

# Pilgrim Shadows in Joyce's Work

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## *Abstract*

The article traces references to Saint James and to pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela that appear in James Joyce's works.

**Keywords:** Saint James, pilgrimages, 25<sup>th</sup> July, James Joyce's works.

Joyce's work has been the subject of so much writing, reaching such unforeseen limits, that a new contribution to the "James Joyce industry" bearing this title does not come as a surprise. Can anyone cast doubt on the presence of the theme of Saint James in Joyce? There is no room for doubt; the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is also echoed in the works of the Irish writer, albeit mostly in an indirect fashion.

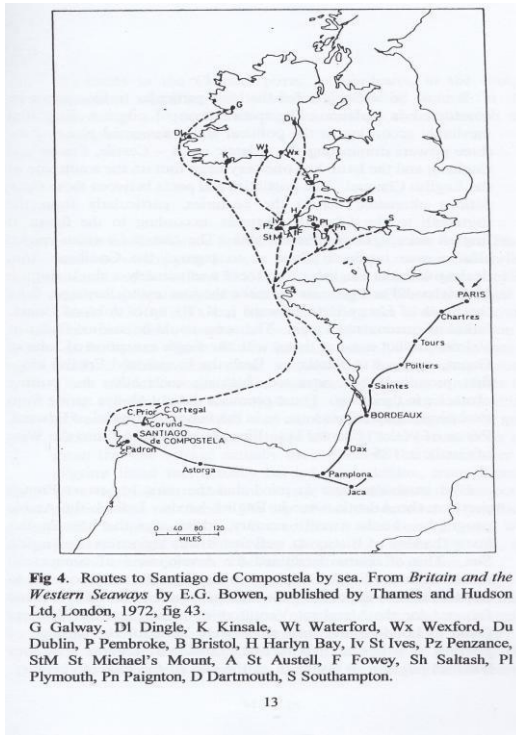
However, we might wonder whether or not this presence is in fact so rare in English Literature and the answer turns out to be dual: yes and no. Let us see, it is exceptional inasmuch as allusions to Saint James do not abound in the history of English Literature but, simultaneously, the references which do exist are made by writers of a consecrated stature such as Langland in *Piers Plowman* (1360), Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* (1390), Samuel Purchas in *Purchas his*

*Pilgrimes* (1625), Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (1603), in *All's Well that Ends Well* (1623) and *Othello* (1622), Walter Raleigh (1554-1618), George Borrow (1803-1881), Robert Southey (1774-1843), Walter Scott (1771-1832), or James Joyce himself (1882-1941), to mention just a few representative cases. And it could not be otherwise if we bear in mind that the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, along with those to Jerusalem and Rome, was a popular phenomenon all over Europe, above all, in the Middle Ages.

There were various routes to Santiago de Compostela from the British Isles by sea, mainly to the port of Coruña or rather crossing to France and continuing on foot along the so-called French Way. The ports of departure in Ireland and the United Kingdom are charted on the map, Dingle, Galway, and Dublin being the most important ones in Ireland. In *Ulysses*, and in particular in the episode of "Cyclops," the following allusion figures:

... and S. Paronymous and S. Synonymous and  
S. Laurence O'Toole and S. James of Dingle and  
Compostella and S. Columcille and S. Columba  
and S. Celestine and S. Colman and S. Kevin  
and S. Brendan and and S. Columcille and S.  
Columba and S. Celestine and S. Colman and S.  
Kevin and S. Brendan and (*U* 12.1698)

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(Tate 13)

