

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction
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September 25, 2023. Joyce (4).

review: i-ro-ny

How simple and beautiful was life after all! And life lay all before him.
(123)

- ▶ What does this mean? How do you know?

- ▶ Life was simple and beautiful.
 - ▶ Stephen believed, “Life is simple and beautiful.”
 - ▶ Joyce does not endorse Stephen’s belief that life is simple and beautiful.

- ▶ Milton!?

The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way.
(*Paradise Lost*, 12.648–51)

review: Hell

—On hell.

—I suppose he rubbed it into you well.

—You bet he did. He put us all into a blue funk.

—That's what you fellows want: and plenty of it to make you work.
(105)

At the washstand a convulsion seized him within; and, clasping his cold forehead wildly, he vomited profusely in agony. (116)

a little sweet talk from Joyce

My mind rejects the whole present social order and Christianity—home, the recognised virtues, classes of life, and religious doctrines. How could I like the idea of home? My home was simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits which I have inherited....

Six years ago I left the Catholic Church, hating it most fervently. I found it impossible for me to remain in it on account of the impulses of my nature. I made secret war upon it when I was a student and declined to accept the positions it offered me. By doing this I made myself a beggar but I retained my pride. Now I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do. I cannot enter the social order except as a vagabond.

Letter to Nora Barnacle, August 29, 1904, in *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber: 1975), 25–26.

practice makes imperfect

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tonal shifts

He started up nervously from the stoneblock for he could no longer quench the flame in his blood. He felt his cheeks aflame and his throat throbbing with song. There was a lust of wandering in his feet that burned to set out for the ends of the earth. On! On! his heart seemed to cry. (143, qtd. by “Jane Smith”)

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He had refused. Why? (139)

it's all about the cabbages

The faint sour stink of rotted cabbages came towards him from the kitchengardens on the rising ground above the river. He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father's house and the stagnation of vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul.
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The chill and order of the life repelled him. (135)

voices again

This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. An instant of wild flight had delivered him and the cry of triumph which his lips withheld cleft his brain. (143, qtd. by “Sid”)

on the shore

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh....

The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

—Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in a outburst of profane joy.
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epiphany

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments....

Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, new ed., ed. Theodore Spencer, John J. Slocum, and Cahoon (New York: New Directions, 1963), 211. This fragmentary draft of *Portrait* dates to around 1906.

what is epiphanized?

A skull appeared suspended in the gloom of the doorway. A feeble creature like a monkey was there, drawn thither by the sound of voices at the fire. (56–57)

Short break, then discussion

Compare the early “epiphany” with the related passage from *Portrait*. How does the novel version differ from the free-standing vignette? What is epiphanized here?

next

- ▶ finish the novel
 - ▶ consider structure
 - ▶ consider freedom