

## *Ulysses at the Movies*

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James Joyce loved movies, and he seems from the first to have thought that *Ulysses* could be successfully translated to film. At various times in his life he actively thought about the possibilities. He considered the great Russian filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein and the German documentarian Walter Ruttmann as superb candidates to make such a film,<sup>1)</sup> and favored the actor George Arliss over Charles Laughton as a possible cinematic Bloom.<sup>2)</sup> But *Ulysses* was never filmed in Joyce's lifetime, and it wasn't until Joseph Strick secured the film rights that the first *Ulysses* film, made in black-and-white, was released in 1967. More than thirty years later, in 2003, the Irish director Sean Walsh made a second independent film of Joyce's

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1) See Gösta Werner, *Nordic Rejoycings 1982: in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of James Joyce*. Norberg: Uno Johnasons Tryckeri AB, 1982: 125-136.

2) Letter to George Joyce, dated 28 October 1935. *Letters of James Joyce*. Vol. III: 380.

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*Ulysses*. Titled *Bloom*, this recent film was made in color. We will, of course, never know how Joyce would have liked these two films of *Ulysses* that are now available. But it is probably safe to say that he might have been pleased that the films were made by independent filmmakers who produced them not to make money, but as labors of love. *Bloom* is Sean Walsh's first feature length film, but Joseph Strick had behind him a distinguished record of making experimental films when he undertook the filming of *Ulysses* in 1966, including a cinematic adaptation of Jean Genet's play *The Balcony*, which was released in 1963. The financing of the Strick film came through a consortium of British producers called British Lion Films, and cost only about a half a million dollars to produce. Strick insisted on complete artistic control and final director's cut. His *Ulysses* was made in black and white over a four month period in the city of Dublin in 1966, with some additional footage — notably the Barbary apes — shot on the island of Gibraltar. After some difficulty, Strick obtained approval from the British Board of Film Censors, although he ran into censorship problems at the Cannes film festival, and the film remained banned in Ireland until the year 2000. But it was shown in England, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. And Joseph Strick and his co-scriptwriter, Fred Haines, were eventually nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1967.<sup>3)</sup> Unlike Strick, who had no formal film training, Sean Walsh has a diploma in film and television from London's South Thames College. In the late 1980s he returned to Dublin and transformed a failing audio-video company into Milbrook Studios. He began by making a number of Irish documentaries, including one on Gaelic games, and another on Irish soldiers who fought for the British Army in World War I. Walsh spent years trying to obtain funding for his film. Although he finally received some help from the Irish Government Tax Scheme

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3) For a production history of the Strick film, see Chapter 2, "Joseph Strick and the Modern Avant-Garde" in Margot Norris, *Ulysses*, 15-29.

and a small subsidy from the Irish Film Board, Walsh chiefly raised the required 5 million euros privately.<sup>4)</sup> Strick, Walsh too held out for complete artistic control, and *Bloom* was released by Odyssey Pictures in 2003. That year, the actress Angeline Ball, who portrays Molly Bloom in the film, won the Irish Film and Television Award for Best Actress (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0050337/awards>).

Although it is by no means clear that Joyce thought of a possible film of *Ulysses* as made for the non-reader, both Joseph Strick and Sean Walsh clearly intended their films to be accessible to novices who had never read the book. Joseph Strick set a complex challenge for himself in making his film. "Our obligation is to make a film good enough for people who have read the book. Our opportunity is to create an entirely new experience for those who have not," he told interviewer Stephen Watts in 1966 (D11). Sean Walsh, on the other hand, explicitly claims to have made his film for the non-reader. *CNN.com* reported a phone conversation with Sean Walsh on June 9, 2004. "What came into my head," he said, speaking by phone from Dublin, "is here's *Ulysses*, supposedly the greatest novel ever written, and nobody's read the damn thing, especially here in Ireland. It's on everybody's shelf, but nobody's read more than five pages of it" (<http://www.cnn.com/2004/SHOWBIZ/Movies/06/09/film.joyce.reut/>). I find this claim both hyperbolic and disingenuous, but it demonstrates Walsh's claim to have made *Bloom* chiefly for a non-academic, mainstream audience. Joyce might well have been pleased by the aims of both films to reach popular audiences. He is said to have told his friend Arthur Power, "the artist must not write for the arty" (73). Yet inevitably both films of *Ulysses* are viewed by a dual audience of newcomers and scholars, of film-goers and literary critics, and both have undertaken responsibility for preserving,

