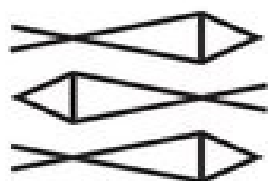


# JAMES JOYCE

A NEW BIOGRAPHY

GORDON BOWKER



James  
Joyce

A NEW BIOGRAPHY

Gordon  
Bowker

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX NEW YORK



*To Rhoda, who was there  
at every step*

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## Preface

The past exudes legend: one can't make pure clay of time's mud. There is no life that can be recaptured wholly; as it was. Which is to say that all biography is ultimately fiction.

Bernard Malamud, *Dubin's Lives* (1979)

In almost every poll taken in recent years, *Ulysses* has been acclaimed the greatest novel of the twentieth century. Among critics and intellectuals it is generally regarded as one of the outstanding landmarks of literary modernism, as important, say, as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in expressing the experimental and international spirit of post-war Europe in the 1920s. From any point of view, of all the 'modernists', James Joyce has had probably the most lasting effect on serious fiction. Even so, his impact was not immediate, and *Ulysses* was still not widely available in unexpurgated form until shortly before his death. However, the slow but certain impact of that book on the wider consciousness is mirrored in the gradual but inexorable progress towards permissiveness in the West. Eliot said Joyce had 'killed the nineteenth century' and Edmund Wilson called him 'the great poet of a new phase of the human consciousness'.

The 'riverrun' of Joyce's life was a never-ending escape route into exile of the sort often taken by creative writers in search of a broader vision. His fight against Irish parochial prejudices and Anglo-Irish censoriousness casts him in a heroic light. Under the influence mainly of Ibsen, Zola and Maupassant, he embraced realism, writing fearlessly about the more squalid aspects of human life. And yet his considerable poetic and comic gifts enabled him to lend an aspect of beauty and humor to what many regard as repugnant.

Joyce's religious dedication to authorship also picks him out as a writer in the romantic tradition of total commitment, suffering near poverty and financial dependency for much of his life in his determination simply to write. He was fortunate in his sponsors. Certain women (Dora Marsden, Edith McCormick, Harriet Shaw Weaver, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier in particular) ensured that he was able to concentrate fully on his great works, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and see them published.

From a fading middle-class background, James Joyce, born a Dubliner, became riveted and possessed, even in exile, by the Dublin of his youth. But he needed to escape the suffocating atmosphere of British Ireland and the paralysing grip of Irish Catholicism to find in Europe a milieu in which his art might flourish. That experience fed into his writing a stream of important influences and ideas, but as his reputation grew, he retreated further - into a tight circle of friends and admirers and the strange world of his fiction. This withdrawal, however, only added to his mystery and fame. As war approached or the intellectual climate changed, he moved on - to Paris, Trieste, Zurich, and back to Paris. He escaped one final time - from Vichy France to neutral Switzerland in 1940 - and died shortly afterwards, far removed from most of his friends and remote from his Dublin family, in the obscurity of a Zurich hospital.

Following his death, critics and scholars set out to explore and anatomize the remains of a great life - the progress, the work, and the extraordinary mental landscape. Apart from Shakespeare and the Bible, Joyce has probably spawned one of the most extensive bodies of analytical and interpretive scholarship of all time. Since his death, editions of his work, some well annotated, have continued to appear, the flood of critical tomes and articles has never abated, literary journals have been devoted exclusively to him, and numerous film adaptations, radio and television programmes have featured his life and work.

Joyce's fiction is highly autobiographical, but it is also fiction and therefore shaped by the author into a form that served his many purposes in writing and presenting himself to the world as an artist. *Dubliners*, his first book of fiction, reflects the world in which he grew up - turn-of-the-century Ireland - and many of the characters, whose identities he hardly bothered to disguise, were people known to him. But what his more perceptive early critics noticed was its revolutionary narrative technique, and the unusual economy and bite of his prose. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is both an extended confession and a droll commentary on the young life of Stephen Dedalus, a Catholic schoolboy with intimations of immortality, which, together with *Dubliners*, can be regarded as portents of the greater works to come.

*Ulysses* takes the reader for a whole day and night's jaunt seen through the eyes and imagination of an older Stephen and the Jewish Everyman, Leopold Bloom, around the streets of Dublin on 16 June 1904. En route, they encounter a multifarious cast of Joyce's acquaintances in a literary free-for-all, satirizing a series of styles and genres, closely mimicking the form and spirit of Homer's *Odyssey*, and the form and spirit of an old society confronting modernity. 'With *Ulysses*,' declared Edmund Wilson, 'Joyce has brought into literature a new and unknown beauty.'

*Finnegans Wake*, his final work, is a tidal wave of teasing verbal conjuration - a dream-like play of voices, the meaning of which is as slippery as the multitude of allusions milling around and interpenetrating the prose. As Joyce himself explained, while *Ulysses* deals with day and the conscious mind, *Finnegans Wake* deals with night and the unconscious mind - the single night's sleep of a single if polymorphous character. Although it seems formless and chaotic, it has a strange coherence, a mysterious music, and tells its own hidden story, enriched by great myths and legends. Joyce was, as Wilson has pointed out, 'the great poet of a new phase of the human consciousness', whose influence has gone deeper than literature. Like D.H. Lawrence, he was aware of the fluidity of human identity, the malleability and unreliability of perceived reality and representations of reality.

To his innovative use of the *monologue intérieur* (or 'stream-of-consciousness'), Joyce brought a curiosity about the working of his own mind and the minds of those around him. This coincided with the growing interest in Freud's explorations of the human unconscious. And, even though he rejected psychoanalysis, *Ulysses* in its own way followed the same path, drawing deeply on traditional sources while using the imagination rather than reason as his guide.

But Joyce was not simply a serious-minded experimenter who took the modernist novel to its ultimate conclusion. He was a great and playful satirist with a highly developed comic imagination. Once, asked about *Ulysses*, he replied, 'I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it'll keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant.' *Finnegans Wake*, he said, no doubt with a hint of irony, was intended as nothing less than 'a history of the world'.

His life was not without its problems, dogged as it was for many years by near poverty, failing eyesight, and the mental illness of his daughter, Lucia. He suffered also the slings and arrows of uncomprehending critics, including some fellow modernists, among them Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf, while Lawrence complained that *Ulysses* was 'more disgusting than Casanova'. Lawrence's disdain was reciprocated, and in 1929, given the opportunity to meet the author of *The Rainbow*, Joyce refused, calling him 'a propagandist and a very bad writer'.



Any survey of modern literature reveals how widespread and profound the impact of *Ulysses* has been. Those who have been clearly influenced by Joyce include Virginia Woolf, John Dos Passos, Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett, Djuna Barnes, Anthony Burgess, Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, Salman Rushdie, and just about every modern writer who has chosen to experiment with the novel form rather than remain confined within its traditional limitations.

