



Byron's Bloomsday Montréal Quickie List

Description

Four-day festival honours Joyce protagonist Leopold Bloom

By Byron Toben



Joyce by Djuna Barnes

Who would have thought that the most famous Irishman would be a fictional character of Hungarian Jewish lineage? Despite having an Irish mother and wife, Leopold Bloom is still an outsider in James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*.

The novel, first published in 1922, was attacked as “the work of a disordered mind”, banned or censored until, after the 1933 court ruling in U.S. vs. One Book Called Ulysses, it eventually earned accolades as the most important novel of the 20th century. It featured stream of consciousness writing inspiring such as Jack Kerouac in the 1950s.

The story consists of one day in Bloom’s life. That day is June 16, 1904 on which Bloom wanders around Dublin. In 1954, a group of celebrants initiated an annual celebration by retracing the route in the novel, starting at the famous Martello tower. That has grown to observance in about 60 cities world wide not only by hyphenated Irish but by literary types. London, New York, Philadelphia, Buenos Aires even Tokyo and Shanghai participate.

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Marilyn Monroe reading Ulysses
Image: Eve Arnold

TIME Magazine featured Joyce on its cover in 1955 and even Marilyn Monroe was snapped studiously reading the tale.

Here in Montreal, largely thanks to the indefatigable work of David and Judith Schurman, Bloomsday, now in its 5th year, has grown into a four-day festival of pub crawls, lectures, readings, song and film from June 12 to 16. [Click here to read the detailed schedule and to register for events.](#)

And Yes I say, Yes, Yes I would love to attend all 15 listed events, but four particularly entice me:

Monday, June 13 at 6:30 pm – Cinéma du Parc – A one time showing of **The Bloody Irish**, a musical about the 1916 Easter Rising on its 100th anniversary. [Click here to see the preview.](#) Admission \$11.80



Tuesday, June 14 at 12:30 pm – Atwater Library – **Story Telling and Irish song**. Free admission.

Thursday, June 16 at 11 am – Westmount Public Library – **Dramatic readings from Ulysses** with Gazette theatre critics Jim Burke and Pat Donnelly, Centaur head Roy Surette, playwright Colleen Curran and journalist Peggy Curran. Free admission.

Thursday, June 16 at 7:30 pm – Jewish Public Library – **Jewish and Irish Memories** closing lecture by Abby Bender of NYU, with reception following. Admission \$15.

Some Joycean trivia

Ulysses was made into film twice:

1967 – **Ulysses**, starring late Milo O’Shea

2003 – **Bloom**, starring Stephen Rea

... and a play,

2003 – **Ulysses in Nighttown**, starring Zero Mostel

Joyce founded the Volta, the first cinema in Ireland in 1909 (closed in 1910).

Joyce wrote one play, Exiles (1918) not highly regarded, but did hire Samuel Beckett (who later became a renowned playwright) as his part time secretary. [Click here to view the videoclip](#) of the voluble Joyce and the reticent Beckett playing golf.

Feature image: [Ben Ledbetter, Architect](#) via [StockPholio.net](#)

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club



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