# nova·nevėdoma



# Sergei Eisenstein's memories of James Joyce

nova-nevedoma.com/eisenstein-about-joyce/

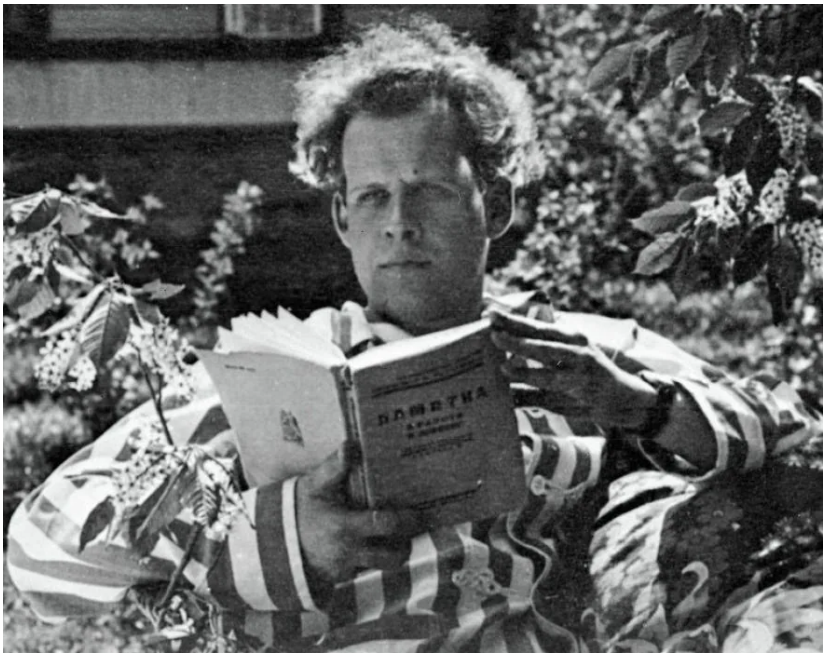
---

The text you'll see below is my translation of an autobiographical note of memoiristic and diary nature written by Eisenstein in preparation for his unfinished book *Method*.

This text is steeped in the spirit of the Roaring Twenties and old Paris and gives a chance to learn something new about that era and two great artists, Sergei Eisenstein and James Joyce, their lives and encounters with each other.

I put notes, mine and from the original Russian page I found, for you to learn more and understand the context and some of my translator's choices better. I haven't checked if it was already translated before by someone (I was so eager to do it myself), so if you by any chance have read it already I'd be happy to read that translation, too.

So, we shall begin.




*Sergei Eisenstein himself*

The year the thought about "intellectual cinema" is born is also the year I meet with Joyce's *Ulysses*. First from the brief prospectus[1] in subscriptions to the German translation edition. But even this prospectus turns my head. Later (in the jubilee days of the 1927 year[2]) I stumble upon the only English edition of *Ulysses* in Moscow. And after the first visit of the Soviet delegation to Geneva, I become the independent owner of my own copy of the book[3].

Why is *Ulysses* captivating?

The inimitable sensuality of the effects of the text (which far surpasses the passionate sensual charm of my beloved Zola[4]). And that "asyntactic" nature of his writing, buoyed from the bedrock of inner speech, which each of us speaks in a special way and which only Joyce's literary genius has managed to put into the foundation of his method of literary writing. All in all, Joyce does in his linguistic kitchen of literature what I rave about in relation to my laboratory pursuits of film language.

Joyce had predecessors.

He named them himself: Dostoevsky, for the content of his inner monologues, and Édouard Dujardin, for the technique and manner of writing through the structure peculiar to inner speech[5].

This is the Dujardin in one of Toulouse-Lautrec's most sumptuous posters, *Le Divan Japonais* (1892), which advertised this popular entertainment venue.




In the centre of it, the black silhouetted dancer Jane Avril[6] in a party dress; to the left, in the corner with her head cut off by the top edge of the poster, but nevertheless unmistakable, is the star of *Le divan*

*Japonais* Yvette Gilbert[7] singing a song. Two contrabass fingerboards. A cocktail glass.

In the right corner, the blond dandy in a cylinder. Monocled. The silky beard blends in with the mottled tie. The dashing curve of his rounded cane handle strokes his sensual lips lovingly, his eyes indifferent to Yvette, but fixed on Miss Avril's lower part. He looks much the same, only without the irony, in someone's etching[8] from 1888, a year after the first edition of his book was published.

This way Dujardin's figure whimsically combines a pioneering work of inner monologue with two characters that I would most like to meet in Paris. James Joyce and... Yvette Gilbert! <...>

To meet Yvette Guilbert is to touch the most charming era of Paris...

