

Patricia Hutchins

## James Joyce's Correspondence

"THIS book is not written in prose, it is written in speech . . . speech moves at the speed of light, prose at the speed of the alphabet," said James Stephens in a broadcast on *Finnegans Wake* in January 1947. After completing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, some combination of influences freed Joyce from narrative conventions and *Ulysses* was an attempt to convey thought as it transforms itself into sound. Then the material had been carefully screened, but in Joyce's last book all the rubble was deliberately included—stammers, mistakes, repetitions, the distortions of a dozen different accents and as many voices.

Joyce's letters, on the other hand, were not written for publication and are seldom discursive or expository. It was in conversation with his brother, Stanislaus Joyce, during the years in Trieste, or in letters to such friends as Frank Budgen or Georges Borach in Zürich, that Joyce outlined his work. In Paris there was Sylvia Beach, the *Transition* group, Stuart Gilbert, Samuel Beckett, and critics such as Louis Gillet and Philippe Soupault to whom Joyce explained what he was trying to achieve through *Work-in-Progress*. Letters were only written when he could not meet a person or telephone: all his energy went into overcoming technical problems. Miss Harriet Weaver, who lived in England, was an exception. In 1921, as proofs of *Ulysses* arrived, he told her that he was working like a lunatic, "trying to revise and improve and correct and continue to create at the one time."

When dealing with Joyce's Irish background or collecting material in England and on the Continent for a further study of his world, a number of letters passed through my hands. These form part of a volume entitled *Letters of James Joyce*, edited by Stuart Gilbert, to be published next autumn by Faber and Faber, and the Viking Press in New York. Written in direct, often humorous terms, they draw together the factors of a situation, show Joyce at a particular moment of his life, and often provide a striking parallel with his writing.

A copy of one of the earliest letters, found with the papers of W. B. Yeats, was written to Lady Gregory in the autumn of 1902, after Joyce had graduated at University College, Dublin. Whereas *Stephen Hero* suggests that Stephen was offered help by the Jesuits and refused, here Joyce protests that the authorities would not give coaching and other work to pay fees at the medical school. Therefore he would go abroad and try himself against the powers of the world. In the concluding sentences we see those romantic elements in Joyce which were never so openly declared in his work:

All things are inconstant except the faith in the soul, which changes all things and fills their inconstancy with light. And though I seem to have been driven out of my country here as a misbeliever I have found no man yet with a faith like mine.

A note, in the possession of Mrs. George Roberts, whose husband was later involved in the abortive attempt to publish *Dubliners* in

Ireland, relates to Joyce's training for the Feis Ceol, or musical competition, in which he competed with John McCormack, and reflects perhaps a passing interest in Nietzsche.

[*N.D. Postmark, Dublin, July 13. 1904.*]  
G.P.O.

Dear Roberts,

Be in the "Ship" to-morrow at 3.30 with £1. My [Hired] piano is threatened. It is absurd that my superb voice should suffer. You recognise a plain duty. Well then—

*James Overman.*

IN THE National Library of Ireland there is a valuable series of letters written to Joyce's aunt, Mrs. Josephine Murray, which touch on his elopement with Nora Barnacle and the years as a Berlitz school-teacher in Pola and Trieste. In many Joyce asks for information about people and places in Dublin to be used in his work. No less important is the correspondence with Michael Healy, a customs official and Joyce's uncle-in-law, who not only provided financial help but obtained books and other material for him.

Later in life Joyce was to thank Yeats again for his friendliness extending over thirty years. Among the correspondence is a letter written in Zürich on September 14th, 1916:

Dear Yeats,

Ezra Pound writes to me telling me of your kindness in writing a letter of recommendation on my behalf as a result of which a royal bounty has been granted to me (£100). I need hardly say how acceptable this money is to me at such a time and in such circumstances but apart from its usefulness, it is very encouraging as a sign of recognition and I am very grateful for your friendly and valuable support. I hope that now at last matters may begin to go a little more smoothly for me for, to tell the truth, it is very tiresome to wait and hope for so many years. . . .

