

James Joyce

Edited by
Robert H. Deming

The Critical Heritage



JAMES JOYCE: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE
VOLUME 1, 1907-27

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE SERIES

General Editor: B. C. Southam

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JAMES JOYCE
VOLUME 1, 1907-27

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

Edited by

ROBERT H. DEMING



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General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality—perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

Lengthy extracts from the writings of James Joyce have been omitted whenever they are quoted merely to illustrate the work in question. These omissions are clearly indicated in the text. References to chapters and pages are to the following editions: for *Chamber Music*, *Pomes Penyeach* and *Ecce Puer* to *The Collected Poems*, New York, 1937; *Dubliners*, New York, 1954; *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, corrected by Chester G. Anderson, edited by Richard Ellmann, New York, 1964; *Ulysses*, New York 1934, 1961 [page references to *Ulysses* are given by episode to the 1934 and 1961 editions respectively (i.e. the Sirens episode, p. 254, p. 258)]; *Finnegans Wake*, New York, 1939 [page references to 'Work in Progress' are given to the pages in *Finnegans Wake*].

The order of the contents is chronological. Reviews and notices published within a year or two of a book's appearance are grouped under the book's title. Reviews of the American and the English editions of *Ulysses* are grouped after the 1922 reviews. Reviews of the French translation of *Ulysses* will be found in 1929 (Nos. 211, 213, 215, 216, 218, 249). After 1922, the first part of a year's work on Joyce is given over to general works, the second part to studies of *Ulysses*, the third part to 'Work in Progress'. A footnote reference to later criticism will be found under the heading for *A Portrait*, *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. When a conjectural date can be set for material which appeared after 1941, the material is placed with its contemporary documents. In the absence of an original dating, these items are placed at the end of the volume. When only the relevant Joyce portion of a long article is included, the first page reference in the headnote is to the actual page or pages used, and the bracketed pages are the entire article (i.e. pp. 28-29 [23-31]). The use of 'n.p.' in the headnote indicates that the exact pages of the item are unknown. Many items in this volume survive only in untraceable press clippings found in the files of the Universities of Buffalo and Kansas.

Introduction

I

If the materials in this volume do not immediately lead to an understanding of how Joyce's life and art are 'interwoven in the same fabric', it is not that the selection of materials is an arbitrary one, but that the materials themselves do not offer that understanding. Joyce's greatest influence has been upon other writers, not upon his critics. And this influence has been absorbed in later writers in terms of two characteristics of Joyce's work—his vision and his style. The first is a moral, cognitive, orderly and encyclopedic phenomenon. The second is an artistic, musical, linguistic and substantive difficultness. Joyce is, after all, a modern writer not so much because of the impact of the first quality upon writers and readers, but because the 'intellectual machinery' so characteristic of the second is also so integral a part of the first. The criticism and commentary and opinion presented in this volume are concerned, by and large, with Joyce's 'machinery' and only rarely with Joyce's vision. To a certain extent, Joyce has himself limited critical apprehension of that vision, his true genius, by his own plan, stated at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist* in terms of 'silence, exile and cunning'.

Silently Joyce unfolded his world view in each successive work. Only his brother Stanislaus, at first, and his closest friends, later, were allowed to penetrate into his intentions, aims and methods. Perhaps none of them—not Stanislaus, or Harriet Shaw Weaver, or Frank Budgen, or Eugene Jolas, or Paul Léon—ever truly knew Joyce's vision. But they, at least, shared partially in its light. The critical world was, however, kept completely in the dark night Joyce seemed to weave in his works. Yet his artistic silence actually provoked critical volumes. Further, his exile from the social and political and artistic worlds while in Italy, Switzerland and France seemed merely to enhance the exile from literary traditions that his readers and critics experienced upon reading his works. From the first work, *Chamber Music* in 1907, through the earlier prose works, *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, and up to *Ulysses* in 1922, no keys or explanations

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or aids to frustrated readers were provided, nor were they until much, much later. Throughout this same quarter of a century Joyce wrote and revised, and wrote and revised again. And as each work appeared he cunningly wrote advance notices, translated foreign reviews (No. 56), directed the writing of some reviews (particularly those on *Ulysses* and 'Work in Progress'), and thereby laid the foundations for later criticism. In this sense, the artistic programme of 'silence, exile and cunning' did not prevent Joyce the detached artist from planning his own critical reputation.

The present array of critical commentary, limited as it is to the period 1902 to 1941, admirably illustrates Herbert McLuhan's comment in a survey of Joyce criticism from the 1940s, that Joyce's critics are intimidated, that they 'approach their subject in an awkward and diffident spirit'.¹ Criticism after the 1940s is equally diffident. It reflects the strain Joyce puts upon his attentive readers, and lacks Joyce's own sense of a lively artistic world. This is by no means a fresh comment to make upon current Joyce studies, but the need for re-appraisal as well as for the endless numbers of catalogues, word and check lists, and exegeses, is greater now than it was in 1941 or any time earlier.

It is evident enough from a perusal of this book that the quantity of critical material is overwhelming. Before the manuscript was reduced to its present size, the volume of material which might have been included was over 700 items and almost a million words. Some will no doubt feel that a collection of the fifty or so most important articles is still a desideratum and will find this book fragmented. Others will no doubt agree that the present large sampling of articles, some extracted and some in full texts, is desirable, but will find the selection too arbitrary and subjective. Still others will find fault with the 1941 terminus date. To anticipate the first two objections, it can be said that as Joyce's method was accretive so also should this collection be, and from as many divergent points of view as possible. This will provide as complete as possible a spectrum of the contemporary response. As to the third objection, there are literally hundreds of articles and books about Joyce after 1941. A selection of these up to the present time would be extremely difficult to make and subjective to be sure. If a Joyce cult existed before 1941, a Joyce 'industry' now flourishes. While this industry produces much that is manufactured and therefore dangerous to Joyce's works, the best products of this organized and automated 'funferall' are eminently useful. The 1941 terminus is, then, more than a matter of convenience; it is a silent act of industrial cunning.

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Because the quantity of material on Joyce before 1941 is so great, much of the material in this volume is excerpted. The use of ellipses indicates omitted material. Whenever the omitted material is of such length that an ellipsis would be deceptive or misleading, a bracketed summary has been inserted in the text. Only key notices, reviews and articles are reprinted in full. Unrevised or minimally revised articles which are reprinted in books are presented here in their original form; where extensive revision has been made, the later text is used and is so indicated. Book-length studies (such as Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*) and articles of such length (for example the Joyce section of Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle*) that judicious excerpting is not possible are placed in Appendix C. Collections of articles (such as *Our Exagmination* and Louis Gillet's *Claybook*) are also listed in Appendix C. It would be desirable to have these in the volume, particularly Gillet's early article on *Ulysses*, but the unwillingness of some publishers to have a competing volume with the same essays, the unwillingness of some critics to allow any extracts to be taken from their works, and the length of this volume, all argue against their inclusion here. The exclusion of these kinds of items does not mean that they are unimportant—indeed, Gillet's change in attitude towards Joyce is a microcosm of the change in attitude generally—but only that they are available elsewhere, and *should* be read in those other volumes. Finally, reviews and critical studies which are omitted for reasons of limitation are listed in Appendix D. The text of this volume and the list in Appendix D, which do not by any means exhaust all the reviews of Joyce's works, provide a supplement to the existing bibliographies of secondary criticism listed in Appendix B.

II

Even before the first published criticism of Joyce's writings, his brother Stanislaus, a constant critic and the financial support of Joyce's family for many of the troubled years between 1904 and 1917, forecasted that Joyce was 'no student' (later Joyce would be called too learned for his or anyone else's own good). Stanislaus was at least partially incorrect when, in a comment in his *Diary* in 1903, he wrote, 'Whether he will ever build up anything broad—a drama, an esthetic treatise—I cannot say. His genius is not literary and he will probably run through many of the smaller forms of literary artistic expression' (No. 3). Joyce did build

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up something broad, the play *Exiles* and the aesthetic theory of *A Portrait of the Artist*. In the next year Stanislaus commented 'He may be a genius—it seems to be very possible' (No. 5), and the proving or disproving of this point nourished later criticism. What Stanislaus already knew in 1904 became the course that Joyce's reputation took and an outline guide to Joyce's new art as it unfolded in one book after another until it culminated in *Finnegans Wake* in 1939.

JOYCE'S POETRY: *Chamber Music*, *Pomes Penyeach*, *Collected Poems*

The critical reception that *Chamber Music* received upon its appearance in 1907 is epitomized in a comment from Arthur Symon's review, 'I have little hope that the rare quality of these songs will captivate many readers' (No. 9). Traditional as Elizabethan lyrics in rhythm, image and meaning, some of the poems had, as William Butler Yeats wrote to Joyce in 1902, 'more subject, more magical phrases, more passion' than some others. Yeats's comment is significant in its generosity, for Yeats and Joyce were at opposite ends of the poetic spectrum. Joyce's cynical disregard for the principles and programmes of the Irish Literary movement, of which Yeats was the leader, did not, however, prevent Yeats from being a lifelong advocate of Joyce—even if he never did finish *Ulysses*. Yeats was singularly responsible for bringing Joyce to the attention of Ezra Pound, thus passing Joyce on to someone who was more sympathetic to what Joyce was trying to do after he ceased writing the kind of poetry found in *Chamber Music*.

Though later he had critical notices of *Chamber Music* printed up to circulate with press copies of *Dubliners*, Joyce was quite sure of the significance of the slim volume of poems. To Herbert Gorman, his early biographer, he said, 'I wrote *Chamber Music* as a protest against myself'.² Yet, to his brother Stanislaus he wrote just before the publication of the volume that 'a page of "A Little Cloud" [one of the short stories in *Dubliners*] gives me more pleasure than all my verses'.³ And later to his brother, Joyce unknowingly corrected many of the reviews of the book, 'I don't like the book but wish it were published and be damned to it. However, it is a young man's book'.⁴ I felt like that. It is not a book of love-verses at all, I perceive . . . Besides they are not pretentious and have a certain grace' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 219). The reviews assembled in this volume grant the 'grace' of *Chamber Music*, but the praise is slight.

Joyce the bard who believed his songs were 'pretty enough to be put to music' was gratified that their musical qualities were so quickly

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recognized. He wrote to G. Molyneux Palmer (19 July 1909), 'I hope that you may set all of *Chamber Music* in time. This was indeed partly my idea in writing it. The book is in fact a suite of songs and if I were a musician I suppose I should have set them to music myself.'⁵ In the same letter he provides the structure of the suite, Poems I and III are preludes, XXXV and XXXVI are tailpieces, and XIV is the central song. But few reviewers, apart from Padraic Colum (and his comment only from the perspective of the later works), perceived that the poems in *Chamber Music* were not just 'recreations of Elizabethan and Jacobean song', that there was 'drama' in the lyrics, and that, read in the light of *A Portrait of the Artist*, *Chamber Music* is the lyric complement to *Stephen Hero* (the first draft version of *A Portrait* not published until 1944 and 1955) and to *A Portrait* in theme, mood and emotion (see No. 81).

Although Yeats commented on the thinness of the thought in *Chamber Music*, the relatively unknown study by John Kaestlin in 1933 cautions against a facile surface reading because the poems, though lacking depth of content, 'achieve a rare union of "harmonic purity and rhythmic freedom"'.⁶ After the publication of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, a reviewer in the *Egoist* (possibly Harriet Shaw Weaver, a lifelong benefactor and amanuensis) would remark on the 'great deal of thought beneath fine workmanship' (No. 12). Still another review, of the New York 1918 edition, would remark that Joyce was 'in verse a shadow of himself and others, a dilettante playing a safe and pleasant game' (No. 13), but the same reviewer, no doubt illuminated by Joyce's statement of his artistic credo in *A Portrait*—silence, exile and cunning—added that the author of *Chamber Music* was 'a mere disembodied third person, aloof, detached'.

Morton D. Zabel, reviewing both *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach* (1927) in 1930, sensed the 'creative impulses' that guided Joyce's mind in the twenty years intervening between the two poetic volumes. *Chamber Music* lacked the 'finality of single intention' and was artificially elegant, Zabel wrote, but in *Pomes Penyeach* 'Joyce achieved . . . his own poetic character for the first time'. Yet a neo-classical sense of decorum only rarely allows a strict form and emotional content to diffuse Joyce's lyric temper (No. 14). Louis Golding, echoing Rebecca West's essay 'The Strange Necessity' (No. 199), remarked on the tastelessness of the poems and on Joyce's and Stephen Dedalus's desire to exercise the subconscious mind in poetry as well as in prose (No. 15). To a very great extent, Joyce's intention in publishing *Pomes Penyeach* when he did (at the time the first fragments of *Finnegans Wake*—known

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until 1939 as 'Work in Progress'—were appearing) was touched upon by Miss West. Joyce remarked in a letter to Miss Weaver (20 September 1928) that Miss West was quite delighted by the 'blowing up [of] some bogus personality' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 268).

Joyce's intention in presenting *Pomes Penyeach* in 1927 was not, moreover, only to show that he could write grammatically and recognizably. *Pomes Penyeach*, like *Chamber Music* before it, is a part of a consistent and unified artistic plan. Joyce's preoccupation with words, with linguistic experimentation, and tonal unity are foreshadowed in *Chamber Music* and continued in *Pomes Penyeach*. But his 'cloacal obsession' (to use H. G. Wells's famous phrase describing *A Portrait*, see No. 41) did suggest the tastelessness observed by Miss West and Golding and may be responsible for the essentially scatological reading—the 'chamber pot' obsession—of William York Tindall's edition of *Chamber Music* in 1954. Even with this obsession, Tindall's insistence upon the unity of all of Joyce's work, beginning with *Chamber Music* and leading to *Finnegans Wake*, upon the thematic cohesiveness of *Chamber Music* (the 'disease of love'), and upon the multi-levelled symbolism has been the main stream of later criticism of Joyce's poetry, what little criticism there has been. Perhaps the single most significant critical study of Joyce's poetry after Tindall's is still Irene Hendry's essay 'Joyce's Alter Ego' published in 1938, one year after the *Collected Poems* appeared (No. 291).

But, *Chamber Music* is, as Herbert Howarth has observed in the latest review of its place in Joyce criticism, 'at once first, last, and nowhere. Chronologically, it is first. It is last for most critics. It is nowhere for most readers, who ignore it or read it too rapidly to gather what it can give.'⁷ Whatever the final place of Joyce's poetry is to be in the critical firmament, it is not as a poet *per se* that Joyce will be remembered by most.

Dubliners

The original twelve stories of *Dubliners* were submitted to the London publisher Grant Richards in 1905 and were accepted for publication on 17 February 1906. Yet it was not until 15 June 1914 that *Dubliners*, by then expanded by three more stories, was published. The publishing difficulties during these eight years are described in great detail in Herbert Gorman's biography published (with Joyce's blessing) in 1924 and, of course, in Richard Ellmann's 'definitive' biography in 1959. Only the highlights and low points need discussion here.

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When Richards wrote on 23 April 1906 that his printer would not set the story 'Two Gallants' because of some 'objectionable passages', Joyce obdurately replied, 'I have written my book with considerable care, in spite of a hundred difficulties and in accordance with what I understand to be the classical tradition of my art. You must therefore allow me to say that your printer's opinion of it does not interest me in the least' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 60). Shortly thereafter, to Richards's continued objections, Joyce stated that his 'intention was to write a chapter of the moral history' of Ireland, focusing on Dublin because it seemed 'the centre of paralysis'. Emboldened, he continued, 'I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard', and 'I have come to the conclusion that I cannot write without offending people' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 134). Richards was offended by passages using the word 'bloody', by a reference to 'a man with two establishments to keep up', and by references to a woman who 'continued to cast bold glances . . . and changed the position of her legs often'. Having deleted some of the offensive passages, Joyce foolishly raised the question as to why the story 'Counterparts' was objected to but 'An Encounter' was not. Richards quickly objected to that story as well. While Joyce yielded, as he says in a letter to Richards on 20 May, on 'the points which rivet the book together', the chapter of the moral history of Ireland was marred. Joyce was, furthermore, adamant about deleting some passages because in writing *Dubliners* he felt he had begun the 'spiritual liberation' of his country. And he was frequently blunt, 'It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass.'

