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The Spaces *Ulysses* Occupies: Navigating the Novel with “Wandering Rocks” and Matisse

Just two years after the United States ban was lifted in 1933, the Limited Editions Club rolled out its new, flashy book: 1500 copies of James Joyce’s infamous *Ulysses* illustrated by Henri Matisse. The structured, yet open-ended experience of Matisse’s six soft-ground etchings and twenty facsimiles engage with the text at hand through the geometric dimension, as Matisse and Joyce both create space to amplify meaning. As one flips through the pages, the composition of the pages opens up visual space, the formatting of serial images and chapters engages conceptual space, the bumping bodies work with narrative space, and the oblique Homeric angles tease out classical space.

While Matisse often collaborated with fellow creatives to produce illustrated artist books, this 1935 edition was different. At its core, the book served US commercialization, with publisher and designer George Macy capitalizing on Joyce’s controversial work and Matisse’s popularity (Brown 61). But Macy was not steering the ship alone to completely commandeer the two artists’ work for his own ends. Matisse was also making careful business maneuvers across the more commercial sphere of the Limited Editions Club *Ulysses*, tactically piquing US interests in a market that favored him (Brown 63). Joyce, then, is perhaps the only one cut out by the pandering, as he famously refused to sign the last 1250 copies—ironically only increasing the value of those he did engage with (Goodwin 86). Much scholarly research from the twentieth century reinforces the story that Joyce was offended by the “artist’s aplomb” (Goodwin 85) of Matisse’s illustrations of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Brown 63), but more recently, academic opinion has changed. These more contemporary works have begun to grant intellectual credit to Matisse and

his illustrations (Brown 63), or argue, like James A. Knapp does in “Joyce and Matisse Bound,” that Joyce and Matisse had in fact discussed the visual artist’s inclinations (Knapp 1056). In her 2017 book *Matisse’s Poets: Critical Performance in the Artist’s Book*, Kathryn Brown writes, “my contention is that Matisse’s decision to base his illustrations on episodes from the Homeric tale is best understood as a contribution to the critical apparatus that developed around the novel during the 1930s” (Brown 65). This “critical apparatus” is a reference to Joyce scholar Stuart Gilbert, who penned the 1935 edition’s introduction because of his well-received 1930 study on the novel (Brown 65). Gilbert claims that to have “enjoyment” in understanding *Ulysses*, one must see the *Odyssey* in it (Gilbert x). For Brown, Matisse launches off of Gilbert’s critical foundation, connecting back to Joyce by route of the academic. In this essay, I argue that the space Matisse creates in his venturing off is another way to loop back to *Ulysses*. Considering Brown’s claim that “the communicative force of each sequence [of illustrations] lies in the relation it stages *between* the images, and, hence, the way in which those images elude finality [emphasis in original]” (Brown 68), I contend that Joyce and Matisse resonate in how *Ulysses* similarly uses various forms of space to generate meaning, and dive into the “Wandering Rocks” as the navigating force.

“Wandering Rocks” and Matisse as Ciphers

The tenth chapter in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “Wandering Rocks” is the novel in miniature. This comparison goes beyond just the way the section reads, as there is the added significance of “Wandering Rocks” also being the only chapter to have no direct Homeric episode (Galeota). The rocks may be Odysseus’ path not taken, but Joyce explores them in order to demonstrate the partial divergence of *Ulysses* from Homer. Joyce’s text works aslant to Homer’s, just like how the “Wandering Rocks” is, on two levels, an aside. In the theatrical sense of the word “aside,” the

words “the Wandering Rocks” are briefly spoken during Odysseus’ recollection of Circe’s warning to him and, even earlier, to Jason (Homer Book XII). Joyce’s chapter therefore derives its name from a brief, offhand reference to its originator, Circe, by another character, Odysseus. “Aside” also invokes the directional dimension of this naming. Since the *Odyssey*’s first mention of the rocky route is a secondhand account, there is already a distancing of the “Wandering Rocks” from the classical epic’s plot, as well as a similar separation of the anecdote from Circe. Moreover, Joyce’s decision to use this relatively unimportant Homeric detail as the vehicle for his micro-*Ulysses* also invokes a movement away, but not entirely separate, from the source. Joyce lassoes the rocks that jut out from Homer, connecting the two authors, but at an askew angle (see fig. 1).

Further evidence of its small-scale invocation of the novel is “Wandering Rocks”’ fragmentation into nineteen parts, which recall Joyce’s original serialization of the novel’s eighteen chapters (Joyce and Arroyo edition notice) as well as inviting Matisse’s sequences into conversation. The format mimics that of a typical book, with individual yet connected units demarcated by the book’s visual composition, as well as *Ulysses*. The vignette structure also mirrors Matisse’s illustrations. Presented as a series, the images emphasize the relationship between each other, as the blue and yellow sheets open a hazy window to the following images. One views all successive drawings through the lens of the first (see fig. 2). Moreover, there is a relationship between the viewer and the page in the “movement of the viewer’s eyes between” the images and in the flipping motions (Brown 68). As one moves further and further into the sequence, the novel’s words fade out (see fig. 3) The set order of vignettes and illustrations creates individual components in succession, but again, they are not entirely discrete. They overlap and bleed together, and are meant to be experienced separately and all at once. The

