

## “Reading Joyce’s Ulysses”

A poem by Daniel R. Schwarz

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### Reading Joyce's *Ulysses*

*"Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred." (Cyclops, Ulysses)*

*"I belong to a race, too, . . .that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant." (Cyclops, Ulysses)*

His Jewish heritage pulsates through his veins,  
 he feels exile, diasporic pain.  
 Despite assimilation,  
 compromise, and tolerance, he  
 speaks boldly to such  
 one eyed monsters

as Citizen Cyclops.

St. Leopold of Perpetual Responsibility,  
and Lamed Vov,

visiting Mrs. Purefoy in her labor,

caring for the widow Dignam

loving Molly,

at once his Calypso and Penelope.

Living with hope of return,

willfully ignoring the Blazing disruption

of Eccles Street home,

haunted by pentimento of

father's suicide, and son

Rudy, guilt and loss are

etched into his flesh like a tattoo.

His scars are psychic scars,

like ones we all bear,

and his, like our, Hades is within:

fears, obsessions,

and dimly acknowledged needs.

He, too, is teacher:

his subject is humanity.

He is Stephen's Nestor

but also his Virgil,

accompanying him—and, yes, us--

through divinely human comedy.