CHAPTER THREE

I sat up reading the first three episodes of Ulysses in the Little Review. Joyce wanted them to pass on to someone else. These three episodes form an introduction to the main theme equivalent to the first books of the Odyssey wherein the situation in the household of Ulysses is described and young Telemachus sets forth to gain news of his father. The Telemachus of Joyce’s book is Stephen Dedalus, whose childhood, boyhood and adolescence are narrated in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. From the date of the last entry in Stephen’s diary at the end of A Portrait of the Artist to the beginning of Ulysses there is a gap of about six months. Stephen has been in Paris. A telegram called him back to the bedside of his dying mother. She died, and now he is living in the Martello tower at Sandycove with his friend, Buck Mulligan, a medical student. They pay twelve pounds a year rent for the tower to the Secretary of State for War. Every reader of Ulysses is captivated from the start with the wit and high spirits of Buck Mulligan, but there is an atmosphere of hostility between him and Stephen. He reproaches Stephen with failing to humour his mother’s last wish and pray at her bedside, and criticises generally “the cursed Jesuit strain” in him. Stephen resents the native and habitual mockery of the Buck. He instances the overheard remark of Mulligan to his aunt: “O, it’s only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead.” In reality, however, it is not one remark or another
that hurts him, but it is that Mulligan is of "the brood of mockers" whose mockery is a blighting negative force. They have a guest in the tower, Haines, an Englishman—a somewhat dull, complacent individual, but fairminded and, like many Englishmen, a collector of Irish folklore. Haines had dreamed of a black panther during the night and his nightmare cries had waked Stephen.

The action that takes place is of the simplest kind. Just out of bed, Mulligan and Stephen appear on the gun platform of the tower. Mulligan shaves while Stephen looks on. They talk and in their talk their conflict of character is revealed. Then they go down into the tower and Mulligan prepares the breakfast of rashers, eggs and tea for them and for their Sassenach guest. After breakfast they go to the forty-foot hole to bathe. Mulligan strips and goes in at once. The prudent Haines sits on a rock smoking a cigarette and waiting for his breakfast to go down. Stephen doesn't bathe at all. Mulligan asks for the key of the tower and of Stephen's remaining fourpence twopence, for a pint. Stephen throws the key and the coppers on Mulligan's shirt, turns and walks away. He feels that the end of his friendship with Mulligan is near. He resolves not to sleep in the tower another night and turns away from the seated Haines and the swimmer out in the sea, uttering to himself the word, "Usurper."

The real action takes place within the mind and conscience of Stephen. His mother had begged him on her deathbed to kneel and pray for her. He refused and she died without the comfort of his prayers. It is a good thing to renounce a corrupting and destroying doctrine, and a good thing to solace the last hours of a sick mother. There would be no conflict in life at all if the choice of action lay always between good and evil. Stephen chooses what seems
to him to be the greater good. If offered the choice again he would choose the same, but that he chose rightly fails to shield him against remorse of conscience—his “Agenbite of Inwit.” One brought up in an atmosphere of rationalist indifferentism might have prayed and come to no harm, but Stephen was an ardent believer and holds his freedom only by dint of constant combat. He has a theologian’s logic and a churchman’s conscience. To pray or not to pray is a grievous question. If he refuses he must be tortured; if he consents he is lost. That is to say, he loses his feeling of integrity, his sense of direction. He knows too well the mysterious potency of words and gestures “behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration.” He has proclaimed his freedom, but he is not free. His negation takes on the character of a religion of which he is the visible head, priest and communicant. The situation and the problem are not new. It is recorded that Jesus Christ was offered a choice between inclining to his mother’s wish and following his own spiritual welfare and that he chose the latter.