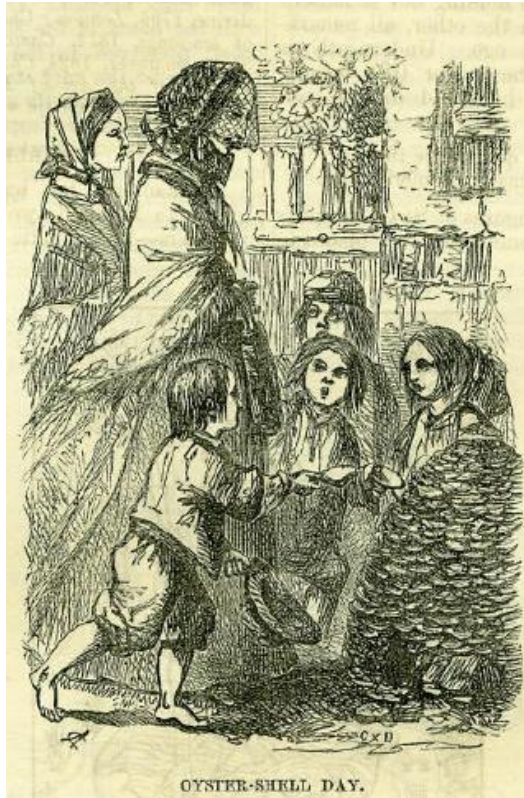
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What turns out to be more surprising is the popular celebration, up to recent dates, of the so-called “Grotto Day,” or else “Oyster Day” on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July when, as is commonly known, the Feast Day of Saint James is celebrated. On this day, children used to build a small cave with oyster shells and other materials, placing a lighted candle inside and saying “Please sir, remember the Grotto” or “A penny for the Grotto,” while asking the passers-by for some coins (Hole 119), but, on other occasions, they recited the full request which alludes to the pilgrimage to Santiago and to the shrine of Saint James, even though the children no longer knew its real meaning:

“Please to remember the grotto;  
It’s only once a year.  
Father’s gone to sea;  
Mother’s gone to fetch him back,

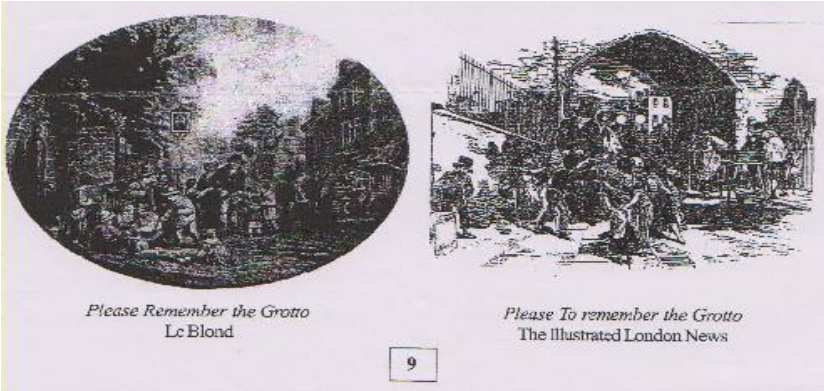
So please remember me.”

Graphic representations of the “grottos” are still preserved and we show some of them below followed by an explanation offered by D’Aeth:



<http://www.shellgrottofriends.org/pasteventsshellgrottoday2009.html> (01/08/2010)

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*FLS News*, No 49. June 2006, 9.



“Please remember the grotto.” Old St. James’ Day  
(Alford 56)

SAINT JAMES'S DAY AND GROTTOS

It is the custom of the children in this neighbourhood (Leytonstone, Essex) on the festival of St. James, July 25th, and on the few following days, to erect little structures of cinkers or rubbish on the edges of the pavement, to which they attract attention by their persistent appeals to "Please to remember the grotto."

During the past grotto season (1904) I invited several of the older boys into the garden and watched them construct one of their edifices.

The *Size* varies; roughly perhaps it is some two feet across, eighteen inches deep, and eighteen inches high.

The *Structure* consists of floor, back, side-walls and roof; the front is left partly open. The roof is formed by placing sticks across the walls and then piling stones upon them, the general form of the roof being that of a dome

*Flowers.* The outside of the structure is ornamented with flowers pushed in between the crevices.

*Materials.* If possible, shells—oyster shells for choice—are procured, but generally, as a matter of fact, the clinkers and stones are used.

*Candle.* The first halfpenny given by the passer-by is spent in purchasing a candle which is put in the grotto and lighted.

The *Date* for making these grottoes did not seem to them clear. "It is grotto time now," said one, "we see others building them"; "We keep a note-book with the time for peg-tops, leap-frog and grotto time," said others.

*Reason for Building.* None of them knew of any reason for their erection; no one had ever seen it elsewhere; they had all done it at school, having seen others. (D'Aeth 182)

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Consequently, a phenomenon of this nature necessarily leaves a trace in literature, as we have mentioned before, and in the case which concerns us, that of Joyce's work, it shows the echoes of the theme of Saint James in the literary production of the Irish writer, even if those echoes are to be traced through an exercise of intertextuality.

