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# Reading Joyce's *Ulysses*: Leopold Bloom

by Daniel Schwarz

*"Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred." (Ulysses)*  
*"I belong to a race, too, . . . that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant." (Ulysses)*

His Jewish heritage pulsates through his veins,  
 he feels exile, diasporic pain.  
 Despite assimilation,  
 compromise, and tolerance, he  
 speaks boldly to such  
 one-eyed monsters  
 as Citizen Cyclops.

St. Leopold of Perpetual Responsibility,  
 and Lamed Vov,  
 visiting Mrs. Purefoy in her labor,  
 caring for the widow Dignam  
 loving Molly,  
 at once his Calypso and Penelope.  
 Living with hope of return,  
 willfully ignoring the Blazing disruption  
 of Eccles Street home,  
 haunted by pentimento of  
 father's suicide, infant son's  
 death; guilt and loss are  
 etched into his flesh like a tattoo.

His scars are psychic scars,  
 like ones we all bear.  
 His Hades, like ours, is within:  
 fears, obsessions,  
 dimly acknowledged needs.  
 He, too, is teacher;  
 his subject is humanity.  
 He is Stephen's Nestor  
 but also his Virgil,  
 accompanying him—and, yes, us—  
 through divinely human comedy.