All this is the inevitable loss and pain of war but it is no problem. It is memory, past time, and his problem is a present one. He has said his “No” to the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt nots” of the Irish Roman Catholic Church, one of the least accommodating of the churches of Christendom, and to the claims of Irish politics, most tyrannical of all oppressed nation politics. But one more chain still binds him—his associations. Stephen believes himself capable of the greatest things and this is an offence against the easy-going egalitarianism of youth. He must constantly suffer the, to him, exasperating experience of being too lightly valued. He is surrounded by those who doubt and by those
who mock and others who are indifferent. Of all these his friend, Mulligan, is in some way the epitome. Every word, every action of the light-hearted Buck arouses in him mistrust and hostility. Further, he envies Mulligan his carefree soul, his physical courage and strength. One feels that the Stephen of *Ulysses* is riding for a fall. His friends have become obstacles to his progress and he must break with them. That in him which is amiable and that in him which is artist are by themselves not capable of the operation, therefore he must call to their aid all the negative qualities of his nature as the armourer makes also the kick of a gun serve his purpose. Only one of the social ties does he recognise. He will have nothing to do with religion and country, but he accepts the family. His family may call on him for physical help and service if it demands no spiritual servitude. That help and service he will give if he can.

But there's the rub. Stephen is entirely without means. He stands in boots and clothes that were given him by Mulligan. He has a job as teacher at Mr. Deasy's school but his salary is barely sufficient for drinks. He owes bits of money all round the town. Let an individualist artist deny religion and politics as vehemently as he will, economics is something he cannot deny. He will take his chance with heaven and hell; with a little luck and some judgment he will avoid the police and the firing squad; but he must eat the bread, wear the clothes and shelter under the roof made by others, and pay for these privileges. Some misguided people have at times affirmed that the stimulus of poverty is useful to the artist and it may be darkly hinted that one day one of these misguided individuals will come to an untimely end. Poverty was never any good to anybody. Starving a racehorse and doubling his
handicap doesn't help him to win a race, so in what way is an artist or any inventor advantaged by being starved and overhandicapped? Not all Stephen's trouble of mind but all his problem is economic. His poverty has conditioned his relations to women and is in fact at the root of all his distress. He has never been loved by any woman, for the love of good women is more expensive than that of the other sort. What love he had he bought and he had what he paid for, but no more.

With the word "Usurper" on his lips, Stephen turns his back on Mulligan and Haines and goes on to Mr. Deasy's school. Interpreting the meaning of the word in the light of the sentence he utters a few hours later, "Ireland must be important because it belongs to me," we can take it to signify that they who should serve him demand of him services, and that his rightful heritage of opportunity is being enjoyed by the undeserving. He partly escapes from this bitter and hostile mood in Mr. Deasy's school. Here he is not provoked by Mulligan's overbearing wit or irritated by the complacency of the Sassenach, Haines. He has a job to do and does it at least as well as anybody else. Roman history and English literature are the lessons. The boys, one imagines, are the sons of fairly well-to-do, middle-class Dubliners. With one exception (the dullest and weakest boy in the school), Stephen has no kindly feelings towards them. They also are usurpers. From the sly whisperings and titterings of back row boys at the mention of Kingstown pier he knows that they share experiences of pierhead flirtations. "With envy he watched their faces." His own sexual experience was a sudden plunge from romantically innocent longings into the promiscuity of bought love. Tittering flirtation with agreeable flappers was to him an unknown province.
But he notes a witty phrase that occurs to him in the course of the lesson: "Kingstown pier . . . a disappointed bridge," and he resolves to work it off on Haines over drinks that evening, despising himself at the same time for playing the jester to people whom he despises.

History, for the boys, is a struggle to learn the record of past events; for Stephen it is a struggle against the past as it is recorded in his body and mind and in the social element in which he lives. History would present him with his life task ready made. He has inherited a religion, a national cause, a social position—all tyrannical agencies jealous of his life and time. Their demand for sacrifice must be continually disputed. It is a wearying struggle, and a mood of weariness dominates the Nestor episode, matching the mood of bitterness and resentment that dominated the preceding one. A running speculative commentary, unspoken, accompanies his teaching of the lesson. Why do some things escape recognition while others, not necessarily the most important, obtain a permanent place in the memory of man? Why did this thing happen instead of that other which, before the moment of time in which it happened, was among the many things that might have happened? "Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a beldam’s hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death." A comment more charged with the passion of his own conflict with the church occurs when young Talbot, repeating Lycidas, comes to the lines:

Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves.

