James Joyce

A Portrait of the Man Who is,

at Present, One of the More Significant Figures in Literature

BY DIJUNA BARNES

THERE are men in Dublin who will tell you that the direct voice has gone; and there are a few women, lost to youth, who will add: "One night he was singing and the next he wasn't, and there's been none since like the old one!" For the singing voice of James Joyce, author of The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and of Ulysses is said to have been second to none.

those who think that Joyce was once singer may not come as a revelation to the casual reader of his books; one must perhaps have spent one of those strangely aloof evenings in his company to realize the singing quality of his words. For tradition has it that a singer must have a touch of bard in him, a joyous pulling forth of first the right leg and then the left, and a sigh or two this side of the cloister, and Joyce has none of these.

I had read Dubliners over my coffee during the war, I had been on one or two theatrical committees just long enough to suggest the production of Exiles, his one play. The Portrait had been censored in part, burnt from one show to the other, but it was not until I came upon his last work that I sensed the singer. Lines like: "So stood they both awhile in wan hope hampered at the start and living just the extrimely large rains bring fusions of the fields, spherical potatoes and iridescent kale and onions, pearls of the earth, and red, green, yellow, brown, rusted, sweet, big bitter rip pomiated apples and pears, frill for fronds and raspberries from their canes," or still better the singing humour in that delightful execution scene in which the "learned prelate kneel in a most Christian spirit in a pool of rainwater."

Yes, then I realized Joyce must indeed have lived the life of a singer, the very tender singer, and occasionally no voice can hold out over the brutulities of life without breaking—he turned to quill and paper, for so he could arrange, in the one case, the abundant inadequacies of life, as a laying out of jewels—jewels with a will to decay. Joyce, the Man

YET of Joyce, the man, one has heard very little. I had seen a photograph of him, the collar up against the narrow throat, the beard, heavier in those days, descending into the arch of the eyebrows and the nose. I had been told that he was going blind, and we in America learned from Ezra Pound that "Joyce is the only man on the continent who continues to produce, in spite of poverty and sickness, working from eight to sixteen hours a day."

I had heard that for a number of years Joyce taught English in a school in Trieste, and this is almost all of his habits, of his likes and his dislikes, nothing, unless one dared come to some conclusion about them from the number of facts hidden under an equal number of im- proved and his words in his evening Ulysses.

And then, one day, I came to Paris. Sitting in the cafe of the Deux Magots, that faces the little church of St. Germain des Prés, I saw apparatus. I thought of him, of the tall, thin man, with head slightly lifted and slightly
James Joyce
turned, giving to the wind an orderly disrester of red and black hair, which descended sharp-
ly in a straight line to his forehead. He wore a blue grey coat, too young it seemed, partly because he had thrust his gathers behind his knees, partly because the coat was slung about his body, and lay two full inches above the hips.
At the moment of seeing him, a remark made to me by a mystic flashed through my mind "A man who has been more crucified on his sensibilities than any writer of our age," I said to myself—"this is a strange way to recognize a man I never held my eye on.
Because he had heard of the suppression of The Little Review on account of Ulises and of the subsequent trial, he sat down opposite me, who was familiar with the whole story, ordering a white wine. He began to talk at once.
"The pity is," he said, "the pity is that I do not choose his words for their age rather than their apt-
ess. There I have stemmed, sit sinuously in my book—or worse they may take it in some more serious way, and on the honour of a gentleman, there is not one single soul line in it."
For a moment there was silence. His hands, peculiarly limp in the introductory shake and peculiarly pulpy, running into a thickness that the base gave no hint of, lay, one on the stem of the glass, the other, forgotten, palm out, on the most delightful assistance it has ever been my happiness to see. Purple with alternate doe and dog heads. The does, tiny scarlet tongues hanging out, blood lower lips, drowned in a light wool, and the dogs so more ferocious, concerning a ferocious animal who adheres to his master through the seven cycles of the moon.
He saw my admiration and he smiled.
"Made by the hand of my grandmother for the first hunt of the season," and there was an-
other silence in which he arranged and lit a cigar.
"All great walkers," he said softly, "have spoken in the language of Sterne, Swift or the Restorer."
The Chap, Howard, or Charles White. He studied the Restoration through a microscope in the morning, repeated it through a telescope in the evening.
"And in Ulises? I asked.
"They are all great walkers," he answered, "they are the things they forgot.
In Ulises, for instance, he is so pensive what a man says, sees, thinks, and what such thinking, saying does, to what you Freidists call the subconscious, the psychoanalysis he broke off, "it's neither more nor less than the blackman.
He raised his eyes. There is something un-
focused in them, the same pale assess in plants long hidden from the sun—and sometimes a little leer that goes with a lift and rounding of the eyebrows.
His Appearance
PEOPLE say of him that he looks both sad and I tried. He does look sad and he does look tired. The whole air that comes about him, the whole look of a man who has procured some medieval permission to sorrow out of time and in no place; the wearis-
omeness of one self-subjected to the creation of an over almost sub-ject. If I were asked what seemed to be the most characteristic pose of James Joyce I should say that he listened; turned further away than d lugest and not so far as death, for the turn of disinterest, disinterest as an end, yet the only thing at all like it, is the look in the throat of a stricken animal. When I asked this I said—
think of him as a heavy man yet this, shrinking a thin cool wine with lips almost hidden in his high narrow mouth, made the et-
ernal cigar, held slightly above shoulder-level, and never moved until consumed, the mouth brought to and taken away from it to eject the sharp jots of yellow smoke.
Because I am not sure of him questions one must know it. He has been my pleasure to talk to him many times during my four months in Paris. For I was, like all of us, a talker of rivers and of re-

