

JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES:
THREE DECADES OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN CRITICISM

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CHAPTER I ---- INTRODUCTION

i. Concerning Criticism

If Dr. Johnson found little to commend his contemporary Dick Minims, in the greatly expanded fields of twentieth century criticism he might surely find less. However, it remains as true today as it was in Johnson's time that "No genius was ever blasted by the breath of critics."

Criticism is as much a part of the literary world today as the object of its attention: literature itself. T. S. Eliot observes that "our impulse to interpret a work of art...is exactly as imperative and fundamental as our impulse to interpret the universe by metaphysics...." This from an artist and critic of the twentieth century is in a measure indicative of literary attitudes of the times.

Most arresting in this "literary fabric" of the present century, in English letters specifically, is the work of James Joyce--which has precipitated arguments and controversies without end, and which has had a singularly profound effect on international letters. Joyce's early poems and short stories and his slim first novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, marked him as a writer of exceptional abilities, but it was the publication of his epic work, Ulysses, which put him under the searching eye of virtually all of the literary world and indeed much of the non-literary. Joyce, that is to say, Ulysses, became the especial darling of the "inner circles," the intelligentsia, if you will; the book was made the target of Victorian cries of "Vulgar! Disgusting!";

and it was the play-toy of any who would be "in the know." In short, a literary storm raged, and the Dick Minims as well as critics of eminently good sense went wild.

Ideally, the critic is as well a creative artist whose background embraces all the world's learning allowing him the best possible perspective for his critical judgements. This man, however (and obviously) is no less than a god, a person who in our extraordinarily complex times cannot exist. We are inevitably expanded beyond the miniature world of Aristotle and, therefore, have no Aristotles to look with the sagest mind upon our works. Today every man who reads is a critic, and so he should be, but we must be discriminating in our consideration of the critical acumen of those critics who have succeeded in making their voices heard beyond the pales of their cubicles; and we should be no less aware of our own limited view. To be sure, we are too close to a virtual contemporary, as in Joyce, to forward or accept any absolute appraisals; it is much too soon for the crystallization which is the ultimate fate of many works of art. As the opinion of scholars regarding writers of the past fluxuates from age to age, century to century, so contemporary critical opinion of its century's own writers varies from year to year, even month to month.

ii. Joyce and His Milieu

Paris was the intellectual center of the universe during the nostalgic decade which began in 1920. Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein were the somewhat self-conscious proselytes of "new directions." Gertrude Stein, in fact, coined the epithet "the lost generation" with which she dubbed this riotous era, and the bearded artists of the Left Bank worked at making it so.

James Joyce, his family and his thirty-eight years, moved up from Trieste to this Paris of the vanguard, bringing with him the growing embryo which fed hungrily on its creator and soon was to astonish the world, if its early fragmentary publication had not already done so.

March 24, 1921

Mr. John Quinn,
31 Nassau Street,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Quinn,

Following our telephone conversation on the subject of the publication of James Joyce's "Ulysses," I have to say that the recent criminal proceedings against The Little Review, of which the editors were found guilty on a charge arising out of the publication of a chapter of "Ulysses," makes the publication of a volume containing that chapter a perilous thing, in my opinion as a layman.

My past course with regard to Joyce's works is sufficient to prove my genuine interest and my desire to bring his work before the American public. I still wish to continue to publish him, but as matters stand at present I strongly recommend that Joyce make such alterations in the condemned chapter as will make it conform to the law.

I request that you present this suggestion to Mr. Joyce, unless you are empowered to decline it without consulting him, and that I be apprized of his reply before proceeding with the negotiations relating to the publication of "Ulysses."

Very truly yours,

B. W. Huebsch.¹

Ulysses was refused publication in the English speaking world; Joyce would not water down his book. But this Paris of the twenties would not allow its artists to suffer Philistinism. Through the good offices of Miss Sylvia Beach, owner of a small vanguard bookshop (Shakespeare and Company), the book was in Joyce's hands in time for his fortieth birthday, February 2, 1922. The book, which had grown slowly and painfully for seven years and which was threatened with extinction at the hands of Mrs. Grundy, burned brightly in the intellectual fires

¹Herbert Gorman, James Joyce (New York, 1948), p. 279.

of Paris. Thenceforth Joyce became the property of the at once animad-
verting and rhapsodizing world.

iii. Ulysses

Ulysses is a tour de force of some half-million words which dis-
play the singular erudition of Joyce. It is the work of a supremely
intellectual mind, whatever else may be said for or against it.

The plot (though I hesitate to use this word--primarily because
of the multi-level structure of the book) is disarmingly simple. It
deals, for the most part, with the peregrinations through the streets
of Dublin, during a period of eighteen hours, of an advertising solici-
itor, one Leopold Bloom. Beneath this ordinary surface, however, lies
an intricate tapestry of astounding color and virtuosity, a work that
is unique in literature.

The title, "Ulysses," provides the key to one of the broad inte-
grating themes of the book. The eighteen sections of the book have
their counterparts in the Homeric Odysseus, though Greece has become
Ireland, specifically, Dublin, and Ulysses carries the very non-Homer-
ic name, Leopold Bloom. The epic structure (for Ulysses is more properly
an epic than a novel) follows this scheme:

I. The Telemachiad

- "Telemachus." 8:00 A.M. Stephen's breakfast.
- "Nestor" 10:00 A.M. Stephen teaching.
- "Proteus." 11:00 A.M. Stephen on beach.

II. Bloom's Adventures

- "Calypso." 8:00 A.M. Bloom's breakfast.
- "Lotus Eaters." 10:00 A.M. The baths.
- "Hades." 11:00 A.M. To the funeral.
- "Aeolus." Noon. To newspaper office.
- "Lestrygonians." 1:00 P.M. To lunch.
- "Scylla and Charybdis." 2:00 P.M. In library
- "Wandering Rocks." 3:00 P.M. Ensemble in streets.

"Sirens." 4:00 P.M. Ormond Hotel,
 "Cyclops." 5:00 P.M. Saloon.
 "Nausicaa." 8:00 P.M. On the beach.
 "Oxen of the Sun." 10:00 P.M. At hospital.
 "Circe." Midnight. At brothel.

III. The Homecoming

"Eumaeus." 1:00 A.M. Cab-shelter.
 "Ithaca." 2:00 A.M. Bloom's kitchen.
 "Penelope." 2:45 A.M. Bloom's bedroom.²

It is a commonplace that we must examine the work itself to discover its value insofar as we, the readers, are concerned. No amount of secondary researches will replace the original, so I will carry my remarks on the "idea" of the book no further. My specific purpose here is to survey the critical reactions to the book over the past quarter century in an effort to establish possible trends in contemporary criticism, and to reveal the position of Ulysses at least in the literary mind of the twentieth century.

The question of the importance of working with this particular book might understandably arise, and I would answer it by pointing to the vast amount of critical attention paid Ulysses, and to the profound, but incalculable, residues it has left in the literature succeeding it. Joyce, Proust, and Mann, say many commentators, are the great literary beacons of the first half of the century; in Joyce's case it is Ulysses upon which they base their judgement. "Ulysses," says Mr. Stuart Gilbert, "is like a great net let down from heaven, including in the infinite variety of its take the magnificent and the petty, the holy and the obscene, inter-related, mutually symbolic. In this story of a Dublin day

²Richard M. Kain, Fabulous Voyager (Chicago, 1947), p. 38. Simplified.

we have an epic of mankind."³

³Stuart Gilbert, "James Joyce," James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. Seon Givens (New York, 1948), p. 453.

CHAPTER II ----- CAVE OF THE WINDS: THE FIRST DECADE

Ulysses has come in for some severe criticisms.
Irish Independent

Though portions of Ulysses had been appearing serially, it was not until February of 1922 that the book in its entirety reached the critical world. I shall deal here with only those critics whose pronouncements were ostensibly made after reading the complete work.

i. 1922

No book has ever been more eagerly and curiously awaited by the strange little inner circle of book-lovers and littérateurs than James Joyce's "Ulysses." It is folly to be afraid of uttering big words because big words are abused and have become almost empty of meaning in many mouths; and with all my courage I will repeat that a few folk in somewhat precious cénacles have been saying--that Mr. James Joyce is a man of genius. I believe the assertion to be strictly justified, though Mr. Joyce must remain, for special reasons, caviare to the general. I confess that I cannot see how the work upon which Mr. Joyce spent seven strenuous years, years of wrestling and of agony, can ever be given to the public.¹

Sisley Huddleston thus, in his mild way, fired the opening shots in the literary battle of critics which was to follow. It is obvious, from the virtual neutrality of his remarks, that Huddleston would decline to enter this battle; he is not more, critically speaking, than a "well-meaning doubting Thomas."²

¹Herbert Gorman, James Joyce (New York, 1948), p. 292.

²Ibid., p. 292.

Soon afterward, in the Nation and the Athenaeum, John Middleton Murry wrote, "The head that is strong enough to read 'Ulysses' will not be turned by it."³ With insight far more acute than that of Huddleston, Murry essays to critically evaluate the book and the creative motivation behind it.

Upon such a head, indeed, the influence of "Ulysses" may be wholly excellent. For the driving impulse of this remarkable book is an immense, an unprecedented, liberation of suppressions. Something utterly different from the childish and futile coprophily of the "Young Girl's Diary" and other Freudian confessions; the liberation of the suppressions of an adult man who has lived under the shadow of the Roman-Catholic Church in a country where that Church is at its least European, and is merely an immense reinforcement of Puritanism. And not only is the effort at liberation much vaster and more significant than the corresponding efforts with which modern literature begins to be strewn, but the mind which undertakes it is indisputably the mind of an artist, abnormally sensitive to the secret individuality of emotions and things, abnormally sensitive also to spiritual beauty. A singular chapter of "The Brothers Karamazov" bears the title "Self-Lacerations." "Ulysses" is, fundamentally (though it is much besides), an immense, a prodigious self-laceration, the tearing-away from himself, by a half-demented man of genius, of inhibitions and limitations, which have grown to be flesh of his flesh. And those who read it will profit by the vicarious sacrifice.⁴

Of Joyce's being "half-demented" I am skeptical, but this notion lends itself well to Murry's commentary. Murry continues, considering the fifteenth ("Circe") episode of the book:

In this part of "Ulysses"--let us say it plainly, in order that we may have our share of the contempt or the glory of a hundred years hence--a genius of the very highest order, strictly comparable to Goethe's or Dostoevsky's, is evident. This transcendental buffoonery, this sudden uprush of the vis comica into a world wherein the tragic incompatibility of the practical and the instinctive is embodied, is a very great achievement. It is the vital centre of Mr. Joyce's book, and the intensity of life which it contains is sufficient to animate the whole of it.⁵

This section, the longest in Ulysses, which Murry so unreservedly praises, is an intense introspective drama, a fantasy blended of sordid

³Ibid., p. 293.

⁴Ibid., p. 293.

⁵Ibid., p. 293.

reality and the twilight worlds of the mind, and has been compared to Flaubert's first La tentation de Sainte-Antoine and the "Walpurgisnacht" episode in Goethe's Faust.

Arnold Bennett, certainly no vanguard leader, reinforces Murry's emphatic acceptance of Ulysses as more than a mere passing curiosity.

James Joyce is a very astonishing phenomenon in letters. He is sometimes dazzlingly original. If he does not see life whole he sees it piercingly. His ingenuity is marvellous. He has wit. He has prodigious humour. He is afraid of naught. And had heaven in its wisdom thought fit not to deprive him of that basic sagacity and the moral self-dominion which alone enable an artist to assemble and control and fully utilize his powers, he would have stood a chance of being one of the greatest novelists that ever lived. The best portions of the novel (unfortunately they constitute only a fraction of the whole) are superb. I single out the long orgiastic scene, and the long unspoken monologue of Mrs. Bloom which closes the book. The former will easily bear comparison with Rabelais at his fantastical finest; it leaves Petronius out of sight. It has plenary inspiration. It is the richest stuff, handled with a virtuosity to match the quality of the material. The latter (forty difficult pages, some twenty-five thousand words without any punctuation at all) might in its utterly convincing realism be an actual document, the magical record of inmost thoughts by a woman that existed. Talk about understanding "feminine psychology"...I have never read anything to surpass it, and I doubt if I have ever read anything to equal it. My blame may have seemed extravagant, and my praise may seem extravagant, but that is how I feel about James Joyce.⁶

The two sections to which Bennett refers, "unfortunately...only a fraction of the whole," constitute very little less than a third of the book, more indeed than Bennett would lead us to imagine.

By May of 1922 an outraged James Douglas was writing:

I have read it, and I say deliberately that it is the most infamously obscene book in ancient or modern literature. The obscenity of Rabelais is innocent compared with its leprous and scabrous horrors. All the secret sewers of vice are canalized in its flood of unimaginable thoughts, images and pornographic words. And its unclean lunacies are larded with appalling and revolting blasphemies directed against the Christian religion and against the holy name of Christ--blasphemies hitherto associated with the most degraded orgies of Satanism and the Black Mass.

⁶Ibid., p. 294.

And here let me say frankly that I have evidence which establishes the fact that the book is already the Bible of beings who are exiles and outcasts in this and every civilized country. It is also adopted by the Freudians as the supreme glory of their dirty and degraded cult, which masquerades in pseudo-scientific raiment under the name of "Psycho-Analysis."⁷

Mr. Douglas's exorcism concludes:

This is a libel on Ireland, for if Ireland were to accept the pater-
nity of Joyce and his Dublin Joyceries, which out-rosses the roseries
of the Parisian stews, Ireland would indeed become one of the dying na-
tions, and degenerate into a latrine and a sewer. The England of Milton
and Wordsworth at least stands firm in defence of decency, decorum, good
manners and good morals.⁸

These remarks fail to touch more than a fraction of the book, en-
tirely overlooking what in Ulysses is fundamentally important. This
approach is unfortunately representative of a large number of critics.
Valery Larbaud, the noted continental critic, felt contrarily that with
the publication of Ulysses Ireland had at last made "a sensational re-
entry into high European literature."⁹ It is also worth noting that
Ulysses fails to appear on the lists of prohibited books of either Ire-
land or the Catholic Church. In all events, Ireland has failed to
undergo the dire metamorphosis suggested by Douglas; the Celt it seems
is made of sterner stuff.

W. K. Magee, who writes under the pseudonym of John Eglinton, and
to whom Joyce has given a minor rôle in Ulysses, writes in his "Dublin
Letter" to Dial:

Mr. Joyce's feat in this book I should find admirable if it were
executed with some practical purpose: but his purpose is to produce a
work of virgin art! And yet they say that art is not the imitation of
reality, as Aristotle naively assumed, but an imaginative creation!

⁷Ibid., pp. 295-96.

⁸Ibid., p. 296.

⁹Harry Levin, James Joyce: A Critical Introduction (Norfolk,
1941), p. 8.

There is an effort and strain in the composition of this book which makes one at times feel a concern for the author. But why should we kill ourselves to write masterpieces? There is a growing divergence between the literary ideals of our artists and the books which humans want to read. Perhaps this divergence will widen indefinitely until aesthetic criticism is superceded by a finer physiological criticism which will recognize that from time to time a man is born to be a depository of the wisdom or musings of the race, which he will utter easily and after a manner of his own.

Byron deplored that "a third of life is passed in sleep": and of the waking two-thirds, probably at least nine-tenths are passed in reverie and abstraction, and the drift of associated ideas. Yet the remaining tenth part of waking life, in which the will is exerted, our true life, is the subject matter of art. Even our natural memories recognize this and work selectively; for in reviewing our past we discard all but the essentials of our thoughts and actions. To catch a man in the folly and inconsequence of his casual thoughts is like snap-shotting Maslova in a single attitude of her swan-dance.¹⁰

Mr. Eglinton's remarks are evasive and seem, somewhat confusedly, to beg the question, which, after all is Ulysses. I question whether an artist sets out to kill himself to write a masterpiece, albeit many have done so in the process, and surely this is the artist's prerogative. To suggest that the fully conscious, the "tenth part," of our life is the "true life" is an absurdity in the light of our increasing knowledge of the by-ways of the mind. And more than one poet has demonstrated that his province is limited only by himself; there is no catalogue of subjects of art.

