

James Joyce in Context

Edited by
John McCourt

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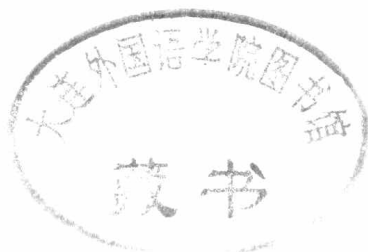


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Preface

For many decades the 'classic' reading of Joyce cast him as the exemplary denationalised high modernist, the 'great writer' and revolutionary inventor who soared loftily above his many contexts, picking and choosing where he needed without ever fully engaging. Seen in this way, Joyce's art was conceived by a man largely indifferent to his surroundings and changing times. Many early critics privileged this version of Joyce (following his own promptings as well as those of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Valéry Larbaud and, to a lesser extent, Stanislaus Joyce). Joyce's first biographer, Herbert Gorman, writing very much under Joyce's editorial control, played down the author's Irishness in order to favour of an image of him as an internationalist, who, like 'Flaubert and Dostoevsky and Proust ... belonged to the international world of letters where national boundaries mean nothing at all'.¹ This casting of Joyce at a remove from the changing Irish and European worlds in which he lived persisted and was cemented by the academy in the years following his death up to, at least, the 1970s and came at the partial expense of a thorough exploration of a vast variety of the contexts within which he was writing. They included, to name but a few, almost at random, the Ireland that formed him, the Ireland that formed itself in his absence, the Austro-Hungarian Italian city of Trieste, France and the French avant-garde, as well as the plays, operas and films that he attended, the newspapers, pamphlets and books that he read or leafed through.

In more recent years a vast body of excellent material has emerged on these and many other contextual areas offering a valuable contribution to our changing vision of Joyce's life and works and allowing us to see him as both the product of and an interested participant in a whole variety of worlds which provide the contexts and co-texts of his fictional output. The cost is perhaps that he seems to us today a little less original and God-like, a little more accidental in his actions and choices, a more human author, happy to lift and to cut-and-paste carefully sifted material from a huge

variety of sources before making it indelibly his own, a writer who was very much of the world.

One could fill dozens of pages with book and article titles dealing with each of the major contexts of Joyce's writings but ultimately the effect would be bewildering. While making no claims for exhaustivity, this volume gathers a series of original, cohesive and concise studies covering various significant contextual areas. Reviewing existing work in each of their fields of interest, these essays provide a series of overviews as well as closer case analyses of various Joycean contextual fields and often suggest directions for future research.

Today, one hundred years after Joyce was writing, it is important to reconstruct his principal contextual information – such as other fiction, politics, religion, ideology, popular culture, cinema, the visual arts, music. It is important to know, for example, what volumes he was using to study Aquinas when he was a young man, what the political situation in Ireland was when he left and how it changed when he was away in voluntary exile, what avant-garde movements he was aware of during his life on the continent. The contexts that need to be illustrated today are perhaps very different from those that needed explaining fifty years ago or will need explaining one hundred years from now. One thinks, for example, of the daily practices of Irish Catholicism, bread and butter to Joyce's contemporary Irish readers but a world apart from readers in today's post-Vatican Two and perhaps even post-Catholic world. Things that would have been old hat to a 'common reader' of Joyce even fifty years ago, such as Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, today form part of a distant past, largely beyond recall, but one vitally important for an understanding of Joyce's use of Moore, and indeed of music, in his fiction.

James Joyce in Context sets out to frame Joyce, then, within his multiple contexts, fortified by his own belief that imagination was not so much invention as memory. Its content has been organised in a manner that will render it a vital companion for readers of Joyce's work and it will complement *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* edited by Derek Attridge, which has a more textual focus. The volume, which runs to thirty-two essays could easily have been double this size. Most of the contexts treated here have been the subject of several volumes of commentary. A careful process of selection was necessary to identify not only the more obviously vital contexts but also to attempt to make other less prominent ones emerge, such as medicine, science or nineteenth-century Irish lyric nationalism. For reasons of space various other contextual areas that are vitally important such as Judaism or the role of Zurich get but partial treatment in other essays.

