

A History and Experience of Bloomsday in Lisbon 2012-2022

História e experiência do Bloomsday em Lisboa 2012-2022

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Abstract: *This text is an account of “Bloomsday” (a celebration of the day in which James Joyce’s Ulysses is set) in Lisbon in the years 2012-2022, from the perspective of the director of the event. I have always tried to interweave Ireland, Portugal and Brazil in the encounter with Joyce with ourselves and our sounds in language and music, with our diverse locations, and with the different translations of Ulysses. The vision has always been to combine entertainment and a subversive joy via music, performative readings and remarks on Ulysses, together with diving deep into the philosophical panorama and profound possibilities of experimenting with language through everyday characters and the experience of life and death within a simple story that encompasses Joyce’s “chaosmos.” Crucially, it is in reading and hearing the text aloud where one enters literature as reality and as a vivid experience. This text also brings up two fascinating reviews of Ulysses which were an inspiration for Bloomsday in 2022: one from 1922 by Shane Leslie (the son of a protestant Anglo-Irish landlord, who converted to Catholicism) where he referred to the book as “literary Bolshevism”; and the other from 1935 by Karl Radek (a Bolshevik leader of the Russian Revolution of 1917) who called it “a heap of dung, crawling with worms.” In their negative critique from opposite ends of the political spectrum, they nevertheless capture the revolutionary spirit and “epic of the human body” of the book in which we are still learning to catch up with and to flourish.*

Keywords: Ulysses; Bloomsday; Lisbon.

Resumo: *Este texto é um relato do “Bloomsday” (uma celebração do dia em que se passa o Ulisses, de James Joyce) em Lisboa, nos anos 2012-2022, a partir da perspectiva do realizador do evento. Sempre procurei entrelaçar Irlanda, Portugal e Brasil no encontro de Joyce conosco e com os nossos sons na linguagem e na música, com as nossas diversas localizações, e com as diferentes traduções de Ulisses. A minha visão sempre foi combinar entretenimento e uma alegria subversiva através da música, leituras performativas e comentários sobre Ulisses,*

juntamente com um mergulho profundo no panorama filosófico e nas profundas possibilidades de experimentação da linguagem através de personagens do cotidiano e da experiência da vida e da morte numa história simples que engloba o “caosmos” de Joyce. De forma crucial, é lendo e ouvindo o texto em voz alta que se entra na literatura como realidade e como experiência vivida. Este texto inclui também duas críticas fascinantes de Ulisses, que serviram de inspiração para o Bloomsday de 2022: uma de 1922, de Shane Leslie (filho de um proprietário protestante anglo-irlandês, que se converteu ao catolicismo), no qual o livro como “bolchevismo literário”; e o outro de 1935, de Karl Radek (um líder bolchevique da Revolução Russa de 1917), que lhe chamou “um monte de esterco, infestado de vermes”. Na sua crítica negativa a partir de extremos opostos do espectro político, eles ainda assim capturam o espírito revolucionário e o “épico do corpo humano” do livro com o qual ainda estamos a aprender a alcançar e a florescer.

Palavras-chave: *Ulisses; Bloomsday; Lisboa.*



The photo above is from my first time directing the Bloomsday event in Lisbon in 2012. Standing, from left to right: Aidan McMahon, Jonathan Weighman, Keith Harle, Norman MacCallum, Bartholomew Ryan; and sitting, from left to right: Amanda Booth, Valerie Braddell, Siobhan Keating, Mary Burke de Lara, Maya Booth.

“Ineluctably constructed upon the incertitude of the void” (Joyce 2018, 650), the celebration of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* on the sixteenth June – known worldwide as Bloomsday – has been flourishing, diversifying, expanding, contracting, and mutating over the last decade in Lisbon, capital of Portugal. What follows here is a text, followed by images of the posters and programs and some photos of the event, to help give an account of the background, evolution, experience, ideas and activity of actors, musicians, orators, designers and organisers – in speaking, thinking, singing and hearing aloud the words of the ‘Blue Book of Eccles’ that occurred from 2012 to 2022. It has taken place in the garden of the residency of the Irish Ambassador in Restelo, on the stage of The Lisbon Players Theatre in Estrela Hall, at the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Campo de Ourique, and on the streets of Cais de Sodré outside the Menina e Moça bookshop-bar by the River Tejo.

A personal and general background of Bloomsday

Coming to direct and perform Bloomsday was something that came upon me accidentally in my first year of living in Lisbon. Although born and raised in Dublin, I never celebrated Bloomsday while I lived in Ireland, but the book became a peripatetic companion in every sense of the word, once I became an itinerant academic, wandering musician and philosophy researcher. Many people have a story to tell on how they first encountered *Ulysses*. I first read the big book of a single day while walking the Camino de Santiago over thirty-four days in June-July 2000 at the age of twenty-three, travelling almost a thousand kilometres by foot with my friend Brian (who subsequently married a girl from Minas Gerais), making our pilgrim way from Roncesvalles to Finisterre in the north of Spain. Not alone in this, there was much in the book that I did not understand, but I savoured the feast of words and heard the music each evening after walking between 15 and 25 kilometres per day.

In 2003, I visited Brazil for the first time as a wide-eyed gringo solo traveller with no knowledge of the Portuguese language except in listening daily to 1970s albums from the great Bahian musician and songwriter Caetano Veloso on my cassette-walkman. I subsequently returned to Brazil three more times for different reasons: in 2015, to give a talk at an international conference on Fernando Pessoa at the University of São Paulo; in 2017, to teach and give seminars on philosophy and literature in various universities (UFES, USP, UFSC, UnB), and then afterwards to follow the trail of the Irish revolutionary and humanitarian Roger Casement on a boat down the Amazon over 2400 kilometres from Leticia in Colombia to Belém da Pará at the mouth of the great river; and in 2020, to write

and record an album, *Jabuti*, in a Zen Buddhist Monastery in Espírito Santo, and then make my way up to the town of Iguatu in the interior of Ceará in the northeast to find out more about the story of my cousin Patrick who had lived and died there. All of these visits incorporated Joyce's work in some way or another. Some of his words entered my songs and album titles; I would teach *Ulysses* and discover the translations of *Finnegans Wake* by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos; and I would write and publish about Casement as a Joycean hero. I read *Finnegans Wake* for the first time with utter incomprehension and occasional delight on a roadtrip through the Baltic countries in 2004 (accompanied by Brian once again); and then when I was employed at Bard College Berlin (2007-2011), I had the opportunity of teaching courses for the first time on *Ulysses*. Thus, by the time I arrived in Lisbon in the autumn of 2011, Joyce had become my go-to travelling companion and a link to both where I came from and where I was going.

