

Ulysses and Modern Novel

Chong-Keon Kim
Korea University

The magnetism and power of Joyce, particularly his *Ulysses*, is phenomenal. More than any other writer from any time, he exerted both a conscious and an unconscious influence upon his contemporaries as well as on later writers in both England and America. His work remains at the center of literary Modernism, yet what he began in the literary world, (though his aesthetics may have drifted into the unconscious) acts as a catalyst for today's literary creations. One aspect of the literary world which benefited directly from Joyce is literary criticism.

Joyce's pronounced experimentations using many themes and techniques in *Ulysses* have provided modern critics and writers new and dynamic concepts of literature. This novel has compelled scholars to refine the theoretical receipts of the New Criticism; to concentrate on semantic analysis using a pseudo-scientific method, deal with the tone and texture of a work to explicate its fused form and content, and determine values by behavioristic psychology. The New Criticism was born, as a matter of fact, because this Modernism made it necessary: other criticism could not cope with Joyce or his contemporaries, Pound and Eliot. For example, William Empson's *The Seven Types of Ambiguity* stresses the close study of words in poems, especially of the intensioned ambiguity used by poets. By Empson's standard of criticism, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (whose novelistic quality is often problematic) is logical, discursive with its intensional ambiguity.

Joyce's contemporaries acknowledge his influence. *Ulysses* provided Eliot with the thematic and structural methodology of *The Waste Land*¹ and with the theoretical principles of much of his seminal criticism; for example: "Tradition and Individual Talent" and "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth." Other writers were influenced in their works directly or indirectly by Joyce's *Ulysses*. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is, in a way, modeled upon *Ulysses*, particularly in her manipulation or juxtaposition of "real clock time" with the "unreal sense of past and future." In the later '30s, Dylan Thomas, inspired by Freud's unconsciousness, uses the imagery of dream, which he subjects to further distortion which is similar to Joyce's work. Thomas's experiment with language—his rhetorical sources of sounds, imagery, and structured language, his puns, portmanteau words, assonantal rhymes, Hopkinsian

1. see Robert Adams Day, "Joyce's *Waste Land* and Eliot's Unknown God," *Literary Monographs*. Vol. 4, ed. by Eric Rothstein. (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), 139—226.

"sprung rhythm"—comprises one of the dominant points of association with Joyce.

In America we have William Faulkner, a major Modernist, who considered himself the heir of Joyce with the method he used in *The Sound and The Fury*.² Thomas Wolfe, himself, once emphasized the influence of Joyce on his development as a writer.³ There is a large section of *Look Homeward, Angel*, particularly the 24th chapter, where Eugene acts as Stephen does in *Ulysses*. In this Joycean chapter, Eugene, the young man, has a brief Dedalian perigrination through his Dublin-like Asheville. His visit to Leonard's school, the wandering in the streets, his watching of the funeral procession, and his crisp pastiche of consciousness, are all suggestive of Joyce's "Nestor," "The Wandering Rocks," "Proteus," and "Hades." John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy, one of the most ambitious works of fiction during the thirties, just as *Ulysses* in the twenties, was greatly influenced by the later.⁴ In particular, the techniques of *The Big Money* such as "News-reels," "The Camera Eye," "Biography," along with the run-together words to express patterns of speech, are highly Joycean (although *Ulysses* is a closely integrated formal structural parts of a significantly composed whole, whereas *U.S.A.* has, instead, an orderly progression of fragments). *Ulysses* captivated Hart Crane's imagination in *The Bridge*, "the reduced edition of *Ulysses*"⁵ and influenced his elan. Most conspicuously indebted to Joyce among American novelists was Conrad Aiken. His *Great Circle* and *Blue Voyage* all testify to Aiken's interest in Joyce and his concern over the Freudian explanation of the human consciousness. The latter novel, in many ways, is modeled on *Ulysses*. Thus, Joyce's influence has been registered in almost Swiftian Brobdingnagian portions both in England and America during his period.