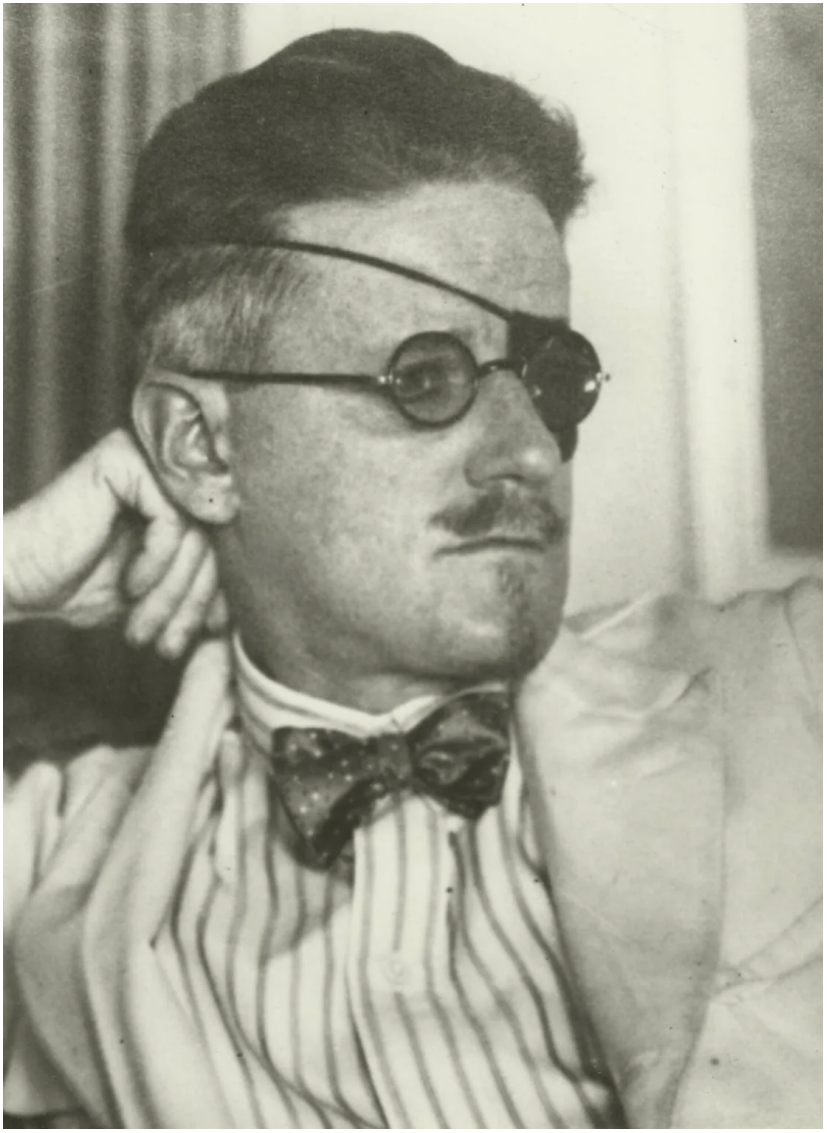
We met. But the description of this wonderful, colourful encounter is certainly beyond the scope of this article. Let's postpone it until another time.

I met Joyce as well.

He is no longer alive now and I can no longer overcome with a new encounter the sad details of the farewell we had.

Saying goodbye in the narrow hallway of his light-coloured flat (as I remember even now the striped wallpaper of the hallway, white matt with white glossy), saying goodbye to me, this tall and slightly stooped man, almost without facade – so sharp is his profile of reddish skin and

fiery and thickly greyed hair – waves his hands strangely and fumbles through the air.



*A photographic portrait of James Joyce with an eyepatch, brought by Eisenstein from Paris, was taken in 1926 by Berenice Abbott (1898-1991), the first woman photographer to achieve international fame in this "traditionally male" occupation in her time.* Surprised, I ask him what is wrong.

"But you must have your coat somewhere...," Joyce replies and fumbles around the walls.

Only now do I realise to what extent was weak the vision in relation to the outside world of that almost blind man, whose blindness, perhaps, accounted for that special sharpness of inner vision with which inner life is described in *Ulysses* (and in *A Young Artist*[9]) with the remarkable method of inner speech.

I get insanely uncomfortable.

Just a moment ago, he was eagerly asking me to show him my films, interested in my experiments in cinematographic language on the screen (in the same way I am fascinated by his kindred literary pursuits).

He has just signed me a copy of *Ulysses*.

