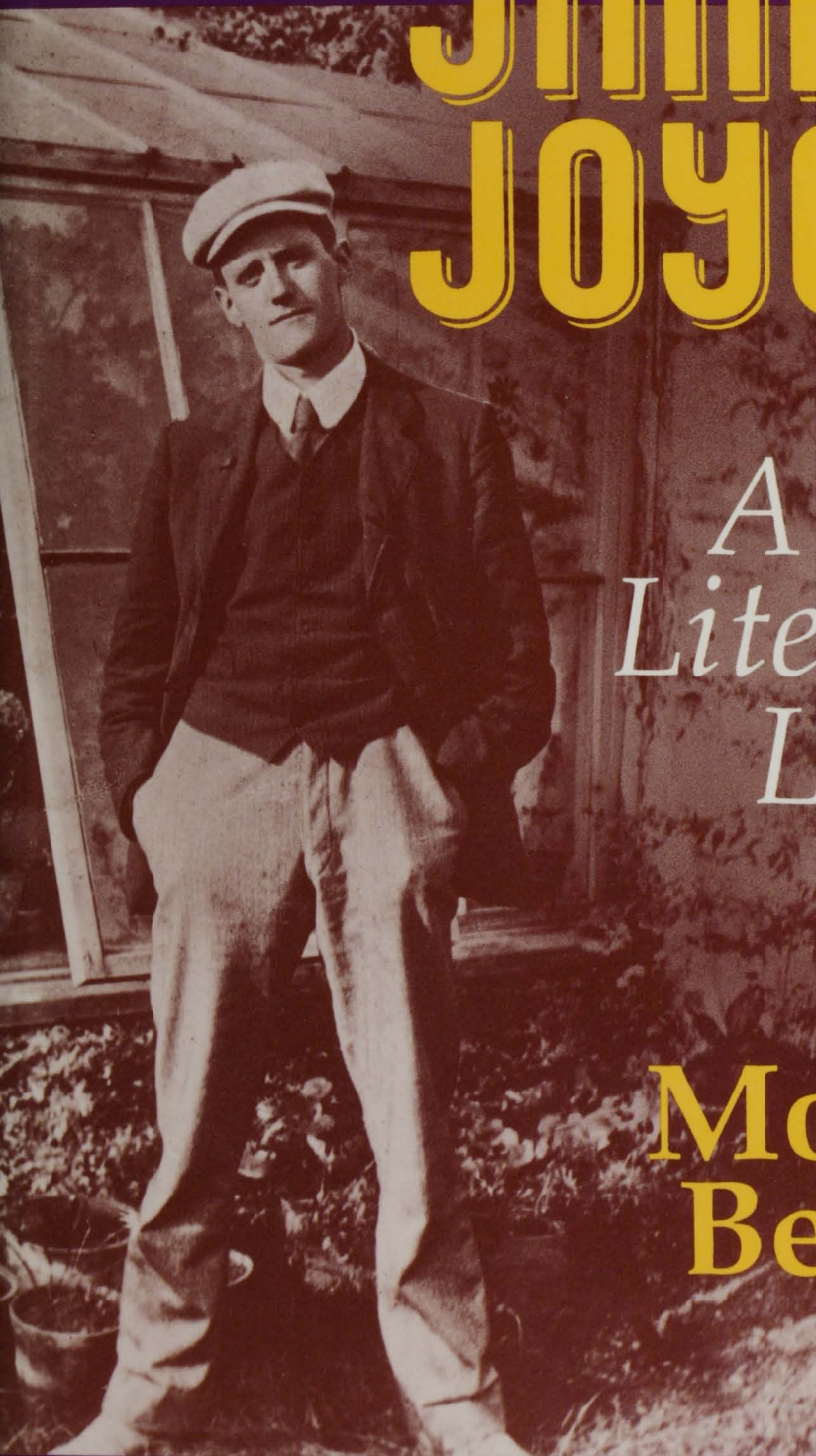


JAMES JOYCE

A
*Literary
Life*

Morris
Beja



James Joyce

James Joyce

A Literary Life

Morris Beja

Ohio State University Press
Columbus

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For Ellen

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Preface: Imagination as Memory

O, you were excruciated, in honour bound to the cross of your
own cruelfiction!

