echoes of Homer in the minutest details of *Ulysses* (Bloom’s cigar, say; the elastic band he plays [with] in “Sirens”) notwithstanding, for the uninitiated—and increasingly, particularly young first-time readers of *Ulysses* are “uninitiated” in Homer—the Homeric texture informing our text can be discouraging rather than heartening. So. “[L]et us have a bit of fun first” (*U* 18.8-9).

“Let us sit down somewhere and discuss” (*U* 15.4434): first-reading *Ulysses*, becoming acquainted with its endless and always unfulfilled, always incomplete and therefore always spectacular riches, is best experienced by (dare I say simply?) *reading* it: by reading it aloud, in company of others, and naively² as a follow-up to and expansion of *Portrait* (Season 2; and introducing a New Hero!) and to some extent *Dubliners* (fifteen interconnected short stories). A dictionary and an occasional, always wary glance at a decent collection of restrained annotations will help in case of stuckness or lostness, but only if we stick to that “occasional.” *Ulysses* itself is *Ulysses*’ first-time reader’s best teacher. As “more experienced” (*U* 16.777) readers, we should urge those first-time readers to embrace (and retrospectively arrange) what at that moment in time, moment of reading, the novel offers *to them*, including their own (which is fundamentally not unlike our own) regular incomprehension of what it offers to them.

At times, first-time readers of Joyce will become students of Joyce (guilty as charged, and life-sentenced). Then, sure, bring in, bring on! the “allembracing give us this day our daily” *Odyssey* (*U* 16.1237-38).

Ulysses, in 1922 as in 2022 “the book sensation of the year,” famously, frequently points to itself (*U* 15.2424): “The most beautiful book that has come out of our country in my time. One thinks of Homer” (*U* 9.1164-65).

2 Spot the perverted original.

One can't help thinking of Homer, of course, coming across a book entitled *Ulysses*—but it doesn't necessarily help (if only because the novel isn't entitled *Odysseus*). "All heartily welcome" (*U* 8.16): that's more like it. Everybody being a literary cove in their own small way, this old specimen in the corner's advice would be to bring a pair of greenish goggles, hook them very slowly over your nose and both ears, paw the novel open, and pore upon Lord only knows what.

—*Utrecht University*

How Our Understanding of *Ulysses* Has Changed Over the Past 100 Years

Peter Kuch

It was T. S. Eliot who offered one of the earliest and, in the event, one of the most influential responses to *Ulysses*. Writing in the November 1923 issue of *The Daily*, Eliot praised Joyce for devising a method for organizing what he called the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy" that was "contemporary history." He named it "the mythic method"—a narrative technique that enabled Joyce to maintain "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity." In general terms, this "mythic method" provides a convenient checklist for reviewing how our understanding of *Ulysses* has changed over the past 100 years. "Continuous" has been replaced by discontinuous. "Parallel" has become augmented by parallax, parataxis, and paralipsis. And "antiquity," in the sense of analogy and allusion with reference to the Homeric, has been expanded to take in anachrony, the archaic and the anagogic. But the term that has yielded the most change in our understanding is "contemporaneity"—both in the sense of "The state or fact of belonging to or existing at the same time or period" and "The fact or quality of belonging to, or being suitable for or relevant to, the present time; modernity" (*OED*). As Richard Ellmann observed, "we are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries," not only in the sense of 16 June 1904, but also of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they were lived and experienced in Ireland and Europe. Hence, biography has significantly increased our understanding of the complex interaction between text and life; narratology of the ways *Ulysses* has been written and can be read. Along the way, we have been introduced to transnational Joyce, genetic Joyce, post-colonial Joyce, dialogic Joyce, feminist Joyce, eco Joyce, and diasporic Joyce. Histories of popular culture, advertising, music, politics, religion, sexuality, film, language, nation-

alism, publishing, science, censorship, readership, critical reception, Jewish identity, and Irish marital relations have also amplified and enriched our understanding not only of specific passages but of the work as a whole. But if I switch from the third to the first person, I can say my own understanding of *Ulysses* has been enhanced by the research I undertook writing *Irish Divorce! Joyce's Ulysses* (2017). That Bloom's "Divorce, not now" and Molly's "suppose I divorced him"—whether whim, wish, fantasy, or conviction—were not so much an unlikelihood in Edwardian Ireland as has been thought within and beyond Joyce criticism has illuminated the contemporaneity of *Ulysses* for me, and, I hope, for many readers.

