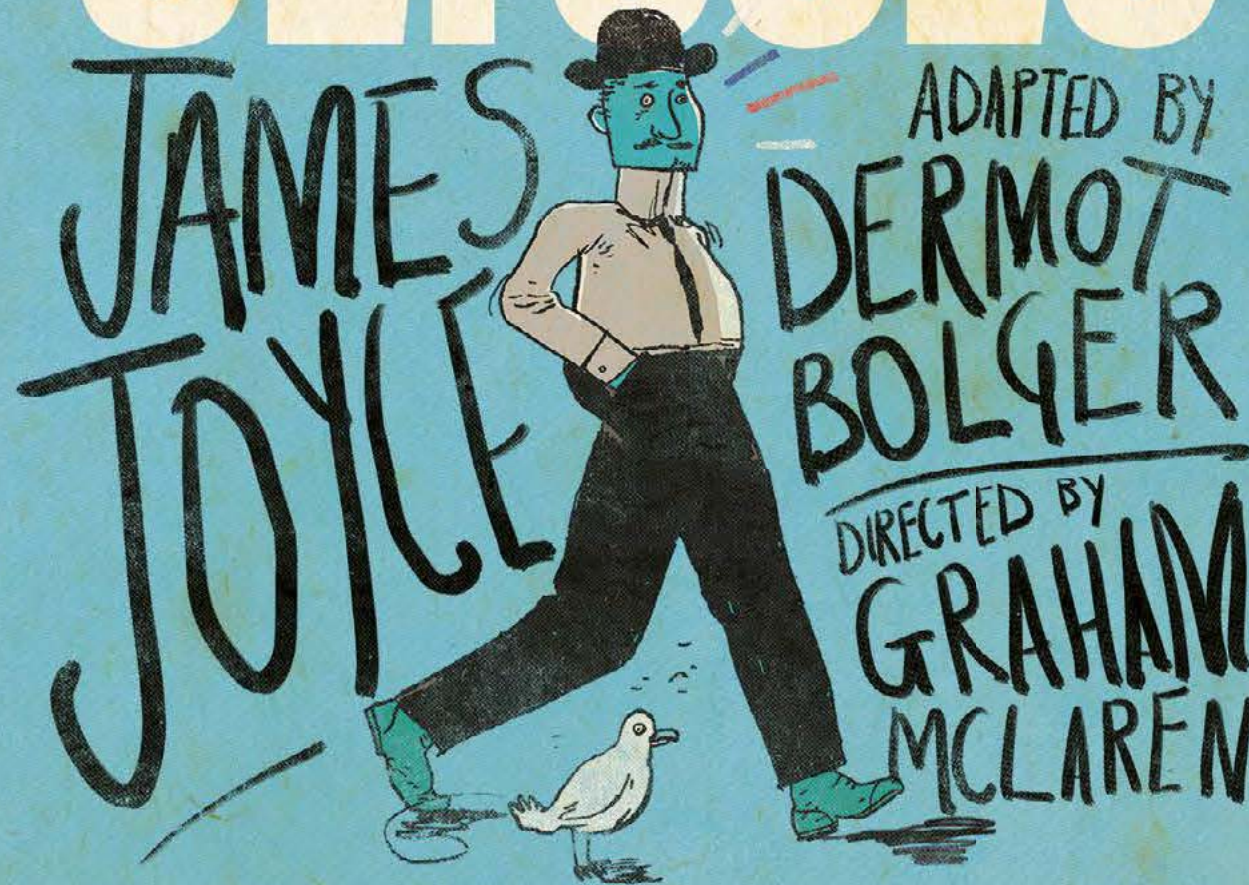




ULYSSES



STUDY PACK

CONTENTS

- 3. FOREWORD / JAMES M. O'CONNOR
- 4. ADAPTING ULYSSES / DERMOT BOLGER
- 7. READING ULYSSES / CAROL TAAFE
- 9. BLOOMSDAY - AND A CULTURAL LEGACY / CAROL TAAFE
- 11. ULYSSES "SEEN" / ROBERT BERRY
- 14. ULYSSES VR EXPERIENCE / EOGHAN KIDNEY
- 16. REMAKING ULYSSES: THE NLI MANUSCRIPTS / CAROL TAAFE

FOREWORD

James M. O'Connor

Community and Education Officer

Ulysses is upon first glance a very simple story about a man setting out about his day around the city of Dublin. The novel operates almost as an exercise in telling one story in as many different ways as possible but it is exactly this variety of approaches that gives the book its unique quality. All of these varied perspectives result in the reader being immersed in a portrayal of a city that is filled with intricate detail and diverse character. A living, breathing Dublin rendered in 360 degrees.

Within this pack, *Ulysses* is explored by those who have continued that exercise. As new and more contemporary forms of story-telling are developed so to do people return, and using these modern means, add further viewpoints to the story of one man's day in Dublin. To begin Carol Taaffe gives us the account of how some of Ireland's chief literary minds, not content with simply intellectual appreciation of the book, set out to relive Leopold Bloom's journey through Dublin themselves, inserting themselves into the story in an event that would grow to be the international annual observance of Bloomsday.

Playwright Dermot Bolger and artist Rob Berry elect to bring the story of *Ulysses* into the realm of their chosen artistic forms, translating it into the mediums of theatre and graphic novel respectively. Then nowhere is it more apparent that Leopold Bloom has reached the 21st modern day than in Eoghan Kidney's work using the technology of Virtual Reality. Each of these artists felt the same thing as Flann O'Brien did when he set out on that first Bloomsday, that this is a story that compels its readers not just to seek to understand and appreciate its myriad idiosyncrasies, but to reinterpret and inject themselves into the story.

And so we come to Graham McLaren's production of *Ulysses* at the Abbey, where the diverse perspectives that make the novel iconic are further translated and reinterpreted through the prism of theatrical technique. Passages presented through literary device are replaced with music, movement and design, allowing an audience the very thing that has been a fixation for almost a century of readers, to step inside the living, breathing Dublin of *Ulysses*.



