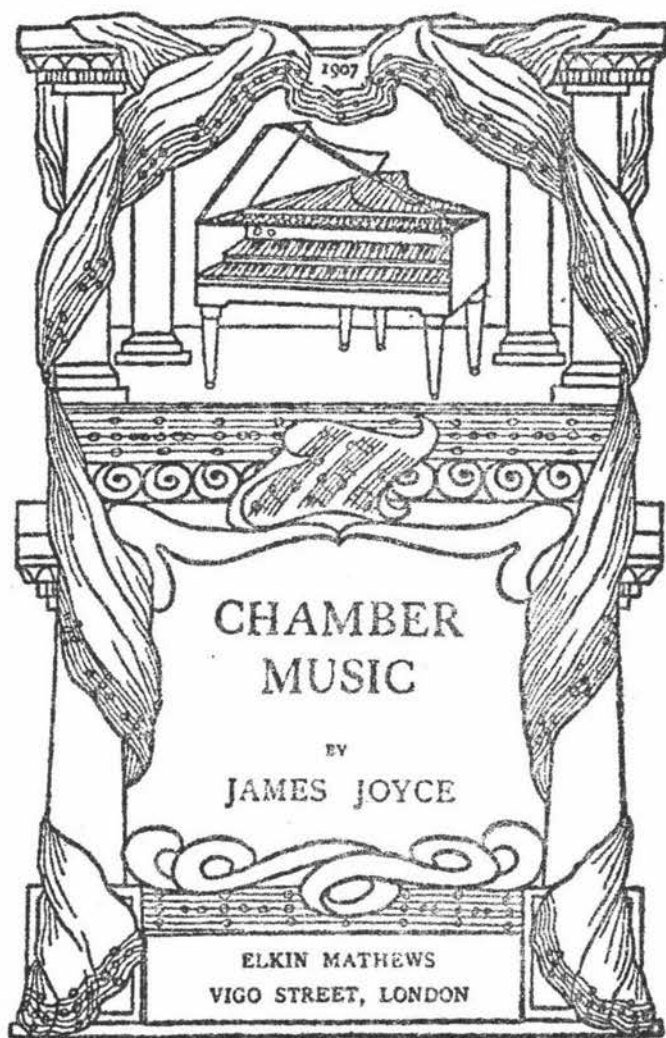


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Title-page of the first edition of Chamber Music, Elkin Mathews, May 1907.

JAMES JOYCE : CHAMBER MUSIC

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English at
Massey University.

Robert John Ward

1971

to
my Mother and Father

PREFACE

This thesis originated in dissatisfaction with William York Tindall's treatment of Chamber Music, in his 1954 edition of the poems. When I began my research on the topic, I found that, not only in interpretation, but in technical matters of dating, arrangement and textual data, and in biographical matters such as Joyce's attitude to the poems, there was ample scope for a new edition. Hence the structure of this thesis. The Introductory Essay is divided into ten numbered sections, but they group themselves into four broad categories: composition and publishing history; the criticism; the evidence of biography; and my own interpretation. I decided to include the individual analyses of each poem (the Notes on the Poems) because Chamber Music criticism has been characterised by glib generalisations and lack of close, specific investigation of all of the thirty-six poems. Tindall's "Notes to the Poems" did not fill this gap.

Throughout this thesis, I have made much use of a few books, frequent references to which have necessitated some form of abbreviation, in the text and in the Notes to the Text. References to "Tindall" signify Tindall's edition of Chamber Music (New York, 1954). Where other books or articles by Tindall are noted, full titles are given. The Letters of James Joyce, one volume edited by Gilbert in 1957, the other two edited by Ellmann in 1966, are referred to by volume number (Letters, I; Letters, II; Letters, III). Ellmann's biography James Joyce (New York, 1959) is described as "Ellmann"; Gorman's James Joyce (New York, 1948) as "Gorman." "Dublin Diary" refers to George Harris Healey (ed.), The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce (London, 1962). The other

two works written by Stanislaus Joyce and quoted herein are noted by their titles, Recollections (New York, 1950), and My Brother's Keeper (London, 1958). "Slocum and Cahoon" refers to John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, A Bibliography of James Joyce 1882-1941 (London, 1953).

Editions of Joyce's works to which frequent page references are made are listed in section A. of the Bibliography, p.260.

I am deeply grateful to Professor R.G. Freen of the English Department, Massey University, for his help with this thesis. From its conception, Professor Freen has generously given of his scholarship and time.

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I

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

(1)

Chamber Music is the first published work of James Joyce, and it is also the first of his works to have been fully edited. William York Tindall undertook this task in 1954, producing a work which in many respects displays impressive scholarship. The editorial apparatus, of both a textual and an interpretative nature, with which he glossed the text, was the most exhaustive and most perceptive criticism of Chamber Music which had appeared.

A handful of other critics had detected substance and significance beneath the superficial rhythmic felicities of the poems before Tindall, but their findings had either not been published, or appeared in small articles at varying intervals, in isolated publications. Certainly the dim perceptions of these earlier critics were in each case restricted in scope, largely unsupported save by subjective assertion, and made no use of primary source material. Tindall centralised Chamber Music scholarship and fashioned the field in his own image. He traced manuscripts and transcribed textual variants, consulted what letters of Joyce he could come upon, conducted an extensive correspondence with Stanislaus Joyce, Herbert Gorman, Constantine Curran, Gogarty, and many other acquaintances of or authorities on Joyce; he gathered material on Chamber Music from other critics, and scoured Joyce's other works for commentary or clue - continually mustering support for his particular interpretation.

