

## **Liberate Ulysses Conversation**

### **Question No. 2:**

#### **Steven Cole:**

Your new album is titled "Anatomy of a Goddess." Which of the many possible goddesses in Ulysses -- Molly Bloom, Gerty MacDowell -- does this title refer to? And the word "anatomy" evokes a variety of different images. What were you intending by using that word in your title?

#### **Ken Cotter:**

In the context of my album I think of two 'goddesses', the city of Dublin, and the book itself.

Reading Ulysses was for me a journey through the mind and body, not just of Joyce, but of his race and their (my) history. Many episodes have a bodily organ associated with them, according to the schema supplied by Joyce to Gilbert, so for me it was an easy leap to think of my examination of Ulysses through song as some sort of anatomical dissection.

In a similar way, when I walk around Dublin, either virtually through the book or in my own wanderings today, I feel like I'm walking through the body and soul of the 'Hibernian Metropolis'. Nowhere in Ireland, in my opinion, wears all phases of Irish history on its sleeve quite so ostentatiously as Dublin City.

The Gaelic 'Atha Cliath.' Christchurch of the Vikings, Dublin Castle, adjacent to the site of the Black Pool from which the city got its name, Dubh Linn and for centuries the bastion of British colonial rule, Grattan's Parliament, O Connell's bullet-damaged statue, the GPO, the grandiose royal coats of arms on the Four Courts and the Custom house.

This is the body of Dublin, which has been given up for Ulysses!

Dublin in the context of my album also conjures up the image of one of Charles Bukowski's distressed goddesses. She has an unhappy habit, often through a haze of alcohol, of choosing the wrong men. Like so many women in Ulysses, it seems her lot will always be one of being let down by the men around her. The goddess Dublin continues to dream of her beloved Parnell, but unfailingly ends up with men

like Boylan, Lenehan and the Citizen.

There is one final reason for the title, 'Anatomy Of A Goddess.' Because the album is inspired by Ulysses, I felt it was important to reference a bit of humour in a book that some people find exclusive and the preserve of academics. Of course the title conjures up Bloom's 'discrete' examination of the backsides of the statues of goddesses in the National Library. Done strictly for research purposes, as might be said these days, he is caught, and references to his actions are dotted throughout the novel. I think it's one of the lighter motifs in Ulysses, which for me, was worth highlighting.