Only upon arriving home and opening the book cover, did I see on the first page almost unreadable marks and the date (30 of November 1929), obviously written from memory (wasn't that why he walk with the copy to another room where he spent so much time on three words of dedication, two of which are the name and surname, and the third is

the city – Paris!). So I myself, like a blind man, spent almost the whole evening with the almost blind man not seeing, not sensing and not noticing it! <...>

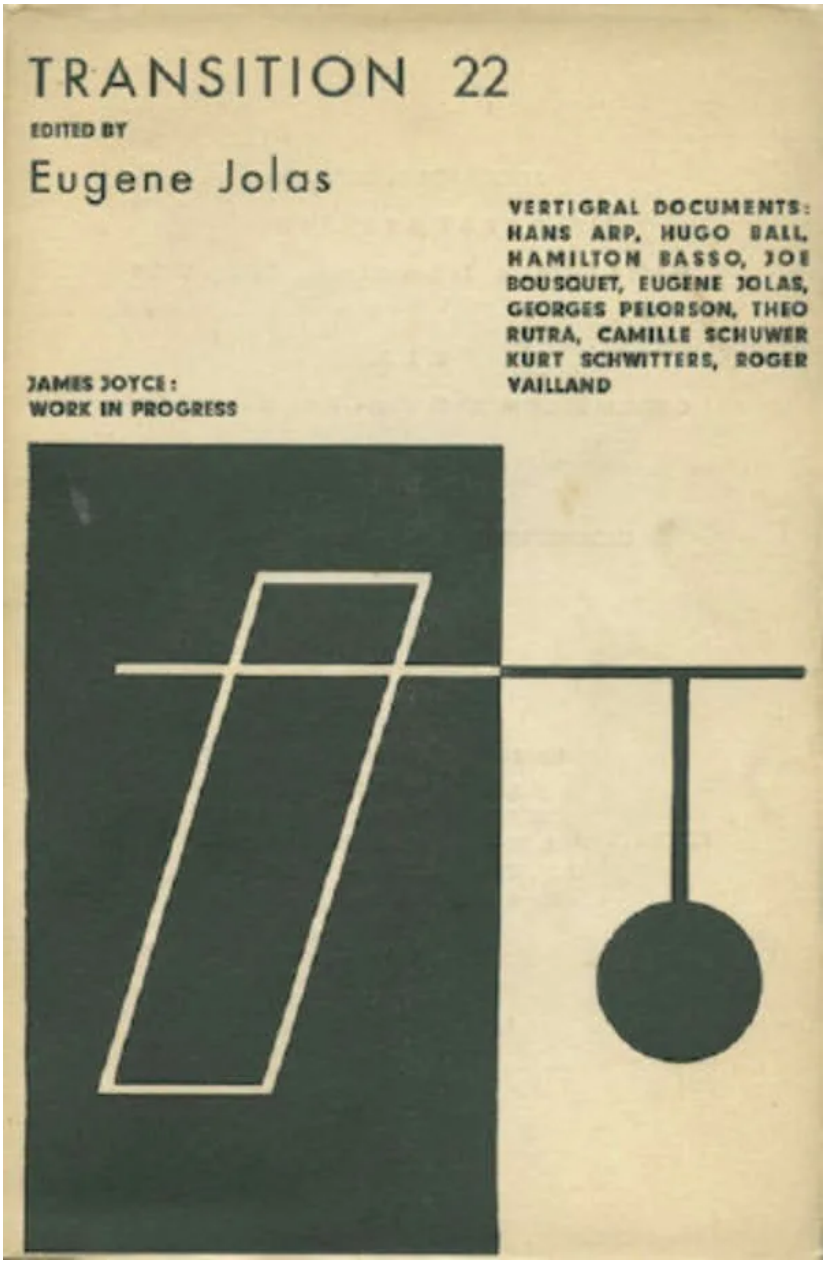
...What brings me out of my awkwardness is our third interlocutor. It's some suspicious Russian with a lackey's face. Probably, an émigré. And maybe also a spy.

It's somehow natural to put a coat on from his hands!

Joyce hired him to study... Russian language[10].

The linguistic work following *Ulysses* will reflect the birth out of the general chaos of separate languages and will be written as a fusion of undifferentiated linguistic elements. The Russian language is also needed in this fusion.

This work is *Work in Progress*, and Joyce's smooth voice reads a fragment of it (*Anna Livia Plurabella*) to me.


