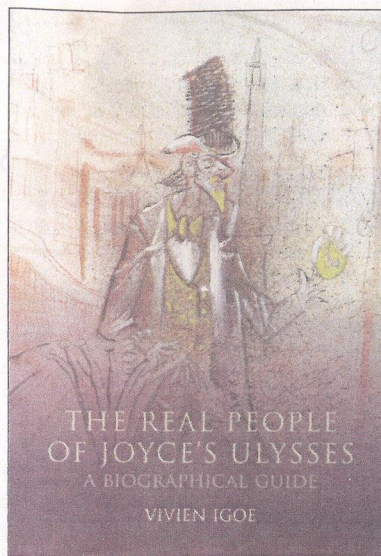


Vivien Igoe's *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses*

Nearly one hundred years after its appearance, James Joyce's *Ulysses* still fascinates, intrigues, thrills and challenges the average reader. To help the neophyte, the Joyce industry has developed a whole range of critical, factual, informative guides to the novel's linguistic, structural and compositional innovations and experiments, such as the use of the stream of consciousness and the profusion of styles. However, there remains a core of hard facts, historical, political and biographical, which can still bewilder the most dedicated of readers. The immense cast of characters which perambulate the streets of Dublin on that memorable day, 16 June 1904, can present a problem, especially for the non-Irish reader whose knowledge of the historical and social background of *Ulysses* may be skin-deep and who only wants sufficient information to place the characters in their real life contexts.

Vivien Igoe's monumental book, *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses, A Biographical Guide*, published by UCD Press, more than provides the essential biographical information for all the real characters which populate Joyce's novel. Like a Russian epic novel, *Ulysses* swarms with names, places, institutions, historical facts and topographical details; enough, in fact, to support the quip once made that if Dublin were to be obliterated, you could reconstruct it from a reading of *Ulysses*. Vivien's book

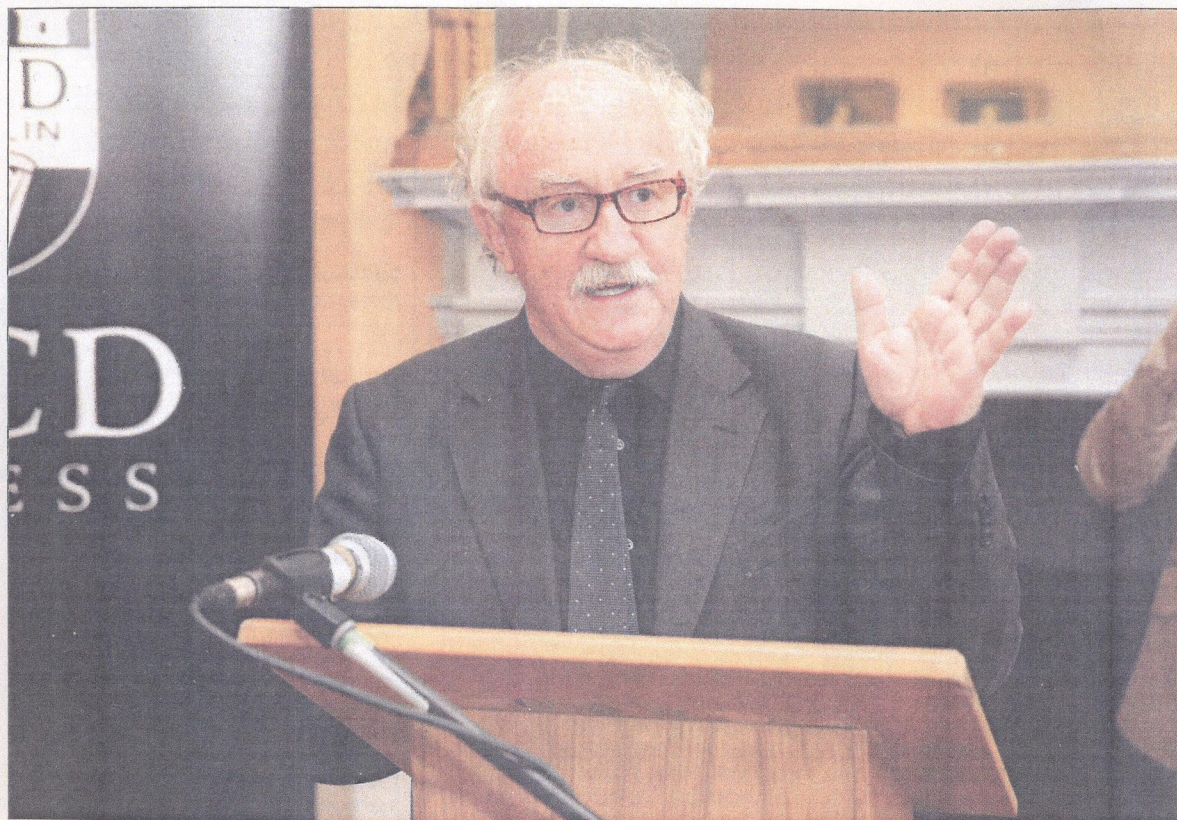


BOOKreview
by Charles M Durante

performs a similar task with the human element of the novel: her biographical entries would enable a future ethnologist to weave a rich tapestry of the human beings who inhabited Dublin (and, in fact, to some extent Gibraltar) in the early twentieth century.