The importance of Joyce has grown, and his greatest work has come to stand as a touchstone of perfection with fiction writers, ever more conscious of their craft. Anthony Burgess said that whenever he sat down to write a novel it was with a sense of despair because he knew he could never match *Ulysses*. George Orwell, who found the novel inspiring, came to regret having read it because it made him feel inadequate. Eliot and Thornton Wilder said much the same while Virginia Woolf regretted having read it for other reasons.

The first full biography of Joyce, by Herbert Gorman, published in 1939, was shaped and edited in significant ways by Joyce himself. Richard Ellmann's biography, written after Joyce's death but influenced by some of his friends, was first published in 1959, and regarded as a milestone in literary biography. A revised edition appeared in 1982, and since then, Peter Costello's *James Joyce: The Years of Growth, 1882—1915* and John McCourt's *The Years of Bloom: Joyce in Trieste, 1904-1920* have added freshly unearthed detail to the story. The same goes for John Wyse Jackson and Peter Costello's biography of Joyce's father, John Stanislaus Joyce, Brenda Maddox's life of his wife Nora, and that of his daughter Lucia, by Carol Loeb Shloss.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on these accounts and on more recently discovered material this biography will attempt to go beyond the mere facts and tap into Joyce's elusive consciousness. Furthermore, the work is informed by the belief that it is enlightening to view the work of a highly autobiographical writer like Joyce in the context of his life.

A character with many facets, he was very conscious of his image and often 'on stage' - certainly as a teacher and always as 'the great writer'. In these roles we can glimpse Joyce from revealing moments (epiphanies) in his fiction or reflected in the memories of others. There was, therefore, the Joyce of wide repute - the reclusive, near-blind genius trapped in a world of darkness, a remote and superior eminence who chose 'silence, exile and cunning', a merry toper who would dance a jig as the spirit took him, the pornographer obsessed with scatological fantasies, and the very correct gentleman with an aversion to obscenity. There are also the complex series of self-created alter egos - Stephen Dedalus (in *A Portrait of the Artist*), Leopold Bloom (in *Ulysses*), Giacomo (in *Giacomo Joyce*), Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker and Shem the Penman (in *Finnegans Wake*). Beyond that there is Joyce the letter-writer in confessional mood, lifting the mask to allow us glimpses of the inner being.

Like most writers of genius, Joyce was a man of contradictions. He loved his father yet reacted against his tyranny; he loved his mother but spurned her intense Catholicism; he loved Ireland but not its romanticization; he grew up an Irish nationalist but rejected the Ireland that nationalism created; he loved the English language yet attempted to reshape and reinvent it; he grew up hostile to Britain but had a lingering attachment to it. This pattern of ambivalence lies at the heart of the man and goes some way towards explaining the many facets, contradictions and convolutions of a tortuous mind. As a child, because of his placid temperament, he was known as 'Sunny Jim'; as an adult he was dubbed 'Herr Satan'. He was an unflinching realist yet was deeply superstitious and steeped in myth and legend. He was immersed in the past yet set the future course of serious modern fiction.

Certain attitudes and sentiments dominated Joyce's personality. He had a fascination for, and an understanding of, women, yet he could also be misogynistic (though rarely after the early stressful years of his marriage), and a woman very close to him, his own daughter, baffled him utterly. He was intensely curious about Jews and Jewish life (the 'Bloom' side of him), and although some of his family (his wife in particular) sometimes expressed anti-Semitic prejudice, Joyce himself never did. At the end of his life he was so moved by the plight of European Jewry that he directly aided

individual Jews and Jewish families to escape the Nazis.

Writers draw on their lives for fictional purposes, but it is considered a mistake to draw on fiction for biographical purposes, even on highly autobiographical novels like *Stephen Hero* and its revised version, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. After all, while based on real lives such fictions are created retrospectively, and shaped by unfettered imagination. Added to that, Joyce was adept at cultivating and projecting an image - a further source of unreality. When he did allow a biography of himself to be written, he was careful to ensure that it remained under his control.

However, although autobiographical fiction must always be suspect biography, this cannot mean that it is of no value whatever to biographers, especially where their purpose is to explore the inner lives of their subjects. Novels and stories are, after all, traces and reflections of mental effort and have some place in the history of their author's consciousness - the movement of a mind and imagination through time. Writers do reveal themselves in some fashion through their creative work, and sometimes it should be possible to say that a passage in an autobiographical novel chimes with known facts or thoughts expressed in other forms, or offers a motivation for this or that course of action. Biographies, too, require a creative effort if we are to get beyond the mere exteriority of a life.

Joyce presents the biographer with a set of particular problems. His letters and manuscripts are widely dispersed throughout Europe and America. There are gaps in the story due to correspondence having been destroyed (many of his letters to his wife Nora, to his brother Charlie and sister Margaret for example). Some influential accounts of Joyce's life appear to reflect the controlling hand of Joyce himself (Herbert Gorman's biography, and Frank Budgen's story of the writing of *Ulysses*) or of significant figures in his life, such as his brother Stanislaus and Maria Jolas (Richard Ellmann's biography). Fortunately, new material and the work of various scholars have helped clarify some of the resulting distortions, though no doubt others persist. In attempting to tap into the flow of Joyce's consciousness it is possible to glimpse a figure both fraught with contradictions and beset by deep feelings of guilt and self-doubt, even teetering on the edge of madness. But his many faults cannot blind one to the undoubted genius that shines through and manifests itself in his great achievements.

Sorting through the relics of a life is not unlike sorting through the tangled wreckage of a deserted house - windows shattered, rooms in chaos, bits of broken furniture, smashed china, books and papers torn and scattered, smithereens of mirrors bouncing back flashes of fractured sunlight and fragmented images. Amid the chaos we may catch a fleeting impression of what the place once was like when it was occupied, a presumption of lives lived, of memories stored and passions spent. Salvaging all the scattered pieces and reassembling them can only produce an approximation of the original, and the drama of ghostly existences will depend on efforts of imagination as much as accumulations of fact.

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# 1

## Past Imperfect

(1800–1882)

‘The past is not past. It is present here and now.’ Joyce, *Exiles*

In a class-conscious society like British Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century, family origin was the main determinant of social status. For John Stanislaus Joyce and his son James, identity was inseparable from family - its historical line and ramifications. The ancestral presence reminded them of who they were and reinforced their sense of social distinction. As James’s father began to squander his inheritance and the family descended into poverty, asserting claims to a distinguished ancestry became ever more important to him. Family associations, escutcheons and portraits became more meaningful, and the family legend passed on to his children became increasingly colourful and inventive.

Two ideas were very important to James Joyce - that the Joyce family had distant Scandinavian origins, and that Daniel O’Connell, the Liberator, was a paternal ancestor. From his father he inherited portraits of various ghostly forebears, to which he added family portraits of his own. He had a close relationship with his mother and his bond with his father was strong and formative enough for many of the old man’s eccentricities to shape his own personality. But he had very little time for his siblings, except Stanislaus, his next-eldest brother, George who died young, and Mabel who suffered the same fate. Consequently for him, as time went by, the past was more immediate than the present and became the chosen playground of his fiction.