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4) The review of the Walsh film in *The Observer*, 23 November 2003, gives much valuable background on Sean Walsh and the financing of the film. <http://www.ulysses.ie/news/article.asp?NID = 119&NCID = 10&T = N&Print =>

honoring, interpreting and hopefully enhancing a work that is increasingly touted as the greatest novel of the twentieth century. How they have met this challenge has been a matter of controversy with respect to the Strick film, and will no doubt be debated also with respect to the Walsh film, as Richard Brown suggests in his review of the film. “*Bloom* undoubtedly has the capacity to delight and animate and probably also infuriate both these audiences,” he writes in *The James Joyce Broadsheet* (66:October 2003). My own response to the question of their success begins by maintaining that both films have much to offer the non-reader, the ordinary person who has never read *Ulysses* and who feels intimidated by the text. I also feel that both films honor Joyce’s work by respecting his language and preserving much of it verbatim, and they successfully clarify the novel’s plot and the complex triangular relationships of the characters, although to considerable expense to the novel’s literary experimentalism.

Films not only offer a presentation of *Ulysses*, but inevitably produce an interpretation as well. Sean Walsh takes a great liberty with the novel’s chronology by opening the film with Molly Bloom’s soliloquy — a maneuver that makes the adultery theme the film’s fore-grounded frame. When this maneuver is contrasted to Strick’s strategy, we see the films producing significantly divergent interpretations of the family dynamic for a novice viewer. Strick’s film repeatedly underlines the loss of the son as the underlying cause of the marital problem that creates the conditions for adultery. This allows him to stress Stephen’s role as a solution to the problem: that Bloom’s ability to be a parent again, for a time, even if only as a surrogate parent to a young man, restores his confidence as a husband. The Strick film consequently pays ample attention to Bloom’s paternalism to Stephen. It lingers over Bloom and Stephen sharing cocoa in the Eccles Street kitchen after Nighttown, and narrates their companionable urination in the garden. These scenes implicitly emphasize the father-son relationship as the key to the marital resolution. Walsh’s opening, on the other hand, diffuses the importance of the father-son

theme,<sup>5)</sup> by grounding Molly's marital grievances in Bloom's multiple minor infidelities. One of the ways the Strick film tightened the focus on the Stephen-Bloom-Molly triangle was to leave out figures who remain off-scene in the novel, like Martha Clifford and Milly Bloom. Walsh's film not only preserves Bloom's secret correspondence with Martha Clifford but shows Molly stumbling onto him while he is writing one of his secret letters to her. *Bloom*, the film, also diffuses the importance of the lost son by not only leaving the absent Milly Bloom in the story, but by showing scenes never actually represented in the novel — such as Milly leaving home and kissing young Bannon. By making the warm and paternal Bloom childless, the Strick film places far more pressure on the significance of a partly orphaned Stephen coming into Bloom's life on this day. Walsh, in contrast, gives greater emphasis to Stephen as a character in his own right, with his own sorrows and torments. We are given a much keener sense of Stephen's close relationship to his mother and his pain at having disappointed her on her deathbed. The Walsh film also gives much greater play to Stephen's quick wit and nervous energy, and his need for intellectual engagement demonstrated in the library Shakespeare lecture, which the Strick film leaves out altogether. Instead of stressing the role of Rudy at the root of the Bloom's marital problems, Walsh seems to shift the blame to Bloom's perverse sexuality, which receives much more ample treatment in *Bloom*, where his more explicit voyeurism, masturbation, and masochism counterbalances the greater lustiness and bawdiness of Walsh's Molly.

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5) Sean Walsh told Mark Harkin in his *Three Monkeys Online* interview: 'A lot has been written about the connection between Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, about how their journeys cross over and are then united. I was less interested in that. What really appealed to me was what was happening to Leopold Bloom as a man, what was happening to Molly Bloom as a woman, and what was happening to Stephen Dedalus as a young man. If there were connections there, fine, but I was more interested in the individual.'

