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Discover Joyce's Dublin by Reading and Running

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Discover Joyce's Dublin by Reading and Running

James Joyce told his friend Frank Budgen: *"I want' said Joyce, as we were walking down the Universitätstrasse, 'to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book"* (Budgen, 1960, p.67, 68).

This paper looks at the relevance of Dublin to Joyce's writings and of the relevance of Joyce's writings to Dublin. It is concerned with the virtual Dublin of Joyce's writings, the physical manifestation of Dublin over time, and the relationships between them. Numerous scholars read and analyse the writings of Joyce without ever visiting Dublin. Is it necessary to visit Dublin to fully appreciate Joyce's writings and is it necessary to read his writings to fully appreciate Dublin? What can be discovered in Dublin that cannot be discovered remotely? Could you recreate Dublin from Joyce's writings?

Methodology

"You are walking through it howsoever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space" (Joyce, 1986, p.31).

In making observations about a city, you, like Stephen Dedalus, need to move around it. Walking and taking public transportation are one way; running is another, with the advantage of speed. Reading all of the works of James Joyce is essential. The main works are well known, but equally important are works such as Stephen Hero, Exiles and Giacomo Joyce, set in Trieste, Italy.

Joyce wrote to his patron Harriet Weaver on 24 November 1926, *"One great part of human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wideawake language and goahead plot"* (Ellmann, 1975, p.318). This is one of the keys to Joyce. There is not a direct linear narrative. Like the writing, the running is not always linear and short runs are made all over the city, many times at random.

Books such as Declan Kiberd's *Ulysses* and *Uss* provide an excellent introduction. Ellmann's biography *James Joyce*, is essential reading. The *Ulysses Guide*, *Tours through Joyce's Dublin* by Robert Nicholson and *James Joyce's Dublin*, *A Topographical Guide to the Dublin of Ulysses* by Ian Gunn and Clive Hart are excellent guides to the locations of events in *Ulysses*. These books explain the situations that arise in the writings, whereas

this research is trying to investigate wider associations between the people and the places that appear in the writings.

Reading and running are the primary methods of this research. Notes made from the runs are linked with textual pieces from Joyce's writings as well as observations in books about Joyce or the city. Runs are developed that link aspects of the writing with elements in the city and these are then documented as a series of blogposts on a dedicated website www.jj21k.com.

The inspiration for a particular run usually comes from the writings. Items of interest are noted from the texts and a run is derived around them. Occasionally the interest comes from something observed, and the writings are searched for references.

Initially the sequence was reading, running and writing. Now blogposts may be partially written in advance of the runs. This evens out downtime as a result of injuries or travel, that may prevent runs taking place. As more research is undertaken, or further observations are made, original blogposts are rewritten. On occasion, locations are returned to and photographed or videoed, to document further observations. All running journeys are tracked using GPS on the fitness app, Runkeeper.

Comparisons are made between observations made whilst running and observations made when reading. A good

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understanding of the writing is essential, but references can be hard to locate, particularly in *Finnegans Wake*. In order to do this efficiently a Kindle and iBooks are utilised. They allow for text searching. You could thumb your way through *Finnegans Wake* looking for the word Grangegorman, but it could take some time.

Most of the major Joyce works are available on iBooks and Kindle. But there are numerous textual inaccuracies in the texts. By way of example the iBook is entitled *Finnegan's Wake*. These platforms are not used for reading the works, rather for initial checking of references and observations.

As well as physical copies of the works and the iBooks and Kindle editions, *Dubliners*, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* are all listened to on Audio Books. *Finnegans Wake* is available on CD, but only in abridged versions. Listening to abridged work can give a false impression, and many of the things of specific interest to this research may have been edited out as being tangential to the story. Audio books are not listened to when running so as not to distract from physical observations.

Online mapping is a great resource particularly Google Maps with Street View and Apple Maps with a movable a three-dimensional model of the city. Both can assist in comparing old photographs with new and both help in planning routes, for example, crossing the city without passing a public house, a well-known puzzle from *Ulysses*.

Online maps are available on the Ordnance Survey Ireland Website, www.osi.ie. You can toggle between current and historic mapping and compare the two. The historical mapping dates from 1897 to 1913. This is ideal for looking at the city layout at the time in which Joyce's works were based.

The Dublin City Library on Pearse Street, Dublin 2, has an excellent set of the annual editions of Thom's Official Directory and historical printed maps of Dublin. The annual Thom's directories list all of the addresses in Dublin in the year of publication. Joyce used them in writing *Ulysses* as well as his printed map of the City.

