

The Long Goodbye: *Ulysses* and the End of Liberal Capitalism

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1. Portrait of a Crisis

Ulysses caused a deep split within the development of European literature and, particularly, of the novel: this much was immediately clear. Less clear was – and still is – the link between this split and the rupture that occurred in the functioning of capitalist societies at the turn of the century. The mutual indifference of socio-historical research and literary research has perhaps even intensified with time to the disadvantage of both. This essay is an attempt to reconnect the two sides of the problem. The instruments used are not new: the only innovation is the attempt to integrate them systematically. This simple operation, however, compels one to read *Ulysses* from a very different viewpoint.

There is a deep attraction between the two terms, '*Ulysses*' and 'crisis'. Yet, in current critical use, the meaning of the second has been assimilated to a hazy image of the end of the world, values, literature – of the bourgeoisie, as, with the logic of folly, students never tire of repeating. It is as though *Ulysses* bewitched readers to such an extent as to make them forget that more than half a century has passed since 1922 and that in the meantime the world, values, literature, and, indubitably, the bourgeoisie, have continued to thrive. Thus, it is necessary to set down the boundaries of this crisis and this *Ulysses*: to define them as historical events, which will never come back to life.

Desirous of moving from the Crisis to the crisis, literary criticism almost always resorts to one single and specific event: the war. There, in the summer of 1914 the break came. There lie the roots

of the crisis and of the literature of crisis – of *Ulysses* and *The Trial*, *The Magic Mountain*, *The Waste Land* and *The Man Without Qualities*. Yet, among the few things these works have in common is exactly the opposite certainty: the war is not the *cause* of the crisis, but only its violent and conspicuous manifestation. The investigation shifts to the years preceding the war (with Mann and Musil, less directly with Joyce), or even cancels it from the picture (Kafka), or finally (with Eliot), treats it as a mere variant of a mythically constant history. Such a shift of analysis is a drastic choice, bristling with consequences: in making it, this 'great bourgeois' literature rejects the spontaneous ideology of Europe's dominant class of the period – that 'conservatism of the twenties' which so strongly linked the war and the crisis and which, for that very reason, lasted no more than a decade.¹

The roots of the split are, therefore, pre-war: they lie according to the main hypothesis of Polanyi's study, in the definitive decline of the 'self-regulating market'. This, in turn, entails the decline of the liberal form of bourgeois society, to which the free market guaranteed rational functioning, automatically regulating its conflictual, irrational, and private foundations. Although fleetingly, Asor Rosa perceived the cultural dimension of the problem in writing of the 'discovery . . . that the real is not rational. And by the real, one means exactly the *capitalist real* to which this culture directly refers itself and which, in order to retrieve a form of co-ordination, regulation and participation for intellectual activity, requires the use of a more formal universe of concepts and values than in the past, and such as to contain within itself the capacity for rational ordering which proves capable of "arranging" something which instead manifests itself in its substance as disjointed, random, and often unjustifiably unjust.'²

Thus, in the first decades of the century, society no longer seems endowed with an intrinsic rationality; it is no longer an organic system of relations capable of holding all its elements together and of giving them a *function* and a *meaning*. According to two of the most cogent semiological analyses, *Ulysses* shows precisely the same lack of internal cohesion:

'These heterogeneous materials have no value of unity of meaning

in Joyce's writing. . . . The value lies precisely in its heterogeneity, in the very distance between the different elements which the writing covers in an incessant play of relations and correspondences, on the basis of which every element becomes the simulation of another. . . . What is built in this game of mutual relations is a discontinuity in progress, a continual displacement from one fiction to another. The negativity of Joyce's writing emerges because of this discontinuity.³

Just as *Dubliners* expressed a situation of "paralysis", *Ulysses* expresses a lack of relationships. . . . The situation expresses a total dissociation. This dissociated world recognizes itself as such but is incapable of finding internal patterns or organization. This is why Joyce resorts to an external pattern and turns his story into a muddled allegory of the Trinitarian mystery.⁴

For the time being, let us lay aside the literary and ideological issues raised by *Ulysses*'s use of 'external patterns of organization', and try to conclude this first point by examining the tie between the *general* form of the capitalist crisis and that peculiar historical crisis caused by the disappearance of the self-regulating market. As Colletti writes: "The general form in which the capitalist crisis manifests itself consists, according to Marx, in the interruption of the process of circulation of commodities: the result of this interruption is that the two instances of "buying" and "selling" separate, and enter into a contradictory relationship. . . . The consequence is that "civilized" form of economic crisis – peculiar to capitalist conditions. . . – known as the crisis of *overproduction*: that is, the seemingly paradoxical condition of the coexistence, on the one hand, of unsold goods, and on the other, of unsatisfied needs."⁵

The capitalist crisis, therefore, is characterized by this *separation* of elements which should, rather, compose a unitary system – by the 'forcible separation from each other of processes which in essence are one', according to an epigraph from Marx.⁶ It is, however, precisely because of such a separation of 'supply' and 'demand', products and producers, that the crisis cannot be seen as an 'irregularity' in the normal development of capitalism. On the contrary it expresses in a conspicuous form that same split which, in an obscure form, characterizes this society's most specific pro-

duct: the commodity itself. According to a famous passage of *Capital*, the commodity form already contains within itself the 'potentiality' of the crisis: 'Thus the mystery of the commodity form is simply this, that it mirrors for men the social character of their own labour, mirrors it as an objective character attaching to the labour products themselves, mirrors it as a social natural property of these things. Consequently the social relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour, presents itself to them as a social relation, not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. . . . To find an analogy, we must enter the nebulous world of religion. In that world, the products of the human mind become independent shapes, endowed with lives of their own, and able to enter into relations with men and women. The products of the human hand do the same thing in the world of commodities.'⁷ Even within the sphere of production (that is, in a 'non-critical' situation *par excellence*), the product is an extraneous and separate entity, and cannot be controlled by the producer: crisis, therefore, originates *along with* capitalist social relationships: it is not an exception, but their full and patent expression.

Although the crisis is ingrained in production, it nonetheless manifests itself within the sphere of circulation: it is in the market that it becomes visible. Joyce wrote in a historical phase which, though it did not encounter a general economic crisis for approximately thirty years, experienced something even more significant: the crisis of the market *as such*, as an automatic mechanism of social equilibrium. This means that the crisis had become a *permanent* feature of capitalist society as it was then known. In Joyce, the typical phenomena of the crisis are no longer sudden and exceptional catastrophes: rather, they are the ordinary conditions of social relationships. This allows him to immerse himself into the 'arcane' depths of capitalist society and give us, in the 'Circe' chapter, what is still the unsurpassed literary representation of commodity fetishism. *Ulysses*'s particularity – its historical and, as we shall see, geographical 'limitedness' – is, therefore, the most stable pedestal on which to rest its 'universality': as the poet of the crisis of classical capitalism in its classical area of development, Joyce offers us a monumental autopsy of an entire social formation.

2. The Strange Death of Liberal England

In Britain, the crisis of the political, economical, and ideological structures of liberal capitalism had a very particular development and outcome. During the crucial decades, the dominant class proved both resistant to and incapable of enacting those basic transformations which, elsewhere, were to permit the move into a new phase of capitalist development, whose leading power was to emerge – emblematically – from the conflict between Germany and the United States.

