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 sweet 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 to figure the like of it!" 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 say 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 a little room, listening to Ulysses, as it appeared in The Little Review to have realized the singing quality of his words. For tradition has it that a singer must have a touch of bard, a joyous ringing 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 consumed, turning 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 horning their food, and gave me losses," an extremely large wains bring fason of the fields, spherical potatoes and iridescent kale and onions, pearls of the earth, and red, green, yellow, brown, rassen, sweet, big bitter ripe pomolled apples and grapes fit for princes and raspberries from their canes," or still better the singing humour in that delicious execution scene in which the "learned predilekt knelt in a most Christian spirit in a pool of rain-water."

Yes, then I realized Joyce must indeed have begged a life as a singer, and I admire his singer, and occasionally no voice can hold out over the brutalities of life without breaking—he turned quill and paper, for so he could arrange, in the time of war, 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 about the narrow throat, the beard, heavier in those days, descending into the shape of five live tawny lions. 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 improprieties in his lifelong Ulysses.

And then, one day, I came to Paris. Sitting in the cafe de Deux Magots, that faces the little church of St. Germain des Près, I saw appallingly speaking to his young French manservant, and a man, with head slightly lifted and slightly
James Joyce
turned, giving to the wind an orderly disatter of red and black hair, which descended sharp- ly into a tangle of disordered curls.
He wore a blue grey coat, too young it seemed, partly because he had thrust his gather behind him. His face looked a little old. The dressers clasped it, 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," and 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 Ulysses 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, seeming to choose his words for their age rather than their apt,-
"there I have stammered, stilted maimingly 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 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 withit out it has ever been my happiness to see. Purple with alternate doe and dog heads. The does, tiny scarlet tongues hanging out over bloody lower lips, drowned in a light wool, and the dogs so more ferocious of sight and sound than the animal who adhered to his master through the seven cycles of the sun.
He saw my admiration and he smiled.
"Made by the hand of my grandmother for the first hunt of the season," and there was another silence in which he arranged and lit a cigar.
"All great talkers," he said softly, "have spoken in the language of Sterne, Swift or the Restorators, and this is the reason that Dean Swift was blackman. He studied the Restoration through a microscope in the morning, and repeated it through a telescope in the evening."
"And in Ulysses?" I asked.
"They are all great talkers," he answered, "them and the things they forget. In Ulysses, I said, Stoppages and situations, what a man says, says, thinks, and what such thinking, saying does, to what you Freidianists call the unconscious. When psychoanalysis broke off, it's neither more nor less than a black man." He raised his eyes. There is something un- focused in them, the same pallor seen in plants long hidden from the sun—and sometimes a little leer that goes with a lift and rounding of one sapphire eye.
His Appearance
PEOPLE say of him that he looks both bad and tired. He does look sad and he does look tired. It is the fifty, a side of shade to a man who has procured some medieval permission to sour out of time and in no place; the weariness of one self-subjected to the creation of an order above the human order. If I were asked what seemed to be the most characteristic pose of James Joyce I should say that he was a man; turned further away than dignit on and not so far as death, for the turn of displesseance, for death may yet, the only thing at all like it, is the in most of a stricken animal. And this I said—think of him as a heavy man yet this, drinking a thin cool wine with lips almost hidden in his high narrow mouth, and taking the eternal, slight above shoulder-level, and never moved until consumed, the mouth brought to and taken away from it to eject the sharp juts of yellow smoke.
Because I have not met him questions one must know him. It has been my pleasure to talk to him many times during my four months in Paris. We have walked on the sands of rivers and in oldmagazinearticles.com
ligion, of the instinctive genius of the church which chose, for the singing of its hymns, the voice without "overtones"—the voice of the eunuch. We have talked of women, about women he seems a lot disinterested. Were 1 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 Ilsen, of Strind- berg, Shakespeare. "Hamlet is a great play, written in his youth, the products of the time," and of Strindberg, "No drama behind the mystical 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 is 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 "badly written." Callahan often found him writing into the night, or drinking a bottle of whisky. Nora herself once came upon him as he lay full length on his stomach poring over a valise full of notes of his young years. "For what?"—for as 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 want it to go for a stroll."  

However he is, in him, 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 Kale-
laistair has given to "Imaginary Country"—an impertinent 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.

"Alas, not only separate from all others, but to have not even one friend," and he has, if we admit Joyce to be Stephen Dedalus half and half, do. "I will not serve that which I no longer believe in. I will not stay at any home, my fatherland, or my church; and I will try to express myself in my art as freely as I can and as I feel I can. I can only serve the defense of 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 many discouragements, to perpetuate his art and ideas in a number of books, some of which have permanent significance. There can be little doubt, "Chamber Music," his first volume of verse, contains Joyce, subdued in tone, but of irreproachable loveliness, "Dubliners," 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 caused his reputation to rise and his popularity in Europe to sink, still bears the label of an author, ceasing its suppression, is about to be published in Paris. It represents, in form, a following and elaboration 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.