In a letter to John Quinn, written on July 10th, 1917, he gives details of the struggle to publish on his own terms:

Ten years of my life have been consumed in correspondence and litigation about my book *Dubliners*. It was rejected by 40 publishers; three times set up and once burnt. It cost me about 3,000 francs in postage, fees, train and boat fares, for I was in correspondence with 110 newspapers, 7 solicitors, 3 societies, 40 publishers

and several men of letters about it. All refused to aid me, except Mr. Ezra Pound. In the end it was published, in 1914, word for word as I wrote it in 1905. My novel [*A Portrait . . .*] was refused by every publisher in London to whom it was offered—refused (as Mr. Pound informed me) with offensive comments. When a review decided to publish it, it was impossible to find in the United Kingdom a printer to print it. I write these facts now once and for all because I do not want any correspondence of the same kind about my play [*Exiles*]  
—I mean from publishers or impresarii. I want a definite engagement to publish or produce by a certain date, or a refusal.

When at last Joyce succeeded in reaching Paris, he told John Quinn, on January 7th, 1921, that the *Circe* episode had been rewritten nine times and as he had already spent seven years on *Ulysses* he would need six months' rest when it was finished, "not necessarily in jail."

Most of Joyce's own papers, which survived so many changes of address (over a dozen in Paris alone), were in his Passy flat when he and his wife left for Vichy in 1939. Joyce's credits froze during the occupation and his landlord was about to sell all their possessions when friends rescued certain books, papers, and manuscripts. These were sorted for the *James Joyce Exhibition* at the La Hune Gallery in 1949. Later a number of family portraits, notebooks, and some three hundred and fifty letters were purchased for the Lockwood Memorial Library at Buffalo University, New York. Through the courtesy of both libraries, these have been available on microfilm at the British Museum. A number deal with the publication of Joyce's work in *The Egoist*, and the suppression of *The Little Review*, others show the friendly encouragement of the American publisher B. W. Huebsch.

YEATS had introduced Joyce to Ezra Pound, but unfortunately none of those communications which found their way into Pound's little triangular room off Kensington High Street are now available. Joyce preserved the second page of a letter from Pound written in December 1917, evidently acknowledging the receipt of part of *Ulysses*, which

was not included in the 1950 edition of the American writer's letters.

Hope to forward a few base shekles in a few days time. Wall, Mr Joice, I recon your a damn fine writer, that's what I recon'. An' I recon' this here work o' yourn is some concern'd litterchure. You can take it from me, an' I'm a jedge.

Several of the letters in the Lockwood Memorial Library have only an association value, such as the note from Maurice Darantière, the Dijon printer, announcing early in 1922 that *Ulysses* was ready at last. Others contain much biographical material and suggest Joyce's relationship with many other writers. For instance, in 1922 John Middleton Murry, who had reviewed *Ulysses* sympathetically, invited Joyce to tea at the Victoria Palace Hotel, Montparnasse, adding, "My wife (Katherine Mansfield) who knows your book even better than I do has points of her own to discuss." She was then writing some of the last stories, and in her diary and journal gave impressions of the place, but as John Middleton Murry wrote to me in May 1954, "I was much too preoccupied with Katherine Mansfield's illness at the time to do more than register that he [Joyce] was very gentle and sympathetic." A year later we find the Joyces themselves installed in the hotel, where early drafts of *Finnegans Wake* were written.

It was Ernest Hemingway, writing from Switzerland in 1928, who brought out very clearly what Joyce had to bear during one of his many eye operations:

My little boy, when I picked him up to pot him at night, coming in here, poked his finger in my eye and the nail cut the pupil. For ten days I had a little taste of how things might be with you. It hurt like hell, even the cocaine wash the Dr. gave me to take the pain out but [it] is all right now.

