

Selected Letters
of
JAMES JOYCE

edited by
RICHARD ELLMANN

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evening?' and you said without thinking 'Where will you meet me, is it? You'll meet me in bed, I suppose'.

Magari! magari!¹

JIM

TO STANISLAUS JOYCE

MS. Cornell

21 August 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dear Stannie The contract with Maunsel was stamped yesterday in the Stamp Office and the book will come out probably in March. The price is 3/6 nett. I am applying for the examinership as soon as the other certificates come. Kettle was most friendly to me but I received no invitation to Sheehy's² though they must know I am in Dublin. In the new National University there will be no chair of Italian only a lectureship in 'commercial Italian'! at £100 a year for lectures a few times in the week in the evenings. I could get it but would be ill-advised to take it. I have written to Synge's brother to know definitely about the play. I also went to the Abbey Theatre and they showed me the costumes used and are giving me the music of the Keen.³ The manager is reserving a seat for me for the first performance of *Blanco Posnet*. I have had cards printed with the indication 'P.d.S.—, Trieste' and tomorrow am going to see the Manager of the Midland Rwy. I shall say I am on the Italian press and am writing a series of articles on Ireland and try to get a pass to Galway. Poppie went away yesterday to Kilkenny and will not be seen again until she goes to New Zealand.⁴ I sent Nora a stone of shell cocoa. Pay the duty on it which cannot be high and see that Nora takes it *every morning and evening*. Kettle marries Mary Sheehy⁵ on the 8 Sept. Kathleen⁶ marries Cruise O'Brien. Skeffington has a son two months old. Caruso sang here yesterday. Neither Irish Times, Express, or Mail would allow me to interview him though at the Corinthian Club dinner he spoke to the toast in Italian and his reply was translated. An Italian Opera Co is playing here⁷ (Aida Gonzaga⁸ of 'I Puritani' last

¹ An Italian expression meaning 'I would it were so.'

² David Sheehy.

³ In *Riders to the Sea*.

⁴ Margaret Joyce was admitted to the Sisters of Mercy; she was sent to New Zealand, where she gave piano lessons in the convent.

⁵ A daughter of David Sheehy. She was a model for Emma Clery in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, though Joyce invented most of the romantic episodes in his novels. Stanislaus Joyce says she inspired two poems in *Chamber Music*, xii and xxv. In later life Mrs Kettle was surprised to learn that Joyce had a liking for her, and she can remember no signs of it.

⁶ Kathleen Sheehy, another daughter of David Sheehy.

⁷ Cavaliere F. Castellano's Italian Grand Opera Company at the Gaiety Theatre.

autumn) is in it [)] but I have been too distracted to go to it. I told the story of this miserable blackmail to Byrne and his opinion is that Gogarty and the other¹ are in collusion. He was very kind to me in the matter. He says that the other's price is half a crown. I liked very much his attitude. I think he is in love himself.

However—we will kill that too like the rheumatism. Eva must come back with me. It means the future happiness of my house; and Nora expects her to come. I rely on you to do all you can to that end and we shall have a fine winter of it.

Nora writes warmly of your kindness to her. Try to cheer her up now and we will put things right. Thanks: and if that was those bowsies' object they have done just the contrary of what they intended JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

22 August 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dear love How sick, sick, sick I am of Dublin! It is the city of failure, of rancour and of unhappiness. I long to be out of it.

I think always of you. When I go to bed at night it is a kind of torture for me. I will not write on this page what fills my mind, the very madness of desire. I see you in a hundred poses, grotesque, shameful, virginal, languorous. Give yourself to me, dearest, all, all when we meet. All that is holy, hidden from others, you must give to me freely. I wish to be lord of your body and soul.

There is a letter which I dare not be the first to write and which yet I hope every day you may write to me. A letter for my eyes only. Perhaps you will write it to me and perhaps it will calm the anguish of my longing.

What can come between us now? We have suffered and been tried. Every veil of shame or diffidence seems to have fallen from us. Will we not see in each other's eyes the hours and hours of happiness that are waiting for us?

Adorn your body for me, dearest. Be beautiful and happy and loving and provoking, full of memories, full of cravings, when we meet. Do you remember the three adjectives I have used in *The Dead* in speaking of your body. They are these: 'musical and strange and perfumed'.

My jealousy is still smouldering in my heart. Your love for me must be fierce and violent to make me forget *utterly*.

¹ Vincent Cosgrave.

Do not let me ever lose the love I have for you now, Nora. If we could go on together through life in that way how happy we should be. Let me love you, Nora. Do not kill my love.

I am bringing you a little present. It is all my own idea and I have had great trouble in getting it done as I wished. But it will always remind you of this time.

Write to me, dearest, and think of me.

What is a week or ten days to all the time of joy before us! JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE (Illustrated letter card¹) MS. Cornell

26 August 1909

4 Bowling Green, Galway

My dear little runaway Nora I am writing this to you sitting at the kitchen table in your mother's house! I have been here all day talking with her and I see that she is my darling's mother and I like her very much. She sang for me *The Lass of Aughrim*² but she does not like to sing me the last verses in which the lovers exchange their tokens. I shall stay in Galway overnight.

How strange life is, my dear love? To think of my being here! I went round to the house in Augustine Street where you lived with your grandmother and in the morning I am going to visit it pretending I want to buy it in order to see the room you slept in.

¹ The illustrations are of Galway places: St Ignatius Church, the Claddagh, Salthill, Claddagh Church (interior), and Menlo Castle.

² Joyce had first heard this ballad or part of it from Nora Joyce. It impressed him so much that he made the ending of 'The Dead' turn upon it. The words tell how a woman who has been seduced and abandoned by Lord Gregory comes in the rain, their baby in her arms, to beg for admission to his house. Three of the verses run approximately as follows:

If you'll be the lass of Aughrim
As I am taking you mean to be
Tell me the first token
That passed between you and me.

O don't you remember
That night on yon lean hill
When we both met together
Which I am sorry now to tell.

The rain falls on my yellow locks
And the dew it wets my skin;
My babe lies cold within my arms;
Lord Gregory, let me in.

The late Donagh MacDonagh pointed out that this is a variant of 'The Lass of Roch Royal', No. 76 in F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (New York, 1957), II, 213-26.

I have asked them for photographs of you as a girl but they have none.

Who knows, darling, but next year you and I may come here. You will take me from place to place and the image of your girlhood will purify again my life.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

31 August 1909

44 Fountenoy Street, Dublin

My darling It is now nearly two in the morning. My hands are shivering with cold for I have had to go out to bring home my sisters from a party: and now I must walk down to the G.P.O. But I do not want my love to be without her letter in the morning.

The ornament I had made expressly for you is now safe in my pocket. I show it to everyone so that everyone may know I love you, Nora dear, and think of you, darling, and wish to honour you.

I was singing an hour ago your song *The Lass of Aughrim*. The tears come into my eyes and my voice trembles with emotion when I sing that lovely air. It was worth coming to Ireland to have got it from your poor kind mother—of whom I am *very* fond, Nora dear.

It is perhaps in art, Nora dearest, that you and I will find a solace for our own love. I would wish you to be surrounded by everything that is fine and beautiful and noble in art. You are not, as you say, a poor uneducated girl. You are my bride, darling, and all I can give you of pleasure and joy in this life I wish to give you.

Nora darling, let our love as it is now never end. You understand now your strange erring wilful jealous lover, do you not, dearest? You will try to hold him in all his wandering moods, will you not, dearest? He loves you, believe that always. He has never had a particle of love for anyone but you. It is you who have opened a deep chasm in his life.

Every coarse word in speech offends me now for I feel that it would offend you. When I was courting you (and you were only nineteen, darling, how I love to think of that!) it was the same. You have been to my young manhood what the idea of the Blessed Virgin was to my boyhood.

O tell me, my sweet love, that you are satisfied with me now. One word of praise from you fills me with joy, a soft rose-like joy.¹

Our children (much as I love them) must not come between us. If they

¹ Camusare *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, II, 177 (172-3)

are good and noble-natured it is because of *us*, dear. We met and joined our bodies and souls freely and nobly and our children are the fruit of our bodies.

Good night, my dearest girl, my little Galway bride, my tender love from Ireland.

