

## Bleibtreu in Joyce's *Ulysses*

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THE NAMES USED BY JAMES JOYCE have always interested readers of his books. Intrigued recently by his employment of German words and garbles in his *Ulysses*, I noted the name "Bleibtreu" which occurs repeatedly in his narrative. Since the locale of the book is entirely Dublin, why should "Bleibtreustrasse" appear so often? How explain its recurrence? Joyce, we know, was sensitive to the sound of words and to their meanings and associations. Was the attraction of Bleibtreu phonetic or semantic or was it a literary echo? Or did he use it without rhyme or reason?

The name "Bleibtreu" appears in *Ulysses* (the references are to the Random House Modern Library edition) in the following instances: "Bleibtreustrasse 34, Berlin, W. 15," lines 21 and 22, p. 60 (following in time Bloom's purchase of kidney during his morning walk); "Bleibtreustrasse," line 22, p. 172 (Bloom is eating lunch at this point); "Bleibtreu," without *Strasse*, line 24, p. 211 (the wanderers are discussing literature, specifically Shakespeare's works, with Buck Mulligan and John Eglinton, and Eglinton states that one Herr Bleibtreu thinks a clue to *Hamlet* may be found in the Shakespeare monument at Stratford-on-the-Avon); and "Bleibtreustrasse, Berlin, W. 13," line 16, p. 456 (Bloom is now deep in the blur of his invasion into the more sordid night life of Dublin. The breakfast kidneys arise to confront him). The third reference, referring to a person, is, of course, not necessarily connected with the other three. It may be noted that "Bleibtreustrasse" always comes up in connection with hunger or eating.

A city plan of Berlin dated 1910 showed the existence of a Bleibtreu Strasse. It was suggested to me casually by a Berlin resident that Bleibtreu street was named after Hedwig Bleibtreu, a famous actress. Her sister Maximiliane was an actress also, playing character parts, but was less well known. I was told by another source,

Frau Hedwig Karwinsky, a Viennese, that Hedwig Bleibtreu was still living in Vienna. Although she was a very old lady living in seclusion, I made an attempt to interview her and through the kind offices of Frau Karwinsky again, she was interviewed and stated that she had often been asked concerning the name of the Berlin street and mention thereof in *Ulysses*. She said that although she had heard of Mr. Joyce, she never performed for him, and that the street itself had been named after the famous painter of battle scenes, Bleibtreu. Since he died in 1892, ten years after Joyce was born, perhaps Joyce knew him or had seen some of his paintings. It is likeliest however that the son of the famous painter, Karl Bleibtreu (1859–1928), critic, poet, novelist, dramatist, and an ardent student of English literature, is the Bleibtreu who deserves chief consideration. He was a man of strongly radical views, an upholder of German naturalism around the end of the nineteenth century, and at times his name was associated with Nietzsche's. Joyce was akin to him as a revolutionary and doubtless knew the German naturalist at least by reputation. Of the Bleibtreu clan of notables it was probably Karl who haunted the memory of the Irish author.

The *Word Index to James Joyce's Ulysses* by Miles L. Hanley and others (University of Wisconsin Press, 1951) lists the name "Bleibtreu" uncapitalized and without comment. It does not appear in the *Key to James Joyce's Ulysses* by Paul Jordan Smith, nor in other studies of Joyce's work, so far as I know.



*Those German Names.*—Formerly our registration clerks and tax collectors made short shift with German names whose owners could not spell in English. Kundert became Cunard, Huber—Hoover, Wilke—Wilkie, Eisenhauer—Eisenhower. They could not do that any longer. Hubert B. Wolfeschlegelsteinhausenbergerdorff of Philadelphia lost no time in telling Frank Brookhouser of the *Inquirer* that his name was not spelled Wolfeschlegelsteinhasenbergerdorff.