His family had its Irish roots, he claimed, somewhere in the so-called Joyce country of County Galway, in the far west of Ireland, whence, it is said, come *all* Irish Joyces. They had migrated from Normandy to Wales following William’s conquest of England, and thence to Galway following Cromwell’s conquest of Ireland. For any imagination haunted by ghosts, here was a rich legendary past to inhabit and explore - as Joyce did in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>1</sup> But his immediate branch of the family, the historically present Joyces, had by the very late eighteenth century gravitated southward to County Cork, ‘a southern offshoot of the tribe’, or so he claimed.<sup>2</sup>

The Joyces’ recorded history originates with a certain George Joyce of Fermoy who begat the author’s great-grandfather, James, born in Cork and married to Anne McCann, an Ulsterwoman. Great-Grandfather Joyce, a lime burner by trade, was by repute ‘a fierce old fire-eater’ and probably a member of the Whiteboys, a secret terrorist group operating in Munster during the 1820s, attacking the larger landed properties and acting to defend tenant farmers. He was said to have been arrested, tried, and barely escaped hanging, living on to establish himself as a successful building contractor.

According to Peter Costello, unlike his strong-willed forebears, the son of James and Anne Joyce, James Augustine Joyce (1827-66), another Corkman, was ‘little more than a feckless charmer;

typical man of the third generation only too happy to spend what his father and grandfather had won. He was a horse-trader and reckless gambler who lost a great deal of money. Perhaps in the hope of stemming his excesses, his family married him off to a woman ten years his senior, Ellen O'Connell, an ex-nun. She was a member of the extensive O'Connell clan which included the great Daniel, MP for Clare and a dominant force in Irish politics during the first half of the nineteenth century. When James Augustine's business eventually failed, his father-in-law, Alderman John O'Connell, secured him a sinecure as Inspector of Hackney Coaches (or 'jingles'), with an office in the City Hall. Here, it has been suggested, is where the idea that the world owed the Joyces a living, which the author's father evidently inherited, first took root.<sup>4</sup>

John Stanislaus Joyce, James's only offspring, was born in Cork city on 4 July 1849. James proved an affable father, but Ellen a sour and censorious mother. Although John was coached by a pious aunt who later took the veil, he eventually became anticlerical, possibly influenced by his grandfather, or James Joyce, who believed that religion was only for women.

Intent on transforming his son into a gentleman able to move in the highest circles of Irish society, on St Patrick's Day, 1859, John's father entered him at the newly established St Colman's College in Fermoy, but he was to remain under priestly eyes for barely a year. The youngest boy in the college, he was said to have been spoiled, and although not much of a scholar, acquired a ready wit and gained a familiarity with the priesthood which later he came to despise. He began to imbibe ideas of Fenianism from these men of the cloth and other boys at the college, as well as from those of his relatives prominent in Irish politics. Music and singing, a significant part of college life, became a significant part of John's life. He had 'a good treble voice', it was said, and 'sang at concerts at an early age',<sup>5</sup> acquiring a passion for operatic arias and old Irish ballads, a passion communicated to James, the son who took after him most. Some of his favourite songs, such as 'Blarney Castle' formed part of young James's repertoire, and 'The Last Rose of Summer' became Mina Kennedy's favourite song in the 'Sirens' episode of *Ulysses*. John's stay at St Colman's was curtailed when he was withdrawn on 19 February 1860, either because his fees were unpaid, or after a severe attack of rheumatic fever rendered almost lethal by typhoid.<sup>6</sup> After that, most likely he completed his education under private tuition.

After St Colman's, John's parents resolved to build him up, and he began a programme of cold baths, exercise, rowing and athletics, which he claimed accounted for his relative longevity. There are allusions to this Spartan lifestyle in James's story 'The Sisters', and in *Ulysses* in Bloom's interest in the exercises of the German strongman, Eugen Sandow.<sup>7</sup> As part of this regime, John's father arranged for him to work aboard a Cork Harbour pilot boat. There he acquired a stomach for sea travel and what his biographers call a 'vocabulary of abuse that for years was the delight of his bar-room cronies', able to draw upon a whole lexicon of inventive expletives. Favourites included 'Shite and onions', 'I'll make you smell hell!' and, when things went badly for him later, 'Curse your bloody blatant son ... Ye dirty pissabed, ye bloody-looking crooked-eyed son of a bitch. Ye dirty bloody corner-boy, you've a mouth like a bloody nigger.'<sup>9</sup> The story of the seaman (D.B. Murphy) encountered by Bloom and Stephen at the cabman's shelter in the 'Eumeus' episode of *Ulysses*, full of hair-raising stories of treacherous foreigners, has the smack of John Stanislaus, the young salt, knocking around Cork Harbour. And the songs of Italian sailors, alluded to in the 'Sirens' episode, must have passed through John's musical memory into the creative imagination of his son.

Later in life he followed the hounds, a love of the chase caught presumably from his father's love of horses. 'Begor, hunting was the game for me,' he told a journalist in old age.<sup>10</sup> This passion is given voice in *Ulysses*, when, in 'Circe', the hunting cries 'Holà! Hillyho!' and 'Bulblul Burbblburbblb! Ha boy!' echo between Bloom and Stephen amid the surrealistic anarchy of Bella Cohen's whorehouse.

And John's habit of regular long walks around Dublin and environs, caught by his children, foreshadows the wandering narrative line which snakes through most of his son's fiction.

Politics was a running theme throughout John's life. As well as the Fenianism imbibed as schoolboy, two O'Connell uncles became town councillors in Cork, and one of his cousins, Peter Pa McSwiney, became Lord Mayor of Dublin. The 1860s saw the resurgence of a Fenian movement prepared to take up arms to liberate Ireland. Under their leader, James Stephens, they led an abortive uprising in February 1867, resulting in imprisonment for the rebels. The movement's conspiratorial air appealed to John, and while the extent of his involvement with it is unknown, escaping university might have saved him from a stint behind bars.

Although he gained entry to Queen's College, Cork, in October 1866, the death of John's father, who was barely forty, delayed his starting there until the following year. He chose to study medicine and found life as a medical student highly congenial - the conviviality, the drinking, the swapping of obscene anecdotes. Cherished memories of those carefree days were passed to his son who fed them into *A Portrait of the Artist*. John is said to have had 'stage presence', and the demands of student life did not prevent him from acting, singing comic songs at college concerts (including the then-popular 'Tim Finnegan's Wake'), and throwing himself into college sports. He was especially keen on field athletics and cricket, a passion his literary son inherited. In the 'Lotus-Eaters' chapter of *Ulysses* Joyce recalls one celebrated Dublin cricketing hero:

Heavenly weather really [muses Bloom] ... Cricket weather. Sit around under sunshades. Over after over. Out ... Duck for six wickets. Still Captain Buller broke a window in the Kildare street club with a slog to square leg.<sup>11</sup>

John failed his second-year exams, and returned to college for a further year before leaving without a degree.