How I would love to surprise you sleeping now! There is a place I would like to kiss you now, a *strange* place, Nora. Not on the lips, Nora. Do you know where?

Good night, beloved!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

2 [September] 1909¹

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dear Nora I have had no letter from you today and hope you have not written any to me addressed to Galway. I forgot to tell you not to.

I am in a wretched state of confusion and weakness on account of doing what I told you. When I woke up this morning and remembered the letter I wrote you last night² I felt disgusted with myself. However if you read through all my letters from the beginning you will be able to form some idea of what I feel towards you.

I have not enjoyed one day of my holidays. Your mother remarked my habit of sighing and said I would break my heart by it. I suppose it must be bad for me.

I hope you take that cocoa every day and are getting a *little* fatter on it. I suppose you know why I hope that.

I am worried to death about you, myself, the return journey and Eva. I hope Stannie will wire me enough for both of us.

Dublin is a detestable city and the people are most repulsive to me. I can eat nothing I am so agitated.

When is this cursed thing going to end? When am I going to start? My brain is empty. I can write nothing to you tonight.

Nora, my 'true love', you must really take me in hand. Why have you allowed me to get into this state? Will you, dearest, take me as I am with my sins and follies and shelter me from misery. If you do not I feel my life will go to pieces. Tonight I have an idea madder than usual. I feel I would like to be flogged by you. I would like to see your eyes blazing with anger.

I wonder is there some madness in me. Or is love madness? One moment I see you like a virgin or madonna the next moment I see you

¹ Misdated 2 October 1909 by Joyce.

² This letter has not survived.

shameless, insolent, half naked and obscene! What do you think of me at all? Are you disgusted with me?

I remember the first night in Pola when in the tumult of our embraces you used a certain word. It was a word of provocation, of invitation and I can see your face over me (you were *over* me that night) as you murmured it. There was madness in *your* eyes too and as for me if hell had been waiting for me the moment after I could not have held back from you.

Are you too, then, like me, one moment high as the stars, the next lower than the lowest wretches?

I have *enormous* belief in the power of a simple honourable soul. You are that, are you not, Nora?

I want you to say to yourself: Jim, the poor fellow I love, is coming back. He is a poor weak impulsive man and he prays to me to defend him and make him strong.

I gave others my pride and joy. To you I give my sin, my folly, my weakness and sadness.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

3 September 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My true love Your present is lying before me on the table as I write, ready. I will now describe it to you. It is a flat square case of brown leather with two narrow golden borders. When you press a spring it opens and the case itself inside is cushioned with soft orange-coloured silk. A small square card lies in the case and on the card there is written in golden ink the name *Nora* and under that the dates 1904–1909. Under the card is the ornament itself. There are five little cubes like dice (one for each of the five years we have been away) made of yellowish ivory which is more than a hundred years old. These are drilled through and strung together on a thin gold fetter chain the links of which are like small safety pins so that the whole string forms a necklet and the clasp is at the back beside the middle dice. In the centre of the chain in the front and forming part of the chain itself (*not* hanging from it like a pendant) there is a small tablet also of yellowish ivory which is drilled through like the dice and is about the size of a small domino piece. This tablet has on both sides an inscription and the letters are engraved into it. The letters themselves were selected from an old book of types and are in the fourteenth century style and very beautiful and ornamental. There are three words engraved on the face

of the tablet, two above and one underneath, and on the reverse of the tablet there are four words engraved, two above and two below. The inscription (when both sides are read) is the last line of one of the early songs in my book of verses,¹ one which has also been set to music: and the line is therefore engraved three words on the face and four on the back. On the face the words are *Love is unhappy* and the words on the back are *When Love is away*. The five dice mean the five years of trial and misunderstanding, and the tablet which unites the chain tells of the strange sadness we felt and our suffering when we were divided.

That is my present, Nora. I thought over it a long time and saw every part of it done to my liking.

Save me, my *true* love! Save me from the badness of the world and of my own heart!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

5 September 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My dearest girl Tomorrow night (Tuesday) if I get money wired for I hope to leave here with Eva and Georgie.

Now I have some news for you, my darling. My good friend Kettle is to be married on Wednesday and tonight I had a conversation of four hours with him. He is the best friend I have in Ireland, I think, and he has done me great services here. He and his wife are coming to Trieste to spend a day or two there during their honeymoon and I am sure that you, my darling, will help me to give them a good welcome. Put the house in order and be sure the piano is not lifted and see that your dresses are right. Get the carpenter to deliver that table and stools. He is a very good-hearted fellow and I am sure you will like his wife. Unfortunately I have no money to make them a present. But I will send on a copy of *Chamber Music* from London.² Tell Stannie to take it to my binder and have it done exactly like the one for Schott³ and at once so that it will be ready when they come. We will try to entertain them the best way we can and I am sure that my warm-hearted girl will be glad to give pleasure to two people who are at the entrance of their life together. Will you not, dearest?

¹ *Chamber Music*, ix.

² A grateful allusion to Kettle's complimentary review of this book in the *Freeman's Journal*, 1 June 1907.

³ Probably Enrico Schott, a patron of music then living in Trieste, and a friend of Ettore Schmitz. Schott was responsible for bringing Gustav Mahler to Trieste to conduct concerts in 1904 and 1906. Perhaps Joyce hoped that Schott would have some of the lyrics of *Chamber Music* set to music and sung.

And now about ourselves. My darling, tonight I was in the Gresham Hotel and was introduced to about twenty people and to all of them the same story was told: that I was going to be the great writer of the future in my country. All the noise and flattery around me hardly moved me. I thought I heard my country calling to me or her eyes being turned towards me expectantly. But O, my love, there was something else I thought of. I thought of one who held me in her hand like a pebble, from whose love and in whose company I have still to learn the secrets of life. I thought of you, dearest, you are more to me than the world.

Guide me, my saint, my angel. Lead me forward. Everything that is noble and exalted and deep and true and moving in what I write comes, I believe, from you. O take me into your soul of souls and then I will become indeed the poet of my race. I feel this, Nora, as I write it. My body soon will penetrate into yours, O that my soul could too! O that I could nestle in your womb like a child born of your flesh and blood, be fed by your blood, sleep in the warm secret gloom of your body!

My holy love, my darling Nora, O can it be that we are now about to enter the heaven of our life?

O, how I long to feel your body mingled with mine, to see you faint and faint and faint under my kiss!

Goodnight, goodnight, goodnight!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

7 September 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My little silent Nora Days and days have passed without a letter from you but I suppose you thought I would have left before now. We leave tomorrow night. By the end of the week or by Sunday we will be together, I hope.

Now, my darling Nora, I want you to read over and over all I have written to you. Some of it is ugly, obscene and bestial, some of it is pure and holy and spiritual: all of it is myself. And I think you see now what I feel towards you. You will not quarrel with me any more, will you, dear? You will keep my love always alive. I am tired tonight, my dearest, and I would like to sleep in your arms, not to do anything to you but just to sleep, sleep, sleep in your arms.

What a holiday! I have not enjoyed myself in the least. My nerves are in a dreadful state from worry of all kinds. Will you nurse me when I go back to you?

I hope you take that cocoa every day and I hope that little body of you[rs] (or rather *certain* parts of it) are getting a little fuller. I am laughing at this moment as I think of those little girl's breasts of yours. You are a ridiculous person, Nora! Remember you are now twenty-four and your eldest child is four. Damn it, Nora, you must try to live up to your reputation and cease to be the little curious Galway girl you are and become a full happy loving woman.

And yet how tender my heart becomes when I think of your slight shoulders and girlish limbs. What a rogue you are! Was it to look like a girl you cut away the hair between your legs? I wish you would wear black underclothes. I wish you would study how to please me, to provoke my desire of you. And you will, dearest, and we will be happy now, I feel.

How long the journey will be going back but O how glorious will be the first kiss between us. Do not cry, dear, when you see me. I want to see your eyes beautiful and aglow. What will you say to me first, I wonder?

La nostra bella Trieste! I have often said that angrily but tonight I feel it true. I long to see the lights twinkling along the *riva* as the train passes Miramar.¹ After all, Nora, it is the city which has sheltered us. I came back to it jaded and moneyless after my folly in Rome and now again after this absence.

You love me, do you not? You will take me now into your bosom and shelter me and perhaps pity me for my sins and follies and lead me like a child.