Finnegans Wake (192.17–19)

James Joyce's art was his 'cruelfiction' but also his salvation, and his triumph. Joyce led a triumphant and a sad life, constantly battling problems forced upon him and created by him.

He began his life within an affluent family and saw it decline into poverty and debt. As a youth he was popular – even a student leader – yet found himself feeling increasingly isolated within the world of his contemporaries. In a city he loved and knew intimately, he came to feel himself an 'exile'. He gave himself to his art with fanatic devotion, with the result that he was long unable to publish work which even those who presented obstacles to publication recognised as successful and important. He endured financial hardships until he began to receive – through earnings and patronage – enough funds to make him a wealthy man, although his spendthrift habits and the costs associated with his daughter's illness kept him constantly in financial difficulties. He worked long and hard on a book that was widely regarded as a masterpiece – and almost as widely thought of as obscene and dangerous, so that he once again faced censorship and could not publish the book in an English-speaking country for over a decade. He devoted even more years and more concentrated efforts to an even more ambitious work, to see many of his former admirers and supporters doubting its value, wondering if he was not wasting his genius.

He arrived nevertheless at a status in which he was recognised as a major force in world literature, only to have such recognition come at a time when, in his private life, he had to endure the agonies of a daughter with severe mental illness and a son without a career or sense of direction. Aside from his art, the most important thing in his life was his family, and he saw his children facing disintegration and unhappiness.

All these successes and all these problems contributed to the triumph of his art, for few artists have drawn so heavily – so clearly and in so much detail – on the fabric of their own lives in weaving their fictions. Fiction must not be confused with reality, autobiographical fiction with biographical ‘truth’; yet the more we have come to learn about the smallest details of Joyce’s life, the more we have come to see correspondences between that life and his art. ‘The artist’, his alter-ego Stephen asserts in *Stephen Hero*, ‘affirms out of the fulness of his own life’ (86). Or his attitude may be more negative: when Oliver St John Gogarty, the model for Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*, requested in 1906 that they ‘forget the past’, Joyce’s reply was that that was ‘a feat beyond my power’ (*LII* 183). In any case, Joyce was quite serious years later when he brushed aside some talk by his friend Frank Budgen about ‘the question of imagination’ with ‘the assertion that imagination was memory’ (*Myself* 187). Again and again in this book we shall see how accurate that dictum was in his own case.

In *Ulysses*, as Stephen Dedalus explores the significance of Shakespeare’s life for an understanding of his art, George Russell (AE) expresses his frustration at ‘prying into the family life of a great man’ – an approach, he claims, which is ‘interesting only to the parish clerk’. Yet Joyce has planted this objection only after he has also made Russell remark, a few pages earlier, that ‘the supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring’ (155 [9.181–4], 153 [9.49–50]).

Throughout his literary career, Joyce was intensely devoted and committed to his craft, but he made relatively little money from his writing, and never enough for someone of his profligate habits to live on. During most of his professional life his chief sources of income came not from his books but elsewhere: from teaching, from patrons, or from a publisher whose financial arrangement with him was extraordinary. From the start his relationships with publishers were almost always unusual, perhaps even unique. Those relationships were sometimes contentious, as when one publisher would back away from a previous commitment to publish his work, or when another put out a garbled version of his work without his permission, in a pirated edition. But in key instances the role of the publisher was – even if Joyce somehow managed at times to make the relationship no less fiery – in contrast less like that of a publisher as such than that of a benevolent patron.

Joyce never doubted the appropriateness of such patronage. An essential aspect of his triumph was his confidence in his own art, and in his own genius – a confidence Stephen Dedalus does not always share, but with which he is permitted to end *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as he goes out ‘to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race’ (253) – just as Joyce himself, in 1912, wrote to his wife that ‘I am one of the writers of this generation who are perhaps creating at last a conscience in the soul of this wretched race’ (LII 311). If such statements have a moral ring to them, that fact was not lost upon the hosts of writers whom he came to influence, sometimes profoundly. Samuel Beckett, for one, could recall in 1969, of his youth, that Joyce had had ‘a moral effect’ on him: ‘he made me realize artistic integrity’ (in Cohn 14).