Joyce was, moreover, aware of what critics were later to acknowledge, that the stories in *Dubliners* are indisputably well done. They are organized around the plan of presenting the entire life of the self from childhood ('The Sisters', 'An Encounter', 'Araby'), through adolescence ('The Boarding House', 'After the Race', 'Eveline'), to mature life ('Clay', 'Counterparts', 'A Painful Case'), and to stories of Dublin public life ('Ivy Day in the Committee Room', 'The Mother', 'Grace'). The three last stories, 'Two Gallants', 'A Little Cloud' and 'The Dead' were added before 1914 (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 92; Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 215-16).

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Grant Richards rejected the book in September and other publishers followed suit until April 1909, when the Dublin publishers Maunsell & Company accepted it, printed it, but then, aroused by objections which Joyce believed were made by his 'enemies', burned the entire edition except one copy which Joyce retained. Afterwards, Joyce wrote 'Gas from a Burner', a broadside which scathingly attacked Maunsell and Dublin and publishers in general. Finally, in 1913, Richards re-accepted the book and published it in 1914. A gruelling ordeal for Joyce, and yet never have so many difficulties engendered such dismal and sparse critical fruit.

Dubliners received scarcely any attention in the reviews. Gerald Gould's review in the *New Statesman* hailed Joyce as a 'man of genius'. The stories had, Gould felt, originality, maturity, 'individual poise and force', yet it was a pity that Joyce had insisted upon 'aspects of life which are ordinarily not mentioned' (No. 22). The anonymous reviewer in the *Irish Book Lover* also wished that, while the prototypes of some of Joyce's characters did exist, Joyce had 'directed his undoubted talents in other and pleasanter directions' (No. 26). Joyce had anticipated this kind of Irish reaction as early as July 1905. In a letter to his brother at that time he wrote: 'The Dublin papers will object to my stories as to a caricature of Dublin life' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 99). Finally, the *Academy* reviewer called for a novel and compared Joyce to George Moore, as did the *Athenæum* reviewer (see Nos. 21, 24).

None of these reviewers took the time or the trouble to examine the realistic tradition that Joyce was working in, the tradition of Flaubert, Zola and George Moore, though the last influence was, indeed, mentioned, to Joyce's detriment. Only Ezra Pound was to point out, as he later did with *Ulysses*, the strong bent toward Flaubert, the 'clear hard prose' in the stories, the rigorous selection of detail and the symbolic content (No. 25). Later critics, particularly the French critics reviewing the 1926 translation of *Dubliners*, were much more conscious of the artistic and narrative mastery in the stories than were their English counterparts (Nos. 27-30). Yet even among the French, who were always Joyce's first champions in the critical field, agreement was not unanimous, and very early a note of regret that was later to become a chorus was raised because Joyce had stopped writing short stories.

Later critics have had little to say about *Dubliners*, with the exception of commentary on the last story of the collection, 'The Dead', which elicited comment primarily because it is so unlike the other stories (rather than because it is a typical story) in the collection. Certainly the

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objectivity, the aims and techniques, the realism, and the 'backgrounds to *Dubliners*' (perhaps the most worth while of Stanislaus Joyce's contributions to criticism of the stories) have been frequent sources for critical essays. But textual studies of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* have made *Dubliners* seem simple by comparison. Marxian critics have tended almost totally to ignore *Dubliners* in favour of what they consider the more obscure 'degenerate product' of a capitalistic society, *Finnegans Wake*. Two Joyces—the Joyce who wrote *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, and the Joyce who wrote *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*—have emerged. Perhaps not enough attention has been paid to Joyce's own comment that he was writing a 'series of epicleti' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 55), or to his remark, reported by the not always infallible Stanislaus, that there is a 'certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass' and the stories in *Dubliners*.⁸

The concerns of the first readers of *Dubliners*—that the stories were without plot, that the style was flat and uninteresting, and that there were no 'truths' to be found—are no longer the concerns of the Joyceans. The pattern of the collection, the variety of techniques, the relation of the parts to the whole—these are the concerns today, because they provide some insights into the later works, particularly *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. After *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach*, *Dubliners* is the next most neglected part of an evolving fabric of artistic expression.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Joyce's difficulties in getting published did not cease with the publication of *Dubliners*. By 1913, however, he had a new ally in Ezra Pound. Yeats had introduced Joyce's work to Pound, an American expatriate, contributor to numerous 'little magazines' and a member of the editorial boards of H. L. Mencken's *Smart Set* and Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*. Wyndham Lewis, who with Pound produced an English 'little magazine', *Blast*, has suggested that, without Pound, Joyce 'might never have emerged from his central European exile' and that it was Pound who 'sold' the idea of serializing *A Portrait of the Artist* to Harriet Shaw Weaver's review, the *Egoist*.⁹ The novel was sent in parts to Pound, who passed them on to Miss Weaver for the *Egoist*, where they appeared from February 1914 to September 1915. And, when no English printer would set the most promising novel of the period, it was Miss Weaver who suggested that the *Egoist* turn publisher and produce the book. Unfortunately, even with Miss Weaver's reputation behind

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it, the book could not be set up in England and eventually had to be printed in the United States and shipped back to England.

Pound was drawn to *A Portrait* by its prose style. He wrote to Joyce (17-19 January 1914), 'I'm not supposed to know much about prose but I think your novel is damn fine stuff' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 327). When Pound, Yeats and George Moore were trying to get a Civil List grant for Joyce in 1915, Pound wrote, '. . . still it gives me a certain satisfaction to state that I consider Joyce a good poet, and *without exception* the best of the younger prose writers . . . His style has the hard clarity of a Stendhal or a Flaubert . . . He has also the richness of erudition which differentiates him from certain able and vigorous but rather overloaded impressionist writers' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 359). (Yeats's and George Moore's letters are found in the text, Nos. 35, 36, 37.) On 7 September 1915, after reading the final chapter of *A Portrait*, Pound again wrote to Joyce, 'Anyhow I think the book hard, perfect stuff. . . I think the book is permanent like Flaubert and Stendhal. Not so squarish as Stendhal, certainly not so varnished as Flaubert. In English I think you join on to Hardy and Henry James' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, pp. 364-5). At the same time Yeats wrote to Pound commenting that the novel is 'a very great book—I am absorbed in it' (*Letters*, II, p. 388), and to Edward Marsh that Joyce is a 'possible man of genius' (No. 36). Thus, the genius of *A Portrait* was recognized by important men of letters even before its complete appearance.

When the complete novel finally appeared in book form late in December 1916, published by B. W. Huebsch in New York, the editors of the *Egoist* classified the reviews under such headings as Drains, Opportunities of Dublin, Wisdom, Advantages of Irish Education, etc. Attacks were numerous and of a kind. They ranged widely throughout the field of condemnation, from inartistic composition, 'His story is lacking in incident, and the little that happens is so indefinitely treated, so swamped with vague discussion, that the result cannot be other than hazy and ineffective' (Italo Svevo had made somewhat the same comment in 1909 on the unimportance of the events and the aridity of observation in the first chapter, see No. 17); to 'another Irishman, in short, with a bit of genius and a mission'; to charges of dullness induced by 'sleeping through a series of confused and rather unpleasant dreams'.¹⁰ Characteristically, Stephen Dedalus's loss of faith was identified with Joyce's supposed own loss of faith. This began what soon grew to be almost a school of autobiographical Joyce criticism. Again, and again, reviewers were faced with the insurmountable problems of reconciling

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the sincerity, the mastery of style, and the enigmatic quality of the novel, with the fact that the book was 'unpleasant', 'nasty', 'futuristic', 'a negligible treatment of Irish politics, society and religion'.

Joyce had, indeed, anticipated most of these criticisms. With his uncompromising clarity of vision, he confided to his brother as early as 1908 that *A Portrait* would never be published, 'What I write with the most lugubrious intentions would probably be prosecuted in England as pornographical' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 274).

To balance such early criticism that Joyce was a 'clever novelist, but . . . he would be really at his best in a treatise on drains' (No. 40), there were a number of early perceptive reviews, notably those by H. G. Wells (No. 41), 'Solomon Eagle' (No. 48), John Macy (No. 52), Ezra Pound (No. 39), and John Quinn (No. 50). Also, Francis Hackett sought to place Joyce as part of, or apart from, the Irish literary background which, as a first-hand savant of Irish life, he knew so well. Hackett concludes his review with a typically Irish statement, 'Many people will furiously resent his candor, whether about religion or nationalism or sex', but then very untypically adds that 'candor is a nobility in this instance' (No. 45). An anonymous review in the *English Review* remarks that 'once more Ireland has given us a writer, a man of a soul and what seems to be a talent original and elusively stimulating, with a fine Irish veracity.' American reaction to the novel seems, in retrospect, more generous, as exemplified by the reviews of James Huneker, Francis Hackett, and H. L. Mencken. Mencken's pronouncement was remarkably prophetic that 'a Joyce cult now threatens'.¹¹

If this spectrum of various critical light seems a bit bewildering to the contemporary reader, he must realize that *A Portrait of the Artist* seemed very bold and enigmatic in 1917-18. The generation of critics which greeted the novel was not prepared for a realistic-impressionistic novel which had an artist-hero who was so personally cathartic, whose mind recorded significant as well as insignificant details and impressions in a combination of the symbolic and the realistic and in a form so candidly personal. It would be many years before the theories and novels of Conrad, Forster and Ford presented Joyce's significant patterns of meaning to that same generation of critics. Joyce was, even at this early date, a writer's writer.

By 1923, a year after the publication of *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist* was virtually forgotten and sales had virtually ceased. By 1930 the critics, no doubt baffled by 'Work in Progress' and somewhat overcome by the astonishing intricacies and wealth of information in Frank

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Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, and Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses, A Study*, and by *Ulysses* itself, turned back to *A Portrait* and began constructing such a critical apparatus around the novel that one recent critic is forced to admit that 'almost nothing can be said about *The Portrait* which is not trite'.¹² The same kind of symbol and source probing that was being concentrated on *Ulysses* and 'Work in Progress' was turned on *A Portrait*. Finally, Harry Levin's 1941 study, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, related the confessional-autobiographical *Portrait* to the European tradition of realism symbolism in Mann, Proust and Gide, thus assuring the novel's 'place' in literature.

This is surely not the place to rehearse the exigencies of *A Portrait* during the forties and fifties, except to note that symbol and source hunting continued, Stephen's aesthetic theory was debated, structure and cosmic pattern were analysed, and Wyndham Lewis and Hugh Kenner founded the 'Stephen-hating school' wherein Stephen Dedalus's callowness and sentimentality, as well as Joyce's irony, were established. *A Portrait* was well on its way to being a 'popular modern classic' primarily because so few people were reading or were able to read *Ulysses*. One of the main criteria Joyce envisioned for himself as a writer, and explicitly one of Stephen Dedalus's artistic tenets, was that of the unity of the artistic endeavour; it had clearly been overlooked. Each of Joyce's works presumes familiarity with every other work.

At least a word in passing should be said about *Stephen Hero*, the first draft version of *A Portrait*, edited by Theodore Spencer and published in 1945. Nearly everyone will concede that *A Portrait* is the economical final version of the embryonic *Stephen Hero*. Stephen Dedalus's character is essentially the same in both versions; the relationship between him and the author is changed. Joyce often reports, though he never comments or makes generalizations as he does in *Stephen Hero*. Furthermore, the difference between the two works is indicated by the way in which Joyce in the later work used symbolic allusiveness to evoke feelings directly. The use of this technique in *A Portrait* presents Stephen's life as a complete harmonious image. Edmund Wilson remarked in his review of *Stephen Hero* that 'Joyce's intellectual maturity, his singleness of purpose, his clarity of vision, are absolutely astounding in this "schoolboy's production", as he called it, written in his early twenties. Joyce was not a great artist yet, but he knew what it meant to be one and that was what he wanted to be.'¹³ In observing the difference of the language between the two versions, we become more aware of Joyce's consciousness of language. This was,

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after all, the feature that attracted the attention of Pound and Yeats to *A Portrait*, and it was the element that was subordinated after Joyce's death. This 'magnetization of style and vocabulary', in Richard Ellmann's phrase (*James Joyce*, p. 151), was the surest key to the language of *Ulysses* and what appeared to be the excessively conscious manipulation of style and language in *Finnegans Wake*.

If Stephen Dedalus has become not a particular young man, or an artist, but 'Every-boy' as Marvin Magalaner has suggested, perhaps it is owing to the 'hot-house' environment of Joycean experts. Certainly, *A Portrait* is not being accepted in the terms that Joycean criticism has so laboriously and exhaustingly presented it in. It is a 'modern' book which speaks to a 'modern' audience, albeit a younger modern audience than heretofore. It represents to today's readers the portrait of man, even of a particular man, James Joyce, and this in spite of fifty years of critical commentary.

Exiles

Joyce's early play, *A Brilliant Career*, has not survived, and little can be said about his dramatic theory, particularly its aesthetic adumbrations as he applied them to the writing of *Exiles*. Many critics have suggested that Joyce hypothesized his aesthetic theory in *A Portrait*, experimented with it in *Exiles*, and then applied it to its fullest limits in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. For, as in the two novels, adultery, homosexuality, the life of the artist, the union of the artist with those who love him, and Ibsenite women, are motifs in *Exiles*. The play found its first critic in Ezra Pound, who wrote to Joyce in September of 1915 that the play was 'exciting. But even to read it takes very close concentration of attention. I don't believe an audience could follow it to take it in, even if some damnd impractical manager were to stage it. . . . Roughly speaking, it takes about all the brains I've got to take in [the] thing' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 365). Yeats two years later commented in a letter to Joyce that he thought the play 'sincere and interesting', but not as good as *A Portrait* (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 405). And Stefan Zweig, after reading the published version, exclaimed that he thought the play 'a great artistic revelation' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 420). Although the play was published in May 1918, in both London and New York, it was owing to Zweig's influence that it received its first production in German translation in Munich on 7 August 1918 and was, in Joyce's own words upon reading a telegram describing the performance, 'a fiasco!' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 476).

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The reviews of the published play were, however, very favourable. Pound, commenting on the play even before its publication, in the *Drama* for February 1916, took the occasion to scourge the modern stage, dramatic agents and managers, and to use the play as a 'very solid basis' for his 'arraignment of the contemporary theatre'. He found the play 'unfit for the stage' not because it deals with adultery, or because it carries the mark of Ibsen, but because Joyce 'is not *playing* with the subject of adultery' and is dramatizing the 'age-long question of the relative rights of intellect, and emotion, and sensation, and sentiment' (No. 68). Desmond MacCarthy found the play 'remarkable' because it caused him to wonder and ponder over its characters and, outside the drama of Ibsen, such contemplation was rare (No. 71). Padraic Colum sensed that narrative rather than drama was Joyce's 'peculiar domain', but recognized the 'real and distinctive' character of Bertha (No. 72). Francis Hackett emphasized Joyce's 'intuitive and occult' gift and his 'genius for idiom and idiosyncrasy', but faulted the play for its unreality (No. 73).

Not all the reviews, by any means, were as favourable as these. W. P. Eaton, reviewing for the *Bookman*, found 'sewer gas' in the play. The reviewer for the *Freeman's Journal* complained that though Joyce obviously borrowed from Ibsen, he borrowed the wrong things—Joyce lacked the 'dramatic reality' found in Ibsen (No. 69). A. Clutton-Brock noted that the play was an 'unacted problem play', but that it had 'resources of spiritual passion and constructive power' which, with experience 'in the use of words and the management of scenes', might make a dramatist of Joyce. At the end of the review he calls upon the Stage Society or the Pioneers to produce the play (No. 70). The former's consideration of the play, with George Bernard Shaw as villain or hero depending upon which critic one reads, is indicative of the fluctuations of Joyce's reputation. Some time between 27 January and 11 July 1916 the Stage Society voted on accepting *Exiles*. The results of the Reading Committee's balloting are summarized by William White (Nos. 66, 67); at the bottom of the ballot in Shaw's hand is the statement 'Just the thing for the S. S.'