Nevertheless, Tindall's edition is not definitive. Many new details of Joyce's biography relating to Chamber Music, and of

Chamber Music bibliography have come to light since 1954. The appearance of this material leaves Tindall's edition incomplete - and where, as in some cases of dating and in most cases of Joyce's critical relationship to Chamber Music, Tindall has assumed what he did not know, he is rendered incorrect. Moreover, some of the information (for instance, on the re-arrangement of Chamber Music) which Tindall had even from as reputable a source as Stanislaus Joyce is erroneous.

Stanislaus Joyce's autobiography My Brother's Keeper was published in 1958, incomplete but covering the Chamber Music period of Joyce's biography up to about 1903. The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce (which, Tindall had it from Stanislaus, had been lost) appeared in 1962, a more immediate journal beginning where My Brother's Keeper left off, and taking the biography up to 1905. These two sources afford a much clearer glimpse of Joyce and Joyce's pursuits and attitudes in the specific period of the poems - and supplemented by Ellmann's definitive biography, James Joyce (New York, 1959), they give new datings of poems, more information on title and order, biographical incidents from which poems arose, and suggest new interpretation.

But the 3 volume Letters of James Joyce edited by Gilbert in 1957 (one volume) and by Ellmann in 1966 (the other two), are especially significant contributions to Chamber Music as to all Joycean scholarship. They have published a great deal of information not previously known or easily accessible. Joyce's attitude to Chamber Music was formerly gleaned from a few carefully-culled statements in available letters, but more especially from quotations (equally well-culled and occasionally erroneously attributed) from Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. These quotations are generally cryptic,

to say the least, and are given precedence over Stephen Hero or Portrait of the Artist glosses on Joyce's lyrics, because they are assumed to be the final word of the more mature Joyce. The published Letters, however, catalogue Joyce's opinions of Chamber Music far less equivocally. They record the meaning his first lyrics had for the artist as a young man, and continued to have for Joyce throughout his life; and they also provide information on more technical matters, for example that Joyce had a lot more to do with the arrangement of Chamber Music than Stanislaus Joyce and most other commentators, including Tindall, have been willing to concede. The Letters are thus an important counter-balance to Stanislaus' occasionally overenthusiastic desire to impose his own significance on the Joyce work.

New bibliographical material has followed Tindall's noting of the texts of Chamber Music. The Cornell manuscripts (as described in II, 'The Poems') have provided new dates and textual variants, and perhaps novel biographical significance. That Tindall was incomplete in his survey of the criticism before his own (omitting mention of important articles such as Zabel's "The Lyrics of James Joyce"),¹ is revealed by Doming's useful compendium James Joyce: The Critical Heritage, (London 1970), which publishes a great deal of the early criticism which is not easily obtainable. There are also a few studies of Chamber Music published after Tindall that are noted later, although, as with most of the criticism before Tindall, they are generally minor, with little new.

However, the need for a reappraisal of Chamber Music is not entirely dependent on new material. The nature of Tindall's interpretation is sufficient reason itself for reassessment. He does much reputable work on the poems, using Stephen Hero as a gloss on

their composition, tracing important sources, and regarding them as a first trial in matter and method for Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist. And when keeping close to the poems, he is often capable of sound perceptive analyses. However, when his first principles are that "it cannot be denied that in Chamber Music and Finnegans Wake Joyce seems devoted to urination,"² and that "if water is life, making it is creation,"³ Tindall ought not remain unchallenged. And when to comments such as "the elegant and impenetrable exterior of the poems, giving almost no sign of ulterior presence, defeats its purpose," he retorts, "as for the 'intentional fallacy' in this section: I intend it,"⁴ his whole critical approach to Chamber Music should be carefully scrutinised.

Tindall still holds the field of Chamber Music criticism. There have been a few snipes, such as this by Levin: "Tindall has jeopardized his efforts by appending a naively Freudian commentary."⁵ But there has as yet been nothing substantial enough to remove the stain of Tindall's commentary from the 'immaculate conception' of the lyrics engendered by the Dedalean "priest of the eternal imagination."

(2)

Although the Joyce opus officially begins with Chamber Music, the young artist already had a number of literary efforts, some printed, some unpublished, to his credit before he started in 1901 or 1902 to compile the lyrics which were to become Chamber Music. In 1891 the nine-year old Joyce wrote a broadside denouncing Parnell's betrayers, "Et tu, Healy," which delighted his father so much that he had it printed and distributed to his friends. Five years later, he began composing poems which were

written into a school exercise-book and entitled "Moods." In 1900 he wrote the article "Ibsen's New Drama" which was published in the Fortnightly Review and so secured the deference of his fellow students. Joyce was not slow to capitalise on literary acquaintanceships, and that same year submitted a play called "A Brilliant Career," dedicated to his own soul, to William Archer, Ibsen's translator and English agent, who had passed on a letter of thanks from the master to the young artist. Archer was critical, but not discouraging, and, in 1901, having written meanwhile a verse play "Dream Stuff" and another volume of poems "Shine and Dark," Joyce put together a collection of poems and submitted them to Archer for comment. Archer's comment was, "there is as yet more temperament than anything else in your work," though he conceded that Joyce 'felt and imagined poetically.'^{6.}

One of the poems sent to Archer (and one which he liked) was poem II of Chamber Music, which had been entitled 'Commonplace.' Of the two early volumes of poems by Joyce, only this poem and four others remain in complete form, according to Stanislaus.^{7.} (The four are 'The Villanelle of the Temptress' - ascribed to a later year in A Portrait of the Artist; two translations published in German - including Verlaine's 'Chanson d'Automne'; and the poem 'O, it is cold and still - alas! - ' quoted by Byrne, which has been printed herein.) Ellmann^{8.} quotes some of the scraps from "Dream Stuff" and "Shine and Dark" which are extant - and some of these bear interesting hints of Chamber Music:

And I have sat amid the turbulent crowd,
 And have assisted at their boisterous play;
 I have unbent myself and shouted loud
 And been as blatant and as coarse as they.

