



The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920

By John McCourt

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While living in Trieste, Joyce wrote most of the stories in "Dubliners", turned Stephen Hero into "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", and began "Ulysses". This biography uses previously unused Italian sources to recreate a fertile period in Joyce's life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

If we regard biography as a kind of archeology, Joyce's Richard Leakey is unquestionably Richard Ellman, whose 1959 opus *James Joyce* established the terrain for all future biographies of the great Irish writer. And there have been many. Few, however, quite measure up to McCourt's informative, lucid and wholly engaging record of Joyce in Trieste, which in Joyce's day was as polyglot as *Ulysses*, as multicultural as any cosmopolitan city of today. Firmly in control of his subject and material, McCourt effortlessly interlaces the details of everyday lifeAmarital storms, economic worries, work habitsAwith larger historical and cultural concerns: Jewish life, the emergence of the futurists, socialist politics. In this milieu, the alchemy of Joyce's most potent art transformed many of the people, places and incidents of Trieste into important sections of *Ulysses*, which Joyce himself described as "the epic of two races (Israel and Ireland)." Laboring in relative obscurity, Joyce struggled not only with Leopold Bloom, but also with timid publishers who balked when it came to releasing *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. While honoring the work of his predecessors in Joyce scholarship, McCourt (who was born and educated in Dublin and now teaches at the University of Trieste) also examines material that was until recently unused or unavailable. This, along with his understanding of the culture and dialect of the once-vibrant port city, deepens our appreciation of Trieste both as a crossroads of cultures and as a profound influence on Joyce's thinking and writing. As one critic has it, "Joyce was born in Dublin... [but] grew up in Trieste." (July.

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From Library Journal

Richard Ellmann's massive biography of James Joyce (originally issued in 1959 and revised in 1982) has warned off new biographers for many years. McCourt (English, Univ. of Trieste) makes the case for a more detailed study of Joyce's life for nearly 16 formative years and, even more persuasively, for Trieste's seminal influence on Joyce's major works. All of the oeuvre except *Finnegans Wake* were written while Joyce lived in this cosmopolitan port, and McCourt argues that the life and language of Trieste and the friends and contacts Joyce made there were far more important than Ellmann had thought. McCourt has unearthed a few new sources and successfully debunks some others while painting a detailed picture of life in the then-Italian metropolis. While aimed at Joyce scholars with a detailed knowledge of Joyce's life and writing, the book gives an unusual overview of European political and cultural life in the early years of the century. For specialized collections. (Photographs and index not seen.) DShelley Cox, Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale

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From Booklist

The immense status accorded James Joyce in twentieth-century literature may have moderated some in the last decade, but his life and work continue to be of great interest to scholars and writers, and this volume on his years in Trieste should help to sustain that interest. McCourt sees Trieste in 1904 as an important "commercial and cultural crossroads between Western Europe and the East," and he traces the impact of this crossing of people, cultures, and ideas on Joyce, especially the latter's complicated indebtedness to "Irish Orientalism" and the development of Jewish characters in his fiction, most notably Bloom in *Ulysses*. McCourt gives details about the elements of daily life and culture that were vibrant in the largely middle-class, education-oriented Trieste, and shows Joyce's developing interest in theater and opera. McCourt also effectively captures the considerable financial woes which Joyce and his wife, Nora, and their family suffered at this time, during which Joyce nonetheless wrote many of his shorter works, and a number of

chapters from the longer *Ulysses*. James O'Laughlin
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