I would in that sweet bosom be
(O sweet it is and fair it is!)
Where no rude wind might visit me,
Because of sad austerities
I would in that sweet bosom be.

I would be ever in that heart
(O soft I knock and soft entreat her!)
Where only peace might be my part.
Austerities were all the sweeter
So I were ever in that heart.²

JIM

¹ Miramare is a white marble castle near Trieste, built in the Norman style by the Archduke Maximilian in 1854-6.

² *Chamber Music* vi

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

7 September 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dearest. Tomorrow night we leave. At the last moment I have managed everything and Eva is coming. Prepare for us.

I was trying to recall your face but could only see your eyes. I want you to look your best for me when I come. Have you any nice clothes now? Is your hair a good colour or is it full of cinders? You have no right to be ugly and slovenly at your age and I hope now you will pay me the compliment of looking well.

I am excited all day. Love is a cursed nuisance especially when coupled with lust also. It is terribly provoking to think that you are lying waiting for me at this moment at the other end of Europe while I am here. I am *not* in a *nice* mood just now.

Let me talk of your present. Do you like the idea? Or do you think it as mad as myself? Has your mother or sister written to you about me? I rather fancy they liked me. How stupid I am asking you questions you have no time to answer!

Keep that piano and get a camp bed for Eva and Georgie. Be sure and have a fine warm dinner or supper or breakfast for us when we arrive. You will, won't you? You will let me feel from the first moment I put my foot inside my house that I am going to be happy in every way. Don't begin to tell me stories about debts we owe. I will ask you, darling, to be as kind to me as you can be as I am dreadfully nervous from all the worry and *pensieri* I have had, very very nervous indeed. How strange it will be when I first catch sight of you! To think of you waiting, waiting there for me to come back!

I hope you will like my sister Eva. People say it is unwise to bring a sister into the house but you asked me to, dear. You will be kind to her, I am sure, my good-hearted little Nora. And perhaps in two years' time your sister Dilly will come to stay with us for a few months.

My darling, I have such a lot to tell you and will tell it to you every night in the intervals of doing something else. What a moment that is, dear! A brief madness or heaven. I know I lose my reason for the time it lasts. At first how cold you were, Nora, do you remember? You are a strange little person. And sometimes you are *very* warm indeed.

Have some appearance of money when I go back. Will you make me a nice cup of black coffee in a nice small cup? Ask that snivelling girl Globocnik how to do it. Make a good salad, will you? Another thing don't bring onions or garlic into the house. You will think I am going to

have a child. It is not that but I don't know what to do I am so upset and excited.

My dear, dear, dear little Nora goodbye now for tonight. I wrote you every night. Now I am not *too* bad; and I am bringing you my gift. O, Lord, how excited I am!

JIM

TO STANISLAUS JOYCE (Telegram)

MS. Cornell

12 September 1909

Milan

Domattina otto Pennilesse¹

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE (Postcard)

MS. Cornell

20 October 1909

[Paris]

[No salutation]

Reached here today and leave tonight for London.² Tell Stannie to call on Latzer³ Via Veneziani, 2, II° to whom I wrote telling him my brother could give the lessons in my absence. Am rushing for train and fear I may miss it. Don't fret

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

[? 25 October 1909]

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My poor little lonely Nora I let so many days go by without writing because only a few minutes before I left Trieste you called me an imbecile because I came home late after being so busy all day. But now I am sorry for you. Please, Nora, do not say these things to me any more. You know I love you. Busy as I am ever since I came I think all day of what presents I can bring you. I am trying to buy for you a splendid set of sable furs, cap, stole, and muff. Would you like that?

I feel the day all wasted here among the common Dublin people whom I hate and despise. My only consolation is to speak about you to my sisters whenever I can as I used to do to your sister Dilly. It is very cruel for us to be separated. Do you think now of the words on your ivory necklet? I have three distinct images of you always in my heart this

¹ 'Tomorrow morning at eight. Penniless.' The last word is mock-Italian.

² Joyce was on his way back to Dublin, this time alone, to start the first regular Dublin cinema, the Cinematograph Volta. His Triestine partners were to follow him as soon as he had completed preliminary arrangements.

³ Possibly Paolo Latzer (1892-1956), whose family had come to Trieste from Graz a few years before.

time. First, as I saw you the instant I arrived. I see you in the corridor, looking young and girlish in your grey dress and blue blouse and hear your strange cry of welcome. Second, I see you as you came to me that night when I lay asleep on the bed, your hair loose about you and the blue ribbons in your chemise. Lastly, I see you on the platform at the station the moment after I said goodbye to you, half turning away your head in grief with such a strange posture of helplessness.

You dear strange little girl! And yet you write to ask if I am tired of you! I shall never be tired of you, dearest, if you will only be a *little* more polite[.] I cannot write you so often this time as I [am] dreadfully busy from morning to night. Do not fret, darling. If you do you will ruin my chances of doing anything. After this I hope we shall have many many many long years of happiness together.

My dear true good little Nora do not write again doubtfully of me. You are my only love. You have me completely in your power. I *know* and *feel* that if I am to write anything fine or noble in the future I shall do so only by listening at the doors of your heart.

What nice talks we had together this time, had we not, Nora? Well, we will again, dear. Coraggio! Please write me a nice letter, dear, and tell me you are happy.

Tell my handsome little son that I will come to kiss him some night when he is fast asleep and not to fret for me and that I hope he is better and tell that comical daughter of mine that I would send her a doll but that 'l'uomo non ha messo la testa ancora'.¹

Now, my little bad-tempered bad-mannered splendid little girl, promise me not to cry but to give me courage to go on with my work here. I wish you would go to Madame Butterfly and think of me when you hear the words 'Un bel di'²

JIM

Keep my letters to yourself, dear. They are written for you.

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

27 October 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My darling Tonight the old fever of love has begun to wake again in me. I am a shell of a man: my soul is in Trieste. You alone know me and love me. I have been at the theatre with my father and sister—a wretched play,³ a disgusting audience. I felt (as I always feel) a stranger in my own

¹ 'The man hasn't put the head on it yet.'

² In Act II.

³ *Patience*, *Shant*, *Laughter of the Gaiety Theatre* or *The Still Alarm* at the Queen's

country. Yet if you had been beside you [sic] I could have spoken into your ears the hatred and scorn I felt burning in my heart. Perhaps you would have rebuked me but you would also have understood me. I felt proud to think that my son—mine and yours, that handsome dear little boy you gave me, Nora—will always be a foreigner in Ireland, a man speaking another language and bred in a different tradition.

I loathe Ireland and the Irish. They themselves stare at me in the street though I was born among them. Perhaps they read my hatred of them in my eyes. I see nothing on every side of me but the image of the adulterous priest and his servants and of sly deceitful women. It is not good for me to come here or to be here. Perhaps if you were with me I would not suffer so much. Yet sometimes when that horrible story¹ of your girlhood crosses my mind the doubt assails me that even you are secretly against me. A few days before I left Trieste I was walking with you in the Via Stadion (it was the day we bought the glassjar for the conserva).² A priest passed us and I said to you 'Do you not find a kind of repulsion or disgust at the sight of one of those men?' You answered a little shortly and drily 'No, I don't'. You see, I remember all these small things. Your reply hurt me and silenced me. It and other similar things you have said to me linger a long time in my mind. Are you with me, Nora, or are you secretly against me?

I am a jealous, lonely, dissatisfied, proud man. Why are you not more patient with me and kinder with me? The night we went to *Madame Butterfly* together you treated me most rudely. I simply wanted to hear that beautiful delicate music in your company. I wanted to feel your soul swaying with languor and longing as mine did when she sings the romance of her hope in the second act *Un bel di*: 'One day, one day, we shall see a spire of smoke rising on the furthest verge of the sea: and then the ship appears'. I am a little disappointed in you. Then another night I came home to your bed from the café and I began to tell you of all I hoped to do, and to write, in the future and of those boundless ambitions which are really the leading forces in my life. You would not listen to me. It was very late I know and of course you were tired out after the day. But a man whose brain is on fire with hope and trust in himself *must* tell someone of what he feels. Whom should I tell but you?

