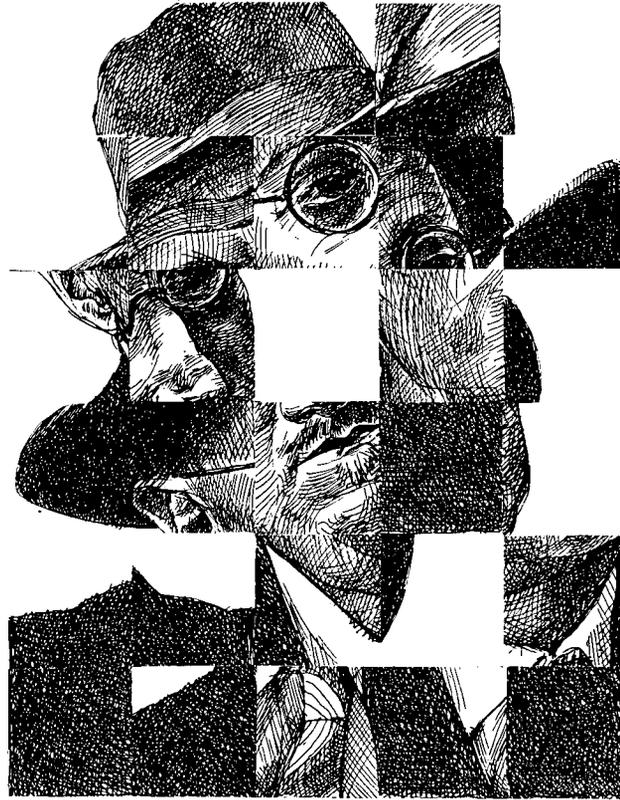


Publishers and Sinners

by E. Christian Kopff



The misadventures of James Joyce's *Ulysses* at the hands of publishers and editors has recently been in the news. Many of the commentators seem to believe that what Joyce suffered was unusual, and that most contemporary authors are treated better. Listen to Thomas Marc Parrott (writing in 1934) on George Bernard Shaw:

Mr. Shaw, for instance, when he is ready to publish a play contracts for its appearance with a publisher, sends him a neatly typed manuscript, receives several sets of proof which he carefully corrects, and finally sees his work given to the world in a printed form as nearly accurate as human ingenuity and care can make it.

But Shaw is the exception. Some authors are partially to blame, because they engage in substantial rewriting of their books in proof. When they are supposed to be correcting printers' slips, they are in fact adding pages and even chapters to the work. Often, however, it is the publishers and their editorial staff who are at fault.

Since we possess Joyce's handwritten copy of *Ulysses* (the Rosenbach manuscript), and it has been published in a fine,

legible photographic reproduction, you would think that establishing Joyce's text would be short and easy work. Unfortunately, Joyce rewrote most of the book while it was being typed for the printers and then again in proof, adding such famous passages as Molly Bloom's monologue that ends the book. Only 14 percent of the Rosenbach manuscript ended up as is in the first edition of *Ulysses*, and one-third of the text is brand new. One typist gave up on deciphering Joyce's handwriting, while the husband of another threw part of the manuscript into the fire in a fit of anger. The book was set up in type in Dijon, France by a team of 26 French typesetters, none of whom knew English or ever learned to read Joyce's distinctive handwriting. Such easy and common words as "Hackney cabs" and "wife" were transmogrified into "Stackney cass" and "urbe." Joyce suffered from poor eyesight and missed many mistakes. To make matters worse, a friend who helped him introduced his own changes into the text. The first edition was a typographical disaster, and a slip apologizing for the misprints was inserted. Some errors were removed, but more (estimated at 1,700) were added over the years. This already complicated summary considerably simplifies the whole story.

The first American edition, published with a great deal of huffing and puffing from Random House about its courageous stand against censorship, was taken not from a corrected version of the first edition, but from a pirated

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American edition. "It was one of the more notable scandals since Gutenberg started it all," in the words of text critic Jack Dalton. It included such famous misprints as the one describing Buck Mulligan on page 2: "He pointed his finger in friendly jest and went over the parapet, laughing to himself." In 1961, after a generation of mockery, Random House published a new edition, which it advertised as "scrupulously corrected." That edition was a reprint of the 1936 Bodley Head edition, called "final and definitive" because literary critic Stuart Gilbert had read over the proofs and written Joyce about a few difficult points he'd noticed. Jack Dalton estimated that the 1936 edition contained nearly 4,000 misprints, and the 1961 edition added a few of its own. "It was the kind of book you could use only a few minutes in a chemistry lab before blowing the place up." This is the text Americans have been reading and writing about for the past generation.