Decade after decade, the British crisis dragged on with monotonous regularity: a full-fledged *decadence*, without sudden tensions or traumas (the example of 1929, when the international crash had relatively mild consequences for the British economy, is illustrative), but also without any innovative steps. An inkling of the forthcoming decline had already emerged during the depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which, according to Hobsbawm, revealed 'that Britain was not ready for all but one of the possible methods of dealing with [the new] situation. Unlike other countries . . . Britain held firmly to free trade. She was equally disinclined to take the path of systematic economic concentration – the formation of trusts, cartels, syndicates, and so on – which was so characteristic of Germany and the USA in the 1880s. She was too deeply committed to the technology and business organization of the first phase of industrialization, which had served her so well, to advance enthusiastically into the field of the new and revolutionary technology and industrial management which came to the fore in the 1890s. This left her with only one major way out . . . imperialism. Britain had escaped from the Great Depression (1873–96) – the first international challenge – not by modernizing her economy, but by exploiting the remaining possibilities of her traditional situation.'⁸

The secular stability of liberal practice and ideology and with the monopoly of the world market, the two great resources of nineteenth-century British capitalism, were now suffocating it. To continue to adhere to that model implied – as Hobsbawm rightly observes – what would prove an irretrievable delay in the new forms of capitalist organization which were both a logical consequence and a drastic denial of the free market. The delay was

apparent in the absence of economic concentration and of convergence between industrial and financial capital,⁹ which were so typical of German and American development at the turn of the century, and which formed the true theoretical core of Lenin's study on imperialism. Just as crucial was the absence of the instrument which proved decisive for capitalism's new course: the systematic use of the state to regulate, redefine, and, ultimately, to expand capitalist accumulation. Stuart Woolf, among others, has observed that 'The role of the state in the economic development of those nations which came to industrialization relatively late – in Germany and Belgium, as in Russia and Italy – was always more prominent than in England, the mother country of free-trade.'¹⁰

This further disjuncture – between state and society, politics and economy – was probably something more than a simple delay. It does not so much reflect the inability of the English dominant class to 'update' itself (which still holds true, however) as the inability to organize from within and assert itself to the outside world as just that: the dominant and hegemonic class of the period that saw the decline of liberal non-interference. Since the close of the era of great statesmen, the English ruling class has produced, over the last century, only mediocre bureaucratic administrators as its political representatives: and this in the face of ever more uncontrollable events. To this phenomenon Joyce dedicated one of the central chapters of *Ulysses*, 'The Wandering Rocks', which is a splendid miniature of the overall structure of the novel. It is impossible to restore organization and dynamism to the social fabric on the basis of the existing forms of power ('spiritual' and 'temporal' – ideological and political), but it is also unthinkable for Joyce to envisage reality except on the basis of these forms – by now lethargic and lifeless – of power and consciousness: a vicious circle which will return, at its highest level, in the use of 'myth'.

But let us now move on to another macroscopic parallel between the decline of English society and the social universe in *Ulysses*. In *Imperialism*, Lenin does not pass up the opportunity of flogging the 'putrefaction' of English capitalism and the growing diversion of resources from productive activity towards conspicuous consumption, recreation, sports, fox-hunting, and so on. This same 'mark of parasitism' – on a less genteel level, obviously

enough – is one of *Ulysses*'s most evident social references: '[In *Ulysses*] we see people eating, drinking, making love, arguing; they go after money . . . and all this is felt as happening simultaneously. But there is no sign of the productive activity without which none of this could happen. . . . there is not a worker in the book. . . His selection of the social relations to be described is that of the consumer.'¹¹

This is both precise and naive. Precise, because this is exactly the state of affairs in *Ulysses* (although a closer analysis shows that consumption can by now occur only at the level of mere survival – eating and drinking – and for the rest Joyce shows us the *unsatisfied* aspiration to consumption, especially in Bloom). Naive, since Joyce enlarges this aspect of reality and renders it 'absolute', not because he is unaware of or scorns the rest of the picture (as West's elementary realism would have it), but because of a deliberate cultural choice: seen in this light, *Ulysses* sets out to be a cynical portrait of how Victorian society will end if it follows its deepest inclinations. Joyce is so confident that the situation will take precisely that course, he feels so deeply involved in this parasitical decline, that he does not offer the British ruling class some sort of 'solution' – as Eliot will strive to do in his overzealous and speculative way – but only the hideous caricature of itself and its world. A few lines from Bloom's nocturnal reflections in 'Eumaeus' will suffice:

'Intellectual stimulation as such was, he felt, from time to time, a first rate tonic for the mind. Added to which was the coincidence of meeting, discussion, dance, row, old salt, of the here today and gone tomorrow type, night loafers, the whole galaxy of events, all went to make up a miniature cameo of the world we live in, especially as the lives of the submerged tenth, viz., coalminers, divers, scavengers, etc., were very much under the microscope lately.'¹²

Here Joyce gives voice to the petty-bourgeois philistine who sees himself and his occasional table-mates as a 'miniature of the world', and who nonchalantly liquidates all productive activities with the commonplaces of the dominant culture ('submerged tenth', 'under the microscope'), automatically ('viz.', 'etc.'). to the

extent that he seems unaware of the very reality of the workers, whose existence he must 'deduce' with an uproarious literal interpretation of the metaphor of the 'submerged tenth': 'coalminers, divers, scavengers'!

It is true then: in *Ulysses*, social relationships appear only through the prism of consumption. Yet, this occurs because the novel's sole field of investigation, its starting point and its finishing point, is the dominant and spontaneous ideological consciousness of the first decades of the decline of English society. And what has been said about the accusation of paying too much attention to consumption also holds true for that 'Marxist' criticism which attacked *Ulysses* for the *stasis* and *mediocrity* of its world (even Lukács was to do so in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*: '*Ulysses* is static. It is more like Cheops than Magnitostroy', wrote Mirsky in 1933, and Radek, the following year asked, 'What is the basic feature in Joyce? His basic feature is the conviction that there is nothing big in life – no big events, no big people, no big ideas; and the writer can give a picture of life by just taking "any given hero on any given day" . . .'¹³

Ulysses is indeed static, and in its world nothing – absolutely nothing – is great. But this is not due to any technical or ideal shortcoming on Joyce's part, but rather to his subjection to English society: for Joyce, it is certainly the only society imaginable, although he just as certainly condemns it, through a hyperbolic presentation of its worst features, to a future of paralysed mediocrity (a future that Joyce, with a stroke of genius, places in the past, as if to underline his consummate scepticism: one can always hope never to reach the negative utopias of science fiction, but if a negative utopia came into being twenty years ago, and no one realized it, then the die is truly cast . . .). Joyce's writing is not 'revolutionary' in any reasonable sense of the word – and yet, no Marxist, novelist or otherwise, has ever been able to perceive the end of the liberal century with such intelligence or with such fury.

Before moving on to *Ulysses* once and for all, a brief explanation is in order. I have dealt – and shall continue to deal – with Joyce and *Ulysses* as expressions of English society and culture. Of course, it is a well-known fact that Joyce is Irish and that *Ulysses* takes place in Dublin. But if Joyce were an Irish *writer*, com-

prehensible and containable without any loose threads within Irish culture, he would no longer be Joyce; if the city of *Ulysses* were the real Dublin of the turn of the century, it would not be the literary image *par excellence* of the modern metropolis. Cultural phenomena cannot be explained in the light of their *genesis* (what ever has emerged from the studies that interpreted Joyce on the basis of Ireland?); what counts is their objective *function*. And there is no doubt that *Ulysses* fully belongs to a critical turning point of international bourgeois culture – a status it would not have achieved in the investigation of Ireland's peripheral and backward form of capitalism (which was, moreover, dependent on the destiny of British capitalism: yet another reason to move from the effect to the cause).