I love you deeply and truly, Nora. I feel worthy of you now. There is not a particle of my love that is not yours. In spite of these things which blacken my mind against you I think of you always at your best. If you would only let me I would speak to you of everything in my mind but

sometimes I fancy from your look that you would only be bored by me. Anyhow, Nora, I love you. I cannot live without you. I would like to give you everything that is mine, any knowledge I have (little as it is) any emotions I myself feel or have felt, any likes or dislikes I have, any hopes I have or remorse. I would like to go through life side by side with you, telling you more and more until we grew to be one being together until the hour should come for us to die. Even now the tears rush to my eyes and sobs choke my throat as I write this. Nora, we have only one short life in which to love. O my darling be only a little kinder to me, bear with me a little even if I am inconsiderate and unmanageable and believe me we will be happy together. Let me love you in my own way. Let me have your heart always close to mine to hear every throb of my life, every sorrow, every joy.

Do you remember that Sunday evening coming back from *Werther*¹ when the echo of the sad deathlike music was still playing in our memories that, lying on the bed in our room, I tried to say to you those verses I like so much of the *Connacht Love Song* which begin

'It is far and it is far
To Connemara where you are'²

Do you remember that I could not finish the verses? The immense emotion of tender worship for your image which broke out in my voice as I repeated the lines was too much for me. My love for you is really a kind of adoration.

Now, dearest, I want us to be happy. Try to get yourself into better health while I am away and please obey me in the small things I ask you to do. First, to eat as much as you can so that you may become more like a woman than the dear awkward-looking simple slender little girl you are. If that cocoa is out get Stannie to send an order for more: the cost is 5s/6d. In the meantime drink plenty of the other cocoa and chocolate. Pay some off the bill to your dressmaker. I sent you today two books of patterns to choose from. On Saturday I send you seven or eight yards of Donegal tweed to have a new dress made from. I have been inquiring about a set of furs for you and if my business turns out well here I will simply smother you in furs and dresses and cloaks of all kinds. I have some very fine furs in my mind for you.

¹ Jules Massenet, *Werther* (1892).

² Actually the 'Mayo Love Song', words by Alice L. Milligan, music by C. Milligan Fox. It is included in Charlotte Milligan Fox, *Four Irish Songs* (Dublin: Maunsell, n.d. but about 1909). The two lines that follow those quoted by Joyce are:

'O, where the winds alone unfold you

Write now, my dear love, and tell me you are doing what I ask. Tell me you are happy because you see that I love you and am true to you and think of you. I am true to you, Nora, and I think of you all day and always.

Goodnight, darling. Be happy for this short time we are divided, and whenever you think of me give a kiss to my image in Georgie.

Addio, mia cara Nora!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

1 November 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My dear little Butterfly I got your letter this evening and am glad you like that photograph of your unworthy lover taken in all his warpaint. I hope you got my little present of gloves safely. I sent them just as I sent you my first present five years ago—from the 'Ship.' The nicest pair is that one of reindeer skin: it is lined with its own skin, simply turned inside out and should be warm, nearly as warm as certain districts of your body, Butterfly. Twelve yards (not eleven as I wrote) of tweed were sent you from Donegal. I would like the coat of your dress to reach nearly the base of the skirt and to be collared, belted and cuffed with dark blue *leather* and lined with bronze or dark blue satin. If this affair comes off and I am continued beyond the fifth of November and receive fresh money I hope to send you a splendid set of furs which I am selecting specially. They are grey squirrel. There would be a grey squirrel cap with violets at the side and a long broad flat stole of grey squirrel and a beige granny muff of the same on a steel chain, both lined with violet satin. Would you like that, dear? I hope I may be able to get it for you. I am also getting ready a special Xmas present for you. I have bought specially cut sheets of parchment and am copying out on them all my book of verses in indelible Indian ink. Then I will get them bound in a curious way I like myself and this book will last hundreds of years. I will burn all the other MSS of my verses and you will then have the only one in existence. It is very hard to copy on parchment but I work at it hoping it will give pleasure to the woman I love.

It is two o'clock at night. I have been copying here alone in the kitchen since they all went to bed and now I am writing to you. I wish I could look up and encounter those dog's eyes of yours. I will try to deserve the trust they have in me.

Do not fret, little Butterfly. Here are a few lines of verse written four

Tears kill the heart, believe.

O strive not to be excellent in woe

Which only breeds your beauty's overthrow.¹

You are a sad little person and I am a devilishly melancholy fellow myself so that ours is a rather mournful love I fancy. Do not cry about that tiresome young gentleman in the photograph. He is not worth it, dear.

It is very good of you to enquire about that damned dirty affair of mine.² It is no worse anyhow. I was alarmed at your silence first. I feared you had something wrong. But you are all right, are you not, dearest? Thank God! Poor little Nora, how bad I am to you!

Never mind Eva but you might see that Stannie looks after himself. I hope he is better now. Addio, Giorgino e Lucetta! Vengo subito!³ And addio, Nora mia!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

18 November 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

[No salutation]

I dare not address you tonight by any familiar name.

All day, since I read your letter this morning, I have felt like a mongrel dog that has received a lash across the eyes. I have been awake now for two whole days and I wandered about the streets like some filthy cur whose mistress had cut him with her whip and hunted him from her door.

You write like a queen. As long as I live I shall always remember the quiet dignity of that letter, its sadness and scorn, and the utter humiliation it caused me.

I have lost your esteem. I have worn down your love. Leave me then. Take away your children from me to save them from the curse of my presence. Let me sink back again into the mire I came from. Forget me and my empty words. Go back to your own life and let me go alone to my ruin. It is wrong for you to live with a vile beast like me or to allow your children to be touched by my hands.

Act bravely as you have always done. If you decide to leave me in disgust I will bear it like a man, knowing that I deserve it a thousand times over, and will allow you two thirds of my income.

¹ From John Dowland, 'I saw my lady weep', in his *Second Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1600).

² A minor complaint probably contracted from a prostitute.

I begin to see it now. I have killed your love. I have filled you with disgust and scorn for me. Leave me now to the things and companions I was so fond of. I will not complain. I have no right to complain or to raise my eyes to you any more. I have utterly degraded myself in your sight.

Leave me. It is a degradation and a shame for you to live with a low wretch like me. Act bravely and leave me. You have given me the finest things in this world but you were only casting pearls before swine.

If you leave me I shall live for ever with your memory, holier than God to me. I shall pray to your name.

Nora, remember something good of the poor wretch who dishonoured you with his love. Think that your lips have kissed him and your hair has fallen over him and that your arms have held him to you.

I will not sign my name because it is the name you called me when you loved me and honoured me and gave me your young tender soul to wound and betray.

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

19 November 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

[No salutation]

I received two very kind letters from her today so that perhaps after all she still cares for me. Last night I was in a state of utter despair when I wrote to her. Her slightest word has an enormous power over me. She asks me to try to forget the ignorant Galway girl that came across my life and says I am too kind to her. Foolish good-hearted girl! Does she not see what a worthless treacherous fool I am? Her love for me perhaps blinds her to it.

I shall never forget how her short letter to me yesterday cut me to the quick. I felt that I had tried her goodness too far and that at last she had turned on me with quiet scorn.

Today I went to the hotel where she lived when I first met her. I halted in the dingy doorway before going in I was so excited. I have not told them my name but I have an impression that they know who I am. Tonight I was sitting at the table in the dining-room at the end of the hall with two Italians at dinner. I ate nothing. A pale-faced girl waited at table, perhaps her successor.

The place is very Irish. I have lived so long abroad and in so many countries that I can feel at once the voice of Ireland in anything. The disorder of the table was Irish, the wonder on the faces also, the curious

looking eyes of the woman herself and her waitress. A strange land this is to me though I was born in it and bear one of its old names.

I have been in the room where she passed so often, with a strange dream of love in her young heart. My God, my eyes are full of tears! Why do I cry? I cry because it is so sad to think of her moving about that room, eating little, simply dressed, simple-mannered and watchful, and carrying always with her in her secret heart the little flame which burns up the souls and bodies of men.

I cry too with pity for her that she should have chosen such poor ignoble love as mine: and with pity for myself that I was not worthy to be loved by her.

A strange land, a strange house, strange eyes and the shadow of a strange, strange girl standing silently by the fire, or gazing out of the window across the misty College park. What a mysterious beauty clothes every place where she has lived!

Twice while I was writing these sentences tonight the sobs gathered quickly in my throat and broke from my lips.

