

On a still, grey, cool Melbourne day we started with a stroll and a talk on Walter Burley Griffins Newman College ( Jesuit of course ) , one of the finest buildings in this country. Professor Jeff Turnbull.(co-author with Peter Navaretti of *The Griffins in Australia and India*, The Miegunyah Press,1998) and a leading authority on Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney was our expert guide. He analysed the breathtaking beauty of Newman. The genesis of this 1918 masterpiece was simple Griffin sketched his plan and elevation on the back of an envelope in a train between Melbourne and Sydney and handed it to his wife, the best draftsman of the time, knowing that she would do the rest. [omission]. From the centre of the quadrangle, Turnbull pointed to the two wings of the college spread out before us and demonstrated how the [omission] design could be traced to classical bridges like the Ponte Vecchio with their arches, parapets and promenades [omission]. The centrepiece, the dome and mast with its pinnacles, known as the twelve apostles, had symbolic meanings and origins {do you remember the allusions? Cambodian stupas, and a particular Oxbridge College – but don't trust my memory!} .The interior of the refectory was the climax, an awe-inspiring space, with its balconies, colonnades and superb acoustics. Despite being chosen by appointed architectural experts, the original Griffin design for the Chapel (completed in 1942), was abandoned in favour of the (I think, inferior) gothic design.

Next came the fictional self-portrait of the hero of the day, James Joyce and his words. With a large cast, the play *Jeune Jesuit* was written specifically for this day and was based on Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, extracting all the [omission] elements of the artists experiences with the Jesuits of Clongowes Wood and Belvedere College. The audience was kept in line by a clutch of nuns, sermonized at and warned by men of the cloth but best of all, invited to the notorious and brilliant Christmas Dinner with turkey as so vividly described by Joyce in his first novel. Poor Parnell, my dead king was eloquently, belligerently and tearfully defended. The fulcrum of this famous scene, Simon Dedalus, the host of the festive occasion and young Stephens father, was played with weight and conviction by David Adamson, and Stephen, with pathos by Niall McCann. It was one of the many highpoints of the day. We proceeded to the Newman Chapel for a dose of imaginative enlightenment on hell and clinical observation of bodily decomposition such as only Joyce would dare. After a dalliance with an all-purpose sexualised bird-girl/muse (danced by Claire Haywood with cello and voice accompaniment), we ended Stephen's and our journey in the Oratory for the closing scenes. I do not fear to be alone or to leave whatever I have to leave. The brilliant cast of fourteen and their expert supporting staff, from the Director Karen Corbett down, were given the most prolonged and well-deserved applause and everyone involved in this production must be very proud indeed. It did Joyce and his unforgettable and eloquent language, his provocations and challenges, full justice.

Finally, we remained in the Oratory to hear three brilliant papers delivered on the theme of our Bloomsday: Joyce and the Jesuits. Frances Devlin-Glass gave revealing and helpful introductions.

Professor Greg Denning analysed Jesuit spirituality in Joyces time. He carefully distinguished between orthodox Jesuit culture and the Irish-Jesuit culture that we knew in Australia. Stephen Dedalus is ..those of us who have experienced both the brilliance and horror of a Jesuit education and he described the various epiphanies Stephen underwent ,through his extreme guilt of sinfulness ,his engagement with his soul and then with the world around him .Joyce detailed analytically and brutally the course of Stephens maturing and Denning repeatedly balanced the experiences of

Joyces own and his characters agonies. He stressed the ethnographic vision and theatricality of Jesuit spirituality which is clearly illustrated in *The Portrait*. Theatre presents us with the dredge of life and we walk out into the foyer having got the plot. This was the genius of Joyce but it grew out of [omission] aspects of his Jesuit background, and in particular the spiritual exercises of Ignatius with its emphasis on scene-building as a meditative tool – the creative imagination of faith it is a dancer of the eye and mind engulfed in mystery and if ever there was a dancer of the eye and mind it was James Joyce. Denning pulled no punches in his condemnation of those times at Clongowes and his own personal experiences at Burke Hall. He drew on Barthes, Newman, Eamon Duffy and others to follow the turmoil in the heart and soul of Joyce.

Yes, a hard act etc. but Dr. Richard O'Sullivan was truly equal. He opened with a revealing quote from the biographer Frank Budgen: You allude to me as a Catholic. Now for the sake of precision and to get the correct contour on me, you ought to allude to me as a Jesuit. And Buck Mulligan opens *Ulysses* in the Martello Tower shouting down: Come up, you fearful Jesuit. O'Sullivan then sets sail on a brand new historical discovery of a Joycean nexus to Australia in the person of Fr. John Conmee S.J. He in fact welcomed the six years old Joyce to Clongowes Wood College in 1888. Conmee was possibly related to Joyces mothers family, the Murrays. He rose to become Provincial of his order and visited the Jesuit Australian Mission in 1907 and reported very critically on St. Patricks and Xavier in Melbourne and St. Aloysius and Riverview in Sydney. Conmee figures affectionately in *Portrait* and in *Ulysses* as a fair man. [omission; not true!] Fr. George O'Neill S.J. was Joyces professor of English at UCD and he came to Australia in 1923 and taught at Corpus Christi in Werribee. He was the first Jesuit in the world to break the public Jesuit silence on the topic of James Joyce. He wrote in 1945: I have introduced to college life a very small boy destined to regrettable celebrity as the author of *Ulysses* and put a Catholic choir-book into his little hand. O'Sullivan, quoting Flann O'Brien, concluded in this vein: Joyce spent a lifetime establishing himself as a character in fiction. He created, in narcissus fascination, the ageless Stephen. Beginning with importing real characters into his books, he achieves the magnificent inversion of making them legendary and fictional. O'Sullivan proudly proclaims that Joyces portrait now hangs in both Clongowes and Belvedere.

Finally, Fr./Prof. Peter Steele S.J. provided copies of his own "Joycepoem" and after reading it, expanded on the references and metaphors he had used in the poem. It was a picture of Dublin, Joyce in that city and the language of Joyce that grew out of his time and place there. Steele has often stayed at Belvedere, the original mansion of Lord Belvedere. He described, as his poem does, the physical environment of that part of Dublin and he put Joyce in that place and time, just as Joyce does so brilliantly in his literature. I know nothing of Lord Belvederes personal proclivities but I somehow imagine that he might have cocked an ironic eyebrow at the lap-dancing establishment which is now next door to his former abode- the finest private house in the Dublin of his time: not that Joyce himself could not be tykeish enough at seeing the insignia of privilege subverted. He too emphasized the importance of the Spiritual Exercises in the Jesuit repertoire which never gets away from the world of incarnation, embodiment, sensory particularity, all Joycean obsessions. Hence the Jesuit contributions to ballet and drama as well as the baroque churches and the baroque poems. In his poem Steele uses the phrase zones of the imagination and he explains: You and I and all of us are together here in this room, but no two of us are present to it in the same way..similarly, and particularly in *Ulysses*, what might be called Joyces filamental

attention to Dublin keeps changing, with the result that his Dublin, in one way so discernibly stable, is in another endlessly mutable. He closed with his own lines :Singer of flesh and its withering, mind and its fall,/there are worse places to be than this one- this one being potentially Dublin, or our battered planet as a whole, or the world which is that book. And he also claimed that the portrait of Joyce in Belvedere does him proud, but if you really want to get to know him, the thing to do is to read Ulysses again.

After a robust question and answer, and to vigorous applause, Joyce and the Jesuits, and Bloomsday 2007 came to a close, with yet another performance of *Jejune Jesuit*.