—University of Otago

The Consecration of *Ulysses*

Ronan McDonald

Sociologists (after Pierre Bourdieu and Pascale Casanova) often speak about how a work of art becomes “consecrated,” how it gains the status of greatness within our culture and enters the canon. (Answer: usually through well-placed cultural economies of reviews, prizes, magazines, influencers.) It’s curious, then, that the novel that most often tops the list of the masterpieces of modern fiction famously begins with a parody of a “consecration,” in the sense of the Catholic ritual whereby bread and wine are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. The word “consecration,” meaning literally “association with the sacred,” is a version of what Joyce is doing to an ordinary man in an ordinary day. This idea is familiar enough. The irreligious Buck Mulligan does his bit with the razor and shaving bowl in the Martello Tower, a parody which nonetheless toys with the idea that the novel itself performs a consecration: the ordinary becomes mythic, an unremarkable day becomes “Bloomsday,” Leopold Bloom becomes the modern Odysseus.

Ulysses plays with both these senses of consecration, the literary and the sociological, the consecration *in Ulysses* and the consecration *of Ulysses*. You might say that the huge reputation and success of *Ulysses* is because it’s a masterpiece, an immense creative achievement. But literary talent is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* cause of literary consecration. *Ulysses* does not spring into the celestial sphere straight from Joyce’s head. It has to acquire recognition and acclaim. It has to speak to its time and be supported by influential circles in the right places and from the right venues, and then it has to speak to our time. Notably and remarkably, *Ulysses* is continually self-reflexive,

pondering its own navigation through this literary field, and how it might succeed or fail. Buck Mulligan on top of the Martello Tower in Sandycove, facing, significantly, eastward—towards Britain and Europe—also signifies the consecration of James Joyce within the canon of modern authors. If the ordinary is consecrated, with the artist as “priest of the eternal imagination,” as Stephen Dedalus has it in *Portrait*, it is also the artist who is the “host”—that which is consecrated or indeed auto-consecrated. Mulligan and Stephen are indeed acting as hosts—to Haines—in this opening chapter. The *hostis* in Latin means enemy or victim, the one who is sacrificed, and “Telemachus” is shot through with cordial enmity. But the chapter is also preoccupied with mechanisms of artistic prestige and aspirations of epical achievement: Stephen’s famous definition of Irish art as the cracked looking glass of a servant; the moment Mulligan puts his arm around Stephen and declares that they both could make Ireland as cultured as Greece once was. The hunger for international esteem is staged throughout the novel, which continually preoccupies itself with the how and the wherefores of literary success. That Joyce anticipates the use of “consecration” to describe this process is one of the many remarkable ways that he reaches forward, and how we still—as Richard Ellman declared—strive to be his contemporary.

—University of Melbourne

Ulysses Reads Us

Vicki Mahaffey

Ulysses has unexpectedly become *increasingly* relevant over the last 100 years. Its most crucial aspect for societies lies in its treatment of highly charged, longstanding hierarchies of value: English versus Irish; white versus black; male versus female; young versus old; gentile versus Jew. It was designed to help readers learn to imaginatively inhabit *both* subject positions, without minimizing the effort or the danger of embracing categories that have been defined as mutually exclusive. It’s about learning to reseal the mind in the body, and using the (shared) fragility of embodiment to bridge differences of background, biology, language, politics. It offers readers the opportunity to celebrate many kinds of otherness, and thereby to move from individuality to community. Another way to put this is that it nudges readers to go from being an individual to an entire city; it helps each open-minded reader to realize the multitudinous possibilities within every person. *Ulysses* suggests that such a process of self-expansion is tantamount to learning to “Bloom.”

Ulysses is extraordinary for many reasons: its subtle and innovative use of language to express more than the characters themselves know consciously; its willingness to represent everyday life as it is lived instead of how people prefer to imagine or remember it, a shift often experienced as shocking; its exuberant virtuosity. But the most revolutionary aspect of the book for me is that it is more about the reader in the act of reading it than it is about the characters, Dublin, or the early years of the twentieth century. It is the most interactive book ever written. It reads its readers, whereas most readers tend to *judge* rather than *read*. How could Joyce know how the book would be read? He knew because reading is a socially conditioned activity; we *learn* how to read, and what we learn is to subordinate our own interpretive activity to that of a narrator often regarded as “omniscient.” It is a book that reads *us*. As Oscar Wilde once wrote, “It is the spectator, not life, that art actually mirrors.” That is true of *Ulysses*: it acts as a form of resistance to cognitive acts that inhibit growth. *Ulysses* not only gives access to the conscious thoughts of its characters (through the famous “stream of consciousness” technique), but it also uses language to give attentive and motivated readers access to what the characters *don’t want to know*, their unconscious minds. And in so doing, it helps readers unearth their *own* unconscious assumptions. I don’t know another book that does this.

