Joyce's Moraculous Sindbook
Introduction

_In the beginning was the Word._—John 1:1
_In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh._—“_A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man_”

The theme of Saint John’s gospel is also the motif of James Joyce’s _Ulysses_, a work that preaches the “good news” of the Logos and offers the promise of a “new Bloomsalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future.” Like Stephen Dedalus, Joyce was determined to use his artistic talents for the transformation of mankind. Throughout the canon of his work, he utters the “word known to all men” (p. 581)—the Logos that defines being, engenders sympathy, and identifies the symbol-system of the race. From the material of words, the artist creates worlds: with godlike omniscience, he fashions an aesthetic microcosm, a fictional “postcreation” that expands the collective horizons of human awareness.

Joyce’s earlier novel, _A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man_, traces its hero’s gradual discovery of the awesome power of the word. Pain is the goad that inspires Stephen Dedalus to
construct an imaginary world of poetry and song. While Baby Stephen cowers beneath the kitchen table, a rhyme about eagles and authority consigns the figures of parental justice to a play frame. A later scene of torment with Heron, Boland, and Nash unfolds as a drama of static perception: Stephen is “divested of his suddenwoven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel.” The torturous experiences of youth and adolescence are stripped of their anguish and dramatically controlled by the use of elaborate metaphor. Poetry offers aesthetic compensation for the dawning pangs of frustrated erotic desire: in Stephen’s Byronic verses “To E—C—,” “the kiss, which had been withheld by one, was given by both” (P 71). Art “transubstantiates” the bread of everyday life into the sanctified wafer of beauty. It transmutes the disappointments of mundane reality into cathartic experiences of pity, terror, and joy.

The structure of Stephen’s aesthetic theory in Portrait is based on Aristotel’s Poetics, filtered through the writings of Thomas Aquinas. The function of the artist is to perceive the “thing in itself” as it really is, shown forth in wholeness, harmony, and radiance. Claritas gives birth to the notion of epiphany, the revelation of the “whatness” of an object or event. An epiphany connotes “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorial phase of the mind itself.” In this “most delicate and evanescent of moments” (SH 211), the “soul of the commonest object . . . seems to us radiant” (SH 213). Stephen leads us through an Aristotelian maze, but he ultimately discards the categorical nets that bind his artistic vision. His description of epiphany initiates an aesthetic celebration of phenomenal reality, perceived and sanctified in the present moment.

In the “Telemachus” episode of Ulysses, Stephen again finds himself enveloped by widening circles of asphyxiation. Threatened by the clausrophobic forces of Irish society, he struggles for the physical and psychological space necessary to function as a priest of art, forging in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race. Most of the Dubliners who surround him have been trapped in a stultified world of spiritual
paralysis. The citizens have been psychologically reduced to particles of matter and energy that function mechanically, according to predetermined modes of behavior. The past, whether racial, social, or personal, constitutes a dead weight of determinism that destroys individual freedom.

The nets of family, church, and state all are supported by a philosophical vision grounded in Aristotelian categories. “History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (p. 34), Stephen proclaims—whether it be his own personal history of irrational guilt, a religious history of subservience to Irish Catholicism, or a national history of British political oppression. The historical model is linear and archetypal: it depends on a serial repetition of instants progressing toward “one great goal” (p. 34). A character like Garrett Deasy claims to be in total possession of the light and looks forward to the manifestation of an “allbright” deity. In contrast, Stephen peers into the darkness of private consciousness and turns to the shadowy regions of his own creative will. As a modern, “viviseective” artist, he rejects the nightmare of tradition and clings to the present moment: “Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past” (p. 186).

