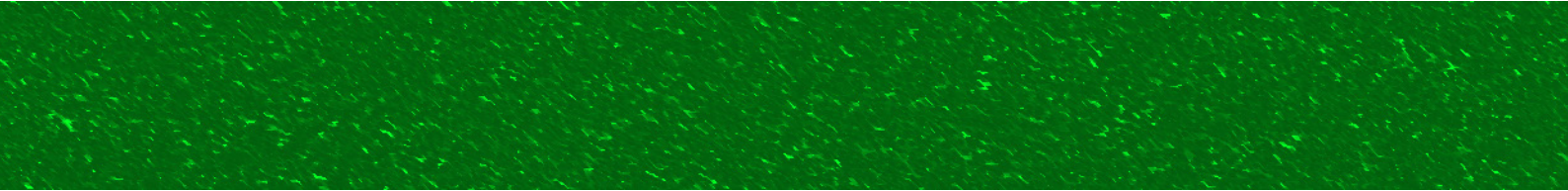


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Lucia Joyce: How to Be the Sister of Famous Book

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Abstract: This essay traces the creative interaction between James Joyce and his daughter Lucia. Joyce wrote extensively about children in his work, using the metaphor of procreation to describe his art form. Lucia served as muse, as model and as rival to his books.

Keywords: Father, daughter, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, writing, dance, James Joyce, Lucia Joyce

Quite early in his creative life, Joyce began to describe his artistic mission in terms of procreation, as if the actual birth of his children, Giorgio and Lucia, had given him a new way of imagining what he hoped to achieve in his writing. With the birth of Lucia, the fascination with gestation and infant development that was already manifest in his delight in Giorgio seemed to intensify, turning into one of the most powerful metaphors of his career. The idea of the artist as a “mother” and the art itself as a kind of progeny controlled the reshaping of *Stephen Hero*, provided a structuring device for *Ulysses*, and led him to fashion *Finnegans Wake* as the great epic story of the regeneration of the earth. The time of Lucia’s early childhood was, Richard Ellmann claimed, the most inventive, forward-looking period of Joyce’s three year struggle to find creative direction and the means to pursue it. The next seven years of Joyce’s writing life emerged from the plans laid at this time, the vision of literature as “the phenomenon of artistic conception, artistic gestation and artistic reproduction,” and his newly honed sense that “in the virgin womb of the imagination the word is made flesh” (Shloss 47-48).

The consequences of her father’s way of perceiving his life as an artist were, for Lucia, manifold and profound. That she had a parent who was secure in his vocation was all to the good. But a parent preoccupied with his art and figuring his preoccupation in terms of another “child” had a more dubious effect. It meant that Lucia’s life was accompanied by spectral children—Stephen Dedalus, Leopold, Molly and Milly Bloom, Anna Livia Plurabelle, H.C. Earwicker—whose presence was ubiquitous. In the Joyce household, real children and invented ones lived, competed, wrestled with one another for places of ascendancy and fell asleep to similar lullabies. Lucia grew up with her father’s eyes always upon her—not just as a doting father but as an artist looking for material.

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Joyce's art surrounded her, haunted her from birth; and she in turn was part of the life that surrounded the maker of that art.

How can a child respond to these complicated circumstances? Let's look at some of Lucia's ways of coping with the children of Joyce's imagination.

You can use

Strategy I

Be unaware of what's going on

Lucia appears in two of the poems Joyce wrote while still in Trieste: "A Flower Given to my Daughter" and "Simples," or at least we can observe that Joyce wrote poems in which young girls figure as innocently beautiful. Somewhere between 1911 and 1914, Joyce began to keep a sketchbook of impressions that we have come to call *Giacomo Joyce*. He used many of these observations in his first book of poetry, *Pomes Penyeach*. In it he has a phantom lover, a young woman on the edge of puberty whom he identifies with many fleeting references. Her pale face is surrounded with furs; she is shy; she wears "quizzing glasses"; she writes with a delicate script. He catches a glimpse of her tobogganing with her father. She is Jewish; she is pale, chill, thin. "Her flesh recalls the thrill of that raw mist-veiled morning." The mystery lady is a virgin—unripe but on the edge of discovering her own sensuality. Among these glimpses, the writer pauses to notice that his beloved student has given a flower to Lucia; and in reverie, he unites the gift, the giver and his daughter: "Frail are her hands that gave/whose soul is sere...Frail gift, frail giver, frail blue-veined child" (Shloss 61-62).