—University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

***Ulysses* and the Thrill of Discovery**

Katy Mullin

Ulysses has always been such a compelling novel for me because there is always more to find out. I was initially drawn to it as a teenager because I found it so difficult and yet so intriguing—the aspects of it I could understand and enjoy promised so much more. Casual remarks and throwaway allusions contain multitudes, and my doctoral research began with one line from “Nausicaa”: “Mutoscope pictures in Capel street: for men only.” It sent me off on a voyage into the past, and an appreciation of the Mutoscope’s significance to the larger chapter.

So much of *Ulysses*’s joy for me is this thrill of discovery. Joyce’s use of telling detail and context often conceals a wider story, and chasing the hare of a sentence can transport you back to 1904 and a richer appreciation of his complexity, creativity, or wit. “Antitreating is about the size of it”—a disgruntled remark about Bloom’s supposed disinclination to buy rounds—led me

down a fascinating rabbit-hole beyond Dublin pub culture and into tensions between rival nationalisms. A throwaway remark, a joke, even a snide aside is seldom mere local color, but often part of the novel's larger design.

—University of Leeds

Future Directions of Our Study of *Ulysses*: “Your Home’s on Native Land”³

Stephen Ross

When I first read *Ulysses*, lo these many years ago, I had no idea what a “sassenach” was. Having been raised in “British Columbia” on the unceded territory of the Sto:lo peoples, I had, however, absorbed some words from the broad linguistic terrain of the Salish language—including “sasquatch.” Sasquatch. Sassenach. They sound close enough, and in my mind, they fused just a bit. Not that I thought they were synonymous, but they seemed to overlap in the work they did, in how they fit into their contexts. I’m not thinking here of Buck Mulligan’s “The Sassenach wants his breakfast” so much as the Citizen’s “bloody brutal Sassenachs and their *patois*.” Where I grew up, sasquatches were local, though most densely sited around Harrison Lake, about 50 kilometers from where I lived. Big, hairy, humanoid entities that stalked the forest, especially in the higher mountain reaches. Dangerous, powerful, stinky. Sassenach. Sasquatch. Citizen. Cyclops. The sibilance forged a matrix in my mind that brought me, “through a com-modious vicus of recirculation,” to look up “native” in *Ulysses*. Huh.

Of the nine uses of the word “native” in *Ulysses*, five refer to places: Israel (“Hades”: “Lay me in my native earth. Bit of clay from the holy land”), Egypt (“Circe”: “native place, the land of the Pharaoh”), Ireland (“Circe,” “Nausicaa”: “native land”), and Jewish diaspora (“Oxen of the Sun”: “native orient”). Two refer to language (“Cyclops,” “Circe”: “native Doric”), and two more to “natives” specifically (“Ithaca”: “natives *de choza*”⁴ and “Cyclops”: “flogging the natives on the belly”). There’s too much here to unpack in a few words, and most readers could do the work for themselves anyway. I want only to highlight the force of these terms taken together: their reference to enforced displacement, deracination, genocide, xenophobia—but also to

3 My title parodies a line from the Canadian national anthem, “O Canada.” The straight-faced version runs thus: “Our home and native land,” but the parodic version scans nicely and is more accurate to boot.

4 That is, the natives “of the hut”—the cabman’s stand in “Ithaca.”

belonging, identity, group formation. The term “native” is infused with and derived from colonialism. It echoes the state of the world’s Indigenous peoples at the time: barred from practising their culture, music, dance, language; expelled from ancestral lands; families, clans, and kinship systems wrenched apart; imprisoned, beaten, starved, and tortured to death. In *Ulysses*, Joyce uses “native” to produce a semantic matrix that links Bloom/Jewishness to nativity, nativism, and natality: to link native Congolese to the native Irish in a domestic drama stalked by the failure of heredity, identity, belonging, and community.

The above is just a stub, meant to be suggestive rather than really persuasive. But maybe it’s time to assess *Ulysses* from the perspective of its intersections with non-Eurocentric practices of colonialist genocide. What did Joyce know, or should he have known, about the tens of millions of “natives” around the world who may have found echoes of their humanity in his depiction of Bloom: one of the wandering tribes of Israel whose connection to North American Indigenous peoples, at least, has been posited more than once?