vignettes detail self-contained moments, but since they engage nearly all of *Ulysses*' characters, those actions of a few in one place will naturally have an impact beyond the frame of the narrative section. A person's experience in one instant is both singular, since it will never be replicated exactly, and plural, as every living person experiences time together. Those shared moments layer on top of one another, just like how the Matisse facsimiles have overlaid layers of black strokes (see fig. 2e). Those illustrations work in a similar fashion, as they paint images that are on a singular page but are part of a set. They are fastened in order, and yet no one image or character is truly prioritized over another because of their seriality (Brown 68). Some get more detail or take up more visual space, but that does not overshadow the merits of the others. All of the vignettes and illustrations have equal importance.

It is fitting that "Wandering Rocks," the book-within-the-book, does not feature Matisse's illustrations. *Ulysses* does not confine its contents, and Matisse's illustrations are particularly resistant to containment within the novel. Their relationship is instead evident in the web of tangents spun by the execution of the episode. Meaning is created in the format of choice: either narrative episodes or illustrated series. The content of each cannot be directly compared. But just as "Wandering Rocks" is not devoid of Homer, neither is it missing Matisse. Each of the works have points of intersection in this nuanced web, where direct path of thought is impossible. One traces glimmers of interactions in every possible combination of the Homer-Gilbert-Joyce-Matisse array. Readers can arrange the four creatives in any order, sparking the impulse to jump from one to the other and reenacting the leaps between the masters' own constructions on the page.

To the Text of "Wandering Rocks"

Ulysses' tenth chapter is a reset, winding back time to start the interiorized book anew. "Wandering Rocks" opens with John Conmee S. J.'s vignette, and begins once he "reset[s] his smooth watch in his interior pocket" (Joyce 210). As Father Conmee walks out onto the streets of Dublin, the book's prior chapters are recalculated, with a break—the jolt of disrupting the novel's flow—and then a clarity. "Wandering Rocks," then, is *Ulysses* recalibrating itself to its course, and the rocks are therefore no longer Circe's unnavigable route. The chapter is the watch, pulled out from its "interior pocket" within the book. Tucked away in the middle of June 6, 1904, "Wandering Rocks" presents readers with an even more granular sense of time over the course of a singular, finite unit. The instrument is "smooth" because it is its own entity that glides between moments and chapters. Just as a watch's hands move smoothly from moment to moment, each unit of time is concurrently individual. A second, a minute, and an hour are all irreplicable experiences that reset regularly. They then give way to the next moment, which is both a continuation and a distinction from all that came before.

Here, the units of time are not marked by the second or minute hands, but by people. Dubliners regularly bump into one another (see fig. 4) like clockwork, generating new mental paths as a result. For example, just after Father Conmee resets his watch and confirms his walking route, his recollection of the person he just saw sends his mind spinning into Latin. He jumps along the ties between the boy's name, Dignam, and the word *dignum*, which itself is part of the Catholic phrase "*Vere dignum et iustum est.*" His religious musing ends with the sight of the "onlegged soldier." Represented by the paragraph break, this is a visual intrusion into his mind. A new trail of thought springs forth in response, and, just like the last two, is finite: "he thought, but not for long, of soldiers and sailors." This thought is not separate from those that came before, as his recollection of a quote concerning piety—"If I had served my God as I had served

my king...”—demonstrates the continuation of the prior religious minute of thought into the following moment, with him steered by visual stimulus. Unsurprisingly, these italicized words are left behind as a third person, David Sheehy’s wife approaches along the street (Joyce 210) and therefore into his mind. By the end of the first page, readers have experienced four “minutes” of Dublin time, regulated by the people of the city by themselves, for themselves. They are both the instrument, the mechanism that powers it, and those who are subject to its motions.

For the disabled soldier in the second section, the intervals of interactions inform his actions. While his manner remains the same—he speaks four times, “growl[ing]” for three and “halt[ing]” for three—what he says needs to alternate for it to make sense. “*For England...*” must be followed by “*home and beauty*” (Joyce 216) because they are two halves of the same whole. He is instructed by those he sees, halts, and growls at as to when to deliver the next part. Larry O’Rourke hears “*For England...*”, whereas Katey and Boody Dedalus receive “*home and beauty.*” No one passerby receives the whole phrase, so to them the comprehensibility does not matter. The soldier, however, knows he must complete the ellipses of “*For England...*” with the uncapitalized fragment of “*home and beauty.*”, just as that period signals the need for the sentence to begin again. While grammar governs his sentences, what spurs on this cycle is the regular interval of the people passing. To him, there are no individual people, so instead he acts out his structured performance to the continuous flow of the Dubliner.