In July 1870, at the age of twenty-one, he came into part of his inheritance, including properties in Cork yielding an annual income of some £500 from rents. Almost simultaneously the Franco-Prussian War broke out. It caused a sensation in Cork, with demonstrations and Irish volunteers rushing to the aid of the embattled Catholic French. John decided to join the fray, only to be intercepted in London by his mother and shipped straight back home. She was also alert to any female entanglements she considered unsuitable, and John's affairs were often cut short by maternal intervention. However, he was not deterred. As a young man, according to James, his father was 'a conqueror of women'. The reckless pursuit of the female once led, it seems, to a venereal infection, though his claim to have cured himself of a syphilitic chancre seems exaggerated. The idea that inherited syphilis led to his favourite son's later near-blindness has been argued and discounted, John never having shown any of the advanced symptoms of the disease. Nevertheless, that James may himself have contracted some sexual infection leading to rheumatic and ocular afflictions is not entirely improbable.<sup>12</sup>

Following university, John's life began to progress. After a few years as an accountant he took a job, for £300 a year and a £500 shareholding, as secretary of a distillery established by Henry Alley, a Cork businessman, at Chapelizod (meaning 'the Chapel of Isolde'). This Dublin suburb with its legendary associations would capture the imagination of his son, the author, who made it the home of James Duffy in his short story 'A Painful Case', and is the setting of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1869 novel, *The House by the Churchyard*, which features in *Finnegans Wake*. Robert Broadbent



Chapelizod, a friend of John's, owned the Mullingar Hotel which became in the novel the home of the landlord Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, him of the ambiguously recurrent initials. H.C.E. (He Comes Everybody; Haveth Childers Everywhere) owed something to Hugh C. E. Childers, Gladstone's Chancellor and Secretary of State for War, an Irish Home Ruler, whom John met at Dublin's United Liberal Club in 1880.<sup>13</sup>

To his various pastimes John now added yachting around the mouth of the River Liffey and in Dublin Bay, and serious opera-going. He delighted in the great singers who visited Dublin during the period. John himself had developed a fine tenor voice, and sang occasionally in concerts at Dublin's Ancient Concert Rooms. He was thrilled on being told that he had been declared 'the best tenor in Ireland' by Barton McGuckin, a celebrated singer with the Carl Rosa Opera Company - a story he never tired of repeating to anyone who cared or did not care to listen.

At that time, Dublin musical culture was suffused with a passion for opera. As Joyce told Stuart Gilbert:

One of the most remarkable features of Dublin life in the heyday of Mr Bloom [and John Joyce] was the boundless enthusiasm of all classes of citizens for music, especially of the vocal and operatic varieties ... and their cult of the divo, carried to a degree unknown even in Italy.<sup>14</sup>

The lasting and profound influence of this enthusiasm on James has been well noted, and Peter Costello underlines the point by asking, 'What after all is *Finnegans Wake* but a species of operatic chorus?'<sup>15</sup>

Nor had John lost his penchant for acting, especially when tipsy and telling colourful stories. One which spun itself into *Finnegans Wake* was the Crimean War story of Buckley the Irish soldier, who once had a Russian general in his sights, but, in awe of his uniform and decorations, was unable to fire. Then, reminding himself of his duty, he took aim again, at which moment the general dropped his pants to relieve himself, again prompting the soldier, unable to shoot so vulnerable a target, to lower his gun. However, when the man then proceeded to wipe himself with a piece of turf, Buckley could no longer respect the man and shot him. How he might use this story did not dawn on Joyce until, in the late twenties, he told it to Samuel Beckett, who commented, 'Another insult to Ireland.' 'Now I can use it,' said Joyce delightedly, 'now I can use it.'<sup>16</sup>

At the distillery, fate suddenly took an unfortunate turn. The manager, Alleyne, was misappropriating the firm's funds, and, when challenged by John, disappeared with the spoils. The company later went into liquidation and John lost not just his job but his £500 investment. Alleyne barely survived to enjoy his ill-gotten gains, dying just two years later in January 1888. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, he became Joyce's model for the irritable, curmudgeonly boss in his stories 'Counterparts'.

John worked for a time in an accountant's office in Westland Row in central Dublin, and became a familiar figure in various city bars and hostelrys where his congeniality, scathing wit and fondness for drinking became legendary. He was something of a dandy, sporting a monocle, a carefully waxed moustache, and sometimes a colourful waistcoat later memorialized in his son's short story 'The Dead' — 'a waistcoat of purple tabinet, with little foxes' heads upon it, lined with brown satin and having round mulberry buttons', made for him by his mother as a birthday present.<sup>17</sup> In keeping with

the image, he was also very charming - a 'character' — convivial, amusing, full of 'blarney' with sharp line in repartee. Asked if he knew anything about the quality of Liffey water, he replied, 'Not damn bit because I never drank it without whiskey in it.'<sup>18</sup>

Through O'Connell contacts John was appointed secretary of Dublin's United Liberal Club, catering for members of the party which represented the independence-minded rising middle class against the Conservative pro-British Establishment. It was that section of Irish society which produced James Joyce and upon which he would focus his creative intelligence. For John, here was an opportunity to enjoy the social life, the parties and balls at the Mansion House.

At around this time he became romantically involved with nineteen-year-old Mary Jane Murray (known as May), the beautiful, blonde, blue-eyed daughter of John and Margaret Murray (nee Flynn) who ran a tavern in what is now Terenure, a suburb in the west of Dublin, and he patronized the distillery. May's father disapproved of the small, handsome but rakish John Joyce pursuing his beautiful daughter (someone dubbed them 'Beauty and the Beast'), and his mother, reproachful as ever, objected to her only son's marrying into the family of a mere innkeeper. But John ignored his mother for once, and his ardent pursuit of May first charmed and finally won the young girl's heart.

Mary Jane was born in the county town of Longford on 15 May 1859, the third child of a Leitrim Murray and a Dublin Flynn. John Murray's family, it was said, included a priest with literary talents. Margaret Theresa Flynn's family were musical and, claimed Joyce, she and her sisters had studied singing with Michael Balfe, the Dublin composer of *The Bohemian Girl*. May had two older brothers, John and William, who did not get on, a family situation, as Costello points out, replicated in *Finnegans Wake* - a pub landlord, his wife, a beautiful daughter and two quarrelsome brothers. Brother John, a journalist with the *Freeman's Journal*, was forced into marriage when he impregnated the sixteen-year-old daughter of his lodging-house landlady, something John Joyce, who disdained his brother-in-law, never allowed to go unmentioned. John Murray's plight - a young man inveigled into marriage - became the basis for his nephew's story 'The Boarding House'.<sup>19</sup> William, the younger of the brothers, a self-employed cost accountant, married the convent-educated Josephine Giltrap, who became James's favourite aunt. Kind and empathetic though she was, William was a martinet who bullied his children, providing James with yet more material for a story — 'Counterparts' — in which a browbeaten clerk in turn browbeats his own son.

