James Joyce

A Portrait of the Man Who is, at Present, One of the More Significant Figures in Literature

By DJUNA 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 since 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.

Though that Joyce we once conocer 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 the presence of a man of his kind, 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 that sort, a joyous parting of the 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 Dublillness 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 entirely by one show, 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 morning, but the sun was red of the path to the extremity large rails bring fusion of the fields, spherical potatoes and iridescent kale and onions, pearls of the earth, and red, green, yellow, brown, rassett, sweet, big bitter ripe pomolated apples and newspaper fit for princes and raspberries from their canes," or still better the singing humour in that delicious execution scene in which the "learned prelate kneels in a most Christian spirit in a pool of rainwater."

Yes, then I realized Joyce must indeed have lived a life as a singer, and a very tender singer, and no conceivable voice can hold out over the brutality of life without breaking—he turned to quill and paper, for so he could arrange, in the heat 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 over the narrow throat, the beard, heavier in those days, descending into the alien of his eyes was lost. 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- probable traditional stories in his latest novel.

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 Pres, I saw appallingly on the table of the most fat man, with head slightly lifted and slightly...
James Joyce
turned, giving to the wind an orderly disturbance of red and black hair, which descended sharp-
ly into a well-cut and well-fitting overcoat. He wore a blue grey coat, too young it seemed, partly because he had thrust his gatherings behind his collar, and partly because it seemed to have 
clad 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 sensi-
tivities 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 I 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 it is," he said, seeming to choose his words for their age rather than their apt-
ness, "there I have sat denned, sit-de-nnenned 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 it in."
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 wistfulness it has ever been my happiness to see. Purple with alternate doe and dog heads. The does, tiny scarlet tongues hanging out over blood lower lips, downed in a light wool, and the dogs no more ferocious than the look of a rabbit, which is the animal who adheres to his master through the seven cycles of the moon.
I saw my admiration and he smiled. "Made by the hand of my grandmama for the first hunt of the season" and there was an-
other 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 Restorative. This is the language of the classic."
"And in Ulysses?" I asked.
"They are, indeed, great talkers" he answered, "them and the things they forgot. In Ulysses there is, indeed, sit-de-nnenned. What a man says, sees, thinks, and what such thinking, saying does, to what you Freudians call 'concessions' to the psychoanalysis' he broke off, 'it's neither more nor less than this.'"
He raised his eyes. There is something un-
focused in them, the same pallor seen in plants long hidden from the sun,—and some-
times a little leer that goes with a lift and rounding of the left eye.
His Appearance
PEOPLE say of him that he looks both sad and tired. He does look sad and he does look tired. He is a tall man, with a tubercular cough, the haight which has procured some medicinal permission to sour out of time and in no place; the wearis-
omeness of one self-subjected to the creation of an ever above all other figure.
I was asked what seemed to be the most characteristic pose of James Joyce I should say that he leaned; turned farther away than disgust and not so far as death, for the turn of displeasure-speech of him is a turn, yet the only thing at all like it, is the look of a stricken animal. And this I should add—
think of him as a heavy man yet tire, drinking a thin cool wine with lips almost hidden in his high narrow mouth, and taking the eur-
nical cigar, held slightly above shoulder-level, and never moved until consumed, the mouth brought to and taken away from it to eject the sharp jets of yellow smoke.
Because he does not put him questions one must know him. It has been my pleasure to talk to him many times during my four months in Paris, crossed the bridges of rivers and of re-
Jame Joyce

dition, of the instinctive genius of the church which chose, for the singing of its hymns, the voices without "ovcneress"—the voice of the cooch. We have talked of women, about women we seem a litl disinterested. Were I vain I should say he is a man for the voice, but I am certain he is only a little skeptical of their existence. We have talked of Blains, of Strind- berg, Shakespeare. "Hasmet is a great play, written in a language quite the same," and of Strindberg, "No drama behind the lyrical 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 dross 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 "Play GO CALBERG. Callaloo often found him writing into the night, or drinking with. Nora. No, not a poet; I myself once came upon him as he lay full length on his stomach poring over a valise full of notes for "the great flan- tierism is 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 to go for a stroll."

However it is, 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 futil- istic. One wonders why, thinking what a fine lyric beginning that great Karel- lasin always had, but an imperat addsenda 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.

"And, not only separate from all other, but to have not even one friend," and he has, if we admit Joyce to be Stephen Dedalus's tale, "I will not serve that which I no longer believe in; I will not stayed home, my fatherland, or my church; and I will try to express myself in my art as freely as I can and use it for what I can, unlike for the defense 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 Lay in Paris of Joyce, who, in exile from his native Ireland, has continued, in spite of the war, his great literary work. The permanent significance there can be little doubt. "Cham-
ber Music," his first volume of verse, contains Joyce, subdued in tone, but of unapproachable loneliness. "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
had been suppressed in London for a year, is now pub-
lishing its suppression, is about to be published in Paris. It represents, in form, a follow-up 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.