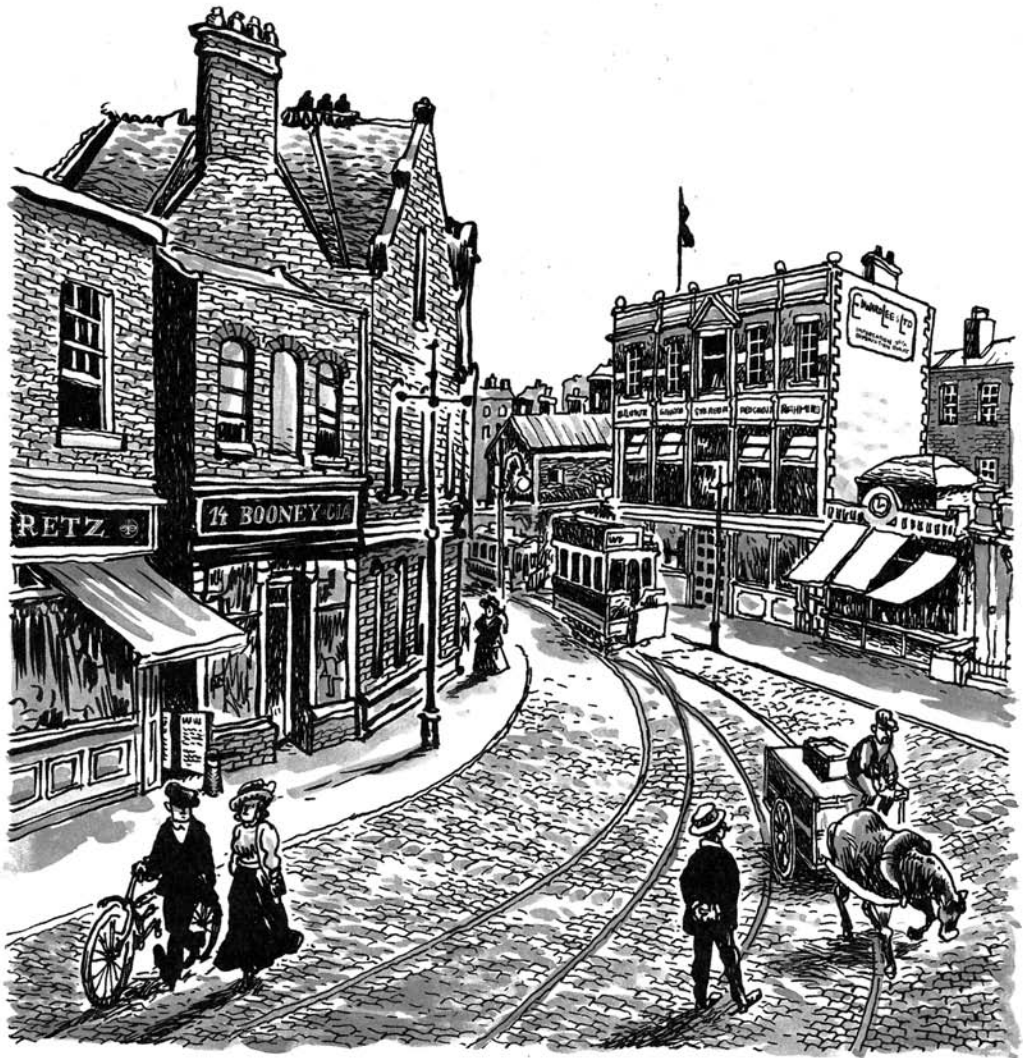


Chapter I
The Joyce Family



James Joyce I



James Joyce's great grandfather was born in Cork in the early nineteenth century. His turbulent life was marked by his membership of the Whiteboys, a group of anti-landlord, Catholic agitators. He was sentenced to death for this, though the sentence was later annulled. A lucky man, this early Joyce.

His descendants inherited his passionate nationalism, along with a deep contempt for the clergy and an inability to run any kind of business. This last trait was clearly manifested by all the later Joyces. In 1835, Joyce obtained the licence to exploit a salt and lime mine near Cork. This was a profitable, prosperous business, but by 1852 he was completely bankrupt.