May was schooled mostly by the musical Misses Flynn at their finishing school for young ladies on 15 Usher's Island (on the south bank of the Liffey in the heart of Dublin). There she learned deportment, how to dance, play the piano and sing, and, as John also sang, James would grow up in a world of music and song - from Irish ballads to operatic arias. This was the background evoked in 'The Dead', in which the Flynn sisters become the Misses Morkan, who also feature *en passant* in *Ulysses*.<sup>20</sup>

As secretary of the United Liberal Club, John played a key role in helping Maurice Brooks, a Home Ruler, and Robert Lyons, a Liberal, triumph over the Conservatives James Stirling and Sir Arthur Guinness (later Lord Ardilaun, doyen of the Dublin brewing family) in the election of March 1880. Afterwards, so he alleged, he had the pleasure of informing Sir Arthur that he was no longer an MP. This was a triumph for the energetic secretary who liked to boast that he had received 100 guineas for his services from each of the grateful candidates. 'I won that election,' he would claim, and from that success he acquired a reputation for organizing election campaigns which would find him employed in harder and less friendly times. A month after that election, in May 1880, Charles Stewart Parnell became leader of the Home Rule League, of which John was to become an ardent supporter. (Parnell's close associates Michael Davitt and Timothy Healy, also among the Joyce family's heroes, would play a key role both in Irish politics and in the lives of John and his impressionable son James.) As it was

with his reputation riding high, there was talk of John being offered a parliamentary seat. The future looked assured for this young man on the rise.

By the beginning of 1881, as Irish opinion, with Parnell in the vanguard, turned against Gladstone, the United Liberal Club was losing its purpose, the secretaryship was dispensed with and John was looking for a job. He got his break when the post of rate collector at the Collector General's Office in Dublin became vacant. This pensionable Civil Service post (in the gift of the Lord Lieutenant) was worth over £400 per annum (comparable to that of an experienced Irish doctor) - with additions for administering jury lists and checking electoral registers, John's friend Alf Bergan put it at £800. With support from various political contacts, and after having to re-sit the Civil Service entrance examination (failed first time), he was duly offered the post by W. E. Forster, the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

John and May were married on 5 May 1880, ten days short of her twentieth birthday, at Rathmine Church. May afterwards liked to say, 'I was born in May, am known as May and was married in May'. The newly-weds honeymooned in London and Windsor before setting up home at 15 Clanbrassil Street, a few doors from the Murray family home. In *Ulysses*, drawing as ever on his personal past, Joyce made this street the home of Rudolph Virag, father of its wandering anti-hero Bloom, pictured as 'precociously manly, walking on a nipping morning from the old house in Clanbrassil street to the high school, his booksatchel on him bandolierwise, and in it a goodly hunk of wheaten loaf, a mother's thought'.<sup>22</sup>

But living close to his in-laws did not suit John. Like his mother, who, outraged by the marriage, had now cut him out of her life, he thought the Murrays beneath him, and the bad blood between him and that family would persist. He always referred to May's twice-married father as 'the old fornicator', and on hearing William refer to one of his children as 'Daddy's little lump of love', John quickly rendered it into 'Daddy's little lump of dung'. They soon moved to Ontario Drive, Rathmine, just a brisk walk from the United Liberal Club on Dawson Street.

May Joyce, a pious Catholic, would endure seventeen pregnancies from which came thirteen survivors, two of whom died in infancy. The first child, John Augustine Joyce, was born three months prematurely on 23 November 1880 and died after eight weeks. His father, unlike his mother, found little consolation in religion and was known to call Irish bishops and priests 'sons of bitches' — as does Simon Dedalus, his fictional incarnation.<sup>23</sup> But John could forget his troubles in the company of his many congenial friends.

For May, the sad loss of her firstborn was compounded in February 1881 by the death of her mother, Margaret (the only Murray John liked), and her life was further disturbed when her restless husband moved twice more within the next twelve months. Less mourned was the death in June that year of John's mother, Ellen, who had not communicated with him since his marriage.

Coming from a strong male line, the loss of his first son affected John profoundly, and probably explains why he focused almost all his affection and pinned all his hopes on the next son to come along. James ('Jim' to his family) was born at 6 a.m. on Thursday 2 February 1882 at 41 Brighton Square West, in Rathgar. That day, reported London's Meteorological Office, the barometer was falling, south-easterly winds turning to gales were forecast, with fog, dull mists and rain over all Ireland. The outlook, said the report, was gloomy.

The new arrival was baptized three days later by the Rev. John O'Mulloy at St Joseph's Chapel of Ease at Terenure. A distant relative of John, Philip McCann (ship's chandler on Burgh Quay), and his wife Helen were godparents, undertaking to pray for him regularly, set a Christian example, and encourage him in the faith. In the case of the newly christened 'James Augustine Joyce' that would prove a somewhat thankless task.



The date of Joyce's birth coincided with the religious festival of Candlemas and the pagan ~~Groundhog Day~~, an appropriate birthday for a writer who would combine a religious (if impious) cast of mind with a fascination for myth and legend. He had emerged into a solid, predictable Victorian world dominated and enshrouded by tradition, in a country which stood in the shadow of another, and whose indigenous language and culture had been supplanted. He was not only destined to shake the world of modern letters, but eventually, by taking and subverting the intrusive English language, would help put Ireland firmly on the literary map.

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## 2

### The Dawn of Consciousness

(1882–1888)

‘Once upon a time and a very good time it was.’  
Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Not surprisingly, echoes, fleeting memories and epiphanies are all that remain of James Joyce’s ‘once-upon-a-time’ years. Moving through and around them we may try to comprehend and re-weave the threads of an evolving consciousness.

Emerging from the fog of half-forgotten childhood, young James’s awareness of the world seems to have focused most fixedly on the jovial John Stanislaus, the proud father playfully absorbed with his new son. Little Jim (if the imaginative memory of his alter ego Stephen can be trusted) was ‘a nice little boy named baby tuckoo’, his father, ‘a hairy face’ looking at him, as he later recalled, ‘through a glass’. He seemed to know he was the focus of this man’s attention and his amusing fancies - the ‘nicens little baby tuckoo’ encountering ‘a moocow’ remained a defining memory of a blissful beginning. His mother was a more fragrant, musical presence, playing sailor’s hornpipes on the piano for him to dance to. These are the glimpses of a recollected past filtered through imagination and personify in print an idyllic but ultimately disrupted childhood.<sup>1</sup>

His father recalled them as ‘the happiest moments of my life’.<sup>2</sup> James, thinking back, agreed with Aristotle that childhood is a time of both wonder and confusion, and from this wondrous confusion he was able to fish a few lingering fragments of memory - that ‘nicens boy’ and that ‘moocow’ — and, a song learned from his crooning father, ‘O, the wild rose blossoms/On the little green place’, of which he managed only ‘O, the green wothe botheth’.<sup>3</sup>

