

sound of a firing gun into the score, a real gunshot would be harder to detect; it would be robbed of its singularity. The masquerade, as we have seen, serves a similar function. For Flaubert was well aware that the artist who describes history can use hindsight advantageously, as we see in his description of Delmar's successes: "Un drame, où il avait représenté un manant qui fait la leçon à Louis XIV et prophétise 89, l'avait mis en telle évidence qu'on lui fabriquait sans cesse le même rôle. . . . Brasseur anglais, il invectivait Charles Ier; étudiant de Salamanque, maudissait Phillippe II . . . s'indignait contre la Pompadour, c'était le plus beau!" (pp. 174, 175). In the richly imaginative masquerade scene, Flaubert, like Delmar, anticipates historical events in a way that was, of course, impossible for the real participants; doing so, he transforms the open-ended time of history into the closed time of a novel that approaches formal perfection. On all levels, then, the masked ball accomplishes what Sartre sees as the ideal of Flaubert's romantic phase: ". . . l'attitude *poétique* n'était que la fuite du réel dans l'imaginaire; l'activité *artistique* consiste à dévaloriser le réel en réalisant l'imaginaire."⁷

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L'Idiot de la famille, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), II, 1488.

HUGH KENNER

Ulysses

Winchester, Massachusetts: Allen and Unwin, 1980. Pp. 182.
\$15.95

About fifteen book-length studies of *Ulysses* have appeared in the last five years, but a new book by Hugh Kenner, consistently the most stimulating and enjoyable of Joyce's many critics, stands out from the rest. Kenner presents here his first extended reading of Joyce's masterwork since the still influential *Dublin's Joyce* of 1956. Without abandoning the emphasis on detail that is his hallmark and that has earned *Dublin's Joyce* a lasting place in Joyce studies, Kenner now offers a significantly revised interpretation of *Ulysses*, one that evolves not only from his thirty years of attention to the text but also from recent trends in *Ulysses* criticism. Specialists will appreciate Kenner's fresh readings of previously familiar passages, the consistencies and contrasts between his earlier studies and his one,* and the

*Readers interested in tracing the development of Kenner's approach to *Ulysses* should consult three of his articles and the relevant sections of five of his books: *Dublin's Joyce* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956); *The Stoic Comedians: Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); *The Counterfeiters* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1973); three articles in the *James Joyce Quarterly*: "Homer's Sticks and Stones," 6 (1969), 285-98, "Molly's Masterstroke," 10 (1972), 19-28, and "The Rhetoric of Silence," 14 (1977), 382-94; *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); and *Joyce's Voices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). The transition to the later approach can probably be located in "Homer's Sticks and Stones"; except perhaps for the frequently strident *Dublin's Joyce*, all the studies are delightful as well as instructive.

links with the *Ulysses* critics from the last decade that he has read and absorbed. All readers, including teachers and fairly advanced students, will benefit from Kenner's lucid, concise, and witty analysis of *Ulysses*, and they will find a useful and necessary corrective to the harshly ironic reading he presented in *Dublin's Joyce*.

Kenner's approach to *Ulysses* in his new book centers on the concept of "parallax," the astronomical principle that Bloom recalls in a typical manner in the "Lestrygonians" episode: "Parallax. I never exactly understood." As Kenner understands the term, different perceptions result from different points of observation: "seen from different spots, *Gestalts* alter" (p. 73); "two standpoints, two different alignments of phenomena" (p. 75); "parallax modifies . . . events not at all; modifies only the way different people perceive them" (p. 151). Kenner argues that parallax operates on every level of *Ulysses*: in the eighteen episodes, since each has its own style and hence a unique standpoint; in Joyce's use of his characters, since Stephen, Bloom, Molly, and the various minor characters bring different perceptual fields to the events they observe and remember; in the use of Homer as a backdrop, since there are almost as many relationships between the Homeric world and Joyce's 1904 Dublin as there are versions and translations of the *Odyssey*. On every level parallax produces a double view of events—"stereoscopic vision" (p. 75)—and neither view can cancel out or even dominate the other. Thus, "no one comprehensive reading is thinkable" (p. 80).

The "comprehensive readings" precluded by the principle of parallax include the kind offered in *Dublin's Joyce*, where, echoing Ezra Pound's 1922 review "James Joyce et Pécuchet," Kenner saw *Ulysses* as a relentless satire of modern bourgeois life. Now, like several recent critics, he emphasizes the stylistic complexities of the second half of the text, and he demonstrates how the movement of *Ulysses* through its many episodes and styles, each with its own limits and biases, opens up possibilities of meaning and interpretation without ever allowing one of the alternatives to prevail. In *Dublin's Joyce*, for example, his interpretation of Molly's last words was clear: "Some readers have over-sentimentalized the final pages of her monologue. They are in key with the animal level at which this comic inferno is conceived: and they are the epiphany of all that we have seen and heard during the day." In the new book, he emphasizes the different Molly we encounter: "Molly, at first a voice that grunted 'Mn' ('no') . . . , then an impression of lazy sluttishness, then a glimpse of 'a plump bare generous arm' . . . , will turn into an unexpectedly realized character whose final word is Yes" (p. 70).

