

The Delighted States: A Book of Novels, Romances, & Their Unknown Translators, Containing Ten Languages, Set on Four Continents, & Accompanied by ... Illustrations, & a Variety of Helpful Indexes

Adam Thirlwell

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Having slept with a prostitute in Egypt, a young French novelist named Gustave Flaubert at last abandons sentimentality and begins to write. He influences the obscure French writer Édouard Dujardin, who is read by James Joyce on the train to Trieste, where he will teach English to the Italian novelist Italo Svevo. Back in Paris, Joyce asks Svevo to deliver a suitcase containing notes for *Ulysses*, a novel that will be viscerated by the expat Gertrude Stein, whose first published story is based on one by Flaubert.

This carousel of influence shows how translation and emigration lead to a new and true history of the novel. We devour novels in translation while believing that style does not translate. But the history of the novel is the history of style. *The Delighted States* attempts to solve this conundrum while mapping an imaginary country, a country of readers: the Delighted States.

This book is a provocation, a box of tricks, a bedside travel book; it is also a work of startling intelligence and originality from one of our finest young writers.



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