I have consorted with vulgarity...

Although the hero in Chamber Music does not 'unbend' himself or 'consort with vulgarity,' the terminology is similar:

He who hath glory lost, nor hath
 Found any soul to fellow his,
 Among his foes in scorn and wrath
 Holding to ancient nobleness,
 That high unconsortable one -
 His love is his companion. (Chamber Music XXI).

And the title of his first collection of poems, "Moods," suggests the influence of Yeats, who regarded 'moods' as metaphysical realities to be transfixed by the artist.

However, although there are echoes of Chamber Music in the early poems, they are far looser in structure, and do not bear the smooth and slightly opaque surface of the later volume. Archer's polite but unfavourable criticism could not have helped his own estimation of his poetry, and moreover with the criterion of Yeats' volume Wind Among the Reeds (1899) which Joyce greatly admired, to measure his own production against, Joyce became dissatisfied with his early poems. From 1900 to 1903, he began to write his series of 'prose poems' called "Epiphanies," and in 1901 he decided to burn all of the first two collections of poems, save one or two, and a few recent ones. Stanislaus describes the immolation: "Beyond announcing his intention to burn them, he gave no reasons. He just read them over again critically and then tore them up one by one and burnt them without comment." 9.

Nevertheless, Joyce's heart was still in his poetry - the poems he rejected were rejected largely for technical or aesthetic reasons. Stanislaus describes his interest in "the indefinable suggestion of word, phrase and rhythm. The poems that he liked sought to capture moods and impressions, often tenuous moods and elusive impressions, by means of a verbal witchery that magnetizes

the mind like a spell, and imparts a wonder and grace, which Marlowe thought no virtue could digest into words." ^{10.} Joyce was seeking, in other words, the achievement of Chamber Music.

Joyce's attraction to Elizabethan lyrics (his favourites were Dowland's "Weep you no more, sad fountains!" and Jonson's "Still to be Neat" - both remembered by Colum and Gogarty ^{11.}) led him to seek out Elizabethan song-books in the National Library, where he copied out lyrics from Dowland and Henry VIII and Jonson. He began to recapture their mood in the love lyrics he started writing in 1901 and 1902. Byrne ^{12.} recalls:

After the publication of the Ibsen article, Joyce began occasionally, and when in the mood, to seek expression in writing short poems. In the production of these he was not prolific; and even as he sat beside me in the [National] library he would write and rewrite and retouch, it might almost seem interminably, a bit of verse containing perhaps a dozen or a score of lines. When he had at last polished his gem to a satisfying degree of curvature and smoothness, he would write out the finished poem with slow and stylish penmanship and hand the copy to me. ... Joyce gave me copies of all the poems he wrote prior to October 1902 [invariably done on National Library slips].

In a letter to Tindall, ^{13.} Stanislaus said Joyce wrote these poems in a variety of locations, in streets, the private bar of some public hotel, a post office, as well as the National Library, when the mood struck him. Stanislaus describes the composition of Chamber Music poem XII from its conception, originating in a conversation with Mary Sheehy on 12 April 1904, to its inscription, on the inside of a torn cigarette-box, while Joyce was standing under a Dublin street-lamp. ^{14.} This incident, unknown to Tindall, will be described more fully later.

Tindall ^{15.} noted three possible periods for the composition of most of the Chamber Music lyrics. Stanislaus Joyce in Recollections suggested 1900 to 1901; in a letter to Tindall, Stanislaus

proffered 1901 to 1902; while Gorman claimed 1903 to 1904.

Tindall's own guess was that "most of the poems from which the thirty-six of Chamber Music were selected were written in 1901 and 1902."

But the only dates he could be sure about were for poems XXXV (1902), poem XX (1903), poem XXI (30 September 1904), poems VII and XXIV (1901-1902), and poem II (before 1901).

However, Tindall was evidently wrong about poem XXIV - Ellmann¹⁶ claims this was written on 8 April 1904. Dates of eight other poems have been ascertained since Tindall. According to Stanislaus' Dublin Diary (pp. 28, 62, 63), poems XII and XXV were written on 12 April 1904, and poems XV and XXVII on or about 31 July 1904. The Letters II (p.27) reveal that poems IV and XXXVI were written on or about 8 February 1904. (Tindall, p.67, estimated incorrectly that poem XXXVI was written in 1902 "during the first exile."). Ellmann (p. 180) and Letters II (p. 126) date poem XVII with poem XXI in the Martello Tower period, 9-19 September 1904. And Scholes¹⁷ dates poem XVIII in 1902.