He paused once more in these early years of Lucia's childhood to linger over the meaning of his daughter's life. In 1915 he wrote her another poem entitled "Simples." It begins with a quotation from an Italian popular song—"ella bionda, ei come l'onda!" The father watches a child gathering salad greens in moonlight and speaks of the haunting loveliness of the child, of her talent, and of the innocence of the moment. The girl sings but is unaware that she is being watched. Be mine, the father prays, and asks for a "waxen ear" to shield him from her "childish croon." He has faith in the child; he finds her piercingly beautiful and in her singing moonlit self he glimpses a world complete and completely self-contained. Her concentration on the simple task of gathering greenery both excludes him and rends his heart; and because of this, his poem is akin to a prayer.

We could say that Lucia is the first of Joyce's sirens. Lucia represents a love that is too intense to follow. Give me waxen ears so that I cannot hear her song, he prays. Shield my heart from all that I see here.

Lucia was seven. She had no idea that her father drew inspiration from her being. She sang unself-consciously; she lived the ordinary life of a young Triestine girl. Joyce did not yet exist for her as an artist gathering material for his writing. The world was safe.

You can use

Strategy II

Notice your father's brooding intensity

World War I drove the collective Joyces from their home in Trieste. The next phase of Lucia's life was lived in Zurich, Switzerland, where Joyce worked on *Ulysses* and began to receive the attention of an international group of artists and philanthropists. There is a young girl in the Leopold Bloom family that centers Joyce's masterpiece. Interestingly, she is sent away from a home and is known primarily from her parents' views of her. To herself, she is "silly Milly" (*U* 4.409); to her father she is "Millicent the young the dear the radiant" who follows her mother like a "filly-foal (*U* 14.1082-85)." From the mother Molly to the daughter Milly, from the mother mare to the daughter filly, the girl child is perceived to be a smaller, newer version of the older woman. She is "the same thing watered down," (*U* 6.87) as if all women in time shared the same biological fate. "Destiny," thinks Bloom (*U* 4.229-30).

Molly Bloom imagines her daughter in a similar light, seeing her destiny in the simple fact of her maturing sex: "they all look at her like me when I was her age of course" (*U* 18.1036). At the end of the novel, as she drifts into sleep at the close of day, Molly remembers Milly primarily for the trouble she has caused, and values her because of her beauty: "Shes restless knowing she's pretty...I. was too" (*U* 18.1065).

The daughter is also delinquent; she refuses to stay in place. Molly concludes that 'Its as well he sent her where she is she was just getting out of bounds" (*U* 18.1027) and remembers one transgression after another: "I had to tell her not to cock her legs up like that on show on the windowsill before all the people passing" (*U* 18.1034-36). She broke a small "statue with her roughness and carelessness before she left" (*U* 18. 1012-15). She was sly; she flirted; she smoked cigarettes in secret. She was an obstreperous child. A "saucebox" (*U* 4. 423).

The real Lucia Joyce living in Zurich was nothing like this. Among the many things we can observe from juxtaposing Joyce's inner and outer world is an extraordinary discordance between his image of female adolescence and the testimony of his daughter's young life. Whatever "wildness" she expressed in her character; she was no namby-pamby

smarmy young airhead. She was a serious child; she could be droll and witty; she was an excellent linguist and a budding mathematician who loved physical culture and sport. She was also a talented singer and pianist. Could Lucia have known anything about Joyce's portrait of female adolescence.? There is no evidence that she read *Ulysses* in manuscript during the years between 1915 and 1919; there is no record of a young girl recognizing her own father's portrayal of her age group. Until Lucia moved to Paris in 1920, she remained outside of Joyce's art, except, perhaps in realizing the importance of art in and of itself. She was still in training, living on the margins of someone else's creativity. To her, *Ulysses* was a project that required her to remain quiet while her father worked. The book was already a rival for her father's attention. She could see his brooding intensity.

You can use

Strategy III

Challenge the status quo; Compete with your father

In 1920, things began to change in Paris...both for the better and the worse. Lucia was placed in a school to learn French so that she could conduct her life in a new city and a new language. But the major event in her young life was meeting a new American friend, Helen Kieffer, niece of Myron and Helen Nutting, who introduced her to the Jaques-Dalcroze method of dancing. This was her introduction to the art form that would claim her deepest artistic allegiance, for it gave her a way to channel her energy and to translate music, at which she was already adept, into the language of movement.

