

# Lucia Joyce

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38. *"This kissingwold's full of killing fellows."*  
(FW 248.24)

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## LASHING OUT

PARIS AND FELDKIRCH 1932



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## 1. THE DANCING SHIFTS

For a time at the beginning of 1932, Joyce's preoccupation with his father's death disrupted the foundations of his life. He considered not finishing *Finnegans Wake*, and on another level he was so thrown off track that he feared there would be no 2 February celebration of his fiftieth birthday. Helen, a few weeks away from the birth of her child, could do nothing for the event, but as the time approached, Maria Jolas came through with a party and a splendid cake with *Ulysses* represented in blue frosting.

On 2 February, Lucia, dangling irresolutely around the edges of her previous life, suddenly leaped from her liminal position to the forefront of everyone's awareness by throwing a chair at Nora. She was not dressed in a costume, but she might just as well have been performing on a stage. The theatricality of her feat caught everyone's attention.

When they talked it over, those people closest to the family understood Lucia's hostility to stem from her parents' having invited Samuel Beckett to her father's party.<sup>1</sup> She had expected a longer-lasting loyalty from them. She still had feelings for Beckett; his presence would make her anxious and unhappy. But it was not so simple. Beckett had long-standing friendships in the Joyce circle, aside from Joyce himself, and he had been careful to maintain them. On 25 March 1931, he had come to

preferred to marry the men she loved. One exception was Alec Ponisovsky. To her he was "charming, well educated, and about the nicest person I ever knew."<sup>11</sup> But everyone "in the know" in Paris in the 1930s knew that Alec was desperately in love with Hazel and had been for years.

Maria Jolas, who looked down on the Guggenheim circle in general, had kind words to say about Alec. Of the group as a whole, she remarked, "It was a frivolous, less psychoanalytic group looking for one thing—titillation. There was a tremendous amount of lesbianism, the beginning you might say, the first rivulets of the wave of sexuality. Rules were to be flouted and the body abused."<sup>12</sup> But if Jolas knew about Alec's participation in this lifestyle, she did not admit it. To her he was a "devoted friend of Peggy's sister, Hazel," and she said that she "found his conversation astoundingly intelligent. He was personable, kindly . . . and always helpful to other people."<sup>13</sup> Alec was eventually to be picked up by the Nazis in Monte Carlo and presumably killed, but Maria Jolas knew that personal danger had not affected his generous outlook. In the summer of 1940, she remembered thirty years later, Alec and Giorgio Joyce were instrumental in getting Peggy's art collection out of Paris.

In 1932 Alec Ponisovsky, for all of his fine and sympathetic qualities, was still in love with Hazel Guggenheim. Yet the Léons convinced him to propose to Lucia on the grounds that she was a well-raised, bourgeois girl to whom one could not show attention without its being misconstrued. Helen Kastor Joyce looked on the scene being acted out in Paris and saw the futility of the gesture. Alec "was certainly never in love with Lucia," she wrote to Richard Ellmann in 1959. She said Ponisovsky still loved Hazel Guggenheim, and that they had had an affair "for about three years."<sup>14</sup>

What Joyce and Nora Joyce knew about the hearts of their children is unclear. A few years later, Léon's and Joyce's account for Lucia's doctors said that Alec, after years of enjoying Lucia's affection, "disappeared from the picture and often had affairs with other women. When he reemerged on the scene in 1932, he proposed to her, whereupon Lucia became psychotic for the first time."<sup>15</sup>

Stuart Gilbert noticed that sometime early in March there had been an engagement dinner at the Restaurant Drouant at which both Joyce and Paul Léon got "royally drunk."<sup>16</sup> To ask what happened next and

39. Alec "was certainly never in love with Lucia," she wrote to Richard Ellmann in 1959. He was "still in love with Hazel Guggenheim, with whom he had had an affair for about three years. I believe she had left him and returned to London, or started another one of her numerous affairs or marriages."

Helen Fleischman Joyce. Notes to Richard Ellmann re mistakes in his biography of James Joyce, RE Papers.

seen her so pretty, so gay, so strangely tranquil. We exchanged a few joking words, then I watched her move off with a lithe, startlingly light step.<sup>121</sup> Carelessness, plain and simple, was now to stand in the Joyces' way: Burns and Oates had lost Lucia's lettrines.

Between February 1933 and September 1934—that is, for almost one and a half years—Joyce tried doggedly to locate his daughter's work. It took more than a year for Holroyd-Reece to return Louis Gillet's preface and two photographs of Lucia.<sup>122</sup> Then he began an elaborate set of apologies for not sending on the lettrines. They were in his safe in Grasse; they were not in his safe in Grasse; they must be in England; no, they were apparently sent to Paris; they weren't there either; the matter was now in the hands of the Paris postmaster general. During this time Léon tried every strategy he could think of to compel a response, including the threat that if the lettrines were not sent to Holland, the Dutch editor would press Holroyd-Reece for damages. Nothing worked. Holroyd-Reece claimed that his feelings were hurt and that he would no longer write to Léon because of his "commercial, threatening attitude."<sup>123</sup> In August Joyce hand-wrote a letter to Holroyd-Reece himself, reviewing the dark trail of human error that had endangered the lettrines he so admired, which were "also a family document of great value to me and I regard their eventual loss in the same light as I should regard the loss of one of my own mss."<sup>124</sup> He noted that they had already missed the Christmas market. He could soon add that the fiasco had scotched Servire's interest in the *Chaucer A.B.C.*<sup>125</sup> He and Lucia did not find another publisher until Jack Kahane made another "no cost to himself" agreement for the Obelisk Press to bring the book out in 1936 in a limited edition of three hundred.<sup>126</sup> But by then the rationale of the project—its role in reconfiguring a *vita nuova* for Lucia—was destroyed beyond repair.

