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Joyce's "Nameless" Hero and Hungarian Jewish Experience

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Abstract. The essay considers the background of James Joyce's "nameless" hero, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, from the point of view of his Hungarian Jewish ancestry: his family history in the Western Hungarian town of Szombathely and the Jewish history of his town. It shows how a certain reading of the "Circe" and "Cyclops" episodes of *Ulysses* reveals them in hindsight as anticipating the nightmarish future of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. This reading is enabled when taking account of the strong parallels that run between the crisis of progress in human history that *Ulysses* addresses and the idea of history in Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* of 1940. 1882, the year of Joyce's birth, was a turning point, if not actually a new beginning, in the long history of anti-Semitic feelings in Hungary. There was a blood libel case in the town of Tiszaeszlár in Eastern Hungary that year. More widely-known and central to the story of modern anti-Semitism in Central Europe was the holding of the first International Anti-Jewish Congress in Dresden in 1882. A local politician from Szombathely, called Győző Istóczy, is linked to both of these events, Szombathely being the town from which Leopold Bloom's family originates in *Ulysses*. By unfolding some of the oblique references hidden in the novel to the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe, and revealing the background of the invented Bloom (Virág) family, the essay shows what tragic fate awaited the real-life Jewish families to which they allude and what would have happened to the Joycean "nameless" hero had he remained in Szombathely.

Keywords: James Joyce, Leopold Bloom, Szombathely, holocaust, Walter Benjamin

Benjamin, Bloom, and the Holocaust

During the course of a study tour in Portbou, Spain, in December 2019, I came across the following quotation on the memorial of the great German Jewish thinker, Walter Benjamin, a victim of Nazi persecution: "It is more arduous to honour the

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memory of anonymous beings than that of the renowned. The construction of history is consecrated to the memory of the nameless" (Benjamin, "Preparatory notes for the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*"). The spectacular spot in the Pyrenees Mountains by the Mediterranean Sea, where this unique memorial stands, is the place where Benjamin spent his last hours before committing suicide, after having failed to escape German-occupied France and inevitable deportation to the Nazi concentration camps, his hope being to find eventual freedom in the USA. The quotation commemorates all those who have vanished namelessly from our planet. A comprehensive historical narrative would not ignore their lives. My sympathies are with Benjamin: history should concern the fates of the nameless more than those of the renowned.

One such nameless hero is James Joyce's protagonist from his 1922 modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*: Leopold Bloom. Morton P. Levitt states that in Bloom Joyce "created the archetypal Modernist figure, the man whose history, attitude, condition come to represent all of humanity in the twentieth century" (2004–2005, 146). Paradoxically, Bloom has become the most well-known "nameless" hero in modernist literature: a "nameless" figure in so far as his rootless, humanistic, wandering Jewish family history and complex ethnic-religious identity are concerned. We follow his past and present life through his experience of everyday events in the Dublin of 16 June 1904 over the course of nine hundred pages. Bloom, an ordinary man by social status, is in constant search of his family's past and the meaning of his present life. He is one whose ancestors were people whom we would call today "migrants." They left their homes in a faraway country in the hope of finding a better life in another place, just as Irishman James Joyce and German Walter Benjamin did, albeit for very different reasons. Benjamin fled from the Nazis to save his life. Joyce's exile was self-inflicted, motivated at least in part by his desire to leave what he experienced as the suffocating and intolerant atmosphere that prevailed in 1900s Dublin in order to find a place where he would be free to express his own ideas. Being a migrant is a personal characteristic that connects the fictional "nameless" character of Bloom to Joyce and Benjamin. It has been argued that in certain forms of literature exile is a fundamentally Jewish condition. Drawing on the thought of George Steiner, Ira Nadel examines this theme in *Joyce and the Jews: Culture and Texts* (1996, 5). This is one of a number of works that reflect the growth of interest within Joycean criticism in the Jewish subject over the past thirty years. Jews became a "metaphor for what had gone wrong in modern society" with their "perseverance through centuries of persecution," as Morton Levitt claims (2004–2005, 148). Going further, Mark Scroggins has highlighted an interesting development in his review of these two books written on Joyce and the Jews (2000). The books in question are Neil Davison's study of the construction of Jewish identity in European modernism (1996) and Marilyn Reizbaum's exploration of Joyce and Judaism in *James Joyce's Judaic Other* (1999). These studies involve

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a shift from exploring Joyce's experimental technique "to the cultural and social marginality of its protagonist, Leopold Bloom" (Scroggins 2000, 79).