Archetypal city

"For myself I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal" (Power quoted in Ellmann, 1983, p.505).

Joyce created an archetypal model of Dublin and expressed it through literature. In it he positioned people in places to suit his purposes and move them on real and imagined journeys in time and space. Arthur Power notes the picking and placing of ideas:

As we know, he finally placed the scene, as he placed everything, back in Dublin – this Dublin which he never left in his imagination ... now a sort of half-real and half-dream city; for Dublin was to Joyce what Florence was to Dante, the city of his soul (Power, 2004, p.95).

As Joyce explained to Power, a fellow Irishman, *"—A writer's purpose is to describe the life of his day, he said, and I chose Dublin because it is the focal point of the Ireland of today, its heartbeat you may say, and to ignore that would be an affectation"* (Power, 1999, p.123). Joyce wrote from what he knew and what he had experienced and he used the people and places to assemble his model. *"In Ulysses I have tried to forge literature out of my own experience, and not out of a conceived idea, or a temporary emotion"* (Power, 1999, p.50).

In making this model he consulted a map. *"Joyce wrote Wandering Rocks with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of Earl Dudley and Father Conmee"* (Budgen, 1960, p.122, 123). Joyce mapped the city and he timed his created journeys through it.

People

James Joyce placed people into his model, sometimes thinly disguised and sometimes referred to by their real names. In Stanislaus Joyce's book *My Brother's Keeper*, James Joyce's *Early Years*, Stanislaus points out that he is the model for Mr. Duffy in the *Dubliners* story, *A Painful Case*: *"Our house was well down the lane and we had to run the gauntlet of the unwashed every evening coming home from school. In the end I had a fight with one of the most active of the cat-callers, a little red-headed rough-neck, who rejoiced*

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in the sobriquet of Pisser Duffy. It was late in the afternoon, and the loungers from the cottages, and even the women, stood around without interfering. In the imaginary portrait for which I served as model. 'A Painful Case,' my brother has given me the name of Duffy" (Joyce, S., 2003, p.54).

As well as Stanislaus, Joyce's father, John Stanislaus Joyce appears in many different guises. Most obviously he appears as Simon Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as well as in *Ulysses*, where he has some of the best dialogue "*Agonising Christ, wouldn't it give you a heartburn on your arse?*" (Joyce, 1986, p.102). Buck Mulligan, possibly Joyce's most celebrated character is based on Oliver St. John Gogarty, reimagined in *Ulysses* *Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. A yellow dressinggown, ungirdled, was sustained gently behind him on the mild morning air. He held the bowl aloft and intoned:*

—*Introibo ad altare Dei.*

Halted, he peered down the dark winding stairs and called out coarsely:

—*Come up, Kinch! Come up, you fearful jesuit!* (Joyce, 1986, p.3)

Places

People populated his model, but Dublin is only lightly described. The following passage opens *Araby*, the third story of *Dubliners*:

"North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces" (Joyce, 1992, p.21).

Vivien Igoe notes in her book *James Joyce's Dublin House & Nora Barnacle's Galway* (p. 61, 62) that the Joyce family lived for four years in North Richmond Street, and Joyce briefly attended the Christian Brothers School on the corner with the North Circular Road. Joyce mentions the street in the *Wandering Rocks* chapter of *Ulysses*; "*A band of satchelled schoolboys crossed from Richmond street. All raised untidy caps. Father Conmee greeted them more than once*

benignly. Christian brother boys" (Joyce, 1986, p.181).

You could not recreate North Richmond Street from these descriptions. These passages tell us more about the social strata of Dublin than they do the physical nature of the street.

Details

Accuracy was important for Joyce and he wrote to his Aunt Josephine in January 1920 to find out about the trees in Leahy's terrace and the steps at the rear of the Star of the Sea Church in Sandymount, both of which feature in the *Nausikaa* episode of *Ulysses* (Ellmann, 1975, p.248). He wrote again in November 1921, to ask about the railings at 7 Eccles Street for the *Ithica* episode (Ellmann, 1975, p.286).

Joyce clearly cared about particular details, but why are there so few mentioned in the writings? Frank Budgen wrote:

But it is not by way of description that Dublin is created in *Ulysses*. There is a wealth of delicate pictorial evidence in *Dubliners*, but there is little or none in *Ulysses*. Streets are named but never described. Houses and interiors are shown us, but as if we entered them as familiars. Not as strangers come to take stock of the occupants and inventory their furniture. Bridges over the Liffey are crossed and recrossed and that is all (Budgen, 1960, p.68).