The *Little Review*, which was publishing a serialized version of *Ulysses* at the time, contained a symposium on *Exiles* in its January 1919 issue (No. 74). And when the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York produced the play in March of 1925, Robert Benchley summarized his dissatisfaction with the play in these words, 'We now understand why Mr. Joyce wrote *Ulysses* in the incoherent style that he did. When he

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puts his words together so that they make sense, as he has done in *Exiles*, they sound just like ordinary writing. Very, very ordinary writing.¹⁴ Joseph Wood Krutch's review of the same performance is much more perceptive. The characters, he said, 'stand on the threshold of contemporary thought', but they 'seem to have had so much intelligence and so little wisdom'.¹⁵ Not until 1932 did *Exiles* receive an extensive critical commentary, that of Francis Fergusson in *Hound & Horn* (No. 76). Fergusson analysed the influence of Ibsen, particularly Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*, and showed how Joyce went a step beyond Ibsen in freeing himself from typically Ibsenite dramatic conventions. Demonstrating the dramatic 'circling of the mind around a fixed, compelling thought, which is the Stephen-Rowan-Joyce thought of himself', Fergusson suggested that the 'Joycean cycle will doubtless not be understandable till long after it is completed'. Until then, the play is the 'most terrible and beautiful of modern plays'. The contrary view was expressed by Bernard Bandler the following year in *Hound & Horn* (No. 77). Since that time Joyce's only play has not received adequate attention because the critics very soon became absorbed first by *Ulysses* and then by the imponderables of *Finnegans Wake*.

1918 TO 1922: YEARS OF PROMISE AND PRODUCTIVITY

The four years from the publication of *Exiles* to the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 were marked by three events in Joyce's life. The gift of a large sum of money by Harriet Shaw Weaver enabled Joyce to write for the first time relatively unencumbered by financial pressures (though these by no means ceased with Miss Weaver's generosity, which was extended a number of other times in the future). This gift allowed Joyce time for the writing of *Ulysses*, which appeared in a serialized version in the *Little Review* from March 1918 until the *Review* was suppressed after the September-December 1920 issue. And, finally, Joyce and his family arrived in Paris in July 1920, with Pound's help, encouragement, and advance publicity.

Joyce's wartime exile in Zürich was enriched by what Richard Ellmann has labelled 'a great exfoliation of Joyce's creative powers' (*Letters*, II, p. 346). During this period he was writing *Ulysses* and corresponding regularly with Pound, Miss Weaver and Frank Budgen, whose book, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, is a far more adequate and detailed account of Joyce's writing than any other work. Since Miss Weaver's gift had been given anonymously, Joyce was curious about the identity of his benefactor. He wrote to her solicitors, Monro Saw &

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Company, inquiring about her and received this reply: ' . . . Briefly, the qualities in your work that most interest her are your searching piercing spirit, your scorching truth, the power and startling penetration of your "intense instant of imagination"' (Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 445). This was not unusual praise at this time, for with the appearance of *Ulysses* in the *Little Review*, Joyce began to receive something like 'comprehensive' treatment in the literary journals.

Pound's influence and reputation brought Joyce to the attention of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, the editors of the *Little Review*, who heroically began publishing *Ulysses*. Pound received the chapters from Joyce, often deleted lines, and then sent them on to New York. Joyce was aware of Pound's dissatisfaction with parts of the new novel. In a letter to Miss Weaver in July 1919, he wrote, 'Mr. Pound wrote to me rather hastily in disapproval but I think that his disapproval is based on grounds which are not legitimate and is due chiefly to the varied interests of his admirable and energetic artistic life' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 218). Yeats was also following the course of the Irish comet; in a letter to John Quinn, a New York lawyer, Joyce benefactor and later buyer of Joyce manuscripts (at prices Joyce considered too low), Yeats waxed enthusiastic: ' . . . his new story in the *Little Review* looks like becoming the best work he has done. It is an entirely new thing—neither what the eye sees nor the ear hears, but what the rambling mind thinks and imagines from moment to moment. He has certainly surpassed in intensity any novelist of our time' (No. 84). Padraic Colum, a contemporary of Joyce in Dublin, wrote one of the earliest articles on him. It is filled with reminiscences, praise for *Chamber Music* and the now rather curious judgement that *A Portrait* gives a 'glimpse into a new life—into the life that has been shaped by Catholic culture and Catholic tradition' (No. 81). One critical touchstone had been scratched. Another was exposed in Colum's story that in his youth Joyce had said to Yeats, 'We have met too late: you are too old to be influenced by me.'

A new edition of *A Portrait* in May 1918 prompted a summary of criticism and some new comments from Ezra Pound in the *Future* (No. 82). Pound noted a 'finer volume of praise for this novel than for any that I can remember', but also much 'impotent spitting and objur-gation'. Praising the novel as 'literature', Pound commented on Joyce's 'swift alternation of subjective beauty and external shabbiness, squalor, and sordidness'. He also found *Chamber Music* 'an excellent antidote for those who find Mr. Joyce's prose "disagreeable" and who at once fly . . . to conclusions about Mr. Joyce's "cloacal obsessions"'.

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Silvio Benco, writing in the Triestine journal *Umana* (No. 83) in July 1918, remarked on the 'precision and extreme lucidity of the draughtsmanship' of *A Portrait*. And in a very long and detailed criticism in the *Dial*, Scofield Thayer (No. 85) attempted to comment on all the works published up to that time (1918), though he chose to comment on *Ulysses* in terms of the similarity of style between the first chapters and *A Portrait*. He considered *Dubliners* Joyce's finest work and *A Portrait* a 'cross-section of contemporary Irish middle-class life'.

Jane Heap was Joyce's most outspoken advocate in America, and her replies to letters to the editor of the *Little Review* (and her letters themselves) are a gauge of American reaction to Joyce. According to Miss Heap, and here again we find a foretaste of later critical concerns, Joyce is not concerned with audiences and their demands. He is not obscene, for he is 'too religious about life' and, because he is aware of 'cerebral irradiations' he 'conceives and records'.¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, reviewing W. B. Yeats's *The Cutting of an Agate* in the *Athenæum* for July 1919, took the occasion to compare Yeats's 'crudity and egoism' with the 'exploitation to the point of greatness' of these qualities in the later work of Joyce:

Mr. Joyce's mind is subtle, erudite, even massive; but it is not like Stendhal's, an instrument continually tempering and purifying emotion; it operates within the medium, the superb current, of his feeling. The basis is pure feelings, and if the feelings of Mr. Yeats's were equally powerful, it would also justify his thought.¹⁷

Pound also compared Yeats and Joyce, finding in Joyce a 'concentration and absorption passing Yeats'—Yeats has never taken on anything requiring the condensation of *Ulysses* (No. 86). And Virginia Woolf quite generously suggests that in *A Portrait* we have the 'proper stuff for fiction', that it comes 'closer to life' and preserves 'more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves' writers 'by discarding most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelists' (No. 63). In *A Portrait* and in *Ulysses*, she finds a distinct sincerity.

As the previous paragraph indicates, this period witnessed a great exfoliation of Joyce's reputation. Joyce was discussed and hailed by many: by Evelyn Scott in the *Dial* (No. 87), by Ford Madox Ford (No. 65) and others. Richard Aldington, on the other hand, remarked that the achievement of *Ulysses* was remarkable, but the influence would be 'deplorable': 'From the manner of Mr. Joyce to Dadaisme is but a step, and from Dadaisme to imbecility is hardly that' (No. 93). Joyce's reputation among men of letters was greatly increased by the

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suppression of the *Little Review* for publishing *Ulysses*. John S. Sumner, secretary of the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice, lodged a complaint against the *Little Review* and its editors, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, for the publication of the 'Nausicaa' episode in the July–August 1920 issue. The *Review*'s lawyer, John Quinn, had, with Ezra Pound, urged Joyce to wait until the entire book was finished before publication, so that isolated passages would not be condemned as obscene. But the outcome of the trial was never in doubt in spite of the favourable testimony of such critics of stature as Scofield Thayer and John Cowper Powys. When the ultimate suppression occurred in 1921, Burton Rascoe in the *New Age* hoped that 'some reputable English publisher' would produce the book (No. 92). Such would not be the 'notable triumph for the Empire over America', as Rascoe suggested, for the book appeared in Paris in 1922, in America in 1934 and not in England until two years later.

But by the time the suppression trial started Joyce had arrived in Paris heralded by Pound (and by himself). Copies of his works were placed in 'strategic hands' and press notices were distributed. Offers to translate his works appeared, along with beds, free flats and an overcoat. Soon he met Sylvia Beach, the proprietress of the Paris bookshop, Shakespeare and Company, and the now famous agreement was made to publish *Ulysses* under her imprint. The campaign for the publication of *Ulysses* was unlike that waged for any other novel in history. Even help from Valéry Larbaud, distinguished *homme de lettres*, was enlisted, and in his often-quoted letter to Sylvia Beach in February 1921 we have the fountain-head of all *Ulysses* comment, 'I am *raving mad* over *Ulysses*' (No. 91). On 7 December 1921, two months before the publication of *Ulysses*, at Adrienne Monnier's bookshop—La Maison des Amis des Livres—the first full criticism of *Ulysses* and of all the previous works was presented to an enchanted (and, we note, carefully entrapped) audience (No. 118).

Ulysses

When the large, square, blue-covered and white-lettered *Ulysses* appeared in February 1922, it was an immediate sensation. The critics were, however, first bewildered by its lack of any apparent plan. The plan was a carefully withheld secret until Stuart Gilbert's *James Joyce's Ulysses* appeared in 1930. Even then, the scheme was not complete. None the less, Joyce allowed portions of the scheme to be 'leaked out', though as part of his publicity strategy, and he later admitted to Samuel

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Beckett that he may have 'over-systematized *Ulysses*' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 715). At the time of the writing of the book, however, Joyce seems to have had a very clear, general plan, he states:

It is an epic of two races (Israelite-Irish) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life) . . . It is also a sort of encyclopaedia. My intention is to transpose the myth *sub specie temporis nostri*. Each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole) should not only condition but even create its own technique (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, pp. 146-7).

How far short the reviewers fell from an understanding of these intentions is a key to Joyce's reputation in February 1922.

The sin of 'boredom' was raised by the *Pink 'Un* reviewer, boredom in the decent and the indecent passages (No. 96). James Douglas in the *Sunday Express* labelled Joyce 'a rebel against the social morality of Europe, which is based upon the Christian religion',¹⁸ a judgment for which he was attacked by Joyce 'advocates', Sisley Huddleston, Middleton Murry and Arnold Bennett. A reviewer for the *Evening News* suggested that the book was being purchased as an investment, which indeed it was, and that it had limited general appeal (No. 97), while the anonymous cry of the *Dublin Review* was '*écrasez l'infâme!*' (No. 100). Shane Leslie in the respected *Quarterly Review* found the book impossible to read, undesirable to quote, 'opposed to all ideas of good taste and morality', and a gigantic effort 'made to fool the world of readers' (No. 102). Joyce's reaction to this was that 'as a criticism or even an attack Mr. Leslie's article is rather ineffective but as a leading article . . . in the most authoritative review in the English-speaking world it is very effective in a way in which the writer did not at all intend' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 185). The exaggeration and the sensationalism of the reviewers can, however, be overemphasized.

The first favourable English review was Sisley Huddleston's in the *Observer*. He found Joyce a genius, but maintained that he would remain 'caviare to the general'. He emphasized the psychological advances Joyce had made and stressed that sex did not play such a vital part in the book (No. 104). The *Observer* review was a stimulus to sales, for the day after it appeared 145 letters came into Sylvia Beach's bookshop asking for prospectuses. Joyce's reaction to the review was, however, a cool one: 'I do not count the *Observer*,' he said, 'which was merely preparing the way' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 183). Misquoting (as Ernest Boyd was later to do also) Valéry Larbaud's statement that 'With this

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book Ireland makes a sensational re-entrance into high European literature', J. Middleton Murry sought to disprove this assertion. For, if a European work is an 'artistic acknowledgment of and submission to the social tradition of Europe', then Joyce's work is none of these things (No. 98). The reviews which most pleased Joyce were those by Edmund Wilson in the *New Republic*, Mary Colum in the *Freeman*, and Gilbert Seldes in the *Nation*. Wilson chose to argue to Ezra Pound's contention that Joyce is like Flaubert (No. 119), though he devoted most of his review to a discussion of the Homeric parallels, to the scale and microscopic fidelity of the chief characters and to the humour (No. 108). Mary Colum placed *Ulysses* in the 'Confession Class of Literature'—an autobiographical work which is also the life of a man (No. 109). She is supported to some extent by a letter from Stanislaus to James, written in August 1924, which concludes: 'It [*Ulysses*] is undoubtedly Catholic in temperament. This brooding on the lower order of natural facts, this re-evocation and exaggeration of detail by detail and the spiritual dejection which accompanies them are purely in the spirit of the confessional. . . .'¹⁹ Gilbert Seldes made the significant point that in *Ulysses* Joyce wears the dual mask (in Yeats's sense) of Bloom and Stephen, and acknowledges Joyce as 'possibly the most interesting and most formidable writer of our time' (No. 110).

In the *Outlook* and the *Bookman*, Arnold Bennett presented the middlebrow point of view. He showed that he had read Joyce's earlier works, had read Valéry Larbaud's article in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (an expanded version of his lecture of 7 December 1921), and had even read *Ulysses*. The suspicion always lingers that Joyce's reviewers did not read his books. Bennet found 'pervading difficult dulness' along with a 'mean, hostile, and uncharitable' vision of the world and its inhabitants. His final comment, however, is that 'in the finest passages it [*Ulysses*] is in my opinion justified' (No. 106). Joyce feared that the review would not help because Bennett had not mentioned the name and address of the publisher.

Valéry Larbaud's long article in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in April 1922, lent his prestige and that of the journal to Joyce. Many later errors might have been avoided if Larbaud had been read. Unlike Larbaud, Joyce's other significant French critic, Louis Gillet, of the equally prestigious *Revue des Deux Mondes*, wrote with little knowledge of Joyce's early works. He later reappraised his early views, however, and became a leading French spokesman for Joyce. Larbaud had read the earlier works, had benefited from discussing *Ulysses* with Joyce, and

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had seen the inextricable unity of Joyce's works. He emphasized the Homeric correspondences, the 'interior monologue', the method and material of the book, the relation to Rabelais, and the significance of the main characters, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom (No. 118).

Ezra Pound's essay, 'James Joyce et Pécuchet', which appeared in the June 1922 issue of the *Mercure de France*, established Joyce in the tradition of Flaubert, emphasized the satirical aspects and the form of the work, and first suggested that like Flaubert Joyce had learned that the best way to handle the imbecility and idiosyncrasy of his century was to make an encyclopedia of it. Pound also suggested the importance of the father-son theme, a concern which remained dormant for many years thereafter. Though he minimized the Homeric parallels, Pound found *Ulysses* an enormous, finely planned cosmic comment (No. 119).

The third most influential article on *Ulysses* (after Larbaud and Pound), T. S. Eliot's 'Ulysses, Order and Myth', did not appear until November 1923, in the *Dial*. Eliot was the first to suggest Joyce's scientific impersonality and the second, after Larbaud, to appreciate the significance of the method, the parallel to the *Odyssey* and the 'use of appropriate styles and symbols to each division'. Eliot, having read Pound, disposed of the latter's method as 'scaffolding erected by the author for the purpose of disposing his realistic tale' and also disposed of Richard Aldington's fear of Joyce's chaotic influence. He proposed that 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.' This would be a step 'toward making the modern world possible for art' (No. 120).