While still at the University, Joyce had gone to a play with his parents, to whom he said, ‘The subject of the play is genius breaking out in the home and against the home. You needn’t have gone to see it. It’s going to happen in your own house’ (MBK 87). Such early confidence would seem to be hubris, except that it turned out to be justified (a fact which may not make it any more ingratiating). Even in those moments when he might acknowledge the possibility that he would not carry his work to full fruition, he never abandoned his sense of himself as an artist; as he wrote to his brother as early as 1905, ‘it is possible that the delusion I have with regard to my power to write will be killed by adverse circumstances. But the delusion which will never leave me is that I am an artist by temperament’ (LII 110). It was a conviction he never abandoned.

Morris Beja

Acknowledgements

It is impossible to become a biographer (the word in *Finnegans Wake* is 'biografiend') of James Joyce without some trepidation. In the general world of Joyce studies, no one can truly acknowledge all the scholarship and criticism from which one has learned and by which one has been influenced; the citations throughout this book will I hope in some measure indicate some of the greatest debts I owe to many scholars, critics, writers of memoirs, and biographers. In the specific realm of Joyce biography, nevertheless, one cannot help but recognise the special role played by Richard Ellmann: as editor of Joyce's letters and other volumes, but above all as biographer. The present volume cannot match the encompassing achievement of Ellmann's *James Joyce*, which remains the work to which a reader must turn for a detailed and comprehensive account of Joyce's life. This book must clearly have a more limited scope and focus, but it owes many debts to Ellmann's work even as it also attempts to reflect what has been learned – and thought – about James Joyce, his family, his writings and his world in the generation or more since Ellmann's biography first appeared. I am also grateful to Brenda Maddox, for both her life of Nora Joyce and her insights into the task of biography. For chances to think aloud about issues of biography, I would like to thank her and also Ira Nadel and Deirdre Bair.

Bernard Benstock originally suggested I take on this project, and I am grateful to him and to Shari Benstock as well for all our countless discussions of James Joyce over the years. The College of Humanities of the Ohio State University, and Dean G. Michael Riley, helped to support this project in several important ways.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this volume to indicate editions of Joyce's works and frequently cited secondary texts.

- CW Joyce, James. *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1959.
- DMW Lidderdale, Jane, and Mary Nicholson. *Dear Miss Weaver: Harriet Shaw Weaver, 1876–1961*. New York: Viking, 1970.
- D Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. Ed. Robert Scholes in consultation with Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1967.
- E Joyce, James. *Exiles*. New York: Viking, 1951.
- FW Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber, 1971.
- JJ Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- LI, LII, LIII Joyce, James. *Letters of James Joyce*. Vol. I. Ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Viking, 1957; reissued with corrections, 1966. Vols. II and III. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1966.
- MBK Joyce, Stanislaus. *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1958.
- N Maddox, Brenda. *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988.
- P Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. Chester G. Anderson and Richard Ellmann. London: Penguin, 1980.
- PAE Potts, Willard, ed. *Portraits of the Artist in Exile: Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979.
- SH Joyce, James. *Stephen Hero*. Ed. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon. New York: New Directions, 1963.
- SL *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1975.

U

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler et al.
New York: Random House, 1986; London: Bodley
Head and Penguin, 1986.

1

As All of Dublin: The Years of Youth, 1882–1904

In him I have imaged myself. Our lives are still sacred in their intimate sympathies. I am with him at night when he reads the books of the philosophers or some tale of ancient times. I am with him when he wanders alone or with one whom he has never seen, that young girl who puts around him arms that have no malice in them, offering her simple, abundant love, hearing and answering his soul he knows not how.

Joyce, Epiphany #2¹

The place where me heart was you could aisy rowl a turnip in,
It's as big as all of Dublin and from Dublin to the Divil's Glin.

...