The hypothesis of this study, then, is that a 'structural homology' exists between the specific social nature of the British crisis and the specific literary structure of *Ulysses*: if they appear as mutually integrative of each other, the question of Ireland is no longer pertinent. Or, rather, it gives birth to a different problem: why is the most cogent and involved interpreter of the British crisis not English? We face here the vaster question of 'immigrant culture'. Virtually all the protagonists of twentieth-century British culture (the most notable exceptions being Keynes and Leavis), have been immigrants.¹⁴ Just as British society has been unable to produce a ruling class worthy of the name, so it has been incapable of producing a hegemonic culture by itself. Only those who had not been moulded by its moribund value system could have any awareness of the crisis and of the possible ways out: only those who saw Britain from afar were truly capable of understanding it. And Joyce, an Irishman (this is the only legitimate domain of the 'genetic' approach) had every reason and every means to probe deeply in the entrails of British society. The ruthless acumen he shows in describing its degeneration originates here – as also does the impossibility of *opposing* anything whatever to that degeneration. Joyce's precocious scepticism concerning the political and cultural choices of the Irish national movements was to be reconfirmed by the search for sheltered environments (Trieste, Switzerland, the expatriate circles of Paris) at the edge of both storm and renewal. Joyce's ideological position is structurally ambiguous:

neither an 'apology' for nor a 'criticism' of classical capitalism, it is a position that desecrates it and at the same time 'has no other gods before it'; that raises it to universal heights, but in this way renders the condemnation universal. Here again is the image of the vicious circle.

3. *Ulysses*, Disorder, and Myth

From what has been said above, it should be clear that the root of the capitalist crisis lies in the inability of the market's economic mechanisms to assure society's organic functioning. This also produced the crisis of nineteenth-century ideology, both in its *contents* and in the awareness of its social *function*. In literature, this cultural crisis and the attempts to overcome it are manifest with singular clarity, because the concept of aesthetic 'form' is directly involved. If social reality proves incapable of attaining a rational and full form by itself (Asor Rosa: 'the real is no longer rational'), culture and art can no longer have the 'mirror image' as their formal ideal, since that choice would imply the loss of their internal coherence and their possible hegemonic function. On the contrary, art and culture must autonomously contribute to restoring a form to society: but they must, so to speak, count only on themselves, and work on the basis of their peculiar formal mechanisms. They will be able to accomplish their task only by postulating a radical autonomy, a formal self-determination that accentuates to the utmost the distance and the heterogeneity of their foundations, which attempt to be organic, from the non-organic reality of everyday social relationships.

The process by which art creates its form offers itself as an *example* to society at large, and hence claims the right to logical and historical anticipation of all transformation (hence, the common denominator of idealism of twentieth-century poetics). Eliot's discussion of the 'mythical method' in the well-known essay '*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth' (*The Dial*, 1923), is among the most explicit examples of this mode of reasoning: 'The novel, instead of being a form, was simply the expression of an age which had not sufficiently lost all form to feel the need of something stricter.' But

things have changed: '[The mythical method] is simply a way of controlling, or ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.'

Control, order, giving shape and significance – concentration, intervention, redefinition of the social order and its functions: Eliot's quest (as becomes clearer and clearer) expresses in a metaphorical and, later, religious guise, the basic needs of a new phase of capitalist development. Cancelling out futility and anarchy means forcing the course of history in one direction only, and paving the way for a regulatable and controllable future. But it also means cancelling out *Ulysses*, willingly ignoring its monumental stasis and irregularity.¹⁵ A discussion of the mythical method helps us to understand Eliot, not Joyce. Free at last from the interlinear Homer-Joyce homework, it is no longer possible to doubt that Joyce uses myth only to desecrate it, and through it to desecrate contemporary history: to parody Bloom with Ulysses, and Ulysses with Bloom; to create an order which gives greater relief to the absence of order, a nucleus gone haywire with irony and distortions. In Eliot, there is a clear distinction: on the one hand myth ('controlling, ordering, giving a shape and a significance'), on the other, history ('immense panorama of futility and anarchy'). Myth must mould history: it is the active agent of the pair, *form* to history's *content*.¹⁶ In Joyce, myth and history are *complementary*: they presuppose and neutralize each other, and it is impossible to establish a formal or ideological hierarchy between the two. In Joyce, myth is not identified with the aesthetic *form* (as in Eliot), and therefore cannot be the starting point for a new *cultural hegemony*.

It is worth examining these two myths – *The Waste Land*'s and *Ulysses*'s – more closely. The first is truly a myth with all its anthropological requirements in order: it is the myth of the Fisher King.¹⁷ But what *Ulysses* is based on is *not* a myth: There is no 'myth of Ulysses': Ulysses is precisely he who avoids myths: he triumphs over them and relegates them to the past. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* – which is also, like *Ulysses*, a long reflection on the end of the liberal era – contains exemplary judgements on the symbolic and ideological function of the *Odyssey*: 'if it does not

already presuppose a universality of language, the Homeric narrative effects one... The venerable cosmos of the meaningful Homeric world is shown to be the achievement of regulative reason, which destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order in which it reflects it ... The myths have been transformed in the various layers of the Homer narrative. But the account given of them there, the unity wrested from the diffuse sagas, is also a *description of the retreat of the individual from the mythic powers* ... The opposition of enlightenment to myth is expressed in the opposition of the surviving individual ego to multifarious fate. ... The prehistoric world is secularized as the space whose measure the self must take; and the old demons inhabit the distant bounds and islands of the civilized Mediterranean, *forced back into the forms of rock and cavern* ... *The behaviour of Odysseus the wanderer is reminiscent of that of the casual barterer*. In the pathetic image of the beggar, *feudal man retains the features of the oriental merchant, who returns with unheard-of riches* because for the first time, and contrary to tradition, he has stepped outside the milieu of a domestic economy, and 'embarked for other lands' ... *the Odyssey is already a Robinsonade*.¹⁸

If, with Ulysses, trade emerged as a stimulus to knowing the world, giving it an internal order as well as external boundaries, creating a 'universal' language, and defeating superstition, by now, with Bloom, the *same* social function sails in an uncontrollable and unknowable world, reducing attempts at universality to flat banalities (Bloom's 'philosophy') and falling prey to thousands of new superstitions. It is worth remembering that Joyce insists on the fact that Bloom is an advertising agent. And advertising – as Baran and Sweezy observe in their 'Theses on Advertising'¹⁹ – becomes an indispensable aid to modern trade precisely at the time of *Ulysses*, because of the definitive crisis of the automatic balance between supply and demand. But advertising (here again Joyce is blind to those contemporary phenomena which already disclose the mechanisms of the future) does not confer – unlike trade in the *Odyssey* – any unity on *Ulysses*, just as it assures the protagonist no social identity or self-awareness.

Joyce, therefore, uses Ulysses, indeed he *has* to use him, because Ulysses is the *first* symbolic figure of the cultural era of

which Joyce is the ultimate offspring. But Ulysses no longer controls the surrounding world, and thus becomes Bloom. His symbolic value becomes dialectical and ambiguous: what saved Ulysses now condemns Bloom, what was universal no longer makes sense. Confronted with the crisis of liberal capitalism, Joyce looks for its causes in the very foundations of that society's and that culture's 'good working order'.

