

# **“Ulysses” Heroic**

**film**

Thomas Haroldson

1967

Harry Levin, the literary critic, once said that the achievements of such writers as Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and Hemingway “can almost be computed in terms of specific gravity.”

In other words, density, rather than volume, is the main characteristic of their work. However, in James Joyce’s novel, “Ulysses,” one finds both density and volume, which make it one of the most formidable books ever written.

In view of this, director Joseph Strick’s decision to film the story can only be called heroic. It is never easy to bring a 783 page novel to the screen, but in the case of “Ulysses,” now playing at two Studio Theaters, it is almost attempting the impossible.

But Strick did attempt the impossible, and to a certain extent he succeeded. While no film short of perhaps a 30 hour production, could present the entire book, the film “Ulysses” does provide a fairly accurate outline of Joyce’s masterpiece.

To a person who has read the book, the movie may seem a bit thin, but the lack of detail is somewhat compensated for by the enjoyment of seeing such familiar characters as Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom portrayed on the screen.

By current standards, the movie is a low-cost production, and as a result the photography leaves a great deal to be desired. For example, many of the outdoor shots seem to be overexposed (although at times it is intentional), and the fantasy scenes cry out for better special effects.

However, the superb performances of Milo O’Shea, who plays Bloom, and Barbara Jefford, who plays his wife, Molly, more than make up for the weak technical aspects of the production. In addition, the film enjoys some of the best casting of any movie made in recent times.

But, of course, the real star of the picture is Joyce’s language. And no where in the film is the dense prose-poetry of the original work more evident than in Molly Bloom’s soliloquy, which concludes:

“...I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.”



Thomas Haroldson  
"Ulysses" Heroic  
film  
1967

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/41-november-1-15-1967/ulysses-heroic>  
Fifth Estate #41, November 1-15, 1967

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)**