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## VI. UNMAKING PAIN

Years later, when Richard Ellmann came to write about Joyce's concern over Lucia's lettrines, he described him as manipulative and self-deceiving, devoting "his thoughts frantically and impotently to his daughter."<sup>127</sup> But this description misrepresents both the purpose and the

40. but apart from that they are also a family document of great value to me and I regard their eventual loss in the same light as I should regard the loss of one of my own mss, which had cost me months of labor."

James Joyce to Holroyd-Reece, 4 August 1934, Paul Leon Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.



The reason I keep on trying by every means to find a solution for her case . . . is that she may not think that she is left with a blank future as well."<sup>132</sup> A similar motive would guide his preparation of *Storiella as She Is Syung*, published by the Corvinus Press in 1937.<sup>133</sup>

The pain that Joyce was able to imagine on Lucia's behalf tells us something important about his own early life as well. The extent of his empathy for the pain of being separated from the benefits of one's own work suggests anew the suffering of his own younger years when he had struggled unsuccessfully to get his writing published. The earlier "unfamous" self arose, so to speak, and tried to prevent a recurrence of that situation for his child. That his own self-realization in the pursuit of writing was in some way implicated in her unhappiness he did not yet see. Years later he was to tell his friend Jacques Mercanton that he saw a profound connection between the writing of *Finnegans Wake* and Lucia's suffering. "In that night wherein his spirit struggled," Mercanton later recalled, "in that 'wilderling of the night' lay hidden the poignant reality of a face dearly loved. He gave me details about the mental disorder from which his daughter suffered, recounted a painful episode without pathos, in that sober and reserved manner he maintained even in moments of the most intimate sorrow. After a long silence, in a deep, low voice, beyond hope, his hand on a page of his manuscript: 'Sometimes I tell myself that when I leave this dark night, she too will be cured.'"<sup>134</sup>

#### VII. CONSPIRACY

While Joyce worked with Lucia to lay the fragile foundations of a recovered life, Stuart Gilbert noticed not only her talent and her supposed vanity but also the machinations of those who had no faith in her. Joyce knew that Lucia's way would not be smooth, for she had become outspoken and abrasive with friends and family; he told Harriet Weaver, "and as usual I am the fellow in the middle of the rain holding out both hands though whether she is right in her blunt outspokenness or not is a question my head is too addled to answer."<sup>135</sup> He expressed his anxiety through sleeplessness and stomach pains that Dr. Bertrand-Fontaine mistakenly ascribed to nerves,<sup>136</sup> but gradually he recognized the weight of opinion amassing against Lucia. He continued to see the emotional ca-

41. "Unfortunately," he told Harriet Weaver, "she seems to have antagonized a great number of people, including her immediate relatives and as usual I am the fellow in the middle of the rain holding out both hands though whether she is right in her blunt outspokenness or not is a question my head is too addled to answer."

James Joyce to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 25 November 1932, *Letters I*, 327.

Léon, was that Lucia had "ruined her nervous system by five years dancing strain something which [Joyce] always combated and tried to discourage as far as he could while recognizing her great talent."<sup>149</sup> The injections had no discernible effect one way or another, but in April 1933 Joyce became dejected. Half of his plan seemed not to be working. The ever diligent Léon reported to Harriet Weaver that while Lucia was well enough, she had stopped going to her Laurencin classes.<sup>150</sup> The substitution of the visual arts for dancing was not giving her a renewed sense of vocation. It must have been evident to all of them that new roots could not be put down so quickly. Lucia remained unfocused—but then in 1933 none of them had any fixed plans or any fixed place to live.

Nora and Joyce did not invest in an unfurnished flat and unpack their furniture until February 1935.<sup>151</sup> In the spring of 1933, Joyce wrote first to Valéry Larbaud and then to Carola Giedion-Welcker asking if their residences would be free for his family to borrow during the summer, and then in May he and Nora took Lucia with them to Zurich, where Joyce was to have another eye examination with Dr. Vogt. For the time being, Dr. Vignes was left behind and, along with him, one of the most puzzling moves in the Joyces' many attempts to help Lucia. Dr. Vignes was not a nerve specialist but an obstetrician/gynecologist.

There is no question that Vignes was a distinguished man. He had begun his career in 1903 as an *externe des hôpitaux de Paris* and had been granted his medical doctorate in July 1914. By 1919 he had risen to be head of the faculty clinic in Paris and the following year he was named head of obstetrics for all Paris hospitals. In 1933, when he was consulted about Lucia, he was head of obstetrics at La Charité. He was a member of many learned societies who held military titles and medals of distinction, being honored for a distinguished career in public service and recognized for his pioneering work in obstetrics, especially in problems during pregnancy and anomalies of birth, about which he wrote many books. Some of their titles are *Obstetrical Physiology, Normal and Pathological* (1923); *The Hygiene of Pregnancy* (1942); *Maladies of Pregnant Women* (1948); and *The Sufferings of Childbirth* (1951). In 1933, the year he treated Lucia, his two books *The Duration of Pregnancy and Its Anomalies* and *Premature Babies* were published. Nowhere in this long career and in the records of his extraordinary life as a doctor and writer does

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42. "He was a member of many learned societies: "Membre de la société de pathologie comparée...de la Société anatomique...de l'association française pour l'étude du cancer...de la Société de dermatologie et de syphiligraphie...de la Société d'électrothérapie et de radiologie...de la Société de sexologie (membre fondateur, vice-président)...de la Société de l'anesthésie de d'analgésie." He held military titles and medals of distinction. In 1930, for example he had been named Lauréat de l'académie des sciences; in 1933 he had been elected an Officier de la legion d'honneur. Not only was he honored for a distinguished career in public service, but he was also recognized for his pioneering work in obstetrics, especially in problems during pregnancy and anomalies of birth.