Part I begins with a brief overview of Joyce's complex publishing history and continues with a study of the various versions of Joyce's life available today to the critic and reader. An examination of the vast opus of Joyce letters – far too many of them unpublished – follows and brings this 'life' section of the volume to a conclusion.

Part II, entitled 'Theory and critical reception', looks at how Joyce's works were received through the filter of a series of critical paradigms that run the gamut of the most important twentieth-century theoretical schools. Thus, the reader will come to possess a renewed sense of how Joyce's works have been read over time and continue to be read today, of the critical schools that continue to shape our readings and interpretations, and of how Joyce has influenced these various critical schools, seeming so often to prefigure, generate and indeed anticipate the broad strokes of their approaches.

Part III, entitled 'Historical and cultural contexts' places Joyce within multiple Irish, British and European contexts and provides a lively sense of the varied and changing world in which he lived, which formed him and from which he wrote. These essays perform a useful task in helping the reader to discover and understand the various contexts from which Joyce drew and assembled the elements that he then transformed in his fiction. They collectively show how Joyce was rooted in his times, how he is both a product and a critic of his multiple contexts and how important he remains to the developing context of literary, theoretical and cultural studies today.

I would like to thank each of the contributors for their generous co-operation and patience throughout the entire editing process and Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press for his support, encouragement and timely advice during the various stages of this volume's preparation. I would also like to acknowledge the important role played by Maartje Scheltens, Linda Randall and Joanna Breeze, also of Cambridge University Press, and Averill Buchanan during the final editing process. Sincere thanks to Matthew Stout for the map of Dublin that so well illustrates L. M. Cullen's article.

JOHN McCOURT

Abbreviations

References to the publications listed below appear throughout this volume as abbreviations followed by page number, unless otherwise specified. Editions other than those cited below are indicated in the chapters' endnotes.

<i>CH</i> I, II	Robert Deming, ed., <i>James Joyce: The Critical Heritage</i> , 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).
<i>CW</i>	Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, eds., <i>The Critical Writings of James Joyce</i> (New York: Viking Press, 1959).
<i>D</i>	Terence Brown, ed., <i>Dubliners</i> (London: Penguin, 1992).
<i>DD</i>	Stanislaus Joyce, <i>The Complete Dublin Diary</i> , ed. George H. Healey (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1962).
<i>FW</i>	John Bishop, ed., <i>Finnegans Wake</i> (London: Penguin, 1999). References appear as page number plus line number. All <i>Finnegans Wake</i> editions carry the same pagination.
<i>GJ</i>	Richard Ellmann, ed., <i>Giacomo Joyce</i> (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).
<i>JJ</i>	Richard Ellmann, <i>James Joyce: New and Revised Edition</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).
<i>JJA</i>	Michael Groden, general ed., Hans Walter Gabler, David Hayman, A. Walton Litz and Danis Rose, eds., <i>The James Joyce Archive</i> , 63 vols. (New York: Garland, 1977–79).
<i>JJQ</i>	<i>James Joyce Quarterly</i> (University of Tulsa, 1963–).
<i>JML</i>	<i>Journal of Modern Literature</i> (University of Indiana).
<i>JSA</i>	<i>Joyce Studies Annual</i> (University of Texas, 1990–2003) (Fordham University, 2007–).
<i>L I, L II, L III</i>	Stuart Gilbert, ed., <i>Letters of James Joyce</i> , vol. I (New York: Viking Press, 1966); Richard Ellmann, ed., <i>Letters of James Joyce</i> , vols. II and III (New York: Viking Press, 1966).

- MBK* Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, ed. Richard Ellmann [1958] (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003).
- OCPW* Kevin Barry, ed., *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- P* Seamus Deane, ed., *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Penguin, 2000).
- PE* J. C. C. Mays, ed., *Poems and Exiles* (London: Penguin, 1992).
- PJ* Forrest Read, ed., *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1970).
- SH* Theodore Spencer, ed., rev. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, *Stephen Hero* (New York: New Directions, 1963).
- SL* Richard Ellmann, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (New York: Viking, 1975).
- U* James Joyce, *Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (New York and London: Garland, 1984).
References appear as episode number plus line number.
- WD* Robert Scholes and Richard Kain, eds., *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

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