In the New Republic for July fifth Edmund Wilson, while he felt that Ulysses' length was perhaps excessive, "Yet," he says, "for all its appalling longueurs, Ulysses is a work of high genius."

Its importance seems to me to lie, not so much in its opening new doors to knowledge--unless in setting an example to Anglo-Saxon writers of putting down everything without compunction--or in inventing new literary forms--Joyce's formula is really, as I have indicated, nearly seventy-five years old--as in its once more setting

¹⁰John Eglinton, "Dublin Letter," Dial, LXXII (June, 1922), 621-22.

the standard of the novel so high that it need not be ashamed to take its place beside poetry and drama. *Ulysses* has the effect at once of making everything else look brassy. Since I have read it, the texture of other novelists seems intolerably loose and careless; when I come suddenly unawares upon a page that I have written myself I quake like a guilty thing surprised.¹¹

Joyce's imaginative creation, which manifestly lacks not the imitation of reality which Eglinton feels it does, is thus placed in the realm of art rather more securely by Wilson; it is seen to be more than some curious "work of virgin art."

Gilbert Seldes, whose review in the Nation for August thirtieth is a perceptive one, was not in the least appalled by Ulysses' "longueurs"; he, rather, found the book a work of perfection--though it is Seldes's immoderate praise which may weaken an otherwise brilliant piece of criticism.

I have not the space to discuss the aesthetic questions which the book brings up nor to indicate what its effect on the novel may be. I have called Joyce formidable because it is already clear that the innovations in method and the developments in structure which he has used with a skill approaching perfection are going to have an incalculable effect upon the writers of the future; he is formidable because his imitators will make use of his freedom without imposing upon themselves the duties and disciplines he has suffered; I cannot see how any novelist will be able (nor why he should altogether want) entirely to escape his influence. The book has literally hundreds of points of interest not even suggested here. One must take for granted the ordinary equipment of the novelist; one must assume also that there are faults, idiosyncrasies, difficulties. More important still are the interests associated with "the uncreated conscience of my race"--the Catholic and the Irish. I have written this analysis of "*Ulysses*" as one not too familiar with either--as an indication that the book can have absolute validity and interest, in the sense that all which is local and private in the "*Divine Comedy*" does not detract from its interest and validity. But these and other points have been made in the brilliant reviews which "*Ulysses*" has already evoked. One cannot leave it without noting again that in the change of Stephen Dedalus from his affinity with the old artificer to his kinship with *Ulysses*-Bloom, Joyce has created an image of contemporary life; nor without

¹¹Gorman, p. 300.

testifying that this epic of defeat, in which there is not a scamped page nor a moment of weakness, in which whole chapters are monuments to the power and glory of the written word, is in itself a victory of the creative intelligence over the chaos of uncreated things and a triumph of devotion, to my mind one of the most significant and beautiful of our time.¹²

In a vituperative, and somewhat less than brilliant review, appearing in the Quarterly Review for October, Shane Leslie sounds alarms:

From any Christian point of view this book must be proclaimed anathema, simply because it tries to pour ridicule on the most sacred themes and characters in what has been the religion of Europe for nearly two thousand years. And this is the book which ignorant French critics hail as the proof of Ireland's re-entry into European literature! It contains the literary germs of that fell movement which politically has destroyed the greater part of Slavic Europe. If it is a summons or inspiration to the Celtic end of Europe to do likewise, it would be better for Ireland to sink under the seas and join Atlantis rather than allow her life of letters to affect the least reconciliation with a book which, owing to accidents of circumstance, probably only Dubliners can really understand in detail. Certainly, it takes a Dubliner to pick out the familiar names and allusions of twenty years ago, though the references to men who have become as important as Arthur Griffith assume a more universal hearing. And we are sorry to say that it would take a theologian, even Jesuit, to understand all the theological references. At the same time, nobody in his senses would hold Clongowes School responsible for this portent. It was its ill fortune to breed without being able to harness a striking literary genius, who has since yoked himself to the steeds of Comedy and Blasphemy and taken a headlong flight, shall we say like the Gadarene swine, into a choking sea of impropriety. If George Moore is right in saying that "blasphemy is the literature of Catholic countries," this is verily literature.¹³

Mr. Leslie allies himself here with the "downshouter" school of commentators which assumes that the most strenuous objections to a work are the most righteous and which, in consequence, surrenders clear thinking to the plainest sort of ranting.

Gilbert Seldes's remarks on the parochial aspects of Ulysses, following an acute and sound examination of the book, would seem to confound

¹²Ibid., pp. 300-01.

¹³Ibid., pp. 298-99.

Mr. Leslie's. And to that I might add that my own appreciation of the book was not limited by my ignorance of Joyce's Dublin. Ulysses to Leslie presents a Mephistophelian monster in far greater proportions than to James Douglas, who saw the book as devouring only Ireland, not as containing "the literary germs...which politically destroyed the greater part of Slavic Europe."

The fears Mrs. Mary Colum expresses are far more real than those of Leslie's. She says in the July nineteenth issue of the Freeman:

The alarming thing about "Ulysses" is very different; it is that it shows the amazing inroads that science is making on literature. Mr. Joyce's book is of as much interest as science as it is as literature: In some parts it is of purely scientific and non-artistic interest. It seems to me a real and not fantastic fear that science will oust literature altogether as a part of human expression; and from that point of view "Ulysses" is a dangerous indication. From that point of view, also, I do not consider it as important to literature as "Portrait of the Artist." After "Ulysses" I cannot see how anyone can go on calling books written in the subconscious method, novels. It is as plain as day that a new literary form has appeared; the novel is as distinct from this form as in his day Samuel Richardson's was from the drama.¹⁴

Mrs. Colum here follows the same reasoning as John Eglinton, which is the assumption that art is somehow apart from other "categories" of experience, of which science is one and one of the most necessary to this civilization. But even if we allow this categorization, it is not Joyce who can be accused of strangling literature with a garrote of science. Literature, indeed, was most scientifically "misused" under the unsympathetic thumb of Zola and his Naturalisme. With far greater acuteness, however, than Shane Leslie, she dismisses the charges of obscenity which were endlessly being hurled at Ulysses, observing that "...it is doubtful that obscenity in literature ever really corrupted anybody."¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 299.

Joyce's extensive treatment of the mind in both its conscious and sub-conscious aspects has left Ulysses a rich field for psychological speculation. Dr. Joseph Collins, writing in the New York Times Book Review and Magazine for May twenty-eighth, was one of the earliest to delve at any length into this facet of the work. He, more neurologist than literary critic (and possibly exemplifying Mrs. Colum's fears), looks upon Joyce as a psychological case-study and Ulysses as Joyce's biggest symptom. Collins flavors his remarks with an extraordinary superciliousness, which at times is sheer naiveté.

Mr. Joyce had the good fortune to be born with a quality which the world calls genius. Nature exacts a penalty, a galling income tax from geniuses, and as a rule she co-endows them with unamenability to law and order. Genius and reverence are antipodal, Galileo being the exception to the rule. Mr. Joyce has no reverence for organized religion, for conventional morality, for literary style and form. He has no conception of the word obedience, and he bends the knee neither to God nor man. It is very interesting, and most important to have the revelations of such a personality, to have them first-hand and not dressed up. Heretofore our only avenues of information of such personalities led through the asylums for the insane, for it was there that such revelations as those of Mr. Joyce were made without reserve. Lest anyone should construe this statement to be a subterfuge on my part to impugn the sanity of Mr. Joyce, let me say at once that he is one of the sanest geniuses I have ever known.

He had the profound misfortune to lose his faith and he cannot rid himself of the obsession that the Jesuits did it for him, and he is trying to get square with them by saying disagreeable things about them and holding their teachings up to scorn and obloquy. He was so unfortunate as to be born without a sense of duty, of service, of conformity to the State, to the community, to society, and he is convinced that he ought to tell about it, just as some who have experienced a surgical operation feel that they must relate minutely all the details of it, particularly at dinner parties and to casual acquaintances.

Finally, I venture a prophecy: Not ten men or women out of a hundred can read "Ulysses" through, and of the ten who succeed in doing so, five of them will do it as a tour de force. I am probably the only person aside from the author, that has ever read it twice from beginning to end. I have learned more psychology and psychiatry from it than I did in ten years at the Neurological Institute. There are other angles at which "Ulysses" can be viewed profitably, but they are not many.

Stephen Dedalus[Joyce] in his Parisian tranquillity (if the modern Minos has been given the lethal warm bath) will pretend indifference to the publication of a laudatory study of "Ulysses" a hundred years hence,

but he is as sure to get it as Dostoevsky, and surer than Mallarmé.¹⁶

Almost without exception, the critics of this first year have preferred to discuss Ulysses in quite general terms, that is, we do not encounter more than tentative attempts to deal with, as later critics will, the artistic and philosophical problems of the book. Moral issues appear to be foremost in the critical mind.

Many commentators, we observe, are concerned with the excessive richness of the book, which is termed "caviar for the general," a book not to be left in the hands of the ordinary public. This attitude, significantly, will continue to be found to the end of the decade. The first critic I have cited, Mr. Sisley Huddleston, represents this opinion as does Dr. Collins with whom I have closed 1922.

ii. 1923 to 1932

Mr. Joyce's book has been out long enough for no more general expression of praise, or expostulation with its detractors, to be necessary; and it has not been out long enough for any attempt at a complete measurement of its place and significance to be possible. All that one can usefully do at this time, and it is a great deal to do, for such a book, is to elucidate any aspect of the book--and the number of aspects is indefinite--which has not yet been fixed. I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we are all indebted, and from which none of us can escape.¹⁷

The "mythical method" is one of the foundations upon which T. S. Eliot has developed his particular art; he discusses Ulysses in its relation to this method, and in this view he conceivably contemplates the implied rapprochement between Joyce's work and his own. "Among all the criticisms I have seen of the book, I have seen nothing...which seemed to me to appreciate the significance of the method employed--the parallel

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 301-02.

¹⁷T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, p. 198. This article first appeared in 1923.

to the Odyssey, and the use of appropriate styles and symbols to each division."¹⁸ Mr. Eliot suggests further that

The question...about Mr. Joyce, is: how much living material does he deal with, and how does he deal with it: deal with, not as a legislator or exhorter, but as an artist?

It is here that Mr. Joyce's parallel use of the Odyssey has a great importance. It has the importance of a scientific discovery. No one else has built a novel upon such a foundation before: it has never before been necessary. I am not begging the question in calling Ulysses a "novel"; and if you call it an epic it will not matter. If it is not a novel, that is simply because the novel is a form which will no longer serve; it is because the novel, instead of being a form, was simply the expression of an age which had not sufficiently lost all form to feel the need of something stricter. Mr. Joyce has written one novel--the Portrait; Mr. Wyndham Lewis has written one novel--Tarr. I do not suppose that either of them will ever write another "novel." The novel ended with Flaubert and with James. It is, I think, because Mr. Joyce and Mr. Lewis, being "in advance" of their time, felt a conscious or probably unconscious dissatisfaction with the form, that their novels are more formless than those of a dozen clever writers who are unaware of its obsolescence.

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and The Golden Bough have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of the narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art....¹⁹

Richard Aldington, with mixed emotions, takes a shorter view:

Mr. Joyce's "Ulysses" is most interesting both for its achievement and for the influence it must have; the achievement I am convinced is remarkable, its influence, I fear, may be deplorable. If young writers could be persuaded to applaud and honour Mr. Joyce without copying him, all would be well; but such a thing is unlikely. Where Mr. Joyce has succeeded, with occasional lapses, others must fail, lacking his intellectuality, his amazing observation, memory, and intuition, his control over the processes of art.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 201-02.

"Ulysses" is more bitter, more sordid, more ferociously satirical than anything Mr. Joyce has yet written. It is a tremendous libel on humanity which I, at least, am not clever enough to refute, but which I am convinced is a libel. There is laughter in "Ulysses," but it is a harsh sneering kind, very different from the "gros rire" of Rabelais. I see that Mr. Pound, champion of "Ulysses," abuses Tertullian; but is not Mr. Joyce a modern Tertullian and worse?

I say...that when Mr. Joyce, with his marvellous gifts, uses them to disgust us with mankind, he is doing something which is false and a libel on humanity. ...he has succeeded in writing a most remarkable book.... "Ulysses" is a grand soliloquy. Bloom is a kind of rags and tatters Hamlet, a proletarian Lear, "mirroring" life and showing it to be hideous. Mr. Joyce has pushed the intimate detailed analysis of character to a point farther than any writer I know. His faithful reproduction of Bloom's thoughts, with their inconsequence, their staccato breaks, their returns to an obsession, is an astonishing psychological document.

Young writers will be dominated by his personality; they will copy his eccentricities instead of developing their own minds. If we could only treat Mr. Joyce as Plato recommends; give him praise and anoint him with oil and put a crown of purple wool on his head and send him into another country.²⁰

In the article from which I have previously quoted, Mr. Eliot devotes considerable space to the refutation of much of what Mr. Aldington says. "Whether it is possible to libel humanity (in distinction to libel in the usual sense, which is libeling an individual or a group in contrast with the rest of humanity) is a question for philosophical societies to discuss," suggests Mr. Eliot, "but of course if Ulysses were a "libel" it would simply be a forged document, a powerless fraud, which would have never extracted from Mr. Aldington a moment's attention."²¹

Alfred Noyes is rather less perceptive than Richard Aldington; in his zealous attempt to shield mankind from a book "contemptible in every respect," he has failed to see the book. He stoutly submits that Ulysses "is the foulest [novel] that has ever found its way into print."²² He continues:

²⁰Richard Aldington, Literary Studies and Reviews (London, 1924), pp. 192-207.

²¹Givens, p. 199.

²²Alfred Noyes, Some Aspects of Modern Poetry (New York, 1924), p. 333.

...I have read the book, and it is contemptible in every respect. The technical quality of the writing is beneath contempt. ...this is nothing less than a national disgrace; a disgusting blot upon our national heritage; and it is all the more disgusting in that it took place at a time when some of the noblest work of the last century--work with human faults, but, as in the case of Tennyson, work that may outlive England as Vergil has outlived Rome--work of this quality was being depreciated with a silly and ignorant contempt.

The book itself is utterly worthless and beneath consideration. And it is too corrupt to have more than a brief surreptitious existence.²³

While the intent of such "proud man's contumely" is a destructive viciousness, the result is often ludicrous; there are few who will not read Mr. Noyes's vituperation with a smile.

Dr. Collins has revised his earlier essay, though not his dauntless self-confidence; he is certain that

...the average intelligent reader will glean little or nothing from it [Ulysses], save bewilderment and disgust. He is determined that we shall know the effect the "world," sordid, turbulent, disorderly, steeped in alcohol and saturated with jesuitry, had upon an emotional Celt, an egocentric genius whose chief diversion has been blasphemy and keenest pleasure self-exaltation, and whose life-long important occupation has been keeping a notebook in which he has recorded incident encountered and speech heard with photographic accuracy and Boswellian fidelity.²⁴

He is still convinced that he is "probably the only person aside from the author that has ever read it twice from beginning to end."

I read it as a test of Christian fortitude: to see if I could still love my fellow man after reading a book that depicts such repugnance of humanity, such abhorrence of the human body, and such loathsomeness of the possession that links man with God, the creative endowment.²⁵

Concluding, Dr. Collins feels that

Mr. Joyce has made a contribution to the science of psychology, and he has done it quite unbeknownst to himself, a fellow country-man might say. He has shown us the process of the transmuting of thoughts to words. It isn't epoch making like "relativity," but it will give him notoriety, possibly immortality.²⁶

²³Ibid., pp. 334-35.