Our century, since the time of World War II, began to witness, particularly in the context of the Resistance, the emergence of Existentialism and Absurdism in Europe not merely as a philosophy but as a mode of human consciousness. The anti-Aristotelianism of the Modernist movement underwent a metamorphosis so profound that it has become necessary to differentiate between the early metaphysical Modernism and the later Post-Modernism. This means not only the beginning of the end of the age of Modernism, but also the beginning of the Post-Modernist age. In the last few decades, it has been common for reviewers of the novel to regret that

2. Lawrence Thomson, *William Faulkner*. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 17.

3. Thomas Wolfe. *The Story of a Novel*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 8.

4. Water Allen. *The Modern Novel*. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 148.

5. Joseph Schwartz. Hart Crane: *An Annotated Critical Bibliography*. (New York: David Lewis: 1969), p. 13.

it literary modes have relapsed into the ordinary and naturalistic; that the flair for radical innovation and experimentation of the Modernist age has been lost. The recent novel has the tendency to abandon "freedom for genre," and has returned to the main stream of the nineteenth century English realism.

The novel has diminished in scale, and no writer has the moral urgency of a Conrad, the verbal gifts and wits of a Joyce, the vitality and all-consuming obsession of a Lawrence. What we might call the post-*Ulysses* novelists consciously reject experimental techniques and return, instead, to the narrative manner of the late Victorians. Their styles are plain, their time sequences are chronological, and they make no use of mythic structure or the stream-of-consciousness inner-narrative technique. Their novels seem related to the solidarities of an older world; the world of the Edwardians, in some ways akin to Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells. In their novels there has been as sharp a reaction against Woolf's method of internalized characterization, outer plotlessness or storylessness as between the wars there was a reaction, led by Woolf herself, against the realism of those Edwardian masters. Doris Lessing, one of the major recent writers, has written: This runs counter and is totally contradictory of the spirit of such

I hold the view that the realist novel, the realist story, is the highest form of prose writings; higher than and out of the reach of any comparison with expressionism, symbolism ...or any other-ism.⁶

Modernist writers as the American novelist John Hawkes who remarks:

I begin to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting, and the theme.⁷

Lessing has returned to the old Aristotelian tradition that "plot" (*mythos* is the philosopher's term) is the soul of any literary work. It is true that if we are capable of imagining the "Modern" as a closed set of stylistic features, the Modern can no longer mean present.

However, significant is the fact that although there is no sense of striking innovation and spectacular advance that was dominant in the Modernist writers, we observe many Post-Modernist writers who maintain a great deal of the influence from Joyce's *Ulysses*. Some recent writers are prepared to admit their conscious derivation from major Modernist writers. Within the category of Post-Modernism (1940—the present), Joyce Cary, for instance, who drew on the very tradition of English realism in all his novels, integrates in his significant novel *The Horse's Mouth* these conventions of realism with

6. Doris Lessing. "The Small Personal Voice," in *Declaration*. ed. by Tom Maschler, p. 14.

7. Quoted by Robert Scholes in *The Fabulator*. (New York, 1967), p. 68.

Modernist methods such as the stream-of-consciousness technique and present tense narration which emphasize man's inward condition. Evelyn Waugh, (who once said that "Experiment! God forbid! Look at the results in experimentalist—in Joyce. He started off writing very well, then you can watch him going mad with vanity,⁸) has had a strong revolt against the Modernist novelists. It is agreeable that the salient features of Waugh's own works—his constricted plots, his lucid, correct prose, his abundant humor, seem to have little in common with the tortured products of the Modernists. Nevertheless, his lucid, correct prose, his abundant humor, seem to have little in common with the tortured products of the Modernists. Nevertheless, his fiction has a definite continuity with the Modernism movement in it; the disorderliness, the contingency, the collapse of value and meaning of contemporary life are rendered dramatically through his manipulation of the traditional chain of cause and effect and so-called "conversational nuance." William Golding, though not an experimentalist in the novel like the writers of the *nouveau roman*, has always taken great trouble to find for his works, (for instance, *The Lord of Flies*) the form and the content of the novel which are welded together as they are in poetry. Elizabeth Bowen, coming in the wake of the great experimental masters, actually applied their new aesthetic self-consciousness, when she used typical or normatic modes of behaviour to produce what may be called the modern comedy of manners. In her *Death of Heart*, the prose style has the leaboration and tasteful wit of Jane Austin, the richness of texture and model ethic of perception of Geroge Eliot, and the poetic allusiveness of Virginia Woolf.