George Moore had been part of Joyce's Dublin background as a young man but in spite of Edouard Dujardin's suggestion that he should bring them together again, Moore and Joyce did not meet until 1929. In September of that year, Moore wrote to Dujardin

that Joyce was in London and had paid him a long visit:

... He was distinguished, courteous, respectful, and I was the same; he seemed anxious to accord me the first place. I demurred, and declared him first in Europe. We agreed that our careers were not altogether dissimilar and he added, "Paris has played an equal part in our lives." This morning he sent me a book, and pleaded that I had promised to accept a copy of the French translation of *Ulysses*. I was conquered.\*

And a few days later:

121 Ebury Street,  
London S.W.1.

11th September, 1929.

Dear Mr. Joyce:

When we look back upon our lives, our lives seem fateful. I never understood why I avoided reading *Ulysses*, for I was curious to read it, and when I was in the Nursing Home somebody, whose name I cannot recall at the moment, sent me a present of a reading desk, and I wondered what could have put it into his head to send me such a useless piece of furniture. Now I know! I am reading *Ulysses* and if you were here for a longer time and could dine with me, we would talk about the French, which I think wilfully exaggerated in places.

Thank you for sending the book: I look forward to reading it all the winter. And I have to thank you, too, for the volume of essays explaining your new work in progress. The best of these seems to me to be by Stuart Gilbert.

Padraic Colum has written a very pretty introduction to the still unpublished work and I remember him at the outset of his career, when everything seemed against him.

Many of the letters between T. S. Eliot and James Joyce suggest the amount of practical work which went into the publication of Joyce's writing. Occasionally there is a more personal note—T. S. Eliot arranges for Joyce and Lady Ottoline Morrell to meet him for tea at Frascati's or when the Joyces are in Sussex he suggests that he should show him "some of the waste lands round Chichester." On at least one occasion there is a suggestion which Joyce appears to have incorporated into *Ulysses*.

9 Clarence Gate Gardens,  
London N.W.6.

\* *Letters of George Moore*. Edited by JOHN EGLINTON, 1942. Heinemann.

21st May, 1921.

My dear Joyce:

I am returning your three mss by registered post as you require and am exceedingly obliged for a taste of them. I think they are superb—especially the *Descent into Hell*, which is stupendous. Only, in detail, I object to one or two phrases of *Elijah*: “ring up” is English, “call up” American; “trunk line”, if applied to the telephone service, is English, the American is, if I remember, “long distance”. I don’t quite like the wording of the coon transformation of *Elijah*, either, but I cannot suggest any detailed alteration. But otherwise, I have nothing but admiration, in fact, I wish, for my own sake, that I had not read it.

Joyce kept two notes from his father in the childish writing of old age, in which New Year and Birthday greetings are combined. Then the father adds, with perhaps *A Portrait* in mind, “I wonder do you recollect the old days at Brighton Square when you were baby Tuckoo and I used to tell you all about the moo-cow that used to come down from the mountains and take little boys away?” On January 1st, 1932, Joyce wrote to T. S. Eliot:

Excuse me if I am backward in my work and correspondence. I have been through a bad time telephoning and wiring to Dublin about my father. To my great grief he died on Tuesday. He had an intense love for me and it adds now to my grief and remorse that I did not go to Dublin to see him for so many years. I kept him constantly under the illusion that I would come and was always in correspondence with him but an instinct which I believed in held me back from going, much as I longed to. *Dubliners* was banned there in 1912 on the advice of a person who was assuring me at the time of his great friendship. When my wife and children went there in 1922, against my wish, they had to flee for their lives, lying flat on the floor of a railway carriage while rival parties shot at each other across their heads and quite lately I have had experience of malignancy and treachery on the part of people to whom I had done nothing but friendly acts. I did not feel myself safe and my wife and son opposed my going.

I have been very broken down these last days and I feel that a poor heart which was true and faithful to me is no more.