²⁴Joseph Collins, The Doctor Looks at Literature (New York, 1923), p. 35.

²⁵Ibid., p. 58.

²⁶Ibid., p. 60.

James P. O'Reilly concurs with Dr. Collins on the question of the book's notoriety. "His most notorious work, Ulysses, is obviously one that should not be on sale in bookshops for the casual public," but, he continues, "vice in Joyce is anything but attractive: it is hideously revolting. Can the same be said of the Sunday papers?"²⁷ This last observation is cogent, but, I am forced to ask, considering his first statement, what is this "casual public" which so desperately needs protection from the corrupting (O'Reilly implies) influence of the book? Are we to reserve special segments of our literature for some particular, manifestly uncorruptable group? And where, I might ask, is this group?

Mr. O'Reilly continues:

Here [in Ulysses] lack of balance is more pronounced; control is loosened; subconscious thoughts intrude, even dominate. It is almost incoherent in places, but the incoherencies are studied, and there are reasoned deliberate passages at intervals. It has an air of direction, or purpose, about it, notwithstanding its sprawling limbs, its brawling obscenity. The author's mind is fixed, fairly definitely, on the lower instincts of man. These are always close at hand, and he never wanders far from them. Mind has certainly been used, or misused rather, to produce Ulysses.²⁸

O'Reilly's remarks escape any real insight into the possible meaning and import of Ulysses. Paul Rosenfield, on the other hand, has gone beneath a description of literary oddities to elucidate the reason for and the effect of them.

Men before James Joyce have been aware of the parasitic and independent nature of our upper-storey lodger, yet the Irish poet can fairly pretend to be his artistic discoverer and portrayer of his form. The protagonist of his vast novel is no creature of flesh. The hero of the Odyssey may have been an individual. But the being whose wanderings are

²⁷James P. O'Reilly, "Joyce and Beyond Joyce," Living Age, CCCXXXIII (Aug. 15, 1927), 318.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 250-51.

set forth in the modern tragi-comic parallel is no other than "mind in the making," perceived through types of the floating dislocated intellect of our time. With Joyce, a new comedy comes to stand beside the old divine and human comedies, the comédie intellectuelle. He has placed the interior soliloquy of the human being on a plane and a parity with his exterior "action," and boldly mixed the two.

He has represented the mind's play, the manner of drunken existence led by him, with a queer gusto at once sour and Rabelaisian, with pity, tenderness and Irish mischief, and upon an heroic scale and with heroic richness and illustration. And none of Joyce's coevals, neither Miss Stein nor Miss Richardson nor Ernest Hemingway, has made it an object of contemplation with a relentlessness and bravery in any way comparable to his.

Joyce seems to hear through the imitations of the exterior world and the ejaculations of an interior one contained in language, the reports of the senses, the indications of touch or sight or smell, and to taste them with the tongue, and to express this content through verbal interrelations. No living author brings a vocabulary either as crisply, sharply pungently used, or as vasty.²⁹

Rosenfield, in his study, attempts to come to grips with what the author is trying to do--one of the basic principles, Coleridge tells us, of sound criticism. In considering Ulysses as literature (art) Rosenfield's remarks achieve validity as literary (aesthetic) criticism; he declines to moralize.

Edwin Muir comments, reiterating Rosenfield's appreciation of Joyce's powers, that "no other novelist who has written in English has had a greater mastery than Mr. Joyce of language as an instrument of literary expression, and no one else, probably, has striven so to attain it."³⁰ He then turns to the aesthetic of Ulysses:

One feels again and again in "Ulysses" that the uproariousness of the farce, the recklessness of the blasphemy is wildest when the suffering of the artist has been most intense. A writer whose sufferings were so great and so conscious needed a more elaborate technique than most writers do, as much to put a distance between himself and his sufferings as to express them.

"Ulysses" is a complete course, a set banquet, of the modern consciousness.

²⁹Paul Rosenfield, Men Seen (New York, 1925), pp. 24-32.

³⁰Edwin Muir, "James Joyce," The Nation, CXXI (Oct. 14, 1925), 422.

But the most remarkable mark of originative genius in "Ulysses" is a certain immediacy not only of vision but of attitude. It is as if Mr. Joyce had resolved to discard the aesthetic sense of the last three centuries and in discarding that to return to the aesthetic consciousness in itself, an aesthetic consciousness which should not be selective, as the more developed and refined it tends to become, but should include everything. There are failures in this truly heroic attempt, but there are also magnificent successes. "Ulysses" gives one a lively notion of how difficult it is for a great work of art to be born and after inconceivable hazards to come to completion in our day; but it shows also, what is more important, that this achievement is not impossible.³¹

In a similar though more expansive vein, Ivan Goll suggests that

Ulysses is the most formidable parody anyone has ever written on the universe of God and man. It owes its force to the fact that it arises from a deep ethical conviction and a sense of comic despair such as only a true poet can feel. In Irish humor the face remains as impassive as a kettle full of boiling water--until it bursts. Joyce is no longer reverent. I believe that he enjoys parodying God most of all. But how unimportant all this must be to one who can depict accurately the daily middle class routine without twitching an eyelash. He describes his hero's activities in the bathroom with the same indifference and objectivity that he describes purchasing a cake of soap. He is no more shocked by the shamefully concealed sexual immorality of the middle classes than by a debate in Parliament. Everything that the hero thinks, feels, and dreams is written down coldly and fully in this book. The author rises above it all.³²

"But," he says incisively, "behold--the middle class takes it seriously. The book is promptly banned in England and America."³³ He continues:

There is nothing to which Ulysses can be compared.

Apart from all these eccentricities of speech, Joyce has introduced to the technique of fiction a new element of the greatest importance to all European literature--the inner dialogue.

The closing chapter of Ulysses is a quivering masterpiece such as no one will ever be able to give us again.

Ulysses is the most unbridled piece of literature in the world, yet it is the most carefully planned.

He is almost finished and intense a lyric poet as Mallarmé. He has carried poetry to its uttermost limits. Some damn Joyce completely.

³¹Ibid., pp. 421-23.

³²Ivan Goll, "The Homer of Our Time," Living Age, CCCXXXIII (Aug. 15, 1927), 318.

³³Ibid., p. 318.

Others can only compare him to Rabelais, Shakespeare, Swift, Flaubert, or Dante. But no one's work approaches his in magnitude and novelty. James Joyce is our great poet.³⁴

Joyce, of course, was not the first to make use of the "inner dialogue" (monologue intérieur, or stream-of-consciousness, as it has been variously called)--which is really not a dialogue at all, but, as the French name signifies, a monologue. The technique, a distant cousin of the dramatic soliloquy, was used somewhat as Joyce uses it as early as 1887 by Edouard Dujardin as his short novel, Les Lauriers sont coupés (We'll to the Woods No More), to which Joyce in fact acknowledged his indebtedness. Joyce, however, can be credited with making the technique tractable and, ultimately, popular (to other writers, at any rate).

Goll's praise of Joyce might be felt at times extravagant, but perhaps it is a necessity to follow Aristotle's advice and offset one extreme by another to finally achieve the golden mean.

Miss Rebecca West finds Joyce a poet, even a genius, but in her detailed, if often confused, study, she finds Joyce considerably less of a god than does Mr. Goll. "James Joyce," says Miss West, "confident in his own revolutionary quality because his sentences wear the cap of liberty, weakens his masterpiece by executing it with hands made tremulous by the most reactionary sentimentality."³⁵ She accuses Joyce of narcissism which she feels "inevitably deforms."³⁶ Concluding an erudite discussion of Joyce and Manichaeism, which she prefers to identify Ulysses with, she asserts that "For Mr. Joyce to write his Manichaean epic with a dovetailing fidelity to a Greek pattern is as sensible as it would be to write

³⁴Ibid., pp. 319-20.

³⁵Rebecca West, "The Strange Case of James Joyce," The Bookman, LXVIII (Sept., 1928), 11.

³⁶Ibid., p. 12.

a novel about Middle Western farm life in French alexandrines."³⁷ This is, of course, begging the question. Miss West has made no effort to discover Joyce's purpose in using a Greek pattern, though she doubtless has derived infinite delight in elucidating a pattern with which Joyce very probably was not the least concerned.

While many commentators were lauding Joyce's interior monologue, seeing it as an ideal technique for our time, Miss West was seriously distressed with it.

Incoherence, that is to say the presentation of words in other than the order appointed by any logic of words not in sentence formation, is at least a real device and not just a condition, and while it also is suitable for the handling only of a special case, that special case is certainly contained in *Ulysses*. But unfortunately Mr. Joyce applies it to many things in *Ulysses* as well as that special case. To begin with, he writes down these strings of words as if they corresponded to the stream of one's consciousness; as if, should one resolve to describe one's impressions as they came, one would produce isolated words and phrases which would not cohere into sentences. Yet there is nothing more certain than that sentences were used by man before words and still come with the readiness of instinct to his lips. They, and not words, are the foundations of all language. Your dog has no words, but it barks and whines sentences at you. Your cat has no words, but it has a considerable feeling for the architecture of the sentence in relation to the problem of expressing climax. Your baby has no words, but it will express sentences for hours together, sometimes pausing for thought and adding a pungent dependent clause, till it builds up a kind of argument-like mass. Indeed, the chief difficulty of teaching a child to talk is to persuade it to abandon the wordless sentence, which perfectly conveys all the emotional communications it wishes to make, and to go through the labor of memorizing words for the purpose of making intellectual communications it will feel no need to make for some years to come. A mother who points to a doll and repeats "doll" over and over again to the child who for some time has been perfectly well able to convey that she wants the doll in her arms by saying "Wa wa wa wa" [*sic*], must seem to the child positively unteaching it to speak, to be cramping and deforming a faculty; which probably adds to the dark suspicion of the adult world held by the young.³⁸

And so on for several columns in which Miss West by this ingenious though unconvincing paralogism expresses her disfavor with Joyce's method.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 16.

She continues:

I do most solemnly maintain that Leopold Bloom is one of the greatest creations of all time: that in him something true is said about man. Nothing happens to him at the end of "Ulysses". Nothing is suggested in the course of the book which would reconcile him to the nobility of life. Simply he stands before us, convincing us that man wishes to fall back from humanity into the earth, and that in that wish is power, as the facade of Notre Dame stands above us, convincing us that man wishes to rise from humanity into the sky, and that in that wish is power. But it is when one considers the rest of the work in both these expressions of man's desires that one is overcome by fury at Mr. James Joyce's extraordinary incompetence.³⁹

Miss West is quite thorough in her efforts to mark Joyce as something of an incompetent; she complains that his "gibberish" (the stream-of-consciousness) "renders the book pointless";⁴⁰ she avers that Joyce "simply did not understand what he was doing."⁴¹ But in the concluding lines of her essay, Miss West effectually controverts her major arguments.

...I claim that the interweaving rhythms of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus and Marion Bloom make beauty, beauty of the sort whose recognition is an experience as real as the most intense personal experiences we can have, which gives a sense of reassurance, of exultant confidence in the universe, which no personal experience can give.⁴²

Stuart Gilbert, who subsequently wrote what might be called the "official" explication of Ulysses (I refer to James Joyce's "Ulysses," a detailed study of the Homeric parallels, which was published with Joyce's imprimatur), finds the Homeric allegory quite more sensible than does Miss West.

At first sight "Ulysses" may seem a chaos of riotous imaginings, a betrayal of order, or decency, of all that evolution has achieved to raise man above his fellow animals. But a closer study shows that each word is used exactly as in a scientific manual, always with the same connotation, and that "Ulysses" is linked together by an all-pervading rhythm, just as

³⁹Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 21.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 21.

⁴²Ibid., p. 23.

each part of the body--and here we see why Joyce has related each episode to a bodily organ--is joined to all the others by a vital synthesis, a complex of nerves and muscles. "Ulysses" is, in fact, the most "symbolical" book ever written (the most intensely living, too), for it is a small scale miniature of the universal macrocosm. Mr. Bloom's day is a paradigm of all days and his adventures illustrate the whole range of human activity. The title itself, a deliberate recall of the greatest of epic historias, suggests one aspect of the rapprochement. The Greeks saw in the "Odyssees" their Bible, a mirror of life, a parable of the wandering soul seeking to find itself, and in "Ulysses" we are invited to see a like meaning. If time after time...Mr. Joyce reproduces in a modern setting the adventures of Ulysses, it is not for humorous incongruity--though humor there is everywhere in "Ulysses"--nor to impose an artificial unity or a series of sketches, not even because Ulysses was, as it happens, his boyhood's hero. It is because the adage "history repeats itself" has a deeper application than is generally believed and there is a rhythm, a recurrence, in human evolution, as many besides theosophists have observed. The ancient Irish held that every poet was a prophet and could in trance perceive both past and future events. Timelessness, in fact, is the supreme quality of a work of art and its validity, unlike "news," is not for today only. The interpreter of Joyce can echo Porphyry's opinion of Homer: "it must not be denied that he has obscurely indicated the images of things of a more divine nature in the fiction of a fable."⁴³

Harvey Wickham pounds the already well pounded pulpit of morality, decency. He seems wholly unable to grasp the smallest measure of the book's vital meaning; his sensibilities are quite the reverse of Mr. Gilbert's.

His "Chamber Music," his "Dubliners," his "Exiles" merely displayed a talent for writing. Only as he became more outrageous, as in the "Portrait," did he give much promise of setting his adopted [?] Thames on fire; and only when, in "Ulysses," he finally threw all decency to the winds, did the waters passing under London Bridge (to say nothing of those reaching to Brooklyn) begin actually to blaze with the heat of his inspiration.

It is, for one thing, easier to write pornography than to write "Idylls of the King," even mediocre ones; easier to produce a sensation in the reader's mind when the limit is off than when conventions hold the pen in check. Who can peruse without mental disturbance of some sort these passages which set out in black and white what used to be indicated only by a blank space feebly dotted with asterisks? Such passages had the thrill of novelty--in print, that is, though most of us males were made familiar with their phraseology through early examination of the walls of the old primary-school latrine. True, the novelty soon wears off, but meanwhile the author is stimulated by a sense of his own audacity.

⁴³Stuart Gilbert, "Growth of a Titan," The Saturday Review of Literature, VII (Aug. 2, 1930), 18. Italics mine.

Joyce never did much conscious thinking, even of an evil sort [what an assumption!], and so has escaped the blackest curse of all. He merely lets himself sink.

He is dizzy with animal passion. Indeed, this vertigo, since it manifests itself in a nature much more simple and thoughtless than Proust, out swings anything to be found in the entire Recherche. It takes us reeling through filth with a giddy ecstasy impossible to any fall less abrupt than from unsophisticated Faith to a cesspool.⁴⁴

Thus Mr. Wickham, invective upon sophism, relegates Joyce to the ash heap, or cesspool as he would have it. Maurice Murphy, a compatriot of Joyce's, is of the contrary opinion and he sententiously remarks that "James Joyce has done more for Ireland than any other man of letters. It is not at all inconsistent with Irish character that in Ireland and, to be sure, elsewhere he is looked upon as a kind of pariah, not only by the peasantry but by many otherwise intelligent people."⁴⁵

Returning to the aesthetic problems of Ulysses, Cyril Connolly writes:

In England the literary public is governed by good taste, cautious as the cenotaph, the critics decide the value of a book in terms of "delicious" and "charming." The general public is equally conservative, and the fate of a book like Ulysses (so hopelessly unpresentable when submitted to the Chelsea canon) is decided in advance. It is in America, where there is a large and less sophisticated general public, and in Paris, where there are a great many young writers anxious to experiment in literary form, that the "Ulysses generation" has grown up.