We can begin with a humoristic poem around the name of the author and entitled "Epigram on the Ladyfriends of St James" (1931):

As I was going to Joyce Saint James' I  
met with seven extravagant dames;  
Every dame had a bee in her bonnet,  
With bats from the belfry roosting upon it.  
And Ah, I said, poor Joyce Saint James,  
What can he do with these terrible dames?  
Poor Saint James Joyce.

(*Poems and Exiles* 89)

In Dublin, we can find a street called St James, the church of St James and also the St James Gate, better known nowadays for being the headquarters of the Guinness brewery, and in the past for being the place from which pilgrims used to leave for Santiago. These lines play with those allusions in the same way as the following ones from *Ulysses* do:

Mr Kernan, pleased with the order he had booked, **walked boldly along James's street.**  
(*U* 10. 673)

From the sundial **towards James's gate** walked Mr Kernan, pleased with the order he had booked for Pulbrook Robertson, boldly **along James's street**, past Shackleton's offices. Got round him all right. How do you do, Mr Crimmins? First rate, sir. I was afraid you might

be up in your other establishment in Pimlico.  
How are things going? Just keeping alive. (*U* 10.  
718)

In *Ulysses*, we find several references to the theme of Saint James, as we will see below:

And now his strongroom for the gold. Stephen's embarrassed hand moved over the shells heaped in the cold stone mortar: whelks and money cowries and leopard shells: and this, whorled as an emir's turban, **and this, the scallop of saint James. An old pilgrim's hoard, dead treasure, hollow shells.** (*U* 2.212)

**Stephen's hand, free again, went back to the hollow shells. Symbols too of beauty and of power.** A lump in my pocket: symbols soiled by greed and misery. (*U* 2.226)

Stephen, wandering around Sandymount Beach, muses upon the variety of shells that he finds and, amongst them, he mentions the symbol of the pilgrims heading to Santiago: the scallop shell. Some lines ahead he alludes to its beauty, which has largely been captured in worldwide art, either in architecture or in sculpture and painting, and also to the symbolic power encapsulated in the shell.

In the episode "Proteus," once again, we follow Stephen, via the *stream of consciousness*, through the maritime geography of Dublin:

Come. I thirst. Clouding over. No black clouds anywhere, are there? Thunderstorm. Allbright he falls, proud lightning of the intellect, *Lucifer, dico, qui nescit occasum*. No. **My cockle hat and staff and hismy sandal shoon.** Where? To



evening lands. Evening will find itself. (*U* 3.  
485)

The line in boldface alludes to the usual attire of the pilgrim, as appears in the iconography of the pilgrimages to Santiago, that is, the hat with the scallop shell, the staff, the short cape, the haversack and the sandals. Nevertheless, the foregoing allusion goes much beyond that, constituting a clear reference to the song that Ophelia sings in *Hamlet*:

How should I your true love know  
From another one?  
By his cockle hat and staff,  
And his sandal shoon. (*IV*, v, 23)

Certainly, Joyce's quotation comes from Shakespeare but, as occurs with many other lines from Shakespeare, these ones are not genuinely his. Shakespeare appropriates a very popular ballad from the Elizabethan period, "The Friar of Orders Gray"

It was a friar of orders gray  
Walkt forth to tell his beades;  
And he met with a lady faire  
Clad in a pilgrime's weedes.

Now Christ thee save thou reverend friar,  
I pray thee tell to me,  
If ever at yon holy shrine  
My true love thou didst see.

**And how should I know your true love  
From many another one?  
O by his cockle hat, and staff,  
And by his sandal shoone.**  
.../...

There is also another allusion to Saint James in “Scylla and Charybdis”: Eglinton and AE are referred to as: “Booted the twain and staved” (*U* 9.413-14). According to Gifford (220), the boots and staff (“staved”) are generally considered to represent typical features of the pilgrim.

Finally, we find two indirect references concerning pilgrimages in the episode of “Circe”:

STEPHEN

A time, times and half a time.