In the past, biographies of Joyce have noted this series of happenings as if Lucia were discovering a pastime suitable for a leisured young woman. It was also a godsend for her parents: they wanted to get Lucia out of the house in anyway possible.

But to see these early efforts as frivolity is to miss the advent of a new art form in the Joyce family and to fail to see the challenge presented specifically to Joyce as a writer of fiction. Lucia pursued the dance as seriously as Joyce followed his linguistic talent. "She dances through it all," Joyce paused to notice. But it is also appropriate to say that neither he nor Nora understood the dedication with which Lucia pursued the dance. In their minds, it remained an avocation, which could be discarded at any moment. The only "real" art form was Joyce's brilliant innovations in writing.

In all fairness, very few understood the new forms of dance taking place in Paris at the time. Isadora Duncan, Josephine Baker, the Russian Ballet, Jean Borlin—these were all new names even to Parisians attuned to innovations in body movements—but all the

same, the Joyces failed to take Lucia's enthusiasms and achievements seriously. If she challenged the status quo with her dancing, she did so without effect. Music and writing were the only art forms recognized and rewarded in their household.

At this moment in Lucia's life, several prejudices reveal themselves, both of them related to gender: on the one hand, women should not pursue careers; on the other, women's role was procreation. Lucia was delinquent in both ways: she neither accepted that women should not pursue the arts nor did she think her life would be fulfilled by getting married and having babies. Despite Joyce's view of Milly Bloom as "the same thing watered down"....that is, a younger version of her mother Molly... Lucia was nothing of the sort. She was an original young woman with her own gifts. These prejudices in the Joyce family can account for the friction we see arising in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the Joyce family...for, no doubt, there was friction.

First came the achievements that spoke of talent. After studying with various teachers, including Isadora Duncan's brother Raymond and the Englishwoman Margaret Morris, Lucia joined a dance troupe that performed both in Paris and the south of France. The Six of Rhythm and Color offered Lucia inspiration and friendship as well as opportunities to perform. Founded by Helene Vanel and Lois Hutton, they taught Lucia that dance was not merely a technique—it was a spiritual event: "They should be improving their spirit before starting to perform. There is so much to do, simply to adjust to the world, so much to look at, to astonish one, so much to look for, so many essential problems to consider, so much to bring into harmony, to combine, until the spirit draws its own conclusions." They envisioned the artist as having an aura, a "radiance," that little by little, through words, suggestions and revelations, would penetrate the subconscious, bringing the student to a realization of her own truth (Vanel 34).

These girls provided Lucia with a meaningful way to look at her endeavors. Equally important, they offered her a life away from her family. By 1926, the Joyces had weathered the publication of *Ulysses* and had enough money to move to a decent flat, but the turmoil surrounding *Ulysses* did not cease. Joyce had learned that Samuel Roth had pirated *Ulysses* in America. While obscenity trials had marred their early years in Paris, Roth's actions threatened to turn their lives into another round of trials about intellectual property rights. This time Lucia had a community of friends to retreat to. They encouraged her to enter a prestigious international dance competition at the Bal Bullier in May of 1928. Lucia made it to the final six contestants...the audience thought she should have won...they booed when the winner was announced..."The Irish girl! Gentlemen be fair!" they cried. Charles de Saint Cyr's judgment was the same: he thought her the only dancer

with sufficient talent to become a professional dancer. To him she was a “very remarkable artist whose craft was both “subtle and barbaric” (*La Semaine*; my translation).

But then nothing happened. Giorgio made his singing debut and Joyce hauled the family off to England for more summer research on *Finnegans Wake*. Lucia’s accomplishment was at first overlooked, and then actively discouraged. According to her sister in law, Helen Fleishman, it was Nora’s doing. She bullied Lucia to give it all up. And then Nora and Joyce decided to pack up their home and move to England more permanently. If Lucia had tried to compete with Joyce’s writing in the 1920s, she had failed.