Expose des Titres et des Travaux Scientifiques du Dr. H. Vignes.

# Lucia Joyce

## Supplemental Material

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These are quotations of my own language that were deleted before publication.

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1. "The whole family was bickering. Looking back at this time in June, Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver that his decision to take up domicile in England had brought only misery into the lives of Nora and Lucia."

Joyce's nomadic pursuit of his own genius had to end. They had paid enough.

Not everybody who heard about this incident took it as matter-of-factly as Stuart Gilbert. Padraic Colum remembers hearing about it at Sylvia Beach's bookshop. "They didn't get off," Beach told him, and he laughed because "the Joyces' unpredictability had become a joke. There we were, believing that at that moment they were having tea in Piccadilly, and they hadn't got off."<sup>26</sup> Just when they were laughing, however, Joyce walked in, stood on his dignity, and described the seriousness of Lucia's hysteria. And indeed it was serious enough to set off a chain reaction that affected him greatly.

Within a fortnight, in the first week of May, Nora was also threatening to leave him, packing suitcases, making her own version of a scene, and admitting that she too had come to the end of her rope. On 6 May, on the way home from a performance of *Châtiment*, Gilbert found himself embroiled in another Joyce family drama, this one staged by Nora. "Mrs. Joyce," Gilbert observed, "who is nearly as jumpy as her daughter, got more and more *énervée*, blaming him for everything—that they have no home, that the girl was ill and so forth. Unjustly, as I think—for she is just as fretful and capricious."<sup>27</sup> He described the drama of returning to the Hôtel Belmont with Joyce, Joyce's worry that his wife had carried through her plan to desert him, finding no one in the room, going to tea, returning, and waiting in the reading room. "After a quarter of an hour porter asks me to go up. Mrs. Joyce is by herself. Tells me it's all over, she won't live with him any more . . . Says he gives her and Lucia an unbearable life." The show of emotion was quickly over. By the next morning, when Gilbert telephoned, Nora told him that she had "given in again."<sup>28</sup>

All the Joyces were tense, but Lucia's anxiety had the force of being a repetition. Nora and Joyce had heard the story before: She did not want to live with her parents any longer. The first trip to London had kept her from becoming a Margaret Morris instructor; the current trip would separate her from Alec. The previous year at least she had had Helen and Giorgio's flat in the rue Huysmans as a fallback position when things got too contentious at home. Now, with the birth of Stephen, who had a live-in nurse, she had no place to go. To break the impasse, Joyce asked Lucia where she wanted to live since she was so unhappy at home. She tried returning to Paul and Lucie Léon's flat. When that proved too crowded



and nerve-wracking, she asked to go to Padraic and Mary Colum, who had taken over the Jolases's old place in the rue de Sévigné.

On 24 May, Stuart Gilbert wrote in his diary: "The interest has centered for the last twenty days round Lucia." Once she was living with the Colums, everyone in the Joyces' circle seemed intent upon interpreting her conduct. Gilbert thought that she was "selfish," that she "cultivate[d] her father's imperious airs," and that she had, for the first time in her life, "run up against realities." He also thought there was something theatrical about her responses to those realities. She was merely "profess[ing]" sleeplessness and anxiety. He disapproved of the attention the Colums were giving to her, and he noted that "she came to lunch here and was quite cheerful and normal; realized, I suppose, that we are not impressed by hysterics."<sup>29</sup>

Padraic and Mary Colum saw things differently and disagreed with each other about what they saw. Padraic thought Lucia was "distinctly a pretty girl" and remembered that a houseguest whom he'd taken to the Joyces had remarked, "*Mademoiselle de la maison* is the most charming of the girls there." Perhaps because he found her "a normal and attractive young woman"—even if somewhat "hesitant and solitary"—he was surprised by the vehement emotions she directed at her father: "Once when we suggested she come some place with us, she said, 'If anyone talks of my father I'll leave.'" Certain isolated incidents seemed ominous to him although he could not explain why. Lucia had impressed him when she explained her name: " 'Lucia,' she once said to me . . . 'It means Light—like Paris, the City of Light.'" And he found himself lingering over an image of her staring out the window at a particular star, as if it meant something special. He noticed how she slipped in and out of languages: "She would slip from English into French, and from French into Italian, in the course of going from one side of the room to the other." And he noticed that her English idioms were sometimes wrong. He remembered that she had religious longings and that Joyce, on learning she'd gone to Mass, had said, "Now I know she is mad."<sup>30</sup>

Mary Colum, in contrast, was not bothered in the least by faulty idioms or isolated odd behaviors. She tried instead to see the world from Lucia's perspective and to offer the external stability that would allow Lucia to sort out her confusion. Lucia had instinctively turned to a genuine ally. Young, recently married, an American in Paris by virtue of a

2. "When he [Stuart Gilbert] spoke about her [Lucia's] insomnia, he thought it likely that she was posing—in his words 'profess[ing]' sleeplessness. When he spoke about her nervousness, he used the same language—she was once again 'profess[ing] anxiety."

must have gone up to the roof and then descended to the street from another stairwell.) "You win" was neither a confession of madness nor a tacit admission of guilt, but a straightforward reckoning of her position. Lucia was alone at the foot of the cultural stairs, and she was facing another closed door. In a few days, on 29 May, her own brother **tricked her** <sup>3</sup> into going to the sanatorium of Dr. Gaston Maillard at L'Haye-les-Roses, where she was held against her will.<sup>32</sup>