Mr. Forster, in his lectures on the novel, states perfectly the English attitude toward Joyce, the bad boggy-man of letters. "Ulysses," he writes, "is a dogged attempt to cover the universe with mud, an inverted Victorianism, an attempt to make coarseness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed, a simplification of the human character in the interests of Hell." It is also an "epic of grubbiness and disillusion... a superfetation of fantasies, a monstrous coupling of reminiscences... in which smaller mythologies swarm and pullulate, like vermin, the vermin between the scales of a poisonous snake." "Indignation in literature," adds Mr. Forster, "never quite comes off," and the passage I have quoted does little except to express the general attitude of English culture towards novelty, and to prove that the vocabulary of scandalized vituperation is drawn from the reptile house in every age.

⁴⁴Harvey Wickham, The Impuritans, (New York, 1929), pp. 238-39.

⁴⁵Maurice Murphy, "James Joyce and Ireland," Nation, CXXIX (Oct. 16, 1929), 426.

"Indignation" is not a quality of Joyce's work, but "the raging of Joyce seems essentially fantastic, and lacks the note for which we shall be listening soon," continues Mr. Forster, who proceeds to classify Ulysses as belonging to the period of Zuleika Dobson. Let us get a clear idea of Ulysses before we try to estimate the later work of its author. James Joyce is, by temperament, a medievalist. He has always been in revolt against his two greatest limitations, his Jesuit education and his Celtic romanticism. Each of his books reveals a growing fear of beauty; not because life is not beautiful, but because there is something essentially false and luxurious in the "Celtic Twilight" approach to it. The tinsel element is very strong in Joyce's early poems, and is contrasted with an equally pronounced repulsion from it in "The Portrait of the Artist." In Ulysses he has got it in hand, and is experimenting in other approaches to beauty; the pagan simplicity of Mrs. Bloom's reverie, the mathematical austerity of the catechism which precedes it. Only Stephen Dedalus, the Hamlet young man, thinks automatically in the diction of the Celtic Twilight; but in him the remorse, the guilty sense of loneliness which attacks brave but weak men who destroy the religious framework of their youth, has fused with his minor poet melancholy, and gives to his reverie the quality of a Greek chorus. Stephen Dedalus, in fact, equips the Ulysses generation with a fatalism, a dramatization of their own forebodings, and with the medieval quality so rare in America, so reduced in England, so rife in Europe--the Tragic Sense of life. This is the great link between Joyce and Proust, otherwise so misleadingly compared. Both the Irishman and the Jew possess the tragic intelligence; The idea that life can only be appreciated, can only be lived even, if the intelligence is used to register all the beauty and all the intimacy which exist in ironic contrast to the unrelieved gloom of squalor and emptiness, mediocrity, disease and death.

For all our wit and reading do but bring us
To a truer sense of sorrow.⁴⁶

"We are...justified," says S. Foster Damon, "in examining Joyce's fat volume as an expression of ideas and as a plumbing of the depths of the soul."⁴⁷ "This book," continues Mr. Damon, "is perhaps the most thoroughgoing literary attempt to analyze the ancient problem of evil since Goethe's Faust."⁴⁸ In a lengthy, erudite essay, Mr. Damon does a superlative job of the elucidation of several levels of Ulysses. In Ulysses he finds essentially "these three elements: the symbolic narrative of the Odyssey, the spiritual planes of the Divine Comedy, and the

⁴⁶Cyril Connolly, "The Position of Joyce," The Condemned Playground (New York, 1946), pp. 1-3. This article first appeared in 1929.

⁴⁷S. Foster Damon, "The Odyssey in Dublin," Givens, p. 203. This article first appeared in 1929.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 203.

psychological problem of Hamlet. Homer furnishes the plot, Dante the setting, and Shakespeare the motivation."⁴⁹ And here emerges a heretofore unsuggested aspect of the book; this will begin numberless studies on the "meaning" or "problem" of Ulysses, and we shall gradually see the book assume a position in the more scholarly areas of the literary world.

Edmund Wilson's chapter on Joyce in his book Axel's Castle, was one of the most extensive and solidly grounded studies to have appeared in this first decade. Mr. Wilson's view is a comprehensive one; the student of Joyce owes considerable to this exceptional piece of critical work. It is difficult to extract scraps of an article which should be read in its entirety, but perhaps the section following will answer some of the major objections to Ulysses.

I believe that the first readers of "Ulysses" were shocked, not merely by Joyce's use of certain words ordinarily excluded to-day from English literature, but by his way of representing those aspects of human nature which we tend to consider incongruous as intimately, inextricably mingled. Yet the more we read "Ulysses," the more we are convinced of its psychological truth, and the more we are amazed at Joyce's genius in mastering and in presenting, not through analysis or generalization, but by complete recreation of life in the process of being lived, the relations of human beings to their environment and to each other; the nature of their perception of what goes on about them and of what goes on within themselves; and the interdependence of their intellectual, their physical, their professional and their emotional lives. To have traced all these interdependencies, to have given each of these elements its value, yet never to have lost sight of the moral through preoccupation with the physical, nor to have forgotten the general in the particular; to have exhibited ordinary humanity without either satirizing it or sentimentalizing it--this would have been sufficiently remarkable; but to have subdued all this material to the uses of a supremely finished and disciplined work of art is a feat which has hardly been equalled in the literature of our time.⁵⁰

"Joyce," feels Mr. Wilson, "is indeed really the great poet of a new phase of the human consciousness."⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 206.

⁵⁰Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York, 1931), pp. 219-20.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 221.

iii. Retrospect

The first decade has ended. Ulysses in the first ten years of its still sub rosa existence has stirred the literary world profoundly, and made a nearly legendary character of its creator. But Joyce, who labors intensely on an enigmatic "Work in Progress," says little to these "seas of angry faces."

The book, certainly a serious contribution to English letters, is as yet steadfastly refused publication in the English speaking countries, though translations into French, German, Czech, Polish, Spanish, Russian, and Japanese will appear.⁵²

The critical attitudes toward Ulysses in the main represented the extremes, with the sound studies of a few perceptive critics like Edmund Wilson, Paul Rosenfield, and others, who concerned themselves primarily with the literary qualities of the book, standing obviously above the mass of critical writings. We hear notes, however, which are common to virtually all of the commentaries. Ulysses, we are certain, is a difficult book, a work which is caviar to the general. The book is universally hailed as something new, often bewildering, and the work of genius--those who like Joyce the very least are admitting his genius.

The critical prolificacy which followed publication of Ulysses marked the revolutionary qualities of the book; very few writings have elicited the abundant criticisms so soon after their appearance as have Ulysses. And while Joyce had succeeded in roundly agitating the literary world, he had succeeded as well in stepping on the righteous toes of church

⁵²Gorman, p. 314.

and middle-class morality; the scandalized cries of numberless Mr. Douglasses and Mr. Leslies witness Joyce's apparent poverty of piety.

Finally, we can observe that in general the most thoughtful and soundest comments were coming from the most well known, if that be a mark of stature, critics--Eliot, Murry, and so on--and the least acute, most violent comments were from critics little known to the field. The watch-and-ward school of critics, by the end of the decade, though they denounced as loudly as ever, were exerting less and less influence; Ulysses, it would seem, was just too much for them.

CHAPTER III ----- WANDERING ROCKS: THE SECOND DECADE

i. The Legal Question

And now in 1933, through the good offices of Judge John M. Woolsey, the Anglo-Saxon world is moving quickly from the constraining, intemperate grasp of an all too temperate censor. Judge Woolsey's decision will be memorable; an unfortunate residue of Victorianism is swept away, and we are given an outstanding piece of literary criticism. I quote sections IV and V of the decision in their entirety:

IV. In writing "Ulysses", Joyce sought to make a serious experiment in a new, if not wholly novel, literary genre. He takes persons of the lower middle class living in Dublin in 1904 and seeks not only to describe what they did on a certain day early in June of that year as they went about the City bent on their usual occupations, but also tell what many of them thought about the while.

Joyce has attempted--it seems to me, with astonishing success--to show how the screen of consciousness with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions carries, as it were on a plastic palimpsest, not only what is in the focus of each man's observation of the actual things about him, but also in the penumbral zone residua of past impressions, some recent and some drawn up by association from the domain of the subconscious. He shows how each of these impressions affects the life and behavior of the character which he is describing.

What he seeks to get is not unlike the result of a double or, if that is possible, a multiple exposure on cinema film which would give a clear foreground with a background visible but somewhat blurred and out of focus in varying degrees.

To convey by words an effect which obviously lends itself more appropriately to a graphic technique, accounts, it seems to me, for much of the obscurity which meets a reader of "Ulysses". And it also explains another aspect of the book, which I have further to consider, namely, Joyce's sincerity and his honest effort to show exactly how the minds of his characters operate.

If Joyce did not attempt to be honest in developing the technique which he has adopted in "Ulysses" the result would be psychologically misleading and thus unfaithful to his chosen technique. Such an attitude would be artistically inexcusable.

It is because Joyce has been loyal to his technique and has not funk'd its necessary implications, but has honestly attempted to tell fully what his characters think about, that he has been the subject of so many attacks and that his purpose has been so often misunderstood and misrepresented. For his attempt sincerely and honestly to realize his objective has required him incidentally to use certain words which are generally considered dirty words and has led at times to what many think is a too poignant preoccupation with sex in the thoughts of his characters.

The words which are criticized as dirty are old Saxon words known to almost all men and, I venture, to many women, and are such words as would be naturally and habitually used, I believe, by the types of folk whose life, physical and mental, Joyce is seeking to describe. In respect of the recurrent emergence of the theme of sex in the minds of his characters, it must always be remembered that his locale was Celtic and his season Spring.

Whether or not one enjoys such a technique as Joyce uses is a matter of taste on which disagreement or argument is futile, but to subject that technique to the standards of some other technique seems to me to be little short of absurd.

Accordingly, I hold that "Ulysses" is a sincere and honest book and I think the criticisms of it are entirely disposed of by its rationale.

V. Furthermore, "Ulysses" is an amazing tour de force when one considers the success which has been in the main achieved with such a difficult objective as Joyce set for himself. As I have stated, "Ulysses" is not an easy book to read. It is brilliant and dull, unintelligible and obscure by turns. In many places it seems to me to be disgusting, but although it contains many words usually considered dirty, I have not found anything that I consider to be dirt for dirt's sake. Each word of the book contributes like a bit of mosaic to the detail of the picture which Joyce is seeking to construct for his readers.

If one does not wish to associate with such folk as Joyce describes, that is one's own choice. In order to avoid indirect contact with them one may not wish to read "Ulysses"; that is quite understandable. But when such a real artist in words, as Joyce undoubtedly is, seeks to draw a true picture of the lower middle class in a European city, ought it to be impossible for the American public legally to see that picture?

To answer this question it is not sufficient merely to find, as I have found above, that Joyce did not write "Ulysses" with what is commonly called pornographic intent, I must endeavor to apply a more objective standard to his book in order to determine its effect in the result, irrespective of the intent with which it was written.¹

Judge Woolsey then concludes, after detailing the legal procedure which was used to clear the book of the label "obscene,"

¹John M. Woolsey, Opinion A. 110-59, United States District Court, quoted in James Joyce, Ulysses (New York, 1934), pp. xi-xii. This decision was rendered December 6, 1933.

I am quite aware that owing to some of its scenes "Ulysses" is a rather strong draught to ask some sensitive, though normal persons to take. But my considered opinion, after long reflection, is that whilst in many places the effect of "Ulysses" on the reader undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac.

"Ulysses" may, therefore, be admitted to the United States.²

The opposition, however, was not to be so easily dispatched. The case was carried to an appellate court for an attempt at a reversal of Judge Woolsey's decision. Judges Learned and Augustus Hand affirmed the lower court's action, but Judge Manton dissented, saying:

Who can doubt the obscenity of this book after a reading of the pages referred to, which are too indecent to add as a footnote to this opinion? Its characterization as obscene should be quite unanimous by all who read it.³

The book is admitted though; the affirming judges, while agreeing that Ulysses is a very difficult book, reiterate Judge Woolsey's opinion of it as a work of art and beyond reproach insofar as its alleged obscenity is concerned.

ii. The Decade

Ulysses is now being openly published in the United States, and Joyce is finally protected from the bald piracy which was his lot during the years of the book's furtive existence. Critical commentary, more and more of which is found in volumes of critical essays and literary surveys, continues to appear in considerable quantity; the admission of Ulysses to the United States of course added impetus to the critical pen. In spite of all of this attention, however, Ulysses has not yet found a secure position in the literary scheme of things, its meaning still escapes many, its art is

²Ibid., p. xii.

³Dorothy Brewster and Angus Burrell, Modern Fiction (New York, 1934), p. 156.

still sincerely doubted by some, to others it is as obscene as it was in 1922.

Norman Collins is unconvinced of Ulysses' importance.

The extent of the influence of Mr. James Joyce is uncertain. Arnold Bennett, for example, praised him extravagantly but continued to write like Mr. Bennett and not like Mr. Joyce. Nevertheless there are hints and echoes and acknowledgements of Mr. Joyce in the work of a score of the younger writers who are uncertain of their aim but are determined that it shall be into the future.

Mr. Joyce is the best example of himself that can be found. His disciples are mostly timid with the timidity of half-conviction. This is not surprising, because Mr. Joyce is not only a courageous prophet but an outrageous punster; and the reader never knows for certain whether he has missed the message or merely missed the joke.

What Mr. Joyce has been endeavoring to do is to present the impressions of the outside world, not as they exist crystallized and mature, within the minds of his characters but as they enter the mind one by one. In this he is like a man at a beehive who is not interested in extracting the honey, but who sits contentedly plucking out the separate bees as they reach the end of their little tunnel. An unprejudiced observer may be forgiven for thinking that if he went farther he would fare better.⁴

The attentive reader of Ulysses will be aware, in addition to the flow of sensual images from external situation to the mind, of an accurate representation, by the author, of the fluxing detritus and effluvia of the sub-conscious and unconscious minds of the characters dealt with. Joyce, as other critics have observed, is concerned with far more than a study in sensual impressionism.

Mr. Collins continues:

Ulysses would be a simpler piece of work if it were by a man who were no more than a joker. But the author is forever obstinately giving us proofs that he is a scholar also; or at least a man who has gone into the library, and the dictionary, at A and come out again at Z, having remembered all the names he met with on the way.

As we proceed we find ourselves following up long passages of archaic or technical prose, identifying more obscure references, Greek and Gaelic, topical and obscene, than it seems fair of any writer to impose on his readers.

⁴Norman Collins, The Facts of Fiction (New York, 1933), pp. 277-78.

Even more common than the classical references are the sexual references. And it is possible to have a great respect for the experimentalist with words who wrote Ulysses and still wonder whether the intellectual proportions of the novel are not a little gawkish, and whether Life really takes its business of reproduction so seriously that it can never forget about it.⁵

This last point has bothered a number of commentators, but in the consideration of the sexuality of Ulysses we must keep in mind the psychological atmosphere in which Joyce was writing, and which had an extensive influence on his creative thinking. Freud was making his revolutionary advancements at roughly the same time that Ulysses was being written. Joyce knew the Freud coterie in Switzerland and was eminently convinced of the validity of Freud's theories in sexual psychology, which were being demonstrated in those early clinics and many of which are today psychological commonplaces. Much of the Freudian dream theory can be found in the "Circe" episode of Ulysses.

Mr. Collins concludes:

It may be wondered how it is that Mr. Joyce has exercised any influence at all. And it may be due to the fact that he remains a fascinating figure no matter whether he is regarded as a valiant pioneer leaving his footprints startlingly distinct across the virgin snows of the mind--which is a perfectly just view--or merely as a man industriously and conscientiously committing literary suicide. For Mr. Joyce is either an Evangelist of a new literary faith or a man who has contrived on the strength of earlier works to be admitted to the home and has then committed hara-kiri on the best carpet.⁶

If Ulysses represents a literary suicide, then I suggest the same is true of Gargantua and La Divina Commedia, which fatal pieces have buried their creators with immortality. But then, this question remains for time to answer.