'Pretty Molly Brannigan' (Irish ballad)

In James Joyce's life, as in his work, the concept of the family, and *his* family, were of primary importance. Throughout his adult life, like his own father before him, Joyce carried with him the family portraits, through all his wanderings and his many addresses. All the pictures, with the exception of one of his mother, were of the Joyces – that is, of James Joyce's paternal ancestors.²

Joyce was born 2 February 1882, at 41 Brighton Square West, in Rathgar, then a suburb of Dublin; the family was at that time fairly well-to-do, and a very good time it was. He was named James Augustine Joyce after his great-grandfather and grandfather (although in fact a mistake recorded the middle name as 'Augusta' in the birth records). His father, John Stanislaus Joyce, was born in 1849, in Cork.³ Like many sons who have rebelled against their fathers, in later life James Joyce came more and more to identify with his.

Actually, Joyce's relationship with his father was less strained than Stephen Dedalus's with his – or than that of the rest of the children with John Joyce. The portrayal of Simon Dedalus in the

Portrait and *Ulysses* seems to some extent based on the perception of John Joyce by James's siblings – in particular, his brother Stanislaus, who regarded their father as 'lying and hypocritical', and as someone who had 'become a crazy drunkard' (*Diary* 6). In contrast, when John Joyce died in 1931, James testified that 'I was very fond of him always, being a sinner myself, and even liked his faults. Hundreds of pages and scores of characters in my books come from him. His dry (or rather wet) wit and his expression of face convulsed me often with laughter' (*LI* 312). An example of that wit is recorded by Eugene Sheehy, a friend of his son, who recalls that one day the elder Joyce read the obituary of a Mrs Cassidy:

Mrs. Joyce was very shocked and cried out:

'Oh! don't tell me that Mrs. Cassidy is dead.'

'Well, I don't quite know about that,' replied her husband, 'but someone has taken the liberty of burying her.'

[In O'Connor 26]

Readers of *Ulysses* will recall that retort being worked on a bit and attributed to Joe Hynes (247 [12.332–3]).

John Joyce had attended Queen's College in Cork, but unsuccessfully. With a small income from his father's will and from his maternal grandfather's bequest, he never acquired the ambition to work very hard. When he moved to Dublin in his twenties, he tried various jobs of one kind or another (including one as advertising canvasser for the *Freeman's Journal*, a line of work his son was to provide for Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*). Perhaps with a degree of truth, he blamed his loss of a position as tax collector at the Rates Office in 1891 on the political shifts arising from the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell. In any case, he was compensated with a small pension: he was in his early forties, and already responsible for supporting a large family, yet for the rest of his life he never had another full-time job. Stephen Dedalus describes his father in the *Portrait* as 'a medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past' (*P* 241); there seems to be no exaggeration as one applies that description to John Joyce.

John Joyce had married, in 1880, Mary Jane ('May') Murray, a woman ten years younger than he. Her husband did not get along

with the Murrays, particularly with her brother William (JJ 19) – an ironic situation, since together the two men both contributed to the characterisation of the bullying, drunken father, Farrington, in Joyce's story 'Counterparts'. In his love for his mother, James was joined by the other children – although young Stanislaus could only record his feelings for his mother in his diary by contrasting them to those for his father; to Stanislaus, his mother was 'a selfish drunkard's unselfish wife' (*Diary* 10).

James was the oldest child. A daughter, Margaret ('Poppie'), was born in 1884, and a second son, John Stanislaus ('Stannie'), later that same year. The Joyces had ten surviving children, six girls and four boys; five others died in infancy. Of all his brothers and sisters, James was closest in most ways to Stannie, different as they were in personality (to James, called 'Sunny Jim' by the family, the serious and moral Stanislaus was 'Brother John'⁴). Stanislaus eventually served as a model for Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case', for the brother Maurice in *Stephen Hero* and for Shaun in *Finnegans Wake* – but in his rebellion against their father and against Ireland, both much more severe in his life than in James's, he also contributed to the characterisation of Stephen Dedalus. In 1904 James wrote – more dramatically than truthfully – to his future wife, Nora, that 'my brothers and sisters are nothing to me. One brother alone is capable of understanding me' (LII 48). In that same year Stanislaus wrote that 'perhaps Jim owes something of his appearance to this mirror held constantly up to him. He has used me, I fancy, as a butcher uses his steel to sharpen his knife' (*Diary* 20). Also in 1904, within *Ulysses*, Stephen thinks of his brother – who otherwise is hardly a presence in either that novel or the *Portrait* – as his 'whetstone' (173 [9.977]).