Much later, contemplating an early photograph of himself (a young Fauntleroy in lace collar and velvet dress carefully posed on a piano stool), James thought himself ‘fierce-looking’ — perhaps a child already taking issue with the world or frowning in imitation of some implacably disapproving priest or relative.<sup>4</sup> He was in fact wan-looking and slight, with pale steely-blue eyes affording him an air of self-possession and detachment rather than ferocity. As the detail of his childhood faded from his consciousness, he would ask his Aunt Josephine to refresh his memory, so that he could conjure up what he called his ‘youthful soul capable of simple joys’.<sup>5</sup>

His young world would gradually widen to encompass a long and colourful cast of characters, all destined to achieve immortality in the pages of three of the most important works of twentieth-century fiction. Simon Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist* and in *Ulysses* was a likeness of his father; his mother, until her untimely death, would appear first as a steady then as a haunting presence; and John’s many friends from hustings and bar room, would dance across all his pages (including

*Finnegans Wake*) like characters in a pantomime, while relatives, fellow students and drinking companions only swelled the boisterous throng.

His mother's piety meant that there were priestly presences in James's early life, as well as all the paraphernalia and iconography of the religious life with which she surrounded herself - rosaries, crucifixes, madonnas and breviaries. This atmosphere would suffuse the Dublin fiction which harked back to his childhood, such as his story 'The Sisters', and early chapters of *A Portrait*. Eva Joyce, younger sister, remembered him as 'a very religious boy'. 'He wrote a lot of very beautiful verse, holy verse; things to the Blessed Virgin, and things that his mother thought a lot about.'<sup>6</sup> But in *Stephen Hero*, Joyce's doppelgänger, Stephen, remarks with Joycean irony, 'I was sold to Rome before my birth.'<sup>7</sup>

Forty-one Brighton Square was a newly built red-brick two-storey terraced house on a tree-lined square (more a triangle), an appropriately respectable middle-class area for a man like John who, on James's birth certificate, now styled himself 'Government Clerk'. When the birth was registered, the registrar got his name wrong - 'James Augusta' instead of 'James Augustine' - as if attributing a feminine side to him which he in turn attributed to Bloom; and in *Finnegans Wake*, Shem (one of Joyce's alter egos) refers to his childhood as his 'augustan days'.<sup>8</sup>

He had been born into a musical home. Love of music was probably what bound John to his wife, at least initially - he sang at concerts and both belonged to choirs. Their singing solo, in duet, and as a family, provided young James with a fund of memories - songs from opera (like the popular 'M'appari tutt' amor' from Flotow's *Martha*), songs brought in from Dublin hostelries (like 'Finnegan's Wake'), sentimental songs for the drawing room (like 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' and old Irish ballads (such as 'The Boys of Wexford') and much sacred music too. John loved especially patriotic ballads and sentimental recitations such as 'The Arab's Farewell to his Steed'. May would also dance and John would caper and jig as the mood and moment took them, or would read aloud for the benefit of the boy. But perhaps even more influential was his father's partiality for storytelling, elaborated with his own very distinctively colourful Irish vernacular - modified at its extremities no doubt for the Brighton Square drawing room.

For the British Empire, as 1882 dawned, it was business as usual. Queen Victoria, Defender of the [Protestant] Faith, had ruled her domain for forty-five years and would reign for a further nineteen. Ireland was just another imperial outpost, and while British authority was based at Dublin Castle, the country was ruled ultimately from London.

Despite the air of political stability and social stagnation, the old order was under challenge. Gladstone's Liberals had Home Rule for Ireland on its agenda, but its progress had stalled. And so was also business as usual for opponents of British rule. There was Whiteboy activity in County Laois and in County Clare armed and masked 'Moonlight' marauders were reportedly terrorizing local households (mostly small farmers thought to have taken over the land of those dispossessed by British landlords). Parnell was incarcerated in Kilmainham Jail for 'seditious conspiracy' in opposition to Gladstone's 1881 Land Act, denying Irish tenant farmers freehold. The impetus towards Home Rule was gaining wider support, and that February the American House of Representatives was calling for information about American Fenians in British prisons.

More dramatically, in Dublin on 6 May 1882, the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his Undersecretary, Thomas Henry Burke, were stabbed (gruesomely with surgical instruments) while walking through Phoenix Park on their way to the Viceroy's Lodge. Those responsible, the so-called 'Invincibles' ('Ignorant invincibles, innocents immutant!'),<sup>9</sup> were caught and hanged, except for three, including John FitzHarris, their jarvey (coachman), known as 'Skin-th

goat', who would later materialize in the 'Eumeus' episode of *Ulysses* as keeper of a cabman shelter, and later still (September 1910) earn himself an obituary in the *New York Times*.

In August, tragedy came a little closer to home when a family called Joyce was massacred near Maamtrasna in Galway. A number of relatives, including seventy-year-old Myles Joyce, were tried for murder in English, though they spoke only Irish. Myles and two others, whom the British took to be Fenian terrorists, were crudely hanged, hardly knowing what was said at the trial. Many thought it a grave miscarriage of justice. A friend of John, Tim Harrington, later Lord Mayor of Dublin, was involved in the case which was much discussed in the Joyce household. James would write about the affair in a newspaper article twenty-five years later, and in the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* the hanging of the Croppy Boy echoes the barbarity of the botched execution.<sup>10</sup>

The end of a literary epoch was signalled that year by the deaths of Longfellow, Rossetti, Darwin, Emerson and Trollope. Meanwhile, the heralds of a modern age of literature, Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Wyndham Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were either just born or about to be, Ibsen was fifty-four and W. B. Yeats not yet seventeen. In 1882, also, Puccini composed his first opera, *Le Villi*, Wagner finished *Parsi fal*, and Nietzsche announced that 'God is dead!'

Since the Act of Union in 1800, Ireland had been incorporated into the United Kingdom. Not only did its politicians lose control of their own affairs but slowly, over time, its ancient tongue had been usurped by the alien English. The future author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, however, would master French, Italian, Norwegian and German, and become familiar with half a dozen other languages, which, in the circumstances of his birth, was a remarkable achievement.

The Joyces had survived the great Potato Famine of the 1840s, which had decimated the Irish population, and through shrewd investment maintained their social status. At the time of James's birth, migrant-ships were still leaving fully laden. The country seemed to hold few prospects for the bright and imaginative: 'When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight,' he wrote - an image reiterated in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>11</sup> Those who remained were destined to die - either by the bullet or by spiritual decomposition.

With little hope of moving beyond the class into which one was born, an air of fatalism and claustrophobia hung over the lower and middle classes, an atmosphere which Joyce captured brilliantly in *Dubliners*. One way out of this quagmire, university education, was only slowly becoming available. Dublin's Trinity College was predominantly for Protestants, but a Catholic university had been established in 1851 (under the Rectorship of Cardinal Newman), one of whose first students was the grandson of Daniel O'Connell. In 1880, Newman's establishment became University College, Dublin, able to award degrees of the newly founded Royal University. For those of Joyce's generation, therefore, there was at last some hope of breaking free from the old shackles of social inertia.