4. Myth, Stream of Consciousness, Advertising

While Ulysses had tamed the myths *because* he had established the rational order of trade and free individuality, Bloom is the product of the dissolution of that order and of that individuality, and there is nothing odd in his succumbing to myths once again. The question of myth returns to the centre of *Ulysses*, but in a completely different way from that in which Eliot posited it: not as a meta-historic image of a fable and several typical characters, but as a relationship between subjective intellectual consciousness and intuition of objective reality; not as a metaphoric pattern for the narration, but as its technique. In his study of the linguistic expression of myth Cassirer maintains that '[In mythic thought] the ego is spending all its energy on this single object, lives in it, *loses itself in it*. . . . For in this mode, thought does not dispose freely over the data of intuition, in order to relate and compare them to each other, but *is captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it*.'²⁰

What is striking, in this outline, is that it coincides in all essential points with Umberto Eco's analysis of stream of consciousness (especially, but not only, of Bloom's): 'Remaining within the conscious facts – all recorded with absolute fidelity as so many equivalents – *personal identity itself is questioned*. In the flow of overlapping perceptions during Bloom's walk through Dublin, the boundaries between "inside" and "outside", between how Bloom endures Dublin and how Dublin acts on him, become very indistinct.'²¹ Stream of consciousness is, then, the linguistic expression of the loss of individual identity: the exact opposite of what it was in Dujardin who used it as an instrument of self-control and re-

demption of the character of the individual. Dujardin's true heir is Proust, not Joyce, who overturned him in the same way as Eliot did Laforgue. In *Ulysses*'s stream of consciousness the individual is split, and expresses himself as such. The illusion that he could be an autonomous and independent subject collapses. Far from being the expression of an 'interior freedom' (as Zeraffa would have it with his thesis of the 'revolution of the novel'), stream of consciousness indicates that the individual is enslaved by arcane and uncontrollable forces: stream of unconsciousness would be a better definition, and though this technique does *not* coincide with the psychic domain that Freud defined as 'unconscious', it is clear that both enact the function of emphasizing a discontinuity within the individual psyche.²²

Stream of consciousness and crisis of the ideology of the free individual meet under the ensign of advertising. This is the new 'myth' to which Bloom – advertising agent and victim of advertising – succumbs with increasing regularity. And this is so because advertising is the myth of the commodity – commodity transformed into myth, into a fetish that parades, instead of hiding, its 'arcane' features. While nineteenth-century advertising described the use-value of a product, hence reproducing the mental acts that any purchaser would spontaneously perform in the market, modern advertising, as we have seen, originates in the paradoxical and 'critical' situation of a perennial imbalance between supply and demand. But this paradox is none other than the patent manifestation of the alienated relationship between producers and products. 'Thanks to' advertising this relationship is no longer hidden and denied, but rather accepted – albeit, as we shall see, unconsciously – as something obvious and permanent. Advertising, therefore, is not so much the exhibition of 'a' commodity as of *commodity fetishism*: it boosts the product by making a fetish of it. It is no accident that one of advertising's favourite rhetorical figures is a metaphor in which – pathetic fallacy indeed – the product emerges as a 'force of nature'. The commodity must visibly take on independent, natural, and even human properties:

'We're a capital couple are Bloom and I;
He brightens the earth, I polish the sky.'

So sings Bloom's notorious soap, rising as the sun in the 'Circe' chapter.

To diffuse its essential content, advertising aims at a form of persuasion based on unawareness, rapid and deep because capable of circumventing all intellectual resistance. Advertising then becomes part of stream of consciousness to the point of dominating its mechanisms and organizing to its own advantage Cassirer's 'loss of self' and Eco's absence of boundaries between 'inside and outside'. If this attempt works, then it is true that 'advertising campaigns if sufficiently large, persistent and unscrupulous (availing themselves of such methods as subliminal suggestion and the like) can sell to the customer "almost anything"'.²³ To be able to sell anything, that is, to spread out over the entire social universe; 'All kinds of places are good for ads' Bloom reflects, in a passage which is exemplary for the multiplying and centrifugal effect of an ad on his stream of consciousness.

But advertising is not just one of *Ulysses*'s most original leit-motifs: in at least two cases, in 'Ithaca', Joyce himself relates it to the stream of consciousness technique:

'What were habitually his final meditations?

'Of some one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder, a poster novelty, with all extraneous accretions excluded, reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life.'

'What also stimulated him in his cogitations?

'... the infinite possibilities hitherto unexploited of the modern art of advertisement if condensed in trilateral monoideal symbols, vertically of maximum visibility (divined), horizontally of maximum legibility (deciphered) and of magnetizing efficacy to arrest involuntary attention, to interest, to convince, to decide'.

'The span of casual vision', 'congruous with the velocity of modern life', 'magnetizing efficacy', 'to arrest involuntary attention, to interest, to convince, to decide'. Here we find precisely the ran-

domness, rapidity, discontinuity, uncontrollability and depth of the stream of consciousness. And these passages demonstrate that the associations of stream of consciousness are by no means 'free'. They have a cause, a driving force, which is *outside* the individual consciousness: even syntactically, the subject of the last passage quoted is advertising: the individual psyche is only the necessary buttress of its effectiveness.

It is, therefore, completely logical that stream of consciousness is eminently paratactic: the absence of internal order and of hierarchies indicates its reproduction of a form of consciousness which is subjugated to the principle of the *equivalence of commodities*. It indicates that the use-values – the concrete qualities of any given commodity – are by now perceived as secondary (and indeed advertising never 'describes' the product, and its very ideal – 'to sell *anything*' – presupposes that every product can become an exchangeable and abstract entity). What is left to fire the imagination and inflame desire is only the overall attraction of this chaotic and unattainable collection of commodities: here lies, perhaps the reason for that continual 'shift and metamorphosis' of sense that Heath observes in *Ulysses*: no concrete and univocal meaning can be attributed to a world of abstract and interchangeable objects. Here again, Cassirer's analysis of mythical thought proves useful: 'If we see [the world] as a whole, this whole nevertheless consists of clearly distinguishable units, which do not melt into each other, but preserve their identity that sets them definitely apart from the identity of others. But for the mythmaking consciousness these separate elements are not thus separately given . . . For this reason the mythic state of mind has been called the "complex" state . . .'²⁴

Thus far I have based my argument on Bloom's stream of consciousness. Yet, it works, with due precautions made, for Molly and Stephen as well. This is immediately clear with Molly because, in her stream of consciousness, we find ourselves before the full realization of the tendency towards parataxis and loss of identity, reproduced in the continual fluctuation between 'me' and 'I'. This can cause no surprise, given that in *Ulysses* Molly is unconditionally posited as the quintessential representative of consumerism. But the argument holds true for Stephen, too. It is essential, in this respect, that his early theory of epiphanies – the attempt to pene-

trate the underlying and unalterable meaning of things, people, situations – no longer works. ‘Signatures of all things I am here to read’: Stephen still holds to this idea at the beginning of the third chapter, ‘Proteus’. But this ‘signature’ is no longer the sign of a univocal transcendent order, just as ‘the soul’ – consciousness – is no longer the ‘form of forms’. If in Stephen’s stream of consciousness in the first chapter images appear which could lead to an epiphanic moment, this moment does *not* arrive, and the images remain undeciphered. Even the doctrine of incarnation, at the end of the third chapter, succumbs to a grotesque sequence of metamorphoses (‘God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain’) that deprives it of all intrinsic or teleological meaning. Certainly, unlike Bloom’s and, to a greater extent, unlike Molly’s, Stephen’s stream of consciousness is still the mirror of a *conflict* between the attempt to dominate the world rationally and the world’s mute or equivocal substance. But the latter triumphs, just as, at the level of plot, *hazard* drives Stephen back and forth during the day and night. The only character who, throughout *Ulysses*, undergoes a transformation can do so only because he has remained artificially extraneous (‘backward’, so to speak) with regard to the dominant social conditions.