This essay examines the invented history of the family of our "nameless hero," Leopold Bloom, to show what would have happened to Bloom had his father not emigrated from the Hungarian town of Szombathely to Dublin. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we may assume that real-life ancestors, upon whom the fictional Bloom's ancestors would have been based, belonged to some "nameless" Jewish family in Szombathely. Had they stayed there, a similar fate would have awaited them to that of Walter Benjamin: they would have become the victims of the Holocaust together with the more than three thousand Jewish people from the town of Szombathely.

Towards the end of his life, Joyce had become all too aware of the monstrous shape that anti-Semitism had taken in Europe. Ira Nadel points out that during the last four years of his life Joyce assisted in getting official documents for German and Austrian Jewish people to escape to the USA (1986, 306–308). Peter Chrisp notes that Joyce added a reference to Hitler in the "Shem the Penman" chapter in *Finnegans Wake* in 1938 (2020). However, in 1922, the year of the publication of *Ulysses*, Joyce could not have foreseen the fate of the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe. Yet for today's readers of the novel, who possess 2020 hindsight, it is impossible to ignore the tragedy of the Holocaust. A modern reader cannot appreciate the character of a descendant of a Jew from Szombathely without imagining the probable fate of Rudolf Virág's Jewish fellow sufferers in Hungary.

Quite surprisingly, the word "holocaust" appears twice in *Ulysses,* although with a very different meaning from the one it has today: the industrialized mass murder of the Jews, the Roma, and other minority groups by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War.[1] Originally, the Greek word meant "sacrifice by fire, burnt offering." Later, from the seventeenth century, it was used in a figurative sense as "destruction, massacre of a large number of people" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). In its present sense, it was not first used until 1957. Therefore, when Joyce used the word, he could not have had its current meaning in mind.

It is still worth considering the two occurrences of "holocaust" in *Ulysses*. It first appears in the "Lestrygonians" episode, when Bloom laments a boat accident that happened in New York on 16 June 1904. More than one thousand children and women died, many of them burnt to death (Gifford and Seidman 1989, 186): "Where is the justice being born that way? All those women and children excursion beanfeast burned and drowned in New York. Holocaust" (Joyce 1986, 149). The second time that the word is mentioned is in the "Ithaca" episode, when Bloom recalls the events of the day one by one in association with Jewish celebrations.

1 President of the James Joyce Society of Hungary, Ferenc Takács, drew my attention to this interesting fact concerning the word in Joyce's novel; Dr Takács is preparing to publish his findings related to the meaning of the word and its different Hungarian translations.

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When he gets to his rather unfortunate encounter with the anti-Semite "Citizen" in Barney Kiernan's pub, he uses the word again in brackets: "the altercation with a truculent troglodyte in Bernard Kiernan's premises (holocaust)" (Joyce 1986, 599). In the first case, the word probably means "a massacre of a large number of people." In the second, according to Gifford and Seidman, besides meaning "burnt offering, total sacrifice," it is also used to refer to the ceremony held to commemorate the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD (1989, 601). In fact, the Yiddish term for destruction, "hurbn," was used in reference to the destruction of the Temple, and survivors of the genocide after 1945 used the same word to describe the murder of the Jews. In both instances from *Ulysses*, there is an element of burning: either literally, in the physical sense of people burnt to death on the ship in New York, or figuratively, in the sense of "a burnt offering." In what follows, I discuss two different thematic renderings of the holocaust in *Ulysses*. One relates to the affinities between Walter Benjamin's and James Joyce's ideas concerning progress in history. The other one addresses the circumstances and the fate of the real-life Jewish ancestors in Szombathely, Hungary, upon whom the Szombathely ancestry of the fictional Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* draws.