James also had special affection for a younger brother, George, who was born in 1887 and died at the age of fourteen. The events leading up to that death, while James was a university student, produced one of the most moving of his 'epiphanies':

[Dublin: in the house in

Glengariff Parade: evening]

Mrs Joyce – (*crimson, trembling, appears at the parlour door*) . . . Jim!

Joyce – (*at the piano*) . . . Yes?

Mrs Joyce – Do you know anything about the body? . . . What ought I do? . . . There's some matter coming away from the hole in Georgie's stomach. . . . Did you ever hear of that happening?

Joyce – (*surprised*) . . . I don't know. . . .

Mrs Joyce – Ought I send for the doctor, do you think?

Joyce – I don't know. What hole?

Mrs Joyce – (*impatient*) . . . The hole we all have here (*points*)

Joyce – (*stands up*)⁵

A short while after George's death, Stanislaus heard James bitterly remark, 'Ireland is an old sow that devours her farrow' – an epigram Stephen will utter in both the *Portrait* and *Ulysses* (*P* 203; *U* 486 [15.4583]).

That view of his country was supported by what the Joyces and many others regarded as the 'betrayal' of Charles Stewart Parnell, whose efforts to achieve Irish freedom were doomed when many of his followers abandoned him after a divorce suit – at the height of his career and power, in 1889 – publicised his relationship with his married mistress, Kitty O'Shea. Prominent among those who turned against him was Tim Healy, formerly his close follower but then a major figure within the Church opposition to his leadership. The Catholic Church was a strongly conservative force upon Irish politics, and it turned against the Protestant Parnell. Its attacks became so virulent that some priests refused to perform sacraments for Parnell's defenders, and one even threatened to turn a Parnell supporter into a goat! (Brown 343).

Parnell died 6 October 1891, shortly after his political downfall. For Joyce, Parnell's fate was all too typical; at the age of nine, he wrote a poem about it – since lost – significantly called 'Et Tu, Healy': the title's allusion to betrayal forecasts the adult Joyce's view of how 'this lovely land' in 'a spirit of Irish fun/ Betrayed her own leaders, one by one.'⁶ Joyce ended an Italian essay he published in 1912, 'L'Ombra di Parnell' ('The Shade of Parnell'), by asserting that it redounds to the honour of Parnell's countrymen that when he appealed to them not to 'throw him as a sop to the English wolves . . . they did not fail his appeal. They did not throw him to the English wolves; they tore him to pieces themselves' (CW 228).

The divisions within Ireland were mirrored within the Joyce household. John Joyce's uncle, William O'Connell, lived with the family in Bray, a seaside resort south of Dublin (where the Joyces lived from James's fifth to ninth years); so, for a time, did Mrs Hearn Conway, called 'Dante' by the children, whom she looked after and to some extent taught. Mrs Conway's husband had abandoned her, taking with him the fortune she had inherited from her brother. No doubt understandably bitter, she was also, Stanislaus claims, 'the most

bigoted person I ever had the misadventure to encounter' (MBK 9). A frequent visitor to the home was John Kelly; he, like Mrs Conway, was a fervent patriot – but they disagreed furiously over the role of the Catholic Church in Parnell's fall, as reflected in the Christmas dinner scene in the *Portrait*, where Mr O'Connell appears as Uncle Charles, Mr Kelly as John Casey, and Mrs Conway as Dante. Unfortunately such arguments, not always political by any means, became more and more frequent within the household; according to Stanislaus's testimony, again, 'the house is and always has been intolerable with bickering, quarrelling and scurrility' (*Diary* 17).