*(Reuben I Antichrist, wandering jew, a clutching hand open on his spine, stumps forward. Across his loins is slung a **pilgrim’s wallet** from which protrude promissory notes and dishonoured bills. (U 15.4609)*

THE NAVVY

*(staggering past) O, yes! O God, yes! O, make the kwawr a krowawr! O! Bo!*

*(Casqued halberdiers in armour thrust forward a pentice of gutted spearpoints. Major Tweedy, moustached like Turko the terrible, in bearskin cap with hackleplume and accoutrements, with epaulettes, gilt chevrons and sabretaches, his breast bright with medals, toes the line. **He gives the pilgrim warrior’s sign of the knights templars.**)(U 15.4609)*

Notwithstanding, *Ulysses* is not the only work by Joyce in which we can find allusions to Saint James. In *Finnegans Wake*, again, we can detect references either to pilgrimages in general or to the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in particular.<sup>1</sup> What is more, there is apparently a character in *FW* who is a pilgrim, allegedly involved in the story of “Cad.” This is one of the many stories which Joyce’s father would have recounted to the Irish writer and which are repeated again and

again. In the mildest version of this story, Joyce's father (in the novel, Earwicker) once came across a man in Phoenix Park who asked him the time or for a light:

The encounter between my father and a tramp (the basis of my book) actually took place in that part of the park. [Presumably the part of the Phoenix (q.v.) Park where Sturk (q.v.) was murdered.] (*Letters I* 396.)

In the more risqué versions of the story, it relates to Joyce's and Nora's elopement:

When Russell [q.v.] first heard Joyce had eloped with Nora, he said to Stanislaus, "Your brother is a perfect little cad." (Ellmann 196n)

And another version, still coarser, recounts how there is actually a scene of voyeurism which involves two girls and which is told by three witnesses. One of those three witnesses would be the pilgrim, "Hosty," who also writes the ballad of Finnegans. As I said at the beginning, "Hosty" is almost an outsider in Dublin. The story is passed on and he is the last person to hear it, which is why we say that he is on the far edge, almost becoming a foreigner.

The first quotation that we include, following the order of appearance in the novel, belongs to Chapter I. ii, "The Ballad," and refers to the Hospital for Incurable Lazar's Hill, built by Garret Wellesley at the beginning of the XVIII century (McHugh 41), and mistaken for a hospital of pilgrims which Archbishop Henry of Dublin had ordered to be built in the III century (1210), but which is not known to have been built for certain.

these incurable welleslays among those uncarable wellasdays **through Sant Iago by his cocklehat**, goot Lazar, deliver us!) without after having been able to jerrywangle it anysides. Lisa O’Deavis and Roche Mongan (who had so much incommon, (*FW* 41.01-04)

The following quotation appears in Chapter I.iv, “lion,” and again in the context of the story of “Cad” and alludes to the pilgrim’s hat. W.Y. Tyndall (86) contends that the reference to the pilgrims’ hats indicates “a vision of rapid transit”:

of a rhedarhoad. So more boher O’Connell!  
Though rainyhidden, you’re rhinohide. And if  
he’s not a Romeo you may **scallop your hat**.  
Wereupunder in the fane of Saint Fiacre! Halte!  
It was hard by the howe’s there, plainly on this  
disoluded and a buchan cold spot, rupestric then,  
resurfaced that now is, (*FW* 81.09-13)

The following quotation is found in Chapter II.iv, “Mamalujo,” and, on this occasion, it is Luke who speaks and who retells the same story as the other Evangelists, and once again he alludes to Ophelia’s song in *Hamlet* and, consequently, to the pilgrims bound for Santiago:

but still they parted, raining water laughing, per  
Nupiter Privius, only terparry, on the best of  
terms and be forgot, whilk was plainly foretolk  
by **their old pilgrim cocklesong** or they were  
singing through the wetttest indies As I was  
going to Burrymecarott we fell in with a lout by  
the name of Peebles (*FW* 390.22-26)

Finally, the following allusion appears in Chapter III.ii, “Second Watch of Shaun,” and is more ambiguous. It speaks about the invocation to Saint James but it actually refers to

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Jonas Hanway, the first person to use an umbrella in London (McHugh 449):

her safe conduct. That's more in my line. I'd ask no kinder of fates than to stay where I am, with my tinny of brownie's tea, **under the invocation of Saint James Hanway**, servant of Gamp, lapidated, and Jacobus a Pershawm, intercissous, for my thurifex, with Peter Roche, that frind of my boozum, leaning on my (*FW* 449.12-16)

As we have seen, the presence of the phenomenon of St. James is also evident within the whole work of Joyce.

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### Note

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<sup>1</sup> I appreciate Dr. Ricardo Navarrete's interesting suggestions concerning the section devoted to *Finnegans Wake*.