James Joyce & Revolutionary Ireland


1916 *Proclamation* – printed secretly and signed by IRB leadership, Sunday 3rd; read out at the GPO, Monday, 4th; reprinted by Sinn Féin Government, 1919.
Colonial Ireland

Pre-19th century

• Norman invasion – feudal “Lordship” established in Ireland by Henry II: 1172-79
• Anglican Reformation – resisted by the majority of Irish nobility and landowners: 1538
• Rebellion of Irish Earls - aided by the Spanish: 1588-1603
• 1641 Rebellion - Catholics rise up against Protestant settlers: 1643
• Cromwellian “Settlement” - Catholics wholly deprived of land: 1655
• Defeat of the English Catholic King James II in Ireland (Battle of the Boyne): 1690
• Treaty of Limerick followed by Penal Laws (Catholics excluded from rights): 1692 &c.
• United Irishmen’s Rebellion – inspired by French Revolution and brutally repressed: 1798
• Act of Union - Irish Parliament integrated with Westminster (London): 1801
• Robert Emmet’s Rising – ends in his execution by hanging, drawing and quartering: 1803
Revolutionary Ireland

19th century

- Catholic Emancipation (allow Catholics into Parliament) won by Daniel O’Connell: 1829
- Development of a constitutional Repeal-of-Union campaign and electoral machine: 1829-45
- The Irish Famine halves the population through death and emigration: 1845-49
- Young Ireland and Fenian Risings breaking the mould of constitutional resistance, 1848 & 1867
- Disestablishment the Church of Ireland (driven through by Liberal PM Gladstone): 1869;
- First of the Home Rule Acts – sponsored by Gladstone, both narrowly defeated: 1886, 1893
- Land War – a violent conflict between Land League tenants and Landlords (“Boycott”): 1879-1903
- Death of Parnell – leader of Irish Parliamentary (Home Rule) following divorce action: d. Oct. 1891
- National Literary Society founded by WB Yeats sponsoring new cultural politics ("soft wax") 1892
- Gaelic League founded by Douglas Hyde to promote the revival of Irish Language – Nov. 1893
British Ireland

20th century

- Wyndham Land Act – a government-sponsored transfer of all Irish land to tenant farmers: 1903
- Sinn Fein (movement and newspaper) founded by Arthur Griffith on Hungarian model: Nov. 1905
- Curragh Mutiny – British forces in Ireland refuse to implement Home Rule by force: 1913.
- Gun-running of German rifles at Dublin by Irish Volunteers using private yachts, July 1914
- Outbreak of World War I and passing of the 3rd Home Rule Bill: August & September 1914
- John Redmond (leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party) sends the Volunteer to War: Aug. 1914
- Irish Volunteers split, 3,000 out of 80,000 remaining at home to drill for revolution;
- Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army embark on the Easter Rebellion in Dublin, April 1916.
Historical Snapshots

16th century Irish nobles, pinct. John Derricke

Bridget O’Donnell
(London Ill., 1846.)

Trim Castle - English power in Ireland

St Patrick (432 a.d.)

Lord Dudley
Viceroy in 1904

Evictions (19th & 20th c.)
Historical Snapshots

The GPO was designed by Francis Johnson, an Irish architect who also oversaw the building of "Nelson’s Pillar" — as it is called in Dublin.

General Post Office (GPO), Sackville St., c.1910

GPO - post-Rising, 1916

The Abbey Theatre, c.1920.

The head is real but the photo is a fake involving students of the College of Art.

Nelson’s Pillar, raised in 1808 to celebrate Trafalgar, was never popular with Dubliners on account of its British associations but well-loved as an urban monument. In 1966 it was blown up, presumably by members of the IRA.

Dublin City was tram-lined earlier than most British cities — and the trams feature prominent in Ulysses.
Patrick Pearse, acting as Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, occupied the GPO and read out the Proclamation from the portico.

Much of the city centre was destroyed and later rebuilt. The GPO re-opened to the public in 1929. Permanent losses include the Royal Hibernian Academy and its pictorial contents. Nelson’s Pillar – from which one of these pictures was taken – remained intact.

