



FRENCH STUDIES BULLETIN

A QUARTERLY SUPPLEMENT

No. 65

WINTER 1997

CONTENTS

ARTICLES/NOTES

- Julien Green — an Early Joycean Critic (Michael O'Dwyer) 1
The Theme of *Révolte* in Albert Camus's *Écrits de jeunesse*
(Mark Orme) 5
Undiscovered Countries: the Role of Some Minor Characters
in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (Edward J. Gallagher) 7
The Role of Nursemaids in the Awakening of Gargantua's
Sexuality (Levilson V. Reis) 11

COMMENT

- La mort hisse Roche (Toby Deller) 13
Just a Quibble: a Note on Beckett's Handwriting (Phyllis
Gaffney) 16
Supplément à la correspondance générale de Théophile
Gautier (n° 3354^{bis}) (Gilles Banderier) 18

QUERIES, REQUESTS, INFORMATION 18

NEWS FROM SOCIETIES 20

CONFERENCE REPORTS 22

EDITORIAL NOTE 24

ARTICLES/NOTES

JULIEN GREEN — AN EARLY JOYCEAN CRITIC

MICHAEL O'DWYER, Maynooth

On 15 May 1924 the review, *Philosophies*,¹ edited by Pierre Morhange, published an article of some two thousand words by Julien Green on James Joyce's *Ulysses*. *Ulysses* had been published in Paris in 1922 and had not yet been translated into French when Green's article appeared. Morhange was already familiar with articles which Green had written on William Blake, Charles Lamb, and Lord Byron.² He

was also preoccupied with the notion of 'revolution' both social and artistic. When Green mentioned that he had read *Ulysses*, Morhange, who saw this work as constituting a revolution in literature, immediately asked him to prepare an article on it and then invited him to his house to eat 'de la carpe à la juive'!³

There are good reasons as to why Green might and might not have been interested in Joyce's novel at this time. When speaking of his origins, Green has frequently used the following formula to describe himself: $\frac{1}{4}$ Irish + $\frac{1}{4}$ Scottish + $\frac{1}{2}$ English = 1 American. Green's maternal grandmother was born in Derry and he has stated that he attributes the impulsive and visionary side of his temperament to his Irish origins.⁴ It would therefore be understandable that, living in Paris, he would express a certain curiosity in regard to the work of an Irish author which was published in that city. However, at this time, Green was also preparing his *Pamphlet contre les catholiques de France* which was published on 15 October 1924 under the pseudonym of Théophile Delaporte in a special edition of the *Revue des Pamphlétaires* also edited by Pierre Morhange. Green states that while Morhange was looking for articles of a revolutionary nature the revolution which he (Green) envisaged was of a different kind: he envisaged a revolution which would 'lead society back to reading the Bible and to spiritual renewal as advocated by the Prophets'.⁵ The *Pamphlet* is an expression of the invective outpouring of the zealous convert who had become a Catholic in 1916 and who was now becoming dissatisfied with what he termed his 'progress in spirituality'. Green attacks the lukewarm faith of middle class Parisian Catholics and shows a preoccupation with salvation and a fear of hell. He goes so far as to defend the Inquisition on the basis that its priority was the salvation of souls. One might not therefore expect somebody who had such preoccupations to express an interest in a work such as *Ulysses* which, from the outset, was associated with corrupting the moral fibre of society and with being revolutionary in the literary world. Green's article on *Ulysses* is also interesting in that it anticipates many of the main features of his own fictional output. He had at this stage published just one *nouvelle*.⁶

The first thirteen and last nine lines of Green's article are devoted precisely to the reaction to Joyce's works on moral grounds. He refers to the burning of five hundred copies by the American authorities and the burning of 499 copies by the British authorities in January 1923. He describes these actions as the kind of abuse of power which Milton had condemned two and a half centuries earlier. He returns to this topic at the end of the article when he condemns the Society for the Suppression of Vice which wanted to ban the book, stating ironically that it was curious that people who wished to act as angels should remain insensitive to the sense of mystery conveyed by this work. Years later in an entry to his *Journal* of 22 September 1940 Green wryly noted a question put to him by an American journalist who wanted to know why he was not excommunicated for reading *Ulysses*!