By 1884 John was not only enjoying his new official status but satisfying somewhat his search for respectability. However, he had a greater dream beyond mere respect - gentility. To this end he had ordered to display an etching of the coat of arms of the Galway Joyces with its motto: '*Mors aut honorabilis vita*', and, of course, those family portraits, maliciously rumoured to be a bogus collection acquired from various sources.

Just prior to James's birth, John had mortgaged the first of his inherited properties in Cork. In 1880 he mortgaged three more and moved his family to a bigger house at a better address - 23 Castlewood Avenue, Rathmines - a step up the property ladder. John's appetite for social advancement was matched only by his appetite to spend, so that gradually he acquired a reputation for profligacy driven by a strong desire to be thought a good fellow. That swagger is captured in *A Portrait* when Stephen

reflects that his father 'always gave him a shilling when he asked for sixpence'.<sup>12</sup>

At Castlewood Avenue there were spare rooms, and taking in lodgers meant extra income. And so the dancing, singing boy soon found an audience, not just in his prideful father and sweet-smelling mother but with older presences in the Joyce ménage — his Uncle William O'Connell and 'Dante Elizabeth Conway'<sup>13</sup> ('Uncle Charles' and 'Dante Riordan' in *A Portrait*)<sup>14</sup> — distant relatives John. On 18 January 1884, the first of James's sisters, Margaret (known as 'Poppie'), was born, followed on 17 December by the first of his brothers, Stanislaus (or 'Stannie'). The house would not remain spacious for long.

Uncle William, a bankrupt draper, was a hearty, rugged old man with white sidewhiskers, who sported an antique tall top-hat which he wore even in the outhouse while smoking a pipe of black twine and singing 'O Twine me a Bower all, of Woodbine and Roses' or 'The Groves of Blarney', one of John's favourites.<sup>15</sup> Dante - 'unlovely ... very stout, baleful and terrifyingly devout'<sup>16</sup> (who moved to Castlewood as governess to the children) - apart from sitting in judgement on the world at large, collected tissue paper for wrapping parcels, and gave Baby Tuckoo a cachou for every piece he brought her. Equally strangely, she kept two brushes in her wardrobe - her totems, a brush with a maroon velvet back representing Michael Davitt and one with a green velvet back standing for Parnell.<sup>17</sup> This red-green colour coding recurs throughout *A Portrait*, symbolizing opposites in Stephen's mind. When Dante arrived at Castlewood Avenue she was a keen Parnellite, which must have commended her to John himself a passionate supporter of the charismatic Home Ruler.

Dante's nationalism was so intense that she once belaboured an elderly gent with her parasol for not standing to attention for 'God Save the Queen' at some public function. James began to learn a great deal from Dante, and, despite the menace of her unbending religiosity, in his first novel, as young Stephen he represents her not unsympathetically.

Dante knew a lot of things. She had taught him where the Mozambique Channel was and what was the longest river in America and what was the name of the highest mountain in the moon ... both his father and uncle Charles said that Dante was a clever woman and a wellread woman. And when Dante made that noise after dinner and then put up her hand to her mouth: that was heartburn.<sup>18</sup>

Stanislaus's memory of her was more jaundiced, recalling that, while teaching reading, writing and the elements of arithmetic and geography, 'she inculcated a good deal of very bigoted Catholicism and bitterly anti-English patriotism'.<sup>19</sup> But even he credited her with giving Jim a good start in life - and by the same token probably himself, too.

Dante, a one-time Sister of Mercy in America, had left the Order after inheriting £48,000 from two brothers who died almost simultaneously. Back in Ireland she married a Dublin solicitor, Patrick Henry Conway, who shortly afterwards decamped with her fortune to South America. The bereft Dante now became attached to John Joyce's emergent clan, and in the spirit of her old Order set out to secure for Eternity the soul of young James Augustine and his siblings.

Throughout the day, Dante exerted her daunting influence, religiously presiding over their spiritual welfare. Every evening she had them reciting the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, something which the well-behaved James seemed to accept, but the more surly Stanislaus found increasingly oppressive. Her teaching always carried an underlying moral threat. An excursion



Inchicore, just south of Phoenix Park, was no mere outing but an occasion to view a waxwork representation of the Holy Family at the birth of Christ, a visit to Dublin's National Gallery. Merrion Square meant having to contemplate a painting by Francis Danby depicting the opening of the seventh seal, the Day of Judgement, with sinners being struck down by thunderbolts and hurled to damnation.<sup>20</sup> Dante, a terrorist of Apocalypse, warned them that thunderbolts were an instrument of God for the destruction of the wicked, and, observing an infant's funeral, declared that those who die unbaptized would surely go to hell. The cynical Stanislaus considered all this ridiculous (or so he recalled), but James took it deeply to heart and, although he later scorned baptism, throughout his life he reacted with unconcealed terror to the sound of thunder. It was, claimed Stanislaus, 'the only real weakness my brother showed as a boy.'<sup>21</sup> That fear of thunder rumbles and rips through his most obscure but revealing last work, *Finnegans Wake*, in which the voice of 'Him Which Thundereth From On High'<sup>22</sup> is heard at the outset.

Because the influence of Dante was so overwhelming, that of Joyce's parents was probably muted. While musical, John and May were not especially literary. John's reading was patchy, limited to Sheridan Le Fanu's *The House by the Churchyard*, and a few other favourite novels such as Frank Smedley's *Frank Fairlegh: or, Scenes from the Life of a Private Pupil*. John, it is suggested, had no taste for books of a saucy kind - much like Leopold and Molly Bloom, and James and Nora Joyce. He did, however, use public libraries so the house cannot have been entirely book-free.<sup>24</sup> His papers of choice were the pro-Parnell *Freeman's Journal*, the more radical *United Irishman*, and the less controversial *Modern Society* and *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*. His eclectic taste also included *Tit-Bits*, a popular weekly full of curious and sensational trivia, and *Answers*, a paper which included competitions with cash prizes irresistible to the ambitious spendthrift. James once gave his father the occupation as 'Going in for competitions', and having Leopold Bloom utilize a copy of *Tit-Bits* for private purposes in the outside privy, he passed the ultimate critical judgement on his father's choice of popular reading.<sup>25</sup>

May knew her religious texts and was something of a reader, even later reading Ibsen at her son's behest. Uncle William would read aloud to entertain the children, as Stanislaus recalled. '[He] read us fairy stories, working his way steadily through Grimm and Andersen, and when the story was of the misadventures of some beautiful princess, he would interpolate pathetic asides, which escaped us, but were intended for my mother sewing in another part of the room.'<sup>26</sup> Children's stories greatly affected many aspects of Joyce's fiction,<sup>27</sup> as did Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, read much later.