Mary Colum's feeling of guilt extended beyond the regret she harbored for having restricted Lucia's freedom, for in other ways she had deceived Lucia. Joyce and Nora, having listened to Giorgio, decided to have Lucia observed by a nerve specialist, but they did not want Lucia to know this. With Mary Colum's cooperation, they devised a ruse: Each day the psychiatrist whom the Joyces had selected, Dr. Henri Codet, would come to the apartment ostensibly to examine Mary. Mary would claim she needed Lucia to act as a translator, and in this way Lucia would have to interact with the doctor. Posing as the patient, Mary would sometimes answer and sometimes wait for Lucia to reply to his questions about the relation between anxiety and creativity. The psychiatrist would say that nervousness was often coupled with artistic sensibility—"Madame est très nerveuse," and "Madame est artiste"—drawing Lucia out until she interposed, "Mais, Monsieur, c'est moi qui est artiste." ("But, sir, it is I who am the artist.")<sup>33</sup>

Mary Colum thought that no doctor could pass judgment after such a short observation. "Frankly, I had not much faith in the proceedings. The psychiatrist did not understand Lucia, and indeed I have never been able to comprehend how such a person, after a couple of interviews and without having known the patient previously, could come to any real conclusion about anyone's malady." But in any case Dr. Codet's judgment was, interestingly enough, that "there was not much the matter with the girl, and that, whatever it was, she would soon get over it."<sup>34</sup>

Each day, whenever Lucia went out, Joyce would telephone or come over to talk with Mary Colum about the doctor's visits. He professed to be shocked when he learned that Codet had said that Lucia "seems to have been hearing a good deal about sex."<sup>35</sup> Mary was not shocked by Lucia's interest in sex so much as by the general conclusion that nothing special needed to be done for her. She thought that it would take a long time for Lucia to get her emotions in order and that "she could get well

3. "In a few days, on 29 May, her own brother would further betray her..."

did not cease to flow when she no longer mounted a stage and enacted its release. ████████████████████ 4

We can imagine a continuum between Lucia's dancing experiences, which were by bourgeois standards already excessive, and the physical violence that periodically characterized her later conduct. Her life had no rupture or psychotic break but rather a transposition of energy that was no longer restrained and purposeful. It was as if she retained an instinctive loyalty to Dionysos. We can imagine her falling like Icarus, drowning in the "Lethean element" that threatens anyone who risks "the dissolution of the self" in bacchic activity. "Ecstatic reality . . . takes no account of the individual and may even destroy him,"<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche had admitted. Joyce, as if in parody of the same idea, had followed his description of the "radiant," "purified" flight of Stephen Dedalus's soul with "o, cripes, I'm drowned!"<sup>57</sup>

The problem for the Joyce family was really a practical one: Lucia was too noisy. She created too much commotion, set too many nerves on edge, as she inserted her energy into her mother's west-of-Ireland common sense and her father's need for quiet in which to write. It is one thing to glorify the life force as a kind of "Blakean tiger of the night."<sup>58</sup> It is another to live with it day by day. "But you can think in what a state my wife's nerves are after four years of it," Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver in 1935. "And that is the problem, the whole problem, and nothing but the problem."<sup>59</sup> Nora could barely tolerate her husband's bouts of drinking in the evening, and she was not equipped to deal with the personal accusations that her daughter hurled at her as rudely and forcefully as chairs across a room. She could certainly not deal with the chair itself once it was thrown. To someone like Nora, who didn't read books and didn't think about deciphering body language, it must have seemed as if her daughter's sanity had collapsed.

When Giorgio, in sympathy with Nora's position, decided to put Lucia into the hands of doctors, the battle between two hostile principles was joined. For mental health professionals in the early twentieth century were Apollonian men par excellence. They had dedicated their lives to what Nietzsche called "Apollo[s] demands": "self-control, a knowledge of self."<sup>60</sup> In Nietzsche's words, they worshiped "the god of engines and crucibles" and believed the world could be corrected through knowledge and life guided by science. They also believed, to Nietzsche's

4. "Despite Joyce's optimistic projection of an abundant world in wait for Stephen Dedalus, the encounter of Dionysos when a person is alone is different from worshipping him en masse, and it is far more dangerous. She is "just a poor child who tried to do too much, to understand too much," Joyce decided in 1934, as if he had finally understood that the burden of creative license could become too great for a fragile, individual will to bear. The daemonic was both his daughter's heritage and her undoing."

# Lucia Joyce

## Supplemental Material

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### The Notebook Observations; the Early Drafts<sup>1</sup>

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1931-1932  
VI.B.31.028  
VI.B.31.061  
VI.B.31.073  
VI.B.31.106 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.128  
VI.B.31.129  
VI.B.31.132  
VI.B.31.133  
VI.B.31.134 ⊥  
VI.B.31.142 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.154 ⊥  
VI.B.31.172 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.252 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.255 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.260 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.31.262 ⊥ (facing left)  
VI.B.32 - flyleaf version T =/ ⊥



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## LASHING OUT

PARIS AND FELDKIRCH 1932



## 1. THE DANCING SHIFTS

For a time at the beginning of 1932, Joyce's preoccupation with his father's death disrupted the foundations of his life. He considered not finishing *Finnegans Wake*, and on another level he was so thrown off track that he feared there would be no 2 February celebration of his fiftieth birthday. Helen, a few weeks away from the birth of her child, could do nothing for the event, but as the time approached, Maria Jolas came through with a party and a splendid cake with *Ulysses* represented in blue frosting.