Donal Gallery (Stephen Dedalus & Ensemble)
and David Pierce (Leopold Bloom)

ADAPTING ULYSSES

DERMOT BOLGER

Although James Joyce was born in 1882 into relative comfort in Rathgar, his father's drinking and spendthrift ways meant that Joyce's childhood was punctuated by numerous moves. Initially, as Joyce's brother recalled, "two floats [wagons] were needed, but eventually one was enough" to transport the family's meagre possessions to addresses that reflected ever diminishing circumstances.

Joyce stood out at UCD for his intellectual brilliance and independence of thought. Aged 21, he briefly fled to Paris before being summoned home by news that his mother was dying. In mourning and penury he drifted around Dublin until, on June 16, 1904, he went walking with Nora Barnacle, a young Galway chambermaid in Finn's Hotel. This encounter felt so significant that Joyce spent much of his next eighteen years recreating Dublin on that exact date in his masterpiece, *Ulysses*. He persuaded Nora to run away to Europe, embarking on the perilous adventure of life together, firstly in Trieste, where he exhaustingly taught English, and then in Paris where he finished *Ulysses*.

Publication of his works often involved battles: the original publisher of *Dubliners* was so scandalised by its realistic portrayal of Dublin that he burnt the first edition rather than let readers' souls be corrupted. In 1922 Sylvia Beach, who had recently opened a bookstore, Shakespeare and Company, in Paris, established her own publishing company just to see *Ulysses* into print.

While the book brought acclaim, Joyce's final years were filled with anxiety for his daughter, Lucia, diagnosed as schizophrenic. In 1940 the Joyces fled Paris before the Nazis arrived. In Jan 1941 he died in Zurich after an operation for an ulcerated duodenum and was buried there in a simple non-religious ceremony. Nora, his great love and muse, died a decade later.

In 1924 Joyce wrote in a notebook: "Today 16 of June 20 years after. Will anyone remember this date?" He needn't have worried. His extraordinary novel remains universally celebrated, surrounded by a mystique that is a blessing and a curse, as readers can feel too intimidated by its reputation to read it. I'm not diminishing its profound complexity, but during their early years of poverty, Molly complained about him keeping her awake, by laughing aloud to himself as he sat up at night writing it.

If readers feel daunted at the prospect of reading *Ulysses*, imagine my trepidation at being asked to transpose Joyce's masterpiece of 265,000 words – in 18 episodes alternating through a dazzling array of linguistic styles – for the stage. Then I realized that my



Janet Moran (Molly Bloom)

terror as a playwright reflected the apprehension many readers feel when approaching it as a book. Nobody can call *Ulysses* an easy read. Joyce joked about keeping critics busy for centuries. Many studies laudably try to open up the book's myriad meanings, but some abstruse criticism places barriers around *Ulysses* being enjoyed as a novel.



Bryan Burroughs (*Lenegan & Ensemble*)

Therefore my starting point was Nora's complaint that Joyce kept her awake, laughing while writing it. I quickly realised why Joyce laughed at subtly getting under the skin and prejudices of the claustrophobic Dublin Stephen must flee. Joyce's writing teems with brilliant virtuosity, but also with insights into the human condition that remain equally true today.

What impressed me most as a reader scared me as a playwright. Joyce not only created remarkable characters in all their contradictions, but *Ulysses* expands to encompass an entire city. It is devoid of minor characters, because Joyce conjures entire lives for people who appear only fleetingly.

Such expansiveness is a privilege of fiction, with subplots forming the common bedrock characters spring from. A play cannot be as expansive. An audience will follow a playwright anywhere, once they are being propelled forward by the engine of curiosity. If the plot overly digresses that spell is punctured.

One difficulty about adapting *Ulysses* is that it could expand into fifty plays. Superb dramas could be conjured from the disastrous marriage of Bloom's former belle, Josie Breen or the delusional life of Bloom's clandestine erotic correspondent, Martha. I needed to focus on two journeys that being together a cuckolded, ridiculed man (who has lost a son but never loses his humanity) and a young man estranged from his own father, intent of true independence by refusing to let any physical, nationalist, religious or moral boundary limit his intellectual freedom. No playwright can match Joyce's gargantuan vision. I could only hope those elements which fascinated me might intrigue an audience.

An immediate theatrical problem was Molly's soliloquy – a brilliant one woman show in itself – but in danger of unbalancing any adaptation. However this gave me a clue towards reimagining the novel as a play. What if I started at the end: with Bloom falling asleep in bed beside Molly? He could be led back through the day's events in his sleep, by characters who change at the drop of a hat, instantaneously transporting him to different locations inside the illogical logic of a dream. Therefore "real time" is when Bloom sleeps and Molly lies awake, agitated by her torrent of thoughts. This allows her soliloquy to punctuate the play, breaking up (and retrospectively speculating upon) the episodes her sleeping husband relives.