While the city dwellers constantly swing around in this web of human interaction, the episodes themselves also introduce one another, with the preceding one effectively bumping into the next. During Leneham and M’Coy’s section, the once fluttering “*Unfurnished Apartments*” card from the onelegged soldier’s vignette (Joyce 216) returns in a new, stable state back on the

window (Joyce 224). The men's conversation earlier switched to Leopold Bloom at the site of his book-shopping "darkbacked figure" (Joyce 224), and now shift gears to Molly at the instant the card is replaced, even though the two instances occur in different parts of the city (Hastings). The pair do not see the card, which "Wandering Rocks" readers know from the window where Molly Bloom's coin-giving arm emerged (see fig. 5), but regardless, their minds redirect to accommodate this new character. Dublin and its inhabitants are linked, where a change in the city means miraculous changes in people's minds. After the text tells us "A card *Unfurnished Apartments* reappeared," Leneham stops, "check[s] his tale a moment," and introduces Molly, via "Bloom and the wife," to the conversation. After this reset, the men mostly talk about Molly, but their section ends with "There's a touch of the article about Old Bloom" (Joyce 225). Immediately after, the reader is confronted with "Mr Bloom" (Joyce 226) as the first two words of the next episode—which is his. This series of events inverts the established method of Dublin interaction and thought. Instead of one person's train of thought being shifted by the introduction of a new person, there is the introduction of the next Dubliner and their vignette because someone else directed their thoughts to them. In other words, rather than a person-to-subject transformation, Bloom moves from subject to person, and therefore also becomes the subject of his own story.

Bloom's section continues to define the logic of a clear-cut chapter, with the lines blurred between book and reality. In the first paragraph, Bloom browses and critiques the bookshop's offerings, thinking on the visual chaos that is the "crooked botched print" and the plates of fetuses that are "all butting with their skulls to get out of it [the womb]." There is an obvious delineation here between the visual stimulus of the book—its print and plates—and his resulting sparks of thought. When he switches from Aristotle's *Masterpiece* to the erotic *Sweets of Sin*,

though, that distinction fades away. First, his neurons fire in quick, short bursts with only a handful of words, like “Yes. Take this. The end.” In the simplified staccato, Bloom and the erotica blend together. “Yes.” could easily be a shared sentiment between the enthralled reader and eager lover about the sensual moment between characters. On the other hand, “The end.” appears at first to be an obvious textual reference, but the plot does not end with this “*luscious voluptuous kiss*” (Joyce 226), nor does the vignette stop quoting from *Sweets of Sin* after this point. “The end.” is therefore not completely in line with the book. For Bloom, “The end.” could signify the finality of his decision to “Take this” book and purchase it, but this is not a perfect alignment either. Rather, the ambiguity of the three sentences sets up the inward tightening of Bloom’s mind, the emotional dimension of his struggling marriage, the heated romance on the page, and the medium of the book into one spiraled paragraph:

Mr Bloom read again : *The beautiful woman.*

Warmth showered gently over him, cowing his flesh. Flesh yielded amid rumpled clothes. Whites of eyes swooning up. His nostrils arched themselves for prey. Melting breast ointments (*for him! For Raoul!*) Armpits’ oniony sweat. Fishgluey slime (*her heaving embonpoint*). Feel! Press! Crushed! Sulphur dung of lions! (Joyce 226-227)

The “him” here is at once Bloom and Raoul, and the clothed “flesh” can belong to any and all of the two men and their respective loves, Molly and the unnamed woman. Bloom’s marriage is at the center of these whorling words, where Bloom vicariously views Molly’s affair through the romance plot and simultaneously becomes the object of her affections. In the collapsing of the book, reality, and the bodies in each, Bloom becomes the subject of a new, interior reality preferable to his exterior one. The bookshop creeps into the fantasy, though. Its bodily rankness of “Armpits’ oniony sweat. Fishgluey slime” (Joyce 227) will not be overshadowed by pleasing

fictional renderings of the flesh, and the dreamy paragraph fades away. Bloom's intimate illusion of no longer being alone is shattered, with him still "alone" (Joyce 226) in the store, holding an erotic novel for the wife who does not lust for him.

The vignette's shifting subjecthood tosses readers around like a crew brave enough to steer their ship into the "Wandering Rocks," and its depths contain intermingling layers. But the sea, in all her mysterious ways, also has her own version of rules for her dwellers. The idea of the watch, then, is the ocean's moon. The round orb moves at regular intervals, moving the sea's tides with it. A complete moon cycle is a defined period of time, yet each phase slowly washes into the next. As the tenth chapter illustrates, there are a myriad of ciphers, whether sea or watch, for understanding the rocks and, therefore, the whole novel. The Limited Editions Club contributed another with its publication of Matisse's work. The visual and the narrative orbit around one another in dizzying loops, and as one tries to follow along, they get pulled deeper into the gyre—to reference both oceanography and Joyce's fellow Irishman Yeats.