On the level of literary appreciation the starting point of Green's analysis is an article published earlier by Valéry Larbaud. In an article which appeared in the *NRF* (April 1922), Larbaud had dwelt, excessively for Green's liking, on the parallels between Joyce's work and Homer's *Odyssey*. The key to *Ulysses* was, according to Green, more difficult to find. Green displayed an awareness that an enigmatic work had come on the scene which was not easy to decipher. He approaches *Ulysses* under two headings: a) the general aspect of the work, b) the central character, Leopold Bloom.

In dealing with the general aspect of the work Green relates to his French audience by drawing a parallel with Rabelais in whose work he finds the same kind of obscenity but also much depth hidden beneath a comic mask. As in the case of Rabelais, Green also finds in Joyce's novel certain passages which are of a more elevated tone than those of the rest of the work.

Green dwells primarily on the extreme variety of the work which, at the same time, displays a strong sense of unity. He points, for instance, to the variety of tableaux and conversations in each chapter. He states that no two chapters reproduce the same situations. At first sight each chapter appears to be independent like a *nouvelle*. To achieve this sense of diversity Green goes on to say that a variety of tone is required and this he finds in abundance in *Ulysses*.

Green finds that on some occasions the style is concise with succinct notations which convey a sense of vigour and trepidation. On other occasions a 'heavier' style can be noted as in Bloom's visit to the maternity hospital which Green sees as being described in the 'goût du Moyen Age'.⁷ Sometimes he finds that there is a 'mauvais romantisme'⁸ or a 'ton niais',⁹ as in Joyce's portraits of sentimental young ladies. He expresses a fascination with Molly Bloom's monologue and the lack of punctuation in the rendering of what he calls the 'processus de pensée'. The effect for Green is at one and the same time one of incoherence and continuity.

Green is therefore predominantly sensitive to the great variety of tone and rhythm corresponding to the depiction of various states of mind. However, he also notes that a sense of unity asserts itself through a judicious choice of details by Joyce and through his art in knowing where to place them. The details are organized around the characters thus giving them their special sense of presence. The sense of unity in variety in *Ulysses* was to make a lasting impression on Green. In an entry to his *Journal* on 17 November 1956, when reflecting on the extraordinary variety of tone of the Bible, a variety which he tries to put into perspective by asking his readers to imagine a book, the chapters of which would be written in turn by Sainte Eulalie, Jean de Meung, Villon, Rabelais, Voltaire, Hugo, and Proust, he is also struck by its sense of unity and adds that the author of *Ulysses* would have no difficulty in appreciating this Biblical unity in diversity.

In the second part of his article Green studies the character of Leopold Bloom. For Green, Bloom is an 'âme tourmentée'¹⁰ beset by 'curieux scrupules'¹¹ for whom the street outside his house with its shops and billboards is a kind of 'monstre'¹² which threatens to devour him. Green underlines the importance of sensation for Bloom, a sensation which is primitive and ordinary. He states that his ideas arise out of the most basic sensations and are linked by purely verbal associations. His emotions Green sees as being based on a cruel and vigorous desire. On the question of concupiscence, Green finds him to be immature and to be incapable of learning from experience. Green is fascinated by the interplay between dream and reality and by Bloom's dream where he sees the hero as being 'libéré et comme allégé du poids des choses de la vie.'¹³ He is then at the mercy of his 'effroi, désirs, faim.'¹⁴

Despite Green's apparently conservative moral preoccupations at this period to which we have already referred, his approach to *Ulysses* is based purely on grounds of literary merit. While his approach is descriptive he shows himself to be a sensitive literary critic open to experimentation and innovation in literary techniques. He states that he will return in a future article to 'la mystique et la symbolique d'*Ulysses*.'¹⁵ It appears, however, that this article was never written.

Green was at this stage setting out on his career as a creative writer. His first work in French, a *nouvelle*, *Christine* was published four months later in September 1924. His article on *Ulysses* is of particular interest as the aspects of the novel which he chooses for comment are almost as revealing about his own future work as they are about that of Joyce.