There are some recent writers such as Lawrence Durrell, Samuel Beckett, Anthony Powell and Anthony Burgess, who are almost exceptions to the Post-Modernist and have even attempted the experimental novels again, in their own ways. Durrell returns to the literary conception of the major Modernists like Conrad, Joyce, Gide and Proust. In *Alexandria Quartet*, his handling of time shows tenuous links with the Modernists. More closely related to William Faulkner, Durrell conveyed a sense of timelessness through his tetralogy: his time is stayed and the four novels are not sequentially connected. They overlay and interweave in a spatial relationship, with only the fourth novel *Clea* representing clock time. Unlike Proust and Joyce (in this respect), Durrell is not concerned with memory (*Bergsonian laduree*), which is psychological and not clock time. His attempt to produce a form for his novels based upon Einstein's relativity theory shows that, like Gide in the *Counterfeiters*, he is concerned with the purely technical problem of writing a novel. However, like Joyce in *Ulysses*, Gide in *Counterfeiters* and Woolf in *The Waves*, Durrell views a world of fluid relationships and is clearly in the same company. Beckett provides continuity with the Modernists in

8. David Lodge. *Evelyn Waugh* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 3.

Molloy, which is written in the first person stream-of-consciousness narrative, although it contains less explicit Joycean devices. Anthony Burgess owes a large literary debt to the Modernist writers, especially to Joyce. The most interesting example of Joyce's influence upon him occurs in his novel *Nothing like the Sun* (1964), a novel of fictionalized life of Shakespeare,⁹ which, in fact, provides one of the most intriguing examples of direct literary filiation in all of modern literature. We recognize that the novel has its genesis in the Scylla and Charybdis episode of *Ulysses*, and it grows out of Stephen's Shakespeare theory.

Some recent writers and critics argue that literary Modernism recedes into the background and seems now to be coming to an end, an idea which can't be proven. They argue that the Post-Modernist novelists intensely dislike their predecessors's adherence to their aesthetic formalism and their reduction of fiction to a record of disjointed momentary sensations, which they dismiss as a passing fad of the twenties and the thirties. For example, C. P. Snow, one of the major anti-experimental novelists, has accused the experimental Modernist writers of having ignored modern *scientific* development. Snow has eschewed all devices of Modernists such as allusion, symbolism, the stream-of-consciousness technique, the complex use of time, allegory, myth, and so on. Thus, Snow has totally rejected experimental forms and sought for a return to a more traditional style of *realism*. Another anti-experimental novelist William Cooper says that the experimental novel concentrates too much on *Man-alone*.¹⁰ In addition, Cooper wants to return character, plot, and traditional forms to the contemporary novel. He feels that:

...writing experimental novels is a retreat from writing about Man-in-Society by novelists who are unable to adjust or reconcile themselves to society; it is a retreat into writing about the sensations of Man-alone by people who cannot stomach present day industrialized society.¹¹

The critic F.R. Leavis, calling Joyce's *Ulysses* "a dead end," discards Joyce from what he calls "*the great tradition* (my italics) of George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and Charles Dickens"¹². Another critic Cyril Connolly has harshly observed: "Joyce ...has finished off the novel."¹³

However, all these criticisms against the experimental novelists are

9. see John J. Stinson, "*Nothing Like the Sun: The Faces in Bella Choen's Mirror.*" *Journal of Modern Literature*. Vol. Five, No. 1. 131-147.

10. William Cooper. "Reflections on Some Aspects of the Experimental Novel"; *International Library Annual Number 2*, ed. by John Wain., p. 33.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

12. See Bernard Bergonzi's *The Situation of the Novel*. (London: Macmillan 1970) p. 14.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

generalizations without proofs. Snow's adverse scientific development contains no foundation and seems very weak. For example, the Ithaca episode of Joyce's *Ulysses* is far more stylistically concerned with science than any of Snow's prose. In this episode of coldly objective catechnism, Joyce depicts Bloom, whose scientific temperament is represented by "mnemotechnic, (U 514, Virag says to Bloom, "Exercise your mnemotechnic. See U 689, 710) to be partly the symbol of social optimism, based upon a firm belief in science, which was an influential creed in Joyce's own youth. In fact, *Ulysses* could be considered as a sort of realism: a new frankness about sexual matters, an inevitable result of the acceptance of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Leaves also seems naive in his weak critical comments he has made on Joyce, because Joyce incorporates some of the most comprehensive earlier literary works into his own by extensive allusion and mythology, by blending their major patterns into those of *Ulysses*. Joyce is far more completely rooted in literary tradition than were many of his contemporaries and later writers. Joyce never completely eliminates characters and plots from *Ulysses*, nor is he as subversive as Cooper suggests.