Therefore, the dates of composition of fourteen poems in Chamber Music are known, and of these, nine were written in 1903 and 1904. This does not invalidate Tindall's assumption that "most" were written in 1901 and 1902 - but it is well to remember that Joyce was still writing Chamber Music well into 1904, while, and after, he was formulating his theory of aesthetic, and well after the period of juvenilia. The fact that 27 poems were probably written in 1901 and 1902 also helps support Sylvia Beach's claim, when advertising the Beach-Gilvarry MS. of Chamber Music in 1935, that this was the "original manuscript," for the first 27 poems were inscribed in Joyce's neat handwriting on large (and expensive) vellum sheets. (The manuscript is described in a later section.)

From about 1901 or 1902 to 1904 or later, Joyce was accustomed to carry with him around Dublin a manuscript roll of his poems, probably transcribed from the National Library slips which Byrne mentioned, or the rough sheets torn from exercise-books upon which, when Joyce had finished using them for his poems and other compositions, Stanislaus wrote his diary, "My Crucible" (published as The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce.) A few palimpsests of this nature are noted in Scholes, The Cornell Joyce Collection. From the expensive parchment sheets, dwarfing the tiny lyrics situated in the very centre of each page, Joyce read his poems to acquaintances such as 'John Eglinton' (W.K. Magee), who remembers poem VII,^{18.} and Padraic Colum, who remembers Joyce reading poem XII^{19.}

Joyce also read his poems to more illustrious personages. He decided to make his debut in the Dublin literary milieu in the summer of 1902, when he buttonholed George Russell for a number of hours one night, haranguing him on the dangers of the Irish Literary Movement going over to 'The Rabblement,' discussing Theosophy, and reading his poems, before which he gave his host a warning that he did not care what Russell thought of them. Joyce need not have worried (if indeed he did): AE liked his lyrics, and passed them on, with an astonished description of the imposing personality of their young author, to George Moore. Moore, who had read Joyce's 'The Day of the Rabblement' and thought it "preposterously clever,"^{20.} was not so taken with the poems, handing them back with one derisive and facile comment, "Symons!" However, Russell wrote to Lady Gregory about Joyce, and she, delighted with Joyce's reading of his own poems, invited him, with Yeats and Yeats' father, to dine with her on 4 November 1902.^{21.}

It was Russell also who had signalled Joyce's advent to Yeats, who met the young poet in early October 1902. Yeats was impressed, and kept the poems and epiphanies which were read out to him. In a letter to Joyce, 18 December 1902,²² in which he criticises poem XXXV, Yeats said: "It has distinction and delicacy but I can remember that several of the other poems had more subject, more magical phrases, more passion." Yeats remained an appreciative critic and a helpful advocate.

The first major benefit accruing to Joyce from acquaintance with Yeats was an introduction to Arthur Symons on 2 December 1902. Ellmann writes, "Symons was to play as central a part in the publication of Joyce's early work as Ezra Pound [also introduced to Joyce by Yeats] was to play later."²³ Joyce's meeting with Symons was part of a one-day stopover in London on his way to Paris and his first exile. Yeats entertained him, and paid for him, during the day, and took him to the editors of the Academy and the Speaker, who, Yeats thought, could help Joyce make his way by accepting articles, reviews and poems. When Yeats and Joyce called on Symons during the evening, he was, said Stanislaus, "hospitable and sympathetic. He offered to submit some of my brother's poems to various editors, and said that as soon as my brother had a volume of poems ready, he would try to find a publisher for it."²⁴

Joyce eventually solicited Symons' aid for his poems in November 1903. After reading the poetry, Symons wrote to Joyce on 4 May 1904: "The poems seem to me remarkably good. They certainly ought to be published."²⁵ On the following day, he wrote to tell Joyce that he had persuaded the Editor of the Saturday Review to accept poem XXIV of Chamber Music. Soon after, he had persuaded John Baillie of the Venture to accept poems XII and XXVI.

Symons then sent the manuscript of all the poems to Duckworth, the publisher, who unfortunately could "not see his way to bring it out." ²⁶. He had another minor success with a magazine - the Speaker accepted poems XVIII and VI. Joyce meanwhile had poem VII published in John Emlinton's Dana. But on 13 July 1904, Symons approached Grant Richards about full publication.

Richards at first expressed interest in the poems, although he could not be sure of selling them because hardly any verse paid - and, getting deeper into financial difficulties, he refused to commit himself. In September 1905 Richards began emerging from bankruptcy, and once again expressed admiration for the poems (called Chamber Music by now), but could not take more than part of the risk. ²⁷. Joyce replied that he could not share expenses as he had no money, and that: "My music must therefore justify its name strictly."²⁸ Richards had meanwhile lost his manuscript of Chamber Music, and Joyce had had to replace this.

Chamber Music continued to suffer reverses in 1905. John Lane rejected it in June, Heinemann in July, and Constable, Symons' own publisher, in October. ²⁹. Gorman (p. 145) also mentions T. Fisher Unwin. But Symons still did not slacken his efforts on Joyce's behalf (even though Joyce had been in Europe for over a year now). A year later, on 2 October 1906, Symons ³⁰. wrote:

Now as to your poems. I feel almost sure that I could get Elkin Mathews to print them in his shilling 'Garland' series. ... If it comes out I will give it the best review I can in the 'Saturday' or 'Athenaeum' & will get one or two other people to give it proper notice.

He met both promises. He wrote to Mathews ³¹. on 9 October 1906:

Would you care to have, for your Vigo Cabinet, a book of verse which is of the most genuine lyric quality of any new work I have read for many years? It is called 'A Book of Thirty Songs for Lovers,' and the

lyrics are almost Elizabethan in their freshness, but quite personal. They are by a young Irishman called J.A. Joyce. ... I have only met him once, and am acting entirely out of admiration of his work.