—University of Victoria

Global *Ulysses* and Childhood Experience

Enrico Terrinoni

A Libyan student of mine, who took my English literature oral exam in Perugia recently, began his presentation by telling me that I had been wrong all the time during my *Ulysses* course: the book was not set in Dublin, as I had duly told them, but in Libya! After this brilliant provocation, he explained to me how a lot of the adventures of Bloom were parallel to events he had either witnessed or taken part in: the feeling of belonging to a tribe other than the one in positions of power, the not-always-taken-for-granted respect for women in his world, the repression of the unconscious side of one’s being, forms of exasperate chauvinism applauded by the many, and so on. This, I must say, was one of the not-too-rare times when I felt that students were teaching me *Ulysses*: they were the professors.

I experienced something similar when I recently visited Ethiopia to give lectures on Dante. I was advised to start my classes from the basics, for students might not know too much either of Dante or of the importance of his legacy nowadays. All those things could be retrieved from *Wikipedia*, I thought, so why ask a lecturer to summarize them? I needed a way to make

Dante relevant for them, and, going to the lecture theatre, I had a sad illumination. I was shocked at meeting so many little kids with no shoes, sniffing glue at the corners of the main streets, and I thought that if there was anything I should say about Dante which might be relevant to Ethiopian people nowadays, it was the fact that all the things upon which he founded the story of the *Divine Comedy*, happened when he was a child. He supposedly met Beatrice when he was nine, and she became the source of inspiration for his vision of Paradise.

Borges suggested that Joyce's obstinate rigor can redeem us, and so can Dante's treasuring of his own experiences as a child, I would say. They can still redeem us because their works can be understood in new ways all the time. *Ulysses* is set in Libya, I now know that; and the *Divine Comedy* can show us that a society which takes care of its smallest ones, can be a better society. I wonder if Joyce saw that in Dante too, when he tried in his works to show us that we can glimpse from hell some sort of vision of heaven.

—*Università per Stranieri di Perugia*

Teaching *Ulysses*

David Thorburn

My ambivalence about *Ulysses* has intensified over the fifty years I have taught it to intelligent undergraduate and graduate students. The book is arrogant and tyrannical. Its demand for sustained concentration is made immensely more onerous by its simultaneous incitement to distraction by allusion, historical detail, stylistic performance. I believe *Ulysses* has become "readable" in my lifetime only because most readers and teachers have gained access to an always enlarging library of plot summary, annotation, and commentary. Surely even avid celebrants at this great anniversary might confess to impatience with the opacities of Stephen's thought, the length of Joyce's beloved lists, the unrelenting *bravura* of "Oxen of the Sun." This very list could become Joycean!

And yet. Of course, of course. Not to have engaged with this maddening, wonderful piece of work would have discredited our travels. I admire the novel's pyrotechnics of voice and style, its self-reflexive drama. But I am augmented by its moral and psychological insight, its call for mockery, attentiveness, generosity, its respect for the body and the music of the ordinary world. Not a book you can read easily or on your own, I tell my students now. But it will test your resources of sympathy and judgment. It will make

you smarter. It will make you humble.

—*Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

On *Ulysses* as Perennial Bloom

Joseph Valente

How to explain the abiding contemporaneity of *Ulysses* at 100? Here's one theory. The socially recognized greatness of *Ulysses* resides in its multi-generic, polyphonic, culturally omnivorous, compellingly humorous, altogether encyclopedic depiction of *historically grounded* sociopolitical and psychological realities in play at a very particular time and place. The continuing social currency of that greatness, however, derives at least in part from a structural latency that is the residual effect of its altogether encyclopedic nature: its accommodation of an indefinite series of unforeseeable, *historically adaptive* reformulations of those realities. Precisely insofar as *Ulysses* is an all-encompassing representation of daily life in metro-colonial Dublin, it touches upon virtually every issue or problematic that has come to us from that cultural moment—concerns subsumed under such categories as feminism, post-colonialism, queer, commercial capitalism, literary revivalism, ecocriticism, etc. Nevertheless, or for that very reason, *Ulysses* cannot be accounted or reduced to a postcolonial novel, a queer novel, a feminist or a patriarchal novel, an eco-critical novel. It is always something less and something more than each of these. Not fully one and always something other. *Ulysses* does, however, give itself to being interpretively refashioned along any one of these lines, and has been, credibly so. It operates as a kind of “kit” book, a manual for the ways in which a reader might put it together according to their lights. In this regard, *Ulysses* presages the emergence of fan fiction, albeit in a critical mode.