A recent critic Rubin Rabinovitz has stated:

In this atmosphere any young English novelist who had ever admired Joyce was forced to choose between the experimental technique that the new realistic style. The choice was complicated by the fact that Joyce was not only a great innovator in English fiction—he was also the chief exploiter of his own innovations. For a young novelist who wanted to use experimental techniques, to surpass Joyce seems impossible; to equal him would be to imitate him. The only possible answer seemed to be move in an entirely different direction.¹⁴

This statement suggests the dilemma of the contemporary novelists; they have inherited the corollary of literary Modernism whose principle characteristic is the novelty of stylistic dynamism, and yet nearly everything possible to be achieved has already been done. Ever since *Ulysses*, the English novel, in general, has lacked vibrant originality, and only a few novels of this distinction have been written. Furthermore, it is hard to believe that any future novel will be characterized by *Ulysses*-type gravity of polymorphism and perversity in both ideology and methodology, and its constant orientation toward uniqueness and its diverse experimentation.

Thus, the influence of literary Modernism remains a substantial force and will continue as the crucial element in contemporary fiction. "Modernism may be dead, but it is still far from buried."¹⁵ A rich vigorous body of the

14. Rubin Rabinovitz. *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950—1960*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 126.

15. *James Joyce Quarterly*. (Tulsa: The University of Tulsa Press, Fall 1972), p. 174.

"rich estates" of the revolutionary movement in literature has established itself, is still very much alive, and will not come to an end; its war-chants will be repeated through future decades. The inheritance of Joyce, in particular, is paramount in contemporary literature. The experimental novel has neither died with Joyce, nor is *Ulysses* "dead end." "We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries," as Richard Ellmann asserts.¹⁶

Likewise, literary Modernism, whose embodiment is *Ulysses*, is neither "a detour or dead end away from the main highway of tradition,"¹⁷ nor "an island, separate from the mainland."¹⁸ It has, in essence, broadened and deepened the main course of tradition. Or, it is merely "the vehicle has been modified...,"¹⁹ as Harry Levin (who, for the first time, applied the term "Modern" to Joyce²⁰) has conclusively stated, speaking of *Ulysses*, but in terms that might apply to the whole literary Modernist movement.

Like his hero Ibsen, who was Norwegian by birth but cosmopolitan in spirit, it was Joyce who attempted to be a European man of letters. Like Columbanus, who bestrode his mother's prostrate body in his fiery and holy zeal to civilize the continent, it was Joyce-Stephen-a lapwing that flew to Paris to forge the uncreated conscience of his race and to free his sireland. In his satirical broadside entitled "The Holy Office," Joyce lumps together Yeats and Russell and their "mumming company," accusing them all of hypocrisy, self-deception and narrow provincialism. Joyce, who had always prided himself on his honesty and candour, yokes Aristotle to Christian ritual to claim that his own office is Katharsis:

Myself unto myself will give
This Name, Katharsis-Purgative.

As a major progenitor of the Modernist movement, Joyce first needed heroism, dynamism or vortexism in challenging tradition to germinate the seed of the movement, but also be needed another kind of heroism, the heroism of patience in maintaining the stance the values and modes of the new movement were established. Among the modern heroes in literature, only Joyce lives and will live by that heroism to the very end. Neither Flaubert nor James established a sure and solid ground for him to stand on. Unlike writers before Flaubert, he had no guidance from conversion or tradition or fellow-*fidus Achates* of art. *Sinn Fein* means "Ourselves alone."

16. Richard Ellmann. *James Joyce*. (New York: Oxford University Press.

17. Monroe K. Spears. *Dionysus and the City: Modernism in Twentieth Century Poetry*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 126.

18. Manrice Beebe. "Ulysses and the Age of Modernism", *JJQ*. VOL. 10. No. 1. (Tulsa: The University of Tulsa Press, 1972), p. 174.

19. Harry Levin. *James Joyce*. (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941), p. 98.

20. James Joyce. *Poems Penyeach*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 33.

Referring to a new Irish Renaissance, young Stephen thinks: "To Ourselves ...new Paganism ...Omphalos." (U 7) Joyce, holding out against the world, has been and will be one-man *Sinn Féin* movement in contemporary literature. As the very avatar of his *Zeitgeist*, his works of art remain in his devotion to a sort of the tabernacle of monasticism for the few and the unconscious Holy Font for the many contemporary writers. And, nothing will change the fact this his *Ulysses*, the *summa* of the whole ethos of his period, will stand firm as one of the greatest *magnum opus(s)* affecting English literature. This, ironically, leads to the quandary of the modern novel.