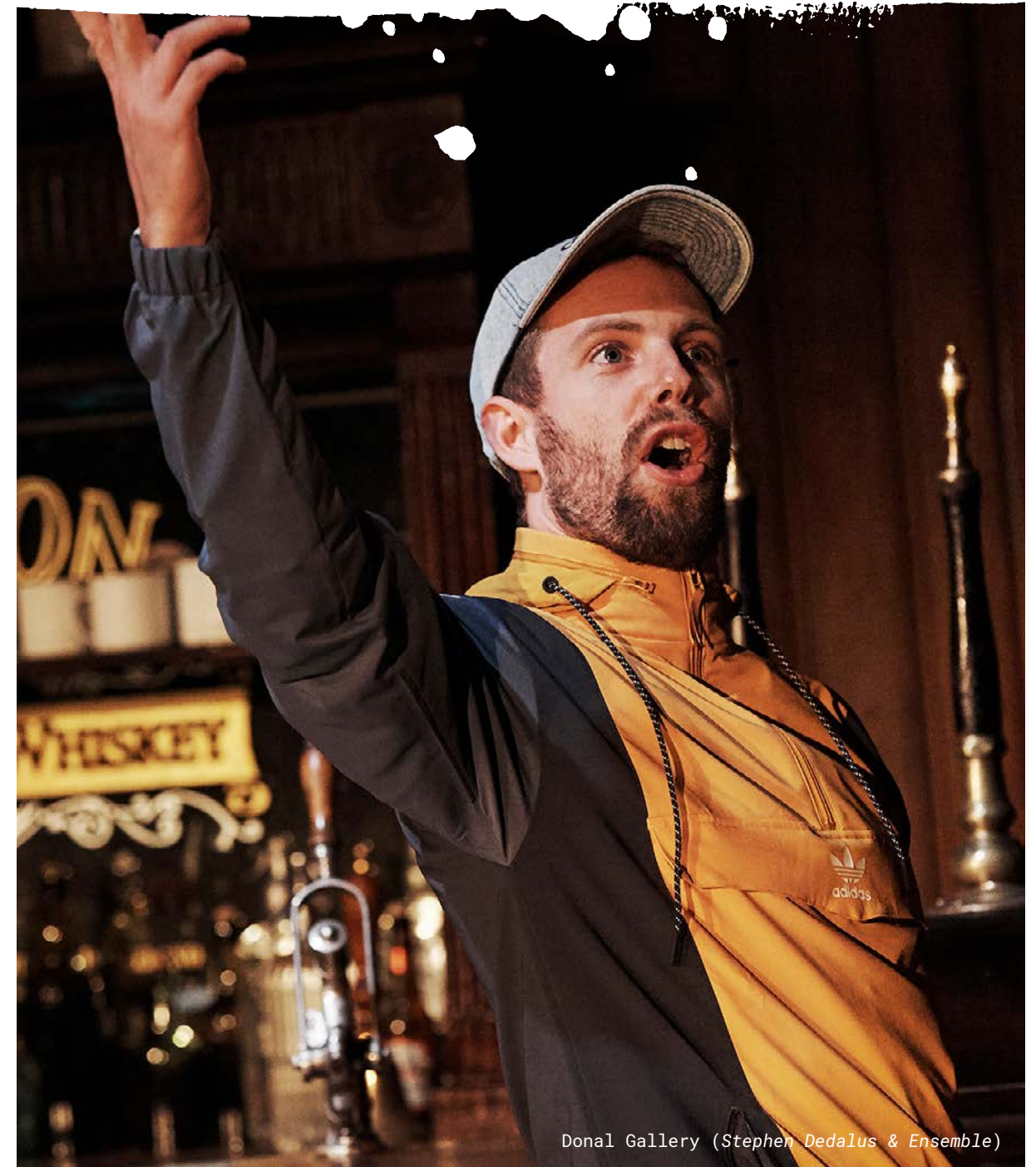
I first read *Ulysses* as a schoolboy too young to understand Bloom. When I first adapted it, for a 1994 American staging, he was my contemporary in age – 38 to my 36. Reimagining it now for the Abbey Theatre, aged 58, I envy his relative youth and remain enamoured

by his steadfastness in clinging to his principles amid public ridicule. One by one he slays his dragons in ways so subtle they barely notice his victories.

For decades Dubliners argued over whose statue should replace Nelson's pillar in O'Connell Street. I love how the Dublin Spire commemorates no single self-appointed hero. The Spire is where young Dubliners meet, a site of friendships made and farewells taken, a commemorative backdrop to everyone's life. But if I could pick an inscription for it, I'd use Bloom's words to Stephen when they amiably agree to disagree about life. Bloom says: "I resent violence or intolerance in any shape or form. A revolution must come on the due instalments plan. All these wretched quarrels, supposed to be about honour and flags. It's money at the back of everything, greed and jealousy."

Bloom strikes me as a different type of Irish patriot – even if the drinkers in Barney Kiernan's pub don't regard him as truly Irish – because he is a Jew of Hungarian descent – in the same way as some people today still refuse to regard Irish citizens of Asian or African descent as truly Irish. He is the sort of patriot who does essential, unglamorous things, like starting credit unions, because a nation is built by the due instalments plan. As a writer I'm proud to share the same city as Joyce. As a citizen I'm proud to share the same city as Bloom – the cuckolded husband, the lecher after shapely ankles, the father carrying bereavement in his heart, the son who understands the silent taboo of suicide, the lowly advertisement agent, regularly sacked because of his opinions, who suffers humiliations but remains steadfast amidst his contradictions.

My ideal audience for this adaptation are people who always wanted to read *Ulysses* but felt daunted. They may be surprised to find that it remains a book about themselves and people they know. Audiences won't leave knowing everything about *Ulysses*, no more than I'll ever comprehend the fullness of Joyce's vision, no matter how often I read his novel. But I hope they are sufficiently engaged by its human dramas – Bloom's subtle triumphs; Molly's all too human contradictions and Stephen's isolation – to once again begin to read this superb chronicle of our capital city: one of the greatest and truest novels of all time.



Donal Gallery (Stephen Dedalus & Ensemble)

"My ideal audience for this adaptation are people who always wanted to read *Ulysses* but felt daunted. They may be surprised to find that it remains a book about themselves and people they know."

READING ULYSSES

Carol Taafe

Ulysses is a story of one day – 16 June 1904 – told in 265,000 words, 18 episodes, and a vast array of literary styles. It is a book that borrows from Homeric epic, Irish mythology, the language of advertising, newspaper headlines, romance magazines, the Catholic catechism and the history of English literature, from alliterative Anglo-Saxon to twentieth-century modernism. James Joyce was a brilliant magpie of a writer. *Ulysses*, he wrote to Carlo Linati in 1920, was 'a kind of encyclopaedia'. And as each chapter or episode has its parallel in Homer's *Odyssey*, the book is also, perhaps, a kind of adaptation or reinvention. But that is just the beginning. As Joyce revealed to Linati, the underlying structure of *Ulysses* is also founded on a 'cycle of the human body' and a 'little story of a day'.