We remake *Ulysses* with contemporary analytical tools and in pursuit of contemporary interests and concerns, but we do so under the direction of the text itself, such that its narrative figures, in every sense of the term, can function as pre-figurations. *Ulysses* offers prompts to such alternative construction; its massive web of commemorative allusions, to multiple past traditions, are counterbalanced by its proleptic allusions, its “prelusions,” to a malleable future. So while Joyce's intention, by his own testimony, was to keep the professors busy for centuries solving the riddles placed in his work, the first century on suggests that his more significant bid for immortality was to enable an ongoing re-imagination of his riddling novel that would keep

time with the ongoing evolution of the human drama and social conflicts it represents. As a result of this textual machinery, *Ulysses* has accrued an aura of prophecy, an uncanny capacity for anticipating its own future. But I would submit that this seeming predictiveness is actually the mark of its *promptitude*, in multiple senses of the term: the prompts to its readers, answerable to the mutations in our concerns and intellectual commitments, ask us to fathom each contemporary moment by its lights and, in so doing, they keep the novel itself prompt, ever timely rather than blandly timeless, in time with the promptings of its audience. One reason we love *Ulysses* so faithfully through the (hundred) years is that it has become ours, perhaps no less than Joyce's.

—University at Buffalo

***Ulysses*: the Good, the Bad, the Translation**

Jolanta Wawrzycka

Ulysses is not a good novel, a student once told me, because it is not a page-turner: “Where is the fun if you have to look up every word or name or reference?” My thought was: at least by now we have some handy resources that help us navigate the book.... But how *good* was *Ulysses* to Joyce's earliest pedestrian readers? What power did it have over those who read it serialized? To women such as Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier—the “midwives,” to use Shari Benstock's descriptor—*Ulysses* appears to have been a self-evident masterpiece, well worth the troubles they steadfastly endured for its sake. As it was to Valery Larbaud, who was “raving mad” about the installments of *Ulysses* in the *Little Review* and who ended up spearheading the French translation of the novel. It was published two years after Georg Goyert's 1927 German translations, and it helped broaden the early readership of *Ulysses*. One wonders how the first and the subsequent translations were received by the average readers in various languages.

I was one of such readers; my first encounter with *Ulysses* was, indeed, through translation: Maciej Słomczyński's *Ulisses*. An instantaneous *rara avis* right after its publication in Poland in 1969, the book fell onto my lap sometime in the mid-1970s, just as I was learning English. I remember very little from reading it, other than making an honest attempt to *revere* the book. Which I didn't. Occasional humor and textual playfulness offered some respite from the density of contextual references, inscrutable to me at the time. But I remember liking the “Circe” episode for its dramatic layout, for

obscenities unfelled by censors, for the hilarity of talking doorknobs, and for the impossibility of discerning any logical content from what I was immersed in (the latter matching well my lived experiences under communism).

My first reading of *Ulysses* in English, in grad school at Southern Illinois University, proceeded largely without aids other than dictionaries. While I was still missing a lot, I was immediately captivated by Joyce's language acts: the verbing of nouns, the milking of lexical polysemy, the capturing of the inchoate thought process—that is, I fell for all the elements that halt reading and resist re-linguaging. Even now, with every new encounter, I never seem to step into the same page twice. When I read *Ulysses* with my students, I can see how it frustrates their assumptions about plot, form, or content because of stylistic shifts, encyclopedic virtuosity, and a great demand on their attention/focus. But I can also see their readerly vexation give way to awe for the book's irresistible humor and deep humanity.

Vexation of a different ilk has been my constant companion recently. As I'm translating *Ulysses* into Polish anew, I'm forcing my language into accommodating Joyce's language acts by stitching words against their will and forging units that the rules of Polish syntax and grammar stubbornly resist. In a recently published Polish retranslation by Maciej Świerkocki, these points of resistance are frequently treated periphrastically, with some reader-friendly built-in explications and nods toward page-turnership that make Świerkocki's *Ulisses* readable *differently* from how Joyce's *Ulysses* is. Joyce had bent the English language to suit the needs of his book; the ambition of my translation is to reflect this by bending the Polish language to suit the needs of Joyce-in-Polish, lest my stitching and unstitching will have been naught. I cannot know how *good* my Polish *Ulysses* will be, but to meet the Polish readers halfway, and in line with many newest one-volume retranslations that are annotated/footnoted, I'm also working on an apparatus of non-spoiler notes to help them navigate it. Though, *pace* my student of yore, it will not be a page-turner.

—Radford University