As a result of these differences, the two films each imply a different forecast for the fate of the Bloom marriage. The Strick film ends by showing Molly's face dissolve in ecstasy as she and Bloom make love on Howth Head — thereby suggesting more strongly a possible sexual reconciliation between husband and wife. This prospect seems much more remote in Walsh's *Bloom*, where Molly's emphatic "I can't wait until Monday," gives her anticipation of Boylan's return much greater urgency than her remembered "Yes" to Bloom on Howth at the end of the movie. Unlike the novel, which forces readers to decide their own interpretations of the novel's outcome, the films of *Ulysses* subtly influence viewers with their own cinematic interpretations.

How do the *Ulysses* films convey the novel's stylistic accomplishments and experimentation to the novice viewer? We could say that neither film effectively translates the elaborate literary parodies of the later chapters into film with the exception of "Circe." One might argue that conveying literary experimentalism is impossible in film, but Mary Ellen Bute's remarkable 1965 adaptation of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* brilliantly challenges this assertion. The Strick film was criticized by Richard Ellmann, who wrote in *The New York Review of Books*, "The film is not without conscience, but it has no innovations commensurate with those of its original" (15 June 1967: 13). The same thing could be said of Walsh's *Bloom* even though in an e-mail interview with the online journal *The Simpleton*, the director claimed that he "wanted to give an audience some insight into the many tricks and techniques employed by Joyce" (<http://www.simpleton.com/20040614.html>). The unsigned *Simpleton* review, one of the most thorough and informed produced to date, puts the matter concisely when it notes, "both movies are much better at dramatizing the first third of the book ... than at depicting the stylistic explosions in the latter two thirds." But Strick makes some interesting moves, nonetheless, that deserve attention. As Stephen walks along Sandymount Strand and closes his eyes to see what it might be like to be blind, Strick makes the screen black for a few

seconds, thereby placing the viewer visually inside Stephen's closed eyes. Walsh films the same scene but without the self-reflexive play — even though Richard Brown reports that Sean Walsh once worked as a ski instructor for the blind. Strick also intercuts Stephen's ruminations on procreation and fecundity with what might be thought of as visual objective correlatives — archeological fertility figures or abstract figures of curves — that suggest the sort of subliminal images evoked by such thoughts. Strick also uses a device seemingly borrowed from Brechtian agitprop theater in his filming of the pressroom in "Aeolus." He puts some of that chapter's provocative headlines — such as "You Can Do It!" — on wall placards, and shows a newsboy carrying a board that reads "K.M.A." Sean Walsh generally avoids avant-garde gestures of this kind, although he occasionally gives fantasy visual form in the film. For example, when Bloom imagines a Middle Eastern bazaar on his way to the butchershop, he is suddenly seen walking through one. And in the "Circe" episode, Walsh resorts to even more dramatic special effects than does Strick. Strick's version of Nighttown is funnier and sillier than that produced by Walsh's sharper pornographic edge and special effects, and *The Simpleton* review finds the Strick Nighttown episode more effective. "Much of this success is attributable to Strick's formally comic and stagy approach. He draws on a range of carnival tropes, mannered theatrical gestures, and b-movie affectations to get at the chapter's maniacal comedy," it notes. The absence of broad comedy makes Walsh's Nighttown a much darker and psychologically more dangerous place than Strick's. *The Simpleton* review attributes this largely to the casting of Bella Cohen. The reviewer writes, "In *Bloom*, Bella is Maria Lennon, a severe beauty who plays the character in unironic dominatrix fashion. What should be an alternately jolly and horrific scene comes across as serious and creepy. It's a misstep from which *Bloom* doesn't recover." Although I agree with this assessment, I was nonetheless impressed with Walsh's treatment of "Circe," which to my mind has an eerie if troubling beauty. But I regretted the scene's treatment of Bloom's politics —

a topic that deserves a more focused discussion in its own right.