Bloomsday began in Dublin on 16 June 1954, when Brian O'Nolan (aka Flann O'Brian/Myles na gCopaleen), Patrick Kavanagh, Anthony Cronin, John Ryan, AJ Leventhal and Tom Joyce (James Joyce's cousin) hired two horse-drawn broughams and set out from the Martello Tower in Sandycove where the architect Michael Scott lived at the time. Instigated by Brian O'Nolan to mark the fifty-year anniversary of the day that *Ulysses* is set, their objective was to visit all the locations of the eighteen episodes of the book. They didn't manage to do so, but it did start a special annual tradition. Imagine: to celebrate a day that did not commemorate a battle, a king or a religious figure; but rather an experimental work of art! The 16 June 1904 was also of course the day that Joyce and Nora Barnacle went on their first proper date.

For the last ten years in Lisbon, we have celebrated Bloomsday in a format that is meant to entertain and to provoke, to communicate the revolutionary power and intertwined eccentricity and universal appeal of the book, and ultimately to try to inspire the audience to read *Ulysses*. Our performance has always lasted approximately an hour and twenty minutes, with at least eight to ten texts chosen, and with three to four musical interludes in between. As, I suppose, the master of ceremonies of the event, I would talk in between the performative readings, walking up and down with my lookalike "ashplant" walking stick, immersing myself into a character dressed a little bit like Joyce and a mix between jester and academic, introducing the texts; making quasi-improvised digressions regarding *Ulysses*, and emphasising the oral and aural experience of the text, its subversive quality, the celebration of the five senses in being alarmingly alive, and its ragged beauty. Every year, a new title and theme was chosen. Here is a list of titles throughout the years (four of them are borrowed from Joyce's *Ulysses* and one is from *Finnegans Wake*):

- 2012: “ReJoyce!”
- 2013: “Suddenly Somebody Else”
- 2014: “Eyes, Walk, Voice”
- 2015: “Chaosmos of Alle”
- 2016: “Language of the Outlaw”
- 2017: “Joyce meets Fernando Pessoa”
- 2018: “Ecological Interpenetrations in Joyce’s Art”
- 2020: “Subversive Joy”
- 2022: “A Shout in the Street”

Throughout these years, Bloomsday would not have happened without the support and organisation of the Irish Association in Portugal, led by the wonderful duo of Siobhan Keating and Aidan McMahon and by the Irish Embassy. Throughout my time, we have had the pleasure in having performed the event in the presence of four Irish Ambassadors: Declan O’Donovan (2012 and 2013), Anne Webster (2014 and 2015), Orla Tunny (2016, 2017 and 2019), and Ralph Victory (2020 and 2022). For the first three years of my time as director, Siobhan and Aidan of the Irish Association came up with the idea for the titles, and they were both central to the conception and choreography of the event. Bloomsday took place in the gardens of the residency of the Irish Ambassador in the first five years of my participation. And in those years, Amanda Booth (actress and translator), Mick Greer (actor, lecturer and Joyce specialist), Siobhan and I discussed and decided what texts from *Ulysses* to use. Then Siobhan, Aidan and I would see what options were available for the music and musicians. The team of actors and musicians has always been an international mix of veteran performers and new arrivals and discoveries in Lisbon. The Lisbon Players’ actors – Amanda Booth, Keith Harle, Valerie Braddell, Jonathan Weightman, Mick Greer, Mary Burke de Lara, Norman MacCallum and Keith Esher Davies – have been regular participants; and Portuguese actresses, such as Paula Lobo Antunes, Maya Booth and Mariana Mourato have also joined the performances, delivering in both English and Portuguese.

“There’s music everywhere”

The music for Bloomsday in Lisbon has ranged from classical to old folk tunes, instrumental compositions to new-indie folk. Irish classic folk ballads that have been performed are “She Moved Through the Fair,” “The Croppy Boy” and “Poor Paddy on the Railway”;

and also “Monto” by George Desmond Hodnett, “Raglan Road” by Patrick Kavanagh, the poem “The Stolen Child” by W.B. Yeats that was put to music by *The Waterboys*; one year we played “Love’s Old Sweet Song” (that reverberates throughout *Ulysses*) on an old gramophone provided by Aidan; and Louise Kakoma sang “Open the Door Softly” in 2013. Giulia Gallina, Judith Retzlik and I have regularly played our songs from our international band *The Loafing Heroes*, such as “Caitlin Maude,” “Dream of the Celt” (with Portuguese novelist João Tordo from the band playing double bass), “Forest” and “Apollo” (from our album *meandertales* [another neologism borrowed from *Finnegans Wake*]), “Gypsy Waltz,” “The Shepherd” (the lyrics are a translation by Richard Zenith of the ninth poem from *O Guardador de Rebanhos* by Fernando Pessoa’s heteronym Alberto Caeiro), and “Love loves to love love” (the title taken from a sentence in the “Cyclops” episode in *Ulysses* [Joyce 318]). Also, regular music contributors have been Billy Corcoran (vocal and guitar) and Carlos Santa Clara (violin) from the Irish folk band *The Melting Pot* (who perform weekly at Lisbon’s oldest Irish pub – called O’Gilins - in Cais do Sodré). Billy sang “The Croppy Boy” (an old 1798 anti-war ballad that turns up throughout *Ulysses*) and “Raglan Road,” and recited lyrics from the folk ballad “McAlpine’s Fusiliers”; and Carlos has accompanied *Loafing Heroes* songs on violin and played Irish reels during some of our musical interludes. Cellist Peter Flanagan performed “Bach Prelude no.1” in 2015; and another Lisbon Players aficionado, David Personne, wrote and performed two instrumental pieces especially for Bloomsday in 2019 and 2020, which we called “We are Contaminated by our Encounters” and “Vagabond.” Conor Gillen and Peter Murphy sang Joyce’s “The Ballad of Persse O’Reilly” from *Finnegans Wake* in 2016; and in 2020, Giulia Gallina even sang “Ho visto Nina volare” by the great Italian singer and poet Fabrizio de André. In 2022, we had the pleasure of bringing in three new musicians for the first time: Conor Riordan (vocal and banjo) who sang “Poor Paddy on the Railway,” Ricardo Quintas (clarinet), and Mariana Costa (vocal and guitar) who sang “She Moved through the Fair.”