Many will agree that America had by now done enough in its courageous battle to give Joyce's *Ulysses* to the world. Now it was Germany's turn. A Munich professor named Hans Walter Gabler decided it was time to show up American and British incompetence. He put all the evidence for *Ulysses*, handwritten copy, typescript, prepublication serializations, proofs, first edition, whatever, onto a computer. The computer could print all the variants in words, spellings, and punctuation; it could also print out Joyce's true text, by leaving out bypassed or mistaken variants. In 1984 Garland Publishing put out this double edition, and in 1986 Random House in America and Bodley Head in England published the second part as "The Corrected Text." The dream of the 20th century was finally achieved. The omniscient computer had finally replaced fallible man.

Fans of Stanley Kubrick's *2001* may see this coming. Let me briefly run down the two main problems with the corrected edition. First: garbage in, garbage out. The collection of variants had been made by human beings from photographic copies. The French typesetters and even stray pencil markings had the same status as corrections made by James Joyce. These slips were not only collected as variants, but printed as the corrected text. John Kidd has collected a few in *The New York Review of Books* (June 30, 1988). Second: how does a computer distinguish between variants that are mere slips, those that are Joyce's first idea before he changed his mind, and those that he wanted to appear in *Ulysses*? Answer: it can't. That requires human intervention, based on logic and a feeling for style. Hans Walter Gabler no doubt ranks above a provincial French typesetter in his knowledge of idiomatic English, but he ranks below many American, British, and Irish readers and critics.

The good news is that anyone with access to a major research library knows a great deal more about *Ulysses* than was known to previous generations. The bad news is that every edition of the novel substantially misrepresents the work. Every work of *exegesis* and much literary criticism written about Joyce has been and continues to be based on seriously defective texts. Critics may prate all they wish about a "close, careful reading of the text," but no valid text exists. It must be reconstructed by every reader. Naturally, this will not affect Joyce's university-level teachers and critics, as one letter writer to *The New York Times* frankly

admitted. They use Joyce's text to preach their views on human freedom and love, and the actual words he wrote are not allowed to affect the use they make of his book. The "theorists" who run our English departments and the PMLA wouldn't care if Molly ended her famous monologue with "No I said No I won't No!" They would still have their will of her and of Joyce's novel.

Nor do the publishers care. The various Random House editions, until they switched over to the Gabler text, all began with the pontifications of lawyer Morris L. Ernst and Judge John M. Woolsey on Random House's heroic role in freeing the world from censorship. (From censorship, that is, based on legislative enactment, on due process and the will of the people, however imperfectly represented. Random House had no problem with censoring poems of Robinson Jeffers in the 40's, because they seemed to criticize the foreign policy of the New Deal.) In fact, Bennett Cerf and the boys at Random House cared not a whit for the text of *Ulysses*. Although they could have used a corrected version of the first edition, which only suffered from 2,000 misprints or so, they wantonly used an irresponsible, pirated edition with thousands more errors. This choice seems especially comical if you read the letter from Joyce that follows the judicial decision in the various American editions printed before 1986. In it Joyce specifically protests against pirated editions.

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Random House is part of a long and glorious tradition. Consider the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament, edited by Erasmus. Erasmus and his Basel publisher, Froben, knew that a group of scholars in Alcalá, Spain were involved in a careful and expensive edition. They decided to beat them to the punch. Unfortunately, Basel did not possess many manuscripts of the New Testament. Erasmus ignored the one good one, because it disagreed with the more numerous bad ones. When none of the Basel manuscripts contained the end of Revelation, he re-translated his own Latin transmission, done over a period of years from various manuscripts, into Greek. Nor was this the only Erasmian Greek inserted into the text. After the work was published, Erasmus went about boasting of his devotion to God's Word. He and Bennett Cerf would have had a good night out together.