5. Bloom

The symbolic function of *Ulysses* and the narrative use of stream of consciousness are two of *Ulysses*’s cardinal points. Within this general framework I wish now to indicate a more tangible example of the sociological hypothesis of this study. If *Ulysses* expresses the cultural dialectics of liberal capitalism in agony, then it will necessarily linger upon the dissolution of the figure of the petty bourgeois – the free producer, economically independent and intellectually proud of his own autonomy – so relevant within the Anglo-Saxon ideological system in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Clearly, Bloom is the key. He is a socially ambiguous figure from the start, neither completely independent nor completely dependent. But he has already betrayed his father’s religion – that

Hebraism which prefigured the bourgeois-puritan ethic – and with it the practical ideal of *innerweltliche Askesis*. His father – or, rather, the image of him produced by Bloom’s sense of guilt – admonishes him in ‘Circe’ for both:

‘RUDOLPH: Second halfcrown waste money today. I told you not go with drunken goy ever. So. You catch no money. [. . .] Are you not my son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the gods of his fathers Abraham and Jacob? . . . One night they bring you home drunk after spend your good money.’

Bloom has no social future (yet another reason for compressing *Ulysses* into twenty-four hours), and this is why Joyce concedes him a genealogy, but no male descendent: Bloom’s son manages to come into the world, but he does not quite manage to survive, just as Bloom’s father, not wanting to abandon the heroic ethic of the free market, is thrashed by it and kills himself. Bloom’s life is suspended between these two deaths: by now, he is an accident, a historical relic. And his is indeed an ethic of pure and simple survival: the balance between debit and credit, at the end of the day, is perfectly even. Savings – one of the first things he associates with the memory of his father: ‘commercial advice (having taken care of pence, the pounds having taken care of themselves)’, – this secular symbol of economic freedom, this guarantee of the future, has somehow become impossible and none of the characters in the novel can even aspire to saving any more, as one of the meanest characters in *Ulysses*, Mr Deasy, complains to Stephen in ‘Nestor’. In Joyce’s novel one truly lives day by day – and yet, tomorrow is not another day.

If Bloom feels the precariousness of his position, and his only *raison d’être* is to manage to preserve it, then the most frightening thing becomes the unusual, the different, the irregular. Thus Bloom to Stephen in ‘Eumaeus’:

‘Mr Bloom, who at all events, was in complete possession of his faculties, never more so, in fact disgustingly sober, spoke a word of caution *re* the dangers of nighttown, women of ill fame and swell mobsmen, which, barely permissible once in a while, though not as

a habitual practice, was of the nature of a regular deathtrap for young fellows of his age.'

And in 'Nausicaa', the philistine eulogy of masturbation compared to coitus is unforgettable: one runs fewer risks when alone. And a short passage in 'Ithaca' raises the issue of risk again:

'His mood?

'He had not risked, he did not expect, he had not been disappointed, he was satisfied.

'What satisfied him?

'To have sustained no positive loss.

The relevance of these last lines goes beyond their immediate meaning. Here, in fact, Bloom is thinking of the horse Throwaway, the unexpected winner of the Gold Cup: this is a minute episode, which Joyce does not even describe directly, but extends throughout *Ulysses* as a perfect metaphor for what is at this point the illusory character of free competition. Throwaway, in fact, does what Bloom has always failed and always will fail to do: it suddenly passes, with a lash of the whip (or a stroke of genius, like the thoroughbred which convinces Ulrich, in *The Man Without Qualities*, to change his way of life?), from anonymity to fame, from precariousness to wealth. At this point, only horses can play the free market: no longer self-made men (as Bloom still deludes himself of becoming with his 'inventions' – in the age that saw the birth of industrial laboratories . . .) but only self-made horses. (Here, incidentally, is the secret of the resurrection of sport in the modern world [the first Olympics were held in 1896]: the extraordinary increase in *real* inequality, due to the concentration of economic and political power, makes a conspicuous *formal* re-proposal – not accidentally, under the ensign of the most puritan dilettantism – of the sacred idol of 'competition among equals' all the more desirable.) Throwaway could certainly have been Bloom's lucky strike, the great surprise – but luck and surprise are by now true exceptions, and serve only to show how firm the rule is.

Clearly, Bloom is prey to this social rule without understanding it. His awareness is partial and distorted. The great corporations

undermine his social identity, but Bloom can grasp this phenomenon only by thinking . . . of the Roman Catholic Church:

'Wonderful organization certainly, goes like clockwork. . . . Square-headed chaps those must be in Rome: they work the whole show. And don't they rake in the money too?

'Mass seems to be over. Could hear them all at it. Pray for us. And pray for us. And pray for us. Good idea the repetition. Same thing with ads. Buy from us. And buy from us.'

Bloom's consciousness, finally, epitomizes and exalts itself in the commonplace. A parody of the reasoning illuminist, Bloom is capable of coming up with commonplaces on any subject: from the concept of nation to relations between the sexes, from the appeal to generosity to social programmes, he believes – by remaining faithful to the letter of liberal orthodoxy – that he can understand and control a world with which he has permanently lost contact. In this light, as Della Volpe has written, *Ulysses* '. . . is a summation and judgement of our humanitarian bourgeois civilization in the sense that the justification of that civilization is reduced to the terms of its now *lifeless commonplaces*.'²⁵ Thus, Joyce's relentless satire is aimed at Bloom because, through him, it can aim higher. And, once more, Joyce's historical judgement is imprisoned between two terms that ridicule and yet implicate each other. Hence the peculiar nature of Joyce's irony, which has none of the 'detachment' indicated by his contemporary Thomas Mann as the price paid in order to understand, judge, and preach, but which, on the contrary, comes from the inside of a system of unresolvable contradictions.

6. Useless Wealth

So far we have seen how *Ulysses* presents some social phenomena typical of the crisis of liberal capitalism. What is perhaps the most important element remains to be seen: what effects does this crisis

have on culture and on literature? What social function does Joyce assign to them and how does it emerge in *Ulysses*'s structure?

Joyce's answer is radical and defines itself on two distinct planes. The first and more elementary concerns the way the novel's characters use – or do not use – culture. Stephen is the most representative figure in this respect. He is the intellectual as intellectual worker: in him, culture and work are one and the same. Consequently, in Stephen culture undergoes the same destiny to which the capitalist crisis condemns every type of work: under-use, if not out and out waste. And, in fact, from the very first pages, Stephen refuses to communicate and to put his accumulated knowledge into circulation, not out of intellectual pride, but because he is obscurely convinced that the effort would have no outcome. That Stephen's culture is a culture of 'opposition' – anti-British and anti-Catholic – certainly contributes to his silence: yet, we must add that the most radical doubt about his own function assails Stephen on the completely calm and neutral territory of teaching ancient history to children. At school, in the second chapter, Stephen is forced to live on two planes intellectually: on the private one of his own reflections and on the socially acknowledged one of teaching. But between these two areas there is no relationship any more, so that Stephen's intellectual wealth hinders him in carrying out his job regularly. At the end of the chapter, with faultless logic, Stephen quits; in the following chapter, 'Proteus', that culture, already socially useless, also reveals itself to him as intrinsically fragile and precarious. Gradually, in the course of the novel, he relegates his knowledge further and further towards a limbo: when he uses it, it is merely to astonish (who could take his interpretation of *Hamlet* seriously?). In 'Eumaeus', he exasperatedly denies Bloom any access to it.

One might think that this occurs because Stephen's culture is obsolete and Thomist. But this explains only the definitive, mute dismissal that it encounters. What seems to me central – that knowledge has been laboriously 'accumulated' and then proves unusable – is valid also for Bloom, although in a different way because his social function is different. Stephen scandalizes him because 'after all the money expended on [his] education' he is unable to 'recoup [himself] and command [his] full price', Bloom

reaches the point of racking his brains to find a way to use the young man's culture to his personal advantage, and then moves on to dreaming of profiting from his own infantile homemade know-how, or from his wife's canorous abilities, or a thousand different small follies. This is an important aspect of Bloom's 'intellectual physiognomy': his desperate managerial vocation, his effort to capitalize on every little thing in view of its potential economic usefulness.