Mathews promptly agreed to publish. With his brother's advice, Joyce rearranged Chamber Music in October 1906 before sending on the manuscript to his publisher. In a letter to Stanislaus, 15 January 1907, Joyce wrote: "Mathews has sent me a contract to sign: no royalty on 1st 300 copies then 15%. Price 1s./6d. Golden Treasury size, published this spring." ³².

Chamber Music finally appeared in May 1907, four years after Joyce had asked Symons' help in finding a publisher. "As he had promised, Symons reviewed the volume with considerable acclaim in The Nation - a tribute Joyce never forgot." ³³. Unfortunately, Joyce was as hapless with Mathews as he had been with Richards. In a letter to his agent on 8 July 1917, Joyce records the fact that "On Chamber Music I received no royalties in ten years." ³⁴. A few months later, in January 1918, Mathews published a new edition: Joyce's comment, 13 March 1920: "Chamber Music. A second edition of this came out, as I hear incidentally, two years ago. I never received from Mr. Mathews any \pounds /s." ³⁵.

Gorman ³⁶. writes on the publication of Chamber Music, waxing slightly lyrical:

the mere fact of the publication of Chamber Music was of a greater value at this period than, perhaps, he suspected. ... Joyce had joined the great company of professional authors and joined it at a moment when he most needed the strengthening reassurance of that fact. It was not a fortification of his faith in himself as a creator that he needed (for that faith had never faltered) but it was rather an indication that the public (represented by publishers, at least) would accept him and, consequently, that in the near or far future he would be released from the routine drudgeries having nothing in common with his art. Chamber Music did that for him.

A good example of the "intentionalist fallacy," this statement is a little misleading. Joyce never courted 'the Rabblement' (and publishers were in its top echelons, as Joyce's broadsides "The Holy Office" and "Gas from a Burner" indicate) nor depended on 'the Rabblement' for succour. It was a very long time after Chamber Music was published that he could look forward to release from drudgeries.

But the practical effects of the publication of Chamber Music were perhaps not as important to Joyce as the practical benefits of the mere achievement of the poems. For while he brought himself to the notice of major literary figures like George Russell and Yeats by sheer force of personality, it was his poetry which prolonged their attention and engaged their aesthetic sympathies. Twenty years after the publication of Chamber Music, AE, reviewing Pomes Penyeach,³⁷ was still voicing his strong appreciation of the earlier work:

There is nothing in the new book quite so exquisite as the best lyrics in Chamber Music. The poet seems to have been aware that in his youth he had created something which perhaps became more beautiful in retrospect in his imagination because the full strength of his intellect had since been devoted to writing the most realistic novels of our generation.

Another influential acquaintance whose advocacy of Joyce was secured by the poems, Yeats introduced the neophyte to Symons, who "had been for about ten years ... the principal [literary] middleman between Paris and London."³⁸ Symons in turn was impressed by the poetry, to the extent that he expended a considerable effort over four years of ill luck, overriding many obstacles and setbacks, in order to see them published. Having finally succeeded, Symons aided their critical reception with favourable reviews, and continued giving Joyce the poet favourable reviews until his

'Epilogue' to The Joyce Book in 1933. 39.

Yeats also maintained contact with and interest in Joyce, and he continued to appreciate Chamber Music, especially poem XXXVI. On 8 July 1915, Yeats wrote to Edmund Gosse of the Royal Literary Fund, 40.

Joyce has written a book of verse Chamber Music and a most remarkable book of stories called Dubliners which I thought of for our Academic Committee [of the Royal Society of Literature] prize. I would be inclined however to base his claim on a most lovely poem [Chamber Music poem XXXVI] in Katharine Tynan Hinkson's Irish Anthology The Wild Harp.

And when trying to obtain a pension on the Civil List for Joyce in 1916, Yeats wrote to Edward Marsh (secretary in charge of Civil List pensions): 41.

His work has a curious brooding intensity. I think one of his poems [Chamber Music poem XXXVI] at any rate a thing of great beauty and great technical accomplishment. If I compiled an anthology of English or Irish Poetry I would include it.

When Ezra Pound was compiling an Imagist anthology, Des Imagistes, in late 1913, he asked Yeats if there were any significant omissions, and Yeats suggested Chamber Music poem XXXVI. Pound was impressed by the poem too, and wrote to Joyce for permission to republish. This readily given, he asked Joyce in January 1914: "Have you anything more that stands up objective [sic] as your 'I hear an Army'?" 42. Pound published this poem again in his An Anthology Collected in MCMXXXI.

The aesthetic value of one of the Chamber Music poems, therefore, began one of the most significant and singularly useful literary friendships which Joyce struck. For introduction to Pound meant introduction also to a number of English and American publishers and magazine editors - and Pound continued to help Joyce with publications. When Pound finally met Joyce in 1920,

he described his impressions to John Quinn: ^{43.}

Joyce-pleasing; after the first shell of cantankerous Irishman, I got the impression that the real man is the author of Chamber Music, the sensitive.