The stories of what publishers have done to authors would fill many pages. When Thomas Hardy's *Return of*

the *Native* was published in America, Harper removed an entire page to make it fit their format. Hardy later substantially revised the text of the novel. Not only did his new version not show up on American bookshelves for a quarter century, but the American publisher kept on reprinting the truncated version. Winston Churchill substantially revised his *History of the Second World War* in proof. This delayed publication. The American publisher got tired of waiting and sent the book to press before Sir Winston was finished.

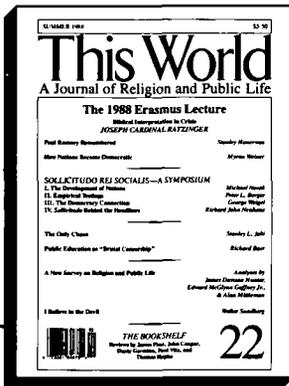
A prime example of what publishers do is furnished by Stephen Crane's misadventures with Ripley Hitchcock, his editor at Appleton. Crane had published *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* himself. Appleton accepted *The Red Badge of Courage*, but Hitchcock removed an entire chapter and much material from other chapters, especially from the last one. The book's effect was now much fuzzier than in Crane's manuscript. Appleton next agreed to publish *Maggie*, but eliminated significant material, including an unpleasant meeting with a fat man that directly precedes *Maggie's* suicide. The result was to make the reasons for her death unclear. The standard editions of Crane's works continue to reprint the Appleton editions, and the standard criticism often glories in their "ambiguities." Crane's version of *The Red Badge of Courage* was first published in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* by Hershel Parker, because more scholarly avenues of publication were denied it.

Not one of Thomas Wolfe's books ever appeared in the form he wrote it, and much of his posthumous books consists of printed matter concocted by his editor.

Sometimes there is a happy ending. To get his first novel

published, John Barth was forced by his publisher to rewrite the end of *The Floating Opera*. After the success of *The Sot-Weed Factor* and *Giles Goat-Boy*, he got his own version of *Floating Opera* published. Had he died before doing so, scholars would have continued to write about the publisher's preferences and not the author's.

We know about the treatment of Joyce, Hardy, Wolfe, *et al.* because they are famous writers and have been the subjects of special study. But the same thing happens to most writers of fiction, nonfiction, and textbooks. Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's did not just rewrite and butcher Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe. He was proud of his work—although he never wrote a line on his own that attracted the attention of either critics or the general public. Bennett Cerf not only propagated a disastrous pirated edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* in a cruel parody of Joyce's own wishes, but he had the gall to boast of his contribution to 20th-century literature. How often have teams of award-winning teachers seen their textbooks rewritten by someone of no academic stature as part of an effort to fit marketing reports prepared on the basis of inadequate or just plain mistaken pedagogical notions? These Nurse Ratchets not only arrange for a frontal lobotomy, they then get consultants to confirm how much happier you are after the operation. That is why, Gentle Reader, we recommend that you devote your reading time to the classics of the ancient world. They have only suffered from several thousand years of misprints and miscopying, the collapse of Rome and Byzantium, and the death of the languages they were written in. They were never edited by Maxwell Perkins and published by Bennett Cerf. ◇