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<sup>1</sup>The following discussion of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* notebook observations supplements the summary chapter about the *Wake* at the end of my published biography of Lucia Joyce (chapter 16). In this supplementary material, the "sigla" for the daughter figure from Joyce's notebooks forms a kind of additional infrastructure of the biography, arranged chronologically and placed next to the actual events of Lucia's life. They show what Joyce observed about Lucia as she grew and they indicate her consistent influence on the final text of *Finnegans Wake*. They also indicate the composite nature of the daughter figure in the *Wake*, as Joyce merges experiential observations with notes from other sources about adolescent girls emerging into womanhood, figures like Alice Liddell from *Alice in Wonderland*, Isa Bowman, "Peaches" Browning, Isolde from *Tristan and Isolde*, Edith Thompson from the *Trial of Frederic Bywaters and Edith Thompson*, Lot's daughters, and so forth. In the early notebooks, the daughter is indicated by the nickname "Is" or "Issy" or "Isabeale" or some variation of the name "Isolde." Later, she, like all of the other major characters, acquired a symbol,  $\perp$ , which could also appear on its side, facing either left or right. When used in combination with the symbol  $\top$ , Joyce was usually referring to some aspect of the love triangle in *Tristan and Isolde*.

As Joyce moved from observations of Lucia to the final construction of *Finnegans Wake*, he went through numerous drafts. Following these drafts lets us see, in a way that is rarely available to scholars, the transposition of life into art. As Joyce progressed from watching his adolescent daughter, he joined her, in his imagination, with the situation of other young women entering into life for the first time. He shows them learning about the nature of human intimacy, the anatomy of sex, the secrecy, suspicions and possibilities for betrayal that can accompany sex, and the complexities and ambiguities of human emotional attachments. Of particular interest to me, was Joyce's propensity to align Lucia with "triangles" and with close brother-sister relationships in history and literature. That is, one of his basic instincts led him to figure her as (for example) Isolde in the the story of *Tristan, King Mark and Isolde*, where, interestingly, the triangle is transposed to Shaun, Earwicker and Issy, that is, to the Wakean characters associated, in familial terms, with Giorgio, Joyce and Lucia. This triangular pattern and the brother-sister attachment pattern are insistent in Joyce's notebooks, in his drafts and in the final version of *Finnegans Wake*. The triangular pattern is also insistent in my biography of Lucia, as published, but, with the addition of this notebook and draft evidence, the assertion of these heavily weighted familial relationships is even more compelling than in the published version made available to scholars and reviewers. In fact, given the consistency of Joyce's evidence, a biographer would have been irresponsible to create a narrative without these emotional constellations.

Here you will find an additional infrastructure for my biography, given in the form of citations from the notebooks, for scholars who are interested in tracing most of Joyce's observations of the Lucia/Issy character. Also included are several examples of the transformational use of such material that I did not include in the final version of the book; that is, in the published book, I used only material from *Finnegans Wake* and not the genetic material leading up to it, the material that shows Joyce's chronological observation of Lucia and his transformational use of it.

# Lucia Joyce

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43. *"Grisly old sykos who have done our unsmiling bit on 'alices when they were yung and easily freudened."*  
(FW 115.21-23)

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## PLAYING WITH FIRE

ZÜRICH AND GENEVA 1933-35



43

## 1. CLASSIFYING AND CONSTRAINING

When Lucia went to the Burghölzli Poliklinik on 19 July 1933, it was an institution in transition. Directed by Dr. Hans Wolfgang Maier, who had been a medical student under Eugen Bleuler, it was at the cutting edge of research on schizophrenia and what was then known as the “moral treatment” of mental patients. But in the minds of ordinary people, it was still what it had been for many long years: an insane asylum, a house of lunacy, a place of madness, of screaming and despair.<sup>1</sup>

Lucia went there only for a consultation, a diagnosis, and a referral. Since in Maier’s judgment Lucia was “not lunatic but markedly neurotic,”<sup>2</sup> he suggested that the Joyces take her to Les Rives de Prangins, outside Geneva in the town of Nyon. Prangins was another of the twenty-eight hospitals that the Swiss maintained for the care of people with mental and spiritual problems. Though his care of Lucia was fleeting—a judgment, a suggestion—Maier was a pivotal figure in Lucia’s life, for it was through him that she was handed into the care of other doctors who had been trained by Bleuler.<sup>3</sup> He was, consequently, responsible for whatever consistency of diagnosis Lucia received.

How would Maier have looked at Lucia? What could he do for her? Although his colleagues often considered Maier a “weak” scientist, he was a superb administrator, famous for redesigning the therapeutic



The second influence of this departure and the consequent feeling of emptiness in the house is to my mind even of greater importance. Mr. Joyce's thought actuated by this feeling has turned to his work and the last three years of unceasing worry about Miss Joyce, which have caused him almost to abandon his work. It is remarkable that he was even able to accomplish what he did. . . . But what is obvious is that owing to whatever influences it may have been he has neglected that part of his work. . . . [H]is daughter's health . . . should be kept in as satisfactory circumstances as possible though even materially it involves a great sacrifice. Mr. Joyce will never be calm unless he knows his daughter is taken good care of even be it at the sacrifice (as he is doing now) of 7,000 francs monthly.<sup>39</sup>

When Joyce first began to write to Lucia at Prangins, he had thought her worst problems there were melancholy and passivity. In June he had written, "Why do you always sit at the window? No doubt it makes a pretty picture but a girl walking in the fields also makes a pretty picture."<sup>40</sup> His letter is as interesting for its tacit presumption that, whether sitting or walking, Lucia would experience herself as being observed, as for its explicit advice.