Joyce did not answer any reviews or criticisms, because he had his own ideas about what *Ulysses* was. This enormous tome which had started as a short story for *Dubliners*, was, he felt, 'an extremely tiresome book', but the only book he could then write (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 128). 'From my point of view,' he suggested, 'it hardly matters whether the technique is "veracious" or not; it has served me as a bridge over which to march my eighteen episodes' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 542). He admitted to a 'grocer's assistant's mind' (Ellmann, *Letters*, III, p. 304), and, in letters written when he was composing *Ulysses*, he supplied the motivation for the innovations in structure and style: the Sirens' episode is written with all the eight regular parts of a *fuga per caanonem* (Letters, I, p. 129); Nausicaa is written in a 'namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style with effects of incense, mariolatry, masturbation, stewed cockles, painter's palette,

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chit chat, circumlocution, etc. etc.' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 135). And when Benoist-Mechin wished to see the plan for the book, Joyce replied: 'If I gave it all up immediately, I'd lose my immortality. I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 535).

None the less, Joyce followed the progress of the book very closely, with his eye apparently on sales. He suggested additions to the collection of reviews Miss Weaver was preparing. He had planned to let Larbaud reveal his intentions in the December 1921 lecture, for he wrote to Miss Weaver that month, 'It will allow me to send out to the world in those parts where he uses critical exegesis certain suggestions as to the scheme and technique which I shall then have the pleasure of rehearsing and rereading when they have gone the rounds' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 199). He is reported to have said to Djuna Barnes, 'The pity is the public will demand and find a moral in my book, or worse they make take it in some serious way, and on the honor of a gentleman, there is not one single serious line in it.'²⁰ To Jacques Mercanton he admitted that in *Ulysses* 'there is no past, no future; everything flows in an eternal present.'²¹ But on the subject of the interior monologue and his desperate little scheme for the rehabilitation of Edouard Dujardin's having originated it, he said, 'I laugh at it today, now that I have had all the good of it. Let the bridge blow up, provided I have got my troops across.' And on the subject of *Ulysses*: 'Nonetheless, that book was a terrible risk. A transparent leaf separates it from madness.'²²

Perhaps it was the transparency of this leaf which provoked contemporary authors (with a few exceptions) to such hostility. Virginia Woolf found the book 'underbred', a book of a 'self taught working man', or of a 'queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples'. Even Eliot, in private, was not quite as approving as his *Dial* essay might indicate: 'Bloom tells us nothing. Indeed, this new method of giving the psychology proves to my mind that it doesn't work.' Katherine Mansfield, evidently, was troubled by Joyce: 'Oh, I can't get over a great great deal. I can't get over the feeling of wet linoleum and unemptied pails and far worse horrors in the house of his mind—He's so terribly *unfein*.' Bernard Shaw, whose famous thrift letter is presented in this volume (No. 94), wrote to the editor of the *Picture Post* in June 1939 denying that he was 'disgusted by the unsqueamish realism of *Ulysses*', as Geoffrey Grigson had reported in an earlier article (Ellmann, *Letters*, III, pp. 444-5, note 3).²³ The reactions of other contemporary

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writers like Gertrude Stein, Edmund Gosse and George Moore are equally worth noting (Nos. 125-31, 145).

There is no adequate but brief way to summarize the course of Joyce's reputation from 1922 up to the American publication of *Ulysses* in 1934. Richard Ellmann suggests that 'the ironic quality of Joyce's fame was that it remained a *gloire de cénacle*, even when the *cénacle* had swelled to vast numbers of people' (*James Joyce*, p. 541). Joyce was not generally read, although there were eight editions of *Ulysses* during this period. Primarily because his book was banned, his pornographic reputation soared, and copies of *Ulysses* were smuggled into England and America. Until Samuel Roth's piracy of *Ulysses* for his *Two Worlds' Monthly* in 1927, there were few American copies. Roth's piracy evoked a famous 'Ulysses Protest' which was signed by hundreds of the world's leading writers. This was also the period of the appearance of the first introductory books: Herbert Gorman's Joyce-written biography in 1924 and books by Paul Jordan Smith, Charles Duff and Louis Golding. Gilbert's *Study* suggested Joyce's conscious artistry for the first time. But, a too-conscious artistry which becomes almost a manipulation seemed a fearful prospect, particularly when 'Work in Progress' began to appear in 1927. Joyce the mysterious and Joyce the intentional confuser became the 'darling' of the critics. Even reputable German critics like Ernst R. Curtius, Bernhard Fehr, Carola Giedion-Welcker and Carl Jung, entered the foray (Nos. 202 and 212; 125, 200, 261 and 262; and 149, 164, 167-8, 201, 202). The French continued to assist at the *gloire*, but the voice of Italian criticism was scarcely heard. Even the Marxian critics Radek, Mirsky and Miller-Budnitsky entered the critical arena in the middle thirties, deploring Joyce for his bourgeois decadence and holding up socialist realism as an example for him (Nos. 265, 275, 279, 294). They were answered by James T. Farrell in a famous attack in 1935 (No. 288).

As early as November of 1922 Sylvia Beach could meet Joyce's suggestion for an article on *Ulysses* with the frank statement that nothing concerning him or a possible third edition should be printed (Gilbert, *Letters* I, pp. 195-6). None the less, the progress of Joyce's reputation marched onward. When Malcolm Cowley came to summarize the criticism of the 1924-34 period, he used the metaphor of a stone dropped into a pool: there was a moment of silence after *Ulysses*, the stone, was dropped, 'then all the frogs who inhabited the pool began to talk at once'.²⁴ Edmund Wilson summarized Joyce's reputation differently, however, in a review of Gorman's biography: there are those

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who stupidly denounce him and there are those who perpetuate esoteric follies. Future readers of posterity's criticism will not know which critic to admire the most.²⁵ The observance of the sixteenth of June became known as 'Bloom's Day' and was annually celebrated, provoking from Joyce the comment that 'I have to convince myself that I wrote that book' (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 216).

In 1927, however, the first major and significant blow at Joyce's rising reputation was delivered by Wyndham Lewis in his review *Enemy* and then in his *Time and Western Man* (No. 165). Joyce is, Lewis says, saturated with the 'time mind' which is inimical to the human arts. Joyce is a pernicious influence and Lewis attacked him on all sides. Joyce's reaction was fairly typical: 'Allowing that the whole of what Lewis says about my book is true, is it more than ten per cent of the truth?' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 608). When in November of 1931 Harold Nicolson proposed a series of talks on Joyce for the BBC, the outcry (led by Alfred Noyes and others) was such that the programmes were delayed for a month. A general protest arose, however, and Nicolson was finally allowed to go on provided he did not refer to *Ulysses* (No. 251).

Since *Ulysses* was banned, few sincere admirers of Joyce's early work had a means of bridging the gap between *A Portrait of the Artist* and 'Work in Progress'. This lapse was resolved by Judge John Woolsey's decision in December 1933 to allow *Ulysses* to be published in the United States, which it was in 1934. The American reviews were, generally, perceptive, owing to the work of English, French and American critics. This was, after all, the period of E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), which emphasized the importance of the mythological journey of Odysseus in the creation of Joyce's characters; of Joseph Warren Beach's *The Twentieth Century Novel* (1932), which examined the break with the entire historical tradition of the novel, and the influence of *Ulysses* on the technique and substance of the novel. It was followed by the period of David Daiches's *New Literary Values* (1936) and *The Novel and the Modern World* (1939), which, in examining all Joyce's works, pointed out the new technique in the building up of characters, the escape from a chronological time-sequence and the 'new and dangerous' treatment of language as a medium. As late as 1939, Edwin Muir, in *The Present Age*, stated that it was still difficult to judge *Ulysses*; but he very cogently summarized the influence *Ulysses* had had upon contemporary prose fiction up to that time: free association for verbal and imaginative freedom, use of legend (and myth) as a frame-

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work for action, use of the past and literary forms of the past to 'throw the present into relief', a learned approach to experience, and a view of human nature as timeless.

Critical commentary on *Ulysses* continued to appear in the thirties; but the book was eclipsed by *Finnegans Wake* in 1939. Studies have continued in structure and style, in themes, in naturalism and psychology, and in Joyce viewed as a social historian. To attempt to estimate Joyce's reputation in terms of *Ulysses* during the past three decades would be to catalogue the 'heavy freight' of criticism by which the novel seems occasionally obscured. It is a modern classic, no longer considered unorthodox or outspoken or the product of a madman. More and more, as *Ulysses* is viewed as a psychological novel, a verbal symbolic poem, a document of a disintegrating society, or a writer's compendium of techniques of fiction, it is used to determine whether Joyce was classical or romantic, medieval or modern, realistic or symbolic. Frank Kermode perhaps best estimated the present reputation of *Ulysses* in a 1959 review of Richard Ellmann's biography:

If you were ever flushed and excited by *Ulysses* you are probably now over forty; if you ever tried to live by it, over thirty. Under thirty, people seem to be a little bored by Joyce's endless experimentation, and also by the setting up of a polarity between prose and poetry which is rendered in terms of straight talk about the genitals or swooning pre-Raphaelite rhythms.²⁶

Joyce's 'greater reality' has declined in reputation even while the whole system and the whole world of itself, the art of *Ulysses*, is still there as it was in 1922. We all create our own meanings for *Ulysses*.

Work in Progress and Finnegans Wake

In March of 1923 Joyce began work on what was known until 1939 as 'Work in Progress'. The title of the work, *Finnegans Wake*, a reference to an Irish ballad concerning a hod carrier who is resurrected by whisky at his wake, was confided only to his wife. Although the work was published in parts, in *transition* and other journals, Joyce seems to have had a general notion of the entirety of the work. Others did not have this notion, and the publication of the first part, 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' (or *ALP* as it was known), in 1927, began seventeen years of dissatisfaction among former close friends and sympathetic critics. During this period Joyce wrote letters to Pound, Harriet Shaw Weaver and others, seeking encouragement, asking their opinions. Numerous strategic manoeuvres followed, unlike any of the publicity campaigns and

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strategies that had preceded his other works. He worked the fable of 'The Ondt and the Gracehoper' (*Finnegans Wake*, pp. 414-19) into the book as a defence against Wyndham Lewis's attack on him as a pernicious influence (No. 165). He published *Pomus Penyeach* in July 1927 to show that he could write in conventional grammar. He encouraged the publication in July 1929 of twelve essays explaining 'Work in Progress', the famous *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. He suggested that James Stephens finish 'Work in Progress' if he could not. In another area, he humorously sent Harriet Weaver some 'Advance press opinions' of *ALP*:

My father: he has gone off his head, I am afraid . . . My brother Stanislaus: What are you driving at. To make the English language quite incomprehensible. Literary bolshevism. Too flabby for my taste . . . E.P. [Ezra Pound]: F.M.F. [Ford Madox Ford]: E.W. [Ernest Walsh]: No acknowledgement . . . [Sisley] Huddleston: Why would the English printer not print it? (Gilbert, *Letters*, I, p. 235).

To Robert McAlmon, William Bird, Claud Sykes and others, he defended his book. Finally, in November 1926, Miss Weaver having carefully, guardedly and sympathetically sought to understand what Joyce was doing, raised her own doubts:

But, dear sir . . . the worst of it is that without comprehensive key and glossary such as you very kindly make out for me, the poor hapless reader loses a very great deal of your intention; flounders, helplessly, is in imminent danger, in fact, of being as totally lost to view as that illfated vegetation you mention . . . would it be utterly against the grain, your convictions and principles to publish (when the day comes), along with an ordinary edition, also an annotated edition (at double to treble price, say?) (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 596).

This key or glossary was not part of Joyce's plan, and it was not until 1944 that *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* by Campbell and Robinson appeared. But Joyce was 'trying to tell the story of this Chapelized family in a new way' using the elements that any novelist might use: 'man and woman, birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death' but building 'many planes of narrative with a single esthetic purpose'.²⁷ Part of his intention with this work, as with *Ulysses*, was to keep critics busy for three hundred years unravelling the skein. He defended the book as a cyclical, night-dream life, the complexity necessary to the theme; a book of pure music, a book to make its readers laugh. In retrospect, *Finnegans Wake* is the logical extension of the use of consciousness in *Dubliners*, of unconsciousness in *A Portrait*

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and *Ulysses*, leading to the mind asleep in *Finnegans Wake*. To represent this night-third of human life, he could not use a 'wideawake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot' (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 597).

Miss Weaver, however, became less guarded in her reaction: '... I am made in such a way that I do not care much for the output from your Wholesale Safety Pun Factory nor for the darkness and unintelligibilities of your deliberately-entangled language system. It seems to me you are wasting your genius' (Ellmann, *Letters*, III, p. 154, note 2). Joyce was, then, more and more aware of the hostility that was building about his experiment, just as he was aware of the yeoman work being done in explanation by the writers for *transition*, the Paris organ of the Revolution of the Word group, led by Elliot Paul and Eugène Jolas. Others like Samuel Beckett, Stuart Gilbert, Louis Gillet, Jacques Mercanton also attempted to try to explain the 'Work in Progress'. Robert McAlmon reports of the awe and respect, and his own bewilderment, shown by the select group which gathered to hear Joyce read *ALP*. And he also mentions one of the few surviving comments by Ernest Hemingway on Joyce (No. 206).

The critical reaction to the serial publication of 'Work in Progress' aroused hostility in critics other than the *transition* group. The exception is Edmund Wilson's early and enlightened essay in *Axel's Castle*. Wilson, relying heavily on the suggestive and ground-breaking essays in *Our Exagmination*, discussed the importance of the night and the subconscious, the language, the hero and the 'plot', and attempted to show that the most bewildering elements of 'Work in Progress' were actually exaggerated elements from *Ulysses*. The reviews included in this volume of 'Anna Livia Plurabelle', of 'Haveth Childers Everywhere' and of 'Tales Told of Shem & Shaun' indicate well the adverse opinions Richard V. Chase summarized later: that the book is irreverent, anti-intellectual, and tries to destroy the past; that it is coterie literature and not a novel; that it is a book of pedantic and irresponsible word-play; that it is a parochial curiosity because it is based on the technical elements of Vico, Freud and Jung; and that it is not worth the effort to read Joyce's language.²⁸ Much of the adverse criticism was provoked by the association of Joyce with the Revolution of the Word movement which declared that the writer expresses; he does not have to communicate; in other words, 'the plain reader be damned'. Joyce's virtuosity in the use of words was later either seen as an end in itself, or else praised for its 'orchestral magnificence' as an organic part of the creation. Critics lamented the 'barrage of learning, authority, research,

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collation, argument, thesis and hypothesis' produced by admirers in support of Joyce's dream book.

The reviewers of 'Anna Livia Plurabelle', or *ALP*, emphasized Joyce's method and the new language. Many relied on Padraic Colum's 'Preface' to the New York edition for information about Joyce's conception of the River Liffey, the place of the episode in the whole work, the music of the episode, and Joyce's 'de-formations and the re-formations of words' (No. 177). The unsigned reviewer in the *Irish Statesman* (probably George Russell) remarked that, while a chapter was exciting, the entire book 'may prove a labour too great for any to peruse to its end' (No. 181). A controversy between Eugène Jolas and Sean O'Faolain erupted in the pages of *transition* and of the *Irish Statesman* over Joyce's language, a controversy which O'Faolain later (in 1930) resolved by a further examination of the merits that lay in Joyce's language (Nos. 178, 182-4, 190). Gerald Gould, one of Joyce's earliest advocates, objected to the 'fundamental aesthetic dishonesty' of Joyce's new sort of writing (No. 179). The *Times* reviewer chose to emphasize continued Irish dissatisfaction with the English language (No. 180). But by 1929 and 1930, when *Haveth Childers Everywhere* and *Tales Told of Shem & Shaun* appeared, reviewers were more willing to let Joyce have his way until the finished book appeared. This attitude reflects the lucidity of the essays in *Our Exagmination* and the indebtedness of all critics in the thirties to that collection. Such subjects as the analogies of 'Work in Progress' with the kennings of Eddic poets, the presentation of a cyclical history according to the Viconian theory (another bridge to march troops over, Joyce believed), the composite nature of the characters and of the language, the etymological innovations, the use of time and space, the Catholic element, and an explication of selected paragraphs from 'Work in Progress'—these were the topics of invention the Joyce disciples placed before the critical world. These topics were, as Clive Hart has observed, a 'progression away from generalities and towards an increasingly detailed examination of the text'.²⁹

When *Finnegans Wake* finally appeared in 1939, the reviews were, in general, apologetic, tentative, confused and confusing, and 'arrogant'. Eugène Jolas reported later that the reviews that most pleased Joyce were those by William Troy in the *Partisan Review* (No. 312), Harry Levin in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* (No. 311), Edmund Wilson's two essays in the *New Republic*, later incorporated into *The Wound and the Bow*, Alfred Kazin in the *New York Herald Tribune* (No. 307), and Padraic Colum in the *New York Times* (No. 300). Harold

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Nicolson acknowledged in the *Daily Telegraph* that he had 'failed to penetrate the meaning of this enormous allegory'. Harry Levin was to apply Dante's fourfold allegorical interpretation to *Finnegans Wake* in one of the most interesting and lastingly valuable essays on the work. The *Irish Times* found it inconceivable that Joyce should have spent so many years upon a hoax (Oliver St. John Gogarty considered the book the 'most colossal leg pull in literature' (No. 301)). Both Harry Levin and Edmund Wilson assumed that the book had a meaningful basis, a sound aesthetic and logical plan, and that through an assembling of its details, the basic pattern of the work could be described. These reviewers are the antidote to the reviewers (and this group includes most of the other reviews found in this volume) who found Joyce either mad, a charlatan, or an exponent of destruction. Joyce, in the meantime, encouraged articles from such friends as Louis Gillet (No. 321) and Jacques Mercanton. But, alas, the world that Joyce was supposedly trying to destroy was destroying itself. *Finnegans Wake* was overshadowed by a world war, Joyce went into exile again in Zürich, where he died in January 1941. He did not live to discover that within a few years, even at the remaindered price of \$1.75, *Finnegans Wake* was not being read.