Green's description of Bloom as an 'âme tourmentée' beset by scruples and for whom the outside world is a monster, is a remark which is applicable to many of his own characters who are prisoners of their obsessions and for whom the world in which they find themselves represents a threat and inspires fear. This is particularly true of his *nouvelles* and of his first three novels, commonly known by critics as a *trinité sombre*.¹⁶ In his analysis of Bloom's dream and the emphasis which he places on the notion of escape from the weight of the world, Green touches on what was to constitute the main theme of his second cycle of novels, those written during the period 1931-47,¹⁷ which reveals a preoccupation with the interplay between dream and reality and with the fantastic, the invisible, and the supernatural in its various forms. In his comments on Bloom's immaturity in regard to concupiscence, Green shows himself, albeit unwittingly, to seize upon a detail which proves to be extremely prophetic about many of his own characters. The preoccupations of Marie-Thérèse in *Le Visionnaire*, of Joseph Day in *Moïra* and of Wilfred in *Chaque homme dans sa nuit*,¹⁸ with concupiscence reveal an immature temperament. Day and Wilfred would fit Green's description of Bloom as a tormented soul beset by scruples. His description of Bloom's dream in which the latter is at the mercy of his 'effroi, désirs faim', echoes Green's own description of his first novel, *Mont-Cinère*, when he states in an entry to his *Journal* of 2 February 1954 that he put into this novel 'ma faim, mes inquiétudes, l'effroi de vivre'.

At the request of Jacques Rivière Green wrote a further article on Joyce, this time on *Dedalus*, the French version of the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* which was published in August 1924.¹⁹ In a lecture entitled *Souvenir de 1925*²⁰ he recalls his awe on meeting Joyce and his inability to tell him that he had written on his work. Entries to Green's *Journal* throughout the years show that he remains an admirer of Joyce and his works.

¹ The review, *Philosophies*, was founded by Pierre Morhange and had a lifespan of almost one year. The first issue appeared in May 1924 and the sixth and final issue in March 1925. Green's article on *Ulysses* can also be found in Julien Green, *Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) pp. 1009-14. References in this article are to this edition.

² Green's article on Blake was published in *Feuilles critiques* in 1923 (September-October edition). His article on Charles Lamb was published in *Vita* in March 1924 and his article on Lord Byron was published in the same review in April 1924. These articles were written under the pseudonym David Irland. (Green's paternal grandmother's maiden name was Lucy Irland Hunton). The articles on Blake and Lamb, along with articles on Samuel Johnson and Charlotte Brontë, were later published *en volume* under the title *Suite anglaise* (Paris: Les Cahiers de Paris, 1927) and under the name of Julien Green.

³ Green describes this meeting in *Jeunesse*, the fourth volume of his autobiography (Paris: Plon, 1974). See Julien Green, *Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, V (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp. 1439-41.

⁴ See for example, *Journal* V, 1946-50, *Le Revenant* (Paris: Plon, 1950) pp. 311-12.

⁵ See *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, V, pp. 1439-40.

⁶ *The Apprentice Psychiatrist* in *University of Virginia Magazine*, 63, May 1920, pp. 334-46. French translation: *L'Apprenti psychiatre*, tr. Eric Jourdan (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1977).

⁷ *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, I, p. 1011.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1011.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1011.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1012.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1012.

¹² Ibid., p. 1012.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1014.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1014.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1010.

¹⁶ *Mont-Cinère* (Paris: Plon, 1926), *Adrienne Mesurat* (Paris: Plon, 1927), *Léviathan* (Paris: Plon, 1929).

¹⁷ *L'Autre Sommeil* (Paris: Gallimard, 1931), *Le Visionnaire*, (Paris: Plon, 1932), *Minuit* (Paris: Plon, 1936), *Varouna* (Paris: Plon, 1940), *Si j'étais vous* (Paris: Plon, 1947).

¹⁸ *Chaque homme dans sa nuit* (Paris: Plon, 1960).

¹⁹ *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, August 1924.

²⁰ Julien Green, *Œuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, III (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 1446-47.