When he and Nora finally returned to Geneva to see her at the end of August 1934, Lucia was distraught with grief and beside herself with the joy of being reunited with her parents. Although the Joyces had planned to sneak into the clinic for a private talk with Dr. Forel before seeing her, Lucia had learned of their arrival and fell upon them in tears. "Babbo!" "Mama!" For seven months she had been held, as Joyce was to describe it to Carola Giedion-Welcker on 2 September, "under restraint, that is, her windows are barred, and she is always *surveillée*."<sup>41</sup> Joyce was appalled at the meager young woman who stood before him, a mere ghost of her former self.

Joyce's discussions with Dr. Forel did little to alleviate his distress at the condition of his child. The doctor had no diagnosis to offer him. Carola Giedion-Welcker, Frank Budgen, and Giorgio all received versions of the same report: Forel said he could not make a diagnosis; "he could not sign his name to a conclusive statement about her. . . . The only hold she seems to have on life is her affection for us. . . . I feel if she stays there she will simply fade out."<sup>42</sup> Separated purposefully from the one friend she had made at Prangins, Lucia was found lacking in "affect."<sup>43</sup> Divided from whatever world she had possessed before she was institu-

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44. "We found Lucia after seven months of the clinic almost on the verge of collapse. Utter despair. The doctor says [that] after all that time he can make no diagnostic. They are helpless in the case. The only hold she seems to have on life is her affection for us I feel if she stays there she will simply fade out."

James Joyce to Carola Giedion-Welcker, 2 September 1934, *The Letters of James Joyce*, vol. III, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: The Viking Press and London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 323.

tionalized, she was noticed to be unconnected to life. In Joyce's eyes, seven months at Prangins had eroded her already fragile sense of self.

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## III. FIREBIRD

Dr. Forel tried to mitigate the Joyces' devastation by telling them about a physical abnormality in Lucia that puzzled him. She had too many leukocytes or white blood cells, a circumstance that seemed to indicate some kind of lingering infection that they could not find. Though this worried Joyce, his first order of business was to get her out of Prangins altogether. Forel suggested a colleague in Geneva, a Dr. Loy, who would care for Lucia under a *cure libre*, that is, without physical restraint. But before this transfer could be effected, Lucia staged her most incendiary performance. She set fire to the tablecloth in her solitary confinement room.<sup>44</sup>

The immediate and practical consequence of this startling behavior was to close the doors of Dr. Loy's clinic. Few doctors want to offer freedom to a woman whose irrationality takes a dangerous form. But we should notice that Lucia waited to stage her protest until her father was among its witnesses and that she chose to make a Ring of Fire, as if she were enacting a scene from the Wagner operas of which she was so fond. When Joyce asked her about her "prank," she said that she had used the fire to show her need to get out of the confinement room, reasoning that she had created a circumstance in which the door would be opened. It was as if she had decided to personify the "Prankquean," one of the characters in her father's *Work in Progress*, who "lit up and fireland was ablaze. And spoke she to the dour" (*FW* 21.15–17). She later remarked that fire was red and so was her father's face. The blaze of genius, the fires of consciousness, the heat kindled by a Lucifer ("Lausafire" [*FW* 621.03]), the father a devil, the room a space that she occupied in a passionate but dark and unviable emotional economy, a misdirected love, a preoccupation that she could neither accept nor escape—her act resonates with manifold symbolic qualities. She seemed to speak with the "dancetongues of the woodfires" (*FW* 404.06). But in the report from the clinic, the fire was a cryptic gesture about which the patient refused to speak,<sup>45</sup> and which for that very reason became the focus of further intense inquiry.

45. "pyrolyphics"  
(*FW* 570.06)

Lucia's dilemma was her dependence upon the father whose love confined her in the unhappy and solitary rooms of consciousness. Whatever dark recrimination he read in his daughter's behavior, Joyce now chose to deal with the problem he could address immediately: Lucia's physical condition. Remembering that Frank Budgen had once spoken to him about a friend who had been treated for a reduction of white blood cells, he wrote asking about the condition and the doctor who had treated it. The friend, Fritz Fleiner, put him in touch with Dr. Otto Naegeli, a blood specialist in Zurich. And once he was in Zurich, Joyce decided, after years of resistance, to take Maria Jolas's suggestion and to consult Dr. Carl Gustav Jung.

#### IV. THE BIG MATERIALISTIC DOCTOR JUNG

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The Zurich to which Lucia Joyce returned in the fall of 1934 was very different from the city that had sheltered her as a child during the Great War. Once the site of youthful friendship and awakening aspiration, it was now the site of further dreary probing. What was wrong with her? Why did she play with fire? What made her so angry? She came stigmatized, and she left, according to her new doctors, with no deeper insight into her own spirit. Neither Maier, who examined her again, nor Jung was able to establish a therapeutic relationship with her. In the absence of such rapport, Maier now called her "catatonic," and Jung conceded that he could think of nothing to lessen her suffering. To one doctor, she was withdrawn and unreachable because of her apparent self-absorption; to the other, the lack of "transference" signaled the limit of his art. The one doctor categorized her according to his belief about the body's relation to behavior; the other was the first to practice analytic psychology on her. Jung's task was to ask serious and systematic questions about the psychogenesis of Lucia's problems. To each of them, Lucia responded with an antagonism that her father recognized as characteristic. He and Léon admitted in the *Anamnese* that they submitted to the Burghölzli that she had "a great aversion to all doctors and wants only to be with her father, to leave with him, to show the doctors that the two of them are stronger than medical authority."