Choosing the episodes

Regarding the choice of episodes, even though we always included at least two or three new passages for the first time, there are some sections that we always came back to, such as: Bloom’s idea of putting a gramophone on every grave, and the enigmatic character of the “man in the brown macintosh” in the Graveyard/Hades episode; the cacophony of sounds and cackle and laughter of the barmaids in the Ormond Hotel/Sirens episode;

and the final Molly Bloom soliloquy. The House/Ithaca episode has also always been a favorite, where we include multiple voices reciting sentences in turn, following a formal secular catechism style. Nearly all of the actors present on the day performed the sections in the House/Ithaca episode, such as, for example, on the “affinities between the moon and woman” (Joyce 2008, 654-655) and the section on “Bloom’s admiration of water” (Joyce 2008, 624-625). The Brothel/Circe episode, that midnight carnival, which Declan Kiberd called “the book’s unconscious” (Kiberd 2009, 229), offers multiple possibilities. On more than a few occasions, we have performed an edited version of the trial of Bloom, and we also have gathered texts that convey apocalypse. It is Dublin’s Walpurgis Night, and I always return to these lines from Goethe’s *Faust* when preparing for the episode:

World of magic, land of dreams!
We have entered you, it seems.
Wisp, lead well and show your paces;
We must get there, we must hurry
In these wild, wide-open places!
(Goethe 123 [lines 3871-3875]¹)

The Barney Kiernan’s Pub/Cyclops episode often gets the most laughter on Bloomsday, and it is easy to let loose with it, as it leaps from the drunken Dublin “many-voiced” (which is what “Polyphemus,” the Cyclops’ name, means) dialogues to the interrupting parodic narratives of the epic form. We have utilized both these aspects, such as “the Citizen” being introduced as “the figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower” (Joyce 284), and the bigoted words, gestures and berating of Bloom which reveals both a humorous and sinister atmosphere. The question of “the nation” is brought up, and I have always found it crucial that out of the sixteen so-called leaders of the Irish 1916 Rebellion who were executed, only one is mentioned in *Ulysses*: Roger Casement. He is slipped into a conversation in the Cyclops episode, as it is the year 1904 after all when Casement had delivered his damning report on what was happening in the jungles of the Congo with the murderous extraction of raw rubber under King Leopold II of Belgium. Casement then went to work as a British consul in Brazil from 1906 to 1912, and was soon investigating crimes against humanity again because of more barbaric brutality in the extraction of rubber along the Amazon and Putumayo rivers. From the Congo to the Amazon, Casement knew all about rivers, having spent so much time on them, and was immersed in multiple identities, exile, and the rise of nationalism and the trauma of colonialism. Here was a “twosome twimind” (Joyce 188), whose mother was Catholic,

and his father Protestant; who was both a decorated Knight of the British Empire and a radical Irish revolutionary nationalist. He was the only one of the sixteen leaders executed from the 1916 Rebellion in Dublin who was killed outside Ireland, and he was the only one given a full British public trial and subsequently hanged (rather than shot) as a traitor. In the story and figure of Casement, one could imagine that the author of the great river-book *Finnegans Wake* would have greatly admired the humanitarian and multifaceted personality. During Bloomsday in 2016 (the centenary of the 1916 Rebellion and death of Casement) which we called “the language of the outlaw,” one of us read out an extract from a speech Casement gave in Antrim in 1905:

Remember that a nation is a very complex thing - it never does consist, it never has consisted solely of one blood or of one simple race. It is like a river, which rises far off in the hills and has many sources, many converging streams before it becomes one great stream. But just as each river has its peculiar character, its own individual charm of clearness of water, strength of current, picturesqueness of scenery, or commercial importance in the highways of the world – so every nation has its own peculiar attributes, its prevailing characteristics, its subtle spiritual atmosphere - and these it must retain if it is to be itself (Mitchell 28).

The inclusion of *Finnegans Wake*

In the last four or five years, we have always included one or two passages from *Finnegans Wake*, such as a part of the final soliloquy of ALP (which Amanda Booth has daringly dived into a couple of times, and then reemerged from the deeps transformed); the description of “Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand” (Joyce 4) and the section on the “prankquean” (Joyce 21-23) (both so vividly performed by Mick Greer); and passages of the gossiping of the washerwomen by the River Liffey. Bringing *Finnegans Wake* into the mix has always been a surprising joy for the performers and audience, an attempt to set free this impossible (in the Kierkegaardian sense²) book, and let it simply be heard in all its mad, multilayered glory. It is also a taste of what a few of us have often talked about doing in the near future, that is in performing a *Finnegans Wake* event every year after dark, in the dead of winter, six months after 16 June.

Finally, incorporating *Finnegans Wake* into Bloomsday in Lisbon, within a landscape of the Portuguese language, has allowed me to link Ireland and Brazil when talking of the impact and presence of Joyce’s “book of the dark” in Brazil that few Irish and British people know about. This includes letting more people know about the twenty-two selected sections that the de Campo brothers translated from *Finnegans Wake*, and

that was published in a book in 1962 under the title *Panaroma do Finnegans Wake*, and the new translations of *Finnegans Wake*;³ and how Joyce's last book inspired the Brazilian concrete poetry movement that began in the 1950s and later Paulo Leminski's radically experimental novel *Catatau*. There was perhaps an impact, albeit indirectly, of *Finnegans Wake* (via Haroldo and Augusto de Campos) on Caetano Veloso and the Tropicalia movement in popular music in the late 1960s, with the composer's particular fondness for Joyce's word "verbivocovisual" (Joyce 341) – which was central to the concrete poets' manifestos – that he mentioned in his autobiography *Verdade Tropical* [Tropical Truth] (Veloso 226⁴).