"Of Him that walked the waves. Here also over these craven hearts his shadow lies and on the scoffer’s heart and lips and on mine. It lies upon their eager faces who offered him a coin of the
tribute. To Caesar what is Caesar’s, to God what is God’s. A long look from dark eyes, a riddling sentence to be woven and woven on the church’s looms. Ay.”

For ever on the defensive with his equals, Stephen has pity for weakness. It is Thursday, hockey at ten, and the boys rush eagerly out of the classroom to the playing field. One boy, the awkward, backward, weedy Cyril Sargent, stays behind. He is in distress with his algebra and Mr. Deasy has ordered him to come to Stephen for assistance. Stephen explains, demonstrates, encourages. Something in the boy recalls to him his own youth.

“Like him was I, these sloping shoulders, this gracelessness. My childhood bends beside me. Too far for me to lay a hand there once or lightly. Mine is far and his secret as our eyes. Secrets, silent, stony sit in the dark palaces of both our hearts: secrets weary of their tyranny: tyrants willing to be dethroned.”

Mr. Deasy returns from the playground and takes Stephen to his study to pay him his salary. He is a shrewd, brave old man. As is the case with all old men in Ulysses, his portrait is painted with delicate sympathy. Joyce reserves his satire and caricature for the younger generation. With such a difference of age, temperament and social outlook it is necessary that they shall talk past each other but they do so with an instinctive sympathy each for the other’s worth. Stephen is as deferential with Mr. Deasy as he is cantankerous with his own contemporaries. In these days of “youth” movements (generally started by some juvenile man past middle age to instil, with some profit to himself, a little youth into his gravely senile juniors) this unforced respect for age on the part of Stephen seems worth noting. Mr. Deasy is a just man, careful of money because
he knows its value, and he counsels a like respect for this powerful instrument to Stephen, well knowing that his wise words will be disregarded. His view of national character is sounder than Stephen's for when he asks if Stephen knows "what is the proudest word you will ever hear from an Englishman's mouth?" Stephen replies: "That on his empire the sun never sets." No doubt Mr. Deasy knows better. "‘I will tell you,’ he said solemnly, ‘what is his proudest boast. I paid my way.’" He was right. There never has been an English empire. It was always British, which is to say that at least four nations collaborated in the making of it. And the boast about paying their way certainly had, perhaps still has, a great vogue among Englishmen. But Stephen is wiser and fairer than his senior when they speak of the Jews.

Mr. Deasy thinks the Jew merchant is working the destruction of Old England.

"‘A merchant,’ Stephen said, ‘is one who buys cheap and sells dear, Jew or Gentile, is he not?’

"‘They have sinned against the light,’ Mr. Deasy said gravely. ‘And you can see the darkness in their eyes. And that is why they are wanderers on the earth to this day.’"

To Stephen, who wills his own personal freedom, history is a nightmare from which he is trying to awake. Mr. Deasy accepts all the obligations imposed upon him by the past of his race and believes that all history is moving forward to one great goal, the manifestation of God. But what is God?

"Stephen jerked his thumb towards the window, saying:

"‘That is God.’

“Hooray! Ay! Whrrwhee!

“‘What?’ Mr. Deasy asked.
“‘A shout in the street,’ Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders.”

There is an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Ireland and Mr. Deasy believes the disease to be curable if the right treatment is adopted. It can be cured, he thinks, with Koch’s preparation which has been used with success by Austrian cattle-doctors. His advocacy of the Koch treatment in official quarters has failed, as he darkly hints, on account of intrigues and backstairs influence, so now he will try publicity. While Stephen waits, he types a letter to the press and asks Stephen to use his influence with his journalist friends to get it printed. Stephen promises that he will do what he can, takes the letter and leaves.

In the quieter, early episodes of *Ulysses* motives are given out that with variations recur constantly in the orchestration of the later episodes. When he takes Mr. Deasy’s letter Stephen coins for himself the Mulliganesque nickname, “bullockbefriending bard”; history is a “nightmare”; God a “shout in the street”; faithless wives who brought strife into the world are mentioned by Mr. Deasy; the identity of Shakespeare in his plays is first mentioned on the walk to the bathing cove, the mystery of father and son kinship as well. Verbal pattern and plot are fused together in one.