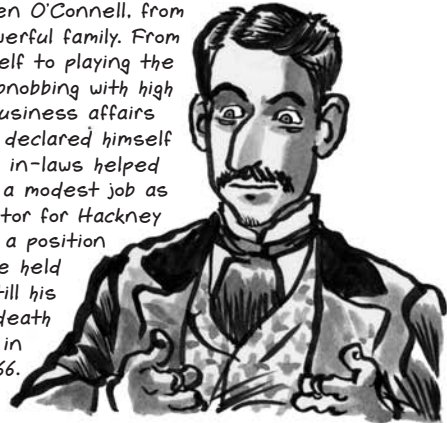


James Joyce II



Joyce's son was a know-it-all. When he was twenty-one, he married Ellen O'Connell, from Cork's richest and most powerful family. From then on, he devoted himself to playing the Irish gentleman and hobnobbing with high society, until his business affairs fell apart and he declared himself bankrupt. His in-laws helped him to get a modest job as an inspector for Hackney Coaches, a position

he held till his death in 1866.



John Joyce



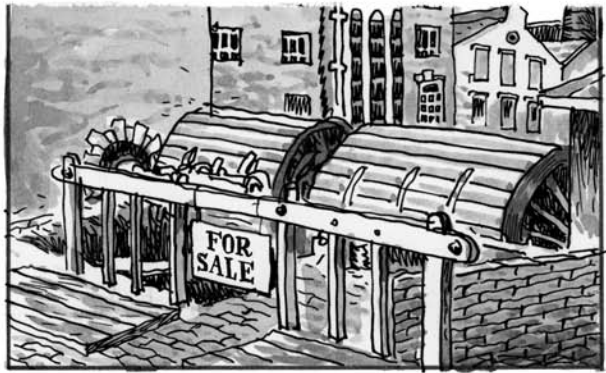
James' father had a complex personality, and the same kind of genius for which his son would become famous. He was a good student, a champion jumper, an excellent shot, a great cross-country runner and a marvellous singer and actor. John's handicap was his wealth of talents, which ultimately led him to failure. His youthful recklessness forced his mother to move to Dublin, in the hope that her unusual son would settle down and find honest employment. Instead of this, John bought himself a sailing boat and spent his time sailing around Dalkey.



John Joyce allowed himself to be conned by a Cork man into buying a distillery with him on the outskirts of Dublin.



John was no genius when it came to business, and one day he discovered that his partner had swindled him out of all of their funds. The Chapelizod Distilling Company was ruined.



But luck hadn't turned its back on the charismatic Joyce. John was a nationalist, and he decided to devote himself to the politics of those turbulent years. In 1880 there was a general election.

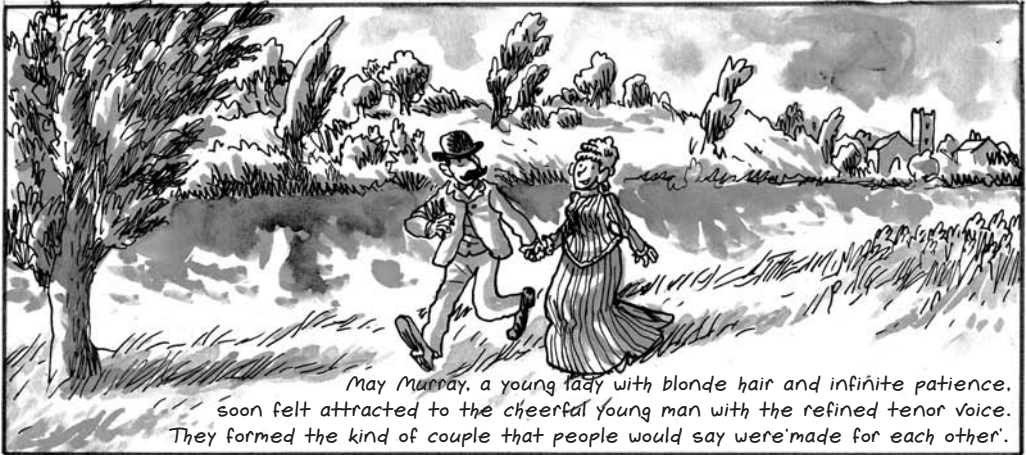
He became secretary of the United Liberal Club, and campaigned for Brooks and Lyons, the two liberal candidates for Dublin. They were running against two conservatives: Jim Sterling and Guinness, the powerful beer magnate.