As such, Bloom is the relentless parody of the 'spirit of capitalism' of a Benjamin Franklin (all the more so – as has been seen – because when it comes down to it, even the most modest savings are impossible for him); just as his aspirations towards an omnilateral culture are the parody of the *Encyclopédie*. Bloom's library, described at length in 'Ithaca', is a masterpiece of randomness and uselessness, and its key is furnished in 'The Wandering Rocks'. A scene closes with Lenehan's line to M'Coy:

'He's a cultured allroundman, Bloom is, he said seriously. He's not one of your common or garden . . . you know. . . . There's touch of the artist about old Bloom.'

The scene immediately following opens icily:

'Mr Bloom turned over idly pages of *The Awful Disclosure of Maria Monk*, then of Aristotle's *Masterpiece*. . . . He laid both books aside and glanced at the third: *Tales of the Ghetto*, by Leopold von Sacher Masoch. . . . Mr Bloom, alone, looked at the titles. *Fair Tyrants* by James Lovebirch. . . . *Sweets of Sin*'.

Bloom's library, and his culture, are thus the library and culture of a second-hand bookstore: both show the same absence of order and hierarchies. The levelling logic of the culture market integrates with the stagnant passivity of the overall social mechanism. The accumulation of knowledge has become gigantic and has knocked down the barriers of time and space, but, finding no purpose, lies in disuse on the shelves and in the head of an advertising agent.

These last remarks bring us to that aspect of *Ulysses* in which the

idea of culture's 'unproductivity' manifests itself both in the most specific and the most ostentatious ways. We enter, that is, the field of *Ulysses's* aesthetic forms. The most peculiar aspect of Joyce's novel is that it uses a plurality of aesthetic forms that lie at opposite extremes. To notice the phenomenon is not difficult: to interpret it is another matter, especially since this feature of *Ulysses* has for a long time been the hunting grounds of a critical trend that is satisfied with recognizing and cataloging its stylistic procedures, and which, in so doing, becomes inebriated, and in its euphoria extols the novel's 'wealth', and reads and describes it as an unorthodox but magnificent summary of the history of literature and of rhetoric. It is as if that professor of professors, Ernst Robert Curtius, had not written with bitter awareness, in 1929: 'Joyce's work comes from the revolt of the spirit and leads to the destruction of the world. With an inexorable logic there appears in Joyce's Walpurgis-night, amid larvae and lemures, the vision of the end of the world. A metaphysical nihilism is the substance of Joyce's work. . . . This entire wealth of philosophical and theological knowledge, this power of psychological and aesthetic analysis, this culture of the mind educated in all the literatures of the world, this ratiocination which is so far above all positivistic platitudes – all this is finally nullified, refutes itself in a world of conflagration, in a sprinkling of metallicly iridescent flames. What remains? Odour of ashes, horror of death, apostate melancholy, tortures of conscience. . . .'²⁶

Curtius is right. The mechanics and meaning of this 'destruction of the world' remain to be understood. For the great bourgeois culture of the beginning of the century, the destruction of the world is a corollary and consequence of the destruction of the world of culture – since only culture can posit itself as system, hierarchy, and order. In *Ulysses*, then, the world goes to pieces not because it is a text prolific in apocalyptic visions, but, rather, because in it every idea of cultural system goes awry. Stuart Gilbert, in *James Joyce's 'Ulysses'*, observes that 'All facts of any kind, mental or material, sublime or ludicrous, have an equivalence of value for the artist.' This principle of equivalence which establishes itself in Joyce's novel is irreducibly opposed to the hierarchical principles of the great bourgeois culture of his time.

By rendering any 'organic' pretension of the work of art vain, Joyce also declares the impossibility of 'deducing' from it an idea of a cultural system capable of restoring order to society.

Joyce dismantles the ideology of 'organic' art: but not in the ways suggested by Robert Musil when he writes that 'another characteristic of Joyce and the whole tendency is dissolution. He gives into the contemporary state of dissolution and reproduces it through a sort of "free association", whereas he supposedly practices a "heroic conception of art".'²⁷ According to Musil, *Ulysses's* dissolution derives from art's 'surrender' to reality, from the collapse of a selective aesthetic order and its substitution by 'free association' (to which, in fact, it is not possible to reduce the style of *Ulysses*). Exactly the opposite is true. Dissolution is possible and effective only because of an extremely controlled formal involvement. But this formal involvement – here is the decisive innovation – now aims completely at showing that every style is arbitrary and therefore irrelevant.

The idea of an arbitrary literary style – that would dominate and determine its subject, and would not be simply its transparent and 'sensitive' representation – already belonged to the 'decadent' reaction to Hegelian aesthetics. Artistic and theoretical research, at the time of *Ulysses*, continued to centre on this problem. But in this tradition the concept of 'arbitrariness' is functional to the foundation of a new cultural *Koiné*: it is an attempt to reformulate at one and the same time the ideological consciousness of the elite and individual artistic techniques. Experimentalism strives towards the completion of cultural control. This is why Nietzsche attacks Wagner, and Eliot the Edwardian poets: not for giving in to the current taste *per se*, but in so far as this concession precludes a future hegemony. But an arbitrary convention, to be hegemonic, must put itself forward as the only possibility: Nietzsche's allegory, which finds in Kafka its sinister realization. To propose two or more conventions for the same 'object', on the contrary, is to invalidate them all and renounce all hegemonic pretensions. This is exactly what happens in *Ulysses*.

I have said that *Ulysses* is built upon a plurality of styles. This procedure has nothing to do with James's or Conrad's differential point of view, where the diversity of styles is *motivated* by the

diverse psychology of their characters. In Joyce, when one episode is presented in two or three or fifty different styles, the procedure is not based on any codified literary motivation. It is pure technical exploration (and the 'everyday' quality of the subject also serves to intensify the metaliterary quality of the novel). The exploration, however, does not lead to a choice. The various styles – and the ideological forms they embody – are all perfectly equivalent: all equally arbitrary, all equally incapable of imposing themselves. All, therefore, are equally *irrelevant* as interpretations of reality or formalizations of literary language. While they detract meaning from each other, none becomes its privileged vehicle.²⁸ In *Ulysses*, there are no 'trustworthy' styles, capable of 'explaining' reality, and 'false' ones, intent on 'masking' it – just as there is no qualitative distinction between 'elite' and 'mass' culture: the 'titles' of 'Aeolus' are neither 'truer' nor 'more false' than the colloquial dialogue that surrounds them; Gerty's 'novelettish' style is neither truer nor more false than Bloom's philistine monologue or the narrator's impersonal style; the same holds good for the alternation of epic hyperbole and colloquial naturalism in 'The Cyclops', and above all for the plethora of styles used in 'Oxen of the Sun'.

Joyce's indifference to any criterion of functionality or truth in cultural forms brings him close to Dada. However, the Dadaist collage was limited to declaring the equivalence of ready-made, finished products. Joyce goes further: his extraordinary mimetism attempts to indicate that even compositional procedures – literary 'means of production' – are equivalent, interchangeable: lacking any definite social function, and not worthy of a future. *Ulysses* is a mad clearance-sale of literary styles; and it is no accident that Joyce does not found a school, and that those who use him as a model and imitate one of *Ulysses*'s many styles betray the fundamental intention of his novel: the systematic refusal to assume *one* style as the privileged vehicle of expression.

