



Holy Cow!

James Joyce Slaughters the Sacred Cows of English Literature

Directed by Jen Dean

What does a style virtuoso do with the sacred cows of literary tradition? Nothing is safe and everyone is fair game! James Joyce chooses fine cuts and then gorges, spews, parodies, refashions and creates new life.

This original adaptation for theatre of chapter 14 of *Ulysses*, *Oxen of the Sun*, foregrounds Joyce's literary virtuosity: he magisterially commandeers all the styles (some 1000 of them at last count) of literary history, refurbishing them to tell his own modern story. Does style make the man? How does it limit how one thinks? Govern even what one can think?

As well as showcasing Joyce's wit at its best and his parodic take on the whole of English Literature, this chapter simultaneously tells the simple story of Bloom's visit to the maternity hospital to offer moral support, and homage, to a woman in labour for the twelfth time. It tracks the nine months of pregnancy, the birth and removal of placenta. All the while, too, in the tea-room, the rambunctious medicos and friends carouse and discuss sex, contraception, obstetrical pathologies, church attitudes to childbirth, and women's bodies. They don't hold fertility in quite the same esteem as Bloom or Joyce and their over-the-top exchanges make for great comedy. They are irreverent, sacrilegious and down-right offensive. Despite the unlikelihood of it, this encounter marks a turning point in Bloom's relationship with Stephen, who might 'replace' the son who failed to thrive and whom he and Molly still mourn.

Join Mina, the boyos, Stephen and Bloom at the Holles Street maternity hospital, for a romp through English literature and the maternity hospital.

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