The Crisis of Historical Progress in Benjamin and Joyce

Certain episodes of *Ulysses* share with Benjamin's work,[2] *On the Concept of History*, a disconcerting anticipation of an imminent cataclysm. In *On the Concept of History*, this sense is most striking in Benjamin's famous ninth thesis concerning Paul Klee's painting, "Angelus Novus:"

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 1968, 257–258)

2 My thanks to Michael McAteer for his suggestions on the affinities between Benjamin's ideas on history and history as it is treated in *Ulysses*.

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Benjamin identifies in the image a representation of progress as a contradictory historical movement. Despite moving forward, there is no improvement, neither material nor spiritual. The Angel is looking backward at the past, where he can see disaster, rather than forward into a paradise of freedom and enlightenment. Although he would try to restore the destruction and revive the dead, a force propels him forward into the future. When he arrives, the catastrophe lies in front of his eyes. According to Benjamin, progress is independent of the person's intention and will and is largely determined by historical forces. It is not something positive that improves things but rather the opposite. Goodwill has no effect on it. Humanity may anticipate the malign signs in time but is unable to change direction because a force beyond human power drives humanity towards an inescapable destiny. The past disaster remains and fully expands into a cataclysm in the future. Progress does not yield to material or intellectual development but to destruction and suffering. When Benjamin recorded his ideas in 1940, he had already seen and experienced historical events as moving towards a total disaster: the Second World War had started, Hitler had taken power in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, Franco in Spain, while Stalin had turned the Russian Revolution into a repressive totalitarian regime.

Less than two decades before the publication of Benjamin's enigmatic theses, Joyce had already expressed a similar sceptical idea regarding the Enlightenment idea of progress in history in *Ulysses*. Early in the novel in the "Nestor" episode, Stephen Dedalus makes his rather pessimistic statement about history after listening to Mr Deasy, his Private School Headmaster, make anti-Semitic comments: "History […] is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 1986, 28). The phrase recurs in Stephen's thoughts later in the "Aeolus" episode, in a slightly altered way: "Nightmare from which you will never awake" (Joyce 1986, 113). After reading the whole novel, one gets the impression that Stephen Dedalus is predicting a disaster in this utterance, represented as cataclysm in the nightmarishly surreal "Circe" chapter at the end of the novel and in the actual historical developments that occur during the two decades after the publication of the novel. Like Benjamin, it seems as if Joyce could foresee the end at the beginning: the nightmare and the road leading to it. In Mr Deasy's stereotypical comments about the Jews, Stephen recognizes how such "identifying mark of a people […] become disseminated unquestioned, and through generations, become unquestioned" (Davison 1996, 196).

Mr Deasy's anti-Semitic outburst in "Nestor" foreshadows a more explicit appearance of anti-Semitism in one of the most powerful episodes of the novel in terms of anti-Semitic aggression, the "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses*. It is important to note that despite the content of their common anti-Semitic feelings and utterances, Mr Deasy and the Citizen represent two completely different political ideas concerning the British-Irish question. While the former is a pro-British Unionist, member of the Orange Order, devoted to the Protestantism of the English monarchy, the latter is a narrow-minded Catholic, pro-Sinn Féin Nationalist, who

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passionately yearns for Irish independence. In fact, in her book, *James Joyce and Nationalism*, Emer Nolan regards the Citizen as "the mirror-image of Mr Deasy in Chapter 2" (1995, 98). Both of them have black-and-white, one-sided views in their approach to the Anglo-Irish relations. Therefore, it is not surprising that they share certain extremist, discriminatory ideas targeting the Jews. In his influential study, *Joyce, Race and Empire*, Vincent Cheng attempts to explain the background of these narrow-minded, nationalistic discourses. Both British unionists and Irish nationalists could only think in terms of binary oppositions: in order to highlight their racial superiority and dominance over the other group, they degrade and dehumanize the opponent (1995, 18). Such extremist ideas could only be maintained by applying xenophobic narratives and assuming the "purity" of the given nation, which implies the exclusion of people with different ethnic backgrounds, including the Jews. Cheng rightfully states that in *Ulysses* Joyce "reverses all these derogatory analogies to other races by using them in a positive, vital, and enabling manner; analogizing and equating the Irish with other races and colonized peoples by accenting the flattering aspects of such comparisons and by suggesting a solidarity of the marginalized and othered" (1995, 27). It is significant that early in the novel, in the "Nestor" episode, a parallel and solidarity is built between Stephen and Bloom when Stephen tries to defend the Jews in his reaction to Mr Deasy's anti-Semitic comments, anticipating Bloom's defence of himself later in the "Cyclops" episode. Stephen's feeling of history as a nightmare when listening to Deasy after teaching his morning class is shared by Bloom later in *Ulysses* during the row with the Citizen in Barney Kiernan's pub: "Persecution, says he, all the history of the world is full of it. Perpetuating national hatred among nations" (Joyce 1986, 271).

