

CHAPTER FOUR

THERE is a sudden break with Stephen after the end of the third episode. The clock is put back to eight in the morning, but the scene changes from the Martello tower at Sandycove to the kitchen of a house in Eccles Street. A man of different race, age and character comes into the foreground of the book and almost without a break stays there till the end. He is Joyce's Ulysses, the Jew, Leopold Bloom. Bloom and Stephen are opposites. Bloom is while Stephen is becoming. He leans to the sciences, Stephen to the arts. He is by race a Jew, is equable in temper, humane and just, whereas Stephen, the Gentile, is egotistical, embittered, denies his social obligations and can be generous but is rarely just. But there is a difference of dimension and substance as well as of character. Stephen is a self-portrait, and therefore one-sided. Bloom is seen from all angles, as no self-portrait can be seen. He is as plastic as Stephen is pictorial.

The question, is this or that character in fiction good or bad, sympathetic or unsympathetic ought to be aesthetically immaterial and the answer unimportant; yet there is something in us that asks it. Mr. Wyndham Lewis considers Stephen a priggish, mawkish and altogether objectionable young man, but why should that matter if he is presented with force enough to make him organic and memorable? On this logic a Christian Scientist ought to turn down a picture of a hospital ward, a vegetarian one of a butcher's shop and both of them would refuse

to enter a gallery where a picture of a bullfight was hung even if Goya painted it. If in the world of imagination we allow only such characters as would make good neighbours and club-mates there would be no room in it for Iago, Macbeth, Madame Bovary and Cousine Bette. However, putting Stephen to the social and moral test, is he really such a priggish and detestable person? His mood for the first hour of *Ulysses* is a weary and embittered mood, but then Stephen is a Dubliner and what Dubliner, or for that matter what Londoner, is at his bright best at eight o'clock in the morning? That mood changes in the schoolroom. There he is sympathetic to the backward schoolboy and, without malice behind his manner, he is deferential to a man three times his age. When he walks on the sea-strand his mood is one of bright, elfin, poetic humour. Later in the day he is delicate and tactful with his sister, and, still later, he forgets his own existence in philosophical discussion. Although not in funds he stands many rounds of drinks for his friends. Humanly considered, Stephen is certainly as sympathetic as Stavrogin and there is no doubt that he much more resembles a possible human being.

Joyce said to me once in Zürich:

"Some people who read my book, *A Portrait of the Artist* forget that it is called *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*."

He underlined with his voice the last four words of the title. At first I thought I understood what he meant, but later on it occurred to me that he may have meant one of two things, or both. The emphasis may have indicated that he who wrote the book is no longer that young man, that through time and experience he has become a different person. Or it may have meant that he wrote the book looking backwards at the young man across a

space of time as the landscape painter paints distant hills, looking at them through a cube of air-filled space, painting, that is to say, not that which is, but that which appears to be. Perhaps he meant both. However, it led me to ask myself if the writer, representing his own past life with words, is subject to the same limitations as the painter representing his physical appearance with paint on a flat surface. How near can each one get to the facts of his own particular case? Their limitations cannot of course be the same, but they are equivalent, and on the whole, the painter has the lighter handicap and is the likelier of the two to produce a true image of himself in his own material, although the extra difficulties that confront him are considerable. His first limitation is the inevitable mirror. The best of quicksilvered glass gives an image that is less true than an unreflected one, and the size of that image is by half smaller than it would be, were the same object standing where stands the mirror. He sees in the mirror a man holding in his left hand brushes and in his right hand a palette and he paints right-handedly this left-handed other self. Then he is fatally bound to paint himself painting himself. His functional, his trade self is in the foreground. The strained eye, the raised arm the crooked shoulder may be ingeniously disguised (they generally are) but something of objective truth gets lost in the process. And he is not only painting himself painting himself; he is also painting himself posing to himself. He is painter and model, too. The painter may be pure painter, but the model may be a bit of a poet or half an actor, and this individual will slyly present to his better half's unsuspecting eye something ironical, heroic or pathetic, according to the mood of the moment or the lifetime's habit. The limitation of viewpoint is obvious. The