A New Rock

Nearly ninety years after the Limited Editions Club bound the Irish and French artists together, a new illustrated edition was published in 2022 by Galaxia Gutenberg and Other Press. The art is the work of Eduardo Arroyo, a Spanish artist who, in his later life, absorbed himself in imbuing visual life into Joyce's words. While Arroyo has been hailed for his sociopolitical discernment and "colorful narrative figuration" (Bradley), extensive scholarship has yet to be performed on his *Ulysses* drawings, watercolors, and collages—which he completed in 1991 in hopes of publication for the fiftieth anniversary of Joyce's death. Back in 2004, fourteen years before Arroyo's own death, art critic Kim Bradley noted that Arroyo had yet to receive equal recognition in the US as he had in Europe. This sentiment does not appear to have altered much,

as now Arroyo's larger reach has come at the cost of a Macy-esque publishing mentality to make art into a commodity. The American half of the 2022 publishing partnership, Other Press, has also marketed the edition as less of an engagement with the "critical apparatus" and more as a tool to decode the text, whereas the Spanish Galaxia Gutenberg's publisher, Joan Tarrida, stated the art can be considered as "a parallel reading" (Minder). Pieces such as the yellow "Wandering Rocks" spread (see fig. 6) reveal the European sentiment is much more in line with Arroyo's work. If one follows the advice of Other Press' publisher Judith Gurewich, Arroyo's illustrations are to be used as a teaching instrument, a simplified version of the text to help readers "reconstruct" *Ulysses* (Minder). This limited outlook falls apart with the aforementioned artwork. If readers identify the fourteen icons for important moments in the text, that only loops them back to looking at nearly all of the vignettes, if not all. Instead, if one "reads" the piece, as Brown instructed readers to do with Matisse, deeper meaning materializes in the framing. These frames construct a geometric dimension for the icons, where readers can move two-dimensionally from image to image as well as view them from above, like looking at a map of Dublin in this hour. They also become the illustration, too, such as the right page's rendering of Blazes Boylan tipping his hat. The brim is an extension of the frame, and, since the hat's body is not explicitly drawn, it too emerges from the framing in the spaces between. The spread can also be viewed as a precursor to the final vignette's collaging of every character together, as the piece opens up simultaneous windows into each section. This voyeuristic ability, as well as the page's yellow color, recall Matisse's series. The art, then, builds on the intertextual plane that Matisse engaged with. Arroyo provides an opportunity to engage with the novel in a way Joyce's words do not, forming his own perspective without straying too far from the established web.

Whether it is vignettes or series, frames or montages, each of the three artists—Joyce, Matisse, and Arroyo—are authors in their own regard. They stand tall like rocky fixtures in the sea, sometimes obscured by changing currents, but are nevertheless firmly grounded in their vast, elusive, and ever-expanding network.

Annotated Appendix



Fig. 1. *Lasso*, Isabella Durgin, 2023.

Caption: I made this digital piece as a more lighthearted, but still grounded interaction with the texts at hand. The geometric dimension works best when engaged visually, which makes Joyce's feat in words so astonishing. Here, all four of the greats are engaged: Homer and Joyce, obviously, with Arroyo is seen in the style of the rocks (see fig. 1.1) and Matisse in the in-between space. The French artist is not named, so that clarity can be found in contemplating where his presence lies.