The extraordinary year of 1922

As is well known, *Ulysses* was published by Sylvia Beach and her bookshop Shakespeare and Co. in Paris on the 2 February 1922, Joyce's fortieth birthday. What a year 1922 was in the history of the twentieth century in Europe. This was the same year that saw not only the publication of *Ulysses*, but also T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, the first part of *Sodom and Gomorrah* from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the first publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* in an English translation, and when Rainer Maria Rilke wrote *Sonnets to Orpheus*. It was also the year that the Irish Civil War began, when Mussolini marched on Rome and formed a Fascist government in Italy, and Stalin became general secretary in the Soviet Union. In exile in Vienna, Georg Lukács finished probably the most famous and influential work of Western Marxism of the twentieth century – *History and Class Consciousness* – which was then published in 1923 – the same year as Sigmund Freud's *Ego and the Id*. Lukács' biographer Arpad Kadarkay comments on these two publications (which could apply to nearly all the groundbreaking works of 1922 mentioned above): "Both works express, in their own way, the crisis of the modern soul, whose alphabet was written by war and revolution" (Kadarkay 274).

"Literary Bolshevism" or "a heap of dung": two reviews of *Ulysses*

There are two extremely negative reviews of *Ulysses* which inspired our approach to Bloomsday in 2022. I read these reviews of *Ulysses* as actually brilliantly and incisively capturing Joyce's revolution, and as the starting point for our "Shout in the Street" celebrations in Cais do Sodré. From opposite ends of the political spectrum, the first is by Shane Leslie, the son of a protestant Anglo-Irish landlord, who converted to

Catholicism and was first cousin to Winston Churchill, and who wrote in his review: “As a whole, the book must remain impossible to read . . . [It is] literary Bolshevism. It is experimental, anti-conventional, anti-Christian, chaotic, totally unmoral.” (Deming 207). Joyce indeed embraces and encompasses the “literary Bolshevism” as Leslie calls it, which is experimental, anti-conventional, dangerous, blasphemous, anti-colonial, and against sexual repression. What Leslie and so many other critics fail to see, understand or take seriously is the great humour and critical affirmation of the book. In a letter to Oliver St. John Gogarty (who was his closest literary friend in Dublin), Leslie uses the word “Bolshevik” again, writing: “If we are to stand for a Gaelic and Catholic Ireland *Ulysses* has to go by the board. It is Bolshevism applied to our unhappy literary movement—like the opening of the Cloaca maxima. It sweeps all the small fry before it in its muddy and rancid spate” (Rauchbauer 164). Gogarty is famously immortalised from the first lines onwards in *Ulysses* as “Stately, plump, buck Mulligan” (Joyce 3); and as for the “Cloaca maxima”, it is Latin for “Greatest Sewer”, and was one of the world’s earliest sewage systems located in Rome. There is so much fun and linking to be made here, but the reference to sewage leads us onto the second review.

The second review is from 1934 by Karl Radek at the Soviet Writers’ Congress, and the title of his speech was “Contemporary World Literature and the Tasks of Proletarian Art”. Born to a Jewish-Litvak in Lemberg which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and is now Lviv in Ukraine), Radek was one of the most important Bolshevik leaders of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and close associate of Lenin, Trotsky and then Stalin (before being executed in one of Stalin’s purges), and who describes the book as “a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope” (McSmith 196). Radek’s venom marvellously captures central aspects of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. For Joyce, “dung” (faeces and rot) and “worms” (animals that recycle organic material in the soils of the earth) are the very fabric of existence that are played out on an equal footing as the sublime art of Mozart and Shakespeare; the “microscope” alludes to the obsessive detail in and of space and time through the last two books; and the “cinema apparatus” as moving image alludes to the cinematic vision which is part of what Joyce was trying to capture in *Ulysses*. Finally, halfway through the Circe episode, the whore mistress Bela Cohen (now changed to Bello) calls Leopold Bloom a “Dungdevourer!” (Joyce 498).

Joyce is of course indebted to and directly inspired by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri, Giambattista Vico, William Shakespeare, and Giordano Bruno, but Leopold Bloom is much more of a Spinozist than any of these colossal European thinkers.

For I would argue that for Bloom, to quote Spinoza, “The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (Spinoza 35 [Part II, proposition 7]); and “. . .no one has yet determined what a body can do . . .” (Spinoza 71 [Part III, Proposition 2]). As Frank Budgen famously recounted in conversation with Joyce:

[Joyce:] “Among other things, my book is the epic of the human body . . . In my book, the body lives in and moves through space and is the home of a full human personality. The words I write are adapted to express first one of its functions then another. In *Lestrygonians* the stomach dominates and the rhythm of the episode is that of the peristaltic movement.”

[Budgen:] “But the minds, the thoughts of the characters . . .”

[Joyce:] “If they had no body they would have no mind. . . . It’s all one. Walking towards his lunch my hero, Leopold Bloom, thinks of his wife, and says to himself, ‘Molly’s legs are out of plumb’. At another time of day he might have expressed the same thought without any underthought of food. But I want the reader to understand always through suggestion rather than direct statement” (Budgen 21).

Joyce’s vision of *Ulysses* as “the epic of the human body” has always been at the heart of Bloomsday for us in Lisbon over the last ten years, remembering that Joyce wrote in a letter to Budgen only a few months before the publication of *Ulysses*, “*Ich bin der [das] Fleisch der stets bejaht*” [I am the flesh that always affirms] (Ellmann 502), rather than “*Ich bin der Geist der stets verneinet*” [I am the spirit that always negates] (Goethe 42 [line 1338]) – which Mephistopheles had declared in Goethe’s *Faust*.