Brooks and Lyons were elected, and John was rewarded with a life-long post in the Dublin Tax Office.

Well set up socially and financially, John Joyce was now ready for marriage. He set his eyes on a young lady who sang with him in the Rathgar Church Choir.





May Murray, a young lady with blonde hair and infinite patience, soon felt attracted to the cheerful young man with the refined tenor voice. They formed the kind of couple that people would say were made for each other.

Of course, not everybody agreed. May's father and John's mother didn't approve of the relationship.

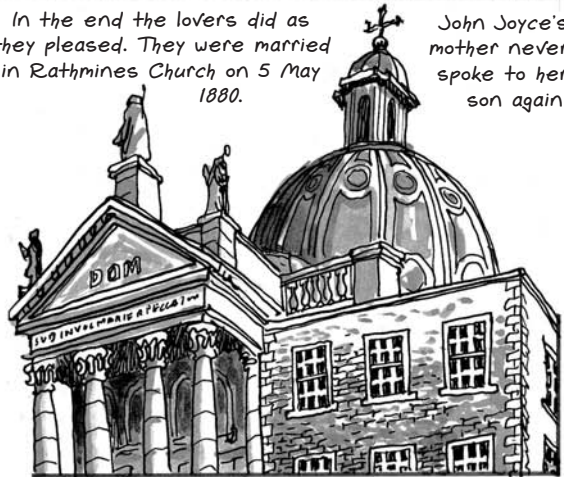
In the end the lovers did as they pleased. They were married in Rathmines Church on 5 May 1880.

John Joyce's mother never spoke to her son again.



Stay away from my daughter, you drunkard

'That Murray is beneath you!'



Mr and Mrs Joyce were very happy together, even though they had no support from the Murray family. John detested his in-laws profoundly, and invented the most cruel and derogatory jokes and epithets to describe them.



He called John Murray, the patriarch, 'the old fornicator', because he had been married twice.



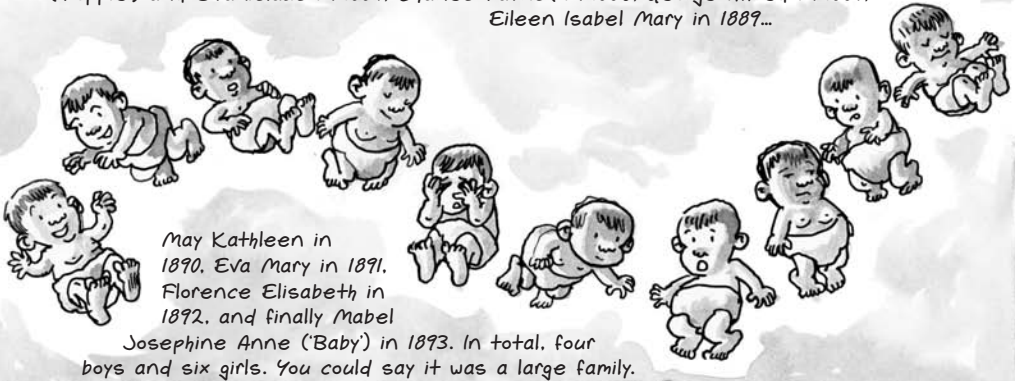
NGAAAA



May's brothers William and John became 'the highly respectable gondoliers' or, respectively, 'the little drunken pen pusher' and 'the cornet player'. An accurate description of William, an accountant with a love for the drink, and John, who led a generally unfortunate life.

Then there was May's cousin, a priest who went mad and lost his parish.

John and May Joyce spent their time enthusiastically breeding children: on 2 February 1882, James Augustine Aloysius was born, followed by Margaret Alice ('Poppie') and Stanislaus in 1884, Charles Patrick in 1886, George Alfred in 1887, Eileen Isabel Mary in 1889...