Before Stephen was out of earshot at the bathing cove, Mulligan called out to him the rendezvous—“The Ship, half twelve”—and Stephen assents. Presumably he intended at the time to go there, but he changes his mind and sends instead a cryptic telegram, a quotation from Meredith’s *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*: “The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debt of a thing done.” Then, glad to be alone, he goes for a walk on Sandymount shore. The morning
is bright and clear but not cloudless. The third episode is a record of Stephen’s thoughts and sensations during his stroll. The character of his thought has changed. He is no longer on the defensive as he was with Mulligan and Haines in the tower, or weary and dispirited as he was in Mr. Deasy’s school. He is free and alone with a vast, bright space around him. This is incomparably the richest, the most musical of all the earlier episodes.

I went to 29 Universitätsstrasse one evening, after reading the three episodes, for a chat and to return the Little Reviews.

“You have read them?” said Joyce. “What do you think of them?”

“I like them all,” I said. “But I found the third one so exciting, and I’ve just finished reading it, that I can hardly think of the rest. I think I’m right in calling it the best. No?”

Joyce picked up the slim paper-covered volume.

“I think you are,” he said. “It’s my own preference. You understand that this is the opening of the book? My Ulysses appears in the next episode. What is it you like about this one?”

“It is rich,” I said, “and full of light and colour. But apart from the colour and material I like the Stephen in it. He has the freshness of the schoolboy Stephen in A Portrait of the Artist. And then I like the seashore. And I’ve painted a lot on seashores, Cornish mainly, between St. Ives and Land’s End, so I know something about them.”

Does any other prose writer know and enjoy his own work as Joyce knows and enjoys his? We expect the poet to recognise and place any one of his lines, but it must be a rare thing for the writer of prose to be able to do as much. He would need first to compose with as much care and to be very satisfied with the result. Joyce composes with
infinite pains, but he looks on his handiwork when he has done it and finds it good.

"You catch the drift of the thing?" said Joyce. "It's the struggle with Proteus. Change is the theme. Everything changes—sea, sky, man, animals. The words change, too."

He began to read the episode from the beginning in a smooth, easy way, without emphasis, which is his normal manner of reading the unspoken thoughts of his personages. Emphasis and the normal speaking voice too much suggest the normal spoken word. There is nothing from beginning to end of Proteus that is not thought or sensation. Other characters who come into the picture do so only as part of the content of Stephen's mind. Through his senses the seashore comes to life. The natural abode of change is that area between low water and high water mark. It is easier to believe that life began here than that it began in a garden. Tides ebb and flow, cheating the clock every day, lagging behind. The volume of water changes, spring to neap and neap to spring again. Cold water flows over hot sand. Sea breeze and land-wind alternate. The colour of sea and sky changes like shot-silk. The sea makes and unmakes the land. Steel-hard rocks are broken up, firm contours of land are dissolved and remade. A sea-town drifts inland and the houses of an inland town topple into the sea. Yellow sand, lying neatly round rocks, is taken away by an overnight storm and a floor of black boulders appears. Then with the smooth lapping of the next calm the yellow carpet is laid again. There is a whole population of plants and animals here and of living things that are neither plant nor animal. Carcasses of man, beast, bird, fish washed ashore, decompose. Sea and sand bury them. Wreckage rots and rusts and is
pounded to pieces and every tide brings new flotsam and jetsam, lays it on other ribbed sand, other stones. The seashore is never twelve hours the same.

To this Protean province comes Stephen. With open eyes he walks through space. In it things lie nebeneinander. He calls it the "ineluctable modality of the visible." With eyes shut he walks through space in time. "Time is the ineluctable modality of the audible." One happening follows the other nacheinander.

"My definitions of space and time are good. What?" said Joyce.

Stephen has suffered a sea change. There is nothing in him sullen, listless, bitter, resigned, weary. With no half hostile friends to force him into a defensive watchfulness, no longer performing wearily an uncongenial task, he is free, alone, essentially himself. He is a magician's apprentice experimenting with new magic. Whatever images are shown him by his memory they can cause him no remorse, no shame, no regret. They are material for his poetic improvisations like the sights, sounds and smells of land and sea around him. His invention, humour and sensibility are memory proof.