In "Cyclops," the Citizen's slogans become extremist arguments as the dispute turns aggressive, Bloom humiliated and metaphorically crucified by the Citizen because of his Jewish origins: "I'll crucify him so I will. Give us that biscuit box" (Joyce 1986, 280).[3] The insult develops into a physical assault when the nationalistic, xenophobic Citizen throws a tin of biscuits at Bloom.[4] He even threatens to kill him: "Where is he till I murder him?" (Joyce 1986, 281). Walter Benjamin's storm drives the Angel/Bloom from his past towards his future destruction, which unfolds in the surreality of the "Circe" chapter. The Citizen's attack is followed by the description of a catastrophe, in the form of an earthquake, anticipating the cataclysms in the "Circe" episode.

3 In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus names himself as "nobody" – a "nameless" person –, but in fact, in Joyce's work, it is the narrator of this episode who remains "nameless" in this instance, rather than Bloom.

4 The tin of biscuits was manufactured by W. and R. Jacob & Company, Ireland's largest biscuit producing company. Despite the Jewish-sounding name of the family that might lend the Citizen's threat an element of farce, the owners were actually Quakers in origin (Gifford and Seidman 1989, 379; Jacob 1940, 134).

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Two important moments in the "Circe" episode represent catastrophe and relate back to the Citizen's threat of the crucifixion and burning of Bloom as well as to the earthquake shaking the world. This is the scene where the "nightmare of history" from "Nestor" manifests itself in full "reality," and it is magnified into a cataclysm. We enter a realm where it is sometimes difficult to separate dreamlike hallucinations from reality. In this episode, Joyce's vision of the crisis of human progress reaches its final destination. In "Circe," a dream features the ascendance of Bloom to recognition and fame followed by his downfall, crucifixion, and death. The fire brigade sets fire to him, and "Bloom becomes mute, shrunken and carbonised" (Joyce 1986, 407). Before Bloom achieves all his secret desires, his unconscious ambitions are fulfilled: he is elected as Lord Mayor, then Crowned as Leopold the First, a city is named after him (Bloomusalem), at some point he changes his sex and gives birth to eight "male yellow and white children" (Joyce 1986, 403) who become very successful people, and finally he even becomes the Messiah! In the Bloomusalem of Bloom's fantasies, as Vincent Cheng argues, he is given the opportunity to refute all the false accusations and prejudice of the Citizen in "Cyclops." He becomes the king of the Celts and the Jews since in "Bloom's vision of an Irish nation they would both be welcome" (1995, 219–220). However, during this process he is metamorphosed into a demagogue dictator, is admired and praised by everyone, even by those people who have excluded him, thereby rising beyond the exclusivism of Irish and British nationalism. Despite all his success, Benjamin's storm of history grabs him and carries him towards his destiny. People start questioning him about the sins that he has committed; hostility grows and is followed by persecution. People who admired him before turn against him now, even his Jewish friends mock him. He is tortured and murdered as a heretic in a mediaeval inquisition: "Invests Bloom in a yellow habit with embroidery of painted flames and high pointed hat. He places a bag of gunpowder round his neck and hands him over to the civil power" (Joyce 1986, 406). Sadly, it is the Citizen from "Cyclops" who first expresses his relief at Bloom's arrest by saying "Thank heaven" (Joyce 1986, 406).