May Kathleen in 1890, Eva Mary in 1891, Florence Elisabeth in 1892, and finally Mabel Josephine Anne ('Baby') in 1893. In total, four boys and six girls. You could say it was a large family.

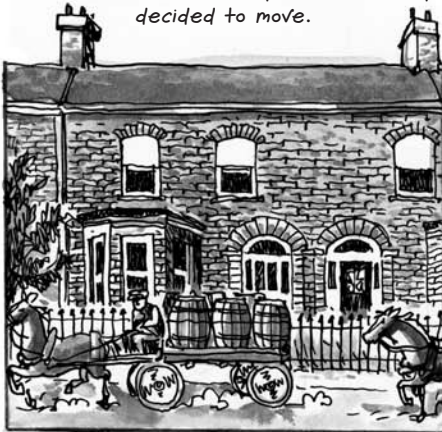
Jim returned his affection, perhaps conscious of the complexity of his father's character, which he shared to a large degree.



John Joyce loved his firstborn most, as he saw his own talent and spontaneity reflected in his son's blue eyes. Hated by most of his other children, John never hid his preference for little Jim.



In 1882, the Joyce family lived in Rathgar, a suburb in south Dublin. But with so many children, the house soon became too small for them, and two years later they decided to move.



In early May they moved to Bray, a quiet neighbourhood by the sea.



Bray was well connected to Dublin by rail...

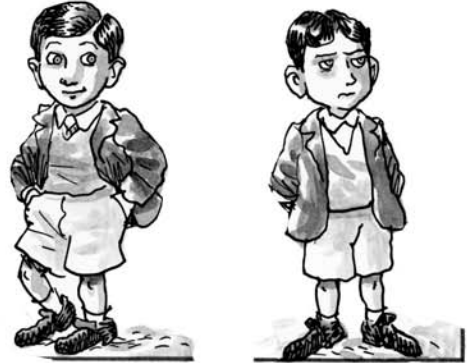
...always sarcastic. John Joyce thought the price of the train ticket would be enough to keep his unwelcome in-laws at a distance.



The little house by the sea was a beautiful, healthy place, where the children grew up happily. That brief, golden time was full of games and laughter.



The contrast between the two eldest brothers was already noticeable: Jim was known as 'Smiling Jim', while the slightly younger, austere Stanislaus was called, not very affectionately, 'Brother John'.



The Joyces enjoyed playing the piano and singing together with their neighbour, the chemist James Vance. In the evenings, the cosy house would be full of music and song.



Jim made friends with the Vances' daughter Eileen.



But the Vances were Protestants. The Joyces' governess took it on herself to remind Jim that the friendship would lead to eternal damnation.



Mrs Conway says that you'll go to Hell, and that I will too, if I carry on seeing you.



What will you do, Jim?

Hmm..

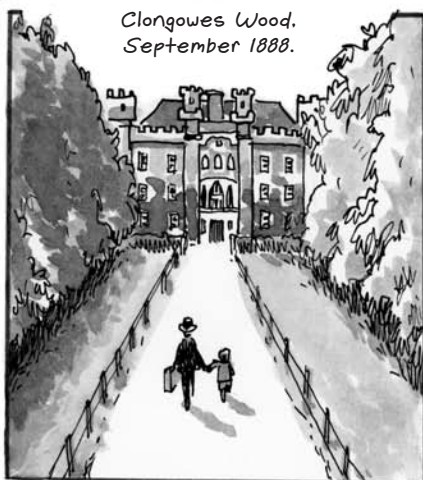


We'll go together.



Conway, with her fire-and-brimstone sermons, caused Jim to feel panic whenever a storm broke out. In every bolt of lightning he saw the wrath of God coming for him.

Jim was also scared of dogs, but this was because a mutt had attacked him once when he was playing with his brother Stanislaus.



By putting Jim into this Jesuit boarding school, John Joyce felt that he was giving his son a privileged education. But the six-year-old boy didn't see it that way.



James Aloysius had to cope with his fellow pupils' snobbishness. He dealt with it by using a little imagination.

I'm James Joyce, from Bray. My father is a Dublin aristocrat.

My grandfather is the judge in Cork, and my uncle is a general in Singapore.

OOOOH!





Is this boy not writing, Father Arnall?