painter's two-dimensional mode of presentation limits him to one view of an object whatever he paints. He chooses that view and must abide by his choice. All that he can do is to convey the impression in painting one side of an object that the other side exists. In the case of any other object but himself he has at any rate the whole compass to choose from. He can walk round any other model but not round himself. So that, unless he resorts to one of those cabinet mirrors in which tailors humiliate us with the shameful back and side views of our bodies, he can see nothing of himself but full face and three-quarter profile. All this has to do merely with the getting to grips with what is usually called nature. The resulting picture, as all the galleries of Europe testify, may be as good as any other. Are there any Rembrandts we would change for the best self-portraits? One difficulty or limitation more or less among thousands is of no consequence.

And the writer's self-portrait? Goethe subtitled his own, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Did he mean that he consciously mixed fiction and fact to puzzle, delude or please, or did he mean that some *Dichtung* would be there by sleight of memory or because there were many true things better left unsaid? All the psychological inducements to fictify his portrait are present in greater measure for the writer than for the painter. A painter will rather paint the wart on his nose than the writer describe with perfect objectivity the wart on his character. All the posing that the painter does for himself the writer must do also. If he has a passion for confession he will exaggerate some element or other—make the wart too big or put it in the wrong place. He has his favourite role too—villain, hero or confidence man—and he would be more than human if he failed to act it. But, worst of all, his medium is not an active

sense, but memory, and who knows when memory ceases to be memory and becomes imagination? No human memory has ever recorded the whole of the acts and thoughts of its possessor. Then why one thing more than another? Forgetting and remembering are creative agencies performing all kinds of tricks of selection, arrangement and adaptation. The record of a man's past is inside him and there he must look with the same constancy as the painter looks at his reflection in the mirror; only he is not looking *at* something (still less *round* something like a sculptor) but *into* something, like a mystic contemplating his navel. He can as little walk round his past life psychologically as the painter can walk round his reflected image. Between the moment of experiencing and the moment of recording there is an ever-widening gulf of time across which come rays of remembered things, like the rays of stars long since dead to the astronomer's sensitive plate. Their own original colours have been modified by the medium through which they passed. The "I" who records is the "I" who experienced, but he has grown or dwindled; in any case, he has changed. The continuous present of the painter is the writer's continuous past. No doubt, the most fervently naturalistic painter paints from memory, for there is a moment when he turns his eye away from the scene to his canvas and he must remember what he saw, but for practical purposes his time may be regarded as present time. Interpretation in material, words, pigment, clay, stone, is equivalent in all arts and all have the same aesthetic necessities. One other thing: if the writer cannot see the other side of himself, by a still more elementary disability he cannot see the outside of himself in action at all. He knows what he does as well as any, and why he does it better than any, but how he does it less than any.

JAMES JOYCE

Does he even, for example, know the sound of his own voice? If he is a singer he may, after long practice, get to know the sound of it when he is singing, but he will certainly not know how it sounds when he is arguing with a taxi driver. He knows the inside of himself and the outside of everybody else. He supplies other folk with his inner experiences and motives, and himself, by judgment and comparison, with the visible outward of their actions. The mimic among our friends will show the assembled company how we walk or talk. It seems strange and unbelievable to us, but from the laughter and "just like him"s of the others we know that it must be reasonably like. The essence, however, of this comparison is to show that all self-portraits, whether painted or written, are one-sided—that they are pictorial in character, not plastic.

Stephen Dedalus is the portrait and Bloom the all-round man. Bloom is son, father, husband, lover, friend, worker and citizen. He is at home and in exile. One morning he leaves his home and after a time returns. True, he is absent from home only about seventeen hours, but one day or many: it is of no consequence. If a thousand years may be as a day, why not a day as a thousand years? The same elements are present in them all. Bloom's wanderings do not take him outside the city boundaries; but it is enough. Blake said that he could touch the ends of space with his walking stick at the end of his garden. Dublin is the locality, and the day on which the action takes place is the 16th of June, 1904. Nothing is recorded that did not take place or might not have taken place on that day.