TRANSITION 22
EDITED BY
Eugene Jolas
VERTIGRAL DOCUMENTS:
HANS ARP, HUGO BALL,
HAMILTON BASSO, JOE
BOUSQUET, EUGENE JOLAS,
GEORGES PELORSON, THEO
RUTRA, CAMILLE SCHUWER
KURT SCHWITTERS, ROGER
VAILLAND
JAMES JOYCE:
WORK IN PROGRESS

*Joyce's novel Finnegans Wake was published in parts in the avant-garde magazine Transition under the title Work in Progress*

"But isn't Joyce blind?" an attentive and benevolent readeress[11] would ask, precisely a readeress; a readeress and only a readeress would have noticed that.

Calm down, readeress.

And thus the voice reads... sounding from the pathéphone Joyces winds up.

*Anna Livia Plurabella* recently came out in a tiny book as a separate edition. A fragment of this fragment of the future thing Joyce "narrated" onto the record.

# ANNA LIVIA PLURABELLE

BY JAMES JOYCE

WITH A PREFACE
BY PADRAIC COLUM




NEW YORK: CROSBY GAIGE: 1928

*The most famous part of the novel was published in 1928 by Crosby Gaige in New York.*

Thus I follow the spoken text on the gigantic one-meter sheet filled with gigantic lines of gigantic letters. These are those enlarged tables of miniature pages of the tiny book, which Joyce used to reinforce his memory while narrating the record.

That exaggerated size of a miniature page of a miniature book fragment!

It is in the image of the author. It is in the mode of the magnifying glass with which he traverses the microscopic windings of the mysteries of literary writing. How emblematic of the ways in which he wanders through the windings of the inner movement of emotions and the inner structure of inner speech!

The new meeting doesn't bring much. Except for the same element of direct touch that I gained later when I visited Mexico regarding anthropology.[12] And, perhaps, more information that Joyce was very fond of cinema and even once ran a film distribution business, temporarily owning a small cinema in Switzerland.[13]

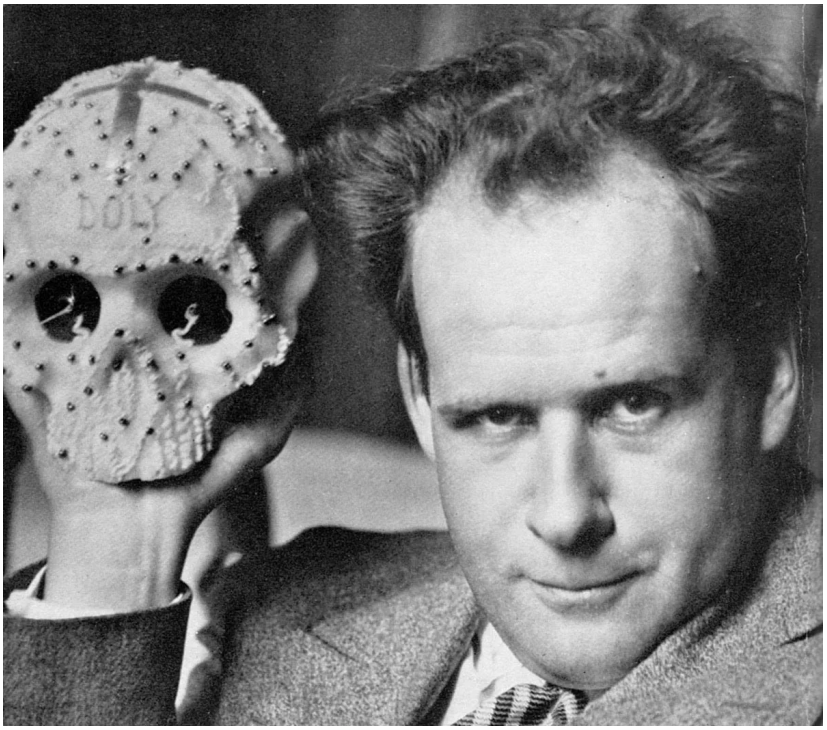
*1940 – 1948*

---

## James Joyce and the cinema of the future

In part II today, I want to turn to Eisenstein's theoretical reflections on Joyce's work, particularly stream-of-consciousness, or rather "internal monologue", and how it influenced Eisenstein's approach to cinema, concepts of montage, and possibilities of sound film. That said, cross-pollination of Irish modernist literature and Soviest film theory is an amusing example of how art world actually functions and evolves.