You can use

Strategy IV

Feel sorry for yourself and throw a tantrum

From this time forward, interpreting Lucia’s life becomes more complicated. After the Square Robiac house in Paris was packed up, Lucia threw a tantrum at the railway station. She didn’t want to go to England again....she and her friend Kitten Neel had planned to give physical culture lessons in Paris, and her father’s plans interrupted all her own life ambitions. Joyce’s previous biographers, Richard Ellmann and Brenda Maddox, both interpret this behavior as signs of Lucia’s growing mental illness. And there is no doubt that Lucia acted out. When the telephone rang repeatedly after the publication of *Ulysses*, Lucia cut the phone lines to stop the noise. We can find other examples of extreme behavior. When Nora nattered at her, she once threw a chair at her mother. But there are other ways of accounting for it. Repeatedly giving up your own goals in life, repeatedly being sidelined by the attention given to your father, repeatedly being ignored can lead to an understandable anger.

To me it has never been clear that Lucia was schizophrenic. That is the diagnosis usually given to her, but do we always need a label for unhappiness? Are all ways of expressing anger inevitably signs of derangement? When Lucia threw her railway station tantrum, she was being pulled away from everything that was meaningful to her: she had no friends in England; she had no dance troupe in England; she had no boyfriend in England; she had nothing except sitting on the sidelines once again. Perhaps some tantrums are justified.

You can use

Strategy V

Start performing for your father

One thing that has remained constant in this brief survey of Lucia's life is Joyce's observation of his daughter and his transposition of young girls into his growing body of work. And one thing I have tried to make clear is that his fictionalized representations of childhood and adolescence are often at odds with Lucia's actual character. What are the consequences of such discordance? Lucia was a serious, introspective child, good at languages, good at sport, adaptable to circumstances that would have overwhelmed other children. Think about the trajectory of her life: she was born into a culture where Italian was spoken; she was a refugee in Zurich during WWII where she was required to learn German; she was displaced in Paris where she had to learn French; her parents spoke English. In what language could she feel at home? And in what place?

In the early 1930s, the Joyces tried to change the trajectory of Lucia's life and to interest her in an arranged marriage. The proposed suitor's name was Alec Ponisovsky; he was a relative of Giorgio's wife, Helen Kastor Fleishman, and he was not in love with Lucia. As most people in their set in Paris knew, he was having a love affair with Hazel Guggenheim and was courting Lucia only to please his relatives. When the inevitable occurred—he and Lucia broke up—Lucia had a breakdown of some sort. This was one disappointment too many. Her brother, Giorgio, took her to a sanatorium, where she was institutionalized for the first time. From this point onward, psychiatric doctors and mental asylums would become a common feature of her young life. No treatment seemed to work, but I would like to focus on one episode in the Joyces' efforts to relieve some of their daughter's unhappiness, for it shows us a relationship between Joyce's writing and Lucia's behavior. As a young girl, she had no idea that her father was writing about her; as an early adolescent, she began to understand that his silent withdrawals produced amazing, unprecedented narratives about everyday life. In her teenage years, she took Joyce's dedication to heart and tried to establish herself in a new vocation, competing in some sense with his belief in the saving power of art. Art was to save both of them, but only Joyce prevailed.

Not knowing where to turn, Joyce took Lucia to Zurich, Switzerland to the private clinic of Carl Gustav Jung. Jung housed her in a neighboring sanatorium run by Dr. Theodor Brunner, and he engaged a companion for her. It is from the diaries of this companion, Carey Baynes, that we retain some of the most careful and riveting images of Lucia during a crucially important time in her attempted recovery. And these disquieting observations reveal a young woman bent upon performing for her father. That is, Lucia

consciously created *tableau vivants* for Joyce to observe and reckon with in his writing. She has gone from unself-conscious living to conscious engagement with her rival *Finnegans Wake*.

Cary Baynes drove Lucia around Zurich, took her shopping, and often had tea with the senior Joyces. We know more about her interactions with the family than we know about Jung's treatment plan. She tried repeatedly to get Lucia to give voice to her thoughts. On one outing, for example, she told Lucia that she thought many things had happened to her which she did not understand. Lucia responded enthusiastically, as if she'd finally been given something to grab hold of. "Oh, yes," she replied, "it is just as if you had been very rich and collected many valuable things, and then they were taken away from you" (Baynes). She had lost not only her life in dance but also her prospects for love as well. She retained a fierce sense of the injustice of it all.