Locations, approaches and themes in 2017-2022

Our Bloomsday celebrations have been predominantly performed in English, but each year we delve deeper into the Portuguese language, given that the location is Lisbon. The first proper bilingual Bloomsday occurred in 2017 when we juxtaposed Joyce with Fernando Pessoa, the event taking place at the latter’s home, a museum and cultural centre for the poet: the Casa Fernando Pessoa. If we were already presenting something polyphonic, now with Pessoa and his heteronyms, there really was a quite a crowd! That year Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis, Fernando Pessoa, Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, the Citizen, Molly Bloom, and others shared the stage together, and we shifted from English to Portuguese and back. This was also the first year (during my involvement) that we took Bloomsday out from the residency of the Irish Ambassador to another location. In 2018, I made a sort of “sabbatical” or *intermezzo*, as I was invited to give a performative talk at

the Henrik Ibsen Museum in Oslo. Invited by John Fitzgerald and the Oslo Bloomsday Society there, my title was “An Epic of the Human Body: The Art of Living / Art of Dying in Joyce’s *Ulysses*.”

In 2019, I returned to Lisbon as director, and, for the second time, we chose an alternative location. This time it was at Estrela Hall, the mythic theatre of the Lisbon Players that had been running an inclusive stage and international cultural centre for thespians, musicians, light and sound technicians, directors, playwrights and curious-minded souls since 1947. Tragically and shamefully, Estrela Hall was forced to close down in 2021 because the British government – who had been given the building as a gift by the Portuguese government over a hundred years ago – sold the premises off to be knocked down so luxury condominium apartments could be built. Talk about contributing to ripping the soul out of a city. To add insult to injury, in the destruction of one of the few active British cultural centres in Portugal, the new buildings have been called the *Quarteirão inglês* [English block]. Estrela Hall hosting Bloomsday proved a perfect match – given that most of the performers had been on stage with the Lisbon Players at some point or another, and the mercurial, eclectic, multinational inclusivity of the theatre group would have made Joyce completely at home – as a lover of Shakespeare and Ibsen, and as a mischievous “chaosmopolitan.”⁵ That year, the title was: “Ecological Interpenetrations in Joyce’s Art.”

The advent of Covid-19 in 2020 entering all our lives did not stop us from going on with Bloomsday. Thus, with the encouragement from the new Irish Ambassador Ralph Victory, we performed it online. Musician Carlos Santa Clara and myself set up headquarters at my apartment at the edge of Graça in Lisbon. Carlos – with his fiddle, and me - with my voice, ashplant walking stick, hat and dickie bow, we tuned in with other actors and musicians and transmitted Bloomsday to people from all over the globe. Given the year and state of the world, the title was: ‘Subversive Joy: Zooming into James Joyce’s *Ulysses* amid viral technologies, apocalypse, pandemia and pandemonium’ (with an inspired poster designed by Hugo Santos). Unfortunately, in 2021, Covid-19 got its clutches into me two days before Bloomsday, and so we had to wait until the following year to bring *Ulysses* to the streets.

To close, let me say a few words about Bloomsday in 2022, the centenary of the publication of that book. I feel that this was a Bloomsday that brought together various strands and streams that we had traversed over the years. Portugal, Ireland, Britain and Brazil were present, where the resonance and reverberations of both the English and Portuguese language were intertwined and with a little dose of the Irish language. We were

navigating once again between the establishment and chaos to manifest Joyce’s “chaosmos” (Joyce 118) – with the Irish Embassy supporting us alongside our efforts to be subversive and anarchic (hence the style and colour of the poster that year, beautifully designed by Marta Saraiva, capturing the revolutionary *Zeitgeist* of both the era and the book). We had a team of veteran Bloomsday performers and new voices from Portugal and beyond, and we had finally taken Bloomsday out onto the streets – on the pink street in Cais do Sodré, in front of the Menina e Moça bookshop-bar. This bar was in fact our host that day, led by its exuberant owner and lover of literature and spontaneity – Cristina Ovídio. Making a deal with the other bars and restaurants on the street, they switched the music off, and for nearly ninety minutes *Ulysses* took central stage in the centre of Lisbon to a mixture of an expectant crowd and surprised passers-by – locals and tourists. The title was “A Shout in the Street,” which is a quote from Stephen Dedalus from the School/Nestor episode when responding to his pompous, anti-semitic employer Mr. Deasy on where God might be found (Joyce 34).

For 2023, the title and theme for Bloomsday in Lisbon is “The Incertitude of the Void.” We have come full circle, but it is anyone’s guess to what is ahead of us in the next few years. At the end of the day, when 16 June comes around, if you cannot understand *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*, no bother, just read the text aloud, and feast on the sound and flow and rupture of the malleable words. And we just may begin to grasp what Shem the Penman had said: “Do you hear what I am seeing . . .?” (Joyce 193).

