



### **Bloomsday, por Charles Durante (académico y escritor gibraltareño)**

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El 16 de junio de 1904, un joven intelectual dublinés conoció a una aguerrida camarera pelirroja. Se enamoraron y se fugaron al continente europeo para vivir una vida de aventuras, ocasional penuria y grandes logros literarios. James Joyce, autor de 'Ulises' y 'Finnegans Wake', había conocido a Nora Barnacle, la chica de Galway que le inspiraría para crear el personaje de Molly Bloom. El propio Joyce aparecería en 'Ulises' bajo la identidad de Leopold Bloom, un judío irlandés, y Stephen Dedalus, un distante aspirante a artista. El trío dominaría 'Ulises', la novela modernista ambientada en Dublín aquel fatídico 16 de junio de 1904.

Joyce celebró su encuentro con Nora situando toda la acción de 'Ulises' en ese día. Irlanda, aunque inicialmente contraria a lo que se consideraba una novela obscena y crítica anticatólica, aprendió a apreciar el valor único de lo que había logrado uno de sus hijos más prestigiosos. 'Ulises' se ha convertido en sinónimo de complejidad, exhaustividad, experimentación y audacia literaria.

Bloomsday celebra ahora la incomparable cartografía que Joyce hizo de la ciudad de Dublín y sus pintorescos habitantes, con visitas a sus pubs, una iglesia, el cementerio, un hospital de maternidad, un burdel, la biblioteca nacional, los baños públicos, el paseo marítimo y la torre Martello, donde comienza la odisea de un día.

Los dublineses son retratados con su garrulería, sus hábitos de bebida, su legendaria hospitalidad, su gregarismo y su cordialidad. Conocemos a Blazes Boylan, el hombre de la ciudad con buen ojo para las chicas, que seduce a Molly a las cuatro de la tarde en su propia casa; al Ciudadano, nacionalista fanfarrón, siempre bebiendo, antisemita e intolerante; a los bibliotecarios que discuten Hamlet y son sometidos a las extravagantes ideas de Stephen sobre la vida amorosa de Shakespeare; a Gerty MacDowell, que se levanta la falda para excitar a ese mirón empedernido que es Bloom. Aunque Joyce satiriza muchos aspectos de la vida dublinesa, los personajes son presentados con cariño, con sus entrañables rarezas, su socarrón sentido del humor, su afición a la floritura retórica, su profundo apego a su ciudad. La principal sátira de Joyce está reservada a la Iglesia Católica y a la presencia imperial británica, dos amos que Stephen está decidido a repudiar.

El Bloomsday es ahora una larga fiesta callejera con bailes, banquetes, música y lecturas de la novela. Un libro que en 1922 fue proscrito y vilipendiado por obsceno e inmoral, ahora se considera la personificación del espíritu irlandés, especialmente del carácter único de la ciudad de Dublín y sus ciudadanos. Ese día es costumbre vestirse como Bloom, con traje negro, bombín y bastón, como un mediocre vendedor de anuncios de la época *eduardiana*; las mujeres llevan vestidos con vuelo y escote profundo para emular el escote de Molly. El propio Joyce aparece con sus gruesas gafas oscuras, su bigote bien recortado, su chubasquero, su chaleco de colores y sus zapatos de charol. Por supuesto, también se pasea con su planta de fresno.



Lo que hace que Bloomsday sea relevante y desafiante a nivel local es el último capítulo, Penélope, que se desarrolla principalmente en el Gibraltar de mediados del siglo XIX. Todo el capítulo se compone de los recuerdos de Molly sobre su juventud en Gibraltar. Molly es hija de una judía española, Lunita Laredo, que, asombrosamente, está enterrada en el cementerio judío de North Front, y del mayor Tweedy, un militar irlandés destinado en Gibraltar. Penélope está salpicada de referencias locales: Bell Lane, la catedral católica con el padre Villaplana y el rosario que le regaló a Molly, el Castillo Moro, los Jardines de la Alameda, la Bahía extendida bajo la luz dorada de un atardecer, Spy Glass y Aix House con su pan premiado. Aunque parezca increíble, Joyce nunca visitó Gibraltar, pero se las arregló para extraer de sus lecturas suficientes detalles y colores locales como para crear una imagen creíble de este destacamento del imperio cuando Gran Bretaña aún era temida y su poder era incuestionable. Sin embargo, Molly prefiere la mezcla social, sexual y racial de la fortaleza a su estricta función militar. Joyce emplea a Molly como crítica abierta al militarismo británico y derrocha todo su poder poético en sus últimas palabras de la novela, que terminan con su repetido y orgásmico 'sí', pronunciado bajo el muro del Castillo Moro. En cierto modo, el Bloomsday es también el día de Gibraltar, aunque nunca se haya celebrado aquí.



*Pie de foto:*

*[Fotografía de Brian Reyes, actual editor del Chronicle]*

*Escultura de Molly Bloom, situada en una zona tranquila de los jardines de La Alameda [de Gibraltar].*

*La escultura fue encargada por este periódico en 2001 y fue esculpida por el antiguo editor del Chronicle, Jon Searle.*

# Bloomsday



In my opinion

by Charles Durante

**O**n the 16th June, 1904 a young Dublin intellectual met a feisty, red-haired chambermaid. They fell in love and eloped to the continent to live a life of adventure, occasional penury and high literary achievement. James Joyce, the author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, had met Nora Barnacle, the Galway girl who would inspire him to create the character of Molly Bloom. Joyce himself would appear in *Ulysses* under the guise of Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew, and Stephen Dedalus, an aloof would-be artist. The trio would dominate *Ulysses*, the modernist novel set in Dublin on that fateful day of 16th June, 1904.