Towards the end of "Circe," Benjamin's apocalyptic vision becomes manifest. The Irish nationalist Citizen appears again in a heavy argument with the British Major Tweedy, tension increasing between the two men. While Bloom is trying desperately to make peace between them, the unavoidable disaster happens: "Dublin's burning! Dublin's burning! On fire, on fire" reaches a cosmic level: "The midnight sun is darkened. The earth trembles. The dead of Dublin from Prospect and Mount Jerome in white sheepskin overcoats and black goatfell cloaks arise and appear to many" (Joyce 1986, 488). Eventually, a Black Mass is performed, a reference to the Last Judgement. The world has come to an end, and the future is laid in front of us: this is the stage to which human progress has led. As with Benjamin, Joyce's vision of so-called progress is a dark one. Knowing with hindsight of the

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destiny of the six million Jewish people in Europe during the Second World War, one cannot help but associate that great tragedy in the burning images as described in these pages of *Ulysses*.

Modern Jewish History in Leopold Bloom's Szombathely

Acknowledging, of course, that *Ulysses* is a work of literary fiction and Bloom a fictional character, it is nonetheless of value to regard the real-life circumstances of the Jewish people of Szombathely in Western Hungary. This is so both with respect to deepening our understanding of the fictional character that Joyce created and also to gaining a better appreciation of the cultural and historical significance of *Ulysses* to the horrors that engulfed the Jewish people of Central and Eastern Europe less than twenty years after the publication of Joyce's work, especially those of a Hungarian background. With this in mind, I turn to non-fiction, describing what happened in reality to the "nameless" Jewish people: Bloom's Jewish ancestors and their descendants, who remained in the small town of Szombathely.

Let us start with the name of the town: Szombathely, famous as the birthplace of St Martin. It began its documented existence as a Roman town called Savaria. The name Szombathely is from the Hungarian "szombat," which literally means "Saturday," and "hely," which means "place." The name of the town is thus presumably derived from the fact that mediaeval markets were held on every Saturday. The Hungarian word for Sunday is "vasárnap." The word "vásár" means "market" in Hungarian and "nap" means "day." We know that for Jewish people Szombat/Sabbath is supposed to be the most important day of the week. However, the legal situation for the Hungarian Jewish community was that they were not allowed to trade on any of the one hundred and four regular weekly markets or on any of the five annual markets until 1840. This was one of many restrictions that the repressed Jewish communities suffered up to the nineteenth century in Hungary, and the history of this repression carries some interesting Joycean resonances.

1882, the year of Joyce's birth, witnessed two notorious events related to the oppression of the Jews in Central Europe. In Hungary, there was a blood libel case in Tiszaeszlár. Although the falsely accused Jews were acquitted in the Tiszaeszlár blood libel trial, the case led to a strengthening of anti-Semitic feeling throughout Hungary. In 1883, there were attacks on Jews in Budapest and in other places. These outbreaks assumed such proportions that in certain districts the authorities were forced to proclaim a state of emergency in order to protect the Jews and their property. More well-known and central to the story of anti-Semitism in Central Europe was the first International Anti-Jewish Congress in Dresden also in the year of Joyce's birth, 1882. Both of these events can be linked to a local politician from Szombathely, called Győző Istóczy. Istóczy's prominence in Hungary was such that

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he represented Hungary at the Dresden Congress, his credentials confirmed by his recently established Hungarian Anti-Semitic Party. There was also another infamous anti-Semitic politician from Szombathely, László Bárdossy, who was a prime minister in Hungary for a period during 1941–42. He promulgated the notorious Third Jewish Law of 1941, banning marriages between Christians and Jews. He was a political representative for Szombathely until 1944 and was subsequently executed for war crimes in 1946.