Joseph Strick deliberately set his *Ulysses* at the time of the filming, in the nineteen-sixties — a post-colonial moment when Ireland was already a republic and the novel's Irish historical references had lost much of their urgency and relevance. As Richard Ellmann complained in his review, "There is no hated occupying power in Dublin Castle, and Stephen is at peace with the Irish Government" (12). But by updating the film to a time two decades after World War II, Joseph Strick was able to use anti-Semitism — perceived as much more dangerous after the war than before — to stand in for British imperialism as a global oppressor. His *Ulysses* introduces this theme right at the beginning by cleverly intercutting references to Jews in the "Telemachiad" with images of Bloom. The first occurs when Haines tries to distract Stephen from the touchy subject of Irish and British relations by saying, "I don't want my country to fall into the hands of the Jews." The scene now cuts to Leopold Bloom in his apron, fixing his wife's breakfast tray and feeding the cat — a highly unlikely threat to England. Strick makes the same maneuver in "Nestor," when Mr. Deasy tells Stephen his joke, that Ireland never persecuted the Jews because she never let them in. The film again cuts to Bloom in front of a store window sporting a Star of David. Without a word, it makes Deasy's joke doubly ironic by showing that there are Jews in Dublin anyhow, and if they don't suffer persecution they still suffer bigotry and prejudice. Sean Walsh, in contrast, deliberately plays down the anti-Semitism in "Cyclops." In a 2004 interview, he told Mark Harkin, "I didn't want to have this anti-Semitic thing up there as a beacon, this film about anti-Jewishness in Ireland." ([http://threemonkeysonline.com/threemon\\_article.php?article=Bloom](http://threemonkeysonline.com/threemon_article.php?article=Bloom)). This is entirely reasonable, given that Walsh's *Bloom* is not set after World War II, but is explicitly offered as a period piece, with its date of June 16, 1904 clearly stated at the beginning. *Bloom* could therefore have been expected to retrieve the numerous references to Parnell, to the Phoenix Park murders and the Invincibles, to Sinn Fein

and the quest for Home Rule, and have represented the Viceregal cavalcade crossing Dublin during the “Wandering Rocks” episode. But curiously, the Irish 2003 Walsh film is considerably less politically inflected than Strick’s *Ulysses*, and generally leaves out the novel’s extensive historical and colonial discourses. Joseph Strick also gave his filmed story a socialist edge, especially in the Nighttown sequence where he has Bloom rally the workers to the stirring cadences of the Communist “Internationale.” Not only does give virtually no sense of Ireland’s colonial status at the turn-of-the-century, it also downplays the poverty and grim economic conditions of Dubliners in the novel. With its beautifully nuanced black-and-white cinematography, Strick’s film evokes a much bleaker image of 1960’s Dublin than does Walsh’s sunny and lush color photography of the 1904 city. Strick’s gaunt and raggedy Dilly Dedalus is replaced by a pretty young woman in a smart straw hat in *Bloom*. And Walsh unaccountably appears to elevate the unemployed and ill-educated Gerty MacDowell to the status of a “frustrated young governess,” according to Mark Harkin’s description of her in *Three Monkeys Online Magazine*. In contrast to the Strick film’s dear dirty Dublin, praised by Richard Kain for producing “the same effect as the book, an atmosphere of teeming life in a shabby environment” (351), Sean Walsh gives novice viewers a period Dublin of clean and solid middle-class modernity.

Both films of *Ulysses* are set chiefly in Dublin, although their view of the city is also, ironically, at odds. Joseph Strick justified his decision to set his *Ulysses* in the nineteen-sixties on the grounds that 1904 Dublin no longer really existed in 1966, and that it would have been impossible to bring back the tramlines, for example (Watts, D11). Yet many of his scenes were shot in their original locations. He filmed the opening sequence of “Telemachus” at the Martello tower and the Forty Foot swimming hole in Sandycove. 7 Eccles Street was still standing in 1966, and when Bloom, having forgotten his key, drops into the front entry well to get into his house through the basement kitchen, we see him entering the actual 7 Eccles

Street. Sean Walsh could no longer film this actual house which is now gone. But his substitute is a prosperous, suburban looking townhouse with a front garden, trees, and creeping vines—a setting much closer to Bloom’s fantasy cottage in “Ithaca” (17.1504)<sup>6)</sup> than to his actual home. Although the original Martello tower is still standing and now houses the Joyce Museum, Walsh inexplicably filmed his opening at a different Martello tower, one located on Dalkey Island south of Dublin, according to the published production drawings (*Images from ‘Bloom.’* n.p). This decision produces a more pastoral setting for the film’s opening scene. But having Stephen and Mulligan sit on the grass in front of the tower, rather than standing in its turret overlooking the sea, destroys the symbolic geography of the opening with its references to the similarities of Ireland and Greece, and to Dublin as an omphalos or navel. Joseph Strick filmed Paddy Dignam’s funeral in its original setting at Glasnevin cemetery. Yet Sean Walsh filmed the burial in a cemetery in Rathfarnham Village, according to the production drawings (38). He thereby sacrificed the Glasnevin cemetery’s appearance as a petrified forest of monuments and crosses in favor, once again, of a more pastoral ambience. Also the Walsh film for the most part ignores the city’s statuary and monuments, which Strick uses to marvelously ironic and allusive effect, particularly in the fantasy scenes of “Circe.” Walsh’s veering away from a recognizable Dublin may seem like gratuitous violations of Joyce’s carefully chosen settings to the veteran reader and critic of *Ulysses*, who is familiar with the original sites. But according to the quirky *LoopDiLoop* review online at [http://www.loopdiloop.com/film/Blm\(Bloom\).asp](http://www.loopdiloop.com/film/Blm(Bloom).asp), the geography of the film also makes little sense even to actual Dubliners:

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6) Bloom’s dream house is described in “Ithaca” as “a thatched bunglowshaped 2 storey dwellinghouse of southerly aspect, surmounted by vane and lightning conductor, connected with the earth, with porch covered by parasitic plants (ivy or Virginia creeper), halldoor, ilive green, tracery at eaves and gable” and so on (17:1504-1509).

but unlike literary dublin, cinematic dublin is an odd world, one in which you can enter the gates of trinity college and appear in the courtyard of the royal hospital in kilmainham (goldfish memory) or here criss-cross the city from the grand canal at mount street to sean heuston bridge over the liffey at parkgate street and in the next scene be back on the banks of the grand canal. for the most part, dublin castle doubles as joyce's dublin, which had me doing double-takes when bloom helped the blind man cross dawson street to molesworth street. if you re-created dublin on the basis of this film, it'd be a very odd looking dublin (sic).

Richard Brown charitably attributes the geographical disorientation by noting that "the film cleverly avoids the pedantry and inevitable pitfalls of attempting to use Joyce's actual locations" (1). The question of whether geographical authenticity *matters* in a film of *Ulysses*, in any event, not easily decidable.

This brings us to an analogous problem and one of film's great prerogatives, its ability as a dramatic, visual, and auditory medium to make the characters from a novel visible, to appear in person, to speak audibly, to come to a more vivid life, as it were. This is where, in spite of their many other similarities, the two films dramatically diverge. Their casting reflects their historical moments with respect to the entertainment industry. When Joseph Strick came to Dublin to film *Ulysses* in 1966, he found three major theatrical enterprises in the city from which to draw his large cast: the Abbey Theatre, the Gate Theatre, and the Radio Telefis Eireann Players. His actors in general therefore had considerable stage experience but little film experience. Strick had seen Barbara Jefford, whom he cast as Molly Bloom, on stage with the Old Vic in Los Angeles. Milo O'Shea who played Leopold Bloom, and Maureen Potter, who appeared as Josie Breen, were highly successful music hall comedians. Strick consequently gave O'Shea a range of skits and turns in "Circe" that invest the sequence with the character of a music hall olio. Sean Walsh,

in contrast, cast two experienced film actors — Stephen Rea and Angeline Ball — into the roles of Leopold and Molly Bloom — with strikingly different results. O’Shea and Rea are conspicuously different physical and temperamental types, one droll, sharp, endearing, the other lugubrious, meek, alienated. The reviewer of *The Simpleton* gives the performances a thoughtful comparison and arrives at the following conclusion:

Ultimately, any version of *Ulysses* stands or falls on the quality of its Bloom, and here again, I think Strick’s version comes out ahead. Stephen Rea gets to shine in the flights of fancy in “Circe,” and he revivifies some of the character’s sadness and pathos ... But in general Rea plays the book’s hero in a mopey, hangdog manner that drains away much of the fun.

The website of Stephen Rea, best known for his performances in the films *The Crying Game* and *Michael Collins*, concedes that he is generally described by the media as a “morose and gloomy Irishman with a sad, ‘hangdog’ face” (<http://www.stephenrea.net/main.htm>). Although the warm, alert Bloom of Milo O’Shea endeared himself to many viewers, one could argue that Rea’s less comic interpretation of a more depressed, marginalized, and lonely Irish Jew is perfectly valid. The differences between Barbara Jefford’s and Angeline Ball’s versions of Molly Bloom are also striking, and somewhat historically paradoxical. Jefford fits the novel’s physical description of Molly Bloom as a darkhaired, “jewess-looking,” Spanish-type beauty, while Ball’s Molly, with her blond curls and girlish face has what Richard Brown calls “unaffectedly contemporary good looks” (1) in spite of her period costumes. But although Strick’s film was made when the second feminist movement was barely off the ground, Barbara Jefford’s Molly Bloom has a much more feminist inflection. She is presented as much more cultivated and culturally and socially ambitious than Angeline Ball’s Molly, imagining herself as

