

March 6, 1967

Enjoyed your counter rambler. As I think I said to you before, I think the ramble is an essential characteristic of a real letter. One can get the most beautifully organized letter from someone (my aunt for instance) and find it dull. I think the reason is, and this is only my own feeling, that when you think out loud in a letter, committing the inevitable little non-sequiturs, gaucheries, et cet., the net effect is warmth and sincerity. Something studied is not a letter - except of course in the requirements of business. End of homily.

The main purpose of this letter is to say that I have sent two packages of pictures back to you first class and registered to protect them as much as possible. As the hour for our departure nears I am trying to do things that must be done. In the case of the pix I finally came to a sensible (not easy) decision, to compromise. I have held out 23 pictures to take one more crack at, at least the ten of these from the album, mostly shots of Hem; the other 13 are from that second batch you sent me, mostly not directly connected with Hem. I have copies of most of the album shots, some of them good, I think, but I would like to make doubly sure of the Hem shots, and then are now manageable enough to get back to you quickly when I hopefully find someone to back up my own efforts with copies of the Hem shots. A few of the pix I soaked in water, trying to get the glue and black off the back but not succeeding. A photographer friend said it would peel right off, but it didn't and so there is a suggestion of wrinkle in some, although not really noticeable unless you are told about it. If this ever became an important consideration a glue solvent would remove the glue and the black paper and then, when the pix were dried, they would dry flat or be susceptible to ironing. Wrinkling is caused, I think, by a difference in coefficient of expansion in the glued paper and non-glued paper in the drying process. If you get this before receiving the pictures please don't be nervous about it because I doubt you would really notice it.

I guess Ulysses is important because of the emphasis given the stream of consciousness technique; I say emphasis because Joyce was hardly the first to try this method. But he pushed it further than anyone else, and I guess is revered by writers for his expertise. Certainly he has never appealed much to the public, certainly not to me. I loathe his Finnegans Wake and can barely skim around on Ulysses. To always playing a game with writing, with future doctoral students, creating little puzzlers of double, triple and quadrangular connotation, making of words, etc. I think the basic goal of writing is to communicate and that any cute impediments a writer puts in the way are pretentious claptrappery. Joyce was allowed to get away with this because of his really superb short stories, THE DUBLINERS, which are in a class with Hemingway. I had one hell of a time getting through Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: the jargon, the Catholicness, the embarrassing extremes of his self revelation. As a man, I gather, Joyce was a most disagreeable and rather nasty sort. You will find few men as attractive as Hemingway, physically and in other ways, in the world of literary genius. I a