What has been said for style is also true of ideology in *Ulysses*. There is nothing *but* ideology in this novel: it is the universe of false consciousness. This is immediately clear if one recalls the clogged consciousness of its characters, who are incapable of understanding what is happening, or even their own actions, unless by producing grotesque reasons that the course of events destroys

and resuscitates in different but equally sterile forms (one need only remember the thousands of problems Bloom faces, considers, and fails to solve during the course of the day). While Lukács's theory of the novel postulated a tension between the hero's 'spiritual world' and the 'second nature' of the outside world, Joyce levels this tension and reduces it to meaningless and aimless habits: ideology is no longer a tool – partial and perhaps ineffectual, but 'heroic' – to attempt to mould the world, but a fatuous routine that outlives its function.

Ulysses is an ideological universe though, mainly because of its treatment of style. In general, every stylistic choice 'translates' or preannounces an ideological choice within the literary sphere, thereby ramifying its social influence. And yet, as soon as a stylistic choice reaches its final literary objectification – as soon as 'it resolves itself completely into poetry' as Croce would have said – its ideological function, which has just been achieved, seems to vanish and the style puts itself forward as a purely literary operation, an 'intrinsic' necessity of artistic development. Such 'innocent' embodiment of ideology in literature is Eliot's great effort, from the theory of the 'objective correlative' to the writings on the politics of culture. Joyce, on the other hand, lets the mask drop. *Ulysses* denies literary exploration all 'objectivity' and all 'naturalness', because it presents all stylistic choices as partial, arbitrary, and subjective. In so doing, Joyce demonstrates the persistently ideological nature of all styles.

This does not, however, mean that *Ulysses* should be read as a *criticism* of ideologies, even less of ideology in the abstract, as the specific form of consciousness of capitalist alienation. In *Ulysses*, Joyce presents styles and ideologies as purely formal entities, products of an experiment lacking any motivation and purpose.²⁹ In other words, Joyce can give us a grand representation of ideological and literary phenomena because, at the same time, he implicitly declares these phenomena neither necessary nor functional to the society from which they issue. His criticism of ideologies is itself based on an ideology: the ideology of culture's social *superfluity*, which is a typical product of the common consciousness of classical capitalism, for which cultural 'superstructures' were, indeed, superfluous to the regular operation of

society – Polanyi's self-regulating market, itself a mechanism typically independent of all cultural values and aims, took care of that.

The conviction of culture's superfluity is so deeply ingrained in Joyce that he considers the aesthetic sphere incapable of being either an example to, or a compensation for, the state of the world. Eco observed that the aim of *Ulysses* (and even more so, of *Finnegans Wake*) is to offer a linguistic duplication of the real: this is true, and is a declaration of total superfluity. Armed with this certainty, Joyce had only to reproduce, in the literary sphere, the same deranged mechanisms which governed society. And this is what he did with *Ulysses*: a novel both eminently 'literary' and eminently 'social', and which forces criticism to switch incessantly from semiology to sociology and vice versa.

I have often underlined the historical determination of Joyce's work. The idea that ideological and aesthetic phenomena are socially redundant and unproductive also belong to the past: the history of our century has demonstrated that the opposite is true. Yet this decidedly obsolete idea furnished Joyce with a cultural cynicism that made of him a prophet of the cynicism to follow. The mutual in-difference of cultural values and expressive techniques, the multiplication and equivalence of ideological fashions, the false freedom of choice: the substance of *Ulysses* is the substance of the contemporary cultural system. The dismantling of cultural hierarchies, Curtius's 'destruction of the world', is nothing other than the abolition of the fixed and hierarchical limits that held back the expansion of the 'cultural market' and towards which Joyce acted as true radical leveller. The integral coincidence of culture and society, of value choices and everyday life: this is the story of the fifties. But is it really so absurd to think that contemporary capitalism is also the parody of its liberal past?

The Long Goodbye

1. 'The conflict of 1914–18 merely precipitated and immeasurably aggravated a crisis that it had not created. But the roots of the dilemma could not be discerned at the time; and the horrors and devastations of the Great War seemed to the survivors the obvious source of the obstacles to international organization that had so unexpectedly emerged. For suddenly neither the economic nor the political system of the world would function and the terrible injuries inflicted on the substance of the race by World War I appeared to offer an explanation. In reality the post-war obstacles to peace and stability derived from the same sources from which the Great War itself had sprung.' (Karl Polanyi, *Origins of Our Time: The Great Transformation*, London 1945, pp. 30–1).

2. Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Cultura e società di massa', in *Quaderni storici*, 20, 1972.

3. Stephen Heath, 'Ambiviolences', *Tel Quel*, 50, 1972.

4. Umberto Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce*, 2nd edn., Turin 1966, pp. 91–2.

5. Lucio Colletti and Claudio Napoleoni, *Il futuro del capitalismo: crollo o sviluppo?*, Bari-Rome 1970, pp. 153–4 (A partial translation of Colletti's essay has been published under the title 'The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism' in Ted Honderich, ed., *Social Ends and Political Means*, London 1976.)

6. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, New York 1952, p. 388.

7. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, London 1957, p. 45. At this point it is necessary to refer to *Ulysses* – to the 'Circe' chapter in particular. Here Joyce translates 'the nebulous world of religion' (the chapter is also known as 'Walpurgisnacht') back into the everyday reality of the metropolis. All of a sudden, commodities emerge as the modern divinities: objects slip out of people's control and start to move, sing, and talk. Conversely, people fall prey to continuous metamorphoses that dominate and suffocate them to the extent that they lose all identity in this alienating merry-go-round, which is evidence of the precariousness of social and psychic roles.

8. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, Harmondsworth 1971, pp. 130–1, 151. Cf also Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, London 1946, pp. 313–4.

9. Cf. Rudolph Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development* (London 1981, p. 408, note 8): 'There can be no doubt that the different course of development taken by the banking system in England, which gives the banks far less influence over industry, is one cause of the greater difficulty of cartelization in England. . . Improvements in the organization of English industry, particularly the growth of combinations in recent years, are due to American and German competition. *English industry has been retarded by its monopoly on the world market.* . . .' (italics mine).

10. Stuart J. Woolf, 'Le trasformazioni del mondo europeo 1880–1910', *Quaderni Storici*, 20, 1972.

11. Alick West, *Crisis and Criticism and selected Literary Essays*, London 1975, pp. 120–1.

12. *Ulysses*, Harmondsworth 1968, p. 567. All quotations are from this edition.

13. Mirsky's and Radek's texts are included in the anthology *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 2 (1928–41), Robert H. Deming, ed., London 1970, pp. 592, 625.

14. The best analysis of the overall significance of this phenomenon is Perry Anderson's 'Components of National Culture', *New Left Review*, 50, 1968. For the literary side of the question – which is also the most conspicuous – see Christopher

Caudwell, *Romance and Realism. A Study in English Bourgeois Literature*, Princeton 1970, and Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés*, London 1970. It is also worth noting, however, that the immigrants directive function emerges even in the economic sphere (the political domain, which is traditionally 'closed', remains extraneous to the phenomenon and in obtaining this immunity, pays the price of provincialism). Cf. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, p. 169. 'The somnolence of the economy was already obvious in British society in the last decades before 1914. Already the rare dynamic entrepreneurs of Edwardian Britain were, more often than not, foreigners or minority groups (the increasingly important German-Jewish financiers who provided the excuse for much of the pervasive anti-semitism of the period, the Americans so important in the electrical industry, the Germans in chemicals, Quakers and late-flowering provincial dissenters like Lever, who exploited the new resources of the tropical empire).'