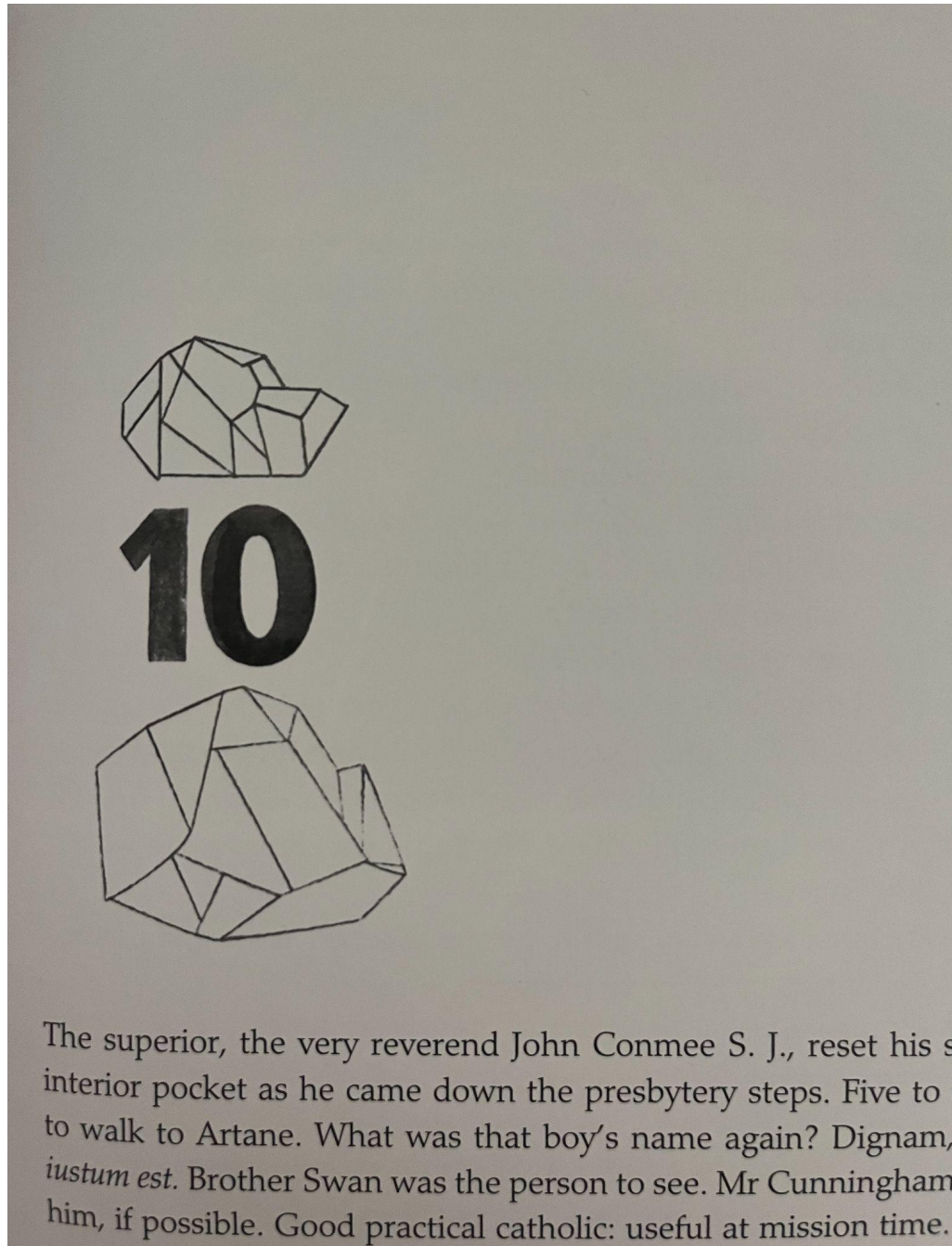


Fig. 1.1. Chapter Opener for Chapter 10, Eduardo Arroyo. James Joyce, *Ulysses: An Illustrated Edition*, Illustrated by Eduardo Arroyo, Other Press and Galaxia Gutenberg, 2022.

Caption: Here, Arroyo illustrates the chapter with two fine-line rocks that have been distilled down to their simplest form. A version of these rocks can be found in the yellow spread later in this chapter (see fig. 6). Both the Matisse and Arroyo editions do not include the names that have

come to be associated with the chapters, as they were not present in the first editions. The 2022 book, though, clearly demarcates the start of a new chapter with page breaks, a one-page artwork, and an illustrated, numbered chapter opener. The 1935 edition does not incorporate any art or material maneuvers, having the chapter begin in the same column following a small spacer. Arroyo's decision to illustrate the space before a chapter's story begins, as well as his decision to move into the space of the margins (see fig. 5), not only aids the reading experience but also echoes the Irish tradition of illuminated manuscripts. This can be read as an homage to Joyce's roots, and while there are similarities in the two-dimensionality of his art style and that of medieval Irish illumination, he does not modify his mode of expression by bending towards the ornate.