smartly dressed and out and about in society, a diva on stage, an elegant matron in the tearoom, and authoress signing her book for admiring ladies. But if Angelina Ball's Molly waggles her bottom and juts out her bosom, she also does something that violates the novel's narrative technique — but to interesting effect. Walsh gets his Molly Bloom out of bed during her soliloquy and has her address an imaginary audience directly with some of her observations. This maneuver radically alters the effect of Molly's bawdiness, which in the Strick film is contained by her silent, uncensored, private ruminating self while in *Bloom* it becomes an exhibition and a performance. However, I would argue that the performances of the actresses in both films succeed in turning Molly Bloom from a sex object into a sex subject in our contemporary sense of the term — that is, a thinking agent who has her own views on men and women and sexuality.

Finally, what of the aesthetic qualities that film's opportunities as both an auditory and visual medium offers the viewer? Fortunately, the screenplays of both films remain remarkably true to the novel's language. Strick claimed to about 99% of the film's script came directly from the book "I made it just from the text," Strick told Michael Dwyer in 2000. "There are no new words. Who's going to rewrite Joyce. I know no one that good." CNN.com reports that Sean Walsh scanned the text of *Ulysses* into his computer, then condensed it to four or five hours worth of material which he then reshaped to his sense of the requirements of the film. The fidelity of both films to Joyce's language depended on the filmmaker's legal freedom to work with the texts. Strick had purchased the rights outright from the Society of Authors, which represented the Joyce Estate, while Walsh's situation with respect to copyright was more complex. When Walsh started the project in the early nineties, European copyright was 50 years plus the life of the author. Since Joyce died in 1941, he was in the clear at that time, although the law was subsequently revised. One of the most striking and satisfying aspects of both *Ulysses* films for the non-reading novice is therefore the ability to *hear* Joyce's prose in all

its infinite variety — as dialogue, soliloquy, third person narration, fantasy scenario, prayer, letter, and much more—delivered with an Irish inflection. Barbara Jefford's lyrical soliloquy has the Irish idiom even though the actress is British. Joseph Strick cleverly justified casting her by pointing out that Molly Bloom's accent may well have been "mixed" — given that she grew up in the British garrison of Gibraltar.<sup>7)</sup> Film's auditory capability also allows it to produce the novel's silent music. A reader is obliged to imagine the melody of "Love's Old Sweet Song," but the viewer of Strick's *Ulysses* will hear Simon Dedalus actually sing it in the Ormond bar as Bloom remembers, in flashback, his first lovemaking to Molly on Howth Head. But sadly neither film plays with "Siren's" musical "overture," or reproduces the one bit of music whose notes are actually reproduced in *Ulysses* in Joyce's own handwriting. This is the ugly little ballad about the Jew's daughter who kills "Little Harry Hughes"—inexplicably sung to Bloom by Stephen Dedalus in "Ithaca." The unusual music for Strick's *Ulysses* was composed by Stanley Myers, who became famous in later years for the theme for Michael Cimino's 1978 film, *The Deer Hunter*. The reviewer for *The Simpleton* characterizes Myers's music as a "spikey modernist score." But it is worth remembering that the music in Joyce's works was far less well known in the nineteen-sixties than it is today, and Myers went to the trouble of consulting Matthew Hodgart and Mabel Worthington's *Songs in the Work of James Joyce* to get it right. David Kahne's music for Walsh's *Bloom*, in contrast, is melodic and understated, though not without some lovely, clever touches. In addition to the predictable melodies of "Love's Old Sweet Song" and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, he underlines Stephen's tutoring of little Cyril Sargent in "Nestor" with

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7) In the text, Molly Bloom herself seems to claim that her accent, acquired from her father, is distinctly Irish, when she remembers her old flame Gardner. "I was afraid he mightnt like my accent first he so English all father left me in spite of his stamps" (18.889).

the melody of *Off in the Stilly Night*, the song the little Dedalus children sing with Stephen over their dreary, impoverished tea in Portrait. Richard Brown, however, expresses disappointment that the Walsh film fails to exploit the possibilities of having Angeline Ball act out Molly Bloom's professional singing. Ball had played a soul-band singer in Alan Parker's 1991 film *The Commitments*.