Perhaps in *Ulysses*, a novel of over 260,430 words in length (Hickey, D. and Hickey, K., 2004, p.xv), Joyce thought detailed physical descriptions were a distraction, adding superfluous text, detracting from the narrative. Why add such descriptions when readers can visit Dublin and see it for themselves? Perhaps as his University friend Constantine Curran alludes to, he simply had no interest in his physical surroundings:

All my student friends were devoted to the theatre; some of them shared an equal interest in painting or music. But I never once saw Joyce in the National Gallery or at any picture exhibition or heard him make any comment on Dublin painting or architecture. ... *He knew the streets of Dublin by heart and his memory was a map of the town. But his interest in buildings, as in pictures, was for their associations* (Curran, 1968, p.39).

It may seem unusual that a man so interested in his city had so little interest in its physicality, but this interest extended to his own surroundings. In her biography *Nora*, Brenda Maddox writes about the upgrading of the Joyce family apartment at Square Robiac in Paris:

Their friends all crowded in for a look and privately found it dreadful. The kindest verdict was the painter Myron Nutting's: '*comfortable and not untasteful*' ... These critics, like most of the Joyces' visitors, were aesthetic sophisticates who expected Joyce, as a leader of the avant garde in writing, to be equally adventurous his personal surroundings ... The Joyces' indifference to design puzzled their friends all the more because Nora and her husband took an interest in modern music (Maddox, 2000, p.303).

In Joyce's Dublin there are only people, and associations with their places, not detailed architectural surroundings. He outlined the process to Power:

When you arrive at the description, say, of a house you try and remember that house exactly, which after all is journalism. But the emotionally creative writer refashions that house and creates a significant image in the only significant world, the world of our emotions (Power, 1999, p.119).

Joyce took the particulars, and placing them in his archetypal city, made them universal.

City of play

Having made his model, Joyce proceeded to play with it. "*He becomes the more at one with his city in that it lives in him not he in it*" (Budgen, 1960, p.282). Joyce edited his view of the city to suit his dramatic and personal ends. It allowed him to write about real people in a way that might have been libellous, and in the case of his writings about Rueben J. Dodd Jr., was (Bowker, 2012, p.55, 201).

Budgen understood the use Joyce made of his model and its cubist perspective. As they were discussing the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses* he told Joyce "*Every event is a many-sided object. You first state one view of it and then you draw it from another angle to another scale, and both aspects lie side by side in the same picture*" (Budgen, 1960, p.153).

“Accuracy was important for Joyce and he wrote to his Aunt Josephine in January 1920 to find out about the trees in Leahy’s terrace and the steps at the rear of the Star of the Sea Church in Sandymount, both of which feature in the Nausikaa episode of *Ulysses*”

Joyce even bought a game. *“While working on Wandering Rocks Joyce bought at Karl Franz Weber’s on the Bahnhofstrasse a game called “Labyrinth”, which he played every evening with his daughter Lucia. As a result of winning or losing at the game he was enabled to catalogue six main errors of judgement into which one might fall in choosing a right, left or centre way out of the maze”* (Budgen, 1960, p.123).

Not only was Joyce playing with Dublin, he was also playing with us, *“I’ve put in so many puzzles and enigmas that it will keep professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant”* (Ellmann, 1983, p.521).

People often speculate as to why Joyce did not return to Dublin after 1912. Perhaps it was the threat of getting sued, or worse as Power notes, shot (Power, 1999, p.57). Perhaps having built and manipulated his model, he could not return, lest he interfere with it.

Findings

This paper compares Joyce’s imagined Dublin with the real Dublin, past and present and it identifies and comments on these relationships.

Some parts of the city are little changed since Joyce lived in Dublin. In the story *A Little Cloud*, from *Dubliners*, Little Chandler’s *“soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street”* (Joyce, 1992, p.68). This description of Capel Street seems as accurate a description of Capel Street now, as it was when the story was written in early 1905. So how much has Dublin changed since Joyce’s writings?

In running around the city it is obvious that whilst the buildings may have changed, the network of streets has not changed substantially. There are few new streets and street patterns are largely the same, even if many of the buildings have changed. The public transportation system is little changed.

In the novel *Ulysses*, Bloom speculates several times on the possibility of developing a new tramline. *“Of course if they ran a tramline along the North Circular from the cattlemarket to the quays value would go up like a shot”* (Joyce, 1986, p.47). Bloom speculates about the rising house prices that would be associated with the development of a new tramline. It is interesting to

compare this to the present possibility of house values rising along the new Luas extended tramline, which will open on the north of the city in 2017.