In the years since its publication *Finnegans Wake*, a myth, the 'Comic Synthesis', the gigantic catalogue—the encyclopedic extension of *Ulysses*, the incredibly rich and rewarding multi-dimensional world vision, has continued to pose a challenge for critics. There are, with good reason perhaps, only a small group of dedicated explorers of *Finnegans Wake*, but the significant studies by Adaline Glasheen, Clive Hart, James Atherton and Fritz Senn have greatly assisted in our 'examination' of the 'funferall'.

THE CRITICAL TRADITION AFTER 1941

If the tremendous impositions of scholarship upon Joyce's works have been in some ways detrimental, they have also in the twenty-seven years since Joyce's death produced notable achievements. We now have an accurate (or nearly so) text of *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, the complete (almost) *Letters* and a definitive biography by Richard Ellmann, *The Critical Writings*, *The Epiphanies* and *Stephen Hero*, and Professor Ellmann's edition of *Giacomo Joyce*. There is probably still no better general introduction to Joyce than Harry Levin's *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, though there are excellent books on the separate novels. The earlier works are neglected, while *Finnegans Wake* has

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become increasingly a scholar's creative plaything. It appears that scholars, with exceptions of course, will continue to avoid the labour of explanation and investigation that the book demands. The Irish are apparently the only ones who are able to see Joyce as real, but few Irishmen will heed Elizabeth Bowen's exhortation in her critical obituary of Joyce, 'Let us strip from Joyce the exaggerations of foolish intellectual worship he got abroad, and the notoriety he got at home, and take him back to ourselves as a writer out of the Irish people, who received much from our tradition and was to hand on more.'³⁰ Because the Irish refuse to perform this function, the outpourings of Joyce scholarship have. The function grows each year, and occasionally it may seem that 'our Human Conger Eel' is being drowned in unreality and in intricacy, or in what Robert M. Adams has called the 'logically arranged machinery of glittering, sterile edges'.³¹ It is up to Joyce scholarship in the next period of growth, the next stage already 'in progress', to discover in the entire interwoven fabric of Joyce's art precisely how he tried himself against the 'powers of the world'. This is a peculiarly difficult task, as it was for the critics whose views are collected in this volume, because one of the 'powers' is criticism itself.

NOTES

1. Herbert M. McLuhan, 'A Survey of Joyce Criticism', *Renascence*, IV (1951), 13.
2. Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (1959), pp. 154-5; hereafter cited in the text as Ellmann, *James Joyce*.
3. Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 241, and in Richard Ellmann, ed., *The Letters of James Joyce*, Volume II (1966), p. 182; hereafter cited in the text as Ellmann, *Letters*.
4. This is a point Yeats had also observed, with the corollary that it is the poetry of a 'young man who is practising his instrument, taking pleasure in the mere handling of the stops', quoted in Ellmann, *Letters*, II, p. 23.
5. Quoted in Stuart Gilbert, ed., *The Letters of James Joyce*, Volume I (1957), p. 67; hereafter cited in the text as Gilbert, *Letters*.
6. John Kaestlin, 'Joyce by Candlelight', *Contemporaries*, No. 2 (Summer 1933), 47-54; quoted in Marvin Magalaner and Richard M. Kain, *Joyce: The Man, The Work, The Reputation* (1956), pp. 48-9. I am extremely indebted to this excellent summary of Joyce's reputation for many of my remarks in this Introduction. My only hope is that I have not been slavishly dependent upon this truly remarkable book.

NOTES

7. Herbert Howarth, 'Chamber Music and Its Place in the Joyce Canon', in *James Joyce Today*, edited by Thomas F. Staley (1966), p. 11.
8. Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, edited by Richard Ellmann (1958), p. 116.
9. Wyndham Lewis, 'Ezra: The Portrait of a Personality', *Quarterly Review of Literature*, V, No. 2 (1949), 136.
10. Comments taken respectively from the *Bellman*, XXI (3 March 1917), 245, the *English Review*, XXIV (May 1917), 478, and the *Future* (June 1917), 237.
11. H. L. Mencken, in the *Smart Set*, LII (August 1917), n.p.
12. Marvin Magalaner, 'Reflections on *A Portrait of the Artist*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, IV, No. 4 (Summer 1967), 343.
13. Edmund Wilson, 'Stephen Hero', *New Yorker* (6 January 1945), 63.
14. Robert Benchley, 'Back to Form', *Life*, LXXXV (12 March 1925), 20.
15. Joseph Wood Krutch, 'Figures of the Dawn', *Nation*, CXX (March 1925), 272.
16. Jane Heap, *Little Review*, V, No. 2 (June 1918), 54, 57.
17. T. S. Eliot, *Athenæum* (4 July 1919), 553.
18. James Douglas, 'Beauty—And the Beast', *Sunday Express* (28 May 1922), 5.
19. Ellmann, *Letters*, III, p. 104.
20. Djuna Barnes, 'James Joyce', *Vanity Fair*, XVIII (April 1922), 65.
21. Jacques Mercanton, 'The Hours of James Joyce, Part I', *Kenyon Review*, XXIV (1962), 702.
22. Mercanton, op. cit., p. 725.
23. Virginia Woolf's comment in her *Writer's Diary* (1954), pp. 47, 49; T. S. Eliot's comment in Virginia Woolf, *Writer's Diary*, p. 50; Katherine Mansfield's comment in *Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, edited by J. Middleton Murry (London, 1928), Volume II, p. 173.
24. Malcolm Cowley, 'James Joyce', *Bookman*, LIX (July 1934), 518.
25. Edmund Wilson, 'An Introduction to Joyce', *Dial*, LXXVII (November 1924), 430.
26. Frank Kermode, *Puzzles and Epiphanies* (1963), p. 86.
27. These comments are reported in Eugène Jolas, 'My Friend James Joyce', in *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, edited by Seon Givens (1948), pp. 11-12.
28. Richard V. Chase, 'Finnegans Wake: An Anthropological Study', *American Scholar*, XIII (Autumn 1944), 418.
29. Clive Hart, 'Finnegans Wake in Perspective', in *James Joyce Today*, edited by Thomas F. Staley (1966), p. 137.
30. Elizabeth Bowen, 'James Joyce', *Bell*, I, No. 6 (March 1941), 49.
31. Robert M. Adams, 'The Rent Knife Blade: Joyce in the 1960s', *Partisan Review*, XXIX (1962), 518.

1. George Russell (Æ) on James Joyce

1902

George Russell (Æ), in a letter to W. B. Yeats (? 11 August 1902).

From *The Letters From Æ* (1961), ed. Alan Denson, p. 43; also in *The Letters of James Joyce*, Volume II (1966), ed. Richard Ellmann, pp. 11–12.

. . . I want you very much to meet a young fellow named Joyce whom I wrote to Lady Gregory about half jestingly. He is an extremely clever boy who belongs to your clan more than to mine and more still to himself. But he has all the intellectual equipment, culture and education which all our other clever friends here lack. And I think writes amazingly well in prose though I believe he also writes verse and is engaged in writing a comedy which he expects will occupy him five years or thereabouts as he writes slowly. [George] Moore who saw an article of this boy's says it is preposterously clever. [The essay is 'The Day of the Rabblement,' a 1901 attack on the Irish National Theatre Society.] . . . He is I think certainly more promising than Magee [William K. Magee who wrote under the pseudonym of John Eglinton]. . . .

2. Æ on Joyce

1902

George Russell (Æ), in a letter to Sarah Pruser (15 August 1902).

From Æ, *Letters*, ed. Alan Denson, pp. 42–3; also in Joyce, *Letters*, Volume II, ed. Richard Ellmann, p. 13.

. . . I expect to see my young genius on Monday and will find out more about him. I wouldn't be his Messiah for a thousand million pounds. He would be always criticising the bad taste of his deity. . . .

3. Stanislaus Joyce on his brother

1903

Extract from *The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce* (1962), ed. George H. Healey, pp. 13–14.

One of the earliest, 1903, critical comments on Joyce is this one by his brother Stanislaus in his *Diary* (see Introduction, p. 3).

His intellect is precise and subtle, but not comprehensive. He is no student. His artistic sympathy and judgment are such as would be expected in one of his kind of intellect—if he were not more than a critic, I believe he would be as good a critic of what interests him as any using English today. His literary talent seems to be very great

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indeed, both in prose and in verse. He has, as Yeats says, a power of very delicate spiritual writing and whether he writes in sorrow or is young and virginal, or whether (as in 'He travels after the wintry sun') [from 'Tilly', published in *Pomes Penyeach*] he writes of what he has seen, the form is always either strong, expressive, graceful or engaging, and his imagination open-eyed and classic. His 'epiphanies'—his prose pieces (which I almost prefer to his lyrics) and his dialogues—are again subtle. He has put himself into these with singular courage, singular memory, and scientific minuteness; he has proved himself capable of taking very great pains to create a very little thing of prose or verse. The keen observation and satanic irony of his character are precisely, but not fully, expressed. Whether he will ever build up anything broad—a drama, an esthetic treatise—I cannot say. His genius is not literary and he will probably run through many of the smaller forms of literary artistic expression.

4. Æ on Joyce

1903

George Russell (Æ), in a letter to T. B. Mosher (3 November 1903).

From Æ, *Letters*, ed. Alan Denson, p. 50.

. . . Another boy named Joyce writes with perfect art poems as delicate and dainty as Watteau pictures. . . .

5. Stanislaus on Joyce

1904

Extract from *The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce* (1962), ed.
George H. Healey, p. 23 (see Introduction, p. 4).

Diary entry for 29 February 1904: . . . I have no doubt that he is a poet, a lyric poet, that he has a still greater mastery of prose. He may be a genius—it seems to me very possible—but that he has not yet found himself is obvious.

6. Æ on Joyce

1905

George Russell (Æ), in a letter to T. B. Mosher (? April 1905).
From *Æ, Letters*, ed. Alan Denson, pp. 55–6.

. . . We have a young scamp named Joyce here who writes with a more perfect art than anyone except Yeats who is I believe going to publish a book of lyrics. He gave it [*Chamber Music*, published in 1907] to Grant Richards who collapsed, and I have not heard anything more of it as the poet has decamped to the continent with a barmaid. It will be a good book when it appears. . . .

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7. Arthur Symons on Joyce

1906

Letter to Elkin Mathews (9 October 1906), quoted in Karl Beckson and John M. Munro, 'Letters from Arthur Symons to James Joyce: 1904-1932', *James Joyce Quarterly*, IV, No. 2 (Winter 1967), 96-7. Also in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (1959), p. 240.

Elkin Mathews was to publish *Chamber Music* in 1907.

. . . Would you care to have, for your Vigo Cabinet, a book of verse which is of the most genuine lyric quality of any new work I have read for many years? It is called *A Book of Thirty Songs for Lovers* [the title was subsequently changed to *Chamber Music*], and the lyrics are almost Elizabethan in their freshness, but quite personal. They are by a young Irishman called J. A. Joyce. He is *not* in the Celtic Movement, and though Yeats admits his ability he is rather against him because Joyce has attacked the movement. . . I am offering you a book which cannot fail to attract notice from everyone capable of knowing poetry when he sees it . . .

8. Thomas Kettle, review, *Freeman's Journal*

1 June 1907

Extract from 'Review', *Freeman's Journal* (1 June 1907), n.p.

. . . His work, never very voluminous, had from the first a rare and exquisite accent. One still goes back to the files of *St. Stephen's*, to the *Saturday Review*, the *Homestead*, to various occasional magazines to find these lyrics and stories which, although at first reading so slight and frail, still hold one curiously by their integrity of form. *Chamber Music* is a collection of the best of these delicate verses, which have, each of them, the bright beauty of a crystal. The title of the book evokes that atmosphere of remoteness, restraint, accomplished execution characteristic of its whole contents.

There is but one theme behind the music, a love, gracious, and, in its way, strangely intense, but fashioned by temperamental and literary moulds, too strict to permit it to pass over into the great tumult of passion. The inspiration of the book is almost entirely literary. There is no trace of the folklore, folk dialect, or even the national feeling that have coloured the work of practically every writer in contemporary Ireland. Neither is there any sense of that modern point of view which consumes all life in the language of problems. It is clear, delicate, distinguished playing with harps, with wood birds, with Paul Verlaine.

But the only possible criticism of poetry is quotation.

[quotes poems I and XXVIII]

Mr. Joyce's book is one that all his old friends will, with a curious pleasure, add to their shelves, and that will earn him many new friends.

9. Arthur Symons, review, *Nation*

22 June 1907, i, 639

'A Book of Songs,' *Nation*, I, No. 17 (22 June 1907), 639 (see Introduction, p. 4).

I advise everyone who cares for poetry to buy *Chamber Music*, by James Joyce, a young Irishman who is in no Irish movement, literary or national, and has not even anything obviously Celtic in his manner. The book is tiny; there are thirty-six pages, with a poem a-piece. And they are all so singularly good, so firm and delicate, and yet so full of music and suggestion, that I can hardly choose among them; they are almost all of an equal merit. Here is one of the faintest:

Gentle lady, do not sing
Sad songs about the end of love;
Lay aside sadness and sing
How love that passes is enough.

Sing about the long deep sleep
Of lovers that are dead, and how
In the grave all love shall sleep:
Love is a weary now.

No one who has not tried can realise how difficult it is to do such tiny, evanescent things as that; for it is to evoke, not only roses in mid-winter, but the very dew on the roses. Sometimes we are reminded of Elizabethan, more often of Jacobean, lyrics; there is more than sweetness, there is now and then the sharp prose touch, as in Rochester, which gives a kind of malice to sentiment:

For elegant and antique phrase,
Dearest, my lips wax all too wise;
Nor have I known a love whose praise
Our piping poets solemnise,
Neither a love where may not be
Ever so little falsity.

There is a rare kind of poetry to be made out of the kind or unkind insinuations of lovers, who are not always in a state of rapture, even when the mood comes for singing, and may, like this love-poet, be turned to a new harmony—

And all for some strange name he read,
In Purchas or in Holinshed.

There is almost no substance at all in these songs, which hardly hint at a story; but they are like a whispering clavichord that someone plays in the evening, when it is getting dark. They are full of ghostly old tunes, that were never young and will never be old, played on an old instrument. If poetry is a thing to be overheard, these songs, certainly, will justify the definition. They are so slight, as a drawing of Whistler is slight, that their entire beauty will not be discovered by those who go to poetry for anything but its perfume. But to those who care only for what is most essentially poetry in a poem, they will seem to have so much the more value by all that they omit. There is only just enough life in them to come into existence, but these instants are, in Browning's phrase, 'made eternity.'