Joyce celebrated his encounter with Nora by setting all the action of *Ulysses* on that day. Ireland, though initially adverse to what was considered the novel's obscenity and anti-Catholic criticism, learned to appreciate the unique value of what one of her most prestigious sons had achieved. *Ulysses* has become a byword for complexity, comprehensiveness, experimentation and literary daring.

Bloomsday now celebrates Joyce's unrivalled mapping of the city of Dublin and its very colourful denizens, with visits to its pubs, a church, the cemetery, a maternity

hospital, a brothel, the National Library, the public baths, strand, and the Martello Tower, where the day-long odyssey starts.

Dubliners are depicted with their garrulousness, their drinking habits, their legendary hospitality, their gregariousness and their conviviality. We meet Blazes Boylan, man-about-town with an eye for the girls, seducing Molly at four in the afternoon in her own home; the Citizen, boastful nationalist, always cadging a drink, anti-semitic and bigoted; the librarians discussing Hamlet and being subjected to Stephen's outrageous ideas about Shakespeare's love life; Gerty MacDowell, lifting her skirt to excite that inveterate voyeur, Bloom. Though Joyce satirises many aspects of Dublin life, the characters are lovingly presented with their endearing foibles, their sly sense of humour, their fondness for the rhetorical flourish, their deep attachment to their city. Joyce's main satirical thrust is reserved for the Roman Catholic Church and the British imperial presence, two masters Stephen is determined to repudiate.

Bloomsday now is one long street party with dancing, feasting, music and readings from the novel. A book, which was proscribed and vilified in 1922 as obscene and immoral, is now seen as epitomising the Irish spirit, especially the unique character of the city of Dublin and its citizens. On that day it is customary to dress up like Bloom, in a black suit, bowler hat and walking stick like a middling advertisement canvasser of the Edwardian period; women wear flouncy dresses with a deep neckline to emulate Molly's embonpoint. Joyce himself appears with his thick dark glasses, neatly clipped moustache, boater, colourful waistcoat and patent leather shoes. Of course, he also strolls about with his ashplant.

What makes Bloomsday locally relevant and challenging is the last chapter, Penelope, which is



Photo by Brian Reyes

A sculpture of Molly Bloom, located in a quiet area of Alameda Gardens. The sculpture was commissioned by this newspaper in 2001 and was sculpted by the Chronicle's former editor, Jon Searle.



mainly set in the Gibraltar of the mid-nineteenth century. The entire chapter is made up of Molly's reminiscences of her youth spent in Gibraltar. Molly

is the offspring of a Spanish Jewish woman, Lunita Laredo who, amazingly, is buried in the Jewish cemetery at North Front and Major Tweedy, an

Irish military man stationed in Gibraltar. Penelope is peppered with local references: Bell Lane, the Roman Catholic cathedral with Fr Villaplana and the rosary he gave Molly, the Moorish Castle, the Alameda Gardens, the Bay spread out in the golden light of a sunset, Spy Glass and Aix House with its prize-winning bread. Incredibly, Joyce never visited Gibraltar, but managed to cull enough local detail and colour from his reading to create a credible picture of this outpost of the empire when Britain was still feared, and its power was unquestioned. However, Molly prefers the social, sexual and racial mix of the fortress to its strict military role. Joyce employs Molly as an outspoken critic of British militarism and lavishes all his poetic power on her last words in the novel which ends with her repeated orgasmic 'yes,' uttered under the wall of the Moorish Castle. In a way, Bloomsday is also Gibraltar day, even though it has never been celebrated here.

## GNTF launches new website, unveils vision for cultural hub and 'Buy a Seat' plan

The Gibraltar National Theatre Foundation (GNTF) announced the launch of its new website, designed to provide a "seamless and immersive experience" for theatre enthusiasts, supporters, and the community.

The website will explore the upcoming construction of the 1000-seat National Theatre and associated cultural hub at the John Mackintosh Hall.

A statement from the Government said that the GNTF's mission goes beyond the establishment of a world-class theatre. It said it aims to create a vibrant cultural complex that will serve as a centre for drama, dance, music, and various artistic ex-



pressions.

The new website is said to showcase the GNTF's comprehensive vision of the project, including the main theatre, a

studio theatre with retractable seating for over 200, an expanded lending library, exhibition spaces, and a modern catering facility.

In conjunction with the website launch, the GNTF is introducing its 'Buy a Seat' plan. This unique opportunity allows individuals and entities to pur-

chase a theatre seat and have their name immortalised with a personalised plaque.

"We are excited to provide the community with a user-friendly online platform that not only informs about our progress but also invites engagement and support," said a spokesperson for the Foundation.

"Through the 'Buy a Seat' plan, we hope to involve as many individuals and businesses as possible, as this project truly belongs to the entire community."

To explore the new website, learn more about the GNTF's initiatives, or to express interest in purchasing a theatre seat, visit [www.gibraltarnationaltheatre.com](http://www.gibraltarnationaltheatre.com).

"Join us in shaping the future of Gibraltar's cultural landscape. Together, we can make the Gibraltar National Theatre a source of pride and inspiration for generations to come," the statement added.