I have loved in her the image of the beauty of the world, the mystery and beauty of life itself, the beauty and doom of the race of whom I am a child, the images of spiritual purity and pity which I believed in as a boy.

Her soul! Her name! Her eyes! They seem to me like strange beautiful blue wild-flowers growing in some tangled, rain-drenched hedge.¹ And I have felt her soul tremble beside mine, and have spoken her name softly to the night, and have wept to see the beauty of the world passing like a dream behind her eyes.

[Unsigned]

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

22 November 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dearest Your telegram lay on my heart that night. When I wrote you those last letters I was in utter despair. I thought I had lost your love and esteem—as I well deserved to do. Your letter to me this morning is very kind but I am waiting for the letter you probably wrote after sending the telegram.

I hardly dare to be anyway familiar with you yet, dear, until you give me leave again. I feel I ought not to, though your letter is written in your old familiar roguish way. I mean, when you say what you will do to me if I disobey you in a certain matter.²

¹ In Act I of *Enitha*, Robert Hand calls Bertha, 'A wild flower blooming in a hedge.'

I will venture to say just one thing. You say you want my sister to bring you across some underlinen. Please don't, dear. I don't like anyone, even a woman or a girl, to see things belonging to you. I wish you were more particular in leaving certain clothes of yours about, I mean, when they have come from the wash. O, I wish that you kept all those things *secret, secret, secret*. I wish you had a great store of all kinds of underclothes, in all delicate shades, stored away in a great perfumed press.

How wretched it is to be away from you! Have you taken your poor lover to your heart again? I shall long for your letter and yet I thank you for your kind good telegram.

Do not ask me to write a long letter now, dearest. What I have written above has saddened me a little. I am tired of sending words to you. Our lips together, our arms interwoven, our eyes swooning in the sad joy of possession, would please me more.

Pardon me, dearest. I intended to be more reserved. Yet I must long and long and long for you.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

27 November 1909 *Saturday evg.*[*Dublin*]

Dearest Nora I leave tonight in a moment for Belfast¹ and must miss your letter tonight. Tomorrow I come back and will write again. Dream of me Your lover

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

2 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My darling I ought to begin by begging your pardon, perhaps, for the extraordinary letter I wrote you last night.² While I was writing it your letter was lying in front of me and my eyes were fixed, as they are even now, on a certain word in it. There is something obscene and lecherous in the very look of the letters. The sound of it too is like the act itself, brief, brutal, irresistible and devilish.

Darling, do not be offended at what I wrote. You thank me for the beautiful name I gave you. Yes, dear, it is a nice name 'My beautiful wild flower of the hedges! My dark-blue, rain-drenched flower!'. You see I am a little of a poet still. I am giving you a lovely book for a present too: and it is a poet's present for the woman he loves. But, side

¹ The partners were also considering new cinemas in Belfast and Cork.

² Joyce's letter of 1 December 1909, quoted in *James Joyce*, p. 100.

by side and inside this spiritual love I have for you there is also a wild beast-like craving for every inch of your body, for every secret and shameful part of it, for every odour and act of it. My love for you allows me to pray to the spirit of eternal beauty and tenderness mirrored in your eyes or to fling you down under me on that soft belly of yours and fuck you up behind, like a hog riding a sow, glorying in the very stink and sweat that rises from your arse, glorying in the open shame of your upturned dress and white girlish drawers and in the confusion of your flushed cheeks and tangled hair. It allows me to burst into tears of pity and love at some slight word, to tremble with love for you at the sounding of some chord or cadence of music or to lie heads and tails with you feeling your fingers fondling and tickling my ballocks or stuck up in me behind and your hot lips sucking off my cock while my head is wedged in between your fat thighs, my hands clutching the round cushions of your bum and my tongue licking ravenously up your rank red cunt. I have taught you almost to swoon at the hearing of my voice singing or murmuring to your soul the passion and sorrow and mystery of life and at the same time have taught you to make filthy signs to me with your lips and tongue, to provoke me by obscene touches and noises, and even to do in my presence the most shameful and filthy act of the body. You remember the day you pulled up your clothes and let me lie under you looking up at you while you did it? Then you were ashamed even to meet my eyes.

You are mine, darling, mine! I love you. All I have written above is only a moment or two of brutal madness. The last drop of seed has hardly been squirted up your cunt before it is over and my true love for you, the love of my verses, the love of my eyes for your strange luring eyes, comes blowing over my soul like a wind of spices. My prick is still hot and stiff and quivering from the last brutal drive it has given you when a faint hymn is heard rising in tender pitiful worship of you from the dim cloisters of my heart.

Nora, my faithful darling, my sweet-eyed blackguard schoolgirl, be my whore, my mistress, as much as you like (my little frigging mistress! my little fucking whore!) you are always my beautiful wild flower of the hedges, my dark-blue rain-drenched flower.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

3 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My darling little convent-girl, There is some star too near the earth for

the street with an exclamation whenever I thought of the letters I wrote you last night and the night before. They must read awful in the cold light of day. Perhaps their coarseness has disgusted you. I know you are a much finer nature than your extraordinary lover and though it was you yourself, you hot little girl, who first wrote to me saying that you were longing to be fucked by me yet I suppose the wild filth and obscenity of my reply went beyond all bounds of modesty. When I got your express letter this morning and saw how careful you are of your worthless Jim I felt ashamed of what I had written. Yet now, night, secret sinful night, has come down again on the world and I am alone again writing to you and your letter is again folded before me on the table. Do not ask me to go to bed, dear. Let me write to you, dear.

As you know, dearest, I never use obscene phrases in speaking. You have never heard me, have you, utter an unfit word before others. When men tell in my presence here filthy or lecherous stories I hardly smile. Yet you seem to turn me into a beast. It was you yourself, you naughty shameless girl who first led the way. It was not I who first touched you long ago down at Ringsend. It was you who slid your hand down down inside my trousers and pulled my shirt softly aside and touched my prick with your long tickling fingers and gradually took it all, fat and stiff as it was, into your hand and frigged me slowly until I came off through your fingers, all the time bending over me and gazing at me out of your quiet saintlike eyes. It was your lips too which first uttered an obscene word. I remember *well* that night in bed in Pola. Tired of lying under a man one night you tore off your chemise violently and got on top of me to ride me naked. You stuck my prick into your cunt and began to ride me up and down. Perhaps the horn I had was not big enough for you for I remember that you bent down to my face and murmured tenderly 'Fuck up, love! fuck up, love!'

Nora dear, I am dying all day to ask you one or two questions. Let me, dear, for I have told you *everything* I ever did and so I can ask you in turn. I wonder will you answer them. When that person¹ whose heart I long to stop with the click of a revolver put his hand or hands under your skirts did he only tickle you outside or did he put his finger or fingers up into you? If he did, did they go up far enough to touch that little cock at the end of your cunt? Did he touch you behind? Was he a long time tickling you and did you come? Did he ask you to touch him and did you do so? If you did not touch him did he come against you and did you feel it?

Another question, Nora. I know that I was the first man that blocked

¹ Vincent Cosgrave

you but did any man ever frig you? Did that boy¹ you were fond of ever do it? Tell me now, Nora, truth for truth, honesty for honesty. When you were with him in the dark at night did your fingers *never, never* unbutton his trousers and slip inside like mice? Did you ever frig him, dear, tell me truly or anyone else? Did you *never never, never* feel a man's or a boy's prick in your fingers until you unbuttoned me? If you are not offended do not be afraid to tell me the truth. Darling, darling, tonight I have such a wild lust for your body that if you were here beside me and even if you told me with your own lips that half the red-headed louts in the county Galway had had a fuck at you before me I would still rush at you with desire.

God Almighty, what kind of language is this I am writing to my proud blue-eyed queen! Will she refuse to answer my coarse insulting questions? I know I am risking a good deal in writing this way, but if she loves me really she will feel that I am mad with lust and that I must be told all.

Sweetheart, answer me. Even if I learn that you too have sinned perhaps it would bind me even closer to you. In any case I love you. I have written and said things to you that my pride would *never again* allow me to say to any woman.

My darling Nora, I am panting with eagerness to get your replies to these filthy letters of mine. I write to you openly because I feel now that I can keep my word with you.