As early as Stephen Hero, Joyce’s protagonist rejects Aristotle as a guide to the “inexact sciences” of human behavior. When Lynch wonders what Aristotle would have thought of Stephen as a poet, his companion angrily replies: “I’m damned if I would apologise to him at all. Let him examine me if he is able” (SH 186). “I do not think that he is the special patron of those who proclaim the usefulness of a stationary march” (SH 187). Stephen disdains both the “toy life” of the “docile young men” in the college and the “marionette life” of his Jesuit masters: “And yet both these classes of puppets think that Aristotle has apologised for them before the eyes of the world. Kindly remember the monstrous legend upon which all their life is regulated—how Aristotelian it is!” (SH 187). Although Stephen chooses to reiterate a number of premises from the Poetics, he feels nothing but scorn for the “hemiplegia of the will” supposedly sanctioned by Aristotle.
In the course of *Ulysses*, Stephen moves from an enclosed world of determinism to the existential liberation of artistic consciousness. With a Luciferian gesture of independence in "Circe," he professes moral and creative freedom in a realm of infinite possibilities. He becomes the *Übermensch* who embodies "the new, the unique, the incomparable, making laws for ourselves and creating ourselves."*Joyce’s artist-hero is a Nietzschean overman, the messiah and priest of a new religion, who affirms the “spirit of man in literature” (p. 666) and “creates a meaning for the earth.”* Declaring aesthetic autocracy, the artist becomes godlike in his power to fashion a new reality from the "flesh made word": "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation” (p. 391).

The movement toward phenomenal reality makes possible both art and human relationship, activities that require the suspension of categorical assumptions and the exercise of "negative capability." The literary artist creates imaginary worlds from the revelation of things in themselves, made radiant in a moment of epiphany. Similarly, what Joyce calls "interindividual relations" (p. 667) take root in an act of mind contingent on creative sympathy. Suspending the limits of his own ego, the individual stands open to the *claritas* of another personality. The process involves a spontaneous psychodrama initiated by the perceiver, who reconstructs and identifies with a life-world beyond the scope of his immediate experience.

If Stephen Dedalus is a self-declared artist of the beautiful, Leopold Bloom functions as an unselfconscious artist of sympathy. By contemplating the unknown lives of others, Bloom moves toward an imaginative identification with familiar qualities that make alien sensibilities keenly intelligible. Long acquainted with exile and suffering, he is constantly in the process of creating miniature works of art—empathic stories that reconcile him to an apparently hostile environment.

Using the word of life to structure his own experience, Bloom applies a parallactic perspective to every situation he encoun-
ters. Like Homer's mythic hero, he is "Everyman" and "No-
man." In the persona of Outis or Noman, Bloom reduces his
go to a "parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity" (p. 698) in the
cosmos. He refuses to think as "One does," or to obey the
social precepts established by das Man, Heidegger's term for
"the crowd." As "Noman," Bloom is able to question perceptu-
tual models that reinforce prejudice or feed on social bigotry.6

Like Stephen Dedalus, Bloom discovers that he can fashion
his own reality from the shards of historical chaos. Bloom's
equanimity allows him to defy traditional categories of behav-
or. He rejects conditioned responses of sexual jealousy and
successfully exorcises the specters of compulsion. Bloom is
able to conquer past phantoms and to take effective action in the
present—to proffer his hand to Stephen in paternal solicitude
and to slay Molly's suitors on the battleground of his psyche. By
the end of the novel, he transforms a potentially tragic situation
into a comedy of personal triumph.

There is little resemblance between Leopold Bloom and the
brawny titans of ancient Greece and Rome. In the modern
world, traditional bravado is outmoded. The true hero is the
individual endowed with sufficient courage to challenge tribal
patterns of violence, wrath, and aggression. Bloom embodies
the injunction to salvation uttered by the thunder in Eliot's
Waste Land. In full recognition of the limitations that bind his
life, he manifests charity, sympathy, and the wisdom of self-
control. He creates hope out of despair and presents the twen-
tieth century with a model of contemporary heroism.