Rodin once called sculpture "*le dessin de tous les côtés.*" Leopold Bloom is sculpture in the Rodin sense. He is made of an infinite number of contours

drawn from every conceivable angle. He is the social being in black clothes and the naked individual underneath them. All his actions are meticulously recorded. None is marked "Private." He does his allotted share in the economic life of the city and fulfils the obligations of citizen, husband and friend, his body functioning meanwhile according to the chemistry of human bodies. We see him as he appears to himself and as he exists in the minds of his wife, his friends and his fellow citizens. By the end of the day we know more about him than we know about any other character in fiction. They are all hemmed in in a niche of social architecture, but Bloom stands in the open and we can walk round him. His past is revealed in his own memory and in the memories of others. He is a Jew of Hungarian origin. The family name was Virag but Leopold's father changed it to Bloom. Leopold was baptised a Protestant and later a Roman Catholic. His wife, Marion, is the daughter of Major Brian Tweedy and a Gibraltar Jewess. There were two children of Bloom's marriage, one of whom, Rudolph, died on his eleventh day. The other, Millicent, is just fifteen and works as a photographer's assistant in Mullingar.

The completeness with which Bloom is presented is at times bewildering. There are innumerable changes of key and scale. Sometimes he is a dark phantom in the middle distance and then he suddenly dominates the foreground plane. He may stand like a floodlit building, stark and flat against the sky or he may be entirely built up out of reflections of his surroundings. Now a searchlight illumines violently one part of him and now normal daylight flows over him from head to foot. But always he is the same kindly, prudent, level-tempered, submissive, tragically isolated, shrewd, sceptical, simple, uncensorious person, with an out-

ward seemingly soft and pliant but with a hard inner core of self-sufficiency.

His wife, Marion, is a onesidedly womanly woman. She is unfaithful, but her infidelities are not the furtive, conscience-stricken infidelities of average life. They are the actions of a body that refuses to accept the rules of custom, and therefore has no need of duplicities. She is proof against all doubts of the mind and all remorse of conscience, because, according to her own scale of values, she does no ill. She is a shrewd, humorous, wilful personage, who might perhaps, except for a sisterly quarrel or two, get on very well with the Wife of Bath. In person she appears only twice in the book, once in the first episode and again to speak the epilogue at the end, but she is ever present in the thoughts of her man as he pursues his wanderings throughout the day.

A host of minor characters throng the pages of *Ulysses*—two hundred, perhaps. Most of these are present in the flesh, but those absent or dead become known to us through the minds of those living and present. Of the dead the most important are Bloom's father and son and Stephen's mother. Through the conversation of the mourners at his funeral we become acquainted with Paddy Dignam, a friend of Bloom. Bloom's earlier friends, Apjohn and Meredith, now dead, have a ghostly yet amiable existence. His daughter, Millicent, is absent in Mullingar but she writes home; we meet her friend, Alec Bannon, and we hear a great deal about her from her father and mother. Not all the population of the book is accorded the same measure of attention and seriousness of treatment. Some of them, notably those of the older generation, are portrayed with a certain humorous and touching intimacy. Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus, is the principal example, but with him might stand Martin Cunningham, Jack

Power, Ben Dollard and others. They seem to be portrait studies conveying all the illusion of character and experience. Others, as, for example, Professor MacHugh, Haines the Englishman, young Dignam, Tom Rochford, are drawn on the flat with a few suggestive lines. Yet others, and these are of the most enjoyable, are vital, grotesque types—caricatures as a Rowlandson might have conceived them. The Nameless One and the Citizen in the *Cyclops* episode are examples. Blazes Boylan, Marion Bloom's impresario and lover, can hardly be classed in any of these categories, but in the main he is a caricature of the overbearing blond beast, who gets the better of his neighbour in bed and business, who thinks himself a hero, but who in reality is a comic automaton.