Pelham Edgar speaks with somewhat greater conviction than does Mr.

⁵Ibid., p. 279.

⁶Ibid., p. 280.

Collins; he says that

We, of the older generation, have outlived too many literary revolutions to be disturbed by any clamorous contemporary reputation. Mr. Joyce's Ulysses has been more than ten years before the world, and by assailants and defenders alike it is still described as the most revolutionary single book that the century has produced. The defenders may have been excessive in eulogy, but they have at least justified themselves by better books or articles than have the attacking side. Mr. Shane Leslie's discussion of Ulysses in The Quarterly Review for October, 1922, is a model of argumentative weakness. The man who did not like Dr. Fell rested his case on a temperamental disharmony, and did not think it necessary to give reasons for his lack of appreciation. Mr. Gerald Gould has written frequently with discernment on his chosen theme of current fiction. But Ulysses disturbs his vision: "a book almost exactly like the London Telephone Directory in size and weight, and only slightly less monotonous in style." The ineptitudes on the other side are less glaring. A book of encyclopedic knowledge and dark symbolism like Ulysses demands commentative analysis. The author refuses to give us any help, but interpreters like Larbaud in France, Curtius in Germany, Fehr in German Switzerland, Gilbert in England, and Gorman in America seem to be telling the truth not too laboriously, and Edmund Wilson's recent Axel's Castle, again from America, is a triumph of sane and penetrating criticism.

Whatever the faults of Ulysses may be it pullulates with life, and Leopold Bloom is such a triumph of characterization as modern fiction can scarcely match. Revolted often, bewildered continually, we end by being fascinated, and that is a pragmatic test from which there is no escape.

Mr. Gerald Gould's flippant analogy of the London Telephone Directory, the size and weight, and the monotony--is an echo of the unwary criticism that dismisses Ulysses as a formless chaos. Read attentively the book reveals itself as unique not only in the complexity of the design, but in the orderly care with which the design is unfolded. If over-elaboration is a vice this book lies open to condemnation. Balzac, Flaubert, James, our accredited masters of composition, have given us books which we thought to be articulated to the ultimate degree. We have felt that they were even too finished in their careful calculation of effects, in the harmony and balance of their divisions, in their distribution of weight and emphasis. Compared with Joyce they are children of ingenuity, but none the less we are not constrained to deem them inferior artists. It seems to me that Joyce has had recourse to an excessive tightness of treatment to counteract the excessive looseness of his material. Without a binding framework everything would have slipped out of his picture. He makes exacting claims upon our patience that no other writer has ventured to make, and it is certain that no living reader understands the book in its entirety.⁷

I would reservedly agree with Mr. Edgar's concluding statement; there are few readers who will find that the protracted study of Ulysses, so

⁷Pelham Edgar, The Art of the Novel (New York, 1934), pp. 301-12.

necessary to its complete understanding, will be worth the effort--and without this concerted effort much of the detail of the book's rich mosaic, many of the nuances and delicate rhythms will escape the reader. Indeed, virtually all of the book appears to have escaped Camille McCole, who, however, is overmuch disturbed by its strangeness. Surely, she complains,

James Joyce is presuming a great deal if he really expects many persons to wade through this sort of thing! Or is the whole book a hoax, a little stuffing of the auctorial ballot box? At all events, Joyce's supposed "learning" fails to be impressive; and I can see no more excuse for the publication of Ulysses than for the permanent recording in the Library of Congress of all the scratches which children have made on their nursery wallpaper.

Is it not time that we look upon such books merely as freaks of erotic and crazed minds; that we discountenance those critics--a dozen or more--who try to keep in the swim of pseudo-sophistication by prating of the "monumental significance" of such books as Ulysses? James Joyce might as well have taken the sounds of a baby that is learning to talk, mixed in a few kindergarten sketches, the reports of some coal company, and the records of a city sewerage department--put them all together, and then asked us to riddle out the meaning. But why did he not throw the results of his game away?⁸

To Robert Cantwell Joyce's "games" are worthy of serious study, and in a comprehensive article on Joyce-at-large, he attempts to suggest his literary value and the possible extent of his influence, which, for the sake of convenience, he says

can be separated into three aspects: the influence of his technical discoveries, of the general attitude toward experience most eloquently expressed in his work, and his personal career. The separation is arbitrary. The reader who responds to a writer's technique will also respond to his message, and a knowledge of a writer's career, no matter how fragmentary or ill-founded such a knowledge is, influences any judgement that is passed on his work, regardless of whether the reader wants to exclude such information or not. But to consider Joyce's technique. In the ten years since the publication of "Ulysses," novelists have modified and re-worked and experimented with Joyce's methods with a persistence unlike anything in literary history. The only parallel I can think of is the quick absorption of Marlowe's blank verse into Elizabethan drama, which seems to have taken place very rapidly. The results of Joyce's influence, unfortunately, spoil this analogy, but the processes are strongly similar. It began almost as soon as "Ulysses" was published.

⁸Camille McCole, "Ulysses," The Catholic World, CXXXVIII (March, 1934), 728.

In what particular ways are Joyce's methods superior for communicating the complex phenomena and the involved psychological relationships of the modern world? It should be remembered that no other novelist has introduced formal changes so daring or so imaginative. The realistic novel evolved out of the extended anecdote, the story told in epistle form, and out of drama; and awkward though it is, with its formal alternation of dialogue, description, summary, it served for a century to carry the burdens that even the most observant and imaginative writers put upon it. But for Joyce--and no doubt for others who never reached a solution--the modern world, even the modern world of Dublin in 1904, presented scenes and relationships too complex to be packed into this framework. It is enough to point out as one example, Joyce's attempts to capture the prose in those complex mechanical sounds which are so heavy a part of modern urban life, and which writers of the past, never having heard, felt no need to express. Joyce did not arrive at his methods without a search through others. He wrote lyrics, a realistic play, stories, and experimented--in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"--with a kind of reminiscent, analytical, free association-of-ideas-and-impressions writing, suggestive of Proust, before he hit upon the multiple methods of presentation employed in "Ulysses." It seems clear that he quickly recognized the limitations of these forms and consciously sought for something more inclusive, something that would enable him to draw into his fiction more of the complexities of contemporary experience, to introduce that dissonance and contrast evident everywhere around him into the very detail of his work--in place, let us say, of the unity of tone or mood which characterizes "Portrait of the Artist" and for which such writers as Proust and James, who also desired to enlarge the scope of the novel, made their sacrifices. In "Ulysses" he worked out such a form, inclusive, varied, permitting the language to come ever closer to the actuality. This, I think, is what the writers who have followed him have sensed; they have recognized that under the lens of his methods all the overworked scenes of realistic narrative, like drops of water under a microscope, are suddenly seen to be teeming with unsuspected life; the pauses and silences whose meaning could barely be guessed, the nuances of moods, the emotional responses which are scarcely reflected in speech and gestures or in facial expression--all this, it can be seen now, is packed with infinite voiceless dramas, with dramas which yield less fully to any other method of presentation, or cannot be otherwise stated at all.⁹

It is curious that an artist of the proportions of D. H. Lawrence, whose novels, by the way, were often the objects of the same violent attacks that Ulysses suffered, should dispose of Joyce with such utter disdain, saying, in a letter to M. and A. Huxley, "My God, what a clumsy olla putrida James Joyce is! Nothing but old fags and cabbage-stumps of quotations from the Bible and the rest stewed in the juice of deliberate,

⁹Robert Cantwell, "The Influence of James Joyce," The New Republic, LXXVII (Dec. 27, 1933), 200-01.

journalistic dirty-mindedness--what old and hard-worked staleness, masquerading as the all-new."¹⁰ I would offer Mr. Cantwell's discussion of Joyce's method as a refutation of at least the latter portion of this rather too acrimonious summation of Ulysses. "If Lawrence was unsophisticated," suggests Frank Swinnerton, "Joyce is the reverse."¹¹ With much more temperance than Lawrence, Swinnerton says further that

What Joyce has is this great knowledge of the seamy side of life and character. He has unrivalled power to represent the thoughts and feelings of some very odd people. He has a literary manner which ranges from the Rabelaisian to the Meredithian, and has between those extremes a large area of clever, ingenious, sophisticated expressionism which at its best is of amazing virtuosity and penetration. If he had remained the realist of DUBLINERS (but he could not do that, for his is essentially an egotistical talent), he might have had high standing as an objective realist. He now has high standing as a psychological realist. I should not, however, rate him higher than that; and it will be understood that I am commenting solely upon the claim made by respectable critics that ULYSSES is a great book, and the author a fixed star. To my mind he is a very able man, but not different in kind from other men; only more brilliant and ruthless than they, and with a preference for what H. G. Wells has styled the cloacal. In that field he is a past master.¹²

I would hesitate to consider, say, Leopold and Molly Bloom, two of the three central characters of the book, "very odd people." Joyce was writing an epic of modern man, but centered on the mean of modern man rather than the extremes of heroics or utter degradation. To personify l'homme moyen Joyce creates Bloom and his wife out of a veritable hodge-podge of everything that is almost painfully ordinary, though, it is true, many of our "normalities" we are loath to think about, even less discuss. He then sets these people in middle-class Dublin and sends them about their business. To scrape away the surface of the average man as Joyce does may leave us looking on a scene that is indeed odd, but aren't we, in one way

¹⁰D. H. Lawrence as quoted in Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene (New York, 1934), p. 415.

¹¹Swinnerton, p. 415.

¹²Ibid., p. 419.

or another, looking on ourselves?

William Troy offers us some new aspects of Ulysses, and, I think, clears up "The most common confusion into which the discussion of the work has fallen," which, feels Mr. Troy, is "the result of the failure to distinguish between Stephen Dedalus, who is one of the three principal characters, and James Joyce, who is its author."¹³

It is a confusion [he continues] that is not difficult to understand; for Stephen Dedalus is not only one of the most perfectly realized characters in modern fiction but also the character with whom the modern reader can most easily identify himself. The influence of Joyce on other writers, for example, has been almost exclusively the influence of the character of Stephen Dedalus, and not of the characters of Leopold and Molly Bloom, although these two characters are certainly of equal importance in the structure of his work. In other words, the modern writer, finding in the mental and psychological state of Stephen as rendered by Joyce such a precise duplicate of his own, has been quick to assume that this must also be the permanent mental and psychological state of his creator. It has been too seldom recognized that quite distinct from whatever special interest he may have as the Hamlet de nos jours, Stephen is one character among others in an objectively constructed work of fiction; that he is only a part of a whole, and not the whole itself; and that even whatever development of his character occurs is necessarily subordinate to the total development of the work. Now it need hardly be remarked that if a few of the many imitators of Joyce's style and method had shown some awareness of this fact we should probably have been spared that chaotic and artistically meaningless overflow of sensibility which has passed for fiction in recent years. But the point at present is that the failure to recognize "Ulysses" for what it is--perhaps the most objective work of fiction ever created, a work about which it is impossible to say that it is written in such and such a style, since it is written in as many styles as there are characters and situations to be rendered--is what is most responsible for the habit of ascribing to its author a psychology and point of view which really belong to one of his characters at a certain stage in his development.¹⁴

Concluding his article, Mr. Troy, who has taken Joyce's realism with fortitude, sounds a hopeful note. "For out of his pride and contempt and ambition," he says, "Joyce has given us a work which leaves us, at the end,

¹³William Troy, "Stephen Dedalus and James Joyce," The Nation, CXXXVIII (Feb. 14, 1934), 187.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 187.

with a still passionate faith and trust in the reality which even societies must keep in mind if they are to survive."¹⁵

Angus Burrell asks the rhetorical question: "Why did Joyce choose to write about these people?" He answers himself thus:

Most likely to ease the pain of his own heart, and to fulfill his gifts; to show the stupidity, the futility, the ignorance, the coarseness, the brutality of these people he has known. If he was the Stephen Dedalus of Ulysses, we have seen how the people in Dublin seared the young man's heart. Being what they were, they could have no knowledge of a young man like Stephen, and without that, they could have no sympathetic understanding. He could find no place to live among them; they would have killed him. One wonders sometimes if the writing of Ulysses was not fraught as well with a spirited and unholy revenge against these complacent boors. But behind this writing lies a deeper and a holier purpose surely. To show themselves, those Irishmen of the first quarter of a century, just how bad and how hopeless they were, and to show them this (and to show the world, for all of this could probably be matched in other lands) in writing that has a "bite" in it, might be to point the way to something better. In reflecting about this possible purpose, one must be reminded again of that significant statement of Stephen's at the end of the Portrait--that he would go to forge in his soul the uncreated conscience of his race.¹⁶

Mr. Burrell here is making the identification (of Joyce with Stephen) which Mr. Troy advises us against. Ultimately, I suppose, we must go to the book and decide for ourselves. I wonder though if Mr. Burrell isn't being a little too hard on the Irish; truly these hostile attitudes are to be found in all societies, and in all societies there is somewhere warmth.

L. A. G. Strong approaches Ulysses with the darker mien of metaphysics.

Over Ulysses, as over the earlier work A Portrait, broods the sense of sin, that terrific spiritual legacy which the Catholic Church irrevocably leaves her children. Ulysses is a great Catholic novel. The blasphemies that turn the shortsighted against it are the desperate gestures of a man doomed to accept, with his spiritual entrails, if not with his intellect, certain Last Things. The whole book is the organized attempt of an artist to bring all life within his scope, aware that his effort is also a religious effort and agonized because, while his genius bids him accept his own interpretation, he cannot escape from the interpretations of others. The Catholic artist knows that none other is better equipped to face and portray life in all its aspects, but he is tortured by expediency.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁶Brewster and Burrell, pp. 214-15.

Joyce's words, then, are his ritual, his incantations, and he is as serious in their use as any priest. In many of the scenes in Ulysses they are governed by theory, as where, in the lying-in hospital, the language moves to the New World to celebrate the arrival of the new life. This variation in language, the Graeco-German combination of words, and the boldness of association are the main contributions of Ulysses to the art of the novel. Joyce's avowed purpose was so to reconstruct Dublin, in the compass of a single day of June, 1904, that if the city were swallowed in an earthquake a reader of the book would find a perfect record of what had gone on. More than photographic description is needed for such a reconstruction. Magic is necessary, and magic proceeds by incantation.¹⁷

And finally Mr. Strong observes:

A mark of the experimental novelist is that he always demands an alteration in the level of consciousness of the reader. The traditional novelist comes down to the reader's level (of consciousness, in no derogatory sense), takes him by the hand, and leads him where he will. The experimental novelist remains where he is; the reader, if he is to follow him, must come to his level. This beckoning technique, shared with many contemporary poets, Joyce has in a high degree, and here, it may be guessed, he will prove to be strongly influential.¹⁸

It would be a virtual impossibility to number the writers who have come under Joyce's influence, directly and otherwise. Certainly William Faulkner, John Dos Passos, Thomas Wolfe, and Ross Lockridge, Jr. (whose voluminous Raintree County is a veritable tribute to Joycean technique) are obvious examples. Of lesser known writers, for better or worse, there are many more to be found in Joyce's sphere.

The question of technique is further elaborated by Herbert J. Muller in a detailed (and markedly laudatory) chapter on Joyce, which deals rather thoroughly as well with several other major aspects of the book.

He is not merely distorting surface reality but conventionalizing it. He is presenting the essential idea of his scene, a blend of the time and place and minds of his characters with all his individual themes, in the form of an abstract symbol that corresponds to no fact in nature. He is adding a kind of Einsteinian fourth dimension. Hence he has in the same novel carried the realistic method further and departed from it more radically than any other novelist.