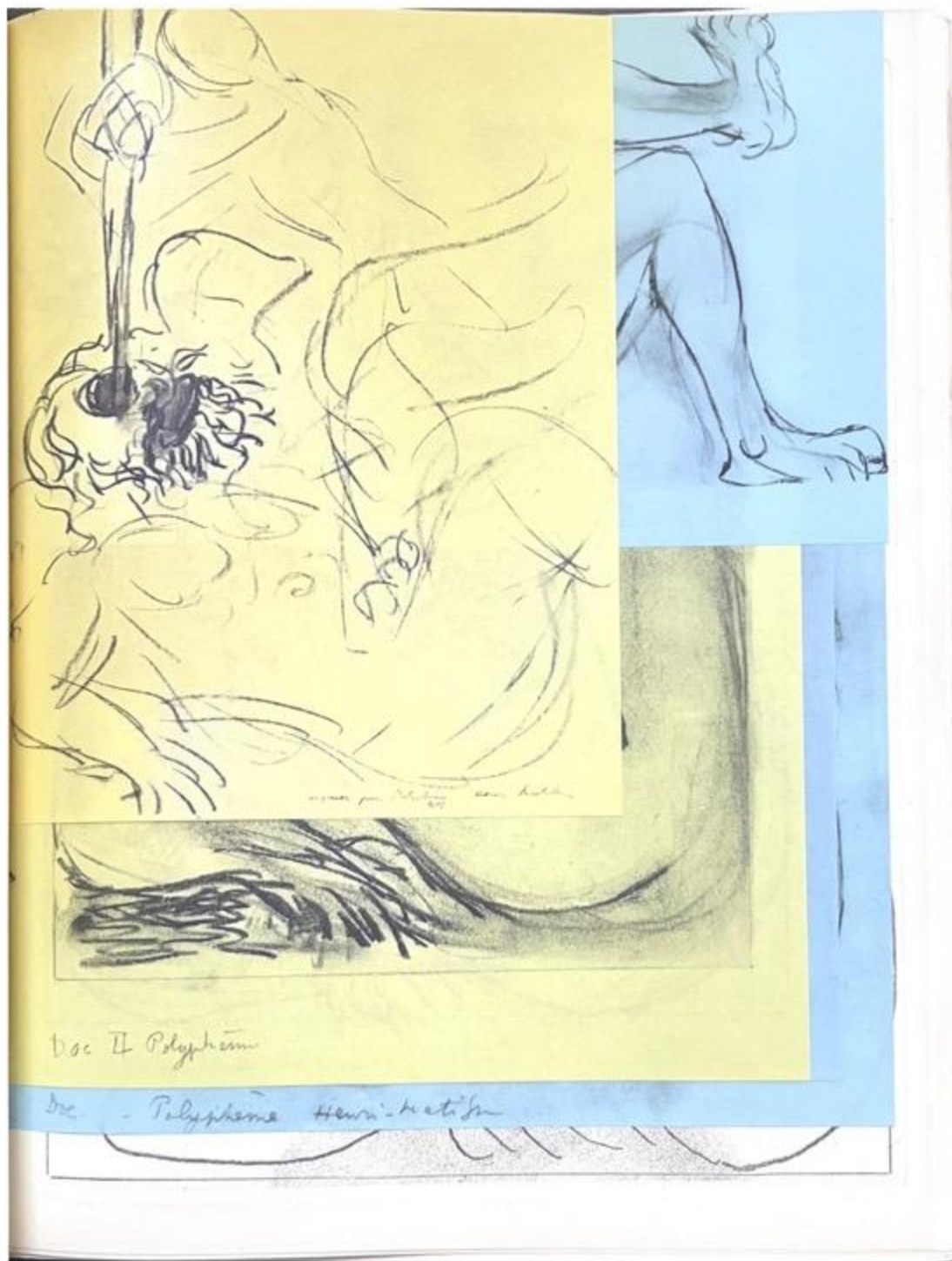


Fig. 2a

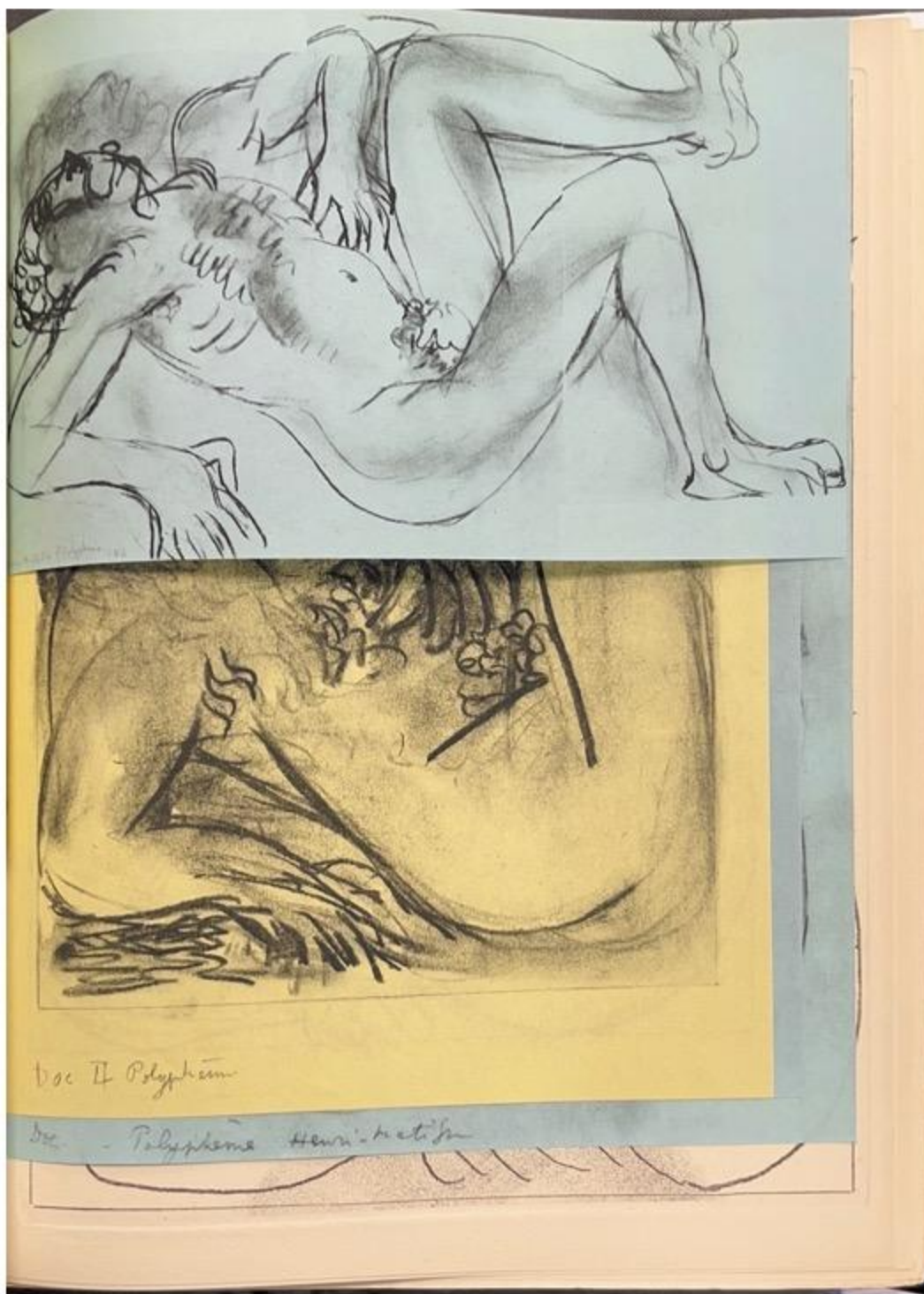


Fig. 2b



Fig. 2c



Fig. 2d



Fig. 2e



Fig. 2f

Fig. 2. *Polyphème* Sequence, Henri Matisse. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Illustrated by Henri Matisse, Limited Editions Club, 1935.