Bloom’s proposed line was never built and the modern bus routes simply developed from the existing tram routes. Most routes radiate out like spokes from the city centre, with few lateral routes. In the *Wandering Rocks* episode of *Ulysses* Father Conmee has to walk from Gardiner Street via Mountjoy Square, Fitzgibbon Street, the North Circular Road and Portland Row to pick up a tram heading north. He would have to do the same today if he planned to travel by bus.

In *Aeolus* (Joyce, 1986, p.96) no trams are going to the northside of the city from Nelson’s Pillar. This indicates Joyce’s own relationship with the parts of the city. As the Joyce family’s circumstances declined, they moved from affluent southern suburbs to the inner northside of the city. His nephew Ken Monaghan highlights the decline. *“The family was dragged from comfortable middle-class circumstances on the fashionable south side of the city to the very unfashionable north inner city and to conditions of extreme poverty and destitution”* (Monaghan, 2005, p.22). When Joyce left the family home in St. Peter’s Terrace, Cabra, he moved southwards to Shelbourne Road in Dublin 4. He moved south again to the Tower in Sandycove, only returning to the northside for brief visits to his family. These passages tell us about social strata in the city, which persist today.

Ulysses is suffused with the smell of Dublin as noted by Joyce in this exchange with his friend Arthur Power:

What is the first thing that you notice about a country when you arrive in it? Its odour, which is the gauge of its civilisation, and it is that odour which percolates into its literature. Just as Rabelais smells of the Spain of its time, so Ulysses smells of the Dublin of my day. –It certainly has an effluvium, I agreed.

–Yes, it smells of the Anna Liffey, smiled Joyce, not always a very sweet smell perhaps, but distinctive all the same (Power, 1999, p.117).

A run was developed around the city, taking in the contemporary smells and comparing them to those in *Ulysses*. Notable smells include the Liffey, but also the Guinness Brewery, regularly written about by Joyce. In his book *Guinness Times, My Days in the*

World's Most Famous Brewery, Al Byrne writes: *It is claimed that no writer has made more literary allusions to Guinness than Joyce, but Guinness has generally confined its use of Joyce's references in its own advertising campaigns to Ireland, on the grounds that the average drinker outside Ireland would find them too enigmatic. What, for example, would foreigners make of the following characters from Finnegans Wake, Guinnghis Khan, Allfor Guineas, Ser Artur Ghinis, Mooseyeare Goorness? All the same, one Guinness ad in the UK featured an excerpt from Finnegans Wake, as follows: 'Foamous homely brew, bebattled by bottle, gageure de guegarre'* (Byrne, 1999, p.159, 160).

The quote can be found on Page 272 of Finnegans Wake and in a wakean circle, Guinness advertising also influenced Joyce. In 1929, Guinness released its first newspaper advert with the slogan "Guinness is good for you". And the slogan made its way into Finnegans Wake when Jute makes the memorable pun comparing the beverage to money. "*Jute – One eyegonblack. Bisons is bisons. Let me fore all your hasitancy cross your qualm with trink gilt. Here have sylvan coyne, a piece of oak. Ghinees hies good for you*" (Joyce, 1992, p.16).

Joyce stayed from late July until early September of 1909, in 44 Fontenoy Street, the latest of John Joyce's homes. Nora Barnacle

remained in Trieste. Shortly after his arrival in Dublin he met his friend Vincent Cosgrave who told him that he had been with Nora in 1904. The claims were false but they were to lead to many of the themes of jealousy that interplay in the later works of Joyce, including the play Exiles and, of course, Ulysses.

On August 6 1909, Joyce wrote to Nora: *At the time that I used to meet you at the corner of Merrion Square and walk with you and feel your hand touch me in the dark and hear your voice (O, Nora! I will never hear that music again because I can never believe again) at the time I used to meet you, every second night you kept an appointment with a friend of mine outside the Museum, you went with him along the same streets, down by the canal, past the 'house with the upstairs in it', down to the bank of the Dodder. You stood with him: he put his arm around you and you lifted your face and kissed him. What else did you do together? And the next night you met me!* (Ellmann, 1975, p.158).