Most of the people belong to the poorer class of Dublin citizen. Hardly any of them are what might be called working people; that is to say, there are no plumbers, carpenters or railway guards in regular employment among them. Nearly all are of the lower middle class, in dire poverty if they have lost their jobs or property, but a shade above the well-paid workingman if things are going well with them. The comfortably-connected Buck Mulligan is an exception. Apart from Mulligan all the students are of the hard up or stoney-broke variety. Bloom canvasses for advertisements; Tom Kernan is a traveller in tea; Martin Cunningham has a good job in Dublin castle; Simon Dedalus, without property or position, can only with difficulty give his daughters a shilling for food; Cowley is dodging the bailiffs, and Dollard lives in a home for gentlemen who have seen better days. The rich bourgeois and governing patrician, as also the pure and simple wage worker play no great part in the book. About ninety per cent of the people in George Moore's

Dublin are of the Irish literary movement. That movement, in the persons of some of its most distinguished representatives, figures also in *Ulysses* but in a proportion equal to its importance in the life of the city.

One important personality that emerges out of the contacts of many people is that of the city of Dublin.

"I want," said Joyce, as we were walking down the Universitätstrasse, "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book."

We had come to the university terrace where we could look down on the town.

"And what a city Dublin is!" he continued. "I wonder if there is another like it. Everybody has time to hail a friend and start a conversation about a third party, Pat, Barney or Tim. 'Have you seen Barney lately? Is he still off the drink?' 'Ay, sure he is. I was with him last night and he drank nothing but claret.' I suppose you don't get that gossipy, leisurely life in London?"

"No," I said. "But then London isn't a city. It is a wilderness of bricks and mortar and the law of the wilderness prevails. All Londoners say, 'I keep myself to myself.' The malicious friendly sort of town can't exist with seven million people in it."

But it is not by way of description that Dublin is created in *Ulysses*. There is a wealth of delicate pictorial evocation in *Dubliners*, but there is little or none in *Ulysses*. Streets are named but never described. Houses and interiors are shown us, but as if we entered them as familiars, not as strangers come to take stock of the occupants and inventory their furniture. Bridges over the Liffey are crossed and recrossed, named and that is all. We go into eating-houses and drinking bars as if the town were

our own and these our customary ports of call. Libraries, churches, courthouses, the municipal government, professional associations function before us without explanations or introductions. The people are being born, dying, eating and drinking, making love, betting, boozing, worshipping, getting married and burying their dead. Politics, especially the politics of Irish nationalism, and economic questions, such as the cattle trade with England, are being fiercely debated. The history of Dublin and of the Irish nation is served up piping hot in the speech of living patriots. Young men are struggling for bread and a place in the sun; prudent middle age is doing what it can to keep what it has; and the old are scheming for a little peace and quietness away from the hungry generations. Women of all ages aid, thwart, distract, criticise and comfort them in all their enterprises. Sex, in all its normal manifestations, is ever present together with the solidarities and disputes of families. There is much in *Ulysses* that, in the normal acceptation of the word, is obscene, but very little that is perverse. The cultural life of Dublin is revealed to us in discussions on music and literature. It is a thirsty day and any moment of it seems to be a suitable moment for having a drink. At times the reader so acutely realises the existence of Dublin that Dublin's sons and daughters, even including Bloom and Stephen, become by comparison unimportant.

How do we come by our vision of place for the happenings in books? Some pagelong, meticulous descriptions are lost on us and we place the action in a setting we know. I have often been obliged to do this for Balzac; and Borrow's fight with the Flaming Tinman I always place on a certain roadside patch between Godstone and Lingfield. But in reading Tolstoy, George Moore, Kipling and Henry