Caption: Matisse's *Polyphème* is a sequence of 5 blue-and-yellow facsimiles and one soft-ground etching.



Fig. 3. Spread of *Ulysses* and *Polyphème*, taken by Isabella Durgin. *Polyphème*, Henri Matisse, and James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Illustrated by Henri Matisse, Limited Editions Club, 1935.

Caption: When one completes their reading of Matisse's illustrations, the layered sheer sheets become opaque and obscure the opposite page of text. The series eclipses the novel, immersing the reader in its own book, with only the first letters of "Ulysses" and "page" peeking around the edge.



Fig. 4. *Circe* Soft-Ground Etching, Henri Matisse. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Illustrated by Henri Matisse, Limited Editions Club, 1935.

Caption: Bodies bump together in *Circe*, one of the six soft-ground etchings Matisse completed for the Limited Editions Club *Ulysses*. The forms overflow the frame of the piece as well as the framing within, as lines that should be obscured (e.g., the shoulder of the figure in the bottom-left corner) are visible through a body that should be overlapping (e.g., the breast of the upside-down figure in the center).

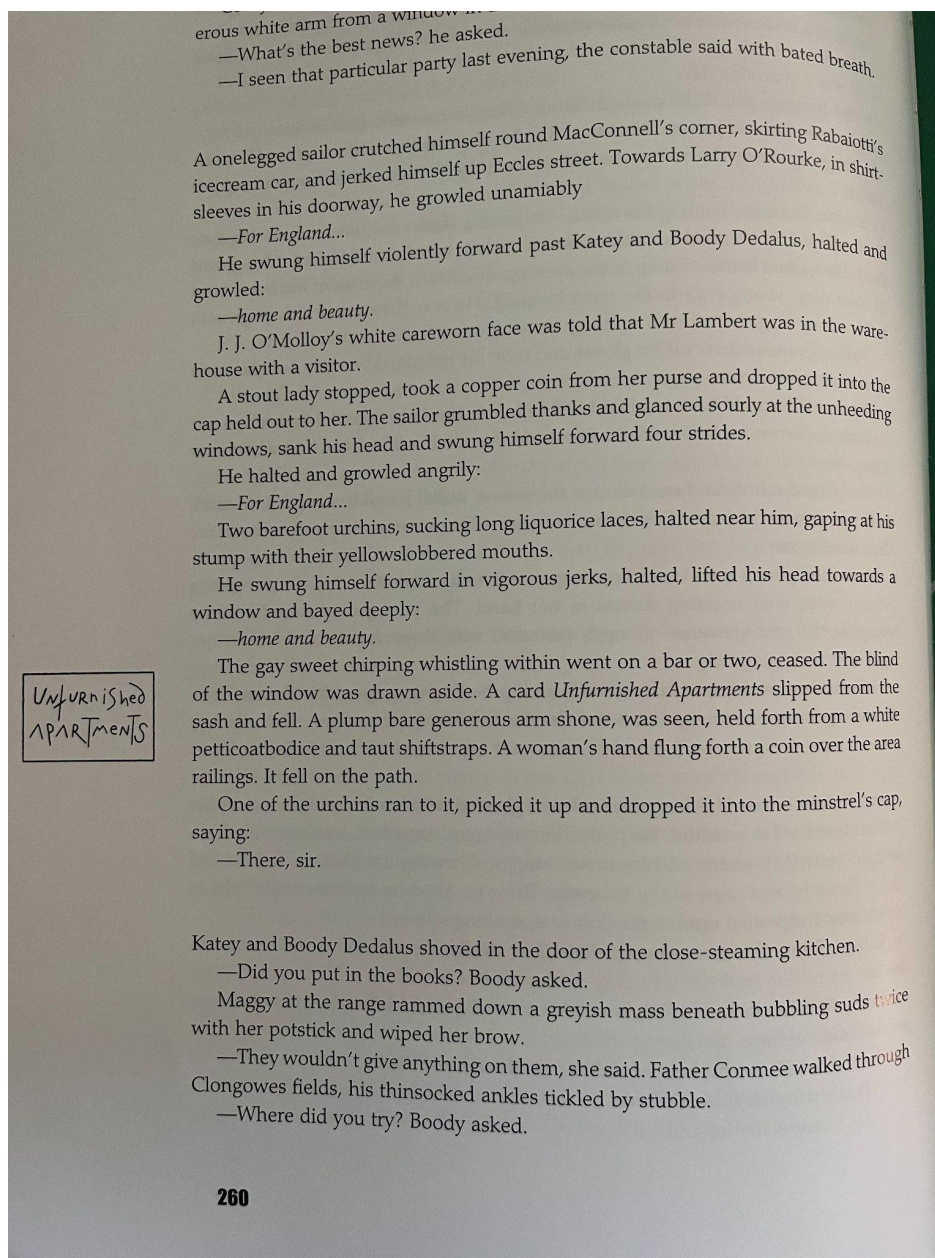


Fig. 5. *Unfurnished Apartments*, Eduardo Arroyo. James Joyce, *Ulysses: An Illustrated Version*, Illustrated by Eduardo Arroyo, Other Press and Galaxia Gutenberg, 2022.