I have little hope that the rare quality of these songs will captivate many readers. Such a song as 'Bright cap and steamers,' or 'Silently she's combing,' ought to catch every fancy, and the graver pieces ought to awaken every imagination. But if anything in art is small, and merely good, without anything but that fact to recommend it, it has usually to wait a long time for recognition. People are so afraid of following even an impulse, fearing that they may be mistaken. How unlikely it seems, does it not, that any new thing should come suddenly into the world, and be beautiful?

10. Unsigned notice, *Bookman*

June 1907, xxxii, 113

A little book of poetry which charms, provokes criticism, and charms again. Mr. Joyce has a touch reminiscent of the sixteenth century poets, with here and there a break in his lines' smoothness which can only be smoothed by an old-time stress on the syllable, such as Vaughan and Herbert demanded. At times there are bold liberties taken with rhyme and rhythm; but there is so much of music and quaintness in the little volume that we give praise instead of censure.

II. Opinions of *Chamber Music*

1907

Press notices of *Chamber Music*, privately printed at Trieste, quoted in Joyce, *Letters*, Volume II, ed. Richard Ellmann, pp. 332-3, note 3.

Joyce had a printer in Trieste print up these excerpts from the reviews of *Chamber Music* which were inserted in press copies of *Dubliners* in 1914.

The reviews by Arthur Symonds (No. 9), T. M. Kettle (No. 8) and in *Bookman* (No. 10) are not included here. The extracts are Joyce's.

Chanel in the *Leader*: Mr. Joyce has a wonderful mastery over the technique of poetry. It is not without supreme skill that he produces lines of such apparent ease and simplicity, every word in its right place, the whole beautiful in its unadorned charm with a faint subtle fragrance of earthly loveliness. . . . Mr. Joyce flows in a clear delicious stream that ripples. . . . Mr. Joyce complies with [sic] none of my critical principles: he is, in truth, entirely earthly, unthinking of the greater and the further, though let me say in justice that the casual reader will see nothing in his verses to object to, nothing incapable of an innocent explanation. But earthly as he is, he is so simple, so pretty, so alluring, I cannot bring myself to chide him.

Daily News: Light and evanescent, pretty and fragile. . . . His poems are attempts at much: he has tried to express one art in terms of another. His aim has been to catch in his rhythms something of the music of pipe or lute as distinct from the verbal music of the great lyrical masters. . . . His poems have at once the music and the want of music of a harpstring played on by the winds in some forest of Broceliande.

Evening Standard: Pretty lyrics with a delusive title.

Manchester Guardian: A welcome contribution to contemporary poetry. Here are thirty-six lyrics of quite notable beauty. . . . Something of the spirit of Waller and Herrick . . . grace and simplicity . . .

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an elegance and delicacy that are as uncommon as they are perilous. At their best they reveal a rare musical quality. His muse is a gentle tender spirit that knows smiles and tears, the rain, the dew and the morning sun.

Nottingham Guardian: Lovers of verse will delight in many of the pieces for their simple unaffected merit. *Chamber Music* has a tuneful ring befitting the title and both the rhythm and the smoothness of his lines are excellent.

Glasgow Herald. ... verse which has an old-fashioned sweetness and flavour, Mr. Joyce sings of the coming and, apparently, inexplicable going of love. The most are but snatches of song and one has to be penetrated by the subtle music of them before their poetic value is perceived. Once that is felt their merit is beyond dispute though only lovers of poetry will be likely to see or acknowledge it. Verse such as this has its own charm but where will it find its audience?

Irish Daily Independent: . . . Music in verse, poems, sweet, reposeful and sublime; poems that lying in the shade amid the scent of new-mown hay one would read and dream on, forgetful of the workaday world.

Scotsman: A volume of graceful verse: it contains some little gems of real beauty.

Country Life: A very promising little volume.

12. Unsigned review, *Egoist*

June-July 1918, V, No. 6, 87

An unsigned review of the second edition, Elkin Mathews, 1918.

This is a second edition; first published in 1907. This verse is good, very good; though it never would have excited much attention but for Joyce's prose, still it would in any case have worn well. We infer from it that Mr. Joyce is probably something of a musician; it is lyric verse, and good lyric verse is very rare. It will be called 'fragile,' but is substantial, with a great deal of thought beneath fine workmanship.

[quotes the first three lines of the second stanza of 'When the shy star . . .' (IV) and the second stanza of 'Be not sad . . .' (XIX)]

13. 'M.A.' review, *New Republic*

8 March 1919, xviii, No. 227, 191

This anonymous review, entitled 'The Lyrics of James Joyce', is a review of the B. W. Huebsch (New York) edition.

This is James Joyce's one book of verse, a small book written some ten years ago. And beyond that fact, which is indicative in itself, there are many other indications within the thirty-four lyrics that he is not essentially a poet. There is little of the dreamer in them, nothing of the enthusiast. They make their fragile points by turns of evanescent thought,

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or rhetoric thrice refined. If we may judge his personality by the zest and spontaneity of his plays and novels it is fair to say that he was in verse a shadow of himself and others, a dilettante playing a safe and pleasant game. The charm the lyrics possess, a charm undeniable and unfailing, is due in great measure to a skill in rhythms that, if not unique, is arresting, and a cleverness that has lent itself momentarily to the touching of chords at once light and wistful, whimsical and sadly austere. Not that it was a conscious effort, to be repeated at will. It is youth that makes these things possible to men not singers by inner compulsion.

The music of the lyrics is of a casual ballad quality, seemingly artless, but full of subtly gained effects. The shifting stress, the naively lengthened line, the half-rhyme, are used with a surety that could be no other than deliberate. And the consciousness of the art is emphasized by the perfection with which variations of the formal rondeau are used. There is formality and device throughout, though well disguised, and a courtliness that reminds one of Herrick or Lovelace:

Now, wind, of your good courtesy
I pray you go,
And come into her little garden
And sing at her window. . . . [XIII]

One-half stanza, of excellence compact, yet it reminds you of too many other excellent things. Of Rossetti, of Yeats, and of phrases and rhythms more archaic, a trace of each. It would be a pretty problem to unravel all the strains of influence that meet, say in the thirtieth poem, perhaps the best:

Love came to us in time gone by
When one at twilight shyly played
And one in fear was standing nigh—
For Love at first is all afraid.

We were grave lovers. Love is past.
That had his sweet hours many a one;
Welcome to us now at the last
The ways that we shall go upon.

But though we might unravel them to our satisfaction we should still find it beautiful, and not alone with imported tricks. For the very lack of emotion that holds Joyce's hand from further poetic achievement lent him here a special grace. He was ill at ease in this alien medium; he

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would not venture to put himself on paper; he avoided committing himself. And the result is a sentiment so faint that it seems fairy-like, a madrigal from the stars, a summer wind in the harp that leaves you groping for the minstrel. A mere disembodied third person, aloof, detached, is the author of *Chamber Music*. And now that Joyce is grown up past recall we shall seek him under heaven, or in the depths of the subconscious, quite in vain.

14. Morton D. Zabel on *Chamber Music*

1930

'The Lyrics of James Joyce', *Poetry*, xxxvi (July 1930), 206-13.

A review of both *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach*. This is the first extensive criticism of Joyce's poetry (see Introduction, p. 5).

The interest aroused by the ever-expanding design of the *Work in Progress*, as it appears in quarterly installments in *transition*, as well as by the inclusion of three segments of this prose epic among the poems which the Messrs. Ford and Aldington have gathered in their recent *Imagist Anthology*, 1930, is probably sufficient reason for recalling that among Joyce's achievements is a small group of lyrics which certain readers still claim as his most beautiful work. Throughout his career Joyce has been regarded in many quarters as fundamentally a poet. . . . His first published book was the collection of lyrics, *Chamber Music* (1907), and in earlier poems like *Tilly* (1904) he had sketched in himself the familiar traits of poetic adolescence, enraged at the stupidity of life:

Boor, bond of the herd,
Tonight stretch full by the fire!
I bleed by the black stream
For my torn bough.

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. . . But, conventional definitions apart, his novels lack specific poetic elements, as well as poetry's absolute sublimation of experience. It is equally apparent that his lyrics are the marginal fragments of his art, minor in theme and too often, for all their precise and orderly felicities, undecided in quality. To the thirty-six poems in *Chamber Music* he added the thirteen which in 1927 came from the press of Shakespeare & Co., Paris, under the title *Pomes Penyeach*, eight having originally appeared in 1917 in *Poetry* [Vol. X (May 1917) and Vol. XI (Nov. 1917)]. Though an extremely small part of his entire production, this body of lyrics is large enough to disclose changes and adjustments through which Joyce's mind has passed, as well as the creative impulses by which it has been guided.

The verse in *Chamber Music* has not the finality of single intention. Its deficiencies have been ascribed to the fact that, where it does not reflect the vaporous mysticism of the early Yeats, Æ, and the other Irish revivalists, it is a patent imitation of the Elizabethan song-books. Examination reveals in these poems little more than a superficial verbal similarity to the poetry of the Celtic twilight whose obvious accents appear only in XXXVI, 'Oh, it was out by Donnycarney.' Whatever Joyce retained from the bardic songs (or their modern translations) in the way of simplified expression and elegiac motives, was overlaid with the formal decorum, yet enlivened by the lucid sensibility, of Jonson and Herrick, or of those poems by Byrd, Dowland, and Campion which he knew from boyhood. To read *Chamber Music* with its familiar refrains is to revive sensations first gained from the *Book of Airs* or *A Paradise of Dainty Devices*. Yet the overlay of artificial elegance never conceals wholly a nerve of sharp lyric refinement. Little more than elegance is present in VI:

[quotes the first stanza]

Adjusted to the courtly tone of Suckling and the Cavaliers, it reappears in XII:

[quotes the first stanza]

It is clear that in such poems one has, instead of direct and unequivocal poetic compulsion, a deliberate archaism and a kind of fawning studiousness which attempt to disguise the absence of profounder elements. Yet the archaism which exists at its extreme level in X and XI, or, phrased as *vers de société*, in VII, was converted into Joyce's own material in two or three lyrics which, for spiritual suavity and

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logic, approach the minor work of Crashaw, or at least of Crashaw's descendants in the nineteenth century, Thompson and Lionel Johnson. One of them is XXVI:

[quotes the entire poem]

It has been remarked before, by Edmund Wilson, that Joyce was closer to continental literature during his apprenticeship than to current English and Irish. In a writer so intentionally derivative, affiliations are natural. They can probably be traced here to the kind of lyric impressionism that grew, by a curious process of inversion, out of Dehmel and Liliencron toward the broken accent of expressionism as one finds it in Werfel, Joyce's closest ally among the figures of later German poetry. Through his lively contemporaneity and his curious sympathy with modern French art, Joyce was undoubtedly attracted by the inferential subtlety of the Symbolists. But his lyricism, like Dowson's or Rilke's, betrays too much diffusion to enable him to approach Mallarmé's faultless penetration or Rimbaud's intense discipline . . . But Joyce was testing his lyric gift by a stricter training, by a reading of Rimbaud and Samain perhaps, or of Meredith. The latter's homelier phrases in *Love in a Valley* are echoed in XXIV, and his unexpected power to order the material of allegory lies behind the last poem in *Chamber Music*, the magnificent lyric whose Yeatsian tendency has yielded to the vigor of Meredithian symbolism as one finds it in *Lucifer in Starlight* or *The Promise in Disturbance*:

I hear an army charging upon the land
And the thunder of the horses plunging, foam about their knees.
Arrogant, in black armor, behind them stand,
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.

The later lyrics in *Pomes Penyeach* go so far in integrating these disparate elements that Joyce achieved in the little booklet his own poetic character for the first time. The sedulous understudy which kept him from attaining intimacy or a unifying personality in his earlier work is largely avoided. The style may be defined by devices. It consists in the marked alliteration of *On the Beach at Fontana* and *Tutto e sciolto*; in the persistent periphrasis of words like *rockvine*, *greygolden*, *slimesilvered*, *moongrey*, *loveward*, and *loveblown* (all suggestive of *Ulysses*); and in the transparent choral tonality of *She Weeps over Ragoon* and *Watching the Needleboats at San Sabra*. Archaisms are still present, and the humid emotionalism of impressionist verse still prevails in *Alone* and *Bahnhofstrasse*. But the pattern is constricted by severer form, the lyric accent

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gains edge, and the emotional content is more secure in its power. Ultimately the tragic surge and wrath of *Ulysses* finds voice in *A Prayer* and in *A Memory of the Players in a Mirror at Midnight*:

[quotes the second stanza]

Even within this narrow range, Joyce's eclecticism, the long reach of his artistic interests, is revealed. Yet one sees likewise the limitations which have kept his lyric output small. The real functions of free-verse have escaped him, and his lyric ideas must otherwise submit to conventional stanzaic formalities. Diffusion mars the outline of many poems, and unnatural sobriety and caution hinder the spontaneity of others. But in four or five pages he has achieved a complete fusion of rapture and lucidity, and written with mastery. *Simples* must rank as one of the purest lyrics of our time:

[quotes the entire poem]

The lyric motive and discipline have not been forgotten by Joyce among the problems and ingenuities of his prose epics. Wherever *Ulysses* avoids parody or satire, it is likely to soar in a lyric utterance; the river symphony at the beginning of the *Work in Progress* is one of the brilliant phonetic evocations in modern literature. His power to synthesize and formulate the swarming resources of his mind has demanded prose for its proper extension. Yet the poetic temper which has played an indubitable part in his career has given us, by the way, a small offering of exquisite poems, valuable both as diversions of one of the first literary geniuses of our day, and as lyrics which at their best have the mark of classic beauty upon them.

15. Louis Golding on Joyce's poetry

1933

'A Sidelight on James Joyce', *Nineteenth Century & After*,
cxiii (April 1933), 491-3, 496-7 [491-7].

. . . The James Joyce canon officially begins with the publication in 1907 of a collection of thirty-six poems entitled *Chamber Music*. . . .

I state that the canon *officially* begins with *Chamber Music*, not merely because it was the first work published by Joyce through the ordinary channels, not merely because the most solemn consideration of Joyce as major artist usually includes a respectful or even enthusiastic criticism of *Chamber Music*, but because Joyce himself has made no effort to disavow it. On the contrary, he avows it very explicitly. In the page that faces the title-page of his most famous work, *Ulysses*, it stands up in bold type heading the brief list of works 'by the same writer.' Moreover, so late as 1927, in the year when the first section of the cryptic *Work in Progress* appeared, *Chamber Music* appeared again. It is true it had another name. It was called *Pomes Penyeach* this time . . . From the title of the minute volume, from the fact that *Ulysses* had been finished in 1921, from the fact that *Work in Progress* was in progress, the reader would have been justified in expecting a terrifying distillation of that variety of Rive-Gauche-Greenwich-Village poetry which, consisting to an appreciable extent of figures and signs of punctuation, seems to the uninitiate as coherent as a blind man's lackadaisical tapplings upon a typewriter.

But it was not that variety of poetry which met the eye. You read in a poem entitled *Flower Given to My Daughter* and written in Trieste in 1913:

Frail the white rose and frail are
Her hands that gave
Whose soul is sere and paler
Than time's wan wave.

In *Alone*, a poem written in Zürich in 1916, a year when the same

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author was engaged upon a prose masterpiece which exalts him among the most important artists of our day, you read:

The sly reeds whisper to the night
A name—her name—
And all my soul is a delight,
A swoon of shame.