On 24 July 1886, a fourth child was born to the Joyces - Charles Patrick ('Charlie' to his family). And another move was pending as John sought to distance himself even further from his wife's family. Wishing for an ever-larger house, he rented No. 1 Martello Terrace at Bray, an affluent resort known as 'the Brighton of Ireland', in County Wicklow overlooking Dublin Bay. By the time they moved there in May 1887, May Joyce was again pregnant.

Bray had an air of fashionable gentility - gents in blazers and straw hats, ladies in white tennis dresses, a boat club and all the usual summer seaside entertainments. Number 1 Martello Terrace, sitting adjacent to the broad-sweeping strand, had thirteen rooms, a sea-view, and although it was cheaper than their Castlewood Avenue house, John had raised two more mortgages on his County Wicklow properties to prepare himself financially for the move. There was money enough to employ more than one servant for his growing family, including a nursemaid called Brigid.<sup>28</sup> On John's thirty-eighth birthday, 4 July 1887, another boy was born. He was christened George Alfred, after George Washington and his great-great-grandfather Joyce.

Conveniently for John, Bray was just a short train journey from the city, close enough for his old Dublin pals to travel down for convivial weekends. All would find themselves in James's cast of

characters. There was Alf Bergan, a man with a taste for excremental jokes, whom Stanislaus 'disliked', his boss, the tall Dublin sub-Sheriff, John Clancy ('Long John Fanning' of *Ulysses* and himself in *Finnegans Wake*), whom he 'disliked very much', and Tom Devin ('Mr Power' in 'Grace' and himself in *Ulysses*). Bergan remembered how John would be at Bray station every Sunday morning to meet any friends who cared to visit. James he recalled as 'very handsome ... very sensible and extremely well-behaved for a boy of his age' with a slight lisp and who asked amusingly childish questions.<sup>29</sup> This was the charmingly amiable face of the young boy they called 'Sunny Jim'.<sup>30</sup> The visitors would be taken for lunch, then for a stroll and finally back home for an evening of music and entertainment. John would sing to May's accompaniment, and there was many a jolly chorus for all to join in. Jim, he remembered, was always attentive, keen to participate - keen and attentive enough for such evenings to resurface in *A Portrait*.

Another and probably more glamorous visitor to Bray was John Kelly, an active and much-imprisoned Fenian, who, after the passing of a new Crimes Act in July 1887, was in constant danger of re-arrest. John had invited him to stay at Martello Terrace to recuperate following his last prison sentence, and was ever ready to help him avoid capture. On one occasion he escaped fractional inches ahead of the law thanks to the warning of a sympathetic local policeman. Kelly duly found his place in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* as John Casey, who taught Stephen to sing songs in Irish and to say 'Sinn Féin' instead of 'Good Health' when raising a glass. Jim would learn to say 'Good Health' in many other fashions and languages before his time was up, but the conviviality and taste for Irish gossip that went with alcohol never left him.

Aged five, James was sent to a local nursery school run by a Miss Raynor. There he met his neighbour's young daughter, Eileen Vance, whose father, James, was the local chemist and a Protestant. Joyce picks up a thread from his past as his alter ego Stephen Dedalus recalls the Vance family in his novel:

The Vances lived in number seven. They had a different father and mother. They were Eileen's father and mother. When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen. He hid under the table. His mother said:

—O, Stephen will apologise.

Dante said:

—O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes.<sup>31</sup>

This savage remark from this emissary of a vengeful God set up in the mind of the embryonic poet a chanted refrain, the lines repeated over and over, round and around in the mind of the haunted young boy: 'Pull out his eyes/Apologise/Apologise/Pull out his eyes.'<sup>32</sup> If his eyes were weak, which they were, the threat, associating blindness with guilt, must have been only too terrifyingly real.

The Vances and the Joyces became quite close. According to Eileen, 'We ran in and out of each other's home all the time.' Her father and John Joyce were, she said, 'both great sinners' who indulged in a great deal of drinking and singing together, raising the roof with their Irish 'Come-all-ye' songs. Eileen's bass voice would blend well with John's tenor in 'The Moon has Raised her Lamp Above', a duet from *The Lily of Killarney*, an opera based on Dion Boucicault's play, *The Colleen Bawn* (which crops up in *Stephen Hero*, in *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake* as 'colleenbawl'), in which a youth sets out to charm a girl, but is trapped into marriage by a wily seductress.

There were also parties with the Vances where the children donned fancy dress, played games, sang and performed little skits. At one party Jim sprinkled salt in everybody's drink, which Eileen thought very clever of him. Sometimes, donning a red cap, he played the Devil, condemning some of them to hell which he decided was under a wheelbarrow. But the children were mostly well-behaved, and Miss Raynor's kindergarten Jim, with whom Eileen was frequently paired, stood out as leader. Playing together at home, the imaginative Jim also took charge, persuading them that if they misbehaved at the Joyce house, his mother would hold them head-down in the toilet and pull the chain. However, despite the reputation her son had given her, Eileen found May delightful and welcoming. Uncle William, she thought 'very pompous', a figure from Dickens; Dante, on the other hand, was an enemy who regarded close contact with Protestants a threat to the immortal soul. If James continued to play with Eileen, she warned, he would undoubtedly go to hell. But on this occasion his attraction to the girl next door overcame his fear of Dante's inferno.<sup>33</sup> Anti-Protestant bigotry was quite alien even to the young impressionable boy.

James would sometimes take Stannie for walks along the beach. Living and walking beside the sea became a lifelong pleasure for him. It gave him his liking for seaside entertainment and the setting for the 'Proteus' and 'Nausicaa' episodes of *Ulysses*. It also gave him a lifelong phobia, when one day out along the beach with Stannie, they came across a dog, an Irish terrier, at which they began to throw stones. Taking exception to this, the dog attacked and bit the terrified James on the chin. He carried a scar thereafter, and dogs, like thunderstorms, would drive him into a frenzy of fear, astonishing those who witnessed it.

In February 1888, May Joyce suffered a miscarriage. The luck of the Joyces seemed to be deserting them. That same month saw John under suspicion at the Collector General's office and his position there endangered. He was suspected of 'borrowing' from his takings, an accusation cooked up according to his friends, by anti-Parnellites out to destroy him. Perhaps hoping to restore his reputation, he claimed to have fought off robbers who attacked him for his collector's bag in Phoenix Park, but it did little to lift the impending cloud. He was moved from collecting rates in rural areas to collecting in and around central Dublin. Whether this amounted to punishment or promotion is unclear but it brought him closer to the pubs and clubs haunted by his cronies. To give himself more time to play, he farmed out some of the clerical work he found irksome. Back at Bray he joined the Boat Club and in June he and May took part in a concert there, with James singing along with them. It was his first public performance; it would not be his last.

However, the boy was about to move into a wider world and on to a bigger stage. In September, aged a mere 'six and a half', he fulfilled the first part of his father's ambition of transforming his favourite son into a gentleman by way of a Jesuit education. If his pious mother shared the dream, it was that he became both a gentleman *and* a priest.



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