He sees two old midwives come down to the beach with a bag to gather cockles and with the humour of fantastic association, imagines a telephone cable of navel-cords trailing back through time to Eden garden and himself ringing up our first parents through his own navel.

His feet seem to be conveying him to the house of Richie Goulding, his maternal uncle, but his mood is too rich to waste upon a visit, the nature of which he knows beforehand. He remembers a typical reception in the house of uncle Richie. It is, like his own, a house in decay.
Without wincing, he remembers pages of his follies. "You prayed to the devil in Serpentine Avenue that the fubsy widow in front might lift her clothes still more from the wet street. O si, certo! Sell your soul for that, do, dyed rags pinned round a squaw. More tell me, more still! On the top of the Howth tram alone crying to the rain: naked women! What about that, eh?

"What about what? What else were they invented for?"

His conscience has no better luck when it reminds him of his before-the-mirror vanities and fantastical literary projects. He mimics himself gaily:

"You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hray! No-one saw: tell no-one. . . ."

Sight of the Pigeon-house reminds him of Paris and of Kevin Egan's son, who introduced him to the blasphemies of M. Léo Taxil.

"Qui vous a mis dans cette fichue position?"

"C'est le pigeon, Joseph."

Joyce stopped often to laugh at his own composition as he read through Stephen's recollection of his Paris exploits.

"Proudly walking. Whom were you trying to walk like? Forget: a dispossessed. With mother's money-order, eight shillings, the banging door of the postoffice slammed in your face by the usher. Hunger toothache. Encore deux minutes. Look clock. Must get. Fermé. Hired dog! Shoot him to bloody bits with a bang shotgun, bits man spattered walls all brass buttons. Bits man khrerrklak in place clack back. Not hurt? Oh, that's all right. Shake hands. See what I meant, see? Oh, that's all right. Shake a shake. Oh, that's all only all right.

"You were going to do wonders, what? Mission-
ary to Europe after fiery Columbanus. Fiacre and Scotus on their creepystools in Heaven spilt from their pintpots loudlatinlaughing: Euge! Euge! Pretending to speak broken English as you dragged your valise, porter threepence, across the slimy pier at Newhaven. Comment? Rich booty you brought back; Le Tutu, five tattered numbers of Pantalon Blanc et Culotte Rouge, a blue French telegram, curiosity to show:

"'Mother dying come home father.'"

Joyce looked up and said:

"I haven't let this young man off very lightly, have I? Many writers have written about them- selves. I wonder if any one of them has been as candid as I have?"

Yellow sunlight on sand and boulders reminds Stephen of the lemon streets and houses of Paris. The same sun is shining there, too. For himself he sees nothing in Irish nationalism but an authority to make his art tongue-tied, but he is Irish enough when in Paris to seek out the exiled Fenian, Kevin Egan, forgotten at home mourning his exile in café, restaurant and printing shop. "Weak wasting hand on mine. They have forgotten Kevin Egan, not he them. Remembering thee, O Sion."

He turns and scans the shore. Southward he sees the tower, his home, and foresees his messmates, Mulligan and Haines, waiting for him that night in vain. He has told them nothing, but he has resolved not to go to the tower that night. He sits on a rock, watching the tide flow, rocks all round him.

"Sir Lou's toys. Mind you don't get one bang on the ear. I'm the bloody well gigant rolls all them bloody well boulders, bones for my stepping-stones. Feefawfum. I zmellz de bloodz oldz an Iridzman."

Joyce read this with stammering, cluttered
utterance, then stopped with a laugh at the odd sounds he made.

“Who are Sir Lout and his family?” I said. “The people who did the rough work at the beginning?”

“Yes,” said Joyce. “They were giants right enough, but weak reproductively. Fasolt and Fafnir in *Das Rheingold* are of the same breed, sexually weak as the music tells us. My Sir Lout has rocks in his mouth instead of teeth. He articulates badly.”