By suspending moral judgments, Bloom abstracts from con-
tingent circumstances the victimized consciousness of "the
other." He becomes the "new womanly man" (p. 493) who
unites scientific curiosity with feminine compassion. In the role
of androgynous artist, Bloom makes of his own life a miniature
work of art through negative capability. He dramatically acts
out the aesthetic ideal, not only of Keats, but of Stephen Ded-
alus. One might say of Bloom, as Stephen declares of Shake-
speare, that he finds "in the world without as actual what was in
his world within as possible" (p. 213).
"Love loves to love love" (p. 333). If all flesh comes to nothing, then the only hope of conquering the beastliness of a "dogsbody" existence is to liberate the mind in a sympathetic gesture of understanding: "I mean the opposite of hatred" (p. 333). Leopold Bloom offers a new gospel that celebrates the power of the word in human consciousness. The Logos entails more than verbal felicity. It releases symbols that put us in touch with the inchoate experience of the human race. Static art is itself a kinetic reagent: it stimulates the ecstatic response of consciousness to communal perception. The Logos takes on a sacramental, semi-religious function. It evokes spontaneous associations that fuse private perceptions with those of the entire human community. Verbal expression makes possible the articulation of shared experience, and thus, of "at-onement" with others through a wellspring of common feeling.

The three protagonists of Ulysses—Stephen, Bloom, and Molly—all exult in the playground of the mind. Stephen's intellect is well stocked with erudition, but he must learn through a long, somewhat torturous apprenticeship, to connect word with flesh. Bloom is more adept at associating verbal symbols with visceral experience. Endowed with a cosmic, "parallactic" perspective, he recognizes the triviality of words that evoke an archaic emotional resonance and no longer describe the human condition.

Bloom warrants our pity, but not our tears. Like Shakespeare, he has forfeited spousal possession and paternal ownership for a life of creative sympathy. Despite the sadness and disappointments of middle age, he lives, grows, and refuses to be paralyzed. He exhibits a mind rich in curiosity, rife with fantasy, and burgeoning with an artistic comprehension of universal pain. From his own experience of domestic isolation, Bloom can re-create his wife's loneliness, fear, and sexual hunger. He is able to imagine the frustrations of motherhood, the terror of physical inadequacy, and the sheer pathos of erotic desertion. Given the cold of interstellar space, charity is the only appropriate gesture. Eros is transient, agape transcendent.

Leopold Bloom brings "light to the Gentiles" by introducing
Stephan to the arts of love and personal relationship. He leads the younger man to the altar of the flesh made word—not to worship, but to behold. Bloom acquaints Stephan, at least verbally, with the “warm, fullblooded life” of Gea-Tellus.

And in some sense, Molly Bloom may be the most prolific artist in Ulysses. Working in the most universal of all media, she builds a fictional microcosm from the materials of passionate reverie. Through Molly, Joyce celebrates the powers of the Logos residual in every human being. As art improves on life, so dream and fantasy embellish quotidian reality. Molly recollects her daily experiences in the magical mode of amorous transcendence. She re-creates life out of life, weaving a tapestry of events into a mythic story that defies the limits of factual history. The past becomes grist for the mill of art. From moment to moment, Molly exists in a continuous present, turning “like the huge earth ball . . . round and round spinning.” Her thoughts explode spontaneously from a central, controlling consciousness that spins in cyclical repetition around the axis of imaginative fantasy.

Molly escapes from linear time and mentally enclosed space by celebrating the “ecstatic moment.” She creates her own reality from the experiences of the day-self filtered through the uncensored imagination. All those possibilities never actualized by history come alive in a psychodrama of prolific enjoyment. The artistic faculty of Molly’s dream-self gives birth to fictive worlds that associate and recombine in fascinating permutation. Molly represents the anima, the side of the mind that refurbishes the past and illumines the future. Joyce’s Penelope is “posthuman,” and as such, she captures the ideal of postcreation.

In Ulysses, the gods have come down to earth. Art is redemptive in its power to transform the mythic heritage of humankind. It reveals to us the imaginative potential of ourselves: “In the intense instant of imagination, when the mind, Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be” (p. 194). Art illumines the reality of what we are and divulges the secret of what we might become.
Bloom is an artist of compassion; Molly, an artist of passion. Both function as "artists of life." And Stephen, as poetic observer, will eventually give verbal form and aesthetic stasis to the movement of love that unites the Bloom ménage. Together, the three characters affirm the spirit of humanity through literature, sympathy, and desire.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce describes *Ulysses* as his "moraculous . . . sindbook," an epithet that came to seem increasingly appropriate as the world of *Ulysses* began to reveal itself. In German, *sind* is a form of the verb "to be"; and the noun *Sinn* denotes "meaning" or "sense." The title conflates a number of Joycean themes: the concepts of morality and of sin; the authorial preoccupation with *Sein* or "being"; and Joyce's artistic celebration of the miraculous powers of human consciousness.

