



# Joyce and Dublin: the roots of a conflicting relationship

di **SILVIA CHINI, FELICE VERDELLI**

Dublin is written in James Joyce's heart: with its streets, pubs, and characters it has become "the character itself" in the writer's works. But like other Irish authors, Joyce's relationship with his homeland was based on conflict.

Against the limitations of spreading nationalism, he wrote *Dubliners*, published in June 1914, "to betray the soul of that paralysis which many consider a city"<sup>1</sup>. After the first three stories printed in *The Irish Homestead*, the editor refused to continue publication due to excessive protests by its readers.

Joyce's hostility against his fellow citizens was rooted in a childhood experience he himself recounts in the first chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, his autobiographical novel. In 1891, the leader of the Irish autonomist movement, Charles Parnell, died abruptly after an instigation campaign against him, and Joyce dedicated his first poem to him, which can be read at the end of the short story "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" in *Dubliners*<sup>2</sup>.

Faithful to his political line, under William Gladstone's government, Parnell succeeded in introducing the Home Rule Bill

into Parliament for the first time; soon afterwards, he fell victim to an affair with a married woman, and Gladstone refused to approve the Bill if Parnell had continued to hold his seat in Parliament. He was removed by his own comrades and supporters who preferred to remain firmly anchored in blind moralism instead of pursuing their path to independence. Joyce recalled this event in an article written in 1912 for an Italian newspaper: "The high and low clergy and the Irish press poured the bitter cup of envy upon him and the woman he loved. (...) In his last, desperate appeal to his compatriots, Parnell begged them not to throw him to the English wolves, and they did not remain deaf to his plea. They did not throw him to the English wolves: they tore him to pieces themselves."<sup>3</sup>

This betrayal was an experience that profoundly affected Joyce: at sixteen he left the Catholic Church and declared war on all religious and political forces in Ireland. If he didn't want to rot in Dublin, he had no choice but to leave. On 8th October 1904, he and Nora boarded the ship that would sail them to Italy, never to return. But Dublin remained an eternal presence for Joyce: this Irish micropolis would become the macrocosm of all his literary works.

1 Letter to Constantine Curran, 1904

2 J. Joyce, The Death of Parnell – 6th October 1891

3 J. Joyce, L'ombra di Parnell (The Shade of Parnell), 1912

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

Political and social situation in Ireland

Scarica i materiali: <https://www.rizzolieducation.it/content/uploads/2025/10/LitHub-pg178.pdf>

Work with "Dubliners"

Scarica i materiali: <https://www.rizzolieducation.it/content/uploads/2025/10/LitHub-pg264-267.pdf>

Compare Joyce with Svevo

Scarica i materiali: <https://www.rizzolieducation.it/content/uploads/2025/10/LitHub-pg272-273.pdf>

## SPECIALE TURISMO

Engaging James Joyce Dublin walking tour.



[Vai al video](#)

Plan a tour of the city of Dublin for a group of teenagers who want to explore meaningful places linked to Joyce's works.