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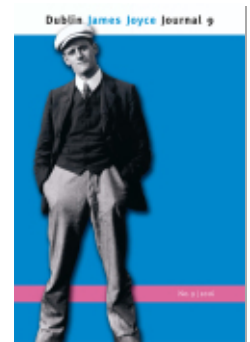
Centenary Readings of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Conference, 5–6 May 2016

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Dublin James Joyce Journal, Volume 9, 2016, pp. 137-140 (Article)

Published by James Joyce Research Centre at University College Dublin

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/djj.2016.0009>



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The final writer of the evening was Belinda McKeon, who read from her delicate novel, *Tender*. On reflection she concurred with Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, that all writing concerned with personal development marked to some degree an experience of coming of age. McKeon, the youngest of the three writers, appeared herself to be coming of age, at one point unselfconsciously expressing her delight at being part of the event. To illustrate her nuanced reaction to the experience of development, Belinda cited an initial review of *A Portrait* quoted in Richard Ellmann's biography of Joyce in which the critic objected to the language: 'ugly things, ugly words, are too prominent; indeed at times they seem to be shoved in one's face'. This she reflected can often constitute the success of a coming-of-age novel when the emotions and language are so raw as to make the readers cringe, not able to look away; the feeling is shoved in their faces. To illustrate, she chose a passage from *Tender* that evinced the same emotions; a youthful expression that caused her to wince at its rawness. However, its honesty and clarity of expression demonstrated above all her dexterity as a writer.

The panel on the coming of age novel after Joyce was an elegant combination of beautiful readings and fascinating insights into the process of writing by three keenly articulate authors. The evening closed with a wine reception celebrating the first event in a series of lectures, 'Reading James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist, 1916–2016*', which runs throughout 2016 to mark the centenary year of the publication of Joyce's seminal masterpiece.

**Matthew Fogarty**  
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**CENTENARY READINGS OF *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A  
YOUNG MAN* CONFERENCE, 5–6 MAY 2016**

There are few places finer to participate in one's first Joyce conference, or indeed better equipped to host a centenary reappraisal of *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, than the James Joyce Centre. Located at the very epicentre of the city forever immortalized by the author's *magnum opus*, its neighbouring shopfronts offer a poignant snapshot of the ever-increasing impact made by the global upon local. Stretching either side of the Parnell monument, the amalgamation of Oriental food stores, multi-million dollar fast food chains

and overseas supermarket conglomerates provide a stirring contrast to the elegant Georgian architecture that to this day still dignifies the hill of North Great George's Street. Once inside the Centre's Kenmare Room, the time-warping illusion is finally complete: on all sides one is surrounded by reproductions of portraits of the author and his family, while the great ceiling showcases the skilfully restored vision of master stuccodore, Michael Stapleton, which had all but disappeared by 1982. How fitting, then, that these conference proceedings should have begun on Thursday evening with a key note lecture that so effectively re-emphasised the importance of the localised Irish context within the overlapping contexts of Joyce's modernist *Bildungsroman*.

First thing Friday morning, the vistas to the global were thrust open by Patrick Bixby and his exploration of late-nineteenth century European influences on Joyce's work. At this stage in the proceedings, a name was mentioned for the first time that would be heard repeatedly through the day: Friedrich Nietzsche. Set against the philosophical backdrop engendered by *On the Genealogy of Morals*, this paper demonstrated that, in the character of Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's novel presents a figure haunted by what Nietzsche described as 'slave morality' and indeed by the *ressentiment* and bad conscience inevitably spawned by such an inauthentic mode of existence. For Bixby, then, Stephen's resolution to forge 'the uncreated conscience of [his] race' (*P* V.2790) represents the culmination of a psychological struggle which ultimately gives rise to the emergence of an artist determined to create new, nobler values for both himself and for his people. Just as swiftly as Bixby had opened up this vista to European intellectual history, however, so did Ronan Crowley reposition Joyce's *Bildungsroman* in the genre of the Revival *roman à clef*. Rather than trying to explain away the many references to the Irish Literary Revival that permeate *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait*, and *Ulysses*, Crowley suggested that it may prove pertinent to add Joyce's name to a list of writers, which includes the likes of George Moore, Eimear O'Duffy, and Flann O'Brien, whose works incorporate private jokes, and various subtle nods and winks, with a view to situating themselves in relation to established figures within the Irish literary tradition.