**D**URING 1915 Joyce had written to H. G. Wells to thank him for his interest in the instalments of *A Portrait* in

*The Egoist* and for the suggestion that J. B. Pinker, the literary agent, should see his work, which subsequently the firm handled for a number of years. When the novel was published in 1916, Wells was approached by Miss Weaver, the assistant editor, but he was too busy to deal with it. Thus his article in *The Nation* for February 24th, 1917, came as a pleasant surprise. It contained an extraordinary prescience of Joyce’s later work and Wells’s praise—“I write with all due deliberation that Sterne himself could not have done it better”—was to carry Joyce far on his road.

Much later, as *Work-in-Progress* was being published, Joyce wrote to Miss Weaver in December 1928 that he had recently lunched with H. G. Wells, who had been very friendly. While making no concessions, Joyce was always anxious his experiments should be understood, and after H. G. Wells had been sent copies of *Transition*, Joyce received a long letter from him. “He told me that he had expected to meet a tall fierce aggressive man in a frieze overcoat carrying a heavy stick and I think that he probably had a similar phantom hovering between his eyes and my pages.”

Lou Pidou,  
Saint Mathieu,  
Grasse, A.M.

November 23, 1928.

My dear Joyce:

I’ve been studying you and thinking over you a lot. The outcome is that I don’t think I can do anything for the propaganda of your work. I’ve an enormous respect for your genius dating from your earliest books, and I feel now a great personal liking for you, but you and I are set upon absolutely different courses. Your training has been Catholic, Irish, insurrectionary; mine, such as it was, was scientific, constructive, and, I suppose, English. The frame of my mind is a world wherein a big unifying and concentrating process is possible (increase of power and range by economy and concentration of effort), a progress not inevitable but interesting and possible. That game attracted and still holds me. For it, I want language and statement as simple and clear as possible. You began Catholic, that is to say you began with a system of values in stark opposition to reality. Your mental existence is obsessed by a monstrous system of contradictions. You really believe in chastity, purity and

the personal God, and that is why you are always breaking out into cries of c—, s—, and h—. As I don't believe in these things except as quite provisional values, my mind has never been shocked to outcries by the existence of water closets and menstrual bandages—and undeserved misfortunes. And while you were brought up under the delusion of political suppression, I was brought up under the delusion of political responsibility. It seems a fine thing to you to defy and break up. To me not in the least.

Now with regard to this literary experiment of yours. It's a considerable thing because you are a very considerable man and you have in your crowded composition a mighty genius for expression which has escaped discipline. But I don't think it gets anywhere. You have turned your back on common men, on their elementary needs and their restricted time and intelligence and you have elaborated. What is the result? Vast riddles. Your last two works have been more amusing and exciting to write than they will ever be to read. Take me as a typical common reader. Do I get much pleasure from this work? No. Do I feel I am getting something new and illuminating as I do when I read Aurep's dreadful translation of Pavlov's badly written book on Conditioned Reflexes? No. So I ask; who the hell is this Joyce who demands so many waking hours of the few thousands I have still to live for a proper appreciation of his quirks and fancies and flashes of rendering?

All this from my point of view. Perhaps you are right and I am all wrong. Your work is an extraordinary experiment and I would go out of my way to save it from destruction or restrictive interruption. It has its believers and its following. Let them rejoice in it. To me it is a dead end.

My warmest good wishes to you, Joyce. I can't follow your banner any more than you can follow mine. But this world is wide and there is room for both of us to be wrong.

As Joyce continued to Miss Weaver:

For the moment I will content myself by saying in reply to his letter which is quite friendly and honest, that I doubt whether his attitude towards words and language is as scientific as he himself ought to wish it to be and also whether the extra expressionism of which he complains, whether liberative or simply terminological exactitude, is at all as common in my country as in his, though perhaps I ought to add, considerably to our loss. To the rest of his remarks, however, I could whole-heartedly subscribe and the more I hear of the political, philosophical, ethical zeal and labours of the brilliant

members of Pound's big brass band the more I wonder why I was ever let into it 'with my magic flute.'