He has broken his glasses, Father Dolan.



Is that so? Tell me, son, what is your name?



Er... my name is James Aloysius Joyce, sir.



Ha! A liar and a schemer. You can see it in his face.

Oh, no, Prefect...



Where did you break your glasses?

On the path, sir.



Ha ha! On the path! I've heard that one before.



It's true! A boy bumped into me, coming out of the bicycle shed. I don't know his name.



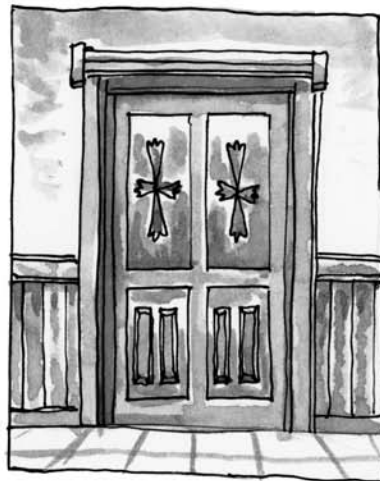
Liar! Cheat! 'My glasses are broken...' That is a very old trick! Hold out your hand.







I broke my glasses, sir.





There must be some mistake... I am sure Father Dolan didn't know about your glasses. Did you tell him you had written home for a new pair?



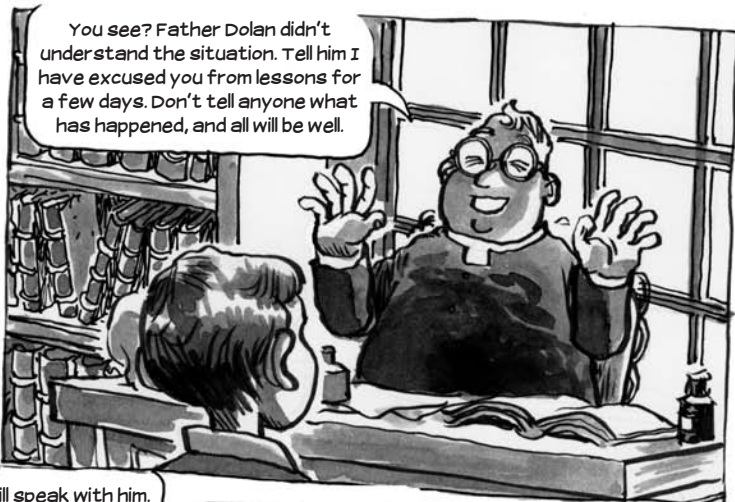
Did you tell him, son?



No, sir.



You see? Father Dolan didn't understand the situation. Tell him I have excused you from lessons for a few days. Don't tell anyone what has happened, and all will be well.



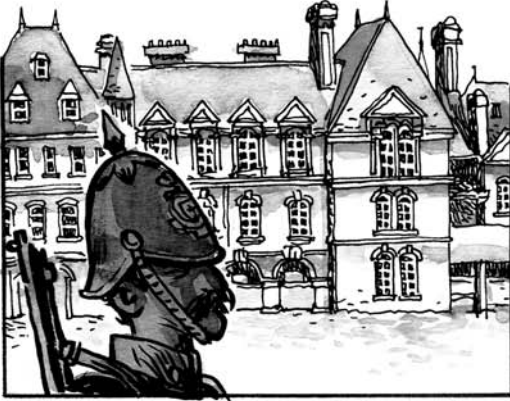
But Father Dolan is coming back tomorrow to beat me again.



I will speak with him. Happy now?



In 1888, the British Crown exerted its power over Ireland through a policy of cultural, political and, of course, military repression.



But the island had an 'uncrowned king': Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish nationalist, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party in London. With his eighty-five MPs in the House of Commons, Parnell kept up a constant fight for self-governance for Ireland. However, 'Home Rule' did not flourish, and the fall of this great man would be a tragedy in two acts.



In 1892, the English Liberals and Conservatives, the Church, and even traitors within his own party were against Parnell.



The first plot against him came from the conservative press, who tried to link him to some political murders perpetrated in Phoenix Park. But Parnell stood firm.



The second attack came shortly after. Parnell had been in a relationship with a married woman, Kitty O'Shea, for over ten years.