While Joyce himself could not have known what horrible events were to be visited upon Europe's Jews, he may very well have acquired some knowledge of the conditions pertaining to Szombathely, a place that informs the invented background that Joyce creates for the character of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*. In Joyce's adopted home of Trieste in Northern Italy, despite a few anti-Semitic incidents, the Jews lived relatively in peace, tolerated and protected, for example, by Emperor Leopold in 1675 and by Maria Theresa during the eighteenth century. John McCourt remarks that in "Trieste […] the Jews were singled out for exceptionally favourable treatment, and simply because they were useful to the city and the empire" (2000, 221). In Szombathely, unfortunately, circumstances for Jews were much less accommodating despite their contribution to the economic and cultural prosperity of the town. Up to the eighteenth century, when the municipal authorities rented shops to Jews, they were only permitted to remain in the town during the day, and then only without their families present. Down to the early nineteenth century only three or four Jewish families succeeded in taking up permanent residence in the town. Consequently, members of the little Jewish community of Szombathely dwelt not in the town itself but in the outlying districts. When the Jews of Hungary were emancipated by the law of 1840, the town was obliged to open its doors to them. Jews could now settle down everywhere, carry out commercial activities, set up factories, companies, and educate their children. Most Jewish families were involved in small businesses, and in a town that had very few Jewish businesses before the emancipation new opportunities arose. After 1840, Szombathely became a target of Jewish migration. From a Jewish population of thirty-six people, the number increased to three hundred by 1848 following the 1840 emancipation (Balázs and Katona 2005, 1).

At the beginning of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, anti-Semitic riots broke out in the town. The authorities intervened, however, and when peace was restored, the community quickly resumed its rapid development. We can see that development in the history of local education and religious practice (Balázs and Katona 2005, 5). A small Orthodox Jewish congregation in Szombathely, numbering about sixty or seventy members, separated from the main body in 1870 following a dispute within the Jewish community over some rituals and liturgical issues. This created separate Orthodox and Neolog[5] groups in the town. The Orthodox had their own cemetery,

5 The Neolog and the traditionalist/conservative Orthodox congregations became two separate denominations following the Hungarian Jewish Congress of 1868–69. The Neologs are socially

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rabbi, synagogue, and, inevitably, an Orthodox school was founded in 1898. In 1880, the growing and prosperous Jewish community founded what became a symbol of their civic status, a large Neolog temple (Balázs 2008, 116). This temple is one of the most beautiful edifices of its kind in Hungary. Designed by Ludwig Schöne, it combines oriental Moorish and Romantic elements. It is one of the first synagogues in Hungary to be built with a tower. Shorn of its original religious function, this building was converted to a concert hall in 1975. A memorial outside commemorates the Jews deported from the locality during the Second World War. Around the 1900s (during the period in which *Ulysses* is set in Dublin), the Jewish community, now firmly established in Szombathely, began to be identified with the town's prosperity. Known as "the Queen of the West," Szombathely's Jewish businesses and Jewish taxpayers enabled the building of some impressive public infrastructure. Between the two world wars, Jewish lawyers, doctors, tradesmen, industrialists, and artists belonged to the intellectual and economic élite of the town. This community produced a number of prominent Jewish Hungarians, all of whom seem to have perished in the Holocaust.

The "Nameless" Victims: Leopold Bloom's Szombathely Relatives

What do we know of the Szombathely ancestors of our nameless hero, Leopold Bloom? We find the following information about Bloom's migrant ancestry in the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses*: "Rudolph Bloom (deceased) narrated to his son Leopold Bloom (aged 6) a retrospective arrangement of migrations and settlements in and between Dublin, London, Florence, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Szombathely with statements of satisfaction" (Joyce 1986, 595).

A wandering people, the Blooms as Jews in Western Hungary had probably come from Moravia or Austria, where they had lived with Western Ashkenazi Jews and spoke Western Yiddish and German (Mecsnóber 2013, 36). Following the failure of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, in which many Jewish soldiers had fought, riots and pogroms broke out in the country. The famous Neolog Rabbi of Szombathely, Béla Bernstein, published a history of Jewish participation in the Revolution (1898). According to other sources, about twenty thousand Jewish soldiers fought in an army of around one hundred and eighty thousand soldiers, thus representing an enormous proportion of the Revolutionary forces. Despite this commitment, Jews were blamed for the defeat of the Revolution. Many Jews decided to migrate to Western Europe, which is probably why Rudolf Virág set off

more liberal and modern and had been more supportive of the integration into Hungarian society since the Era of Emancipation in the 19th century. Their members were representatives of urban, assimilated middle- and upper-class Jewry.

