

"WE'LL TO THE WOODS NO MORE"

(Continued from page one)

its height . . . 'In *Les Lauriers*, Joyce told me, 'the reader finds himself, from the very first line, posted within the mind of the protagonist, and it is the continuous unfolding of his thoughts which, replacing normal objective narration, depicts to us his acts and experiences. I advise you to read *Les Lauriers sont coupés*.'

In the course of 1917, while James Joyce was living at Zurich, busy, like an Homeric rhapsode, 'stringing together' the magical soliloquies of a new Ulysses, one of M. Dujardin's plays was produced at Geneva, and Mr. Joyce attempted to get in touch with the pioneer of the silent monologue. His letter shared the fate of much war-time correspondence and some seven years were to elapse before the two authors met. The scene was a Parisian hotel where Mr. Joyce was staying. One afternoon there was a ring at the telephone in his room; *Un monsieur désire vous voir, monsieur*. Mr. Joyce went downstairs to meet his unnamed caller and, on the instant he entered the hotel lounge, an elderly French gentleman sprang from the seat and (to the Irish author's embarrassed surprise) gave him the accolade. Explanations led to felicitations—for the revivescence of the drooping *Lauriers* after their long winter's sleep, the vindication at long last of the French writer's *trouvaillie*. And, shortly after, when the ultimate edition of *Les Lauriers* appeared, Mr. Joyce received a copy dedicated:

A James Joyce, au maître glorieux, au créateur illustre, et aussi à celui qui a dit au mort, enseveli et oublié: Relève-toi Lazare.

To which Joyce riposted with an *Ulysses*, inscribed:

A Edouard Dujardin, annonceur de la parole intérieure, le larron impénitent.
(To Edouard Dujardin, harbinger of the inner word, the Impenitent Thief.)

It is not to be assumed, however, that M. Dujardin's tale of a boyish love-affair between a French youth and an actress who exploits and tantalizes him—a set of variations on the old theme, *odi et amo*—is in any sense a miniature *Ulysses*; in theme and texture it is poles apart, a love-lyric, not an epic work. But, throughout the book (which, for all the simplicity of its theme, is a psychological masterpiece), just as in so many pages of *Ulysses*, the reader is "posted within the mind of the narrator," thinks his every thought and, in the six hours covered by the novel, comes to know the young lover almost as intimately as a reader of *Ulysses* knows Mr. Bloom.

The peculiar realism of the silent monologue in James Joyce and Edouard Dujardin comes from their recognition of the fact that the discursive thinker (the average man in average moments) is not consciously introspective, he is almost unaware of his musings. His thoughts are gossamer and their thread so finely spun that the mere impact of self-examination

would snap it. If you offered him a penny for his thoughts he could rarely give you your money's worth. For he neither hears nor watches himself thinking. His monologue is inaudible even to himself. Each fragment is no sooner formed than dissipated like a puff of smoke.

In a monologue of Browning, Proust or Dostoevski the hero more or less deliberately sets out to think and, thinking, observes the ordered sequence of his thoughts, intense or trivial, unfold itself. Such monologues are premeditated, stage-managed by the author. The result is a self-conscious record, and 'studied' like the conduct of a self-conscious person in company.

Edouard Dujardin, like Joyce, watches each vagrant fancy, each member of the swarm of thoughts, in freedom. For such an art a special gift is needed, a faculty for patient, unobtrusive observation, akin to that of a skilled watcher of animal behaviour. A flair for the least movement, the merest rustle in the undergrowth, and a curious sleight of mind are the qualities which distinguish creators of the *monologue intérieur* from the writer of soliloquy or dramatic self-revelation, who, it seems, must catch and cage his specimens before he can observe them. (Readers who may wish to study the history of the silent monologue in detail will find an excellent account of it in *Le Monologue Intérieur*, by E. Dujardin (*Messein*, Paris).)

But, in literature as elsewhere, example does more than precept can, and I append some extracts from an unpublished English version of *Les Lauriers* (made by the present writer some years ago) which, it is hoped, despite the handicap of translation, may convey something of the charm and versatility of the silent monologue created by M. Dujardin forty-five years ago.

Here, for example, we watch the young man preparing for a visit to his lady-love.

"High time to start dressing; first of all, a clean shirt; my coat, there, on the bed; next, waistcoat, on the bed too; now for the dressing-room; it's really very tidy, quite a good servant, that fellow; the candles are reflected in that wide glass above the dressing-table; straw-coloured walls; the big basin, white, filled with water; a few drops of musk in it, just a couple; shirt on the peg; it's a good thing I don't wear flannel shirts, they look so ridiculous; the sponge; cold to the hand the water is; my head down in the water, brrr! Fine sensation that, one's head down in cool splashing water that gurgles slippery sliding all over it; ears buzzing, full of water, eyes closed first, then open in the greenness, skin tingling all over; sort of a thrill it gives one, almost like a caress. The sea this summer, delightful to look forward to; I suppose we will stay at Yport, mother likes that coast; those woods, the cliffs! Head plunged in the basin, sponge spurring water on my neck, cool ripple of the good water, just a hint of perfume in it, along my chest; towel now; got shaved about noon, that will have to do for the day; if only I were a dab at shaving; but, there, one never shaves oneself well and I'd look hopeless with a beard. Presentable now; yes, one should always be prepared; I shall be at Leah's presently,