A dog appears and runs towards Stephen, barking. Stephen fears dogs and remembers Mulligan laughing at his fear. A gay pretender: but he reflects that Ireland was ever a Paradise of pretenders. He can’t, however, escape the comparison: Mulligan saved a man from drowning at the risk of his own life, while he shakes at a cur’s yelping. Would he do what Mulligan did? No twisting and turning help him. He is forced to confess that he would not. He pictures to himself the horror of death by water and the vision fades into that of his mother’s death agony. The dog’s master and mistress appear at the surf edge, looking for cockles. Stephen’s attention is fixed on the dog.

“Did you see the point of that bit about the dog?” said Joyce. “He is the mummer among beasts—the Protean animal.”

“Weininger says something about the imitative nature of the dog in his *Über den letzten Dingen,*” I remembered.

“He does?” said Joyce. “This one mimics the other animals while Stephen is watching him. Listen.”

“‘Their dog ambled about a bank of dwindling sand, trotting, sniffing on all sides. Looking for something lost in a past life. Suddenly he made off like a bounding hare, ears flung back, chasing the
shadow of a lowskimming gull. The man’s shrieked whistle struck his limp ears. He turned, bounded back, came nearer, trotted on twinkling shanks. On a field tenney a buck, trippant, proper, unattired. At the lacefringe of the tide he halted with stiff forehoofs, seawardpointed ears. His snout lifted barked at the wavenoise, herds of sea-morse. . . . The dog yelped running to them, reared up and pawed them, dropping on all fours, again reared up at them with mute bearish fawning. Unheeded he kept by them as they came towards the drier sand, a rag of wolf’s tongue redpanting from his jaws. His speckled body ambled ahead of them and then loped off at a calf’s gallop. The car-cass lay on his path. He stopped, sniffed, stalked round it, brother, nosing closer, went round it, sniffing rapidly like a dog all over the dead dog’s bedraggled fell. . . . Along by the edge of the mole he lolloped, dawdled, smelt a rock and from under a cocked hindleg pissed against it. He trotted forward and, lifting his hindleg, pissed quick short at an unsmelt rock. The simple pleasures of the poor. His hindpaws then scattered sand: then his fore-paws dabbled and delved. Something he buried there, his grandmother. He rooted in the sand, dabbling, delving and stopped to listen to the air, scraped up the sand again with a fury of his claws, soon ceasing, a pard, a panther, got in spouse-breath, vulturing the dead.’”

“There he is,” said Joyce. “Panther: all animals.”

“I don’t know a better word-picture of a dog,” I said. “English and Irish, we are all dog-lovers. But when we write about dogs or paint them we sentimentalise them. Landseer.”

“This certainly wasn’t done by a dog-lover,” said Joyce. “I don’t like them. I am afraid of them.”
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The word “panther” brings to Stephen’s mind first Haines’s dream and then his own.

“After he woke me up last night same dream or was it? Wait. Open hallway. Street of harlots. Remember. Haroun al Raschid. I am almosting it. That man led me, spoke . . .”

“Almosting!” I said.


The dog’s owners are gypsies. Stephen sees them go, picturing to himself their strange existence in dark lanes, under archways at night. He remembers fragments of gypsy speech. All words are precious to the poet, gypsy words no less than those of Aquinas. “Monkwords, marybeads jabber on their girdles: roguewords, tough nuggets patter in their pockets.” He watches the gypsy woman’s receding back on which her spoils are hung. “She trudges, schlepps, trains, drags, trascines her load.” Joyce repeated the sentence.

“I like that crescendo of verbs,” he said. “The irresistible tug of the tides.”

Tides of another blood move in the gypsy woman’s veins. A god comes to her in the shape of death.

“He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth’s kiss.

“Here. Put a pin in that chap, will you? My tablets. Mouth to her kiss. No. Must be two of ’em. Glue ’em well. Mouth to her mouth’s kiss.”

He fumbles in his pocket for paper to hold the words, finds only the banknotes of his salary, curses himself for having forgotten to take slips from the library counter and finally tears off the half blank
last page of Mr. Deasy’s letter on the foot and mouth disease, to serve as tablets for his inspiration. He lies on his back, his mind full of memories. The noise of the moving sea breaks in on them and his thoughts turn outwards again. He makes speech for the rocks and water.


Out at sea they are dragging for a drowned man. He heard at the bathing pool that the drowned man would rise that day and he pictures the bloated carcass being dragged over the gunwale of the boat.