There are better poems, far better, in this volume. Indeed, the best is the earliest, and was written in Dublin in 1904, the very year in which the celebrated June 16 occurred in which is comprehended the whole action of *Ulysses*. The best is the first, so that in his lyric verse undeliberately, as in *Work in Progress* deliberately, Joyce confutes the categories of time. But the point is not that there are better poems than *Alone* and *A Flower Given to My Daughter* in *Pomes Penyeach*. The point is that there are poems so bad as those; the point is, that Joyce is writing *Chamber Music*, however exiguously, all his life long; the point is, not that he turns out infrequently a fairly beautiful poem, but that he is perpetuating and re-rendering poems so thin, so mawkish, usually so derivative, as those I have quoted—from stage to stage across a career in which, as a prose artist, he exercises so masculine, so subtle, so versatile, so courageous an intellect, in which, as a prose artist, he not merely handles his medium with incomparable skill, but creates it in a fashion associated with very few artists besides himself . . . How much more enigmatic do the two enigmas of *Chamber Music* and *Work in Progress* become when we try—as we must, for Joyce allows no alternative—to explain them in the terms of a single creative personality! We cannot ignore *Chamber Music* because Joyce does not. And Joyce does not, I believe, because the key to Joyce, or to Stephen Dedalus (the name he gives himself in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), is locked in it, more truly than the key to Shakespeare is locked up in the Sonnets . . . But Stephen Dedalus is the theme of James Joyce from the beginning to the end. In *Chamber Music* he sings his pitiful little songs. In *Dubliners* we tread his streets and rub shoulders with his familiars. The light moves from the circumference into the centre in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In *Exiles* his heart is shown divided between two bodies. In *Ulysses* he is incorporated into myth and attains immortality. His grin, disembodied, extends across the dislocated firmament of *Work in Progress*.

What, then, is the secret hidden away in *Chamber Music* and the much tinier volume *Pomes Penyeach*, which, though twenty years elapse

LOUIS GOLDING ON JOYCE'S POETRY 1933

between the writing of its first and last poem, laboriously tots up to fifteen pages?

[Mr. Golding refers, at length, to Miss Rebecca West's essay 'The Strange Necessity' and the 'secret' she discovers: Joyce is a 'great man who is entirely without taste' (No. 199). Golding discusses the tastelessness of the poems.]

I say of poetry that it is the exercise of the subconscious mind, because, whatever the source of it, the element of irresponsibility is stronger in poetry than in the other forms of aesthetic composition in words, even though the conscious mind may quite scientifically, throughout the whole process, organise the technique of its expression. That Stephen Dedalus did not give up all hope that he might some day exercise in poetry the subconscious mind is proved by the pathetic retention of the scraps of verse which constitute *Pomes Penyeach*. It is as if he hoped that by muttering them over to himself he might some day suddenly, in the fortunate coincidence of kabbalistic syllables, find that the iron doors opposed to him had drawn apart. In the meanwhile, the conscious, the prose, mind exercised itself in the production of *Dubliners*, the *Portrait*, *Exiles*, and, supremely, in *Ulysses*. And now at length, as it seems to me, having given up all hope of release through poetry and the subconscious mind, having exorcised his demon so far as prose and the mind permit (producing during that process the greatest prose work in our time), he is endeavouring to exercise in *Work in Progress* a type of cognition which can be described only as a 'superconscious mind.' That is to say, he himself is conscious, and expects his readers to be conscious, on a number of planes and in a number of dimensions at the same time. In space, the river Liffey is simultaneously Ganges and Indus and all earth's rivers; Waterloo is the Garden of Eden. In time, Gladstone and Noah are simultaneously his protagonists. In speech, a given word may be compounded out of elements introduced from three or four languages. In philosophy, the tongue of the Frenchman Bergson projects from the mask of the Neapolitan Giambattista Vico. In approach, the reader must listen intensely with his ears to the spoken achievement, apprehend on the page the composition and disposition of the printed word, rise to the attack with all he possesses of erudition, lie passive to the reception of overtones, undertones, crude jokes, suave innuendo.

It is extremely difficult. But it is not so difficult, I assure you, as the thirty-first poem in *Chamber Music*:

Chamber Music

Along with us the summer wind
Went murmuring—o, happily!—
But softer than the breath of summer
Was the kiss she gave to me.

There is a sense in which the most tortuous poem of Robert Browning is a nursery rhyme compared with that!

16. Arthur Symons on Joyce's poetry

1933

'Epilogue', in *The Joyce Book* (1933), ed. Herbert Hughes, pp. 79–84; appeared earlier in *Two Worlds' Monthly*, i, No. 1 (1926), 86–92.

The article begins by quoting from Symons's review of *Chamber Music* (No. 9).

. . . Not long ago I received a delightful letter from Joyce written in Paris in which he says (and I venture to give his own words): 'As for *Pomes Penyeach* I don't think they would have been published but for Mrs Symons's suggestion when she was with me'. She was right. There is in these poems a rare lyrical quality, with touches of pure magic, and some give me the effect of a warm wind wafting the scent of heather over me when on the coast of Cornwall I used to lie near the edge of a cliff, basking in the intense heat of the sun. There I could watch the sea, where, when the wind urges it, it heaves into great billows, that rise up green and tilt over, and, as the waves roll up to the shore, they leap suddenly at the rocks, and hammer at them with a loud voluminous softness, and fall back like a blown cataract, every drop distinct in the sunlight. And at times the sea was the colour of lilac deepening into rose, and it lay like a field of heather washed by the rain.

ARTHUR SYMONS ON JOYCE'S POETRY 1933

Wisdom, it has been said, is justified in her children: and why not Joyce? Words and cadences must have an intoxication for him, the intoxication of the scholar; and in his own wandering way he has been a wild vagabond, a vagabond of the mind and of the imagination. He knows that words are living things, which we have not created, and which go their way without demanding from us the right to live. He knows that words are suspicious, not without malice, and that they resist mere force with the impalpable resistance of fire or water. They are to be caught only with guile or trust. And his voice can be heard like a wandering music, which comes troublingly into the mind, bringing with it the solace of its old and recaptured melodies. And I am haunted by the strange wild beauty of two of his poems, *Flood* and *Nightpiece*. Take, for instance, this stanza:

Saraphim,
The lost host awaken
To service till
In moonless gloom as each lapses muted, dim,
Raised when she has and shaken
Her thurible.

Dubliners was published in 1914; *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1916; *Exiles*, a *Prose Play in Three Acts* in 1918. He wrote *Ulysses* (a book of 732 pages) in Trieste, Zürich, and Paris, between 1914 and 1921—an incredible achievement when one considers the difficulties he experienced during its composition. The novel was printed at Dijon in 1922 by Maurice Darantière, and for the simple reason that the printers in Paris who began to set up the type refused to go on with it on account of what seemed to them masses of indecencies. Some of our modern craftsmen are aghast at passion, afraid of emotion, only anxious that the phrase and the sentiment should be right. Joyce is totally exempt from such fears as these: he is afraid of nothing; no more than his Stephen Dedalus, who said—and the words are the writer's own words, and all the more significant for that: 'I will not serve that which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in my art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile, and cunning'. The man and his most creative work are an unholy mixture of these three singular qualities. Without cunning he could never have written *Ulysses*. Without exile he might never have created what he has created—nor in fact could

Chamber Music

Byron or Shelley or Landor. Byron was an exile from his country, equally condemned and admired, credited with abnormal genius and abnormal wickedness, confessing himself defiantly to the world, living with ostentatious wildness at Venice.

We live and die,
And which is best, you know no more than I.

All the wisdom (experience, love of nature, passion, tenderness, pride, the thirst for knowledge) comes to that in the end, not even a negation. He also suffered, as Pater and Joyce and myself have suffered, from that too vivid sense of humanity which is like a disease, that obsession to which every face is a challenge and every look an acceptance or a rebuff. How is content in life possible to those condemned to go about like magnets, attracting or repelling every animate thing, and tormented by restlessness which their own presence communicates to the air around them? This magnetic nature is not given to man for his happiness. It leaves him at the crowd's mercy, as he ceaselessly feels the shock of every disturbance which he causes them. Driving him into solitude for an escape, it will not let him even then escape the thought of what in himself is so much of an epitome of humanity, for 'quiet to quick bosoms is a hell'.

Joyce's vocabulary is unusually large and it is used too recklessly, but in a surprisingly novel, personal manner; and as for the craftsman, he has never curbed himself to a restraint in the debauch of words, still sufficiently coloured and sounding for an equally personal and novel effect; and with this a daring straightforwardness and pungency of epithet which refreshes one's thirst. Take for instance *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

[quotes from *A Portrait*]

. . . Joyce's prose is in a sense fascinating; there is no doubt that he has been and that he will be considered the most complex literary problem of this generation; and, apart from his intricate and elaborate subtleties, it seems to me that he has made such gigantic steps that the only possible comparison which has been hazarded is with Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, itself a satire of so tremendous a nature, and yet withal an unfinished satire, that, when I look backward, I turn to the greatest satire ever written, the *Gargantua* of Rabelais.

[discusses Mallarmé and the 'modern epic' form of the novel]

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. . . Worshipping colour, sound, perfume, for their own sakes, and not for their ministrations to a more divine beauty, Joyce stupefies himself on the threshold of ecstasy. And Joyce, we can scarcely doubt, has passed through the particular kind of haschisch dream which this experience really is. He has realized that the great choice, the choice between the world and something which is not visible in the world, but out of which the visible world has been made, does not lie in the mere contrast of the subtler and grosser senses. He has come to realize what the choice really is, and he has chosen. In his escape from the world, one man chooses religion, and seems to find himself; another, choosing love, may seem also to find himself; and may not another, coming to art as to a religion and as to a woman, seem to find himself not less effectually? The one certainty is, that society is the enemy of man, and that formal art is the enemy of the artist. We shall not find ourselves in drawing-rooms or in museums. A man who goes through a day without some fine emotion has wasted his day, whatever he has gained in it. And it is so easy to go through day after day, busily and agreeably, without ever really living for a single instant. Art begins when a man wishes to immortalize the most vivid moment he has ever lived. Life has already, to one not an artist, become art in that moment. And the making of one's life into art is after all the first duty and privilege of every man. It is to escape from material reality into whatever form of ecstasy is our own form of spiritual existence. There is the choice; and our happiness, our 'success in life', will depend on our choosing rightly, each for himself, among the forms in which that choice will come to us.

17. Italo Svevo on Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist*

1909

Italo Svevo (Ettore Schmitz), in a letter to Joyce (8 February 1909). From Joyce, *Letters*, Volume II, ed. Richard Ellmann, pp. 226–7.

Schmitz describes his reaction upon reading the first three chapters of *A Portrait of the Artist*.

Really I do not believe of being authorised to tell you the author a resolute opinion about the novel which I could know only partially. I do not only allude to my want of competence but especially to the fact that when you stopped writing you were facing a very important development of Stephen's mind. I have already a sample of what may be a change of this mind described by your pen. Indeed the development of Stephens childish religion to a strong religion felt strongly and vigorously or better lived in all its particulars (after his sin) was so important that no other can be more so. I like very much your second and third chapters and I think you made a great mistake doubting whether you would find a reader who could take pleasure at the sermons of the third chapter. I have read them with a very strong feeling and I know in my own little town a lot of people who would be certainly stroke by the same feeling. Every word of these sermons acquires its artistic significance by the fact of their effect on poor Stephen's mind . . . I object against the first chapter. I did so when I had read only it but I do so still more decidedly after having known the two others. I think that I have at last also discovered the reason why these two chapters are for me so beautiful while the first one which surely is of the same construction, by the same writer who has surely not changed his ways, written evidently with the same artistic aims, fails to impress me as deeply. I think it deals with events devoid of importance and your rigid method of observation and description does not allow

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you to enrich a fact which is not rich by itself. You should write only about strong things. In your skilled hands they may become still stronger. I do not believe you can give the appearance of strength to things which are in themselves trivial, not important. I must say that if you had to write a whole novel with the only aim of description of everyday life without a problem which could affect strongly your own mind (you would not choose such a novel) you would be obliged to leave your method and find artificial colours to lend to the things the life they wanted in themselves. . . .

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18. An Irish view of *Dubliners*

1908

Joseph Hone, 'A Recollection of James Joyce', *Envoy*, v (May 1951), 44-5. Joyce's difficulties with Maunsel & Company are discussed in the Introduction, p. 8.

It was in 1908—the summer, I think—that I read Joyce's *Dubliners* in manuscript. The stories were written out in cheap notebooks in a copperplate hand that would have won for a schoolboy a prize in calligraphy. They were handed to me by George Roberts, the managing-director of Maunsel & Co., a publishing firm of which I was then a member. Roberts was a very good judge of a book, besides being a fine printer; but one, at least, of the stories gave him pause: such is my recollection. This was 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room,' in which Dublin's grave councillors are depicted in discussing, among other matters, the private life of King Edward VII . . . I took the manuscript home, the issue still undecided, and I am ashamed to think of the length of time I had it in my possession. A month or two at least. It visited with me the house of a friend near Bray, Victor Le Fanu, a nephew of the novelist, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, the agent for Lord Meath's estates, and in my mind's eye I can still see it lying open on the table of his book-room, for I had invited his opinion upon it. Le Fanu, formerly a famous rugby international, was a good classical scholar, and in the midst of his country pursuits he found time to read a great deal. Kipling, Meredith, and Stevenson were his favourite novelists, and I did not expect that he would take very kindly to *Dubliners*. Nor did he; the life described was off his beat. But he read the stories carefully, and recognising their remarkable quality, took more interest in them than in the usual Maunsel publications.

¹ For later criticism of *Dubliners* see Nos. 50, 52, 82, 85, 87, 118.

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Apparently, Joyce learned that I had been given it to read, and on my way home, while stopping at Marseilles, I had a letter of complaint from him, dated Trieste, and forwarded to me from Dublin. In my reply I may have asked him whether he would assent to the exclusion of 'Ivy Day' from the collection; but, at all events, whatever it was that I said, it furnished him with a pretext for submitting the story in the next year, after King Edward's death, to his successor, George V. Subsequently, he published an account of his grievance against Maunsel and of his appeal to Caesar (which of course was abortive) in a communication to Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Féin*; but I was out of Ireland then, and only heard of this long afterwards, when someone told me, or I read somewhere, that he had quoted 'A Mr. Hone writing from Marseilles' in his covering letter to the King. I have never consulted his version of the episode, and I must confess that I feel a disinclination to do so now, though my memory might be thereby refreshed. . . .

19. Symons on *Dubliners*

1914

Letter to Joyce (29 June 1914), quoted in Karl Beckson and John M. Munro, 'Letters from Arthur Symons to James Joyce: 1904-1932', *James Joyce Quarterly*, iv, No. 2 (Winter 1967), 98.

This letter is in reply to a copy of *Dubliners* Joyce had sent Symons.

No, I have not forgotten you. I still have your verses here. I find a great deal to like in *Dubliners*—unequal as the short stories are, but original, Irish, a kind of French realism, of minute detail, sordid; single sentences tell: I like the kind of abrupt style in the book. 'Counterparts' is quite fine—grim humour—a sense of Dublin as I saw it—a lurid glare over it. It gave me a sensation of Fountain Court and the pubs. But the best is the last: the end imaginative. . . .

20. Unsigned review, *Times Literary Supplement*

18 June 1914, 298

Dubliners is a collection of short stories, the scene of which is laid in Dublin. Too comprehensive for the theme, the title is nevertheless typical of a book which purports, we assume, to describe life as it is and yet regards it from one aspect only. The author, Mr. James Joyce, is not concerned with all *Dubliners*, but almost exclusively with those of them who would be submerged if the tide of material difficulties were to rise a little higher. It is not so much money they lack as the adaptability which attains some measure of success by accepting the world as it is. It is in so far that they are failures that his characters interest Mr. Joyce. One of them—a capable washerwoman—falls an easy prey to a rogue in a tramcar and is cozened out of the little present she was taking to her family. Another—a trusted cashier—has so ordered a blameless life that he drives to drink and suicide the only person in the world with whom he was in sympathy. A third—an amiable man of letters—learns at the moment he feels most drawn to his wife that her heart was given once and for all to a boy long dead.

Dubliners may be recommended to the large class of readers to whom the drab makes an appeal, for it is admirably written. Mr. Joyce avoids exaggeration. He leaves the conviction that his people are as he describes them. Shunning the emphatic, Mr. Joyce is less concerned with the episode than with the mood which it suggests. Perhaps for this reason he is more successful with his shorter stories. When he writes at greater length the issue seems trivial, and the connecting thread becomes so tenuous as to be scarcely perceptible. The reader's difficulty will be enhanced if he is ignorant of Dublin customs; if he does not know, for instance, that 'a curate' is a man who brings strong waters.