DURING the years in Paris, Joyce was in touch with many different people. Sherwood Anderson asks if he might call, St. John Ervine mentions a meeting, there is a letter from Edmund Wilson. André Gide writes, "*Quelle émotion de recevoir une lettre du grand Joyce.*" While on holiday in Copenhagen, Joyce had several long talks with Lévy-Bruhl and gave him copies of his books. At Salzburg one year he met John Drinkwater and his wife Daisy Kennedy, and some of their correspondence has survived. There are several letters from James Stephens in the poet's beautifully precise hand which provide an amusing comment on their relationship.

Joyce saw a great deal of Maria and Eugene Jolas, Stuart Gilbert, Sylvia Beach and other close friends so that few letters were necessary. Those written to Paul Léon, often in despair over his daughter's illness, must remain under seal in the National Library of Ireland for a further forty-five years or so. On the other hand, Valéry Larbaud, novelist and translator of Samuel Butler, was often in Spain or Italy. "*Ah Joyce, c'était un très bon ami,*" he said, when interviewed in Vichy in 1954. Many of Joyce's letters are preserved in the Municipal Library there while a number of Larbaud's replies are at Buffalo University. They corresponded about the French translation of *Ulysses*, supervised by Larbaud, mentioned Italo Svevo or Ernest Boyd, arranged to meet Arnold Bennett, or sent postcards to each other from Parma, Brussels, or Llandudno. As Larbaud wrote in English of *Finnegans Wake*:

... Dante was certainly haunted by the idea of a common Vulgar; and in fact one Canzone at least is written in 'lingua trina'—Latin, Provençal and Italian. Whitman too seems to have felt the necessity of an international tongue based on English. But what you are doing could only be done in English, I think, because there are as many Latin roots as German roots, so that a Spanish or Italian, a Norwegian, or Dutch word, may be brought into it without seeming utterly out of place. At least one of the two or



three meanings or allusions of the word thus coined, will be readily apprehended. While you were reading to me I had an impression of going along a vineyard, where the words were the [bunches of] grapes,—each word the full-grown ‘Racème’, of which I hastily picked one ‘grain’, with the intention and the wish to go back to it later on and pick other ‘grains’ from it. I don’t see how the same thing might be done on a large scale in a purely Latin or purely Teutonic language. See how *déplacés* look French words in German! But an inter-Latin language is possible, and, perhaps, an inter-Teutonic one; but they meet only in English.

Joyce, as he told Miss Weaver, had set out to write “a universal history.” A selection from the several hundred letters written to her over twenty-five years will form an important part of the forthcoming volume. Not only do they suggest Joyce’s life from week to week but they provide an interesting commentary on the development of *Finnegans Wake*. Many passages are closely related to the manuscripts of the book which have been presented by Miss Weaver to the British Museum.

Although Louis Gillet quotes Joyce as saying that *Finnegans Wake* had nothing in common with *Ulysses*—“*C’est le jour et la nuit*”—it began as the logical sequence of Molly Bloom’s monologue. Then as Joyce found himself in the hidden, night-shadowed regions of consciousness, the writing became a series of layers or stratifications. For instance, Joyce’s brother, Stanislaus Joyce, suggested part of the character of Shaun the Post and where he is under interrogation in Part III, section IV, there is perhaps a parallel with the *Ithica* or question and answer chapter of *Ulysses*. (In this connection, there are several interesting letters by Stanislaus Joyce, written after *Ulysses* had appeared and now at Buffalo, which throw light on their relationship.)

The main outline of the book had been worked out by 1924, and on May 6th Joyce wrote from the Victoria Palace Hotel:

I hope to resume with Shaun tomorrow. I had done about a third. But he (already a dawdler) will be longer on the road. . . . I have not seen Miss Beach for a while as my general expression is not a pleasant one to offer to anybody’s gaze,

though, strangely enough, the Shaun the Post piece is very amusing—to me, at least. It is extremely hard to write.