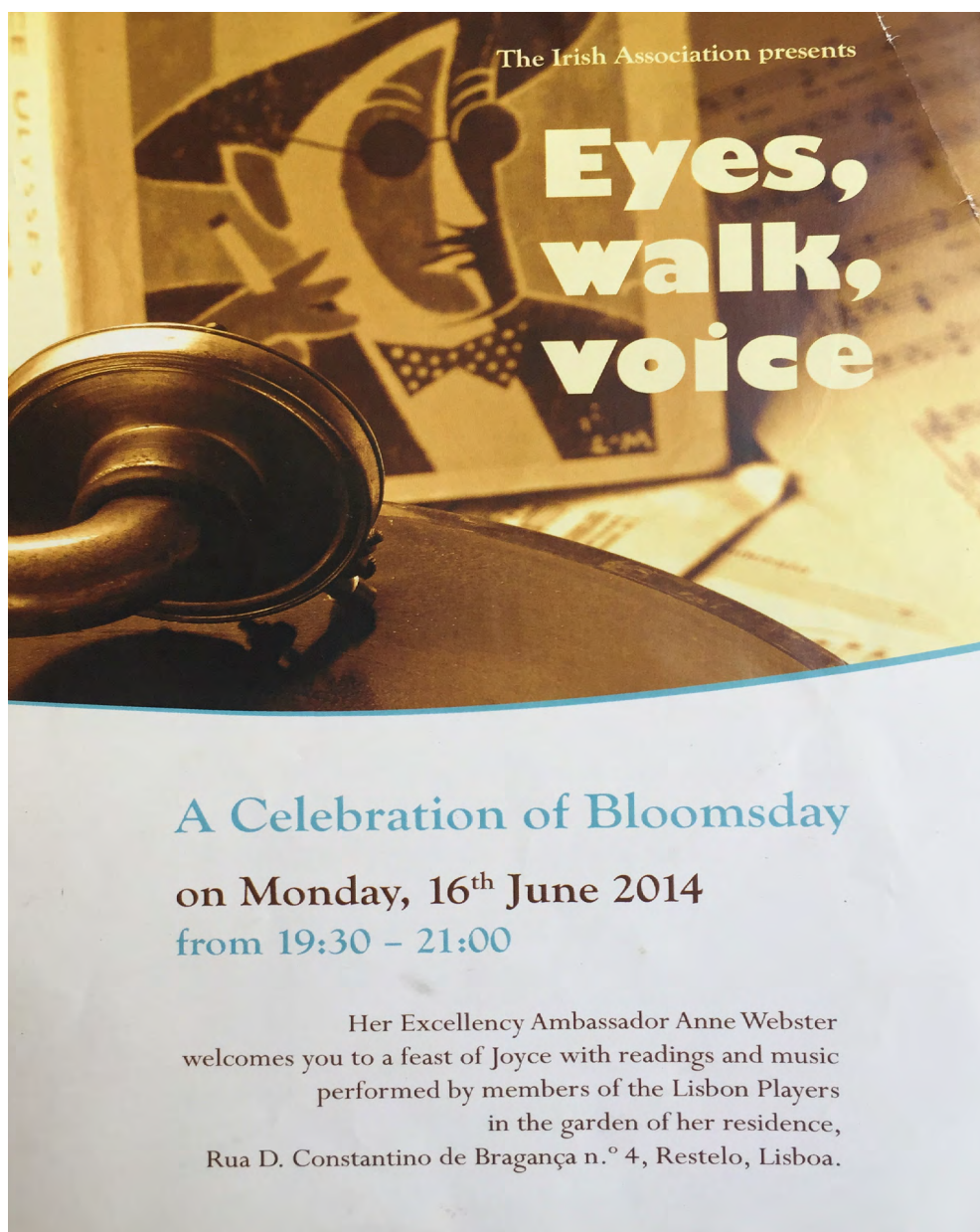
Appendix:
Photos and Posters: Bloomsday 2012-2022



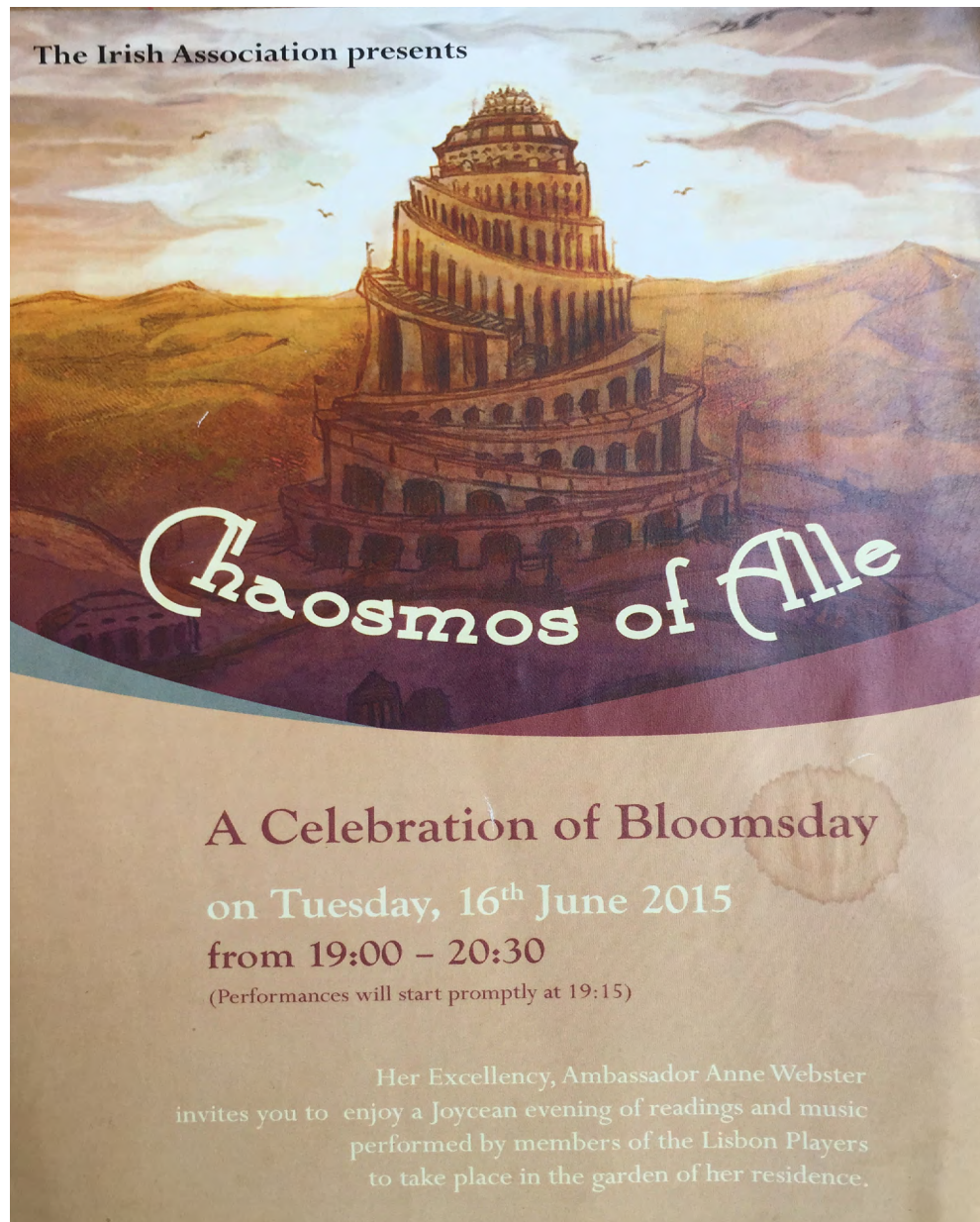
Front cover of the program for Bloomsday 2012.