Caption: Arroyo's drawing of the Bloom's advertisement, *Unfinished Apartments* is a lateral extension of the novel. It is marginalia that makes visible to the reader what is visible in the novel in real time. If one considers this chapter as a ticking watch, the card recalibrates the

reader's mind to remember this card and be ready to switch to thinking about a different character—Molly—when it is introduced again.

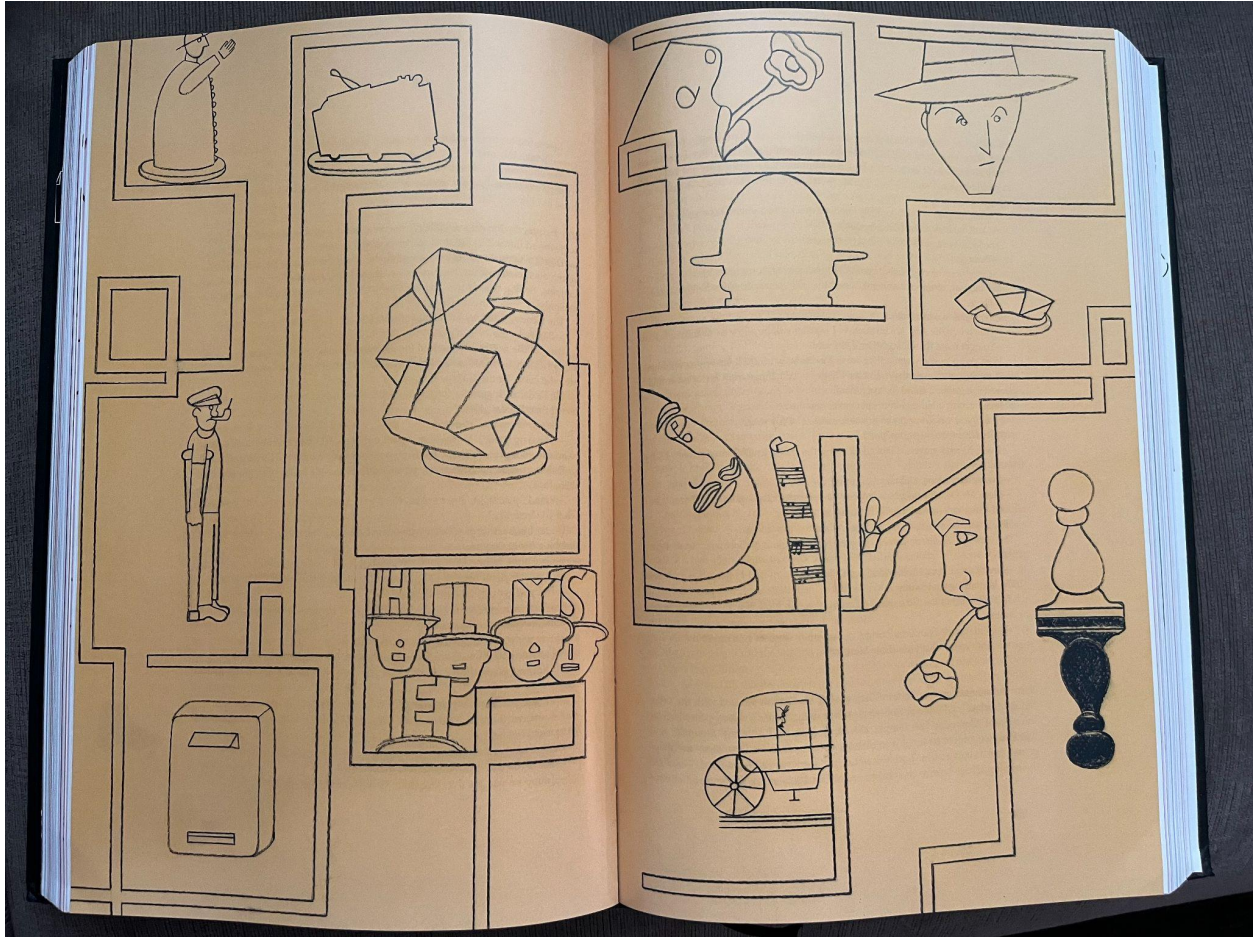


Fig. 6. *Untitled Spread* from “Wandering Rocks,” Eduardo Arroyo. James Joyce, *Ulysses: An Illustrated Version*, Illustrated by Eduardo Arroyo, Other Press and Galaxia Gutenberg, 2022.

Caption: This spread is one of many pieces Arroyo completed for Chapter 10 of *Ulysses: An Illustrated Version*. It is placed in the middle of Dilly and Stephen Dedalus' vignette, which immediately follows Leopold Bloom's. Unlike the Limited Editions Club *Ulysses*, this edition factors the art into the page count; therefore, this spread is located on pages 272 and 273.

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