But if that 'little story of a day' is famously expansive, it has a graceful simplicity to it. At its heart is Leopold Bloom, a bereaved father in search of a son, and Stephen Dedalus, a son in need of a father. That son, however, is also striving for his independence. Stephen is still the artist-intellectual of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* who aspires to fly by the nets of 'nationality, language, religion.' In *Ulysses*, he struggles even harder to escape the needs of his desperate and destitute family.

But it is Bloom, not Stephen, who occupies most of Joyce's epic. In 1904 he is already middle-aged, an advertising agent who has only mixed success in Dublin. Bloom's Jewishness and his sensitivity make him a bit of an outsider in this small, intimate city. At times, he seems to be a joke to some of the Dubliners roaming *Ulysses*. Many suspect that Bloom is a cuckolded husband, and throughout the day he broods on his wife's impending meeting with her lover, Blazes Boylan. Less visible to those around him is the grief for a lost child that permeates his relationship with Molly. Often on the sidelines of the action, Bloom is unremarkable, good-natured, lustful, reflective, paternal. He is ordinary, and for that reason alone perhaps, he provides the human centre of Joyce's epic.

Yet there is no linear story in *Ulysses* to carry the reader from beginning to middle to end. This is a book preoccupied with the business of writing and the infinite possibilities of literary technique. It also pillages the English literary heritage. While writing *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce wryly referred to himself as a 'scissors and paste' man, and *Ulysses* is just as much a work of collage – from the fragmentary thoughts and allusions that



Janet Moran (Molly Bloom) and
David Pierce (Leopold Bloom)



Faóileann Cunningham (Gerty & Ensemble)

Often on the sidelines of the action, Bloom is unremarkable, good-natured, lustful, reflective, paternal. He is ordinary, and for that reason alone perhaps, he provides the human centre of Joyce's epic.

permeate Stephen's stream of consciousness in the first three episodes, to the hyperliterary style of 'Oxen of the Sun' (set in Holles Street, it follows the English language through centuries of gestation). Joyce wrote to Linati that he intended 'to allow each adventure... to condition and even to create its own technique'. And so 'Aeolus', set in the office of the *Freeman's Journal*, is replete with newspaper headlines and windy rhetoric. 'Nausicaa', where the sexual fantasies of Bloom and Gerty MacDowell collide on Sandymount Strand, begins with the sickly clichés of romance magazines. 'Circe', Bloom's hallucinatory foray into Nighttown (or the Monto), takes the form of a playscript, complete with stage directions.

The effect can be disorientating, even bewildering. The reader who has wrestled with Stephen's allusive stream of consciousness in the first three episodes is suddenly stranded with Leopold Bloom in the fourth. And as the chapters accumulate, those familiar voices break down - with further bursts of allusions and digressions and new literary techniques. There is no narrative authority to guide the reader through *Ulysses*; wandering the unreadable streets of a foreign city she is not clearly channelled one way or another. Perhaps that is why much of the pleasure of reading *Ulysses* is really in re-reading, or reading out of sequence. The reader who slowly grows familiar with its world, dipping in and out, making her own way back and forth through the book, is - perhaps ironically - mimicking Joyce's own writing method, which as the book progressed was to move back and forth across published and unpublished episodes, layering complexity on complexity.

Reading *Ulysses* in this way is an interactive experience. This is a book that, for all its difficulties, gives the reader an unusual degree of freedom. It is a compendium of short stories that layer and inform each other. It is an intricate patchwork of imagery and motifs. And as it is a highly allusive text, even the first reading of *Ulysses* is a kind of re-reading of forgotten books. Joyce's magpie tendencies made *Ulysses* a masterpiece of reinvention. In that much it set its readers an example to follow.

BLOOMSDAY – AND A CULTURAL LEGACY

Carol Taafe

“Today 16 of June 20 years after.
Will anyone remember this date?”

The cultural legacy of *Ulysses* is inescapable, even for those who have never opened the book. In Dublin that legacy comes to life on 16 June each year as the city celebrates Bloomsday. And its story begins not in 1904 but fifty years later – on Wednesday, 16 June 1954 – when six friends began a Joycean pilgrimage on Sandymount Strand. Flann O’Brien, Anthony Cronin, Patrick Kavanagh, *Envoy* editor John Ryan, TCD academic A.J. (‘Con’) Leventhal, and James Joyce’s dentist cousin, Tom were the first to celebrate *Ulysses* by following its hero’s path around Dublin city.

That morning, Myles na gCopaleen’s satiric *Irish Times* column had labelled Joyce as an ‘illiterate’, noting that ‘his every foreign language quotation was incorrect’. It was not the first time Myles had played the schoolmaster with the errant Dubliner: ‘His few sallies at Greek are wrong, and his few attempts at a Gaelic phrase absolutely monstrous.’ The swaggering defiance of Joyce’s literary genius was just one symptom of this generation’s fascination with the writer. In fact it was Myles, or his novelist alter ego Flann O’Brien (or Brian O’Nolan), who had instigated the trip to Sandymount – in effect staging the first Irish Bloomsday. And this was no casual affair. The friends had arranged two horse cabs to bring the party up to Glasnevin

Cemetery for the funeral of Paddy Dignam, and then back to the city to commemorate the newspapers episode, ‘Aeolus’, in the offices of *The Irish Times*. At lunchtime, the food-heavy ‘Lestrygonians’ chapter was celebrated in Davy Byrne’s and the Bailey. By then, the trip was already in drunken disarray. Flann O’Brien was largely to blame for that. Yet as Anthony Cronin remembered it, he had been quite serious in his design to re-enact Bloom’s journey through Dublin city. While retracing the route of the funeral party in ‘Hades’, he had insisted on preserving the decorum proper to the occasion. At all points, his biographer remembered, O’Brien wanted the party to behave with the outward respectability of the characters in the book. ‘It struck me then,’ Cronin wrote, ‘that he had a deep imaginative sympathy with them, that he was still part of their world...’. O’Brien objected to the party singing songs as they travelled. He complained when Cronin and Kavanagh perched themselves next to the cabman. He protested even more when the younger poet took the reins. What Flann O’Brien had designed for the day was a re-enactment of Joyce’s imaginative world. It is ironic, in a way, that he was one of the writers responsible for its destruction. Or at least its reinvention. In 1938, O’Brien’s friend Niall Sheridan remarked that James Joyce was so dominant an



