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NAXOS
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COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED

James Joyce

Molly Bloom's
Soliloquy

FROM ULYSSES

Read by **Marcella Riordan**

1	'Yes because he never did a thing like that before...'	10:29
2	'why can't you kiss a man without going and marrying him...'	6:03
3	'I suppose it was meeting Josie Powell and the funeral...'	6:16
4	'they're all so different Boylan talking about...'	8:00
5	'I hate people who come at all hours...'	9:40
6	'yes and half the girls in Gibraltar never wore them neither...'	7:31
7	'if I went by his advices...'	6:37
8	'frseeeeeeeefronnng train somewhere whistling...'	8:57
9	'the days like years not a letter from a living soul...'	7:37
10	'he was looking at me I had that white blouse on...'	11:14
11	'that was a relief wherever you be let your wind go free...'	9:27
12	'I'm too honest as a matter of fact I suppose he thinks...'	10:52
13	'who knows is there anything the matter with my insides...'	7:14
14	'wait there's Georges church bells wait...'	6:58
15	'wait by god yes wait yes hold on he was on the cards...'	4:59
16	'no that's no way for him he has no manners...'	6:59
17	'O I'm not going to think myself into the glooms...'	9:58
18	'God of heaven there's nothing like nature...'	4:56

Total time: 2:24:01

James Joyce

(1882–1941)

Molly Bloom's Soliloquy

...I don't care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldn't see women going and killing one another and slaughtering when do you ever see women rolling around drunk like they do or gambling every penny they have and losing it on horses yes because a woman whatever she does she knows when to stop...

The final chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is one of the most famous – some would say notorious – pieces of writing in 20th-century literature. It's famous because, although very long, it's written entirely without punctuation, as a so called 'stream of consciousness'. It's notorious because it was this chapter, principally, that got the book banned for 12 years following its first publication.

In 1922, the arbiters of taste and decency in the English speaking world were not yet ready for explicit and intimate discussion of sex, especially from the

mouth of a woman (even if they were put there by a male author). Nowadays, such explicit material is less remarkable and even the lack of punctuation seems less challenging in a world of text-speak. Even so, it's hard to read, because Molly's sleepy interior monologue drifts realistically from topic to topic, introducing thoughts and fragments of thoughts without warning, as they occur in real life. That's why a recording such as this is so useful. Here, Marcella Riordan makes sense of every word and every sound of Joyce's text, bringing all the warmth, wit and passion

of Molly Bloom to life perfectly.

So who is Molly Bloom? She is an amateur singer and the wife of Leopold Bloom, the middle aged Jewish seller of newspaper advertising who is the central character of the book. The plot of *Ulysses* unfolds over the space of a single day in Dublin – 16 June 1904 – tracing Bloom’s day from breakfast to bedtime. During the course of the day he wanders the streets of the city, encountering a variety of engaging characters and getting into some interesting scrapes along the way. His wife Molly, meanwhile remains at home, mostly in bed. The highlight of her day, as Bloom well knows, is the arrival at 4pm of her most recent lover, Blazes Boylan. Boylan is a concert impresario who has organised a concert tour for Molly, and he has arranged to come over to her house and ‘go through the programme’ with her. Bloom knows full well what this means, and so, it seems, does the whole of Dublin. More than one of Bloom’s associates, when he informs them of the impending tour, asks him knowingly ‘who’s getting it up?’

Normal marital relations between

Leopold and Molly have, we learn, been non-existent for some years, ever since the death of their young son Rudi, which tore them apart. Molly, however, is a passionate, sexual woman in her prime, and the list of her lovers, all known to her husband, is long. Thus when Bloom climbs the stairs and prepares for bed in the early hours of 17 June, he takes up his usual position, his head at the foot of the double bed, muttering vaguely about eggs.

At this point begins the long interior monologue – 22,000 words – which closes the novel. Bloom’s day is done, but Molly – having spent the day in bed, one way or another, is not finding sleep easy. Her mind races, first taking up the half-heard comment about eggs, and then quickly moving on to reminiscences of the distant and recent past. She recalls her husband’s pathetic attempts at infidelity, and her own rather more successful ones – these in very graphic detail. She assumes that Bloom ‘came somewhere’ – he did, but not in the way she imagines – and speculates about his latest liaisons. Often her mind drifts back to Gibraltar, where

she lived as a girl, and to her father and other characters of those days. From time to time the songs she is to perform on the concert tour come into her head. In particular, the popular 'Love's Old Sweet Song' pre-occupies her – how to enunciate certain words, and the protracted note on the word 'so-o-o-ong', which seems to be echoed by passing trains: 'frseeeeeeeffronnnng train somewhere whistling...'. Unable to move much in bed for fear of waking her husband, she also wrestles with bodily discomforts (wind, the onset of her period) and eventually finds it necessary to slip out and use the chamber pot beside the bed.