James was his father's pride, and there was no question but that he would get the best – or the most prestigious – education available in Ireland. In later years, Joyce often expressed a gratitude and appreciation for his training that Stephen Dedalus, in contrast, seems reluctant to acknowledge. Perhaps above all Joyce was proud of the Jesuit character of his education; when Frank Budgen was writing his book on him, Joyce told him that while Budgen referred to him as a Catholic, 'to get the correct contour on me, you ought to allude to me as a Jesuit' (JJ 27).

He started that education exceptionally early. Clongowes Wood College, in County Kildare, among the oldest and then as now among the most distinguished schools in Ireland, normally took boys 'from the age of seven', according to its prospectus (*Workshop* 131); Joyce started there in 1888, at the age of six, and may still be the youngest child ever to have been admitted to Clongowes (Bradley 10). Nevertheless, he did well – even at sports, earning according to Stanislaus's testimony 'a sideboard full of cups and a "silver" (electro-plate) teapot and coffee pot that he had won in the school hurdles and walking events' (MBK 41).

The rector at Clongowes was the 'mild, benign, rectorial' Father John Conmee (U 458 [15.3673]), who had been prefect of studies before taking on the job as rector as well; he was relieved of the former position in 1887 by Father James Daly, a man regarded as a martinet and feared by students throughout the thirty years he stayed at Clongowes. Daly arrived there from Limerick, where he had seen to it that 'the profession of idling was at an end among the boys'.⁷ He has become infamous as the model for the Father Dolan in the *Portrait* who, accusing Stephen Dedalus of being a 'lazy idle little loafer' and not believing that the little boy had broken his glasses unintentionally, 'pandies' him (P 50). Like Stephen, Joyce appealed this unjust punishment to Father Conmee – and he too was upheld

and assured that he would not receive any further punishment (Gorman 34). Because Father Daly administered the pandies in class, impromptu as it were, there is no record of them in the Clongowes *Punishment Book*, which survives and preserves an account of the more 'official' punishments; but the record does indicate that young James Joyce received several pandies during his years at Clongowes, including one prescient punishment for 'vulgar language' (Bradley 37).

His stay at Clongowes was cut short by the family's declining financial state in 1891. The Joyces were still at Bray that year, and the next they moved to another suburb, Blackrock, also to a nice home in a pleasant area. But the next year saw them move again, this time into the city proper, and then they had an astonishingly quick succession of moves, invariably to less desirable quarters, until by the time James was fifteen he had had a total of nine addresses; such an unsettled nomadic life would characterise his adulthood as well.

John Joyce had inherited a number of properties in Cork, but by 1894 – during the trip to Cork recorded in the *Portrait* – he had sold all of them. He had actually begun to sell them off more than a decade before that, but in his own mind – and to some extent in his son James's, in the family myth that has been called '*The Joycead*' – 'the fall of John Joyce was part of the greater fall of Parnell' (Kearney 65). As one result of that fall, the family could no longer afford to send James to an expensive boarding school; in fact his plight was even harsher than Stephen Dedalus's, for he was sent to a Christian Brothers school on North Richmond Street, in the city – a prospect that Simon Dedalus vehemently rejects for *his* son: 'Christian brothers be damned! said Mr Dedalus. Is it with Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud? No, let him stick to the jesuits in God's name since he began with them' (*P* 71).

James's rescue came in 1893, when he was eleven, and once again his rescuer was Father Conmee, who had become prefect of studies at another eminent Jesuit school, Belvedere College, a non-boarding school within Dublin itself; he arranged for James and then his brothers to attend Belvedere as 'free boys'. That did not make them very unusual, since about a fourth of the students paid no fees (Bradley 86); nevertheless, in addition the rector, Father Henry, discreetly saw to it that James ate lunch at the rector's table, to make sure that he was well fed.⁸