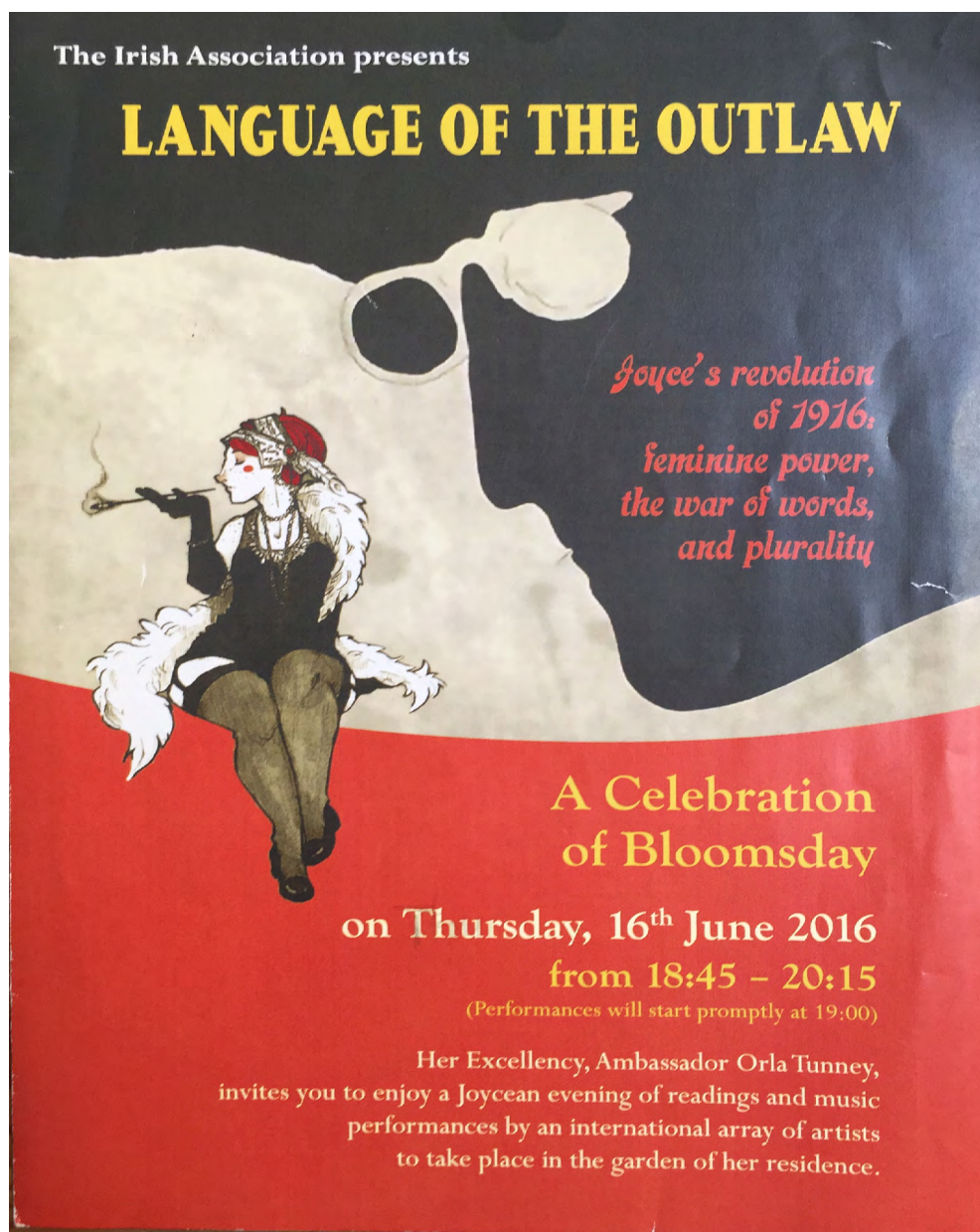
Front cover of the program for Bloomsday 2013.



Front cover of the program for Bloomsday 2014.



Front cover of the program for Bloomsday 2015.



Front cover of the program for Bloomsday 2016.



Poster for Bloomsday 2017, designed by Mark Fitzgerald.



Bloomsday at the Casa Fernando Pessoa, 2017.

Standing from left to right: Billy Corcoran, Kieran Hennigan, Giulia Gallina, Catarina Rodrigues, Jonathan Weightman, Mariana Mourato, Keith Harle.

Sitting from left to right: Carlos Santa Clara, Amanda Booth, Bartholomew Ryan, Mick Greer.

ORGANISED BY: The Oslo
Bloomsday Society
f www.facebook.com/bloomsdayoslo

2018 THE Oslo
Bloomsday
CELEBRATIONS

Programme:

16th
June
16:00

The Bloomsday Lectures
16.00 at the Ibsen Museum,
Henrik Ibsens gate 26, Oslo

*Entrance fee: Adult 200 kr - Student 150 kr
For pre-paid tickets contact – john@irishart.no
Tickets available on the door – cash or VIPPS only
For more info see - www.facebook.com/bloomsdayoslo*

☞ **Opening address**
James Sherry, Deputy Head of Mission
Embassy of Ireland

☞ **The Epic of the Human Body:
Art of Living / Art of Dying,
in Joyce's Ulysses**
Dr. Bartholomew Ryan, IFILNOVA
New University of Lisbon

☞ **EPIPHANY:**
Extract from a work in progress –
centred on James Joyce's 'The Dead'
Written and performed by Declan Gorman