Chamber Music cannot simply be dismissed as 'juvenilia' any more than it could be dismissed as "Symons!" As Valéry Larbaud wrote in 1922: "The success obtained among the lettered was great, this thin pamphlet [Chamber Music] sufficed to place Joyce among the best Irish poets of the ... generation." ^{44.}

Joyce did not at the time, as Gorman asserts, regard his poems as being "much in the light of an idle tuning-up of the rare instrument of his creative instinct preliminary to the more serious performance of Dubliners." ^{45.} Joyce was never idle in his art - certainly not in Chamber Music (as will be discussed later) - and he in fact retained the "cadenced precision of a poet." ^{46.} He wrote a few poems for Chamber Music while the "more serious performance of Dubliners" was being staged, and neither disavowed them nor wished them destroyed, and he continued to regard himself as a poet. ^{47.} Chamber Music did more for Joyce than Gorman's statement is prepared to concede, and meant more to him for a long time after their publication.

(3)

Criticism of Chamber Music has always been full of contradiction and conflicting claims, uncertainties accompanied by summary judgement. This is partly the 'fault' of the beguiling rhythmic facility of the poems, for although Joyce deliberately and studiously engineered this deceptively smooth surface in order to distance the lyric emotion, readers are frequently borne above the substance of the poems on the mesmeric ebb and flow of their

easy rhythm and conventional prosody. Joyce perhaps concealed too well in Chamber Music what also should have been revealed.

Finding only a surface, with no original thought, many critics rush to the source-books to find what Chamber Music imitates. Mirsky ^{48.} said Chamber Music shows the strong influence of the Irish Renaissance on Joyce; Reynolds ^{49.} says the lyrics are "more Elizabethan English than Irish Renaissance;" Levin in one book ^{50.} says Joyce had more in common with the imagists than with the poets of the Celtic Twilight, and in another ^{51.} "his plaintive and cloying little stanzas could only have satisfied George Moore's canons of pure poetry." And Moore's comment on Chamber Music was "Symons!" There has not been enough concentration on the poems themselves.

Three broad lines of criticism of Chamber Music may be discerned. The first, as in the early reviews, was a slightly wistful appreciation of the purity of the lyrics, and of their musical, melodic nature - but they were generally thought to be, "though crystalline in sound, opaque to the mind's eye." ^{52.} The second critical approach was a harsh judgement of Chamber Music because it failed to meet the more imposing criteria established by Joyce's realistic novels. Critics characterised by this approach betray considerable annoyance at the fact that Joyce could write something as 'slight' as the poems. The next step, and the third main approach, was to make full use of critical hindsight, the whole Joyce canon having been produced, and impute to his early work his later super-subtleties. The critic from this standpoint divines that Joyce always seems to be writing his autobiography, and is convinced that Chamber Music is too slight for Joyce to be true, so it must be fraught with

recondite significances and above all, with ironies; it must be as complex an enigma as Finnegans Wake. No critic likes to be caught out by Joyce, but he protected himself so well in his later works by dividing himself, his chief subject-matter, into infinite regressions of ironic masks - "O! the lowness of him was beneath all up to that sunk to!"⁵³ - that the critic is forced to follow suit, and cover himself in all possible directions. Unfortunately, however, this last line of criticism allows a freer play to the persona of the critic, leading one well into the hinterland of the intentionalist fallacy. Chamber Music has suffered a great deal from such fallacies.

The initial critical reception of Chamber Music is effectively characterised by the early press notices. In 1914 Joyce, despite poverty, had a Triestine printer print up some personally-culled excerpts from the more favourable reviews of Chamber Music. (These were designed as advertisements, some to be inserted in press copies of Dubliners and sent round to publishers and critics.) Tindall wrote that he had not seen a copy of these press notices, and that Herbert Cahoon who had, provided him only with a list of the names of periodicals from which Joyce quoted.⁵⁴

The full text is quoted in Letters, II, 332, n.3:

Press Notices
of
CHAMBER MUSIC
by
JAMES JOYCE
(Elkin Mathews, London: 1907)

Mr. Arthur Symons in 'The Nation' They are all so singularly good, so firm and delicate and yet so full of music and suggestion that I can hardly choose among them.... No one who has not tried can realize how difficult it is to do such tiny evanescent things as that; for it is to evoke, not only roses in mid-winter, but the very dew on the roses. Sometimes we are reminded of Elizabethan, more often of Jacobean, lyrics;

there is more than sweetness, there is now and then the sharp prose touch, as in Rochester, which gives a kind of malice to sentiment.... They are like a whispering clavichord that someone plays in the evening when it is getting dark. They are fall [sic] of ghostly old tunes that were never young and will never be old, played on an old instrument.... They are so slight, as a drawing of Whistler is slight, that their entire beauty will not be discovered by those who go to poetry for anything but its perfume.

[Arthur Symons 'A Book of Songs,' Nation, I, xvii (22 June 1907), 639.]

Chanel in the 'Leader': Mr. Joyce has a wonderful mastery over the technique of poetry. It is not without supreme skill that he produces lines of such apparent ease and simplicity, every word in its right place, the whole beautiful in its unadorned charm with a faint subtle fragrance of earthly loveliness.... Mr. Joyce flows in a clear delicious stream that ripples.... Mr. Joyce complies with [sic] none of my critical principles: he is, in truth, entirely earthly, unthinking of the greater and the further, though let me say in justice that the casual reader will see nothing in his verses to object to, nothing incapable of an innocent explanation. But earthly as he is, he is so simple, so pretty, so alluring, I cannot bring myself to chide him.

[Arthur E. Clery, The Leader (22 June 1907).]