It is, of course, their visual quality that sets the two *Ulysses* films apart most dramatically. Joseph Strick deliberately made his 1967 film in black and white and not for reasons of budget, he claims. He didn't like the color emulsions available to him at the time, he points out. "Black and white has all those gradations, all those nuances," Strick told me.<sup>8)</sup> "I could have raised the extra bit of money to make the film in color: it would have been about 5%, but I didn't want to face the extra compromising that color entails." The black and white cinematography of the Viennese Wolfgang Suschitzky also allows Strick to offer both a more somber and grittier view of Dublin, one that deliberately avoids postcard-pretty landscapes and images. In addition, the photography is evocative of old photographs of turn-of-the-century Dublin — the same logic that made Steven Spielberg's cinematographer, Janusz Kaminski, decide to film *Schindler's List* in black and white. Kaminski wanted to capture some of the feeling of Roman Vishniak's old photographs of Eastern European Jewish settlements published in his 1947 book, *A Vanished World*. Strick clearly captured some of the texture of the photos of early twentieth-century Dublin found in the archives of the National Library's Lawrence Collection. Sean Walsh's color version of *Ulysses*, in contrast, is unabashedly gorgeous. He too employed talented and experienced cinematographers for the film. His director of photography, Ciaran Tanham, has credits that include *The Borstal Boy* and *Riverdance*. Mervyn Rowe, his production designer, previously worked on such stunning sets as those for *Excalibur* and *The Never Ending Story*. His production

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8) Joseph Strick e-mail to Margot Norris. 7 March 2003.

drawings, collected into a volume called *Images from Bloom* was published in a limited Centenary Edition of 750 copies in 2004, and illustrates the meticulous period detail and lush imagination with which the various scenes for the film were imagined. Such quick and narratively unimportant moments as the visual image of Molly's father, Major Brian Tweedy, has a lace edge on the tablecloth and a little doily weighted with beads covering the water pitcher. But the most amazing image in Walsh's *Bloom*, which serves as its signature in the publicity materials, is clearly the immense cloud over the Irish sea that refracts a brilliant burst of sun and showers myriad rays over the scene below. Richard Brown was bothered by this dramatic symbol until he referred to Arthur Griffith's home rule sun on the pages of the *Irish Independent*. I needed no such explication; I took that beautiful image to simply embody the sunnier, happier, prettier Dublin of Walsh's *Bloom*. When all is said and done, one or another of the movies made of Joyce's *Ulysses* is likely to appeal more to various viewers. But both preserve Joyce's language, his characters, and his plot, and both offer many visual, auditory, and dramatic delights to filmgoers and readers alike. In the end, lovers of Joyce's *Ulysses* as well as novices who have never read the novel are fortunate indeed that the two *Ulysses* movies were made by independent filmmakers who created their works as labors of love out of their passion for the books. *Ulysses* deserved no less.

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**ABSTRACT**

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*Ulysses* at the Movies

Margot Norris

James Joyce loved movies, and was not averse to the idea that his 1922 novel *Ulysses* could be made into a film. Although the idea was explored in his lifetime, no films of the novel were made until many years after his death. We now have two films of Joyce's *Ulysses*: the 1967 black-and-white *Ulysses* by American filmmaker Joseph Strick, and the 2003 color film called *Bloom*, by Irish filmmaker Sean Walsh. Both films are independent productions inspired by admiration for Joyce's art, and they are consequently remarkably faithful to the novel's language, characters, and plot. Their differences, however, are instructive. Although Joseph Strick moves the time of the film to 1960s Ireland, when the novel's Irish politics may have lost much of their relevance, his film nonetheless has a sharper political edge than Walsh's period film set in its own time in 1904. The two films also present visually divergent representations of Dublin, with Walsh's cinematography offering a much more pastoral, beautiful, and sunny image of turn-of-the-century Irish living than Strick's bleaker, more impoverished city. And in their handling of the narrative, the two films offer divergent interpretations of the novel's outcome, with Strick pointing toward a happier resolution and Walsh to a less likely

reconciliation for the Bloom marriage.