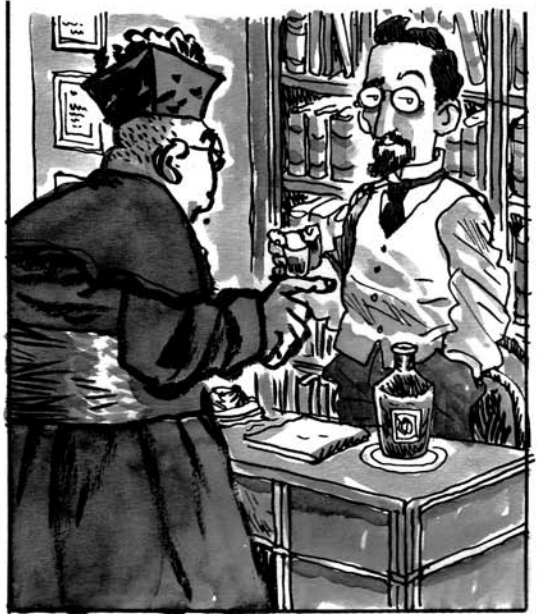
Her husband, Captain O'Shea, had accepted the situation in exchange for a place as a Member of Parliament. But now things were different.



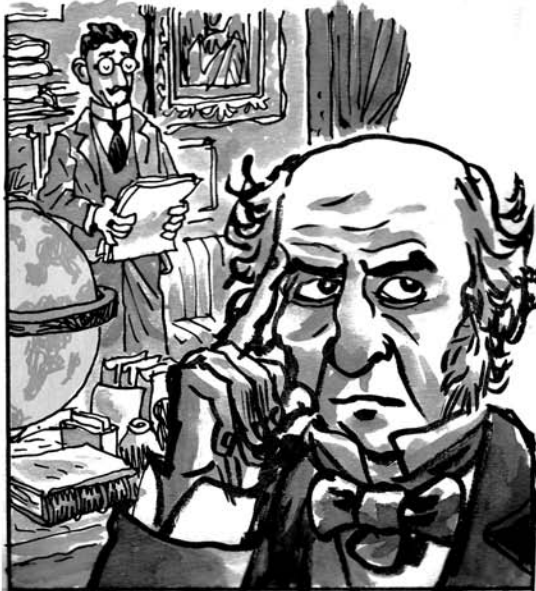
Ireland's Catholic Church, which loathed Parnell, took advantage of the situation to launch a fierce smear campaign against him.



The bishops pressed Tim Healy, Parnell's right-hand man, to hasten his fall. Healy, who defended his chief in public, harboured few qualms about the idea of a change in the party's leadership.



The British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, also pressed Healy to get rid of the 'adulterous sinner'. A pretty hypocritical stance, given that promiscuity and fox-hunting were the main hobbies of the British ruling class.



Finally the prey was brought down.



With all the infighting, the party fell apart three weeks later, and Parnell abandoned the political scene.

The 'uncrowned king' retired to his little kingdom of Avondale with his beloved Kitty. There he lived under a cloud of constant slander and defamation spewed out by the Catholic bishops.



The tragedy ended a year later, when Parnell died after an intense and painful illness. His death closed a chapter of Ireland's history, and opened a wound that would take years to heal. Many citizens believed their leader had died, not from his ailments, but from the terrible betrayal he had suffered.



One of these disenchanted citizens was John Joyce. With Parnell were also buried his political hopes and ideals, and his romantic vision of the heroic Ireland of bygone times.



In order to meet his growing debts, Joyce had to sell his properties in Cork, thus blowing his inheritance.



The Joyces all felt a deep connection between Parnell's catastrophe and their own misfortune.



The great leader's fall was reflected in Joyce's own decadence. He spent the long nights wandering from pub to pub, given over to drinking.



Later he took out a mortgage to raise money, considerably reducing his pension.



Even little nine-year-old James, who wrote a poem commemorating the event. It was aimed at Tim Healy and those who had betrayed their leader.



As things got ever worse, he took out another mortgage. This led to the financial ruin of the family.



The poem was entitled 'Et tu, Healy', and local legend has it that John Joyce was so pleased with his son's poem that he had the wild idea of sending a copy of it by post to the Vatican library.