Nelson’s Pillar was substantially undamaged and survived until 1966 when it was destroyed by a bomb placed there by break-away members of the IRA.
Historical Snapshots

Thomas Clarke, the oldest leader, was a life-long republican and a survivor of the British prison system. James Connolly was the Secretary of the Worker’s Union and a committed Marxist campaigner for worker’s rights. Thomas MacDonagh was a school-teacher, as was Pearse. Eamon de Valera was spared execution as an American and went on to become President of Ireland.

Death toll
The mortality figures for the Rising were reported as follows:
Republicans, 86 (including 16 executed); British forces, 168; civilians (mostly women & children while scavenging), 1,024; unidentified, 12.

Con Markievicz (née Gore-Booth) was an aristocratic member of the Citizen Army and a founder of the Bean na hEireann women’s movement. She recommend trousers and a revolver as the proper equipment for the Rising and used the revolver to shoot an unarmed policeman in St. Stephen’s Green. To her great disgust, she was spared the death sentence as a woman and later participated on the Republican side in the Civil War.

Lieut. Michael Malone was in command of the unit at Mount Street Bridge which decimated newly-arrived British troops at Mount St. Bridge. 144 British soldiers died in fusillades from his position. He himself died in the action.

Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), the son of an English stone-mason and an Irish mother, an Irish-language enthusiast, lawyer and innovative school-teacher, wrote the 1916 Proclamation by himself, with only a few variations of phrase supplied by James Connolly. The “poetic” tone of the document is completely consistent with the matriarchal blood-sacrifice conception of Irish patriotism which he developed in the last few years – much influenced by the blood-bath of World War I.
1916 PROCLAMATION OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisation, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reap the fruits of her patient preparation, and having at length concluded, as a condition precedent to the achievement of her great end, the agreement with the Allied Governments to enter with them into active co-operation against the common enemy, we, the representatives of the Irish nation, now resolutely advance to claim our own freedom and to assert our right to rule over ourselves, as the first step to the establishment of a united, independent, and free Irish Republic. We proclaim the establishment of a Provisional Government of the Irish Republic under the Chairmanship of Thomas J. Clarke, thenceforth to be known as the First Dáil Éireann, and to be called the Irish Republic.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to ownership of Ireland, and to the unencumbered control of Irish territorial, to be sovereignty and independence. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has been accomplished. We, the representatives of the Irish nation, have come together under the leadership of a Provisional Government, to assert that right, to establish the Irish Republic, and to enter upon a new era in Irish history, the era of independence and freedom. We are one people, and we demand a government responsible to the people. We are one nation, and we assert our right to be free.

We, the representatives of the Irish nation, declare the right of the Irish people to be masters of their own destiny, and to control their own affairs. We proclaim the establishment of a Provisional Government under the Chairmanship of Thomas J. Clarke, thenceforth to be called the First Dáil Éireann, and to be known as the Irish Republic.

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Young Joyce on the “plague” of Catholicism

The deadly chill of the atmosphere of the college paralysed Stephen’s heart. In a stupor of powerlessness he reviewed the plague of Catholicism. […] Like the plague of locusts described in Callista they seemed to choke the rivers and fill the valleys up. They obscured the sun. Contempt of human nature, weakness, nervous tremblings, fear of day and joy, distrust of man and life, hemiplegia of the will, beset the body burdened and disaffected in its members by its black tyrannous lice. Exaltation of the mind before joyful beauty, exultation of the body in free confederate labours, every natural impulse towards health and wisdom and happiness had been corroded by the pest of these vermin. The spectacle of the world in thrall filled him with the fire of courage. He, at least, though living at the farthest remove from the centre of European culture, marooned on an island in the ocean, though inheriting a will broken by doubt and a soul the steadfastness of whose hate became as weak as water in siren arms, would live his own life according to what he recognised as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid and unashamed.

Elastic Art/Art elastique

• ‘[L]e problème de ma race est tellement compliqué qu’on a besoin de tous les moyens d’un art élastique pour l’esquisser - sans le resoudre. Je suis de l’avis qu’une pronounciation personelle n’est plus permise. Je suis contraint a la faire moyennant les scene et les personnage de ma pauvre invention.’ (Letters, 1, p.118)

• Translation [letter to Guillermet, 5 Aug. 1918]: ‘The problem of my race is so complicated that we need all the means of an elastic art for sketch - without solving it. I am of the opinion that a personal pronounciation is no longer allowed. I am forced to do it through the stage and the character of my poor invention.’ (Letters, 1, p. 118.)