The first order of business was, however, Lucia's blood count. To this

46. "commanding approaches to my intimast innermost"  
(FW 248.31)



end, the Joyces hoped that Dr. Otto Naegeli, then director of medicine at the Clinic of the University of Zurich, could help them distinguish symptoms that had an organic origin from psychogenic ones. Their hope was well founded, for Dr. Naegeli had made his reputation by helping physicians make just such distinctions. He had written a manual that described the differences among patients suffering from the aftereffects of traumas, from lingering fright, from hysteria, or from inborn nervousness.<sup>46</sup> His diagnosis of Lucia has been lost or destroyed, so all we can know is that he first saw her on 22 September 1934 and continued to treat her until March 1935, months after she had stopped having psychoanalytic sessions with Jung.<sup>47</sup>

Only within the immediate family did the Joyces admit to what they feared this consultation would produce: They thought that Lucia had syphilis. To Giorgio, Joyce wrote,

Try to understand what I am going to say and don't get it all wrong. Lucia has constant leukocytes . . . a superabundance of white blood corpuscles [sic] . . . 47 Hers is not a disease at all but a symptom. He says that white corpuscles [sic] among other things are the police of the body . . . Lucia's blood is always over policed. They say, therefore, there must be a form of infection. Nothing is absolutely sure . . . [but] the chances are 9 to 1 against syphilis. . . . Physically her case is as baffling as it is psychologically.<sup>48</sup>

Lucia herself was preoccupied with the physical aspects of her case, and she considered her appointments with Jung to be fruitless. Cary Baynes, whom Jung engaged to serve as a companion to Lucia during her months of treatment with him, remembered that Lucia bridled at Jung's insistence on remembering dreams. Such a doctor could do nothing for her, she said, "because my trouble is somewhere in the body."<sup>49</sup> Baynes, trained at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, was impressed that Lucia asked about leukocytes by their proper name, and Baynes talked to her about their function, which was to stave off local infections like appendicitis. "But," she assured Lucia, "you have no such place like that so they do not know why you should have so many of these cells."<sup>50</sup>

Baynes's diary of the several months she spent in Lucia's company is one of the few documents in which Lucia's own speech and self-understanding survive, and aside from this immense importance, it pro-

47. "The normal is 5000 to 6500. She has 17,000 to 20,000. He has never known another such case of constant leukocytes. This does not mean that she is anemic. She is not. Anemia is a deficiency of red corpuscles [sic]. Nor does it mean that she has leukemia-white blood..."

James Joyce to Giorgio Joyce, 9 September 1934, Unpublished letter, RE Papers.



her father's other intricately wrought handiwork, she would act as another tantalizing cipher, provoking Jung to recognize in his situation the intelligent reader's "maddening defeat."<sup>66</sup>

V. A MOTHER, A FATHER, AND A DOCTOR BATTLE IT OUT

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Lucia's program of therapy with Jung lasted more or less four months—an interesting length of time, since it indicates that Jung neither dismissed her case nor made a full commitment to it. In the end, Lucia and Jung didn't establish a satisfactory therapeutic relationship. Aside from a brief period at the beginning, when Lucia apparently spoke openly and happily with him,<sup>67</sup> Jung neither impressed her as wise nor gained her confidence. To her, the doctor and her father seemed equally "old fashioned."<sup>68</sup> And the solid bourgeois comfort in which he worked, so different from the series of apartments in which she had been raised, apparently aroused her resentment.

Very few people shared her low opinion of Jung. In the 1930s Jung's practice had the aspect not only of a thriving clinic but of a religious cult as well. From all accounts he was a man of tremendous vitality, wit, and erudition, and his catholic array of interests in occult subjects attracted an international train of disciples. Most of them were women from prosperous homes who had the resources to live abroad and to "pursue their souls."<sup>69</sup> Emma Jung, Toni Wolff, Linda Fierz-David, Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz, and Dr. Liliane Frey were among them, collectively forming what Jung called his "Anima." Charles Baudouin remembered finding them a strange entourage. In his 1934 journal he noted, "But when someone raised the objection that a majority of his disciples were women, Jung is said to have replied: 'what's to be done? Psychology is after all the science of the soul, and it is not my fault if the soul is a woman.' A jest; but for anyone who has followed his teaching, a jest which is itself charged with experience, and behind which one sees arising in all its ambiguous splendor the archetype of the Anima."<sup>70</sup> One thinks back on these women who formed the inner circle around Jung—variously referred to as the Vestal Virgins, the Maenads, the Jungfrauen, and the Valkyries<sup>71</sup>—and wonders what separated their deep investment in analysis with Jung from Lucia's eventual forlorn hostility.

48. "for his beautiful corssmess parzel"  
(FW 619.04)

# Lucia Joyce

## Supplemental Material

[Home](#) > [Chapter 10 Sections](#) > Shloss' Deletions

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These are quotations of my own language that were deleted before publication.

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1. "That in eighty years scientists would still not have discovered such an underlying organic disease would probably have astounded both Bleuler and Maier, and this fact lends pathos to their decision not to pursue therapeutic interventions or to give more empathetic understanding to their patients."

ture might have mitigated his despair. For Bleuler thought that "with many patients, the number of diagnoses made equals the number of institutions they have been to." In his judgment, the diagnostic situation was dire and was likely to remain so until some uniformity in classification was accepted:

It is obvious that every author of a textbook was obliged, above all, to construct his own system of classification since the systems established by his predecessors were useless to his way of thinking and to his method of observation.

Even within the very same school, one physician defined as paranoia what another terms a melancholia. The in-between forms, the atypical cases, had to be fitted in somewhere, if need be forcibly. Situations as the following are rather common: In a certain hospital there would be a big pot, labeled "dementia." Now along comes a new physician who enlarges the pot standing alongside the other one, and labels the second pot, "paranoia." He then carefully proceeds to seize the old inmates of the institution by some vestige of a delusion and puts them, one by one, in his new pot—and in doing this believes that he is correcting the errors of his predecessors.<sup>11</sup>

With such a chaos of theory around them, the Joyces had received a great blessing. Lucia could not have chosen a better location for her temper tantrum than the Zurich railway station. Whatever help there could be in naming her problem in 1933 was to be had in the quiet discipleship of Hans Wolfgang Maier, who still adhered to his teacher's diagnostic categories.