Throughout the canon of his work, Joyce retained a sense of the priestly vocation he attributes to Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait*—a vocation to forge the uncreated conscience of his race. The author himself never forgot this priesthood of the imagination or its call to arouse the dormant conscience of Ireland. In *Ulysses*, Joyce sets forth a new gospel and a new morality: he substitutes the principles of existential humanism for an outworn ethic of defilement. "Sin" and "guilt" belong to a dead past solidified into paralytic stasis; they are part of the historical nightmare that Stephen, Bloom, and Molly all attempt to destroy. In the course of the novel, the three protagonists escape from "sin" into a realization of existential *Dasein*. By virtue of the intellectual imagination made possible by language, they transcend inherited modes of perception and begin to fashion a new reality from the present, "epiphanic" moment.

Although most critics acknowledge the innovative nature of Joyce's stylistic experiments, few have called attention to the radical content of *Ulysses* or to the revolutionary view of consciousness implicit in the novel. The mind imprisoned in traditional thinking is trapped in a sequence of historical events that demand categorical response. To be truly free, the psyche must
uproot itself from conditioned experience and move backward and forward in time, with the liberty of four-dimensional vision. Consciousness not only perceives history but completes it through imaginative postcreation. The "world without as actual" is re-created, once again, as "possible" within the landscape of the mind.

In the later, more experimental episodes of *Ulysses*, Joyce provides us with subtle keys to the interpretation of his novel. He insists that the reader, like the characters, explore the ramifications of both temporal and ethical relativity. We are expected to be "time-travelers," defying Gotthold Lessing’s serial definition of literature. We are forced to apprehend the entire novel as a contemporaneous object of consciousness, an autotelic and self-referential phenomenon. The ultimate subject of *Ulysses* becomes the mind beholding itself in an act of transcendental, creative perception.

*Joyce’s Moraculous Sindbook* is an attempt to re-create *Ulysses* as an existential act of mind and a phenomenological life-world. The methods I employ are closely allied with those of the Geneva school, represented by Georges Poulet in Europe and by J. Hillis Miller in America. “Criticism of consciousness” studies the repetition of words, phrases, and themes within a particular text in order to reconstruct a fictional world. It traces a work of literature back to its point of conception and tries to analyze the consciousness of an "implied" or "incarnate" author—a non-biographical persona, born in a literary work at the moment of genesis, and coexistent with the final artistic product.¹⁰

Both criticism of consciousness and phenomenology take their origins from Edmund Husserl, and both have been influenced by Heidegger and Sartre. Phenomenological criticism examines the existential problems of time, space, and being within a literary context. It acknowledges the work of art as an "object of intentionality" for the author and for his reader, both of whom regard the text as an intersubjective drama of mutual creation.¹¹
Joyce's *Moraculous Sindbook* takes much of its impetus from the principles of phenomenology, a philosophy that stands open to the eclectic use of diverse critical methods. In the following discussion, I rely on the techniques of the Geneva school, and of "new criticism" when close textual analysis proves illuminating. I refer to the ideas of Sigmund Freud and of Carl Jung when traditional psychoanalytic theory substantiates phenomenological observation. And in all cases, I try to allow Joyce's fictional microcosm to dictate both principles of interpretation and critical conclusions.

*Ulysses* is not a tour de force but a work of literature that takes its meaning "from and in life," and is significant to us as moral beings. In the course of the novel, Joyce's characters move from a world of psychological enclosure to an existential liberation of consciousness. Joyce was far ahead of his contemporaries in his understanding of social interaction and psychological development. In *Ulysses*, he questions traditional notions of identity and reality, of conjugal appropriation and egocentric privilege. He delights in the capaciousness of the human imagination and implies that every individual can become an "artist of life" through myth, sympathy, and creative fantasy.

1. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 484, published by The Bodley Head. All quotations from *Ulysses* will be cited from the 1961 Random House reprint edition and will be indicated by page number only, unless corrections are made from earlier editions of the text.

2. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. 82. Hereafter cited in the text as *PA*.

3. James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, p. 211. Hereafter cited in the text as *SH*. Grateful acknowledgment is made to The Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of James Joyce and to the Executors of the James Joyce Estate for permission to reprint.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, p. 168. According to Richard Ellmann, Joyce became familiar with the writings of Nietzsche at the age of twenty-two, "and it was probably upon Nietzsche that Joyce drew when he expounded to his friends a neo-paganism" (James Joyce, p. 147). Joyce, in fact, signed a 1904 letter as "James Overman." In *The Consciousness of Joyce*, Ellmann cites the existence of three volumes by Nietzsche in Joyce's
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra: First Part" (1883) in The Portable Nietzsche, p. 144. Nietzsche writes: "A new pride my ego taught me, and this I teach men: no longer to bury one's head in the sand of heavenly things, but to bear it freely, an earthly head, which creates a meaning for the earth" (p. 144). Compare Stephen Hero: "To walk nobly on the surface of the earth, to express oneself without pretence, to acknowledge one's own humanity! You mustn't think I rhapsodise: I am quite serious. I speak from my soul" (p. 142).

6. According to Richard Ellmann, "Joyce used to insist upon a 'thirteenth-century' etymology for the Greek form of Ulysses' name, Odysseus; he said it was a combination of Outis—nobody, and Zeus—god. The etymology is merely fanciful, but it is a controlled fancy which helps to reinforce Joyce's picture of the modern Ulysses. For Bloom is a nobody . . . yet there is a god in him. . . . The divine part of Bloom is simply his humanity—his assumption of a bond between himself and other created beings" (James Joyce, p. 372).


8. James Joyce, Finnegans Wake, p. 627. Hereafter cited in the text as FW.

9. According to Richard Ellmann, "the whole conception of sin became repugnant to him. He allowed instead for 'error.' To quarrel with the Church . . . led him to quarrel with his mother and by extension with his motherland, in which he saw a secret collusion of Catholic and British authorities threatening hell or jail" (The Consciousness of Joyce, p. 2).

10. As Sarah Lawall explains, "These writers share the existential view of literature as a mental act. . . . They have been called the new 'Geneva School' or, more recently, the 'Genetic' critics. . . . Their accents are moral and humanistic, and their method a kind of spiritual historicism based upon the existential evidence provided by literature. . . . As 'genetic' critics, all these men . . . analyze the human consciousness in literature at its very focal point or genesis. As practical critics, they try to coexist with a creative consciousness at the moment when experience ceases to be mute and takes on the appearance of words and the structure of words" (Sarah N. Lawall, Critics of Consciousness, p. 3). According to Lawall, "The idea of literary consciousness leads to an analysis of the work as a mental universe, a self-contained world where human experience takes shape as literature. . . . This creation in mental space attempts to fuse human perceptions of subject and object, and is thus an 'experience' of life and an 'act' of consciousness. The criticism aimed at this consciousness sees literature as an act or genesis and analyzes it as a drama taking place in the mind. . . . This empathetic reading is evidently not aimed at a formal analysis of the text. It views literature as an existential experience and act of cognition, and consequently attributes to the
reader only the task of extracting the work's original creative experience. The reader cannot view the text 'from outside,' in an aesthetic, formal, or evaluative judgment, for he must attempt to coincide with its very being and identity" (ibid., p. 8).

11. Literature marks the intersection between the subjective expression of the author and the subjective apprehension of the reader. As Roger Poole declares, literature should be a "significant human study." "The kind of enquiry begun by Dilthey might here be taken for our guide. The 'understanding' which he opposes to mere 'explanation' . . . considers a work of literature as existing in the medium of life and therefore as demanding a reading from and in life. . . . Literature finally matters to us as moral beings. And since literature emanates from moral beings, . . . we cannot accept as sufficient an analytical method which offers us no means of access whatsoever to this inner meaning which literature has" (Roger C. Poole, "Structuralism and Phenomenology: A Literary Approach," p. 8).