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James Joyce's Model Dublin

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Abstract

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

James Joyce wrote about Dublin from a position of exile. He created a model Dublin, one in which he mixed people and places, events and activities, real and imagined and combined them into a city that suited his own ends.

This imagined city has been examined remotely in a multiplicity of ways, and by people in a way that the real city has not. One can ask whether it is Dublin at all?

Developing on from an earlier paper to be published in a forthcoming edition of *Iterations*, the Irish Design Journal, and from the running blog www.jj21k.com, this paper develops the themes of the model city that Joyce created and the importance of exile in the creation of his city. It looks closely at real events that took place in the city and compares them with imagined events in the literature, examining the

changes that Joyce made to suit his dramatic ends. Scrupulously accurate about some details, Joyce's manipulations involved people and events, but he also moved buildings to suit his narrative and his motivations. The places he chose are deliberate, and his writing created a textual layer, adding depth to these locations.

As well as James Joyce, other people play with the city to suit their own ends and various examples are examined.

Cities are not just economic engines and we all use them in different ways. Joyce was playing with the city, and in exile using it in a different way to all of its citizens. He was having fun with it and he was having fun with us. "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant." (Ellmann, 1983, p.521).

Introduction

I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales over the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past: the height of a lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper's swaying feet; the line strung from the lamppost of the railing opposite and the festoons that decorate the course of the queen's nuptial procession; the height of that railing and the leap of the adulterer who climbed over it at dawn.

(Calvino, 1979, p.13)

Cities are designed. A combination of nature and intent, they are planned on a multiplicity of levels, consciously and unconsciously and typically lived in by people long after the original designers and their intentions have left. Within the city are obvious systems designed as a layer over existing streetscapes such as tramlines and bus lanes. These layers are visible, as are the people using them. But whilst the physical layers are evident, what of the invisible layers, the interactions of thoughts and actions, all happening over time?

In his book *Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino tells us the essence of what cities consist of, "relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past" (Calvino, 1979, p.13). Cities have never been just economic engines, places of

trade and financial gain, but are places where social and cultural forces interplay with economic ones. These relationships exist over time and the virtual relationships are built upon just as much as the physical ones and must be understood if we are to understand the city. Whilst a multiplicity of designers create pieces of the city, they do not design all of the interactions between them. The resident and the visitor experience parts of the city, choosing what to see, where to go and when to do so. No two Dublin's are the same, each person having their own version, an individually curated city.

People have complex relationships with the city, and one relationship in particular is examined here, the writer and Dubliner, James Joyce and the relationship he has with the city of Dublin. Joyce is well known for writing about Dublin, but what is less well known is how and why he used the city and its inhabitants and its events, how he manipulated people, places and time for his own particular purposes. This is examined, as is how and why he did this and how others have followed on from him, playing with the city of Dublin, real and imagined, over time.

James Joyce's Model Dublin

“Joyce was many things, but he was certainly the last forty volumes of *Thom's Directory* thinking aloud” (C.P Curran's obituary of Joyce, *The Irish Times*, 14 January 1941, quoted in Gunn, I. and Hart, C., 2004 p.15).

In the story *A Little Cloud*, from *Dubliners*, Little Chandler's "soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street" (Joyce, 2006, p.59). 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. If Capel Street has changed little in over one hundred years, how has the rest of the city changed, and can we use Joyce's life and his writings to examine these changes, treating his works as a benchmark?

James Joyce's spent his time writing about Dublin and its inhabitants, whilst not actually living in Ireland. He left the city for the European mainland in 1904, returning on a few occasions, visiting the "Heart of the Hibernian Metropolis" (Joyce, 1986, p.96) for the the last time in 1912. What was his relationship with the city, and was it with a real city, or an imagined one?

It is interesting to speculate as to why Joyce wrote so much about a city that he did not live in. He treated Dublin as an artistic ground layer, and created movements of people in time and space over it creating his artworks. He created excuses for not returning, be they the threat of being shot or sued, but perhaps he felt that he could not return to the city, lest he interfere in his own experiment, in the same way Schrödinger's cat could remain both dead and alive, as long as the box remains unopened. The real reason was perhaps discovered when Philippe Soupault asked Joyce "'Why not go back to Dublin?'" and Joyce answered 'It would prevent me from writing about Dublin.'" (Ellmann 1982, p.643). Exile allowed Joyce to craft a personal model of Dublin and play with it in complete freedom.