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on his journey to Ireland. Tekla Mecsnóber shows how the migration of people from Eastern Europe was accompanied by peculiar changes in surnames, especially in the case of Jews (2013, 35–46).

Under an edict ordered by Emperor Joseph II in 1787, Jews living in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were compelled to change their original family names from Hebrew to German in the eighteenth century. This explains why Rudolf Virág's family in *Ulysses* probably had a German surname originally. Mecsnóber explains that Virág means "flower" in Hungarian, not "bloom:" so, Leopold's surname "Bloom" in *Ulysses* is more likely to derive originally from the German name "Blum" than the Hungarian "Virág." "Blum" was a typical surname among Hungarian Jews in the nineteenth century, and a number of Jewish families called "Blum" lived in Szombathely. However, from the mid-nineteenth century, as a result of the Jewish emancipation in 1840, many Jews changed their surnames into Hungarian as a gesture of willingness to assimilate into Hungarian society. Rudolf Blum, for example, took on the Hungarian surname "Virág" and later changing it to the English version, "Bloom," when living in Ireland.

Among the Jewish families to settle in Szombathely in the nineteenth century was that of the textile merchant Márton Blum. From 1843, they rented Mihály Bossányi's house at 36 Gyöngyös Street, now Főtér, the current location of James Joyce's statue in Szombathely. Márton Blum's eldest granddaughter was called Josephine Paula, her name appearing as Blum Paula in later documents (the surname appearing first in Hungarian convention). In *Ulysses*, Bloom is referred to as Leopold Paula Bloom, a possible echo of Szombathely's real-life Paula Blum. Henrik Blum was the name of one of Márton Blum's sons, a reminder of Henry Flower in *Ulysses*, the name of Leopold Bloom's alter ego.

In *Ulysses*, the reader learns that Leopold Bloom's father, Rudolf, also had relatives in the Hungarian town of Székesfehérvár: "An indistinct daguerreotype of Rudolf Virag and his father Leopold Virag executed in the year 1852 in the portrait atelier of their (respectively) 1st and 2nd cousin, Stefan Virag of Szesfehervar, Hungary" (Joyce 1986, 594). It is possible that a real-life Hungarian Jewish allusion is at play here. Examining lists of photographers living and working in Hungary during Joyce's lifetime, the librarian at the Hungarian National Museum, Endre Tóth, discovered the name of a photographer called Sándor Virág from Székesfehérvár, a possible relation to the portrait photographer Stefan Virag, referred to in *Ulysses* (Tóth 2005, 22–23). Róbert Orbán points out that Sándor Virág happened to be working in Székesfehérvár between 1907 and 1916, so Joyce may have seen his name on a photograph while living in Trieste (2005, 14).

Interestingly, one of the first Jewish settlers in Székesfehérvár was also a man called Márton Blum. At least one person knew the Blums of Szombathely and the Blums of Székesfehérvár: Rabbi Mayer Zipser, who lived in Székesfehérvár between 1844 and 1858 before moving to Rohonc, where he remained until his death in 1869.

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Rabbi Zipser and his brother Markus were well-known scholars in Jewish public life. Markus Zipser's son moved to Trieste and was the member of the Hungarian Circle, where he may very well have heard of Joyce, if not met him in person at some point. He had a printing company and later published newspapers (Orbán 2005, 14–15). As for the Hungarian Circle in Trieste with which Joyce was familiar, *Il Circolo dei Magiari*, it was located near the city synagogue, and two-thirds of the members were Hungarian Jews, who organized cultural events. John McCourt notes that the president was a woman called Nidia Frigyessy Casterlbolognese, whose husband, Rácalmási Adolf Frigyessy, was one of the wealthiest Jewish people in Trieste, founder and President of the Adria Insurance Company (RAS) (McCourt 2000, 94–95).