What he could do to help Lucia feel better or understand her situation more clearly is another question. Even Bleuler had not intended his systematic description of symptoms to serve the interest of the patient in any direct way. He was trying to codify behaviors as a way of laying the foundation for further physiological research. The people who would benefit from his work were not the ones whose lives stood so fragilely exposed to his classifying eye, but people living in some future time whose problems would be expertly recognized. **1**

For Bleuler the essential issue posed by the patients he called schizophrenic was the disturbance of reason.<sup>12</sup> He considered the absence of the ability to make reasonable associations to be the central psychological manifestation of disease. The second most important index of disease was emotional deterioration. Such patients might lack affect; they might

vides the clearest circumstantial evidence that Lucia did not in fact have syphilis. The absence of Naegeli's medical report has left some Joyceans free to speculate that Lucia's erratic behavior might be explained as paresis, a form of neurosyphilis that leads to insanity.<sup>51</sup> But Baynes, who knew explicitly that Lucia had been undergoing blood tests for syphilis,<sup>52</sup> **2** assured her that this was not so.<sup>53</sup> And had Naegeli discovered syphilis, there would have been no reason to lie to Lucia about it.<sup>54</sup>

We are left with another dimension of the issue, the fear of syphilis evidenced in the exchange between Joyce and Giorgio, equaled only by Lucia's own worry that she had contracted the disease. By mid-December, Baynes noted that she thought "the hammering" she had given Lucia about the probity of discussing bodily functions was beginning to take effect, and that Lucia had broached the subject with her father: "And then she told him [Joyce] that she had syphilis . . . explain[ing] to him that he was not to think she thought she had inherited it from him—it was her own fault that she had it."<sup>55</sup> Joyce was equally quick to reassure Lucia that she had been very carefully examined for it, but she was not convinced.

Baynes tried everything she could think of to gain Lucia's confidence. There was nothing shameful about discussing the body, she said. But Lucia would have none of it. She could allude to the kind of sexual experience that might lead to syphilis without being able to discuss her own sex life directly. Baynes recorded her frustration as time and again Lucia began to talk, only to censor herself and then withdraw.

Whatever Naegeli's tests revealed, Lucia could not abide staying in the Burghölzli Psychiatric Clinic. Despite Maier's extensive program to upgrade its facilities and to affiliate it with the University of Zurich, the Burghölzli remained a large cantonal facility, similar to a state hospital in the United States. Its "hysterical" patients were, as one writer has described them, "uneducated and came largely from the lowest classes. Their numbers were relatively small compared with the other patient groups, such as the demented, tertiary syphilitics, and schizophrenics, that made up a state hospital's usual run of cases at that time."<sup>56</sup> To the Joyce family—mindful more of the Burghölzli's dire popular reputation than of the ground-breaking psychiatric work that had been accomplished within its walls—it was the kind of place to be resorted to as a stopgap measure, and unsuitable for a longer stay. On September 28, Lucia

2. "But Baynes, who knew quite explicitly that Lucia had been undergoing blood tests for syphilis, assured Lucia that 'you have no such place like that so they do not know why you should have so many of these cells.'"



is revealed in her observations of Lucia on Thursday, 13 December, the commemorative day for her namesake, Saint Lucia. That morning Baynes took Nora out to see her daughter and watched as Lucia, who had not seen her parents for three weeks, greeted her mother affectionately. Lucia "was dressed as I thought," Baynes noted, "but her mother told me afterwards that she had on an evening dress under her coat, and this she kept on all day." When Nora asked Lucia if Joyce should come for a visit in the afternoon, Lucia laughed and said, "Tell him I am a crossword puzzle, and if he does not mind seeing a crossword puzzle, he is to come out."<sup>89</sup>

Joyce did come to visit, and Baynes recorded what he told her of his conversation with Lucia that afternoon: This was when Lucia told him she thought she had syphilis. Baynes characterized Joyce as blind to the pathology of his own intimate relations: "She was careful to throw back her coat and show herself to him in evening dress. I thought he would get the significance of this but he did not." In Baynes's estimation, Lucia's evening dress was cut from the same cloth as the fire in her room in Prangins. Both were displaced enactments of the sexualized nature of Lucia's attachment to her father, and both explained the animosity between mother and daughter. Incest had reared its tangled head in Baynes's imagination, although she used the Jungian language of "Anima" and "Animus" to explain the psychic system that bound father and daughter together.

Cary Baynes interpreted what she saw as a scene of seduction played out by a young woman whose illness was caused by her illicit desire for a man who refused to understand its importance. Her sister Henri agreed: "At tea I tried and Henri tried to get Joyce to turn his attention for a moment to the meaning of her condition, but it was not possible to make even the smallest dent in the wall he has erected against the understanding of it. He gave some further details of her behavior which show I think how much of an anima situation it is." Then Baynes went on to describe what others attuned to the substance of Joyce's writing have long suspected without having proof: that there was a recognized collusion between Joyce and Lucia in the creation of *Finnegans Wake*. Lucia "asked him if he were stuck in his work and he said he was. 'You mean,' she said, 'that you have not had any new ideas?' 'So,' she said, 'you cannot find anything new, well maybe you can through me.' 'And who knows if I won't?' was his comment to us."<sup>90</sup>

3. "Henri took up this theme and told him [Joyce] if he would but understand what was transpiring in her [Lucia's] mind, he would indeed have the clue to a new idea, but he could not get it."