These priests are incredible.
They've turned churches into
polling booths.



That is their job. The shepherd
must guide his flock on the right
path. It is his duty.



That's religion? Politicking
from the altar?

A priest would not be a
priest, if he failed to tell
his flock what is right
and what is wrong.

Let's drop politics.
Who's for more
turkey?



The bishops of Ireland
have spoken! They
must be obeyed.

Things are changing. If the
Church doesn't leave politics
alone, the people may leave
their church alone.

Did you hear that?
AAAGH!



Why did they have to betray him? Just because the English ordered it?



He was unworthy of leadership! He was a public sinner.

We're all sinners, all of us, without exception.



There could be neither luck nor grace in a house where there is no respect for the pastors of the Church.



Respect! Respect for whom?



For Billy with the lip? Or for the other one, the tub of guts up in Armagh?



John, please! The child!

This is what we've come to: a prieststridden Godforsaken race.





Have you thought about what I said to you?

Well, I...

I'm a bit confused, Father Leary.



Think of your religious vocation, James. Listen to that call.

The secret knowledge and power of a priest...

It is the highest honour possible... No earthly king or emperor has so much power as a priest of God.

...Consider it carefully, my son.

Wow... an offer of power...

The Lord needs your answer, James Aloysius. Try not to disappoint Him.



Belvedere College, Dublin.
1895.

At that time, James Joyce's
conduct was so exemplary
and so spiritual that he
was clearly on his way
to sainthood.

His religious fervour was such
that he was soon appointed
prefect of the sodality of
the Blessed Virgin. But the
line between childhood and
adolescence was starting
to blur...



One day, on his way
home from a theatre
performance of
'Sweet Briar'...



Tell me, you got
any money?



After falling into the sins of the flesh, James couldn't hide the shame which tortured his conscience relentlessly...



He soon aroused the suspicions of the headmaster, Father Henry, the scourge of sinners.



As it was impossible to talk to the closed-up James, the priest took a short cut.



Alarmed, the headmaster sent a brief note to James' mother, simply saying: 'Your son is straying from the path'

The cryptic letter gave no further details, and only increased Mrs Joyce's concerns.

Finally, her maternal instinct guessed the sin, but not the sinner: she sacked the maid, accusing her of perverting her son.



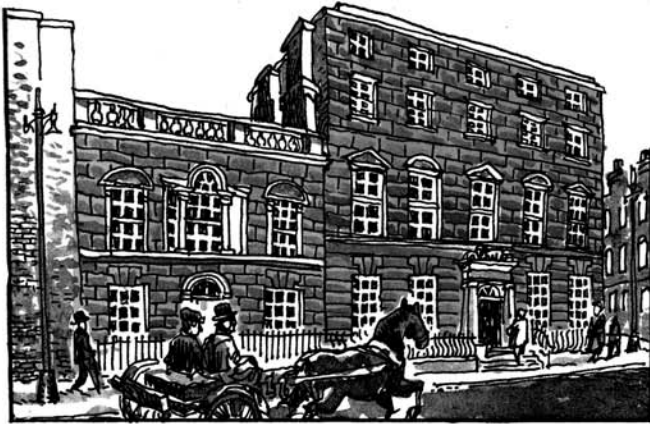
For his part, James lost not a jot of his spiritual purity after the event.

He continued saying his prayers as if possessed, and kept his position as prefect of the sodality of the Blessed Virgin.

But, in fact, he had come to realise that a heretical lifestyle was more manageable, and a lot more fun, than constant pangs of guilt.



In 1898, University College Dublin was the poor relative of Trinity. This small Catholic university received no support from the British government.



James Joyce was sixteen when he enrolled in Languages. They were difficult times for the University.



Hi, lads!

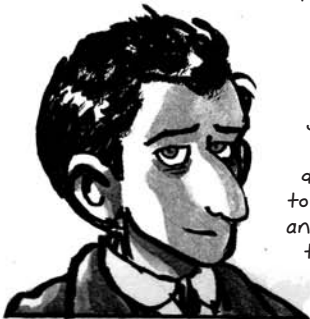
Good morning, Jim.