¹⁷L. A. G. Strong, "James Joyce and the New Fiction," The American Mercury, XXXV (Aug., 1935), 435.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 437.

More important, however, is the whole intention of Joyce, the idea behind all the Organs, Arts, Symbols, and Colors [treated exhaustively by Stuart Gilbert]. And this seems in general clear enough. He has attempted to encompass the whole of human experience. His thorough realism will explore the whole living surface of the external world and the mind of man; his organs will together compose the whole body and symbolize a living organism; his Arts and Symbols will embrace the whole content of human knowledge and human history; his Technics will synthesize all these relationships and intensify the ideal reality beneath them. Hence he will present not merely the entire world, but the Present with the entire Past summed up in it and the Future implicit in it. In the very ordinary day of a befuddled poet and a maundering canvasser he will present a minature of the universe and a symbol of the history of mankind.

This is a vast and magnificent conception, and makes one pause for breath. There is nothing in the literature of the ages quite like it. Even War and Peace is less ambitious; and if the Divine Comedy and Paradise Lost are loftier enterprizes, they are less comprehensive, even less daring, for the glorious transcendental scheme that presented a challenge to Dante and Milton also simplified their intellectual and imaginative problem, and gave them an obvious initial advantage. "Language grows limp" as one attempts to do justice to the erudition and versatility demanded to body out this teeming microcosm; to the intellect that marshaled all this material and firmly commanded it, at once in its entirety and in its intricacy; to the powers of expression that never fall short of the most diverse and severe demands; to the imaginative resources equal to the innumerable daring feats demanded by the whole design. Joyce's gifts for observation and insight into character, for parody and satire, for shimmering poetry and robust comedy, for hewing out a colossus and carving a cherry stone--separately they may be surpassed, but in combination they are unique. There can be no doubt, I believe, that he is the most amazing genius of this age, and one of the greatest of all ages.

Joyce's achievement is not, moreover, an isolated and merely outlandish performance [there are critics who would disagree here]. It is a significant product of the modern age, and has had a powerful impact upon it. As almost all critics now recognize, Ulysses is rich in beginnings. Innumerable streams in contemporary fiction have their springs in it--so many and so divergent that their common source is already lost sight of.¹⁹

Mr. Muller, however, has not only bays to bestow. "The negation in Joyce," he feels, "is thus...not in his downright denial of specific values; it is in his failure to present a significant action in which values would be implicit. With an infinite capacity for taking pains he lays out a vast playing field and elaborates a thousand ingenious rules; but then, he refuses to play ball. In cutting himself loose from the shambles of Irish

¹⁹Herbert J. Muller, Modern Fiction (New York, 1937), pp. 295-96.

politics he also cut himself loose from most of the responsible activities of modern man."²⁰

In three essays which constitute the major portion of his book, David Daiches painstakingly analyzes Ulysses as comedy, as an aesthetic problem, and as a technical problem. In the course of the chapter on Ulysses' aesthetic problem, Mr. Daiches is brought to ask "What, then, is Ulysses?" This is the inevitable question which is either voiced or implied by virtually every critic to deal with the book. Many, as we have seen, fail in giving us the answer or, to be sure, any answer. But this perhaps comes of Ulysses' Protean nature. As a partial answer Mr. Daiches locates the book, which, he says, "is the product of a certain transitional period rare in the history of literature, a suspension of faith between the disappearance of one background of belief and the establishment of another."²¹ This is very general and does little to define Ulysses; he continues more specifically:

Ulysses is the work of a man of great insight, amazing mastery of language, and supreme organizing ability. It has every claim therefore to the title "masterpiece." But it has the defects of its qualities. The insight is too uninterested, too complete--the insight of the impersonal microscope rather than the human eye. And just as pattern itself does not produce art, so observation itself cannot produce art: the difference between the casual lens and the artist's eye and hand--which is the difference between reproduction and art--is not one of clarity, but of relation between observer and observed. Joyce's lens is anything but casual; no one can complain of his lack of organization; but it is lens rather than eye. The sociologist might say that both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake [Joyce's "Work in Progress"] are products of a generation whose most sensitive artists try to avoid at all costs feeling as men what they know as artists, because the result would be too hard on their nervous systems. Indeed, Joyce represents, in one aspect of his work, the truth--or part of the truth--about the generation that produced the last of the liberals: viz., that, faced with the kind of values that Stephen sees at the end of the Portrait, the bourgeois intellectual, unable to follow out the implications for action of such

²⁰Ibid., p. 304.

²¹David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago, 1939), p. 110.

disintegration, retires (in innumerable different ways) from the world, while continuing to observe it. Here, again, the political analogy is startling.

The view which regards the artist as the professional sensitive man, the naked sensibility, rather than as a genuinely feeling human being among other human beings, may be helpful to us in contemplating certain aspects of art, but it tells us little about its values; it allows us to pass no normative comments. It is Joyce's nakedness of observation and attitude that makes it so difficult for us to pass judgement on Ulysses. We can acclaim the style, the organization, the complexity, the insight, the ingenuity, and many other separate aspects of the work, but what are we to say of the whole? It is a work that one finds easier to demonstrate than to appraise. It is a world in itself, and it does not compel us to appeal to anything outside of it. (It is out of some such appeal that criticism is born, however much it may later concern itself only with internal questions.) Stephen had said in the Portrait that art should be static and not kinetic. It might be truer to say that art represents a continuous endeavor--always approaching success but never quite reaching it--to make the static the kinetic. The static tendency is to make the work self-contained and aloof; but the kinetic appeal to the reader's recognition (not simply "how true!" but an infinite variety of more subtle expressions that involve recognition of the writer's world as the reader's, however indirectly) is the element which makes the work worth considering in the first place. Is there this element in Ulysses? There cannot but be, for whatever theories about art Joyce may have had, and acted on, the fact remains that the raw material of the book is the author's observation of men in society, and the author, too, is a man, however he may wish to suppress the fact. The sum of it all is that Joyce has consciously endeavored to remain aloof from his work probably to a greater extent than any other writer in our literature; but that endeavor is, in the nature of things, unsuccessful, though it has a degree of success; Joyce is not just an organizing mind coupled with a naked sensibility, for naked sensibility does not exist outside a chameleon.²²

These remarks have given us interesting insights into the artist, but have, for the most part, skirted the book; in the chapter on Ulysses as comedy Mr. Daiches is more direct.

The constant depression of the heroic and other high levels to the level of the trivial, the merging of all activity onto a vast indeterminate mass, which we have noted as one essential of the type of comedy represented by Ulysses, is carried on more on the mental and psychological than on the physical level. It is by allusion and reference that Greek heroes and Dublin tradesmen, giants and loafers, sorceresses and whores, become identified. Joyce does not put his technique to the supreme test of letting something, which to the normal reader is heroic, happen on the surface level of the plot and then try to level that down to the trivial.

²²Ibid., pp. 116-18.

The heroic is always past, legendary, imaginary, associative. For all Joyce's suspension of judgement he never risks bringing anything really exciting into Bloom's day. All the actions of Bloom and Stephen and the other characters are, on any standard, trivial. For all the talk and the fuss, the vast speculations of Stephen and the restless curiosity of Bloom, nobody does anything of the slightest importance. The day is hardly even a normal day; it tends to be weighted on the side of the trivial. "The dallest day possible," said Arnold Bennett. Joyce spreads his gray objectivity over mythical greatness and actual mediocrity alike; but it is to be noted that the heroism is mythical and the mediocrity alone is actual. It is this fact that has sidetracked some critics into considering Ulysses as satire, whose main point is contrast between the heroic past and the insignificant present. No: Joyce is asserting that the heroic and the insignificant are the same thing--but he takes the precaution of making only the latter real in his story. Is it because he is afraid that otherwise he might not be believed?

There are some who do not believe him anyway. There are some--and their number is growing--who are beginning to realize anew the truth, forgotten by a generation, that the indifference of the artist is a snare and a delusion, an impossibility, a ridiculous abstraction, a lie exposed by the very fact that the writer puts pen to paper at all. If the artist were really indifferent he would not write, or at least it would take him as long to choose a subject as it took Buridan's ass to choose between the two bundles of hay. Of course Joyce was deceiving himself, and that is why that complete, flat, static craftsman's world of his is not our world at all, nor anybody's world, but an artist's misunderstanding. Ulysses, a great work, a work of genius, is the ideal comedy of the sensitive artist who is scared to implicate himself in a world where his function has become obscure. The way out was to deny all responsibility--we remember Stephen in the Portrait sneering at political action of any kind--and that meant denying all values. Aesthetically, the way had been prepared. Edgar Allen Poe, misunderstood and misinterpreted Flaubert, the French symbolists, Wilde and his friends in England, George Moore (whose practice so often contradicted his theory), to name only a few, had been building up an aesthetic which would comfort the frustrated liberal in his impotence. Never mind, you don't need to do anything; you don't need to think that anything ought to be done. Nay, more, it is virtue in you not to think anything ought to be done, to suspend all judgement and merely observe. More still, you can only be a good artist if you adopt that attitude. For art is....etc., etc. The difference between Ruskin and Charles Morgan, between Flaubert and Joyce, is perhaps the measure of the decay of a civilization. In the nineteenth century the liberal was constructive and powerful; in the twentieth he is futile and escapist. That, too, is the measure of the decay of a system. When the imminent breakdown of a civilization is all too apparent and recovery involves facing unpleasant facts and acting on them rather than simply improving things as they are, the mere man of good will cancel himself out with contradictory arguments, while if he happens to be an artist he takes the even simpler course of transforming himself into a lens--or, rather, of pretending that his eye is a lens, when it is really a very human eye--a little too human sometimes, very myopic, with dark glasses. [A personal reference to Joyce.]

Ulysses [Mr. Daiches concludes] will be remembered for its author's virtuosity, for its curious and impressive attempt at microcosm, and most of all as the document of a transition era, the symbol of a lost generation.

It will not be remembered with Oedipus Rex, Hamlet and War and Peace as one of the great manifestations of the human spirit.²³

Though Mr. Muller and Mr. Daiches concur regarding Joyce's detached view of society, and his negation of certain aspects of human activity, the two commentators are quite at odds in their valuation of the book. Mr. Muller, it will be recalled, felt that Ulysses could be ranked close to Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy and was more than a curiosity or a purely historical road-marker.

In a mood even gloomier than that of Mr. Daiches (who, curiously enough sounded his bluest note while discussing the comedy of Ulysses) Edwin Berry Burgum treats Joyce's picture of decaying civilization at painful length.

Authors are likely to be bad critics of their own work because their perspective is distorted by the urgency of some immediate problem of expression. We have paid too much attention to Joyce's conscious statements about his meanings and intentions. Too much of our criticism of him has been an amplification of remarks he himself dropped in the hearing of the rapt and ecstatic few whom he carefully and not altogether naively admitted to the presence. But the effort has been misleading, because what Joyce preferred to talk about was the chapter upon which he was working, or some interest, like place names, not vital to the central meaning. Joyce happened to have theories about the interpretation of Homer's "Odyssey." Therefore we have lost sight of the central fact that it is not simply a parallel but a parallel in reverse. Here, of course, lies the significance. The opposite of everything that happens in "Ulysses" happens in the "Odyssey." Mr. Bloom is the opposite of the crafty, conquering warrior-king. He meets in his wanderings with contempt or indifference. He appears to resist Circe but he has really lost the capacity to become normally excited. He returns home, knowing that his wife is faithless, that the suitors have been victorious, and that he has lost a son. The parallel in reverse makes glaring the decay in our time of the individual, the family, and the community as integrated social units. Other learned interests in "Ulysses" are not, as in this instance, misused, but simply irrelevant. Thomism was an influence, and a painful one, upon the substance of the "Portrait." It was probably the fundamental source of Joyce's insistence upon aesthetic structure. But once we get beyond the "Portrait" Thomism recedes and Freudianism comes in to take its place.²⁴

²³Ibid., pp. 144-47.

²⁴Edwin Berry Burgum, "Ulysses and the Impasse of Individualism," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XVII (Oct., 1941), 564-65.

In this conception of the Joycean Ulysses Mr. Burgum takes exception to Edmund Wilson, who, in his discussion of Ulysses in Axel's Castle, says that

The key to "Ulysses" is in the title--and this key is indispensable if we are to appreciate the book's real depth and scope. Ulysses as he figures in the "Odyssey," is a sort of type of the average intelligent Greek: among the heroes, he is distinguished for his cunning rather than for exalted wisdom, and for common sense, quickness and verve, rather than for, say, the passionate bravery of an Achilles or the steadfastness and stoutness of a Hector. The "Odyssey" exhibits such a man in practically every situation and relation of an ordinary human life--Ulysses, in the course of his wanderings, runs the whole gauntlet of temptations and ordeals and through his wits he survives them all to return to his home and family and to reassert himself there as master. The "Odyssey" thus provides a classical model for a writer attempting a modern epic of the ordinary man--and a model particularly attractive to a modern writer by reason of the apparently calculated effectiveness, the apparent sophistication of its form.²⁵

There is no question, I suppose, of who can be called right. The multiplicity of the book will absorb any number of interpretations. Mr. Burgum continues the decadence theme:

"Ulysses" is Joyce's rejection of this new bourgeois world that seemed to be decaying in the very process of birth. Stephen is clearly the embodiment of Joyce. He rejects this world with an impotent savagery which in Joyce is softened into irony because channeled into creative expression. But Mr. Bloom is Joyce too, his non-creative side, masochistic in the absence of any confident talent, pummeled by the thousand contacts of a disintegrating world of business that is too indifferent to him for active hostility, Mr. Bloom is what Joyce might have become if forced by want of creative talent to remain the man in the street. This explains the strange sympathy the reader feels for this helpless creature of habits and aborted good intentions. It is the sympathy Joyce could feel for his incompetent practical self, since the very act of literary expression saved him from that aspect of himself.

But there is another reason why Joyce does not treat Mr. Bloom as sadistically as Stephen Dedalus does. It is that Joyce, thus freed (as Stephen was not) from his weaker side, is in a position to recognize that Bloom is the victim of circumstances beyond his control. Bloom, like all of Joyce's characters, is particularized in great detail, but this should not obscure the fact that he is only an extreme example of corruption of the personality in a disintegrating society. Ireland, with her long history as one of the earliest of colonial possessions, had become no more than typical of a well-nigh universal process of decay. If Ireland could show the extreme form of this decay, who could better serve as a glaring example of it in the individual than a petty bourgeois convasser of ads for a newspaper, already qualified

²⁵Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York, 1931), p. 192.

as outcast by the unhappy fortune of having been born a Jew as well as an Irishman? Mr. Bloom is generically the little man, the average man of the middle classes.²⁶

Mr. Burgum then concludes:

What one does with the book...will depend upon one's already formed attitudes. Those who have the certainty of despair will stay with it. The aesthetes, enchanted by the marvel of its technical perfection, will find themselves translated, like true saints of decadence will at least have profited by the encyclopedic description of it. Nor will they allow this final word of "Ulysses" to shake them loose from the cumulative significance of its discouraging but realistic detail. They will remain conscious of the despair and not be deceived by the false final hope of the illusory. Nor will they permit themselves to be distracted by another stylistic device that Joyce uses occasionally throughout the book, when he attempts to qualify the gravity of the tragic spirit by the distraction of the animal spirits of the grotesque. It is as though he felt on occasions that the meaning of the book could be palliated if not altogether denied by a robust excursion into the Rabelaisian. It is as though he sought to make the disorder, which I have interpreted as particular to our period, a universal one which the artist's aesthetic consciousness of the grotesque can perennially surmount and vanquish. The Rabelaisian exuberance of "Ulysses" strains at the leash of its theme and seeks to obscure it by the restless, strident irrelevancy of its application. It would give an illusion of vitality to drown by its clamor the stern sad meaning I have isolated.