Handel Richardson, to mention only four, I see places in my mind that I never saw with my eyes. Writing descriptively, Joyce created a pictorial Dublin in *Dubliners*. The slow train in *Araby*, creeping "among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river"; the truant schoolboys in *An Encounter*, wandering aimlessly among the scattered slums, along the Dodder bank, through dismal suburbs and meeting with the sinister pervert; Dublin under snow as the guests return from the party in *The Dead*. There is another way, and that is not to describe the place at all. "A platform in front of a castle"; "A Heath"; "Before Prospero's Cell" tell us nothing in particular. The persons when they possess our imaginations do all that is required. We lend them freely their ambient of material and colour; and we have no special instructions in the matter. One blasted heath, one beetling crag will do as well as another. But it is essential to Joyce that we shall not substitute our own home town for his, and yet in *Ulysses* he neither paints nor photographs it for our guidance. It must grow upon us not through our eye and memory, but through the minds of the Dubliners we overhear talking to each other. They must make us guests or adopted citizens of their city. Names of streets and suburbs, allusions to the intimate life of the place, are constantly on their lips. Here and there we get a clue to the shape and colour of this place or that, but in the main Dublin exists for us as the essential element in which Dubliners live. It is not a décor to be modified at will, but something as native to them as water to a fish. Joyce's realism verges on the mystical even in *Ulysses*.

The Dublin of *Dubliners* is seen piecemeal as a series of isolated happenings. The sky is overcast. An air of corruption and frustration hangs over the city.

The people are frail human beings and even when they are corrupt we are made to feel a human pity for their weakness. Individual, obscure human destinies are isolated and endowed with special importance apart from their place in the mass of human experience. They are gravely and gently regarded, without irony, condemnation or any tendentious contrast. But a hard, bright light floods the Dublin of *Ulysses* and the air is a quickening, tonic air. We see the city as a whole, in a wide sweep, so that the individual destiny is merged in the mass of experience. Death and decay are robbed of their sting, for they are never isolated, but a part of the texture of life, continuing always. Thus Paddy Dignam's death is balanced by his son's growth. An act of adultery is seen as a mechanical and grotesque incident in marriage. The cries of a woman in childbirth and the cries of her newborn child mingle with the shouting and laughter of young men drinking ale. Perhaps it is because the tempo of *Ulysses* matches the tempo of our own lives and repeats their texture in its manifold balances and compensations that the reading of it is a tonic experience. Fifty years of life, as in *The Old Wives' Tale*, is depressing because the funerals follow too quickly one upon the heels of the other and people grow old and die before our eyes as if in a nature-film such as *The Life and Death of the Nasturtium*, only minus the dance-like grace of such a spectacle.

And the attitude of the writer towards the world that he sees? Some human mood must invest the work of every poet, for every poet is himself a human being. Joyce is a keen-sensed stranger, a delicate recording instrument, an artificer as ingenious, patient and daring as the hawklike man whom Stephen invokes at the end of *A Portrait of the*

Artist. It is not easy to define the mood of *Ulysses*, but it seems to me that Joyce neither hates nor loves, neither curses nor praises the world, but that he affirms it with a "Yes" as positive as that with which Marion Bloom affirms her prerogative on the last page. It is not to him a brave new world, about to set forth upon some hitherto unattempted enterprise. Rather is it a brave old world, for ever flowing like a river, ever seeming to change yet changing never. The prevailing attitude of *Ulysses* is a very humane scepticism—not of tried human values, necessary at all times for social cohesion, but of all tendencies and systems whatsoever. There are moods of pity and grief in it, but the prevailing mood is humour. Laughter in all tones and keys, now with the world and now at it, is heard continually. The laughter reminds us often of the bright, mocking laughter of Sterne of whom Nietzsche wrote that he, "the freest of all free spirits," resembled a squirrel flying from tree to tree, bewildering the eye with his agility. But then it often resembles the louder laughter of a Shakespeare or a Dickens, delighting in the over-lifesize caricature of human types, the political windbag, the snarling, scurrilous man, the monumental liar. There is, too, that rarer grim, noiseless laughter which shines out through the eyes of a mask. The relation of woman to man is presented as one of mighty importance but, in its essence, of lapidary simplicity. That of man to man is presented as one full of subtleties and fine shades. Of mother love not much is said. To father love is ascribed a significance rarely admitted. Sometimes a faint note of condemnation of his characters is heard, as in the case of Mulligan or Lynch, but Joyce looks on the doings of men, in the words of Blake applied to Chaucer, "oftener with joke and sport."