The morning session was concluded by a panel of PhD students who offered what the conference programme called a 'Myriad of Perspectives on *A Portrait*'. Following on from what was a detailed and highly informative account of Joyce's Cork connections, Flicka Small pointed out that the disgust

Stephen Dedalus associates with the pubescent epiphany he experiences in Cork correlates to the ailing political climate of early twentieth-century Ireland, and that a resolution for the fortunes of both the protagonist and his homeland would not materialize until Stephen encounters his more mature literary alter-ego in *Ulysses*, and of course the transnational possibilities that this figure of Leopold Bloom embodies. For her part, Charlotte Fiehn placed great weight on the extent to which Stephen's spiritual experiences were mediated through an intensely sensory and sensual language. While paying particular attention to the poetry of John Donne, Fiehn concluded that these allusions to Donne's brand of metaphysical poetry speak to a certain willingness to address the disjunction that exists between religious practice and the realities of life in the modern age. To conclude the panel, my own paper once again focused on the correspondences between the work of Joyce and that of Friedrich Nietzsche. Building upon Joyce's contention that a portrait represents, not merely the 'personal lumps of matter' that comprise the corporeal existence of the central subject, but the 'individuating rhythm' of the subject's life as it is perceived through the prism generated by the practice of mature reflection, I argued that the baseline for the 'individuating rhythm' presented in *A Portrait* brings Joyce's work into a productive philosophical dialogue with a process Nietzsche called 'The Three Metamorphoses of the Human Spirit' in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

After lunch, the second key note address was provided by Gregory Castle (see his essay in this issue). And, in what was a thoroughly gripping reappraisal of Joyce's landmark work, much emphasis was placed on the degree to which Joyce effectively recalibrates the mode of *Bildung* to create a template for a postcolonial and global fiction which might lend itself to the promotion of a sense of transnational belonging. While again making reference to the philosophical vision of Nietzsche, Castle put forward the proposition that the journey of Stephen Dedalus offers a critique of the fantasy of world-making that so characterized the traditional *Bildung*, with its reliance on the god-like authority of the omniscient narrator and its resolute insistence that a life should one day reach a final stage of optimum development. Instead, Castle argued that the trajectory of Stephen's journey promotes a creed of *Amor Fati* which might facilitate the development of an essentially fluid entity such as Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Indeed, I myself was struck by the way in which subsequent novels such as Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices* would follow Joyce's lead, but in this case adopting the backward glance

deployed in *Ulysses* as a means to critique insular Revivalist notions of nation building in the aftermath of the establishment of The Censorship of Irish Publications Board in 1929.

In the late afternoon, Geert Lernout began by considering the degree to which an investigation into Vincent Lynch's use of the term 'Jewgreek' in *Ulysses* might provide some valuable insight into Joyce's earlier work. Having acknowledged that Joyce's neologism immediately blurs the distinction between the terms that constitute the classic Hebrew/Christ and Science/Philosophy dichotomy, Lernout further observed that the term 'Jewgreek' might be seen to blur the boundaries that exist between *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* as Stephen's credo of *non-serviam* actually manifests itself more fully in the later work's description of Buck Mulligan's behaviour — and where there was talk of Stephen's *non-serviam*, there was once again much talk of Friedrich Nietzsche. This highly innovative re-examination of *A Portrait* was immediately followed by Joseph Hasset's equally impressive paper which discussed the potential merits of Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic theory as a legal defence in the *Ulysses* obscenity trials. In his final summation, Hasset concluded that Stephen's insistence that beauty induces stasis and not kinetic desire is as relevant today as it was a century ago inasmuch as it points to the deficiencies intrinsic to the United States obscenity law.

As the day's proceedings drew to their conclusion, I found myself confronted by the growing realization that, if this centenary re-evaluation of *A Portrait* had captured perfectly one solitary thing, it was that Joyce's work seems still effortlessly to blur those distinctions between things that appear so disparate and incongruent: between the global and local; between the spirituality of John Donne and the unabashed paganism of Friedrich Nietzsche; between the scientific and religious; the legal and the literary; and, perhaps most significantly, between the reality of daily life at the outset of the twentieth century and the reality of that which shapes our lives today and awaits for us tomorrow.

[**Editors' note:** Matthew Fogarty was unable to attend Frank Callanan's opening keynote presentation on Thursday evening and Tim Conley's paper at the close of the conference on Friday afternoon.]

CENTENARY READINGS OF *A PORTRAIT OF THE  
ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

UCD JAMES JOYCE RESEARCH CENTRE IN COLLABORATION  
WITH THE JAMES JOYCE CENTRE  
5–6 MAY 2016

**Thursday, 5 May:**

Keynote: Frank Callanan: 'The Parnellism of *A Portrait*'

**Friday, 6 May:**

Patrick Bixby: '*A Portrait* and *A Genealogy*: Overcoming the Bad Conscience of the Artist and his Race'

Ronan Crowley: 'Lying Autobiography and the Revival *roman à clef*'

Panel: Myriad Perspectives on *A Portrait*:

Flicka Small: 'Framed in Cork: "Beautiful City, Charming and Pretty, Beautiful City, Down by the Lee"'

Charlotte Fiehn: ' "holy once more, holy and happy": Joyce and Modernist Spirituality'

Matthew Fogarty: "Welcome, Oh Life!": Reassessing the Advent of the *Übermensch* in *A Portrait*'

Chiara Sciarrino: 'A New Reading of *A Portrait*: Corpus Stylistics at Work'  
'Keynote: Gregory Castle: "'Terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world": Joyce's *A Portrait* and the Global *Bildungsroman*'

Geert Lernout: 'Jewgreek in *A Portrait*'

Joseph Hassett: 'The Afterlife of Stephen's Theory of Beauty in the *Ulysses* Obscenity Trials'

Tim Conley: 'Reframing *A Portrait* in *Finnegans Wake*'