Now this, I take it, is a very different application of the Rabelaisian spirit from that found in the original. Joyce in so far as he is Rabelais at all (and only at a few moments does this form of escapism show itself) is a Rabelais disillusioned, intent upon making his disillusionment universal and impersonal by the gusto of its statement. Thus the individual spirit of the artist would seek to exempt itself from involvement in the spectacle of the universal bankruptcy of individualism. With Rabelais it was otherwise. He ended his book also with a single word of dubious affirmation. It was not "love," however, but "drink": and it was an honest ambiguity, not a contradiction. Rabelais commands us to "drink" because life is truly glorious, and we may ignore its endless possibilities, its immense range of activities now first revealed, since we are safe in the ecstasy of the new immediate interest. We may safely drink to forget the frivolity of boundless aspiration, but we drink also to redouble the expansive powers of the individual spirit as it explores the newly found possibilities of the life about us. Only too well has the Western world obeyed Rabelais's injunction. The Gargantual spirit of the Renaissance has long since become a Frankenstein monster which has now turned from devouring others to devouring itself. Now, after four centuries of drunken individualism, we awaken from our intoxication to find that our ecstasy has cost us love and comradeship and the glory of a common purpose. If Rabelais is the literary record of the birth of individualism, "Ulysses" illustrates its final bankruptcy in the hopeless isolation of the individual spirit.²⁷

²⁶Burgum, p. 566.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 571-73.

There is, it seems to me, a contrary viewpoint easily as tenable as Mr. Burgum's utter despair or, at best, tempered hopelessness. If we universalize the book, take it out of any particular place in time, it assumes much of the significance that the Odyssey does when it is considered as an epic of mankind's wanderings and struggles rather than merely the wanderings and struggles of the ancient Greek king, Odysseus. Though Mr. Bloom is an individual, as was Odysseus, and perhaps the most thoroughly delineated character of fiction, he is, in the larger sense, mankind, and if his successful return to Ithaca has any meaning, it is the note of hope that Joyce is sounding above all of the toils and sorrows of the world. It must be remembered that nowhere in the course of his odyssey is Mr. Bloom really defeated, he repays virtually every insult with a kindness, and when he at last settles himself in his bed he thinks hopefully of the coming day. So Joyce is telling us that man, however low he may fall, what Promethean trials he may suffer, is finally indestructable, and, I might add, it is his rich and healthy animalism--as personified in the yeasty Mrs. Bloom, whose section in the book begins with, has woven throughout, and ends with a very uncontradictory "yes"--which is largely responsible for his indestructability. The old Greek heroes were creatures of great and splendid bodies which were the outward representations of fortitude and virility, two concepts which the Greeks depended upon for the maintenance of their race. In our time as well we depend on these concepts; without them the outlook would be truly a hopeless one--Mr. and Mrs. Bloom embody the fortitude and virility which has kept man going since his conception. Ultimately, then, Joyce was concerned not with parochial Dublin or Mr. Bloom, advertising salesman, though these are certainly explicit in Ulysses, but mankind broadly and timelessly.

Thornton Wilder returns us to a less ephemeral aspect of the book.

Ulysses exemplifies, as a technical problem the mastery of the long book--where Proust and so many others have failed. This has been achieved, perilously, by a resort to curious architectural devices and by the play of the comic spirit,--these Chinese boxes of complicated schematization: each chapter marked by one color; each chapter representing an organ in the human body; each under the sign of a theological virtue and its allied vice; each bearing a relation,--partly as parody, partly for emotion--to a corresponding book of the Odyssey. At first glance how unlike the abounding creativity of the great books,--of Rabelais, Cervantes and Dante--are these devious ingenuities and harried cross-references; and yet Ulysses has the climate of the great books. It circulates in the resources of the style, equal to every mood and to every game; in the lofty requirement that the reader give his whole attention to every word; in the omnipresence of a surpassingly concrete Dublin; in the humanity of the characters; and in the earnestness of an element that one can only call confessional.²⁸

In his critical introduction to James Joyce Harry Levin allies himself with the more pessimistic critics, like Mr. Burgum, who see Ulysses only the bleakest of commentaries. Of the "devious ingenuities" he is less skeptical than Mr. Wilder, and rather than suggesting Proust's "failure," he concludes his section on Ulysses:

"To some of Joyce's younger contemporaries, like myself," T. S. Eliot wrote recently, in a letter which the London Times refused to print, "Ulysses still seems the most considerable work of imagination in English in our time, comparable in importance (though in little else) with the work of Marcel Proust." In distinguishing Joyce from the novelist with whom he is most often compared, Mr. Eliot shows his customary acumen. Proust's esprit de finesse is the very reverse of Joyce's esprit de géométrie. In A la recherche du temps perdu the thought is frequently complex, but the material is relatively simple: through a rambling series of lyrical essays and dramatic scenes, Proust conveys his profound sense of the growth and change of character. His mind is temporal, while Joyce's is spatial. Characterization in Joyce is finally reducible to a few stylized gestures and simplified attitudes. His characters move in space, but they do not develop in time. They only look forward to the ruin of all space, to time's livid flame, to doomsday. Ulysses is not so rich in psychological insight as in technical brilliance. The burning intensity of Joyce's own creative effort animates the statuesque coldness of his creations. It beats down, like an aroused volcano upon an ancient city, overtaking the doomed inhabitants in forum or temple, at home or at brothel, and petrifying them in the insensate agonies of paralysis.²⁹

Considering that Joyce has, as it were, random sampled a few drops from

²⁸Thornton Wilder, "James Joyce (1882-1941)," Poetry, LVII (March, 1941), 372-73.

²⁹Harry Levin, James Joyce (Norfolk, Conn., 1941), pp. 134-35.

the great well of existence, and presents us with those drops for an examination of less than a day in their lives, how much temporal change can we expect? The theme of birth, death, and rebirth is implicitly woven into the book and it is hereby, perhaps, that Joyce suggests the temporal change which is more obvious in Proust.

iii. Retrospect

Conceivably, an era had passed in the course of these ten years--Joyce is dead, Freud, Trotsky, and Lenin. These leaders of great literary, scientific, and political revolutions are gone, but the forces they have set in motion will have countless and far reaching effects.

If the critical reactions to Ulysses are an eminently valid means of judgement, we can now claim for it a singular position in contemporary letters. It is highly controversial, difficult, the fountainhead of many new and involved literary techniques, even schools. The very bulk of commentary dealing with the book will give it a kind of permanence--if it can gain, in the course of time, no other.

Criticism in this decade, with some few exceptions, has attempted to justify Ulysses: its so-called pornography, the extraordinary technical virtuosity which seems to burden its pages, its apparently cavalier treatment of contemporary man, the recondite air which appears to obscure much of the book's meaning. And it is this last point which has given the critics a pregnant area in which to research. Mr. Bloom becomes a latter day Hamlet in the wealth of interpretations to which he is subjected. "What," asked the critics in unison, "is Joyce telling us?" Joyce, here at least, will join the greats; no one can suggest that happy answer which is satisfactory to all concerned.

While the older members of the literary fraternity are occasionally wont to raise a skeptical eyebrow, the younger critics, almost invariably, are finding Joyce the significant voice of at least his part of the century, and are making bold to mention him with Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare. We need another hundred years to be certain.

CHAPTER IV ---- TO ITHACA: THE THIRD DECADE

Critical commentary, in connection with Joyce, as we enter the third decade since the publication of Ulysses, is being directed largely, in the periodicals particularly, at Joyce's enigmatic last book, Finnegans Wake. By this time, however, though Ulysses is no longer a preëminent figure in the critical limelight, the volume is being afforded lengthy exegeses and commentary by a number of still interested critics. And there remain the few, like Professor Stoll, who have not bowed to twenty years of convincing arguments. "As mere writing," he says, "Joyce, though he has undoubted abundance of material and imagination and plastic power, is, I cannot but think, too unsatisfactory, often too arbitrary and exasperating, for high art."¹ He continues:

His principle, when not mechanical, is too often freakish, or both together. As his most intelligent admirers, we have seen acknowledge, he in both of his chief books tells a story or presents a situation that of or in itself is, despite much elaboration and precision, nearly formless and often unintelligible. The later one [Finnegans Wake] and much of the earlier he has deliberately turned into a continuous travesty of English grammar, idiom, and diction, as well as of the normal processes--the "monolinear logic," the sentence-structure--of our human thought. And that much-admired combination or amalgamation of naturalism and symbolism in one piece of writing which is Ulysses, whereby the real and the fanciful, the present and the past, or thoughts spoken and inspoken or even unconscious, come tumbling one upon the heels of the other, as in the Night Town episode--it is indeed an adaptation of the cinema technique, with its fade-outs, flash-backs, and close-ups, but is far from being so successful as on the screen. There we can tell the difference between the present and the past, between fact and fancy, as here we often with difficulty can. In short, while Joyce craves a reader he rebuffs or punishes, baffles or torments him. He demands that the reader shall give up his life to studying Joyce, after spending his

¹Elmer Edgar Stoll, From Shakespeare to Joyce (New York, 1944), p. 384.

own life to make that necessary--or out of the question. Modern art, to be sure, is full of such egotism and arrogance--Whitman, Strauss, Strindberg, the Symbolists, Pound and Stein, and their variously aligned and denominated, still more willful and erring, descendants or adherents; but Joyce has quite as much as any of them. And as with the Symbolists and their followers, it is not merely a personal matter, either, or a matter of content, but a vice of expression, which, since a work of art, not of philosophy or science, is intended, plays havoc with the content as well as the technique.²

Similarly, Nathan Comfort Starr is discountenanced by the apparent anomalism of Ulysses' style and technique.

It would be impossible in a few words to give any adequate idea of the subtle complexity of plot and the baffling inwardness of this amazing book, not to mention the mystifying way in which Joyce expresses himself: the coined words, the uncompleted sentences, the violent leaps from one subject to another. The point I wish to make at the moment is that there is a plan of the whole which can be recognized.

What of the total effect on the reader, however? The effect on this reader at least, and I believe on many others, is not merely one of bewilderment, but more than that, of dispassion approaching apathy. For the emphasis on private feeling and "free association" reduces the expression to such esoteric terms that the actions and problems of the characters can only dimly be seen as objective reality. Joyce does not attempt to translate emotion and instinct even in those communicable forms of reflection which always emerge in the mind of a person under stress. No one doubts that the dark involutions of the subconscious mind play a great part in arousing our emotions and directing our wills. Perhaps it will not be naive to remember, however, that there is a conscious mind also, and that this conscious mind, at least in the sane, is constantly at work, interpreting the material of experience in general, communicable, and objective terms.³

Joyce, in fact, and there are many critics who will agree, rarely lets the reader forget that his characters do have conscious minds--we spend a considerable part of the book within them hearing, seeing, and smelling all that which is being apprehended by these sometimes overly active consciousnesses.

Mr. Starr says further that

The esoteric quality of Ulysses, shown not only in the welter of individual impression but also in the complete absence of objective commentary, and in the bewildering lack of connection between experiences, is so troublesome

²Ibid., pp. 384-85.

³Nathan Comfort Starr, The Dynamics of Literature (New York, 1945), pp. 67-68.

that not even the parallels to the Odyssey are a help. The structural aid given by this device is largely a delusion. For the reader may never actually discover that Bloom is in fact paralleling the adventures of Ulysses, that in some mysterious way Stephen Dedalus as Telemachus finds his father in Bloom, and that Penelope (Molly) will be united with her Ulysses. In fact he will hardly discover any story at all. The plan of the work is submerged by the chaos of the individual. Lewis Mumford has acutely said that Ulysses portrays "the dissociated mind in the disintegrated city."⁴

Concerning this much disputed question of the importance and meaning of Joyce's use of Homeric parallels, Edward Wagenknecht says, in an affirmative view:

Many critics see the parallelism between Ulysses and the Odyssey as merely a satiric commentary on modern life, in the vein of Masefield's "Cargoes." The Sirens become Dublin barmaids, and in our world the lovely Nausicaä becomes the crippled Gerty MacDowell, who can only stimulate her futile Ulysses to a boyish auto-eroticism. The blind Polyphemus hurls a mountain-top; the "blind-drunk" Citizen hurls a biscuit-tin. And when it comes to Marion Bloom as the chaste Penelope...!

Joyce was fully aware of the humor of all of this. But, on the whole, the satirical interpretation of Ulysses is shallow. "It may be first noted," says Stuart Gilbert, "that Homer's account of the absolute fidelity of Penelope was not endorsed by later classical writers." Joyce is not merely perpetuating a gigantic hoax; he is trying--whether successfully or not is entirely another question--to present the whole of human experience. There is a great deal of occultism in Ulysses. From occult tradition comes the idea that our parents are not our spiritual progenitors; hence Stephen's search for a father, though his father is still alive. And from the occult point of view there is a sense in which the infinitely great equals the infinitely little. Metempsychosis ("met-him-pike-hoses" is Marion Bloom's word for it) and the omphalos haunt the book, and there was some influence also from the idea of the eternal return as conceived and set forth non-mystically by the Italian philosopher, Vico.

One reason why many people favor the satirical interpretation is that they feel a decided dissatisfaction when Joyce offers them Leopold Bloom in the Ulysses-role. And there is enough in Bloom that is weak, whining, frustrate, bungling, masochistic, clumsy, and downright unclean to afford much apparent justification for this feeling. But let us see.

Bloom is the ordinary man. He stands between Stephen, who is the creative imagination, and Marion, who is the flesh. As opposed to Marion's sensualism, Stephen is "spiritual," but still, as in the Portrait, he cries "Non serviam!" and so, like Lucifer before him, he is also the pride of life. According to Frank Budgen, Joyce believed that character is best indicated in the commonest acts of life. "How a man ties his shoelaces or how he eats his egg will give a better clue to his differentiation than how he goes forth to war."

⁴Ibid., p. 521.

Now Ulysses was Joyce's boyhood hero. Compared to Achilles, Ulysses was an ordinary man. But as Homer describes him, he is more nearly the complete man than Achilles, more nearly the complete man than Hamlet or Faust. For Ulysses is son, lover, husband, father, war-dodger, warrior, ruler--"a good man."

Despite all his childish (largely mental) philandering, Bloom's love for his grossly unfaithful wife has its touching side. Equally touching is his idealistic (and certainly most unsophisticated) reaction, after his physical response to Gerty MacDowell's wiles--

What a brute he had been! At it again? A Fair unsullied soul had called to him and, wretch that he was, how had he answered? An utter cad he had been. He of all men!

Bloom is humble, non-violent; the brutal callousness of the medical students shocks him; he champions love as the active principle in human life. At first blush, Foster Damon seems to blaspheme when he says that as Stephen is Lucifer, Bloom is the Christ. But there is authority for that interpretation in the text, and the real blasphemy is in us who have dared to forget that there is an Eternal Incarnation, that God is forever trying to impregnate the common stuff, the Bloom stuff of human life.⁵

"Yet," says Mr. Wagenknecht in conclusion, "for all its greatness it stands strangely alone, a masterpiece withdrawn from humanity, with the suggestion of something monstrous about it."⁶

Father-son reconciliation, which is one of the underlying, perhaps the most vital of the book's multifarious integrating themes, comprises the main of Harry Slochower's discussion of Ulysses.

In his diary, young Stephen Dedalus records his mother's prophecy that he would come back to faith because he had a restless mind. Ulysses is the first stage of this return. In it he becomes critically conscious of his dissidence. At the hallucinatory close of the brothel scene, an atheist appears, dressed as a priest with the vestments turned inside out. Dedalus smashes the chandelier, screaming out the word "Nothung." This is his last blasphemy against the principle of Wotan-authority. He is now ready for realignment.