*Translated by Yours Truly from Russian texts found online in various obscure sources with no https. Some additional commentary and footnotes added where necessary.*



## From a Letter to Léon Moussinac:

*1928*

As always, I have a request for you[14]. I have a new fascination — James Joyce. His new work is currently being printed in Paris, in the journal "Transition". I ask you to subscribe to this journal and send me the issues with Joyce's new novel.[15] In my opinion, Joyce is gradually becoming more and more "fashionable". They probably write a lot about him. I have Gorman's monograph about him,[16] and I am very interested in everything that comes out about him. It is a great pity that because of his eyes I will never be able to show my films to this remarkable man. My interest in him and his "Ulysses" is not at all platonic — what Joyce does in literature is very close to what we do, or rather, what we are going to do in the new cinematography! I am in despair that I do not have enough time — I have a whole wagonload of thoughts about Joyce and the "cinema of the future". I need to see "Transition" — perhaps it will captivate me so much that I will set aside 2-3 hours for an article for you on this topic. If possible, send me his "Portrait of the author as a young man". I have read this book, but it is not in my library!

## From the Answer to the Questionnaire "Literature and Cinema":

*1928*

If Zola is — methodologically — the greatest school for a cinematographer (his pages read like perfect montage sheets), then of contemporary writers, cinema can benefit in this sense from only two of the few familiar to me: Isaac Babel[17] and Sophia Fedorchenko.[18] The

former will forever remain an irreplaceable supplementary “anthology” for new cinematic imagery. A concept only just entering cinema. I wrote about it briefly once for “Kino-gazeta” and will soon write about it in more detail. For now, please take it on faith.

Fedorchenko is interesting to us in a structural sense. New cinema works are “written” in a manner close to hers. On logically unmotivated, associative transitions from theme to theme. Those wishing to work in such a manner can learn much from “People at War”. In this respect, Fedorchenko is a more accessible, albeit, truth be told, less rich “edition” of James Joyce.

“Ulysses” is, of course, the most interesting phenomenon for cinematography in the West. I don’t know about its literary [merit], though I think it’s significant there too. In any case, strange as it may seem, I am familiar with Joyce’s writings. I won’t have to read them hastily overnight, as I did with Dreiser, on the eve of an official meeting with him.

Fedorchenko and Joyce are very close to contemporary cinematography. True, more than half of it is still “yet to come”. The same “de-anecdotalisation” and direct expression of theme through powerfully effective material. Completely aside from the plot, which only still figures in the work out of conscientiousness. The same “physiological” quality of detail. In close-up. With a purely intellectual effect — an abstract conclusion through their physiological mediation. Again, pure kino[19].

In Joyce, of course, there is significantly more. Due to the denunciatory, polemical, and other numerous tasks that “Ulysses” or “Portrait of the Artist” set for themselves. Fedorchenko is more of a recorder, but in construction, she works in the same way.

The rest of literature seems to me, from the standpoint of usefulness for cinema only — though this is more than enough — an inexhaustible fundus, a repository of materials.



*Sophia Fedorchenko as a nurse / sister of mercy in the First World War*

## From the Article "Help Yourself!"

*1932*

Only the cinematic element is capable of capturing a complete representation of the thought process of an agitated person. Or if literature, then only literature that has gone beyond its orthodox limitations.

This is brilliantly resolved within the cruel confines of literary limitations in the immortal "internal monologues" of Leopold Bloom, an insurance advertisement agent, in James Joyce's remarkable "Ulysses".

It is no wonder that when meeting me in Paris[20], Joyce was so intensely interested in my plans regarding the "internal cinema monologue" of much more boundless possibilities than the literary one.

Despite his near-complete blindness, he wanted to see those parts of "Battleship"[21] and "October"[22] that move along related paths in the cinematic sector of cultural expressive means.

The "internal monologue" as a literary device for abolishing the distinction between subject and object in depicting a character's experiences in crystallised form was first noted in literature and is attributed by researchers to 1887, to Édouard Dujardin's work on "Les Lauriers sont coupés".[23]

As a theme, as a worldview, a "feeling", an object of description, but not as a method, it is found, of course, earlier. "Sliding" from the objective to the subjective and back is especially characteristic of the writings of the Romantics: E.T.A. Hoffmann, Novalis, Gérard de Nerval. [...]

But as a method of literary writing, not of plot interweaving, but a form of literary composition, as a specific method of exposition, as a specific method of construction, it first appears in Dujardin; its absolute literary perfection, however, is only achieved by Joyce and Larbaud[24] thirty-one years later.

## From the Book "Method"

*Notes on "Grundproblem" Kislovodsk, 17 September 1934*

[...] One need only mention the name Proust, and any intelligent interlocutor will not fail to weave into the reply or ensuing conversation the name Joyce and the designation "surrealism". [...]