Don't be angry, dear, dear, Nora, my little wild-flower of the hedges. I love your body, long for it, dream of it.

Speak to me, dear lips that I have kissed in tears. If this filth I have written insults you bring me to my senses again with the lash as you have done before. God help me!

I love you, Nora, and it seems that this too is part of my love. Forgive me! forgive me!

JLM

To NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

6 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Noretta mia! I got your pitiful letter this evening telling me you were going about without underclothes. I did not get 200 crowns on the 25th but only 50 crowns and 50 again on the 1st. Enough about money. I send you a little banknote and hope you may be able to buy a pretty frilly pair of drawers at least for yourself out of it and will send you

¹ Michael Bodkin. See n. 201n.

more when I am paid again. I would like you to wear drawers with three or four frills one over the other at the knees and up the thighs and great crimson bows in them, I mean not schoolgirls' drawers with a thin shabby lace border, tight round the legs and so thin that the flesh shows between them but women's (or if you prefer the word) ladies' drawers with a full loose bottom and wide legs, all frills and lace and ribbons, and heavy with perfume so that whenever you show them, whether in pulling up your clothes hastily to do something or in cuddling yourself up prettily to be blocked, I can see only a swelling mass of white stuff and frills and so that when I bend down over you to open them and give you a burning lustful kiss on your naughty bare bum I can smell the perfume of your drawers as well as the warm odour of your cunt and the heavy smell of your behind.

Have I shocked you by the dirty things I wrote to you. You think perhaps that my love is a filthy thing. It is, darling, at some moments. I dream of you in filthy poses sometimes. I imagine things so *very* dirty that I will not write them until I see how you write yourself. The smallest things give me a great cockstand—a whorish movement of your mouth, a little brown stain on the seat of your white drawers, a sudden dirty word spluttered out by your wet lips, a sudden immodest noise made by you behind and then a bad smell slowly curling up out of your backside. At such moments I feel mad to do it in some filthy way, to feel your hot lecherous lips sucking away at me, to fuck between your two rosy-tipped bobbies, to come on your face and squirt it over your hot cheeks and eyes, to stick it up between the cheeks of your rump and bugger you.

*Basta per stasera!*¹

I hope you got my telegram and *understood* it.

Goodbye, my darling whom I am trying to degrade and deprave. How on God's earth can you possibly love a thing like me?

O, I am so anxious to get your reply, darling!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

8 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My sweet little whorish Nora I did as you told me, you dirty little girl, and pulled myself off twice when I read your letter. I am delighted to see that you do like being fucked arseways. Yes, now I can remember that night when I fucked you for so long backwards. It was the dirtiest

¹ 'Enough for this evening!'

fucking I ever gave you, darling. My prick was stuck up in you for hours, fucking in and out under your upturned rump. I felt your fat sweaty buttocks under my belly and saw your flushed face and mad eyes. At every fuck I gave you your shameless tongue came bursting out through your lips and if I gave you a bigger stronger fuck than usual fat dirty farts came spluttering out of your backside. You had an arse full of farts that night, darling, and I fucked them out of you, big fat fellows, long windy ones, quick little merry cracks and a lot of tiny little naughty farties ending in a long gush from your hole. It is wonderful to fuck a farting woman when every fuck drives one out of her. I think I would know Nora's fart anywhere. I think I could pick hers out in a roomful of farting women. It is a rather girlish noise not like the wet windy fart which I imagine fat wives have. It is sudden and dry and dirty like what a bold girl would let off in fun in a school dormitory at night. I hope Nora will let off no end of her farts in my face so that I may know their smell also.

You say when I go back you will suck me off and you want me to lick your cunt, you little depraved blackguard. I hope you will surprise me some time when I am asleep dressed, steal over to me with a whore's glow in your slumbrous eyes, gently undo button after button in the fly of my trousers and gently take out your lover's fat mickey, lap it up in your moist mouth and suck away at it till it gets fatter and stiffer and comes off in your mouth. Sometime too I shall surprise you asleep, lift up your skirts and open your hot drawers gently, then lie down gently by you and begin to lick lazily round your bush. You will begin to stir uneasily then I will lick the lips of my darling's cunt. You will begin to groan and grunt and sigh and fart with lust in your sleep. Then I will lick up faster and faster like a ravenous dog until your cunt is a mass of slime and your body wriggling wildly.

Goodnight, my little farting Nora, my dirty little fuckbird! There is *one lovely word*, darling, you have underlined to make me pull myself off better. Write me more about that and yourself, sweetly, *dirtier, dirtier*.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

9 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My sweet naughty little fuckbird, Here is another note to buy pretty drawers or stockings or garters. Buy whorish drawers, love, and be sure you sprinkle the legs of them with some nice scent and also discolour them just a little behind

You seem anxious to know how I received your letter which you say is worse than mine. How is it worse than mine, love? Yes, it is worse in one part or two. I mean the part where you say what you will do with your tongue (I don't mean sucking me off) and in that lovely word you write so big and underline, you little blackguard. It is thrilling to hear that word (and one or two others you have not written) on a girl's lips. But I wish you spoke of yourself and not of me. Write me a long long letter, full of that and other things, about yourself, darling. You know now how to give me a cockstand. Tell me the smallest things about yourself so long as they are obscene and secret and filthy. Write nothing else. Let every sentence be full of dirty immodest words and sounds. They are all lovely to hear and to see on paper even but the dirtiest are the most beautiful.

The two parts of your body which do dirty things are the loveliest to me. I prefer your arse, darling, to your bobbies because it does such a dirty thing. I love your cunt not so much because it is the part I block but because it does another dirty thing. I could lie frigging all day looking at the *divine* word you wrote and at the thing you said you would do with your tongue. I wish I could hear your lips spluttering those heavenly exciting filthy words, see your mouth making dirty sounds and noises, feel your body wriggling under me, hear and smell the dirty fat girlish farts going pop pop out of your pretty bare girlish bum and *fuck fuck fuck fuck* my naughty little hot fuckbird's cunt for ever.

I am happy now, because my little whore tells me she wants me to roger her arseways and wants me to fuck her mouth and wants to unbutton me and pull out my mickey and suck it off like a teat. *More* and *dirtier* than this she wants to do, my little naked fucker, my naughty wriggling little frigger, my sweet dirty little farter.

Goodnight, my little cuntie I am going to lie down and pull at myself till I come. Write more and dirtier, darling. Tickle your little cockey while you write to make you say worse and worse. Write the dirty words big and underline them and kiss them and hold them for a moment to your sweet hot cunt, darling, and also pull up your dress a moment and hold them in under your dear little farting bum. Do *more* if you wish and send the letter then to me, my darling brown-arsed fuckbird.

JIM

To NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

10 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dearest I am awfully disappointed by your letter tonight. All day I was

planning to get together the little note I enclose and wondering what you would write to me.

I wired you *Be careful*. I meant be careful to keep my letters secret, be careful to let nobody see your excitement and be careful not to (I am half ashamed to write it now). I was afraid, Nora, you might get so hot that you would give yourself to somebody.

Buy something nice with this note, dearest. I shall be dreadfully miserable if these last letters of ours come to an end. I am exhausted with this business here. Last night I was not in bed till near five between letters and advertisements and telegrams.

Your letter is so cold I have no heart to write you like before. I have gazed a long time at your other letters and kissed certain words in them, one of them over and over again.

Perhaps tomorrow you will write again. Good night, dearest. JIM

To NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

11 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My dearest Nora No letter from you again tonight. You have not answered.

The four Italians have left Finn's Hotel and live now over the show. I paid about £20 to your late mistress, returning good for evil. Before I left the hotel I told the waitress who I was and asked her to let me see the room you slept in. She brought me upstairs and took me to it. You can imagine my excited appearance and manner. I saw my love's room, her bed, the four little walls within which she dreamed of my eyes and voice, the little curtains she pulled aside in the morning to look out at the grey sky of Dublin, the poor modest silly things on the walls over which her glance travelled while she undressed her fair young body at night.

Ah not lust, dearest, not the wild brutal madness I have written to you these last days and nights, not the wild beast-like desire for your body, dearest, is what drew me to you then and holds me to you now. No, dearest, not that at all but a most tender, adoring, pitiful love for your youth and girlhood and weakness. O the sweet pain you have brought into my heart! O the mystery your voice speaks to me of!