Joyce and his friend Paul Leon had tried to convey this situation in the *Anamnese* they wrote for her for the Burgholzli clinic, when they observed that Lucia had not only loved her brother and lost him in marriage but had repeatedly compared herself to him, finding it incomprehensible that his good fortune should be so much greater than her own. "The patient insists that despite her diligence, her talent and all her exertions, the results of her work have come to nothing. The brother, her contemporary, whom she previously idolized, has never worked at anything, is well known, has married wealth, has a beautiful apartment, a car with a chauffeur and, on top of it all, a beautiful wife." She then turned her situation into metaphor, seeing the previous prosperity of her life as the Eiffel Tower and the intervening experiences as the tower's collapse.

Carey Baynes pressed on: she wanted to know why Lucia had set fire to her room in another sanatorium. She thought she already knew the answer: that fire was the universal symbol of passion and that Lucia had acted out a symbolic desire....a danger that had to do with a fixation on the father. And she thought Lucia was both ignorant and repressed. "I said to her that it looked to me as if she had tried to live her life in her head and maybe she had got sick because her body had got tired of this state of affairs." We can see from these comments that Baynes was totally ignorant herself: Lucia had been a physical culture advocate and dancer...there was no way that she had lived entirely in her head; it was a wrong hypothesis. But there is a way in which Lucia was beyond Baynes' understanding entirely; there is a way in which she succeeded in escaping psychoanalytic theory. She was simply too original. And here we come to Lucia's wildness and her will to evade theoretic concepts. On 13 December 1935, the commemoration day for Santa Lucia, Lucia's namesake, Nora came out to see her daughter. Baynes thought Lucia was

properly dressed and noticed that she greeted her mother affectionately. Later in the day, Nora told Baynes that Lucia 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” (Baynes, on 15 Dec. 1934).

Joyce did come to visit, and Baynes recorded what he told her of his conversation with Lucia that afternoon: This was the occasion 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...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 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 (Baynes, on 20 Nov. 1934).

Was Lucia sick or was she acting out as a way of participating in her father’s art? Was she at the mercy of unconscious impulses that overwhelmed her or was she consciously creating situations for Joyce to transpose into a fictional narrative? Carey Baynes and her sister clearly thought she was crazy. They remembered trying to get Joyce to understand this: “Henri took up the theme and told Joyce if he would but understand what was transpiring in her mind he would indeed have the clue to a new idea, but he could not get it.” In their minds, all the Joyces were refusing enlightenment. To them it was all there: The hatred of the mother: “After Lucia had deviled her mother so that

she had to leave the room, she said to her father, ‘She is jealous of me.’” The parents’ blindness; the child’s immersion in the unconscious: “This, of course is true—both of them tend to think of her as a perfectly responsible agent” (Baynes, on 20 Nov. 1934).

Was Lucia’s performance “responsible” in the sense that it was purposefully created? And did Joyce encourage it, finding inspiration in her originality? Was the transposition of life into fiction in turn damaging to his daughter?

Looking back, we can notice that Joyce used her life experiences from childhood onward. Think back: a young girl, “a wild piece of goods. Her slim legs running up the staircase. Destiny. Ripening now. Vain: very.” The unself-consciousness of youth. Lucia. Milly. The eyes of an attentive father, loving, watching, transcribing, seeing always with the needed transpositions of art pressing against the spontaneity of the moment of lived experience. The child growing into consciousness of those eyes trained upon her. “The circumstance that she bears the name of a famous father is relevant to the consideration of her highest aims.” The knowing, half intuitive dynamic between creative father and responsive daughter. The girl waking slowly to a knowledge of her place within an imaginative economy of the most extraordinary kind: Milly, Issy, the Rainbow Girl, the child before the cracked looking glass not of schizophrenia but of her father’s art.

“Tell him I am a crossword puzzle, and if he does not mind seeing a crossword puzzle, he is to come out.” “Well maybe you can [something new] through me.”

You can use

Strategy VI

But there is no strategy VI. Lucia ran out of options. She did not make her way back into life. She made her way into a book instead. Toward the end of his life, Joyce had a long conversation with Jacques Mercanton in which he recognized a connection between *Finnegans Wake* and his daughter’s illness. Mercanton wrote, “He gave me details about the mental disorder from which his daughter suffered....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 [he said]: ‘Sometimes I tell myself that when I leave this dark night, she, too, will be cured’” (114). This never happened, but Joyce remembered her in the lilting voices of children, in the gracefulness of dancing bodies, and in the sorrows of jilted girls, who appear in *The Wake*. We could say that the book won this sibling rivalry in life. But Joyce loved his daughter until the end. Lucia won in his heart.

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