☞ **Wine reception**



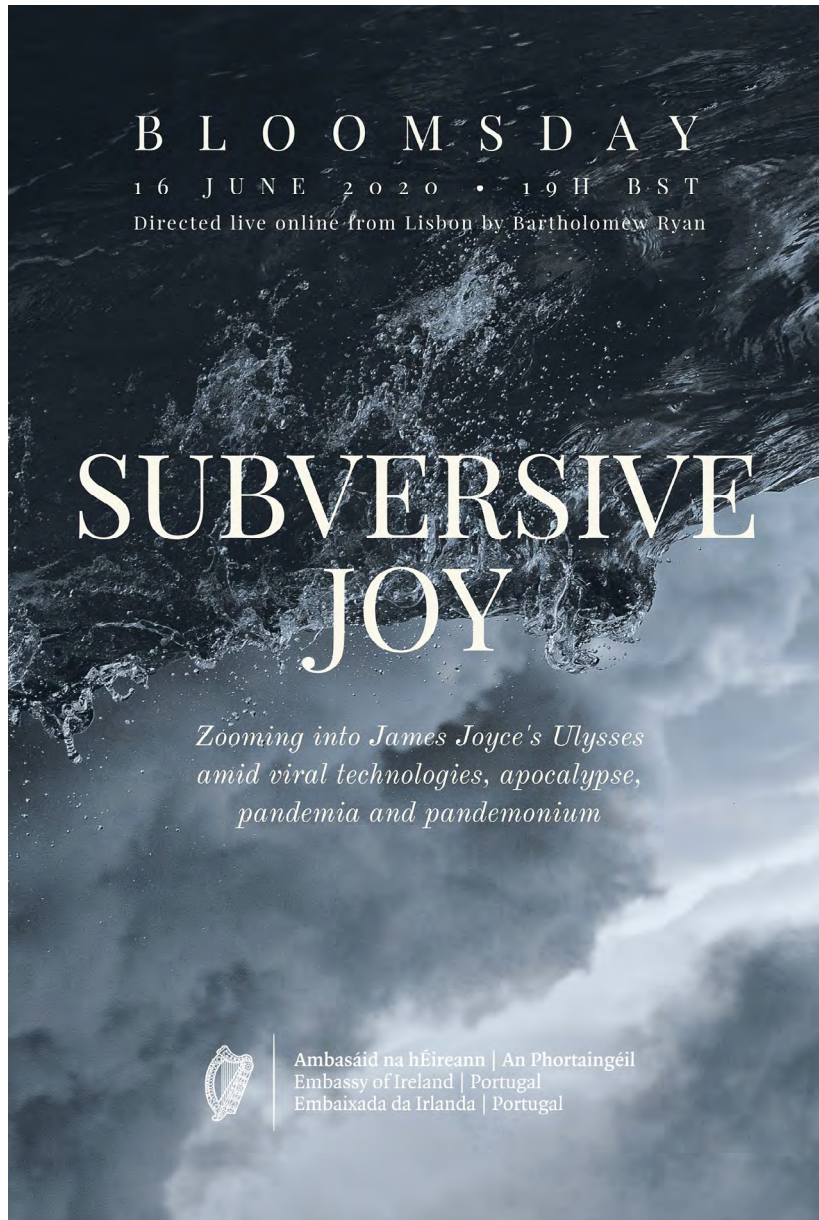
Bloomsday in Oslo 2018.

From left to right: John Fitzgerald, Declan Gorman, Bartholomew Ryan.





Poster for Bloomsday 2019, designed by Vanessa Rola.



Poster for Bloomsday 2020, designed by Hugo Santos.

Supported by the Embassy of Ireland

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BLOOMSDAY

**A SHOUT
IN THE STREET**

**A CELEBRATION OF JAMES JOYCE'S
REVOLUTIONARY NOVEL ULYSSES**

CENTENARY OF THE PUBLICATION

**16TH JUNE
THURSDAY
2022 | 18H45**

**MENINA E MOÇA
LIVRARIA BAR**

CAIS DO SODRÉ, LISBOA

DIRECTED BY BARTHOLOMEW RYAN

**WITH AMANDA BOOTH, MARIA ROMANA
JONATHAN WEIGHTMAN, MAYA BOOTH
KEITH HARLE, RICARDO QUINTAS,
SHORTSLEEVE CONOR & LOAFING HERO.**

Live performance on the pink street with music and words

Poster for Bloomsday 2022, designed by Mara Saraiva.

The following three photographs during Bloomsday 2022 were taken by Mariana Santana.



The pink street in front of the Menina e Moça bookshop-bar in Cais do Sodré on Bloomsday in 2022.



Bloomsday 2022. From left to right: Jonathan Weightman, Mariana Costa, Bartholomew Ryan, Cristina Ovídio, Ricardo Quintas, Maya Booth, Conor Riordan, Amanda Booth, Keith Harle.



il se promène, lisant au livre de lui-même.



Poster for Bloomsday 2022 [in Portuguese], designed by Mara Saraiva.

Notes

- ¹ Original: “*In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre / Sind wir, scheint es, eingegangen. / Führ uns gut und mach dir Ehre / Daß wir vorwärts bald gelangen / In den weiten, öden Räumen!*”.
- ² As Søren Kierkegaard’s pseudonym – Johannes de silentio - would write in *Fear and Trembling*: “One became great by expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he who expected the impossible became the greatest of all.” (Kierkegaard 1983, 16).
- ³ This includes the complete translation of the book, *Finnegans Rivolta*, which was organized by Dirce Waltrick do Amarante, and translated by a group of scholars. This edition was published by Iluminuras (São Paulo) in 2022; and there is a forthcoming translation by Caetano Galindo, who already beautifully translated *Ulysses*, which was published by Companhia das Letras in 2012.
- ⁴ Bizarrely, in the English translation and edition, that was published five years after the original version, the sentence mentioning verbivocovisual (or as Veloso writes it: “verbi-voco-visual”) is omitted. See Veloso, Caetano. *Tropical Truth: a story of music and revolution in Brazil*. Translated by Isabel de Sena, London: Bloomsbury, 2003, p. 136.
- ⁵ I came up with this term when writing and subsequently publishing an article on Joyce and the city. See: Ryan, Bartholomew. *Chaosmopolitanism: Reconfiguring James Joyce’s cities of this order and exiled selves*, E-book: *Conceptual Figures of Fragmentation and Reconfiguration*, edited by N. Conceição, A. Dias Fortes, G. Ferraro, N. Fonseca, M. F. Molder, 2021, pp.73-100. <https://doi.org/10.34619/526h-q85n>.

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