Finally, towards dawn, she begins to succumb to sleep. Romantically, her final thoughts are of the day that she agreed to marry Bloom ('well as well him as another') lying in the grass up on Howth Head above Dublin Bay, and she remembers how she got him to propose to her. There is an inevitability about her answer, for throughout the soliloquy Molly has punctuated her stream of consciousness with the word 'yes', thrown in almost as a marker for a new topic or a change of

mood. As the chapter reaches its closing lines, the appearance of the word 'yes' increases in regularity, until the final line reads: 'he could feel my breast all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes.' And here Joyce writes the chapter's only full stop.

Notes by Roger Marsh



Marcella Riordan began her career at The Abbey School in Dublin and has worked in theatres all over Ireland and the UK, including the Druid Theatre and the Lyric Theatre (Belfast). She has worked extensively on BBC Radio and RTÉ in Dublin. Her previous work on James Joyce includes playing Gerty McDowell in Anthony Burgess's *Blooms in Dublin* (BBC/RTÉ), Zoe in *Ulysses* (RTÉ) and Molly Bloom for Naxos AudioBooks' recording of *Ulysses*. She was awarded Best Actress for her portrayal of Nancy Gulliver in a BBC Radio adaptation of Jennifer Johnston's *The Old Jest*.

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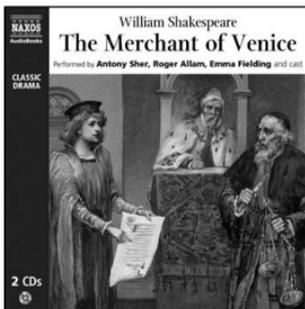
Recorded and edited by Jez Wells at the University of York Music Technology Studios
Mastered by Sarah Butcher

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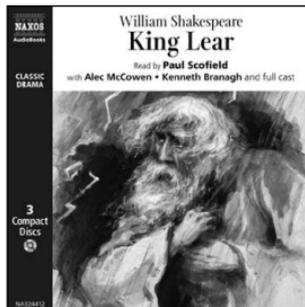
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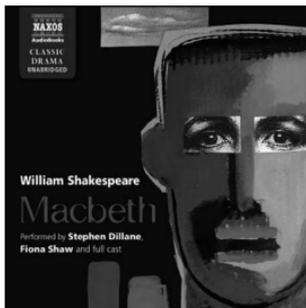
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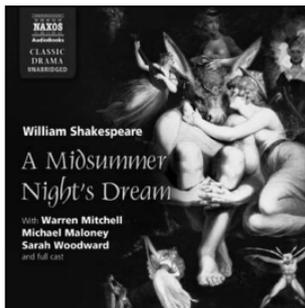
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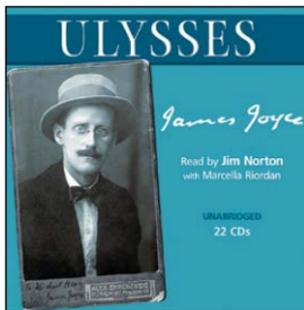
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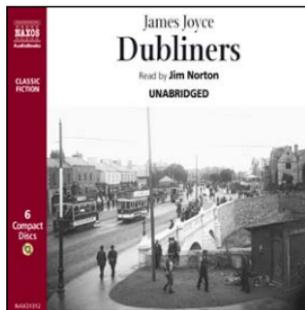
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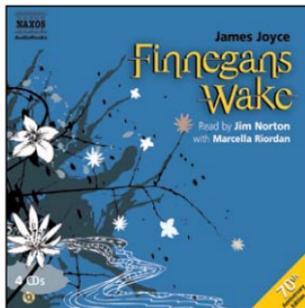
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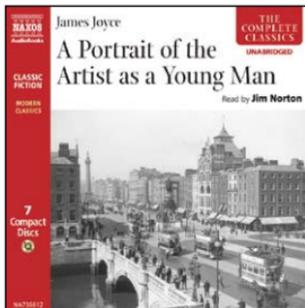
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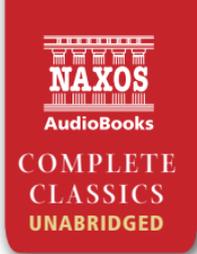
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Read by Jim Norton

James Joyce

Molly Bloom's Soliloquy



Read by **Marcella Riordan**

Molly Bloom's famous soliloquy from James Joyce's *Ulysses* is a languorous internal monologue, in which the passionate wife of Leopold Bloom meditates on love and life. While Bloom sleeps beside her (head to toe), Molly recalls her many infidelities, including the energetic sexual encounter enjoyed that very afternoon. Though difficult to read straight from the page, Marcella Riordan's beautiful reading of this passage brings out all the wit and passion of one of the finest passages of writing in modern literature.



Marcella Riordan began her career at The Abbey School in Dublin and has worked in theatres all over Ireland and the UK, including the Druid Theatre and the Lyric Theatre (Belfast). She has worked extensively on BBC Radio and RTÉ in Dublin. Her previous work on James Joyce includes playing Gerty McDowell in Anthony Burgess's *Blooms in Dublin* (BBC/RTÉ), Zoe in *Ulysses* (RTÉ) and Molly Bloom for Naxos AudioBooks' recording of *Ulysses*. She was awarded Best Actress for her portrayal of Nancy Gulliver in a BBC Radio adaptation of Jennifer Johnston's *The Old Jest*.



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