Tonight I will not write to you as I have done before. All men are brutes, dearest, but at least in me there is also something higher at times. Yes, I too have felt at moments the burning in my soul of that

I could have knelt by that little bed and abandoned myself to a flood of tears. The tears were besieging my eyes as I stood looking at it. I could have knelt and prayed there as the three kings from the East knelt and prayed before the manger in which Jesus lay. They had travelled over deserts and seas and brought their gifts and wisdom and royal trains to kneel before a little new-born child and I had brought my errors and follies and sins and wondering and longing to lay them at the little bed in which a young girl had dreamed of me.

Dearest, I am so sorry I have not even a poor five lire note to send you tonight but on Monday I will send you one. I leave for Cork tomorrow morning but I would prefer to be going westward, toward those strange places whose names thrill me on your lips, Oughterard, Clare-Galway, Coleraire, Oranmore, towards those wild fields of Connacht in which God made to grow 'my beautiful wild flower of the hedges, my dark-blue rain-drenched flower'.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE (Fragment of a letter)

MS. Cornell

[? 13 December 1909]

[Dublin]

go to others? You can give me all and more than they can. Do you believe in my love at last, dearest? Ah, do, Nora! Why everyone who has ever seen me can read it in my eyes when I speak of you. As your mother says 'they light up like candles in my head'

The time will fly now, my darling, until your loving tender arms encircle me. I will never leave you again. Not only do I want your body (as you know) but I want also your company. My darling, I suppose that compared with your splendid generous love for me my love for you looks very poor and threadbare. But it is the best I can give you, my own dear sweetheart. Take it, my love, save me and shelter me. I am your child as I told you and you must be severe with me, my little mother. Punish me as much as you like. I would be delighted to feel my flesh tingling under your hand. Do you know what I mean, Nora dear? I wish you would smack me or flog me even. Not in play, dear, in earnest and on my naked flesh. I wish you were strong, *strong*, dear, and had a big full proud bosom and big fat thighs. I would love to be whipped by you, Nora love! I would love to have done something to displease you, something trivial even, perhaps one of my rather dirty habits that make you laugh: and then to hear you call me into your room and then to find you sitting in an armchair with your fat thighs far apart and your face deep red with anger and a cane in your hand. To see you point to what I had done and

then with a movement of rage pull me towards you and throw me face downwards across your lap. Then to feel your hands tearing down my trousers and inside clothes and turning up my shirt, to be struggling in your strong arms and in your lap, to feel you bending down (like an angry nurse whipping a child's bottom) until your big full bubbles almost touched me and to feel you flog, flog, flog me viciously on my naked quivering flesh!! Pardon me, dear, if this is silly. I began the letter so quietly and yet I *must* end it in my own mad fashion.

Are you offended by my horrible shameless writing, dear? I expect some of the filthy things I wrote made you blush. Are you offended because I said I loved to look at the brown stain that comes behind on your girlish white drawers? I suppose you think me a filthy wretch. How will you answer those letters? I hope and hope you *too* will write me letters even madder and dirtier than mine to you.

You can if you only wish to, Nora, for I must tell you also that [breaks off]

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

15 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dearest No letter! only a short rude one from Stannie. For God's sake let me be spared any of the old trouble or I shall end in a madhouse. Try, dear, till your lover comes back to make things run smoothly. I can write no more. What does he fight with me for? I am doing my best for you all. Please, dear, give him plenty to eat and let him be comfortable. Don't bother him about debts: and for God's sake don't bother me about them. I sent you pictures. Get him to put them up in the kitchen, the big one opposite the fire. Put up well.

No letter! Now I am sure my girlie is offended at my filthy words. Are you offended, dear, at what I said about your drawers? That is all nonsense, darling. I know they are as spotless as your heart. I know I could lick them all over, frills, legs and bottom. Only I love in my dirty way to think that in a certain part they are soiled. It is all nonsense, too, dear, about bugging you. It is only the dirty sound of the word I like, the idea of a shy beautiful young girl like Nora pulling up her clothes behind and revealing her sweet white girlish drawers in order to excite the dirty fellow she is so fond of; and then letting him stick his dirty red lumpy pole in through the split of her drawers and up up up in the darling little hole between her plump fresh buttocks.

Darling, I came off just now in my trousers so that I am utterly played out. I cannot go to the G.P.O. though I have three letters to post.

To bed—to bed!

Goodnight, Nora mia!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

16 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My sweet darling girl At last you write to me! You must have given that naughty little cunt of yours a most ferocious frigging to write me such a disjointed letter. As for me, darling, I am so played out that you would have to lick me for a good hour before I could get a horn stiff enough even to put into you, to say nothing of blocking you. I have done so much and so often that I am afraid to look to see how that thing I had is after all I have done to myself. Darling, please don't fuck me too much when I go back. Fuck all you can out of me for the first night or so but make me get myself cured. The fucking must all be done by you, darling, as I am so small and soft now that no girl in Europe except yourself would waste her time trying the job. Fuck me, darling, in as many new ways as your lust will suggest. Fuck me dressed in your full outdoor costume with your hat and veil on, your face flushed with the cold and wind and rain and your boots muddy, either straddling across my legs when I am sitting in a chair and riding me up and down with the frills of your drawers showing and my cock sticking up stiff in your cunt or riding me over the back of the sofa. Fuck me naked with your hat and stockings on *only* flat on the floor with a crimson flower in your hole behind, riding me like a man with your thighs between mine and your rump very fat. Fuck me in your dressing gown (I hope you have that nice one) with nothing on under it, opening it suddenly and showing me your belly and thighs and back and pulling me on top of you on the kitchen table. Fuck me into you arseways, lying on your face on the bed, with your hair flying loose naked but with a lovely scented pair of pink drawers opened shamelessly behind and half slipping down over your peeping bum. Fuck me if you can squatting in the closet, with your clothes up, grunting like a young sow doing her dung, and a big fat dirty snaking thing coming slowly out of your backside. Fuck me on the stairs in the dark, like a nursery-maid fucking her soldier, unbuttoning his trousers gently and slipping her hand in his fly and fiddling with his shirt and feeling it getting wet and then pulling it gently up and fiddling

she loves to handle and frigging it for him softly, murmuring into his ear dirty words and dirty stories that other girls told her and dirty things she said, and all the time pissing her drawers with pleasure and letting off soft warm quiet little farts behind until her own girlish cockey is as stiff as his and suddenly sticking him up in her and riding him.

Basta! Basta per Dio!

I have come now and the foolery is over. Now for your questions!

We are not open yet. I send you some posters. We hope to open on the 20th or 21st. Count 14 days from that and 3½ days for the voyage and I am in Trieste.

Get ready. Put some warm-brown-linoleum on the kitchen and hang a pair of red common curtains on the windows at night. Get some kind of a cheap common comfortable armchair for your lazy lover. Do this above all, darling, as I shall not quit that kitchen for a whole week after I arrive, reading, lolling, smoking, and watching you get ready the meals and *talking, talking, talking, talking* to you. O how supremely happy I shall be! ! God in heaven, I shall be happy there! I figlioli, il fuoco, una buona mangiata, un caffè nero, un Brasil, il Piccolo della Sera, e Nora, Nora mia, Norina, Noretta, Norella, Noruccia ecc ecc.

Eva and Eileen must sleep together. Get some place for Georgie. I wish Nora and I had two beds for night-work. I am keeping and shall keep my promise, love. Time fly on, fly on quickly! ! I want to go back to my love, my life, my star, my little strange-eyed Ireland!

A hundred thousand kisses, darling!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

20 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My sweet naughty girl I got your hot letter tonight and have been trying to picture you frigging your cunt in the closet. How do you do it? Do you stand against the wall with your hand tickling up under your clothes or do you squat down on the hole with your skirts up and your hand hard at work in through the slit of your drawers? Does it give you the horn now to shit? I wonder how you can do it. Do you come in the act of shitting or do you frig yourself off first and then shit? It must be a fearfully lecherous thing to see a girl with her clothes up frigging furiously at her cunt, to see her pretty white drawers pulled open behind and her bum sticking out and a fat brown thing stuck half-way out of her hole. You say you will shit your drawers, dear, and let me fuck you

then. I would like to hear you shit them, dear, first and then fuck you. Some night when we are somewhere in the dark and talking dirty and you feel your shite ready to fall put your arms round my neck in shame and shit it down softly. The sound will madden me and when I pull up your dress

No use continuing! You can guess why!