“A seachange this, brown eyes saltblue. Sea-death, mildest of all deaths known to man. Old Father Ocean. *Prix de Paris*: beware of imitations. Just you give it a fair trial. We enjoyed ourselves immensely.”

But now he must go. He dallies yet awhile among rocks, sand and seashells. The seashells remind him that his teeth are hollow like them. Shall he go to the dentist with Mr. Deasy’s money? It isn’t enough. Mulligan threw his handkerchief to him after using it as a razorwipe, but he left it lying and must use his fingers. He lays dry snot from his nose on a ledge of rock and looks round to see if he is observed.

“He turned his face over a shoulder, rere regardant. Moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship.”

Joyce laid down the *Little Review*. At times, in reading the long monologue, he had sunk his voice to a talking-to-himself murmur so that only precise articulation and a silent room allowed it to be
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audible. But inside this small scale of tones and with a minimum of emphasis he expressed all the moods of reverie, mockery, perception.

I stopped at the door as I was about to leave.

"You know, Joyce," I said, "when Stephen sees that three-masted schooner's sails brailed up to her crosstrees."

"Yes," he said. "What about it?"

"Only this. I sailed on schooners of that sort once and the only word we ever used for the spars to which the sails are bent was 'yards.' 'Crosstrees' were the lighter spars fixed near the lower masthead. Their function was to give purchase to the topmast standing rigging."

Joyce thought for a moment.

"Thank you for pointing it out," he said. "There's no sort of criticism I more value than that. But the word 'crosstrees' is essential. It comes in later on and I can't change it. After all, a yard is also a crosstree for the onlooking landlubber."

And crosstree does recur in the pattern in that episode where Stephen discusses Shakespeare with some Dublin scholars. "... Who, put upon by his fiends, stripped and whipped, was nailed like bat to barndoor, starved on crosstree. . . ."

Joyce told me that some admirers of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Americans, I understood, had expressed disappointment at the way Ulysses was shaping.

"They seem to think," he said, "that after writing the Portrait I should have sat down to write something like a sermon. I ought to have a message, it seems."

A conflict of direction would be no new thing in an artist. Religion and politics are the most frequent rivals of words, paint and stone. It isn't necessary, one supposes, that the victory of one side shall mean
the annihilation of the other, but it must mean that it has won the direction. Stephen first appears as a named person in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* but there is no doubt that he is the unnamed narrator of the first three studies in *Dubliners*. The story of Stephen’s early years has one peculiarity that marks it off from the general experience of boys, sensitive or insensitive, weak or strong: that is his intense preoccupation with words. To most boys words are convenient counters and no more. When you are hungry, words like “bread” and “butter” provoke pleasant thoughts and are useful if you say them to the right person. And you have to say the right words at games or the other fellows laugh at you. Again, they are troublesome and slippery things in lessons, with spellings and logical relations specially devised to make them as difficult as possible. But to Stephen they were mysteriously alive. In a sense, they were much more potent than the objects, actions and relations they stood for. You say a word or think of its shape and sound and it makes you unhappy or afraid. You say another and a feeling of peace and joy comes to you. The child narrator in the story, *The Sisters,* says: “Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word *paralysis.* It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word *gnomon* in the Euclid and the word *simony* in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being.” And Stephen, in *A Portrait of the Artist*: “Suck was a queer word. . . . But the sound was ugly. Once he had washed his hands in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel and his father pulled the stopper up by the chain after and the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck. Only louder.”
There came a time when the storms of puberty, his care for the state of his soul, his preoccupation with religious experience and church doctrine and ritual, poverty, youthful rivalries displaced temporarily his interest in his predestined material. But the storms die away and the dominant interest returns, enriched, stronger. It is a tenacious growth that no painful experience can kill. It seems like an inversion of normal values, yet while Stephen felt himself to be lost in mortal sin and despaired of pardon, when he obtained pardon and peace and resolved to devote his life to the service of the church he was not undergoing an experience more formative, more fruitful than when, as a boy, he stood before the hotel lavatory basin listening to the last handful of soiled water say "suck" as it went down the waste-pipe.