In a letter written on May 24th we see the dream confusion of time and place which Joyce was using as a basis.

I am sorry I could not face the copying out of Shaun which is a description of a postman travelling backwards in the night through the events already narrated. It is written in the form of a *via crucis* of 14 stations but in reality it is only a barrel rolling down the river Liffey. To write a book like this I should have a study of my own where I could quickly get at my books and papers.

Joyce used a series of signs to denote parts of the book. On August 29th, 1925, he wrote:

I know that  $\Delta$ d ought to be about roads, all about dawn and roads, and go along repeating that to myself all day as I stumble along the roads hoping it will dawn on me how to show up them roads so as everybody’ll know as how roads etc.

At last the Joyces found an unfurnished flat in 2 Square Robiac, Paris, and once installed Joyce thought of little else but his work. In a letter of October 10th, 1925:

I began  $\Delta$ d (otherwise the last watch of Shaun) a few days ago and have produced about three foolscapes of hammer and tongs stratification lit up by a fervent prayer to the divinity which shapes our roads in favour of my ponderous protagonist and his miniscule consort. . . . I composed some wondrous devices for  $\Delta$ d during the night and wrote them out in the dark only to discover that I had made a mosaic on top of other notes so I am now going to bring my astronomical telescope into play.

As Proust observed, a work of art must create its own posterity, and the salvaging of correspondence and biographical detail is part of that process. “The reason for which a work of genius is not easily admired from the first is that the man who has created it is extraordinary, that few other men resemble him. It was Beethoven’s Quartets themselves . . . that devoted half a lifetime to forming, fashioning and enlarging a public for Beethoven’s Quartets. . . . And so it is essential that the artist . . . if he wishes his work to be free to follow its own course, shall launch it wherever he may find sufficient depth, confidently outward bound towards the future.”

*Seymour M. Lipset*

## The American Voter

*Why he votes the way he does*

### *Classes and Parties*

**I**T OFTEN comes as a shock, especially to Europeans, to be reminded that the first political parties in history with "labour" or "working-man" in their names developed in America in the 1820's and 1830's. The emphasis placed on "classlessness" in American political ideology has led many European and American political commentators to assume that American party divisions have had less to do with class cleavages than is the case in other Western countries. The polling studies that have been made belie this assumption. These indicate that in every American election since 1936 (studies of this question were not made before then) the proportion voting Democrat increases sharply as one moves down the occupational or income ladder. In 1944 and 1948 over 70 per cent of the workers voted Democratic, a percentage which is higher than has ever been reported for left-wing parties in European countries. In 1952 the proportion of American workers backing the Democratic presidential candidate dropped to about 60 per cent. It should be noted, however, that in large measure this was a result of Eisenhower's personal appeal, rather than a basic swing away from the Democratic Party. In general, the bulk of the workers, even many who voted for Eisenhower, still regard themselves as Democrats.

The same relationship between "class" (using this term in its rather vague, conversational sense) and politics occurs among the

middle and upper classes. The Democrats are in a minority among the non-manual workers, but they secure more votes from the lower white-collar workers than from any other middle-class group, while the Republican vote increases inexorably with income and occupational status. Perhaps the best single example of the pervasiveness of class as a factor in American politics can be found in a recent (1955) study made by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies, which interviewed a random sample of 1,000 chief executives of major American corporations. Even within this upper-economic group, the larger the company of which a man was an officer, the more likely he was to be a Republican!

The relationship of socio-economic position to political behaviour in America is reinforced by religious and ethnic factors. Surveys do indicate that, among the Christian denominations, the higher the average income of the membership of a given church group, the more likely its members have been to vote Republican. If Christian religious groups in the United States are ranked according to socio-economic status, they are, reading from high to low, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Catholic—and this rank order is identical to the one produced when the denominations are ranked by propensity to vote Republican. This suggests that socio-economic status, rather than religious ideas, is the prime determinant of political values