From the fact that all three types of writers devoted their attention to the internal flow of thought, feeling, and consciousness, they are lumped together, without anyone bothering to understand what position each author takes in relation to this "flow". Whether they flounder in the muddy bottom of the stream, like the surrealists. Whether they float like Moses in a wicker basket of memories, carried by the stream, like Proust. Or whether they conduct wise navigation downstream and upstream, with and against the current. Like Joyce, who possesses both the cunning knowledge of how to ford the stream

and the deep objectivism of a solid observation point on the firm ground of a sturdy bank. The fact that Joyce in old age is plunged into the darkness of blindness. That Proust spends his days in the darkness of a cork-lined room (due to asthma), never leaving it. That the surrealists are blind and have double cork walls of cranial boxes, isolating them much more than the first two misfortunes, still gives no right to lump them together. [...]

Surrealism — Proust — Joyce. In them we have examples of the middle position and two extreme points. A complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the disintegration of the creative element we are interested in among the surrealists. And a complete culmination with the same exposure of the correct solution to the problem, already merging with the "regular" examples of literature, in Joyce. The hyperbolicity of each feature characteristic of the method and any feature of any literary work is one of the characteristics, one of the most fascinating [qualities] and the most instructive in Joyce's "Ulysses".

Indeed, all three work with the material of the "irrational flow". But they have as much in common as a consumptive, Koch's bacillus, and a scientist studying microbes and perfectly controlling the serum from them! [...]

Possessing all grammars, syntaxes, and lexicons, Joyce in each case resorts to the one whose structure and specificity is most plastically adequate to what is called to be expressed through language. The literary poly-genre nature of individual chapters of "Ulysses" is built on this.

Sometimes they are made in the form of a parody of a catechism — questions and answers. Sometimes in the form of newspaper headlines like an incident diary. Sometimes with dramatic lines and stage directions. Finally, within the limits of one chapter, running from early language structures of Chaucer and more ancient ones, through all historical forms of style, the chapter ends with the highest achievements of contemporary style for the English language. Only to give, at the very end, a brilliant example of the syntax of inner speech — never before so revealed and presented — in the monologue of Molly Bloom. And each linguistic construction, each manner of writing is entirely and completely adequate to the plot and thematic content of what they are applied to.

In this feature, Joyce is infinitely instructive and astonishing. Here again, he acts as a kind of microscope. Not only a microscopic examination of the human — Bloom, but (in full correspondence of form to the content of the problem he set himself) a microscope that has hyperbolised to the limit those features that are characteristic of any work. True, there they nuance sequences of phrases or sentences. Each nuance there is not given a whole chapter, exhausting varieties and possibilities within this nuance. But that's what we have a microscope for—making the imperceptible and invisible into unexpected and stunning visibility. No one would break a microscope because it shows what is completely absent from the field of vision under normal conditions as hellish snakes and stars. Meanwhile, criticism, especially ours, treats the most interesting results of Joyce's experiment in exactly

this way; I would say, with Joyce's tables — a kind of Mendeleev's periodic system in the expressive means of language and style! [...]

## From the Book "Montage"

*1937*

Montage of the Sound Film

[...] Every expression, every word in Joyce works with an entire column of planes, meanings, layers of associations: from the crudest means of physiological sound combinations, through two or three layers of normal images, rising to any superstructural readings, echoing with reminiscences, [with] associations, [with] echoes of meanings and feelings. Therefore, reading "Ulysses" requires a very special type of perception. Like the most complex counterpoint or fugue. But both in significantly expanded conditions.

Reading "Ulysses" for me is always associated with listening to lectures by the late N.Y. Marr. As a lecturer, the late Marr was famous for his extreme incomprehensibility. I had the chance to listen to him several times. And I think that acquaintance with Joyce helped me understand where the incomprehension of what Marr did in his lectures came from. Listeners were accustomed to following and listening to only one plane of what they were read. They are trained to follow one horizontal plane, one, single-plane thread of thought flow. Meanwhile, in what N.Y. Marr did in his lectures, we were dealing with the polyphony of thought, with the multi-stranded course of a series of thoughts, a series

of lines of action. In each sentence, a series of parallel planes sounded quite distinctly. Let this be the most common case for example: an excursion into the origin of a word. You primarily felt that Marr's thought at that moment was moving through several languages. He speaks in Russian. But his thought passes under the sign of the same phenomenon through a whole series of languages that coincide with the studied one in this feature. Simultaneously, his thought encompasses the individual nuances and vicissitudes of the same phenomenon across different linguistic spheres. Moreover, a series of contradicting and opposite phenomena is included, especially emphasising his thought. These opposites enter into a connection, are arranged in spheres. This alone already sounds like a tonic, which is echoed by a "column" of overtones and undertones. [...]