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ligion, of the instinctive genius of the church which chose, for the singing of its hymn, the voice without "overtones"—the voice of the crouch. We have talked of women, about women he seems a litl disinterested. Were I vain I should say he is afraid of them, but I am certain he is only a little skeptical of their existence. We have talked of Ilium, of Strind-berg, Shakespeare. "Hamlet is a great play, written in the Greek manner," he says, "and of Strindberg, "No drama behind the hysterical raving."

We have talked of death, of rats, of horses, the sea; languages, climates and offerings. Of artists and of Ireland.

"The Irish are people who will never have leaders, for at the great moment they always desert them." They have produced one skeleton—Parnell—never a man.

Sometimes his wife, Nora, and his two children have been with him. Large children, almost as tall as he is himself, and Nora walks under fine red hair, speaking with a brogue that car- ries the dread of Ireland in it; Ireland as a place where poverty has become the art of scarcity. A brogue a little more "defiant than Joyce's which is tamed by preoccupation.

Joyce has few friends, yet he is al- ways willing to leave his writing table and his white coat of an evening, to go to some quiet near-by cafe, there to discuss anything that is not "artistic" or "sublime." Callahan's is the best. Often found him writing into the night, or drinking alone. Sometimes he could not come upon him as he lay full length on his stomach poring over a valve full of notes for a play or a story, or, as for Nora says, "It's the great fana-ticism on him, and it is coming to no end." Once he was reading out of the book of saints (he is never without it) and muttering to himself that this particular day's saint was "A devil of a fellow for bringing on the rain, and we wanted it to go for a stroll."

However he is, he will be he will come away for the evening, for he is simple, a scholar, and sees nothing objectionable in human beings if they will only remain in place.

Yet he has been called eccentric, mad, incoherent, unintelligible, yes and futur- istic. One wonders why, thinking what a fine lyric beginning that great Kafe- laisian, "When I die I'll put an imperatia addenda for foliage,—the thin sweet lyricism of Chamber Music; the casual inevitability of Dubliners, the passion and prayer of Stephen Dedalus, who said that he would go alone through the world."

"After, not only separate from all others, but to have not even one friend," and he has, if we admit Joyce to be Stephen Dedalus, he has said and done. "I will not serve that which I no longer believe in, whether it be my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in my art as freely as I can, so far as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning.

This is somehow Joyce, and one won- ders if, at last Ireland has created her man.
A sketch made by Miss Loy in Paris of Joyce, who, in exile from his native Ireland, has continued, in spite of permanent insignificance there can be little doubt. "Cham-
ber Music," his first volume of verse, contains Joyce, subdued in tone, but of inexpressible loveliness. "Dub-
liners," his volume of short sketches, was compared with
the best of de Maupassant. "The Portrait of the Artist
as a Young Man," on whose perfection he laboured ten
years, brought to the novel an interest in form, selection
and style, more French than English. "Ulysses," which
preceded its suppression, is about to be published in
Paris. It represents, in form, a following and elabora-
tion of that method which Joyce first made apparent in
the "Portrait." It is a question in many minds whether
Joyce, in this new volume, has not pursued his theory
too far for coherence and common understanding.