David Pierce (Leopold Bloom)



Janet Moran (Molly Bloom)
and Caitríona Ennis (Milly & Ensemble)

influence on young writers that Dublin itself was beginning to look like 'an inferior plagiarism from *Ulysses*'. As if to prove him right, just a year later Flann O'Brien published a novel that is suffused with the Joycean legacy. *At Swim-Two-Birds* shows that he had learned much from Joyce's disruptive way with storytelling. Like *Ulysses*, it is full of parodies and riffs on literary styles; it steals the question-and-answer form of the Catholic catechism that underpins the 'Ithaca' episode; it re-purposes the absurdly comic lists that 'Cyclops' borrowed from Irish mythology. Reviewing *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Sean O'Faoláin sniffily wrote that there was an odour of 'spilt Joyce' all over the novel.

He was right. And yet *At Swim-Two-Birds* is an entirely different kind of book to *Ulysses*. It was a uniquely creative response to the challenge that Joyce presented to the next generation of Irish writers. In effect, *At Swim-Two-Birds* is the result of a particular reading of Joyce's epic. O'Brien picks up on Joyce's ear for Dublin speech, the great humour of his book, and the many creative ways it disrupts conventional storytelling. But he is selective in his borrowings. *At Swim* pirates and it steals, but it also transforms Joycean techniques.

That first Bloomsday in 1954 was the creation of a writer who still lived close at hand to Joyce's Dublin. The proliferation of Bloomsday celebrations around the world ever since is testament to a unique cultural legacy. Eighty years ago, writing *At Swim-Two-Birds* allowed one of Joyce's readers to celebrate a great writer while liberating his own imagination. Bloomsday continues to do the same for thousands. And with the lifting of copyright restrictions seventy years after the writer's death, since 2012 *Ulysses* has been available to writers and artists to respond to Joyce's masterpiece with their own adaptations and inventions. We explored that process with novelist and playwright Dermot Bolger, graphic artist Robert Berry and VR filmmaker Eoghan Kidney.

That first Bloomsday in 1954 was the creation of a writer who still lived close at hand to Joyce's Dublin. The proliferation of Bloomsday celebrations around the world ever since is testament to a unique cultural legacy."

ULYSSES "SEEN"

ROBERT BERRY

Ulysses "Seen" is a comic adaptation of Joyce's novel by Robert Berry. Published digitally, the comic comes with a page-by-page reader's guide to *Ulysses*, discussion groups and access to other online resources. An ambitious artistic and educational project, *Ulysses "Seen"* is a work in progress that is currently hosted on the website of the James Joyce Centre: www.jamesjoyce.ie Robert speaks about his unique graphic novel and the opportunities offered by a digital platform.

Making a comic of *Ulysses* is a daunting prospect. What made you take it on?

In 2004 I attended a local Bloomsday reading here in Philadelphia at the Rosenbach Museum. Afterwards in the pub I was discussing how comics might be better suited than cinema or the stage for an adaption of *Ulysses*. Comics, you see, are not bound by time as those other mediums are and allow a different experience for the audience; visual, but still a reading experience. Over a bet, and a couple of pints, I started sketching out just how it would look.

A few years later, as I became more interested in how I might do some work in a digital space for adapting and annotating fiction, the idea came back. So I dove in.

Do you consider *Ulysses "Seen"* an adaptation, a companion to *Ulysses* or a standalone piece of work?

Ulysses "seen" is hybrid of a few different ideas for what comics might become. It is an adaptation, definitely, on the surface level and just by its nature. But unlike many adaptations, I've set the goal of including all of the novel's allusions and text that are possible. In this respect the comic is more like a translation; just using the language of cartoons as someone might use French or Italian



to unveil some of the beautiful intricacies of the original text.

But it's also a "digital first" learning tool. The attachment of a Readers' Guide and a Questions/Comments section to each page allows myself and other Joyce scholars the chance to take readers through the comic and into the more complex elements of reading *Ulysses*. From there they can move back into the text itself or through to the online resources. I approach it with a sense of "how can I show you in words and pictures as much as I can about this book?"

What process do you follow in creating an episode?

Episodes vary in length throughout the book, and they each present unique problems for adaptation. Much more so than a movie or a play I think, for as a cartoonist I've got a much less limited set of tools to work with and, with a budget of only time, paint and paper, I have the freedom to do anything I can imagine. The "Proteus" chapter, for example, is only thirteen pages of text in the novel. But to draw out all of the (really very funny) allusions for their full educational impact required 107 pages of drawings. There aren't



any rules in this kind of project as there are in most adaptations in other mediums. The only law is to make the translation work for the benefit of new readers.

The process usually involves my total immersion in one "episode" at a time to determine how to push the form. That usually gives me a theme unique for that episode and I begin pulling apart the narrative voices. Then I line up a Joyce scholar appropriate to that episode's theme for our Readers' Guide commentary and we have some back-and-forth about the "teaching points". Fuelled with their guidance, I build the storyboards (or "thumbnails") for the episode.