21. Unsigned review, *Athenæum*

20 June 1914, 875

Mr. George Moore says in his *Confessions*, if our memory does not deceive us, that when he and a certain French writer are dead no more 'naturalistic' novels will be written. Whether this is one of his characteristic outbursts of candour as to his and his friend's abilities, or merely a statement to the effect that novelists as a whole have no taste for such writing, we need not discuss. But we can frankly say that Mr. Joyce's work affords a distinct contradiction of the saying.

The fifteen short stories here given under the collective title of *Dubliners* are nothing if not naturalistic. In some ways, indeed, they are unduly so: at least three would have been better buried in oblivion. Life has so much that is beautiful, interesting, educative, amusing, that we do not readily pardon those who insist upon its more sordid and baser aspects. The condemnation is the greater if their skill is of any high degree, since in that case they might use it to better purpose.

Mr. Joyce undoubtedly possesses great skill both of observation and of technique. He has humour, as is shown by the sketch of Mrs. Kearney and her views on religion, her faith 'bounded by her kitchen, but if she was put to it, she could believe also in the banshee and in the Holy Ghost.' He has also knowledge of the beauty of words, of mental landscapes (if we may use such a phrase): the last page of the final story is full evidence thereto. His characterization is exact: speaking with reserve as to the conditions of certain sides of the social life of Dublin, we should say that it is beyond criticism. All the personages are living realities.

But Mr. Joyce has his own specialized outlook on life—on that life in particular; and here we may, perhaps, find the explanation of much that displeases and that puzzles us. That outlook is evidently sombre: he is struck by certain types, certain scenes, by the dark shadows of a low street or the lurid flare of an ignoble tavern, and he reproduces these in crude, strong sketches scarcely relieved by the least touch of joy or repose. Again, his outlook is self-centred, absorbed in itself rather; he ends his sketch abruptly time after time, satisfied with what he has done,

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brushing aside any intention of explaining what is set down or supplementing what is omitted.

All the stories are worth reading for the work that is in them, for the pictures they present; the best are undoubtedly the last four, especially 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room.' The last of all, 'The Dead,' far longer than the rest, and tinged with a softer tone of pathos and sympathy, leads us to hope that Mr. Joyce may attempt larger and broader work, in which the necessity of asserting the proportions of life may compel him to enlarge his outlook and eliminate such scenes and details as can only shock, without in any useful way impressing or elevating, the reader. . . .

22. Gerald Gould on *Dubliners*

1914

New Statesman, iii (27 June 1914), 374-5.

It is easy to say of Gorky that he is a man of genius. To say the same of Mr. James Joyce requires more courage, since his name is little known; but a man of genius is precisely what he is. He has an original outlook, a special method, a complete reliance on his own powers of delineation and presentment. Whether his powers will develop, his scope widen, his sympathies deepen, or not—whether, in short, his genius is a large one or only a little one, I cannot pretend to say. Maturity and self-confidence in a first book (and I believe that, in prose, this is Mr. Joyce's first book) contain a threat as well as a promise. They hint at a set mode of thought rather than a developing capacity. Certainly the maturity, the individual poise and force of these stories are astonishing. The only recent work with which they suggest comparison is *The House with the Green Shutters*, and even that was very different, for one heard in it the undertone of human complaint—its horrors were partly by way of

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expressing a personal unhappiness; while Mr. Joyce seems to regard this objective and dirty and crawling world with the cold detachment of an unamiable god.

He has plenty of humour, but it is always the humour of the fact, not of the comment. He dares to let people speak for themselves with the awkward meticulousness, the persistent incompetent repetition, of actual human intercourse. If you have never realised before how direly our daily conversation needs editing, you will realise it from Mr. Joyce's pages. One very powerful story, called 'Grace', consists chiefly of lengthy talk so banal, so true to life, that one can scarcely endure it—though one can still less leave off reading it. Here is one of the liveliest passages:

[quotes from 'Grace']

You see the method? It is not employed only in conversation. The description of mood, of atmosphere, is just as detailed and just as relentless. Horrible sordid realities, of which you are not spared one single pang, close in upon you like the four walls of a torture-chamber. It is all done quite calmly, quite dispassionately, quite competently. It never bores. You sometimes rather wish it did, as a relief.

The best things in the book are 'Araby', a wonderful magical study of boyish affection and wounded pride, and 'The Dead', a long story (placed at the end) in which we begin with a queer old-fashioned dance, where the principal anxiety is whether a certain guest will arrive 'screwed,' and are led on through all the queer breathless banalities of supper and conversation and leave-taking till we find ourselves back with a husband and wife in their hotel bedroom, the husband's emotion stirred, the wife queerly remote and sad, remembering the boy, Michael Furey, whom she had loved and who had died because of her. To quote the end without the innumerable preparatory touches that prepare for it seems unfair; yet it must be quoted for its mere melancholy beauty:

[quotes from 'The Dead']

Frankly, we think it is a pity (perhaps we betray a narrow puritanism in so thinking) that a man who can write like this should insist as constantly as Mr. Joyce insists upon aspects of life which are ordinarily not mentioned. To do him justice, we do not think it is a pose with him: he simply includes the 'unmentionable' in his persistent regard.

23. Unsigned review, *Everyman*

3 July 1914, xc, 380

Mr. James Joyce writes with a sense of style that makes his work distinctive. *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories dealing with undercurrents of Irish character. The author understands the technique of his craft to perfection, and uses words as a sculptor uses clay. Every phrase is pregnant with suggestion, but the suggestion for the most part is unpleasantly and curiously tinged with a pessimism that finds virility and purpose only in the power of evil. 'A Painful Case,' one of the best-written sketches in the volume, strips life of all hope of consolation and leaves the reader faced by a cold, cruel egotism that finds expression in perpetual self-exultation. 'Two Gallants' reveals the shuddering depths of human meanness. The men, villainous of soul and repugnant of aspect, trade on the affections of young servant-girls, and the story reproduces the hopes of the one who waits the results of the wiles of the other. Even for these outcasts some hope might remain. But the author, with a ruthless callousness, decides they shall be doomed and damned. The book may be styled the records of an inferno in which neither pity nor remorse can enter. Wonderfully written, the power of genius is in every line, but it is a genius that, blind to the blue of the heavens, seeks inspiration in the hell of despair.

24. Unsigned review, *Academy*

11 July 1914, lxxxvii, 49

In the matter of literary expression these sketches—of which the book contains fifteen in all—are akin to the work of Mr. Cunninghame Graham and of Mr. George Moore; there is a clarity of phrasing and a restraint such as characterises the work of these two authors, and in every sketch atmosphere is so subtly conveyed that, without mention of a street or of a jaunting car, we feel Dublin about us as we read. In one, 'Counterparts,' is power enough to make us wish for a novel from Mr. Joyce's pen, and in the earlier, schoolboy stories are all the dreaming and mystery of an imaginative boy's life. The book is morbid, to a certain extent, in its tone, but it is of such literary quality that we forgive the defect for the sake of the artistic value. The work is not all morbid, however, for here and there are flashes of humour, rendered more forceful by their settings. Altogether, this is a book to recommend, evidently written by a man of broad sympathies and much human understanding. . . .

25. Ezra Pound on *Dubliners*

1914

“‘Dubliners’ and Mr. James Joyce,’ *Egoist*, i, No. 14 (15 July 1914), 267. Also appeared in Pound’s *Pavannes and Divisions* (1918), pp. 156–60, and in *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (1954), ed. T. S. Eliot, pp. 399–401. For an account of Pound’s assistance to Joyce, see Introduction, pp. 4, 8–10.

Freedom from sloppiness is so rare in contemporary English prose that one might well say simply, ‘Mr. Joyce’s book of short stories is prose free from sloppiness,’ and leave the intelligent reader ready to run from his study, immediately to spend three and sixpence on the volume.

Unfortunately one’s credit as a critic is insufficient to produce this result.

The readers of *The Egoist*, having had Mr. Joyce under their eyes for some months, will scarcely need to have his qualities pointed out to them. Both they and the paper have been very fortunate in his collaboration.

Mr. Joyce writes a clear hard prose. He deals with subjective things, but he presents them with such clarity of outline that he might be dealing with locomotives or with builders’ specifications. For that reason one can read Mr. Joyce without feeling that one is conferring a favour. I must put this thing my own way. I know about 168 authors. About once a year I read something contemporary without feeling that I am softening the path for poor Jones or poor Fulano de Tal.

I can lay down a good piece of French writing and pick up a piece of writing by Mr. Joyce without feeling as if my head were being stuffed through a cushion. There are still impressionists about and I dare say they claim Mr. Joyce. I admire impressionist writers. English prose writers who haven’t got as far as impressionism (that is to say, 95 per cent. of English writers of prose and verse) are a bore. . . .

Mr. Joyce’s merit, I will not say his chief merit but his most engaging merit, is that he carefully avoids telling you a lot that you don’t want to

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know. He presents his people swiftly and vividly, he does not sentimentalise over them, he does not weave convolutions. He is a realist. He does not believe 'life' would be all right if we stopped vivisection or if we instituted a new sort of 'economics.' He gives the thing as it is. He is not bound by the tiresome convention that any part of life, to be interesting, must be shaped into the conventional form of a 'story.' Since De Maupassant we have had so many people trying to write 'stories' and so few people presenting life. Life for the most part does not happen in neat little diagrams and nothing is more tiresome than the continual pretence that it does.

Mr. Joyce's 'Araby,' for instance, is much better than a 'story,' it is a vivid writing.

It is surprising that Mr. Joyce is Irish. One is so tired of the Irish or 'Celtic' imagination (or 'phantasy' as I think they now call it) flopping about. Mr. Joyce does not flop about. He defines. He is not an institution for the promotion of Irish peasant industries. He accepts an international standard of prose writing and lives up to it.

He gives us Dublin as it presumably is. He does not descend to farce. He does not rely upon Dickensian caricature. He gives us things as they are, not only for Dublin, but for every city. Erase the local names and a few specifically local allusions, and a few historic events of the past, and substitute a few different local names, allusions and events, and these stories could be retold of any town.

That is to say, the author is quite capable of dealing with things about him, and dealing directly, yet these details do not engross him, he is capable of getting at the universal element beneath them.

The main situations of 'Madame Bovary' or of 'Doña Perfecta' do not depend on local colour or upon local detail, that is their strength. Good writing, good presentation can be specifically local, but it must not depend on locality. Mr. Joyce does not present 'types' but individuals. I mean he deals with common emotions which run through all races. He does not bank on 'Irish character.' Roughly speaking, Irish literature has gone through three phases in our time, the shamrock period, the dove-grey period, and the Kiltartan period. I think there is a new phase in the works of Mr. Joyce. He writes as a contemporary of continental writers. I do not mean that he writes as a faddist, mad for the last note, he does not imitate Strindberg, for instance, or Bang. He is not ploughing the underworld for horror. He is not presenting a macabre subjectivity. He is classic in that he deals with normal things and with normal people. A committee room, Little Chandler, a nonentity, a

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boarding house full of clerks—these are his subjects and he treats them all in such a manner that they are worthy subjects of art.

Francis Jammes, Charles Vildrac and D. H. Lawrence have written short narratives in verse, trying, it would seem, to present situations as clearly as prose writers have done, yet more briefly. Mr. Joyce is engaged in a similar condensation. He has kept to prose not needing the privilege supposedly accorded to verse to justify his method.

I think that he excels most of the impressionist writers because of his more rigorous selection, because of his exclusion of all unnecessary detail.

There is a very clear demarcation between unnecessary detail and irrelevant detail. An impressionist friend of mine talks to me a good deal about 'preparing effects,' and on that score he justifies much unnecessary detail, which is not 'irrelevant,' but which ends by being wearisome and by putting one out of conceit with his narrative.

Mr. Joyce's more rigorous selection of the presented detail marks him, I think, as belonging to my own generation, that is, to the 'nineteen-tens,' not to the decade between 'the 'nineties' and today.

At any rate these stories and the novel now appearing in serial form are such as to win for Mr. Joyce a very definite place among English contemporary prose writers, not merely a place in the 'Novels of the Week' column, and our writers of good clear prose are so few that we cannot afford to confuse or to overlook them.

26. Unsigned review, *Irish Book Lover*

November 1914, vi, No. 4, 60-61

Dublin, like other large cities, shelters many peculiar types of men and women, good, bad and indifferent; in fact some, whose knowledge of it is extensive and peculiar, would say more than its fair share. Of some of these Mr. Joyce here gives us pen portraits of great power, and although one naturally shrinks from such characters as are depicted in 'An Encounter' or 'Two Gallants,' and finds their descriptions not quite

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suited 'virginibus puerisque,' one cannot deny the existence of their prototypes, whilst wishing that the author had directed his undoubted talents in other and pleasanter directions. . . .

27. A French view of *Dubliners*

1926

Edmond Jaloux, 'l'Esprit des livres', *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (29 May 1926), n.p.

An extract from a review of the French translation of *Dubliners*, i.e. *Gens de Dublin*, by Y. Fernandez, H. du Pasquier, J.-P. Raynaud. See the Introduction, pp. 8, 18, 20, for Joyce's popularity with the French; and see Adrienne Monnier's article, No. 211.

. . . One of the most recent foreigners adopted by us—and, this time, an Irishman—is Mr. James Joyce whose revelation we owe to M. Valéry Larbaud, and whose first novel, *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, appeared two years ago. . . . While waiting for a translation . . . of the enormous *Ulysses*, here are his short stories, *Dubliners*, published in London in June 1914 after many difficulties. Reading them, it is astonishing that they could have shocked or scandalized anyone. There are more liberties in Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, in Wycherly or in Farquhar or Smollet. Are the English no longer reading them therefore?

It is difficult to speak of *Dubliners* because these are realistic short stories, and if one maintains appearances, one would risk not being able to speak about them in a way other than by title alone. Mr. James Joyce, however, like Tchekov or Katherine Mansfield—has something which makes him very different from Maupassant, Flaubert or Huysmans. But in what exactly does this something consist?

It consists, I believe, in the total absence of ulterior motive. There is

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in the French mind something fundamentally judicial, fundamentally mathematical, fundamentally didactic. To make a judgment, to demonstrate, to instruct—these are for us the very consequences of thinking. However detached from all moral end Flaubert, Maupassant or Huysmans may seem, they do not escape this law. . . . Now take any work of Mr. James Joyce, 'An Encounter', 'Two Gallants', and try to disentangle the author's intention. . . .

[discusses the lack of certitude in these two stories]

'A little piece of gold shines in the palm.' Imagine with what hidden indignation, what sarcasm Maupassant or Huysmans would have told this story. . . . There is none of this in the narration of James Joyce, and this is not his indifference; it is the minute and pure application of a botanist or of an entymologist, the seriousness of an Irish Fabré, dedicated to unfortunate human beetles, obstinate not even comical. I think that if anyone has been able to influence Mr. Joyce, the excellent humanist, it is less likely the French or Russian realists as the Roman historians. There is in him like a far-off echo of the Suetonius accent, this metallic impassivity with which the terrible annalist of the Caesars recounts the insanity of Caligula or the systematized luxury of Nero. . . .

One must be a great artist to treat events so simply and to render them nevertheless attractive. These short stories would not even make anecdotes; they become true slices of social cells, the scissor operated by Mr. James Joyce on the events and the people so adroitly that each of these stories takes an extraordinary significance from this technique. . . .

. . . These uncertain stories of a gray color have in reality such an interior energy that they impose themselves definitely upon us. And this secret energy contrasts so much more with the apparent impermeability of Mr. James Joyce—impermeability in some scientific way and which has the implacable character of a cinematographic apparatus or of a microphone recording reality.

When the great fragments of *Ulysses* are published . . . we will be able to see the road covered by Mr. James Joyce from *Dubliners* to his extraordinary encyclopedic epic of an individual; but it is obvious that *Dubliners* was already a solid platform for advancing toward this conception. *Dubliners*, if one considers *Ulysses*, is like a store of accessories where the author first tried to use the human and social resources of which he disposed before reuniting them in a new synthesis. It is an essential work for the literary historian, but it is a curious work, attractive and charmingly enigmatic for readers.