James Joyce - Meet Stephen Dedalus



Ulysses has eighteen episodes - a significant number when we recall the time span James Joyce initially set out to cover:

"I am now writing a book," said Joyce [to his friend, Frank Budgen], "based on the wanderings of Ulysses. The Odyssey, that is to say, serves me as a ground plan. Only my time is recent time and all my hero's wanderings take no more than eighteen hours."

"Eighteen hours" is interesting in light of something else Joyce once said:

The demand that I make of my reader is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works.

Although that statement may have been tongue-in-cheek, Joyce scholars spend much of their careers pulling apart the strands of Joyce's genius. Casual readers, meanwhile, often struggle just to get through *Ulysses*.

In this scene - a clip from "Ten Great Writers of the Modern World - James Joyce's *Ulysses*" - we see Stephen Dedalus walking the beach after his Mum has died:

- What goes through the mind of a young man, here a young poet, after such a loss?
- Does he mourn his Mother?
- Or is he actually thinking about his work or course of study?

Unless we are able to listen-in to Stephen's inner monologue, that part of his life remains completely private. We may see him on the beach, but we have no idea what's going on in his mind. How is it possible to ever know what he is really thinking?

In the clip - and in the book - we do learn what he is thinking. What's more, we can observe what Joyce was like, at that age, since the character of Dedalus (originally created in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) is an autobiographical rendering of Joyce himself.

See, also:

James Joyce - Intro to Ulysses

James Joyce - Meet Leopold Bloom

James Joyce - Obsessed with Dublin

Credits:

From the British television series, "The Modern World: Ten Great Writers."

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