I repeat—only the "experience" gained from reading "Ulysses" helped me if not always to grasp Marr's thoughts, then at least to see the ways in which this grasping would be possible. Joyce's "Ulysses" helped to solve the secret of that verticality of overtone and counterpoint movements of Marr's thought, simultaneous with the progressive horizontal course of his main theme of exposition. To a certain extent, this takes place always and inevitably. But for Marr[25], this phenomenon is beyond all ordinary limits, truly not to a certain, but to a... superlative degree! [...]

## From the Article "Pride"

1940

Cinema [...] like no other art, is uniquely capable of compiling into a generalised image: a person and what they see, a person and what surrounds them, a person and what they gather around themselves.

The most heroic attempt of literature to achieve the same consisted in what James Joyce tried to do in “Ulysses” and in other works.

Here, the ultimate recreation of how reality is reflected and refracted in human consciousness and feelings is achieved.

Joyce’s uniqueness is expressed in the fact that he, with his special “two-plane” method of writing, constantly tries to solve precisely this problem: he unfolds the display of an event simultaneously with how it passes through the consciousness and feelings, associations and emotions of the main character.

Here, as nowhere else, literature achieves an almost physiological tangibility of everything it writes about. To the entire arsenal of methods of literary influence, a compositional structure is added here, which I would call “super-lyrical”. For if lyric poetry recreates, along with images, the most intimate course of the inner logic of feelings, then Joyce already gives an imprint of the very physiology of emotion formation, an imprint of the embryology of thought formation.

The effects are sometimes astonishing, but they are paid for at the price of complete disintegration of the very foundations of literary writing; at the price of complete decomposition of the very method of literature and the transformation of the text for the ordinary reader into

“abracadabra”.

Here Joyce shares the sad fate with the entire fellowship of so-called “leftist” arts, whose flourishing coincides with capitalism reaching its imperialist stage.

## From the Book “Memoirs”

*1946*

[...] And I became acquainted with the structure of leitmotif and counterpoint among the foothills of even more gigantic trees—the famous “redwoods” in the vicinity of San Francisco. In their cool shade, I rested for a week from the sultry bustle and commotion of Hollywood,[26] delving into the sweet fruits of knowledge and the subtle poison of Joyce’s “Ulysses” and Stuart Gilbert’s commentaries on it.[27] Again, pure kino.

---

Bonus reading. A wonderful essay by Sam Jennings: How Ulysses Taught Me to Read Again

---

Notes

1. Eisenstein used the word “prospectus” which is not commonly used in Russian and English but I decided to keep it. I found “prospectus” is a programme, a list of something, a reference publication of a promotional nature, containing a detailed list of what is forthcoming or has been prepared for publication.
2. He probably meant the 10th anniversary of Soviet power in Oct 1927.
3. The book was brought to Eisenstein in 1928 by Ivy Litvinova (née

Lowe), an English writer, wife of Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister M.M. Litvinov, who accompanied him to the Congress of the League of Nations in Geneva.

4. Émile Édouard Charles Antoine Zola was a French novelist, journalist, playwright
5. Joyce's statements on Dostoevsky are contained in his 1920s conversations with the artist Arthur Power (Power A. Conversations with James Joyce. London: Millingoton, 1974). Dujardin, Édouard (1861-1949) - French novelist, poet, playwright who attempted to reproduce the "stream of consciousness" in his novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, 1887.
6. Wiki - Jane Avril was a French can-can dancer made famous by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec through his paintings. Extremely thin, "given to jerky movements and sudden contortions", she was nicknamed La Mélinite, after an explosive
7. Yvette Guilbert was a French cabaret singer and actress of the Belle Époque. Youtube.
8. Wiki - Etching is traditionally the process of using strong acid or mordant to cut into the unprotected parts of a metal surface to create a design in intaglio (incised) in the metal.
9. He means here *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Joyces first novel.
10. This is most likely Alex Ponizovsky (1901-1944). He was the brother of Lucy Leon and the son-in-law of Paul Leon, the Russians who had the closest relationship with Joyce. Ponizovsky studied with V.V. Nabokov in Cambridge and was friends with Joyce's son George. Ponizovsky's Russian studies with Joyce began in late 1927 or early 1928. In 1932 Ponizovsky was briefly engaged to Joyce's mentally ill daughter Lucia. After one attack Lucia fell into a catatonic trance and was taken to a psychiatric hospital. Ponizovsky broke off the engagement (as S. Beckett had done before him) and relations with Joyce were temporarily strained but not broken off. During the war, he was in French territory not occupied by the Germans and set up a channel through which Nora Joyce, who was living in Zurich after her husband's death, managed to recover some of the property that was being auctioned off by their Parisian landlord. Staying in the free zone did not save Ponizovsky from death in a concentration camp.
11. "A readeress" is "a woman reader". I decided to use this here. It isn't easy to translate it into English because nouns in Russian are not gender-neutral.
12. From Wiki – Eisenstein was fascinated by Mexico and wanted to

make a film about the country. See, ¡Que viva México!