The cinematograph opened today. I leave for Trieste on Sunday 2 January. I hope you have done what I said about the kitchen, linoleum and armchair and curtains. By the way don't be sewing those drawers before anybody. Is your dress made. I hope so—with a long coat, belted and cuffed with leather etc. How I am to manage Eileen's fare I don't know. For God's sake arrange that you and I can have a comfortable bed. I have no great wish to do anything to you, dear. All I want is your company. You may rest easy about my going with—. ¹ You understand. That won't happen, dear.

O, I am hungry now. The day I arrive get Eva to make one of the threepenny puddings and make some kind of vanilla sauce without wine. I would like roast beef[,] rice-soup, capuzzi garbi,² mashed potatoes, pudding and black coffee. *No, no* I would like stracotto di maccheroni,³ a mixed salad, stewed prunes, torroni,⁴ tea and presnitz.⁵ Or *no* I would like stewed eels or polenta⁶ with . . .

Excuse me, dear, I am *hungry* tonight.

Nora darling, I hope we will pass a happy year together. Am writing Stannie tomorrow about cinematograph.

I am so glad I am now in sight of Miramar. The only thing I hope is that I haven't brought on that cursed thing again by what I did. *Pray* for me, dearest.

Addio, addio, addio, addio!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

22 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My dearest Nora I send you by this post registered, express and insured a Christmas present.⁷ It is the best thing (but very poor after all) that I am able to offer you in return for your sincere and true and faithful love. I have thought every detail of it when lying awake at night or racing on cars around Dublin and I think it has come out nice in the

¹ The word 'whores' is omitted by Joyce.

² 'Pot roast with macaroni.'

³ A Triestine pastry, baked at Easter.

⁴ 'Sauerkraut.'

⁵ 'Nougats.'

⁶ A corn-meal dish.

end. But even if it brought only one quick flush of pleasure to your cheek when you first see it or made your true tender loving heart give one quick bound of joy I would feel *well, well, well* repaid for my pains.

Perhaps this book I send you now will outlive both you and me. Perhaps the fingers of some young man or young girl (our children's children) may turn over its parchment leaves reverently when the two lovers whose initials are interlaced on the cover have long vanished from the earth. Nothing will remain then, dearest, of our poor human passion-driven bodies and who can say where the souls that looked on each other through their eyes will then be. I would pray that my soul be scattered in the wind if God would but let me blow softly for ever about one strange lonely dark-blue rain-drenched flower in a wild hedge at Aughrim or Oranmore.

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

23 December 1909

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My dearest Nora By the time you get this you will have received my present and my letter and will have passed your Christmas. Now I want you to get ready for my coming. If nothing extra turns up I leave Ireland on Saturday 1 January at 9.20 p.m. with Eileen, though how or where I am to get the money I don't know. I hope you have put the posters in the kitchen. I intend to paper it week by week with the programmes. If you could get a few yards of linoleum or even an old carpet and any kind of a brokendown *comfortable* cheap armchair for the kitchen and a cheap common pair of red curtains I think I would be very comfortable there. Is it at all possible for us to have a bed more? Perhaps Francini would sell us his by the month. I sent you every penny I could spare, dearest, but now I am stranded as the present I gave you, you little nuisance, cost me a terrible lot of soldi. But don't think I am sorry, darling. I am delighted to have given you something so fine and beautiful. Now, darling, urge on Stannie to help me to get back promptly with Eileen and then we will begin our life together once more. O how I shall enjoy the journey back! Every station will be bringing me nearer to my soul's peace. O how I shall feel when I see the castle of Miramar among the trees and the long yellow quays of Trieste! Why is it I am destined to look so many times in my life with eyes of longing on Trieste? Darling, when I go back now I want you always to be patient with me. You will find, dear, that *I am not a bad man*. I am a poor . . .

but I am not a bad deceitful person. Try to shelter me, dearest, from the storms of the world. I love you (do you believe it now, darling?) and O I am so tired after all I have done here that I think when I reach Via Scussa I will just creep into bed, kiss you tenderly on the forehead, curl myself up in the blankets and sleep, sleep, sleep.

Darling, I am so glad you like my picture as a child. I was a fierce-looking infant, was I not? And really, dear, I am just as big a child now as I was then. The foolish things are always coming into my head. You know the picture of the man with his finger up in the *Piccolo della Sera* which you say is 'Jim making some new suggestion'.¹ I am *sure*, darling, in your heart of hearts you must think I am a poor silly boy. You proud little ignorant saucy dear warm-hearted girl how is it that I cannot impress you with my magnificent poses as I do other people? You see through me, you cunning little blue-eyed rogue, and smile to yourself knowing that I am an impostor and still you love me.

Dearest, there is one part of your letter I hardly like to allude to.² I have no right whatsoever to do so and I recognise that you are free to act as you wish. I will not ask you to remember our children. But remember that we loved each other truly as boy and girl almost in that heavenly summer five years ago in Dublin. Darling, I am a sad-hearted person in reality and O I believe that if such a thing as you seem to be thinking of took place I could not live. No, dear, I am too jealous, too proud, too sad, too lonely! I would not go on living, I think. Even now I feel my heart so quiet and sorrowful at the thought that I can only stare at the words I am writing. How sad life is, from one disillusion to another!

JIM

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE

MS. Cornell

24 December 1909 Xmas eve

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

My darling Nora I have just wired you the beautiful motive from the last act of the opera you like so much *Werther*: 'Nel lieto di pensa a me'.³ And as it was too late to wire you money I paid £1 to my partner here Rebez and got him to wire to Caris⁴ in Trieste to pay Signora Joyce immediately 24 crowns. I hope you will have a merry Xmas, darling.

¹ A billboard on the roof of the *Piccolo* building showed the upper half of a big man with hand held high and index finger extended, signalling passers-by to use a particular brand of paper for rolling their cigarettes.

² Nora Joyce threatened to leave him.

³ 'Think of me that happy day.' Jules Massenet, *Werther*.

Now, dearest, I expect Stannie will wire me all he can for the 1st so that I can start.

Darling, I am in a most dreadful state of excitement at present. All day I have been in the middle of the bustling Xmas crowd down at the cinematograph. There was a young constable there on special duty. When it was over I took him upstairs to give him a drink and found he was from Galway and his sisters were at the Presentation Convent with you. He was amazed to hear where Nora Barnacle had ended. He said he remembered you in Galway, a handsome girl with curls and a proud walk. My God, Nora, how I suffered! Yet I could not stop talking to him. He seems a fine courteous-mannered young man. I wondered did my darling, my love, my dearest, my queen ever turn her young eyes towards him. I *had* to speak to him because he came from Galway but O how I suffered, darling. I am dreadfully excited. I don't know what I am writing. Nora, I want to go back to you. Forget everybody but me, darling. I am sure there are finer fellows in Galway than your poor lover but O, darling, one day¹ you will see that I will be something in my country. How excited and restless I feel! I enclose his sister's names. I saw that he was astonished at how you had ended. But, O God, would I not give you all the Kingdoms of this world if I only could. O, darling, I am so jealous of the past and yet I bite my nails with excitement whenever I see anybody from the strange dying western city in which my love, my beautiful wild flower of the hedges, passed her young laughing girlish years. Nora dearest, why are you not here to comfort me? I must end this letter I am so dreadfully excited. You love me, do you not, my dearest bride? O, how you have twisted me round your heart! Be happy, my love! My little mother, take me into the dark sanctuary of your womb. Shelter me, dear, from harm! I am too childish and impulsive to live alone. Help me, dear, pray for me! Love me! Think of me! I am so helpless tonight, helpless, helpless!

JIM

A million kisses to my darling dew-laden western flower, a million million kisses to my dear Nora of the curls.

JIM

Your mother sent that present and I wrote to thank her.

TO NORA BARNACLE JOYCE (Postcard)

MS. Cornell

[26 December 1909] *S. Stephen's Day*

44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin

Dearest I got your letter (a very scatter-brained one too) this morning and the wedding-card you enclose. Don't send any present for me. Keep

¹ An allusion to the aria 'Un bel di' in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Act II.