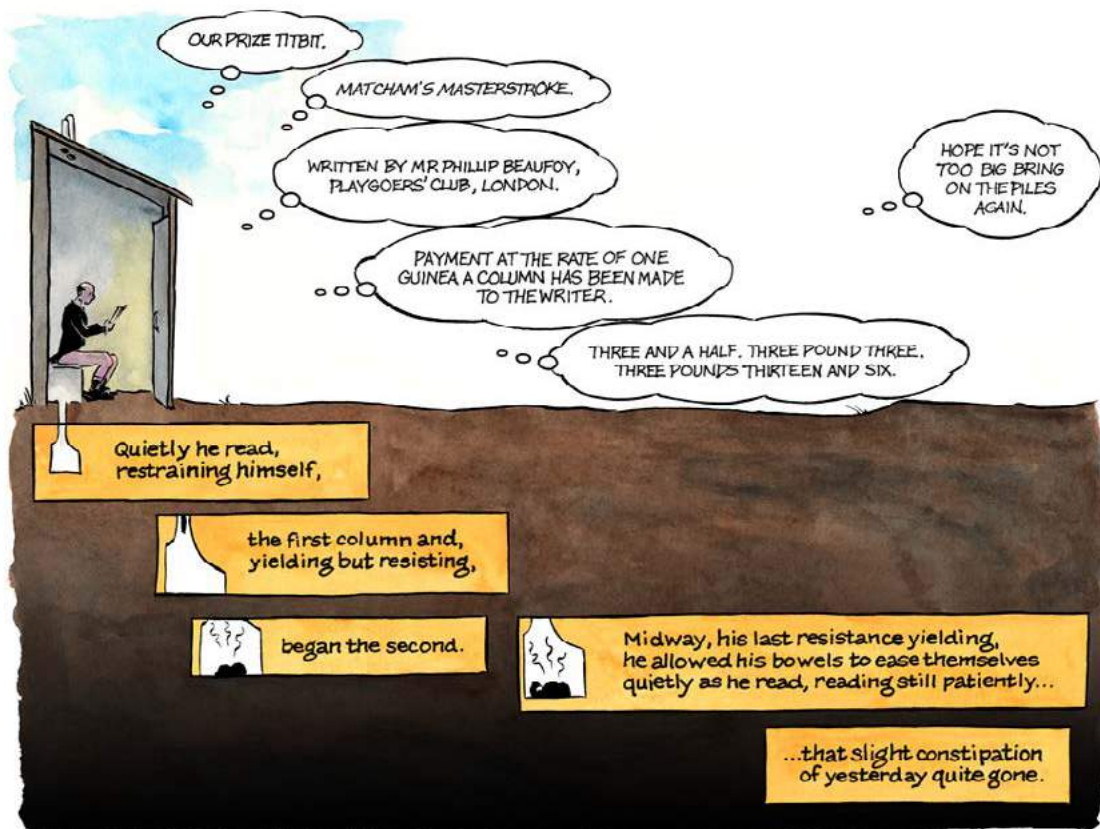
How did you arrive at the visual style used?

Like the novel itself, the intention here is to draw upon a chorus of styles. That is difficult to do for a start-up of course, because I've still not found a way to finance the project and I believe artists, cartoonists in particular, deserve to make a liveable wage from their talents. I worked with Clinton Cahill, another Joyce artist, on the "Proteus" chapter mentioned above, but the work is done from my storyboards and my take on the novel's text. He then brings his visual style to that. It's an exciting way to work and, as we move further into the novel, it should add an extra layer of interest for readers. The first four chapters of the adaptation however are drawn and painted by myself and I'm doing the same for the final "Penelope" episode. In all of those I try very hard to keep to a lighter and more cartoon style as one might expect from *The New Yorker*; very clean, free with caricature, but not overly tight nor restrictive in its design.

What do you think the digital form brings to the reading experience?

There's no fundamental difference between the two; it's still just words (or static images) on a flat surface. But there is more freedom to explore digitally than we have with a book. In some ways that freedom translates to a shorter span of focused attention; we bounce around on the pad or the smartphone as if we're obliged to do so. But that's a conditioned response that has nothing to do with the reading experience itself.

Younger generations are very focused within the digital space and use it really well for study and play and communication. I'm trying to carry that same freedom into the way I think about this project so it might prove increasingly helpful to newer and younger readers for years to come.





Images pages 11 - 13 by Robert Berry

Ulysses "Seen" has been published serially (like Ulysses itself). As the project progresses, how have your methods developed? What new challenges have appeared?

While we were a very early adopter of the digital platform and one of the first comics in the iTunes Store for the iPad, I've always wanted to make the project a place for readers to gather and help one another. Our new version of the site, premiering in June at the University of Pennsylvania, is going to make that more possible. Readers will see my work in progress and follow the adaptation's development from script to finished page, commenting along the way. We'll also have the ability to return to the text itself with annotations, something I've wanted from the start.

The challenge all along has been to keep it going. The process of a full adaptation, like this one, is very slow and careful and requires a LOT of serious research. I think we hit that corner about a year back where it's being used more and more, so the challenge is to keep up with the demand.

What's next for Ulysses "Seen"?

The new website and, within its first few months, a whole lot of new content and navigational material to help first-time readers. The production-blog format shifts us to a much more timely style of delivery and, I hope, gives people a whole lot more to like.