15. The choice enacted in *Ulysses*, of squeezing the time of the novel into one day, is truly radical. By doing so, Joyce is telling us that all days are the same: this devastates – to Lukács's dismay – historical and literary 'perspective' (which is one of the basic structural features of the novel as genre) and with it the idea of historical 'progress'. Such a choice was, however, possible only for someone who was so engrossed in the specificity of the English crisis as to be oblivious of the conspicuous phenomena of reorganization taking place elsewhere. A comparison of Joyce and Kafka is revealing here, and, if carried out systematically, would help us to understand many aspects of the link between literature, ideology, and society in our century.

As regards the problem at hand – 'time' in the novel – Kafka could justifiably be placed at the opposite pole from Joyce: his novels develop almost exclusively along the diachronic axis and have as their core an irremediable conflict (unthinkable in Joyce) between an isolated individual and impersonal apparatuses of power (the Bank–Court–Church triumvirate, unified finally in the Castle) which already belong to the world of twentieth-century capitalism. The outcome of Kafka's diachronic plots, needless to say, also devastates all consolatory 'perspectives'.

16. I believe it secondary that, in *The Waste Land*, myth is incapable of fulfilling this function completely and in the end shares history's anarchic futility: the point is that the poem stages a continual tension, a reiterated opposition between these two poles, so that religion – which closes *The Waste Land* and ushers in the Eliot of the following years – is called upon to resolve the same problems that faced the myth: it is indeed a sort of super-myth.

17. That it is a myth about a *King* is as important as its being a myth: it indicates that society can regenerate itself only by starting *from the summit*: it evidences the problem of this summit's *consciousness*, and hence underscores the essential function of a *dominant culture* and of literature as an example of formal and ordering ability: with this, one returns exactly to the specific function of myth.

18. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London 1973, pp. 43–4, 46, 61 (italics mine). Horkheimer's and Adorno's interpretation of Homer is certainly questionable, but what I am concerned with here is not the true historical meaning of the *Odyssey*, but rather the role the poem played in shaping Western imagination. (In this respect, I believe that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* offers us a faithful picture.)

19. *Science & Sociology*, vol 28, no. 1, winter 1964.

20. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, New York 1946, pp. 33, 32 (italics mine).

21. Umberto Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce*, p. 78 (italics mine).

22. Here too Kafka's narrative technique is at the opposite pole from Joyce's. In Kafka's novels, an equally radical destruction of individual freedom and unity proceeds from completely different causes. The reason no longer lies 'within' the individual and his inability to control his desires and ideal associations rationally – but 'outside' him, in his inevitable surrender to a practical and ideological authority which denies him any appeal to 'concrete' evidence. Kafka's narrative technique, therefore, does not express 'confusion', but, rather, a rigorous and abstract rationality.

23. Baran and Sweezy, p. 24.

24. Cassirer, p. 13.

25. Galvano Della Volpe, *Critique of Taste*, London 1978, p. 240.

26. Ernst R. Curtius, 'Technique and Thematic Development of James Joyce', in Deming, ed., p. 469.

27. The quotation, taken from Musil's journal, is included in Cesare Cases's introduction to *L'uomo senza qualità*, Torino 1972, pp. xviii–xix.

28. The difference between 'decadent' poetics and *Ulysses* can be summed up in the following formula: in the former a single signifier produces many signifieds, whereas in Joyce a single signified produces many signifiers. This reversal dissolves the demiurgic role of the author, who is placed on the same level as all other possible authors.

29. *Ulysses* is not, therefore, a work 'bristling with possibilities' and consequently 'open', as Eco would have it: the idea of 'possibility' that it communicates has lost all concreteness and objectivity (as Lukács very clearly saw in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*) and has become a subjective and merely formal phantasm. In *Ulysses*, in other words, everything is possible because everything is indifferent.

From *The Waste Land* to the Artificial Paradise

1. Perhaps the most famous example: 'When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.' ('The Metaphysical Poets' (1921), Frank Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, London 1975, p. 64.)

2. More exactly: it forms the skeleton of the first three sections of the poem, justifiably the most famous and interesting. Alessandro Serpieri ('Il doppio registro del *Waste Land*', in Hopkins – Eliot – Auden, *Saggi sul parallelismo poetico*, Bologna 1969) has written a very convincing essay on *The Waste Land*'s structural discontinuity and the consequent shift from the mythical to the allegorical–didactic method.

3. 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth', *The Dial*, November 1923.

4. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, London 1978, pp. 46, 56.

5. 'On Sense and Reference', in Peter Geach and Max Black, eds., *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Oxford 1952, p. 57.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

7. Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy', in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, New York 1949, p. 57.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

9. This is, for example, the function of the principle of 'adequate causation': 'the one-sided analysis of cultural reality from specific "points of view" . . . is free from the charge of arbitrariness to the extent that it is successful in producing insights into interconnections which have been shown to be valuable for the causal explanation of concrete historical events.' (*Ibid.*, p. 71).

10. 'The Letter of Lord Chandos', in *Selected Prose*, London 1952, pp. 133–5.

11. R. M. Rilke, *The Duino Elegies*, New York 1972, I, lines 69–78.

12. 'L'impassibilité!' So opens Lukács's essay on Stefan George ('The New Solitude and Its Poetry', in *Soul and Form*, London 1974, p. 79). And later: 'The man of George's songs . . . is a lonely man detached from all social bonds. The content of each of his songs and that of their totality is something that one must understand, yet never can: that two human beings can never become one. . . . In George's poems there is virtually no complaint: it looks life straight in the eyes, calmly, with resignation perhaps, yet always courageously, always with its head held high. . . . A fine, strong, courageous farewell, after the fashion of noble souls, without complaint or lamentation, with broken heart yet with a firm tread, "composed" as the wonderful, all-comprising, truly Goethean expression has it.' (*Ibid.*, pp. 87–90.)

13. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in James Strachey with Anna Freud, ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21 (1927–31), London 1961, p. 76.

14. 'Hamlet And His Problems', *The Sacred Wood* (1920), London 1967, p. 100, italics mine.

15. On this, see Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature*, London 1970, p. 140: 'In the early poems, the objective correlative, in a sense broader than the realizations of local imagery, is not achieved; or, to put it more exactly, the subject-matter of some of these early poems is itself the quest for the objective correlative.'

16. G. Ferraro, *Il linguaggio del mito*, Milano 1979, pp. 164–5.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

18. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, London 1962, p. 223.

19. ' . . . the universe is never charged with sufficient meaning and . . . the mind always has more meanings available than there are objects to which to relate them.' It is precisely this discrepancy between a world too 'poor' in meaning and a culture too 'rich' in inapplicable values that myth attempts to heal. (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Harmondsworth 1972, p. 184.)

20. *The Savage Mind*, p. 22.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

22. The past as an immense heap of materials to use at will: from this point of view *The Waste Land* is the literary translation of one of the great nineteenth-century cultural institutions: the museum. The work of art preserved in the museum, like Eliot's 'quotations', is always the product of a decontextualization: to be brought to the museum, it must be torn from its original setting. (To put it more prosaically, it must be stolen: and Eliot's remark – 'immature poets imitate; mature poets steal' – could well have been Lord Elgin's motto.) In compensation, however, the museum piece is subtracted from the devastating effects of time and all expedients are used to make it virtually immortal: in the same way, their arrangement within the mythic structure confers on *The Waste Land*'s thefts a metatemporal validity.

23. *The Savage Mind*, pp. 232, 234. Claude Lefort expresses similar concepts in an essay of 1952 ('Sociétés sans histoire et historicité', in *Les formes de l'histoire*,