Mr. T.M. Kettle, M.P. in the Freeman's Journal. A rare and exquisite accent lyrics which, although at first reading so slight and frail, still hold one curiously by their integrity of form. Chamber Music is a collection of the best of these delicate verses which have, each of them, the bright beauty of a crystal. The title of the book evokes that atmosphere of remoteness, restraint, accomplished execution characteristic of its whole contents ... a love gracious, and in its way, strangely intense.... It is clear, delicate, distinguished playing, of the same kindred with harps, with wood-birds and with Paul Verlaine.

[Thomas Kettle, 'Review,' Freeman's Journal (1 June 1907).]

Daily News: Light and evanescent, pretty and fragile.... His poems are attempts at music: he has tried to express one art in terms of another. His aim has been to catch in his rhythms something of the music of pipe or lute as distinct from the verbal music of the great lyrical masters.... His poems have at once the music and the want of music of a harpstring played on by the winds in some forest of Broceliande.

Evening Standard: Pretty lyrics with a delusive title.

Manchester Guardian: A welcome contribution to contemporary poetry. Here are thirty-six lyrics of quite notable beauty.... Something of the spirit of Waller and Herrick ... grace and simplicity ... an elegance and delicacy that are as uncommon as they are perilous. At their best they reveal a rare musical quality. His muse is a gentle tender spirit that knows smiles and tears, the rain, the dew and the morning sun.

Nottingham Guardian: Lovers of verse will delight in many of the pieces for their simple unaffected merit. 'Chamber Music' has a tuneful ring befitting the title and both the rhythm and the smoothness of his lines are excellent.

Glasgow Herald: In verse which has an old-fashioned sweetness and flavour, Mr. Joyce sings of the coming and, apparently, inexplicable going of love. The most are but snatches of song and one has to be penetrated by the subtle music of them before their poetic value is perceived. Once that is felt their merit is beyond dispute though only lovers of poetry will be likely to see or acknowledge it. Verse such as this has its own charm but where will it find its audience.

Irish Daily Independent.... Music in verse, poems, sweet, reposeful and sublime; poems that lying in the shade amid the scent of new-mown hay one would read and dream on, forgetful of the workaday world.

Bookman: A little book of poetry which charms, provokes criticism and charms again. Mr. Joyce has a touch reminiscent of the sixteenth century poets, with here and there a break in his lines' smoothness which can only be smoothed by an oldtime stress on the syllable, such as Vaughan and Herbert demanded.... At times there are bold liberties taken with rhyme and rhythm but there is much of music and quaintness in this little volume.

[Unsigned Notice, Bookman, XXXII (June 1907), p.113.]

Scotsman: A volume of graceful verse: it contains some little gems of real beauty.

Country Life: A very promising little volume.

Joyce was particularly interested in the reaction of Dubliners to his book of verse. The homage of a Dubliner was even more significant to him than Symons' kudos. He made a point of thanking 'Chanel' (Arthur Clery) for his "friendly and sympathetic appreciation of my verses" in a letter 9 August 1909. ^{55.} And

that Kettle's review was of special significance to Joyce is seen in his reworking it as Robert Hand's review in Exiles. He also alluded to his appreciation of Kettle's review in his presentation of a copy of Chamber Music to Kettle and his bride Mary Sheehy, on their wedding-day in 1909. ^{56.}

However, the type of criticism exemplified in the press notices - what Tindall describes as "the 'clarichord' school of Arthur Symons" ^{57.} - has continued to recent times, especially in treatments of Chamber Music in general Joyce texts. The chief difference, in later treatments by specifically Joycean critics, is a rather sour tone caused by the great contrasts between the poems and the realistic novels. The technical achievement of the latter being so remarkable, the form of the poems was now either ignored or grudgingly conceded in faint praise. Levin wrote: "Lyrics in the strictest sense, all of Joyce's poems have the practical virtue that they can be set to music and sung," ^{58.} but he is indignant with such "studied frailties." Levin claimed that the poetry was "too concrete, with an opaque kind of concreteness that may be only another form of abstraction" - while Magalaner and Kain assert that "its flaccid nature constitutes one of the best arguments in support of our current demand for irony, tension, and ambiguity." ^{59.}

After Tindall's edition, the "clarichord school" gained accretions from his interpretation, which multiplied the uncertainty and contradiction in criticism of Chamber Music in general Joyce texts. (Two significant exceptions are noted later.) A certain number of received opinions were regurgitated: it is musical, Elizabethan, evidence of Joyce's auditory imagination (enhanced by near-blindness), ^{60.} its title was a scurrilous

double-entendre, and it's a minor work, yet autobiographical and part of "the book of Joyce, the last word of which the author felt he had not said even in Finnegans Wake." ⁶¹ Chester G. Anderson imitated Tindall in stating that Joyce was "no doubt aware that many of the poems were susceptible of interpretations relating not only to their musical quality, but also to their imagery of micturition, chambering and the false wantonness of onanism." ⁶² (Anderson describes Tindall's edition as the "definitive edition of Chamber Music" in an article on Joyce's poem "Tilly" which reveals the same type of frenetic symbol-hunting as Tindall indulges in. ⁶³.) Anthony Burgess, in a chapter on Joyce's poems entitled " 'You Poor Poet, You!' " says they "are not to be read in a Stephen Dedalus context," and recognises the "coarse undertones" - yet "Chamber Music is not a mere collection of verses;... it is autobiographical, like everything Joyce wrote, but the autobiography is heightened, turned into myth." ⁶⁴ And in another recent study, Herbert Howarth wears his heart on his sleeve when criticising "a juvenile failure to match sound and sense; we hear only a slight distant music and miss the satirical clowning and undercutting of precious passions found in the mature Joyce." ⁶⁵ This type of judgement is too tempting when one looks at Chamber Music from the superior vantage of Joyce's later works, and does not make for fair assessment.