Similarly, in *Dublin's Joyce* the *Odyssey* functioned throughout *Ulysses* as an interpretative frame of reference, providing a heroic model against which the modern characters have to be judged. Now, Kenner argues that it operates this way for only the first nine episodes but that in the last half its purpose becomes "coercive" (p. 62), that is, it serves as a structural grid directing the episodes into a pattern of father-son reunion. (The coercive grid became necessary because Joyce had lost almost all interest in the plot as an internal justification for the meeting of Bloom and Stephen). A parallax vision ensures that neither approach to Homer—determinant of meaning and interpretation, or neutral structural backdrop—will dominate a reading of the text and that both approaches will be part of a full reading.

A parallax vision also places equal emphasis on the relatively realistic early episodes, dominated by the interior monologues of Bloom and Stephen, and the expansive, parodic later episodes, told through a medley of voices—journalists, sentimental novelists, forty English prose writers, even something resembling a computer. Furthermore, a parallax vision provides that no version of any incident can be authoritative, since, as Kenner demonstrates, Joyce built *Ulysses*

according to an “aesthetic of delay” (p. 72): “virtually every scene in *Ulysses* is narrated at least twice, and by varying what he tells and emphasises Joyce ensures that repetition shall not dilute but intensify” (p. 76). Thus, the reader experiences *Ulysses* parallaxically, since impressions and interpretations from the early parts of the book will be adjusted and modified later. Kenner supplies many examples of such twice-told incidents.

The approach to *Ulysses* offered here is stimulating and convincing, but large patterns constitute only one of the reasons for turning to Hugh Kenner. Like his other studies of Joyce this one is full of interpretations of textual details that readers have, somehow, missed until now. For example, Kenner mentions Stephen’s meditations near the end of “Proteus” about a “fourworded wavespeech” and comments: “Whoever supposes that what is experienced should be naively recorded supposes that the writer’s discipline is the onomatopoeist’s. Not that to write out the wavespeech was a negligible feat. It testifies to ingenious attention, and within two pages we shall be attending to a fourworded catspeech, not ‘Meow’ and ‘Purr’ but ‘Mkgnao!’, ‘Mrkgnao!’, ‘Mrkrgnao!’ and (milk bestowed at last) ‘Gurrhr’”. Later the book’s final episode will revolve a fourworded womanspeech, by correlation with which we may eventually discover without surprise that ‘Gurrhr!’ in Cat means ‘Yes’” (p. 40). A footnote refers us to a 1977 study of cats that notes all the vowels and diphthongs cats can produce and reminds us that Joyce’s transcription was “of course not meant to represent the cat’s full vocabulary.” In a similar manner, when Kenner mentions Bloom’s urination in “Ithaca” (the trajectory of which Joyce describes in full detail and compares to Bloom’s heroic youthful prowess), he concludes that “it would be a pity not to let that heroic arc remind us of Odysseus’ power manifested in his great bow” (p. 30). Finally, citing Private Carr’s colorful justification for his attack on Stephen at the end of “Circe”—“I’ll wring the neck of any fucking bastard says a word against my bleeding fucking king”—Kenner notes that “Private Carr chooses epithets with inspired precision: Edward VII was the first womaniser in Europe, also a member of a family that carried haemophilia, and Stephen incurs an adjective by his presence in Nighttown and a noun by his imperfect sonship to Dedalus of Athens.” Private Carr, he points out, “is the sole artist of the obscene in a book that was once thought to contain little save obscenity” (pp. 127-28). Kenner’s study is full of such observations, always playful, usually apt, consistently revealing the wonders of details that we have failed to notice despite many readings of the text.

Hugh Kenner’s *Ulysses* will surely be required reading for Joyce specialists, and for teachers and experienced students it should be one of the standard studies of *Ulysses* for some time to come. The book will probably not serve successfully as an introductory guide, partly because it assumes familiarity with the text (as well as some knowledge of critical trends) and partly because, like its subject, it is constructed according to a principle of parallax or aesthetic of delay as it discusses many incidents and episodes twice, often out of sequential context. There is no systematic discussion of the early episodes, while the longer, individual treatments of the later episodes are interrupted by analyses of earlier ones (Kenner talks about “twinned” early and late episodes [p. 100] and often discusses them together). However, as Kenner’s latest word on *Ulysses*, as a clear demonstration of recent trends in *Ulysses* criticism (the book includes a useful summary of the critical tradition and an annotated bibliography), and as a consistently provocative and delightful model of literary analysis, Kenner’s *Ulysses* is a most welcome addition to the large body of Joyce studies.

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