There is a possible link between the salacious kind of low-brow fiction in *Ulysses* that Bloom enjoys and the work of the real-life grandson of Márton Blum in Szombathely: Ödön (later named Edmund), born in the town in 1874. After completing his education in Szombathely, Edmund went on to study medicine at the University in Vienna. He started writing and published in a German-language local paper. He worked as a dentist in Vienna from 1907. His first book, a collection of political and historical essays, came out in Munich in 1913: *Warum lassen sich die Juden nicht taufen?* [Why Do the Jews Not Let Themselves Be Baptized?]. In 1920, he set up a publishing house called E. B. Seps Verlag and launched a book series, "Blum Bücher," which was later followed by "Intime Bibliothek." In 1928, he established a new publishing house called Bergis Verlag. He published about thirty books under his name, but sometimes he used a pen name. His books were erotic, sexual-psychological novels in cheap editions and in a large number of copies (similar in kind to a favourite of Bloom's, *Sweets of Sin*, in *Ulysses*); no wonder Edmund Blum advertised himself as the "Viennese Maupassant." Róbert Orbán points out that it is not known whether Joyce came across any of his books (2010).

The aforementioned information on Márton Blum and his family represent what is known of those who may well have been the real-life yet "nameless" relatives from Szombathely of the fictitious Leopold Bloom living in the Dublin of *Ulysses*. Between 4 and 6 July 1944, four thousand two hundred and twenty-eight Jews were deported by the Hungarian authorities from Szombathely to Auschwitz. There were some survivors, but the Jews of Szombathely were to be largely erased from the local community. The mechanics of their elimination from the community were simple and efficient. The ghetto was set up in the town centre on 8 May 1944, following the German occupation of Szombathely: the deportation of the Jews started on 3 July 1944. Only ten percent of them survived the Holocaust (Balázs and Katona 2005, 12).

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Conclusion

Neither Walter Benjamin nor James Joyce lived to witness the Holocaust directly. Benjamin committed suicide at Portbou to avoid deportation from Spain to a Nazi concentration camp. Coincidentally, Joyce's fictional character, Leopold Blooms's father, Rudolf Virág, had also committed suicide, taking a drug overdose in June 1886 in the Queen's Hotel, Ennis, County Clare, in the west of Ireland. Both Benjamin and Virág had been Jewish migrants, one escaping from Nazi terror, the other from anti-Semitic intimidation in Eastern Europe. Anti-Semitism was a cancer eating away at civil discourse in society during their lifetimes. Apropos the memorialized sentiment of Benjamin's final moments cited at the beginning of this essay, Leopold Bloom's imaginings are a compelling example of Benjamin's proposed historical model. Joyce gave this anonymous wandering Jewish cosmopolitan character a history that was located in a chosen place and moment. There has been wide speculation on Joyce's choice of the surname Bloom. While there were many ways to regard it, the many owners of Thom's Directories from 1904 will surely attest to Joyce's punctiliousness in correctly representing actual places, people, and events. It is impossible to know now whether Joyce was aware of the examples of Blum histories that I have outlined above, but it is safe to say that he always described his characters carefully and in correspondence with figures from real life. In *Ulysses*, this is most obvious through the character of Stephen Dedalus as a reflection of Joyce himself, of Molly Bloom as an image of Joyce's partner, Nora Barnacle, and of Buck Mulligan as based on Joyce's one-time Dublin friend: the physician, poet, and Irish senator Oliver St. John Gogarty. Joyce certainly lived in a place and at a time when some of the personal details I have described could easily have been known to him. The larger question of his sense of the future hinges at least partly on our own hindsight. Did Joyce identify the seeds of the future Holocaust that his experience of the contemporary anti-Semitic atmosphere portended? Any answer to this question may ultimately prove hypothetical, but what remains certain is where Joyce's sympathies lay. The marginalized and anonymous progenitor of the character Leopold Bloom may never be discovered. But the conditions of the Blums of Szombathely about which we have historical information are representative of a particular era in a particular place. We also know their fate, which was to perish in the genocidal conflagration that we now call the Holocaust. Joyce's prescience in choosing to situate the family background of Leopold Bloom in that place and during that time is strongly indicative of his sensitivity to the historical process of popular anti-Semitism that he had personally witnessed. His literary decision regarding Bloom in *Ulysses* also indicates Joyce's rejection of the religious, nationalist, and racial ideas that underpinned anti-Semitic fervour and prejudice both in his own birthplace and in Joyce's adopted homeplace within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

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