According to Bowker, (2012, p.180, 181) Joyce visited his friend John Francis Byrne that same August day at his house in 7 Eccles Street, some 600 metres from 44 Fontenoy Street. Byrne told him that Cosgrave had lied, and was probably in cahoots with Oliver St. John Gogarty to destroy Joyce's relationship with Nora. 7 Eccles Street is the house in which Joyce created the scene where Blazes

“People often speculate as to why Joyce did not return to Dublin after 1912. Perhaps it was the threat of getting sued, or worse as Power notes, shot. Perhaps having built and manipulated his model, he could not return, lest he interfere with it”

“In certain countries of the Far East, American films – even the most bizarre and fanciful – are taken for actuality, not fiction. Readers of Joyce in the West are sometimes no more sophisticated: they are more concerned with the biography of *A Portrait* than with the art, and they welcome Stephen Hero as a source of elucidation and gap-filling. This is desperately wrong”

Boylan cuckolds Leopold Bloom on 16 June 1904, a day Joyce met Nora Barnacle, on whom Molly Bloom is partly based. This was a deliberate manipulation by Joyce. Events that he has imagined to have taken place and have been told to him did not take place, are re-imagined as taking place in the exact location in which he has been told the events never took place.

This intermingling puts Joyce at the heart of psychogeography, as do our intentions to interpret the work. “*If psychogeography is to be understood in literal terms as the point where psychology and geography intersect, then one of its further characteristics may be identified in the search for new ways of understanding our urban environment*” (Coverley, 2010, p.13).

Over interpretation

Anthony Burgess outlines dangers in over analysing Joyce’s works: *In certain countries of the Far East, American films – even the most bizarre and fanciful – are taken for actuality, not fiction. Readers of Joyce in the West are sometimes no more sophisticated: they are more concerned with the biography of *A Portrait* than with the art, and they welcome Stephen Hero as a source of elucidation and gap-filling. This is desperately wrong* (Burgess, 1968, p.58, 59).

“*Joyce’s books are about Dublin, all of them ... But we are wrong if we think that Dublin encloses the work of Joyce, that a knowledge of the city is the key to understanding. The living Dubliner claims a superior appreciation of Joyce because he knows the distance from Sir John Rogerson’s Quay to Mount Jerome Cemetery. This is a delusion. Dublin, in Joyce, is turned into an archetypal city, eventually into a dream city. Moreover, the Dublin of 1904 is, with romantic Ireland and O’Leary, dead and gone ... It helps us to know something about Dublin, the real city of Joyce’s memory, when we tackle the myths he has made of it, but it is by no means essential. The real keys to an understanding of Joyce are given to the diligent reader, not the purchaser of an Aer Lingus ticket*” (Burgess, 1968, p.34).

Conclusion

Joyce took Dublin, a designed object, and its daily users, combining them to design a city of his own interpretation, a design that Dubliners have been interpreting ever since. It is this interpretation that we can recreate from his writings.

Joyce layered and interweaved people and places, and this research seeks to derive meaning from these connections. Burgess is right to highlight the dangers of comparing Joyce's life and the city of his birth directly with events in the writings. However, Ian Gunn and Clive Hart in the book *James Joyce's Dublin, A Topographical Guide to the Dublin of Ulysses* (2004, p.21) make the counterpoint of the richness added in so doing, particularly in relation to Ulysses:

... a knowledge of Dublin's topography and of its train and tramway system is essential to an understanding of the implications of the early and midmorning journeys undertaken by Stephen and Bloom. If the assistance provided by the documentary reality of the city has to be treated with caution, it cannot be altogether ignored. The topography of Dublin is 'on the page' at least as much as are the meanings of the word 'priest', 'kidney' and 'ineluctable modality': it is a part of the book's primary reference system, without which its full sense cannot be apprehended. While nothing, or almost nothing, is incomprehensible without a knowledge of Dublin, everything, or almost everything, acquires a significant new dimension, when local facts are explored (Gunn and Hart, 2004, p.21).

Joyce's writings and his place making are about associations and these associations are developed with the writings. Stephen Hero is a precursor to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Characters from *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* reappear in *Ulysses*, and the day of *Ulysses* becomes the night of *Finnegans Wake*. An understanding of the topography of Dublin, its characters and its history, adds another layer of meaning to these writings.

Whilst it is not essential to visit or to study Dublin, doing so adds a significant layer of discovery of the works. Likewise, whilst it is not essential to read the works of Joyce to enjoy Dublin, cities are more than economic engines and it can add enjoyment and deepen the level of understanding between the observer and the observed if you do.

Research such as this has no finite end point. This researcher and people who have never visited Dublin are continually probing Joyce's writings and their relationship with the city, sifting for meanings. Joyce wrote with the aim of his works being studied. *"Rather than*

write a novel for a million readers Joyce said, he preferred to write novels that one person would read a million times" (Birmingham, 2014, p.7). If there is a limit to the research, perhaps Joyce himself defined it. "The demand that I make of my reader,' he said with a disarming smile to Max Eastman, *'is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works"* (Ellmann, 1983, p.703).