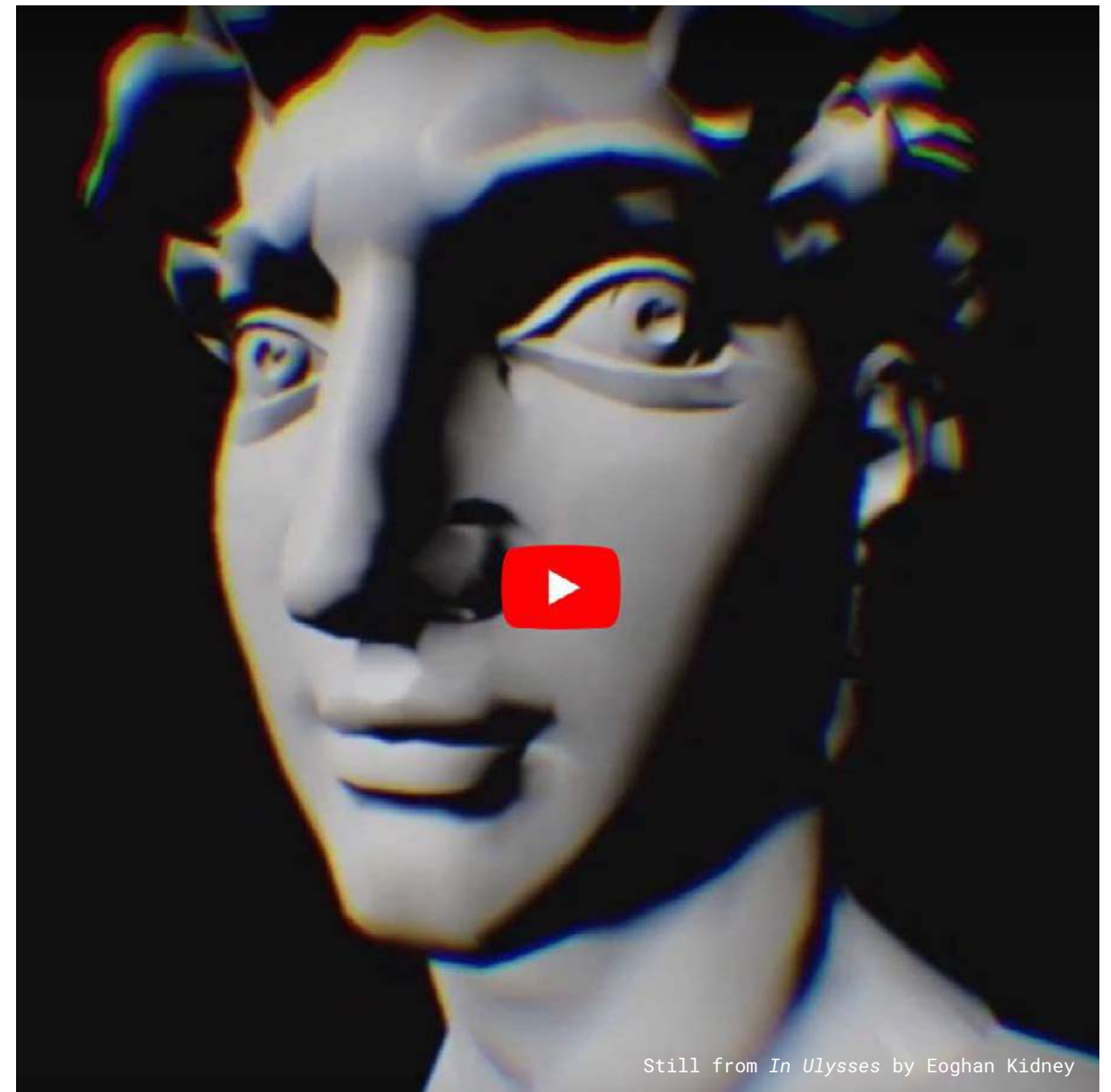
Ulysses "Seen", the page-by-page reader's guide to Ulysses, discussion groups and access to other online resources is currently hosted on the website of the James Joyce Centre: www.jamesjoyce.ie

ULYSSES VR EXPERIENCE - EOGHAN KIDNEY

As an entirely new kind of reading experience, *Ulysses* scandalised and confounded many readers in 1922. Nearly a century later, some of the most disruptive artistic and technological developments are in immersive experiences – or Virtual Reality. Film-maker Eoghan Kidney has married the two, developing a *Ulysses* VR Experience for Oculus Rift which presents the 'Proteus' episode as a film experienced in 360 degrees. The user occupies the persona of Stephen Dedalus, hearing his stream of consciousness while standing on a virtual Sandymount Strand. Illustrations hover in real time, with textual annotations, images and links. Eoghan explains the challenges and attractions of translating *Ulysses* to VR.

How would you explain Virtual Reality to someone who has never experienced it?

It's a new way of interacting with a computer – receiving an experience on demand. It's not just putting on a headset – it's interacting with a digital world using your gaze, your hands, arms, body – computing becomes spatial and a user's cognition becomes embodied. I believe it has the potential to change almost every aspect of society – in communication, work, learning, entertainment and more.



Still from *In Ulysses* by Eoghan Kidney

Why adapt *Ulysses* as a VR experience?

As a fan, it was a way for me to get closer to the book. I think the main similarity they share is immersion – but VR and *Ulysses* happened to be two things I was obsessed with at that time, so there was a creative collision of sorts. I didn't want to gamify it in anyway, as I really wanted it to be another way of experiencing the text in a linear fashion. There was also an urge there to share the book, and people generally are afraid of it, or can't get past the first few episodes – so I wanted to try and make something that would help new readers with that, while offering existing fans a fun opportunity to occupy Stephen.

Proteus, the third episode of *Ulysses*, plunges the reader into Stephen Dedalus's stream of consciousness, following his thoughts as he wanders Sandymount Strand. It's one of the more allusive and challenging episodes. Why did you choose to begin here?

The experience is a multi-layered experiment. I wanted the experience to be a useful tool in experiencing the book - a way of learning about the allusions - I enjoyed this part of reading it so much, but I found it such a pain to have to flick over to notes etc. all the time - so I wanted to give the user an easy way of accessing the annotations - so I wanted to part of the book to be a difficult part. The idea is that the user can select the text as they pass it and read a quick annotation - they can then reverse their journey and experience the text and environment over again, this time a little more knowledgeable about the references.

As Stephen walks along the beach his mind is whirring and protean, with one thing quickly giving way to another. His first thought is of the 'Ineluctable modality of the visible', and Stephen keeps returning to the question of how to understand the world outside of our senses. He commands himself to 'Shut your eyes and see.' He tries to block out his sensory experience. That's a challenge for a filmmaker...

Actually one of the great surprises of making this was that part. The VR headset handily closes your eyes for you by moving to a black scene. When we do that we go into his imagination a little, and the user passes towering figures of gods, hammers, sea shells... it became a virtual reality inside a virtual reality. Questioning our reality is a big part of VR - as a new medium it gives one the opportunity to ask questions in new ways - and maybe get some new answers back.

VR makes the viewer an active participant: you choose where to look in the scene. In some ways, the director has less control over a shot than in traditional film-making. Is there an analogy with the reader's experience in *Ulysses*?