Leopold Bloom becomes Stephen's new father. Bloom's practical realism is to supplement and steady his intellectual imagination. But the new father is himself a homeless man, a "Wandering Jew," a baptized Protestant in an Irish city and cuckold in his home. Bloom is a little man, badgered in public and in private. Although he moves about energetically, he has no destination. Bloom is Joyce's "Noman," a stunted and humbled Everyman. Yet

⁵Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel (New York, 1943), pp. 516-17.

⁶Ibid., p. 521.

this "Noman" was intended by Joyce to overshadow the other characters. Precisely because of his Jewish homelessness, Bloom is meant to be most representatively human. "Jews," we read in Ulysses, "are of all races and most given to intermarriage." Indeed, at one point Joyce likens Bloom's sufferings to those of the Saviour.

As in the case of Proust's Swann (also a half-Jew), Bloom's function is to interweave the events and characters and to act as the mediative principle. But not only is the form of mediation of this man, who solicits advertisements of goods he does not own and in which he is not interested, on a lower plane: this modern Ulysses fails in his central mission of becoming a father to the lost son. He fails not only because he and Dedalus are separated by many differentiating elements in their historical antecedents, but also because he is essentially diffident and unheroic. Bloom and Dedalus have mainly negatives in common: their heterodox resistances and their alienation from home, family and cultural tradition. Bloom is inadequate as a father as well as a husband and a businessman. His one successful mediation is that of bringing Stephen and Molly Bloom together. And in Molly Bloom's universal soliloquy, the composite nomadism of Stephen and Bloom is to be rehabilitated, her unqualified "yes" enveloping and resolving all their antinomical "nays." But in its structural relation to the story, this sudden resolution is not foreshadowed. It is a mystical tour de force, a strained precipitation following on long, tortuous withdrawals.⁷

In a detailed and comprehensive study, Philip Toynbee establishes the various "problems" of the book.

The tasks which Joyce set himself can be grouped together in four bundles, though all four are closely interrelated. The first, and incomparably the most important, was the task of reconciling and combining the methods of naturalism and of symbolism. Expressing this in philosophic instead of literary terms, he made a new attempt to solve the old problem of particulars and universals. Expressing it in psychological terms, he tried to relate the localized, contemporary mind of the individual to the collective, primordial mind of the race. All these are different aspects of the same great endeavor. Related to this endeavor, but not demanded by it, was Joyce's attempt to achieve stereoscopic vision. He tried to inhabit three widely different minds and through them present a composite articulation of reality. An almost inevitable concomitant of this was the use of different languages and different characters and situations. Thirdly, Joyce tried to introduce into the novel something approaching the formal structure of music. This was usually done by the introduction of a theme with later development and variations.

Finally, Joyce wished to give a realistic account of the strange and arbitrary progress of the human consciousness. I hold this last ambition to be the least interesting and least important of the four, hardly more than a superfluous legacy from the naturalism which he had so much admired in the late nineteenth-century French novel.⁸

⁷Harry Slochower, No Voice is Wholly Lost... (New York, 1945), pp. 245-46.

⁸Philip Toynbee, "A Study of Ulysses," James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism (New York, 1948), p. 248.

Mr. Toynbee's study is illuminating and, I feel, a sound introduction to the book itself; its length and nature, however, forbids a graceful dismembering by this writer at least. Concluding, Mr. Toynbee asks

How could it all have been better done? That remains a question which I, at any rate, would never dare to answer. It may even be that some of the problems which Joyce set himself were by their nature insoluble. There was never a more ambitious book than this, or a braver one. And in the main, in that final perspective which was never out of the writer's mind, Ulysses remains a very great novel. The total, the architectural, impression is overwhelming. Indeed, this book is almost unique in the retrospective satisfaction which it gives in spite of the frequent irritation and weariness which one has felt while reading it. The superfluties seem to fall away, and the vivid inforgettable passages (which constantly recur in the most unpromising surroundings) come together in a supreme pattern. Had every part been worthy of the tremendous whole, this would have been the greatest prose work ever written.⁹

Here is one critic, at least, who found the book satisfactory; many critics have praised Ulysses without qualification--except that when they had finished somehow the experience lacked that certain, though nebulously defined, satisfaction.

Perhaps the most readable while most thoroughly elucidative examination of Ulysses (at least at this writing) is Richard M. Kain's Fabulous Voyager, and though, as many commentators have pointed out, a "key" is not sine qua non to the appreciation and understanding of Ulysses, Kain's book is invaluable in setting the stage for its most complete enjoyment. In it we are introduced to Joyce, and more important, Joyce's Dublin, the Dublin of Ulysses. Mr. Kain has left, for the most part, the discussion of Esoteric Buddhism and oriental antiquities to such erudite works as Stuart Gilbert's James Joyce's Ulysses, which, says Mr. Kain, "is more likely to terrify the general reader than to enlighten him, not to speak of providing a somewhat misleading perspective."¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁰Richard M. Kain, Fabulous Voyager (Chicago, 1947), p. 5.

The concluding paragraphs of the book hint at what Mr. Kain has been discussing in considerable detail.

This is the world of Ulysses--a world hurrying through the infinite spaces of the universe at staggering speed, its residents unaware of their destiny. In a small city, the central point of a small island, adrift in the midst of the limitless expanse of the seas, they live in their little orbits, and the generations of man are as grass. Their economic schemes petty, their religions tangled masses of dogma, their art superficial, men of twentieth-century Dublin would be ridiculous if they were not so pathetic.

It was a sorry world that is so mercilessly depicted. Without the saving graces of sympathy and humor, the book would be intolerable. Even so, the patient accumulation of evidence conveys to most readers a feeling of protracted and unrelieved weariness. They forge on doggedly through a never ending jungle of words, ideas, impressions. Observations are thrown upon the page with bewildering rapidity. Ulysses is a mosaic of psychological recalls, topics of the day, Dublin landmarks, social, political, and cultural themes, mystic correspondences and philosophical concepts. Its tone changes with kaleidoscopic rapidity--from irony to pathos to ridicule to poetry. In its cubistic arrangement of contrasting planes and perspectives it is a perfect art form for the modern era. As an art form it has been variously praised and attacked; its content has never received the consideration it deserves. Even those who have analyzed its meaning have been prone to regard it as full of scattered insights, but lacking purposeful direction.

Yet Ulysses marks an important stage in the development of the most accomplished writer of this century. It confronts the poetic and philosophic artist with the common man and the vulgar values of society and projects his vision toward the symbolic plane later to be attained in Finnegans Wake. Thus, beneath the complex of ribaldry and sentiment, blasphemy and aspiration, mockery and tenderness, so strangely compounded, there lies a deeper purpose. Joyce had himself been ineffectual in attaining the prophetic mission he envisioned in the Portrait. In Ulysses he has set himself the task of analyzing the reasons why his hopes have been buried. The nature of his dream is more clearly stated in Stephen Hero than elsewhere in his writing: he "would live his own life according to what he recognized as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid and unashamed." But humanity has been corrupted by its environment; man has degenerated through timidity, through the cheap acceptance of shams; he has welcomed his own fetters.

By the very scope of its indictment and the bleakness of its atmosphere, the novel constitutes a most powerful challenge to commercialism, vulgarity, ignorance, prejudice, and inertia.

Ulysses is a modern Hamlet; but is a Hamlet without the last three acts.¹¹

Closing a stimulating discussion, R. P. Blackmur writes:

If these notes suggest a single picture, surely it is the picture of

¹¹Ibid., pp. 240-41.

Joyce, working out the polarities of his nature in terms of the breakdown of the Christian world as he actually experienced it in his youth. What survives even the blasphemy of thwarted faith is the double figure of Stephen the inalienable individual and Bloom the inalienable Jew; survives, for Joyce, with so acute a sense of loss and inadequacy, that he had to turn to Molly--the mystery itself coarsened but still lyric--in the end. The actuality was all that the honesty of the artist could give. It is up to the "other" imaginations--not the artistic, not the critical--to redeem that faith; to revive it rather, on some new impulse of old energy, with the realization that what was called the Church, like that what was called the Crown, were temporary and temporal, were almost merely expedient, forms of the energy of man itself.

But if contemporary readers can no longer see the Christian-Greek picture--if there is no access or turning to it, or none except as ancestral utopia; then there is all the more reason why we should educate ourselves to assume such a picture for Joyce at the conceptual level, assume it for our own reading at the aesthetic level, and, most important, assume it at the actual level whatever it is that corresponds to it in the experience of Stephen and Bloom and Molly and Whomever, and so passing through the actual experiences come on the impulses, the forward stress or trope as Santayana would call it, with enough faith for feeling and enough mind for thought. It is by deliberate cultivation of such assumptions that we can find a means of crossing the gap between the actual society in which we live and the ideals--the dogmas of vital purpose--to which the expressions of that actual society formerly bore direct relation.

What we come on will be what for us is living in the tradition; which, as it once created the symbols which became the Christian world will no doubt create the symbols which will become whatever it is that will follow Christianity. Many of the symbols will be the same, though they may seem to have opposed forms, or seem formless and only the story of the experience itself, as there was once only the story of Christ's life. Such a possibility seems to have been a part of Bloom's actual experience during his day in Dublin (as it was the experience most impossible for Stephen); the experience is actual both as he is aware of it himself, and in the projections of Joyce's own nature which did not so much enter into Bloom as surround him in penumbra. Bloom the Jew is the most living part of the Christian world, and he is the inalienable problem of what has happened to Christianity. The Jew is in search of a son. Thus the quotation from the book of Malachi which was the impetus of this essay seems even more fitting at its close.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."¹²

It is significant that we read in Ulysses, "Elijah is coming."¹³

He is coming, Bloom reads in a pamphlet (which goes about its own odyssey

¹²R. P. Blackmur, "The Jew in Search of a Son," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIV (Jan., 1948), 115-16.

¹³James Joyce, Ulysses (New York, 1934), p. 149.

through the book) entitled Elijah, in the form of an American evangelist.

Aidan Higgins, in an article which is more accurately an elegy to Joyce than a critical study, speaks briefly of Ulysses, saying:

It is sad that the book should be praised by people who do not understand it, but it is much worse that it should be despised by people who have never read it. It has been written in--or about--ever since it first appeared in 1922. It has been belittled all along, and mostly by little people. In the face of their probable ignorance, the text, and in the teeth of T. S. Eliot's challenge that, perhaps, it should be considered as an epic, they keep on insisting that Joyce has failed, that the stream-of-consciousness technique could not come off when levelled that intensely at living people. But I cannot help imagining that they had not really heard the logic of Ulysses or, perhaps, that they heard it only as a charivari. For how else, confronted with it, could they still insist that such an achievement was an impossibility? All one can say is that one agrees or disagrees. But to question its undoubted power; or even the use of such forthrightness, is as futile an occupation as complaining about the rain.¹⁴

And this, perhaps, is an appropriate epilogue to three decades of criticism, though I will temper Mr. Higgins' remarks by saying that Ulysses is a kind of literary pariah, and pariahs, to be sure, are treated in divers ways--often, from a particular point of view, wrongly; occasionally with perception and sympathy. We have observed critics, in these thirty years, who represent every graduation on the critical scale, and, while this study closes here, Ulysses, I feel certain, will continue to demand the critical attention and elicit the varied reactions that it has in the past.

¹⁴Aidan Higgins, "Aspects of James Joyce," The Fortnightly, CLXIX (April, 1951), 267-68.

CHAPTER V ----- CONCLUSION

Does not his soul lie enclosed in
this remarkable Volume, much more
truly than Pedro Garcia's did in
the buried Bag of Doubloons?

--Carlyle

Ulysses has trebled the odyssey of its namesake; Bloom's day in Dublin has stretched into thirty years. It has not fallen to the ignominious oblivion foreseen by so many of its early critics, and it may yet be the classic predicted by others to whom Joyce seemed to be saying something.

In the three decades since Ulysses' publication we have watched the critical mind develop; the first reactions were characterized, whether favorable or not, by surprise, even shock, and small effort was made to discuss the book on any other bases than its peculiarities, difficulties, and "obscenities." Only a few undertook to interpret the book's essential meaning; meanings, rather, since we have seen that Ulysses maintains the elusive character of a Hamlet; Bloom is Everyman as the book is Mankind, with all the diversity of Man and Mankind. This, too, from the critics we have learned.

Ulysses persisted; the critical world, as time moved on, could no longer forsake it as an oddity, could not ignore what meanings were in it to be discovered. Joyce was no help; he demanded the eternal reader. Men like Stuart Gilbert and Frank Budgen who knew him gave us the first "official" keys--many subsequent critical studies drew from these sources.

Now and then a critic would echo the somewhat scandalized cries of earlier years, but after Judge Woolsey's now classic decision, a remarkable critical work itself--and the admission of Ulysses to the United States, hardly a sound was to be heard again from this sensitive quarter.

Detailed discussions, apologies, and explications of Joyce's involved and multi-levelled technique were forwarded; and more and more critics were addressing themselves to the task of rendering a satisfactory, comprehensive (if possible) interpretation of the book. Mr. Bloom and Stephen were emerging with as many faces as Joyce perhaps intended they should have; almost all, however, were agreed on Molly, the yeasty symbol of earth and regeneration, the final affirming note of the book.

But ever the perplexing questions: is Joyce giving us an impassionate, if painfully detailed, picture of the utter corruption of modern man? Are Mr. Bloom and Stephen hopeless caricatures of man--hopeless in a hopeless world? Every critic approaching or voicing these questions had his own answer. This is decay, said some, look upon it with sorrow, but, offered others, don't lose faith. Still others heard beneath the welter of deadly ugliness a note of beauty, even a kind of twentieth century sweetness and light. Joyce was Dante, Rabelais, Swift, Shakespeare, Milton; and he was none of these. Ulysses reflected life and the spirit of man as these men wrote it; and it did not. The question is still here--what is Ulysses?

The book has been considered a masterpiece of Freudian psychology; the penultimate of the Naturalists; an exceptional example of Symbolism. Some commentators feel that the whole is not worthy of the parts, others will take strenuous exception to this view. It is an outlandish experiment. Again, what is it?

There are certain aspects of Ulysses of which we can be reasonably sure. The book was violently revolutionary, indeed, it still is; and the result of this revolution in letters has been a whole new school of writing. Joyce has given the ultimate, and I might say inevitable, refinements to Stendhal's psychological novel; Joyce deals with causation, however, rather than manifestation--Stendhal studied only motive, Joyce works far beneath this level. The "stream-of-consciousness" is ascribed to Joyce, and, although he did not actually contrive the technique, he did make it useable. And Joyce assuredly brought poetry back into English prose--for all his detractors may say, there are passages of poetic prose in Ulysses that sound organ notes that we have to go back to Milton to hear again. The interior monologue and the poetry give Joyce's style an amazing flexibility, and his permutation of language adds to its power and striking graphic quality. All of these things have been reflected in the writers of the "post-Ulysses" period, and, we may guess, whatever the fate of the book itself, its influence on future writing will be profound.

Finally, though from the wealth of critical commentary can be gotten insights and illuminations that might have easily escaped the plain reader, we must go to the book: it can only be valid insofar as we react to the world it creates for us. Mr. Such-a-one may see Ulysses, or any book for that matter, as representing this, that, or the other; we can respect his judgement or viewpoint, but the essential experience in a book is a personal one and must remain ultimately for the reader himself to undergo. This writer will suggest that Ulysses is one of the most vital aesthetic experiences of our time; it is a book which has most unflinchingly translated the complex Zeitgeist of the twentieth century into human terms.

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Carol Ruth Morris

ERRATA

- P. 11, third paragraph, eighth word is somewhat.
- P. 19, second line, seventh word is is.
- P. 26, ninth line, second word is "Odyssey."
- P. 34, fourth line, first word is in.
- P. 45, fourteenth line, fourth word is does.
- P. 55, second paragraph, eleventh line, eighth word is unspoken.
- P. 58, third paragraph, eleventh word is fair.
- P. 62, third paragraph, fifth line, fourth word is forms.