and supposing, just supposing she asked me to stay the night, great that would be! I wonder, I wonder . . . Where's that hair-brush got to? It's curious how women of easy virtue can put up with any Tom, Dick or Harry; oh, after all, we're not so damned particular ourselves. Fine clean-up that was; excellent; quick now, get my clothes on; might catch a cold; a white shirt; quickly does it; sleeve-links, studs; nice the feel of this clean linen; no nonsense, must get on with it; the bedroom now; my tie; those braces are hideous, wonder what possessed me to buy them; waistcoat; watch in the pocket; my coat; forgot to dust my boots; oh, let it go; no, just a flick of the clothes-brush; it's only a speck of dust; once, twice, that'll do; can put on my coat now; is my tie straight? Yes, all's well and I am ready; can go now; handkerchief, card-case; quite all right; what's the time? Half-past eight only; too soon to start; better sit down there, in the easy-chair; a whole hour to wait. How quiet it is here! There's nothing to beat it, old chap, a little siesta in a comfortable chair, after a quarter of an hour dressing and a good wash in cold water . . ."

And now the hero is walking through the Paris streets on his way to meet his lady-love.

" . . . Noisier here, Place Clichy; must hurry up; always those gloomy lines of walls; thicker shadows on the pavement; ah, here we have the afterdusks, three of them, chatting together; they haven't noticed me; she's quite young that one, slender, bold eyes; killing, the lips she has! In a bare room, shapeless, high up, grey and bare, by smoky candlelight, where all the noises of the street are muted; yes, a high narrow room, low bed, chair, table, grey walls; and in the ruck of the bed a kneeling beast, with roving, lustful lips, a panting, groaning creature . . . Near her now; she's talking; the three of them on the pavement together, not attending to customers; to-morrow, deuce take it, there's that lecture to attend, my course; in three months the exam—of course I shall get my pass; good-bye to freedom then; have to settle down on my job; hullo, regular covey of the girls I've run into here; the café; young people going in; that fellow is like my tailor; supposing I met some pal; but it's better to be alone to roam the streets on a topping evening like to-night, just as one pleases, anywhere. Now shadows of the leaves are restless on the asphalt and a cool breeze is rising; the pavements are shining, bone-dry; over there a party of young girls, tall, slender; fascinating they look there; some children, too; the house-fronts are sparkling, the moon has set; a murmur in the air; it's vague sounds all mixed up, a murmur . . . Lovely month, April! And what a joy to-night to drift along like this, just as one fancies, thinking of nothing, alone, all alone!"

Now he is waiting in the lady's *salon* on their return from a midnight drive along the boulevards; a truly 'Bloomish' passage, this!

"So here I am back in the drawing-room again; only an hour ago and how different it was! It's a certainty Leah will invite me to stay, sure thing; otherwise why ask me to wait while she is undressing? She's in such a kind mood this evening. There's no possible doubt about it, I'm to stay the night. Why to-night, I wonder, rather than another? Still—why *not* to-night? No shadow of doubt, she wants me to stay; thrilling this moment is! Fancy, in a few minutes she will call me, I shall return to her room, loosen those long scented silken garments of hers and presently . . . in her

bed . . . ! Steady now, mustn't let my imagination run amok, this business has got to be tackled with prudence; better take precautions while I'm alone; must be nearly six hours since that lavatory in the Boulevard Sébastopol; the privy here is on the left of the hall; one should feel at ease on these amorous occasions; ware making a noise though, mustn't be heard going out; the hall lamp should be lit, anyhow I have matches; open the door now; hush, no noise; tip-toe out; good business, the light's on, door ajar; remember gentleman are requested to adjust; for this relief—and very needful it was; I leave the door ajar as I found it; the drawing-room door; softly does it; here we are; capital, no one can have heard; and now let's take it easy for a while in this armchair."

Alas, yet once again, the minx denies her favours and the tale closes on the young man's vow (which, we shrewdly guess, he will not keep) to make an end of vain endeavours.

"Why, oh why did I again try to possess her? Once more she has eluded me . . . Must go; my coat, hat.
—*Au revoir*, she says. Wednesday at three.

Holding the candlestick, she opens the drawing-room door; Marie appears; we cross the hall.

—Wednesday then, at three, I say. No, I will never see her again; never again must I see her; what use would it be? All is over now and done with, all possibility of love between us, and I look on her beauty, her white unforgettable beauty, as now she holds out her hand.

—*Au revoir*.
—*Au revoir*.
Friendly she smiles *au revoir*, while lambent on her bosom flickers the pale nocturnal light."

How different from this *diminuendo* in the minor, like the pale close of a Debussy prelude, is the triumphal major cadence that ends *Ulysses*, Mrs. Bloom's Magnificat!

" . . . and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes."

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