

## JAMES JOYCE AND THE CONCEPT OF LITERARY ABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

This article contains information about the life of James Joyce, his g works with clear facts. There is an analysis of his creative heritage, his works. for example, the content of his works such as Ulysses, Finnegans Wake, An Encounter, and The Sisters is revealed.

**Key words:** “*Ulysses*”, “*funfunerall*”, “*Finnegans Wake*”, “*An Encounter*”, “*The Sisters*”.

**James Joyce**, in full **James Augustine Aloysius Joyce**, (born February 2, 1882, Dublin, Ireland—died January 13, 1941, Zürich, Switzerland), Irish novelist noted for his experimental use of language and exploration of new literary methods in such large works of fiction as “Ulysses” (1922) and “Finnegans Wake” (1939).

He was an Irish novelist, short story writer, poet, and literary critic. He contributed to the modernist avant-garde movement and is regarded as one of the most influential and important writers of the 20th century.

Joyce, the eldest of 10 children in his family to survive infancy, was sent at age six to Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit boarding school that has been described as “the Eton of Ireland.” But his father was not the man to stay affluent for long; he drank, neglected his affairs, and borrowed money from his office, and his family sank deeper and deeper into poverty, the children becoming accustomed to conditions of increasing sordidness. Joyce did not return to Clongowes in 1891; instead he stayed at home for the next two years and tried to educate himself, asking his mother to check his work. In April 1893 he and his brother Stanislaus were admitted, without fees, to Belvedere College, a Jesuit grammar school in Dublin. Joyce did well there academically and was twice elected president of the Marian Society, a position virtually that of head boy. He left, however, under a cloud, as it was thought (correctly) that he had lost his Roman Catholic faith.

During most of World War I, Joyce lived in Zürich, Switzerland and worked on Ulysses. After the war, he briefly returned to Trieste and then moved to Paris in 1920, which became his primary residence until 1940.

Joyce began during the age of realism when art relied more on truth rather than imagination. He wanted to bring the ideas of realism into work. Joyce relied on the concept of stream of consciousness to feed into his realist technique. He believed there was something grander in everyday tasks than what people realized. This is one theme consistent throughout many of his works: something so minor and straightforward could be viewed as significant art. Joyce often carried this technique into his characters' monologues and soliloquies. He attempted to jump into that character's mind to describe what the mind was thinking. Joyce ignored traditional rules of sentence structure. Many of his characters ramble and use run-on sentences. Joyce believed that when the mind spoke, it did not use conventional grammatical and punctuation.

As he created more works, Joyce referred to this psychological realist style to further the development of his characters. He spoke nearly twenty languages fluently, as he was a continuous student of linguistics. Joyce had the idea to twist and mold languages to capture how the mind sounded. In his last novel, Finnegans Wake, Joyce attempted to create a new type of language by mixing sounds and word pieces from over 40 different languages. This unique literary technique he developed was called a portmanteau. Essentially, two or more words are molded together to create new expressions. One such example, “funfunerall,” could be translated to “fun for all” or “fun funeral.” The technique made a new way for Joyce to explain the stream of consciousness.

He published three books of poetry.<sup>1</sup> Despite early interest in the theatre, Joyce published only one play, Exiles, begun shortly after the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and published in 1918. A study of a husband-and-wife relationship, the play looks back to The Dead (the final story in Dubliners) and forward to Ulysses, which Joyce began around the time of the play's composition.

The unique writing style of James Joyce became one of the most substantial for the Modernist movement. His technique opened others' eyes to psychological analysis and modern behavior. He greatly wanted to emphasize that even ordinary people were heroes in everyday life. They just needed a clear view under the microscope to see the beauty of simple tasks.

Ulysses was first published in Paris in 1922, but its publication in England and the United States was prohibited because of its perceived obscenity. Copies were smuggled into both countries and pirated versions were printed until the mid-1930s, when publication finally became legal. Joyce started his next major work, Finnegans Wake, in 1923, publishing it sixteen years later in 1939. Between these years, Joyce travelled widely. He and Nora were married in a civil ceremony in London in 1930. He made a number of trips to Switzerland, frequently seeking treatment for his increasingly severe eye problems and psychological help for his daughter, Lucia. When France was occupied by Germany during World War II, Joyce moved back to Zürich in 1940. He died there in 1941 after surgery for a perforated ulcer, less than one month before his 59th birthday.

