



## “JAMES JOYCE” AN IRISH WRITER IN LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Joyce, James (Augustine Aloysius) 1882-1941. Irish Novelist, Short-story writer and poet. Joyce was born in Dublin and educated at Jesuit schools (Clongowes Wood College, Kildare; Belvedere College, Dublin) and University College, Dublin, where he studied modern languages. He graduated in 1902. His first published piece was an essay pm Ibsen ('Ibsen's New Drama') written as an undergraduate and published in The Fortnightly Review in 1900. He cultivated the acquaintance of (among others) Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory and George Russell ("A.E") who were fostering the Irish cultural renaissance, but in 1902, dissatisfied with the narrowness of Irish life, he spent a year in Paris. Though he lived in poverty, he read widely –notably Dujardin's experimental novel Les Lauriers Soni coupes (1888), upon which he later modeled his own stream of consciousness technique.*

### AN ANGLO IRISH

Ireland has two histories, the first that of the Celtic language and the second that of English language. The Celtic language began with the Old Irish and preserved by oral tradition in the last centuries BC. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the coming of the English language Anglo-Irish writers popularized English language. Old Irish was known only to a handful of scholars though Modern Irish is more accessible. Joyce knew almost nothing about the first. Gaelic Literature of the twentieth century is minimal and only a few enthusiasts knew that and continued to write in that language. Anglo-Irish literature was very popular and Joyce was one of the greatest exponents If Anglo-Irish literature. English literature.

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Out of interest Joyce learnt certain Gaelic phrases which he used in *Finnegans Wake*. But he learnt the translations of the Old Irish works and was familiar with Celtic mythology and legend. He was familiar with stories of Cuchullin and other heroes of Ulster Cycle. The main cycle Fionn MacCumhail and other works helped him to write *Ulysses* and tame some of his poems also. The Anglo-Irish literature is violent, grotesque, full of marvels and giants, even Rabelaisian in the strict sense of the word and therefore a good model for the burlesque marvels of *Finnegans Wake*. After the Irish Free State came into being the Irish Folklore Commission got to work in a thorough and professional manner collecting hundreds of stories in Gaelic and English, some of the versions of the folk-tales being of the highest imaginative order. But this was unfortunately too late for Joyce.

The literary history of Ireland that seriously concerned Joyce was the Anglo-Irish one; that is the tradition of Irish born writers in English who had something especially Irish, about their talent. For Joyce's purposes this tradition began with Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Many English critics have failed to mention the peculiar Irishness of Swift and have preferred to mention him as the greatest satirist in the English Language and one of the greatest masters of English Style. But Swift was Irish by birth and for most of his life by residence. In politics he identified himself closely with the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, the ruling group which did not always see eye to eye with English Government. In the case of Drapier's Letters Swift was in open revolt against the Government and risked heavy penalties for his courage. But it was not the political side of Swift's Irishness that interested neither Joyce nor his pre-eminence as a moral satirist. He admired most the 'Prince of Triflers' the master of verbal clowning, the successor to Rabelais. It was Swift's verbal sophistication, his delight in words, rhetoric and absurd logic that presumably Joyce found especially Irish. He was inspired by *A Tale of a Tub*. He has imitated the style of Swift in *The Oxen of the Sun's* section of *Ulysses*. Joyce was very much in favour of Swift's 'polite and Ingenious Conversation'—the first collection of the clichés of ordinary talk. There are many references to Swift in his *Finnegans Wake*.

### **Laurence Influence**

Another author who influenced Joyce was Laurence Sterne, an Anglo-Irish born of an Irish mother and an English father. Sterne is very much like Swift in his Rabelaisian technique. Joyce has admired the structure used by Sterne. Joyce also combines satire with sentimentalism. In Sterne sentimentalism goes with egotisms and Joyce adopted the same in *Ulysses*. Goldsmith, Sheridan, Shaw, Wilde, and O'Casey were all Irish and they contributed to the theatre. Joyce was introduced to Ibsen through Shaw. Shaw's critical work 'The Quintessence of Ibsenism' was an eye opener to him. Homosexuality is quite a large theme in *Ulysses* and naturally Wilde appears as exemplar.



In Anglo-Irish literary history the outstanding event of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre Society in 1901. The leading figures of the theatrical revival were W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Gregory Moore and Edward Martyn. J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* were really the work of genius. Joyce was deeply attached to Yeats as the father of modern Irish literature and not only as the great poet. As Joyce himself accepts, Zola and Flaubert were the other two (not Irish) who influenced his writing.

## CONCLUSION

There is no point in listing the indifferent Irish fiction of the first three decades of this century, which Joyce despised or ignored; but two outstanding works that came out in 1939, just before the out-break of the Second World War, deserve a mention, because they were the last new works that Joyce is known to have liked. One was Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, some pages of which Joyce quoted to its author. Joyce's memory was prodigious, but he only used it to the full on authors whom he liked, such as Cardinal Newman. This was therefore a considerable compliment to the young Beckett (Beckett was never Joyce's secretary, as has sometimes been asserted; but they were very close for several years. Joyce said that he loved him like a son; they would sit together in silence for hours, Beckett grieving over the sorrows of the world, Joyce over his own.) The other new work admired by Joyce was Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-two-birds*, an indescribable work somewhat in the tradition of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Tale of a Tub*. Joyce allowed himself to be quoted in a blurb for this book, saying that it was truly funny work.

## REFERENCE

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