13. At the end of 1909. Joyce opened Ireland's first Volta cinema in Dublin with money from Trieste merchants, but it did not last long. He subsequently owned small cinemas in Trieste and Zurich.
14. Léon Moussinac (1890-1964) was a French writer, art historian, cinema figure.
15. This refers to "Finnegans Wake".
16. Gorman's "James Joyce, His First Forty Years".
17. Isaac Babel (1894-1940) was a prominent Soviet writer known for his short story collections "Red Cavalry" and "Odessa Tales." His concise, vivid prose style, combining brutal realism with poetic imagery, greatly influenced Soviet literature and cinema. Babel later fell victim to Stalin's purges, was arrested in 1939, and executed in 1940, with his works banned until the 1950s.
18. Sophia Zakharovna Fedorchenko (1880-1959) was a Russian writer considered one of the founders of documentary prose in Russia. During World War I, she served as a nurse at the front for a year and eight months before falling ill and returning to the rear. Her experiences led to her masterwork "People at War" (Народ на войне), first published in 1917. The book recreated fragmentary conversations of wounded Russian soldiers from 1915-1916 in choppy, oral style, sprinkled with folk rhymes and fragments of songs, tales and legends — "a polyphonic diary". The book became a hit and was translated into European languages. Fedorchenko admitted that rather than being stenographic records, the book was written from memory, which led to accusations of mystification. However, she received strong support from many prominent figures of the art world including Sergei Eisenstein. It also impressed international writers including Thomas Mann. After the controversy, her health worsened significantly; she focused on children's literature, wrote historical novels, until she died in 1959.
19. He definitely said that.
20. See Part I above
21. "Battleship Potemkin" (1925), Eisenstein's film.
22. "October 1917: Ten Days that Shook the World" (1928), another Eisenstein's film.
23. Édouard Dujardin (1861-1949) — French writer, poet, and critic who pioneered the literary technique of stream of consciousness. His novel "Les Lauriers sont coupés" ("The Laurels Have Been Cut", 1887) is considered the first to extensively employ interior monologue. Though initially overlooked, the work gained recognition when James Joyce cited it as a significant influence on

his own technique in “Ulysses.” Dujardin was also the founder of the Symbolist journal “La Revue Wagnérienne” and was associated with the Symbolist movement. His experimental prose style, which attempted to capture the flow of pre-speech consciousness, marked a crucial turning point in modernist literature, though his own work remained relatively obscure compared to those he influenced.

24. Valery Larbaud (1881-1957) was a French poet, prosaist, translator. He had friendly and working relations with Joyce, in particular, they jointly edited the French translation of “Ulysses”. Joyce’s influence can be traced in Larbaud’s works of the 1920s built on internal monologue, such as a few novellas one of which was dedicated to Joyce.
25. Nikolai Marr (1865-1934) was a Soviet orientalist and linguist, academician, author of “Japhetic theory”.
26. In Hollywood, Eisenstein was engaged in directing the screenplay for the film “An American Tragedy” based on Dreiser’s novel, in which he wanted to translate Joyce’s technique of “internal monologue” into the language of cinema. Paramount, which had objections to the ideological content of the film, terminated the adaptation agreement.
27. Stuart Gilbert (1883-1969), a literary scholar and translator. He became close to Joyce in 1927 in Paris when he retired after many years of service in Burma. He participated in the translation of “Ulysses” into French, and then authored “James Joyce’s Ulysses: A Study” in 1930, in which, at Joyce’s request, he interpreted the novel in accordance with a scheme compiled by the writer in 1921, explaining its structure and concept, semantic load and structure of episodes, analogies with Homer’s “Odyssey”. Some things in the book were considered a bit far-fetched, for example, the correlation of each episode with a specific organ of the human body, and in addition, with a specific science or art, colour, and symbols. This made some writers, including Vladimir Nabokov, not to take Joyce’s theoretical constructions and Gilbert’s faithful following of them seriously. According to Nabokov, Joyce, in a conversation with him in the late 1930s, regretted the existence of Gilbert’s work, equating it to a kind of advertisement. Eisenstein, as can be seen from his memoirs, read Gilbert’s book in the year of its publication and treated it with complete trust.

nova·nevédoma

*A literary locus and samizdat press*
*for original fictions and translations.*

nova-nevedoma.com



scan to subscribe

*Find us on Substack*

blog.nova-nevedoma.com