Ulysses frequently ranks high in lists of great books of literature, and the academic literature analysing his work is extensive and ongoing. Many writers, film-makers, and other artists have been influenced by his stylistic innovations, such as his meticulous attention to detail, use of interior monologue, wordplay, and the radical transformation of traditional plot and character development. Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, his fictional universe centres on Dublin and is largely populated by characters who closely resemble family members, enemies and friends from his time there. Ulysses in particular is set in the streets and alleyways of the city. Joyce is quoted as saying, "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal."<sup>2</sup>

Another work of **James Joyce** is "An Encounter". "An Encounter" suggests that although people yearn for escape and adventure, routine is inevitable, and new experiences, when they do come, can be profoundly disturbing. The narrator and his friends play games about the Wild West to disrupt the rote activity of school, and venture into Dublin for the same reason. However, the narrator and his friends never fully reach escape. Though the narrator bemoans the restraint of school, his attempt to avoid it leads him to the discomfiting encounter with an old man whose fixation on erotic novels, girlfriends, and whipping casts him as a pervert. This creepy figure serves as an embodiment of routine and suggests that repetition exists even within strange new experiences. The man walks in circles, approaching and passing the boys before retracing his steps to join them. He mimics this action in his speech by repeating points already raised and lingering on topics uncomfortable for the narrator. Although these boys seek an escape, they must suffer monotony, in the form of an excruciating afternoon with a frightening man. The rather mundane title for the story suggests that this deeply awkward and anxious meeting is not so atypical of Dublin life, nor of childhood.

<sup>1</sup> Beckett, Samuel (1961) [1929]. "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce". *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. Faber and Faber. pp. 1–22.

<sup>2</sup> Ellmann 1982, p. 505: Cited from *Power, Arthur (n.d.). From an Old Waterford House*. London. pp. 63–64.

Many references to religion hover in “An Encounter,” demonstrating that religion is a fixture in Dublin life that even the boys’ imaginations cannot elude. When Father Butler chastises Leo about the magazine, he scolds that only Protestant boys, not Catholic boys like Leo, would read such fanciful stories. This insult introduces the tension between Catholics and Protestants that Joyce alludes to throughout *Dubliners*, and reveals it to be a routine fact of life in Ireland. Religious tension appears again when two poor boys throw rocks at the narrator and Mahony and mistake them for Protestants, an incident that suggests that the line between these staunchly opposed groups is blurry. The narrator, using words like chivalry and siege, pretends that he and Mahony are in a battle, but the playfulness of such imaginary games only reinforces the authenticity of the scene. Imagination can mask experiences, Joyce suggests, but it cannot reverse them or make them disappear.

“The sister” is the most interesting work of Joyce. In this work, a young boy reflects on the impending death of his friend Father Flynn. Knowing that after three strokes the paralyzed priest has little time left, the boy makes a habit of walking past Father Flynn’s house, looking for the light of the traditional two candles placed on a coffin that would indicate his death. Each time, the boy thinks of the word paralysis. One night at his aunt and uncle’s house, the boy arrives at supper to find his uncle and Old Cotter, a family friend, sitting before the fire. Old Cotter has come to the house to share the news that Father Flynn is dead. Knowing that everyone waits for his reaction, the boy remains quiet.

In “The Sisters” and in the rest of the stories in *Dubliners*, strange and puzzling events occur that remain unexplained. Father Flynn suffers from paralyzing strokes and eventually dies, but his deterioration, epitomized by his laughing frenzy in a confessional box, also hints that he was mentally unstable. The reader never learns exactly what was wrong with him. Similarly, Father Flynn and the young narrator had a relationship that Old Cotter thinks was unhealthy, but that the narrator paints as spiritual when he recounts the discussions he and Father Flynn had about Church rituals. However, the narrator also has strange dreams about Father Flynn and admits to feeling uncomfortable around him. Joyce presents just enough information so that the reader suspects Father Flynn is a malevolent figure, but never enough so that the reader knows the full story. Such a technique is hinted at in the first paragraph of the story. The narrator thinks of the word paralysis when looking at Father Flynn’s window and says the word sounds strange, like the word gnomon, a term that generally refers to instruments, like the hand on a sundial, that indicate something. Joyce does exactly that: He points to details and suggestions, but never completes the puzzle.

This story opens with an image of a Dubliner gazing through a window and reflecting on a dilemma. Such a symbol appears throughout the collection, and here it is particularly important because it draws attention to the narrative point of view. “The Sisters” is the first of three stories in the collection told in first-person point of view. As in the other two stories, “An Encounter” and “Araby,” the narrator never divulges his name and rarely participates in the conversations. The opening image of the window in the first paragraph reinforces this sense of quiet, detached observation, which the narrators of the later stories adopt. Through this narrative technique Joyce suggests that even first-hand experience is in some ways voyeuristic, and that it’s possible for a person to observe his or her own life from the outside.

James Joyce was known for his unique writing style. Joyce’s writing style reflected both his love of languages as well as his desire to express precisely how thoughts sounded. Joyce wrote four fictional works set in Ireland: *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegan’s Wake*. James Joyce’s books were uniquely written and challenged literary standards. Though his works embodied an Irish motif, Joyce’s literary technique changed from one work to another. He often played with diction, monologues, and soliloquies.

The use of complex ideas and innovative symbolism was also a common technique. Joyce often used Irish slang in many of his works but also employed plenty of puns, allegories, and euphemisms to give his characters a more modern and realistic feel.

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