Vivien's book provides the reader who is floundering amid the welter of names with indispensable help: arranged in a dictionary format, a veritable A to Z, her guide collates all the real characters who appear in the novel, including those who only receive a passing mention, like old Luigi from Catalan Bay, Gibraltar.

Before examining some of the entries in Vivien's book and how some have a very local bearing, I have to declare an



Professor Declan Kiberd, from University of Notre Dame, who launched the book at the Joyce Centre in Dublin.

interest. Vivien wrote to the Gibraltar Chronicle some years back asking for help with the characters in *Ulysses* with a Gibraltar connection. Especially in the last chapter of the novel, Penelope, Gibraltar plays a prominent role in Molly Bloom's reverie, when she recalls her youth spent in Gibraltar, her sexual awakening, her first encounter with love and men. I answered her letter, offering to carry out any research necessary locally. I have repeatedly thanked Vivien for providing me with





Vivien Igoe signs a copy of the book for Sister Joan Hutchinson during the launch at the Joyce Centre in Dublin.

is already a worry when Stephen complains to Mulligan that Haines spent the night 'moaning to himself about shooting a black panther'. A scholarly, annotated edition of *Ulysses* will always help the reader with brief biographical sketches of the main characters, but they cannot compete with the full, detailed accounts which Vivien's book provides. Telling observations cast a revelatory light on the quirks of Joyce's characters. For example, in the entry on Oliver St John Gogarty, the original of Buck Mulligan, we learn that he had an 'incisive wit', a trait which is amply corroborated in the novel in Mulligan's bawdy humour and corrosive comments.

In the Circe chapter, we enter Bella Cohen's brothel with Stephen and Bloom. Vivien's entry on Bella Cohen's brothel

and Samuel, are described as grocers with their shop in Engineer Lane, selling high quality products like Twinning Teas and Jacob biscuits. Another family with entrepreneurial brothers were the Abrines, John and Luis Richard, bakers, whose original name was Abri. They ran the Aix Bakery in 292 Main Street. Interestingly, the name Aix was chosen for the family firm because they won a bread competition held in Aix in France. The Aix building is still standing and now houses a thriving bistro. A Mrs Opisso, dressmaker, also receives an entry and includes Molly's remark she would have drowned herself had she had such a name!

The local entries provide an aperçu into the social history of the Gibraltar of the time.

entry on *Bena sneus a furia* glow on Dublin's red light district with its 1,600 prostitutes and its basic organization on hierarchical lines to cater for the sexual needs of all its clients, drawn from the different socio-economic classes. The establishment described in *Ulysses* must be a 'flash-house', the better-maintained brothel, as it boasts a pianola which Stephen plays.

The entry on Almidano Artifoni reveals that he was a language teacher in Trieste. In *Ulysses* he is transformed into Stephen's music teacher, the motive simply being the euphonious sound of the name, with four syllables each, and the accent falling on the third syllable in both names. The exchange between teacher and pupil in *The Wandering Rocks* chapter takes place in Italian, supposedly the most musical of languages.

The 'giants' of Irish culture, politics, literature, and history are found cheek by jowl with undistinguished publicans, businessmen and artisans.

Among the august are Oscar Wilde, G B Shaw, J M Synge, Charles Stewart Parnell (the uncrowned king of Ireland), Jonathan Swift, Douglas Hyde, W B Yeats, George Russell (AE) and John O'Leary. Most of those who played a significant role in Ireland's turbulent history are also here.

Local readers will riffle through the pages of Vivien's book looking for local names. They will not be disappointed.

The Benady brothers, Mesod

But, undoubtedly, the most fascinating entry here is that under the exotic name of Lunita Laredo. Molly, the heroine of Joyce's novel, is of mixed ethnic background, a fairly common occurrence in a place like Gibraltar. She is the daughter of an occupying military man, 'Major' Tweedy and the shadowy 'jewess-looking' Lunita Laredo. Incredibly, a Lunita Laredo lies buried in the Jewish Cemetery at North Front and her biographical details will fascinate many a local historian. Lastly, Vivien has left no local stone unturned: she has consulted the Gibraltar Chronicle and lists our local newspaper among the impressive number of newspapers examined. Vivien has gathered a truly stunning range of documentary evidence concerning the real characters in *Ulysses*: archives, libraries, census findings, heritage and genealogical centres have all yielded their treasures and informed the rich, illuminating entries.

As a former curator of the Joyce Museum, she met and spoke to friends of Joyce like Frank Budgen and Ottocaro Weiss. The Real People in Joyce's *Ulysses* can proudly stand beside such scholarly works as Richard Ellmann's now classic biography, Stuart Gilbert's groundbreaking James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a study and Hugh Kenner's *Dublin's Joyce*. It will undoubtedly become an indispensable 'vade mecum' for all Joyceans.