Yeah you have to sort of direct the viewer a little. It's staging really - if you look at companies like Punchdrunk - they make these very immersive pieces of theatre, and it's like VR in a way - you're giving the audience the freedom to interact with the play in interesting ways, so people come out of it with different experiences - however there is always a spinal story. It's how videogames have worked for decades, so there's tons of work in that domain that we can draw from when designing things like this. I can't remember who, but someone said that *Ulysses* was like the first hypertext - and the reader could be led out of it to research and discover all this wonderful allusions, then come back when they're ready. And most people read it non-linearly right? They always go for last episode first! That's pure choose-your-own-adventure stuff.

In 1922 *Ulysses* outraged, scandalised and confused its readers. It was disruptive in every way. What can *Ulysses* offer VR in 2018?

If a century old piece of text can still surprise contemporary readers with its power, beauty and innovation - what else we can draw from? What other modes of thinking can we unearth from the supposedly outrageous, scandalous and confusing work of today?

In Ulysses, a VR experience by Eoghan Kidney can be viewed on YouTube <https://youtu.be/nwFi1-dk19o>

REMAKING ULYSSES: THE NLI MANUSCRIPTS

Carol Taafe

In 2018, the digital *Ulysses* can also expose Joyce's working methods; a digitized collection of notebooks and drafts held in the National Library of Ireland trace part of his journey in writing the book. 'I have not read a work of literature for several years,' James Joyce complained to his patron Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1921:

...My head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up 'most everywhere. The task I set myself technically in writing a book from 18 different points of view and in as many styles, all apparently unknown or undiscovered by my fellow tradesmen...

Over the seven years it took to compose *Ulysses*, Joyce was continually augmenting drafts with scraps and fragments he collected in dozens of notebooks. His friend Frank Budgen remarked that in Zurich 'Joyce was never without... little writing blocks specially made for the waistcoat pocket. At intervals, alone or in conversation, seated or walking, one of these tablets was produced, and a word or two scribbled on it at lightening speed as ear or memory served his turn'. For Budgen, Joyce's notebooks - and the envelopes he stuffed with scraps of paper - were 'storehouses of building material'. It was a flotsam and jetsam of observations and information; each piece would find its place, somewhere, in his encyclopaedic book.



Raymond Keane (*Simon Dedalus & Ensemble*)



Faoileann Cunningham (Gerty & Ensemble)
and Caitriona Ennis (Milly & Ensemble)

In that sense, *Ulysses* is a masterpiece of reinvention. And 'reinvention' might be the word to describe Joyce's own writing method too. As his work on *Ulysses* progressed, the book changed shape again and again: new voices appeared, new styles proliferated. The stream of consciousness technique dominates the early episodes - an innovative literary style that Joyce attributed to the French writer, Édouard Dujardin. But just as the reader is becoming acclimatised to an interior monologue that shifts between Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, Joyce's technique changes. Soon each new episode takes on a new style, the book reinventing itself again and again.

Then there is the reinvention that comes with re-writing. Even after those early episodes were published in magazines, Joyce continued to revise and augment them. And though *Ulysses* was published in full in 1922, it was still a book in a state of flux. New editions were soon competing with each other, each claiming to be free of the errors that peppered the first printing. Their claims have been difficult to answer. Joyce liked to make copies as he wrote - fair drafts to sell to collectors - and most of all, he liked to make changes. That bred confusion enough in searching for the definitive text of *Ulysses*; printers' and publishers' errors did the rest.

Joyce had a curious writing method, and one that is indivisible from the book's publication history. The first episodes appeared serially in *The Little Review* from 1918 until an obscenity action was brought against the magazine in New York in January 1921. At the same time, some episodes were published in London in *The Egoist* in 1919. That piecemeal publication history would play a part in complicating his writing process. As the scholar Jeri Johnson describes it, Joyce's working method was to write a draft of a chapter, add material from his notebooks (crossing it out with coloured crayon as he did so), and then write out a fair draft of the final text. Once that was typed up he would set to work again, making more additions and corrections before the episode was finally sent to a magazine.

But that did not mean he was finished. When Sylvia Beach undertook to bring out a full edition of *Ulysses* in Paris in 1921, Joyce returned to these published episodes to make more corrections before sending them to the printers. And when the proofs were returned, he added yet more material. All the time he was also composing the last chapters of *Ulysses*, and so he was moving back and forth across his Dublin epic, adding and augmenting as he worked. As Johnson notes (in the OUP edition), 'From the time that the first placards were pulled (11 June 1921) until the published book was in his hands, Joyce added as interlineations and marginal additions what constitutes about 30 per cent of the present text.' Three days before its official publication in Paris, Joyce was still writing.

Many of those early notebooks and drafts of *Ulysses* are now held in the National Library of Ireland. Drafts of nine of the eighteen episodes of *Ulysses* are available in digitized form on the library's website: one is the earliest of any draft of *Ulysses* known to survive. Two of the notebooks held in the library also contain the earliest surviving set of notes for the book. Tracing the path of *Ulysses* through these notebooks and drafts is a complex art. Leafing through these copybooks, following the script of 'Penelope' arcing left and right across the page, crossed through and re-worked, gives an intimate glimpse of the writer's work. The notebooks tell more secrets still, striped through with red and blue and green crayon as Joyce mapped where each line had been used in an episode. Somewhere within those notebooks were the pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass that made their way from Joyce's note-taking to his finished drafts. And those notebooks are now available to all to read online. The digital *Ulysses* unearths another side to this fascinating book: it lays open the art of invention.

ULYSSES

RESOURCE PACK 2018

This resource pack was made possible
with assistance from the Arts Council

Written by Carol Taaffe

Compiled by James M. O'Connor

Production Photography by Ros Kavanagh

Artwork by Robert Berry and Eoghan Kidney

Designed by Mandy Horton

For more information on this resource pack and the Abbey Theatre's educational work please contact:

Phil Kingston Community and Education Manager
phil.kingston@abbeytheatre.ie

or visit – www.abbeytheatre.ie/get-involved/schools/