Situated on a city street in northern Dublin, Belvedere provided a major contrast to Clongowes, which is in an old castle on its own

large estate; but Belvedere too is a distinguished building architecturally; built in the eighteenth century, it is one of the finest Georgian structures in Dublin. Joyce was a good student, and he seems to have been especially fortunate in having been taught by an English teacher named George Dempsey, who may have been the most significant 'of all the intellectual influences on James Joyce in school' (Bradley 106). Certainly he recognised Joyce's abilities. William Fallon, a fellow pupil, reports that when the rest of the class was assigned to write on some lines from Pope's *Essay on Man*, Mr Dempsey told Joyce he could pick whatever topic he liked: the future author of *Ulysses* chose to write on Pope's translation of the *Odyssey* (O'Connor 42). Mr Dempsey formed the basis for Mr Tate in the *Portrait*, and the incident in that novel in which Mr Tate is 'appeased' after having accused his young student of 'heresy' seems actually to have occurred – as did the sequel, in which other students attempted to bully Joyce into naming an appropriate figure as 'the greatest poet', while he insisted on naming the rebellious Byron.⁹

Not all his experiences at Belvedere were so unpleasant: far from it. For example, at the age of sixteen he acted in a play, *Vice Versa*, in which he had the role of a headmaster – and he did not resist the temptation to burlesque the rector, Father Henry, in his portrayal. His impersonation caused the other actors to laugh so much they missed their cues – and produced a great deal of laughter from Father Henry too (Sheehy, in O'Connor 16–17).

In that era, there were important competitive examinations at the Intermediate (secondary) school level, with sizeable prizes of money. Newspapers treated the competitions 'like horse races or prize fights', and friends later remembered Joyce as having been 'one of the scholastic champions of his day' (Colum 13). That seems to be an exaggeration: he was rarely among the very top winners, but the amounts he won between 1894 and 1897 were nevertheless substantial for the time (for example, £20 in both 1894 and 1895, and £30 in 1897; John Joyce's annual pension totalled only £132); Joyce also received £3 in 1897 for the best composition by any student in his grade in all of Ireland (*JJ* 34, 40, 47, 51). That year, as the generally recognised 'head-boy' of Belvedere, he was elected prefect of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. But he became increasingly disaffected, and in his senior year, 1898, all his grades dropped to the lowest he ever attained (Bradley 132, 138).

By then, he had undergone a great many changes in his young life. At the age of fourteen, he was walking through a field with the

family nanny when she asked him to turn around; he heard the sound of her urinating, and he was aroused – perhaps to masturbation. Apparently later that same year he had his first experience of sexual intercourse, with a prostitute he met while walking home from the theatre (*JJ* 418, 48). It was not his last experience with prostitutes. A large part of the fascination of those encounters for Joyce seems to have been the same as for Stephen, who ‘wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin’ (*P* 99).

For a time, this ‘sinful’ life co-existed with his sincere but agonised religious piety. Still when he was fourteen, in 1896, he was deeply affected by the annual retreat at Belvedere, conducted in late November and early December of that year by Father James Cullen, ‘an almost morbidly introspective’ priest who once confided in his diary that he dwelt too much ‘on the swarming pestilential brood of my faults’ (Bradley 124). Although Joyce used other models than Cullen’s for the sermons in the *Portrait*, notably Pietro Pinamonti’s *Hell Opened to Christians, To Caution Them from Entering It*,¹⁰ he reacted much as Stephen Dedalus does to Father Arnall’s. Two decades later Joyce was able to write a limerick making fun of the torments of damnation depicted by Father Cullen:

*There once was a lounge named Stephen
Whose youth was most odd and uneven.
He throve on the smell
Of a horrible hell
That a Hottentot wouldn’t believe in.*

[LI 102]

But the young Joyce did believe in it, and he was profoundly troubled by that belief. He attempted to reform his ‘sinful’ life, and he apparently succeeded for at least a few months (*JJ* 49).

His piety was noticed, and that – coupled with his achievements as a student – led to the suggestion, probably when he was sixteen, that he become a priest (Bradley 134–6). But by then there was little chance of his accepting the proposal, although lack of faith seems not to have been the cause of his refusal. Joyce later told friends that ‘it was not a question of belief. It was the question of celibacy. I knew I could not live the life of a celibate’ (Colum 134).

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