George Clancy was one of Joyce's inner circle of friends. A fervent nationalist, he played hurling and was a member of the Gaelic League. He even convinced Jim to take Gaelic classes for a while (though Jim was not really interested in the Irish question).

Clancy later became mayor of Limerick, and was murdered in 1921 by the Black and Tans (the pro-British paramilitary militia).



Francis Skeffington, considered by Joyce the cleverest student in University College (after himself, of course). Cultured, vegetarian, a pacifist and a defender of equal rights between the sexes, he even adopted his wife's surname when they married.



Such a utopian character was doomed to come to a dramatic end, and it came during the 1916 Easter Rising.

Thomas Kettle was a Catholic nationalist intellectual, and though his views on Ireland differed from Joyce's, they were good friends.

When the Great War broke out in 1914, Kettle volunteered for the British Army, believing that the British would reward the Irish Volunteers by granting independence. He fell in battle in France in 1916.





Constantine Curran was a good-natured, moderate young man, much admired by Joyce. He had a great knowledge of literature and architecture, and later became a Supreme Court registrar.



His travels to the continent gave him a wider, European vision of the world; but he was so devout that religion overcame his reason, and he ended up with a typical Irishman's prejudices and hang-ups.

John Francis Byrne was Joyce's best friend. Simple and quiet, he was a talented sportsman, clever, but a hopeless student.

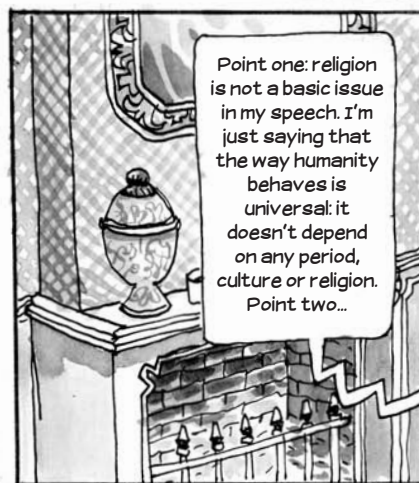
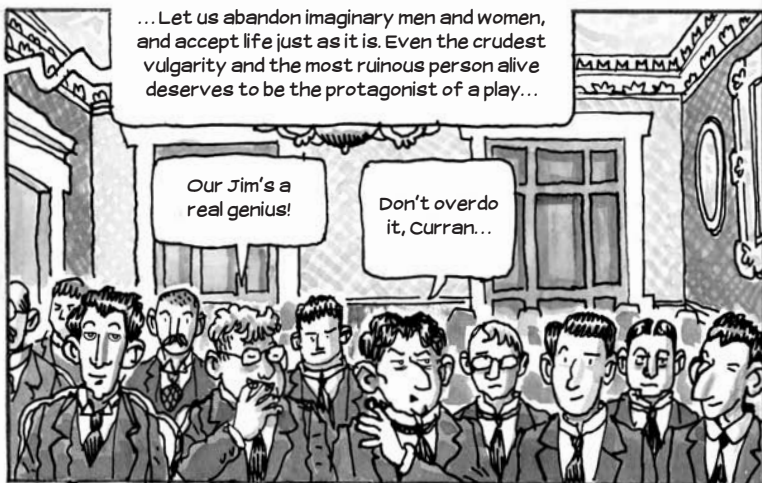
He spent summers on his Wicklow farm, which puzzled his city friends. Byrne and Joyce were fascinated by each other, and Byrne's distinguished silence was a perfect complement to Joyce's shameless chatter.



Vincent Cosgrave completed Joyce's circle of friends. He was proudly ignorant, vulgar and simple. Joyce wasn't particularly close to him, but he could always be counted on to go drinking or whoring at night. Cosgrave was destined to be a mediocre, resentful failure. As the years passed he became more and more bitter. He came to a sudden end in London: his body was found floating in the Thames. He had probably committed suicide.



Can we represent real life on the stage? Some hypocrites would say no, but the fact is that the world changes very fast...



...The role of the Church as a patron of the arts is not the topic of this talk. And anyway, the Church is not the only patron of artists, nor are works of art a monopoly of the Church. Point three: Henrik Ibsen is a damned genius.