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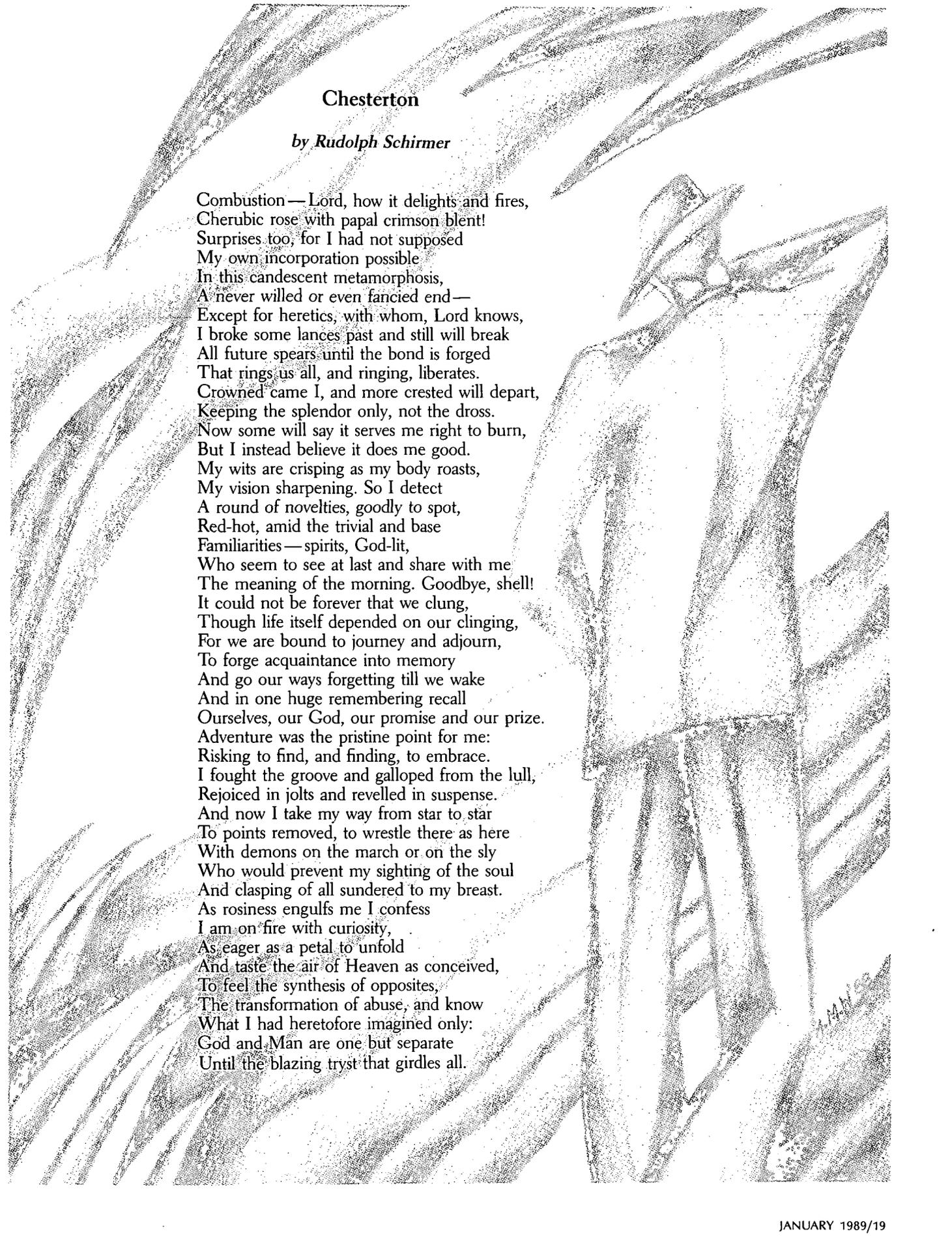
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Chesterton

by *Rudolph Schirmer*

Combustion — Lord, how it delights and fires,
Cherubic rose with papal crimson blent!
Surprises too, for I had not supposed
My own incorporation possible
In this candescent metamorphosis,
A never willed or even fancied end —
Except for heretics, with whom, Lord knows,
I broke some lances past and still will break
All future spears until the bond is forged
That rings us all, and ringing, liberates.
Crowned came I, and more crested will depart,
Keeping the splendor only, not the dross.
Now some will say it serves me right to burn,
But I instead believe it does me good.
My wits are crisping as my body roasts,
My vision sharpening. So I detect
A round of novelties, goodly to spot,
Red-hot, amid the trivial and base
Familiarities — spirits, God-lit,
Who seem to see at last and share with me
The meaning of the morning. Goodbye, shell!
It could not be forever that we clung,
Though life itself depended on our clinging,
For we are bound to journey and adjourn,
To forge acquaintance into memory
And go our ways forgetting till we wake
And in one huge remembering recall
Ourselves, our God, our promise and our prize.
Adventure was the pristine point for me:
Risking to find, and finding, to embrace.
I fought the groove and galloped from the lull,
Rejoiced in jolts and revelled in suspense.
And now I take my way from star to star
To points removed, to wrestle there as here
With demons on the march or on the sly
Who would prevent my sighting of the soul
And clasping of all sundered to my breast.
As rosiness engulfs me I confess
I am on fire with curiosity,
As eager as a petal to unfold
And taste the air of Heaven as conceived,
To feel the synthesis of opposites,
The transformation of abuse, and know
What I had heretofore imagined only:
God and Man are one but separate
Until the blazing tryst that girdles all.