Criticism of Chamber Music in general critical material, then, has been an inconsistent body of heterogeneous received opinions from other sources, especially Tindall. Yet though some of these critics follow Tindall in part, they generally regard the poems as a regrettable lapse in taste by Joyce. Although their own final judgement on Chamber Music conforms to this view, Magalaner

and Kain give a very good analysis of the criticism, from Symons and Kettle (including some early studies which Tindall did not note), to Tindall.

In 1918, an unsigned review of the second edition of Chamber Music appeared in The Egoist, which Harriet Shaw Weaver attributes to T.S. Eliot. (In a letter to Patricia Hutchins, 22 September 1953, Eliot wrote "I have no recollection myself of whether I wrote it or not." 66.)

This is a second edition; first published in 1907. This verse is good, very good; though it never would have excited much attention but for Joyce's prose, still it would in any case have worn well. We infer from it that Mr. Joyce is probably something of a musician; it is lyric verse, and good lyric verse is very rare. It will be called 'fragile,' but is substantial, with a great deal of thought beneath fine workmanship. 67.

This was the first (though very brief) critical acknowledgement that there was substance beneath the musical surface of Chamber Music. This line was pursued in the 1930's and later in the 1950's culminating in Tindall's 1954 edition.

In 1930, Morton D. Zabel 68. foreshadowed later critical uncertainty about the poems in an article in which he quotes 21 possible sources (including important references to Verlaine and Meredith), and is baffled by the form of the lyrics, attacking their diffuseness yet acknowledging "a sharp lyric refinement" and a "lyric motive and discipline." Zabel criticised the "formal decorum" and "artificial elegance," but said they did not lack Jonson's "lucid sensibility"- he praised Joyce for following the sharper elements of the conventions he deliberately chose, yet blames him for the forms which embody them. On the one hand the form "disguises the absence of profounder elements," on the other, the form hinders the "sharp lyric refinement" and "lucid

sensibility" from becoming more obvious or significant. As mentioned before, it is the form, the surface of the poems, which confounds the critics.

Zabel's relative confusion was followed in 1933 by Louis Golding's tortured doubts,⁶⁹ (in an article not noted by Tindall). Golding was worried that Joyce did not disavow Chamber Music - "on the contrary, he avows it very explicitly."⁷⁰ Because of this fact, Golding, with rather cryptic despair, has a vague apprehension of something significant in Chamber Music - as significant as "the key to Joyce, or to Stephen Dedalus, ... which is looked in it, more truly than the key to Shakespeare is locked up in the sonnets."⁷¹ In trying to come to terms with Chamber Music, poem V, he considers Rebecca West's discovery that Joyce was a great man devoid of taste, and then the possibility that the poems are a saturnine joke, because they are an enigma comparable to Finnegans Wake. " 'Another joke!' one said. 'He's testing them again! They'll write books to explain it - its language, its form, its philosophy. And it's just a palimpsest of puns. It's a joke!'"⁷² But unlike Tindall, Golding realises the "futility and insolence" of this, and discounts it:

Joyce has far too sappy a sense of humour to permit himself so arid a joke.... No. There is not a syllable he has penned, in a career of incomparably arduous devotion to his art, which is not utterly, even flagrantly, sincere - even the jejune quavers of Goldenhair, even the multilingual portmanteau puzzles of Work in Progress.

Nevertheless, Golding's uncertainty about Chamber Music continues to the very last sentence of his study. He says that Work in Progress is extremely difficult, "but it is not so difficult, I assure you, as the thirty-first poem in Chamber Music [of which he quotes the second stanza]. There is a sense in which the

most tortuous poem of Robert Browning is a nursery rhyme compared with that." (As a measure of Golding's uncertainty on this score, it is worth noting that, for his book on James Joyce, he revised this last sentence to read: "There is a sense in which the most emancipated poem of E.E. Cummings is a nursery rhyme compared with that.")

In the same year John Kaestlin, in an important but relatively unknown article for the Cambridge University undergraduate magazine Contemporaries ⁷³. (not noted by Tindall),

warned against a facile surface reading of the poems as typically fin de siècle. Joyce's art, rather than reflecting the thin and popular emotionalism of the nineteenth century, is related to the painstaking workmanship of the medieval Scholastic mind. Even the Elizabethan song, which demands music, is less complete in itself than this verse. . . . The poems achieve a rare union of "harmonic purity and rhythmic freedom." The author, even in this earliest work, manifests his characteristic preoccupation with words and with linguistic discipline. ⁷⁴.

Besides Golding's vague apprehensions, and then Kaestlin's modest assertions of deliberateness and strength in the construction of Chamber Music, a few critics began to perceive a narrative or dramatic structure, and more substance and significance in the poems, than had hitherto been conceded.

In 1932, in a short article, "James Joyce as Poet," in The Joyce Book, Padraic Colum says that the poems in Chamber Music form a dramatic sequence which anticipates Joyce's autobiographical novel. ⁷⁵. And in the same year in Australia, John Anderson came to the same conclusion. ⁷⁶. In 1950 Tindall claims that he "ignorantly repeated their discovery, ⁷⁷. and in May 1952 he embodied his findings in an article in Poetry, which is a synopsis of the interpretation he was to proffer in his 1954 edition of the poems.