Joyce kept in touch with friends and family who visited regularly and always talked of Dublin. His university friend C.P. Curran describes visiting him in Paris “With me, as I have said, his talk was of Dublin all the time, Dublin, old and new, with every possible picturesque revival of its familiar figures of the eighties and nineties out of our own and our fathers’ time” (Curran, 1968, p.88). He wrote frequently whilst on his holidays to his assistant Paul Léon requesting copies of *The Irish Times* (Fahy, 1992, p.12,14) and wrote regularly to his Aunt Josephine seeking information about Dublin. He clearly cared about Dublin and events that were taking place there, and was known to keep “Radio Éireann going on the wireless all the time.” (Burke, 2016)

Manipulating Persons

Joyce inserted real people into all of his works. They are often lightly described and sometimes given their real names. Even when their names are changed, most are easily identified and they often form the basis of more than one character. Joyce’s wife Nora Barnacle becomes Greta Conroy in *The Dead* and Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*. Characters appear in multiple works such as the unfortunate Bob Doran who is forced into marriage in the short story *A Boarding House* from *Dubliners*. He subsequently appears as a drunk several times in *Ulysses*, notably in the *Citizen* episode when he hears of the confusion about, Paddy Dignam’s death,

— Is it Paddy? says Joe.

— Yes, says Alf. Why?

— Don't you know he's dead? says Joe.

—Paddy Dignam dead! says Alf.

—Ay, says Joe.

—Sure I'm after seeing him not five minutes ago, says Alf, as plain as a pikestaff.

—Who's dead? says Bob Doran.

—You saw his ghost then, says Joe, God between us and harm.

—What? says Alf. Good Christ, only five.... What?... And Willy Murray with him,
the two of them there near whatdoyoucallhim's What? Dignam dead?

—What about Dignam? says Bob Doran. Who's talking about....?

—Dead! says Alf. He's no more dead than you are.

—Maybe so, says Joe. They took the liberty of burying him this morning anyhow.”

(Joyce, 1986, p.247)

And once dead or forgotten Joyce could bring the citizens of Dublin back to life through his writings. As Stephen Dedalus notes in *Ulysses*,

You have spoken of the past and its phantoms, Stephen said. Why think of them? If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call? Who supposes it? I, Bous Stephanoumenos, bullockbefriending bard, am lord and giver of their life.

(Joyce, 1986, p.339)

Manipulating Places

Joyce names Dublin streets buildings and businesses throughout his works. When he wrote the later works of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* he had been in exile for a long period and had more freedom to name real people and places. This was not always the case. He began to write *Dubliners* in July 1904 in Dublin. He had arguments with the proposed publisher George Roberts about using real names of pubs and publicans. On 23 August 1912 he wrote to his brother Stanislaus to outline his defence to Roberts for naming the pubs,

ii) Public houses are mentioned in four stories out of 15. In 3 of these stories the names are fictitious. In the 4th the names are real because the persons walk from place to place (*Counterparts*)

iii) Nothing happens in the public houses. People drink.

iv) I offered to take a car and go with Roberts, proofs in hand, to the 3 or 4 publicans really named and to the secretary of the railway co. He refused.

v) I said the publicans would be glad of the advertisement.

vi) I said that I would put in fictitious names for the few real ones but added that by so doing the selling value in Dublin of the book would go down.

(Joyce, 1975, p.205)

It is interesting that he wants to name real pubs that people walk between, the journey being significant, and that he wanted to ground the story in the reality of place. Joyce had a brilliant memory of the streets of Dublin but to ensure the accuracy of the places in the stories he also made extensive use of Thom's Directory as well as a map of Dublin sent to him by his Aunt Josephine.

In the opening episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen, Mulligan and Hanes are outside the Tower in Sandycove, “They halted, looking towards the blunt cape of Bray Head that lay on the water like the snout of a sleeping whale” (Joyce, 1986, p.7). Much has been made of this quote and whether it is an error by Joyce, as you cannot see Bray Head from the Tower in Sandycove. Nicholson (2015, p.20) has noted “Some diehards have drawn comfort from the possibility that the word ‘towards’ does not necessarily mean that they were looking at the Head.” Joyce knew the coast intimately, having lived in Bray and stayed in the Tower. He is placing known objects in the readers’ minds, understanding that they experience the layering of connected places using their own memory. Not only do we see places in reality but we become aware of their three dimensional relationships.

It may be that Joyce made an error, but what to make of the following piece? “of the dean of studies, Father Butt, in the physics' theatre of university College, 16 Stephen's Green, north: of his sister Dilly (Delia) in his father's house in Cabra” (Joyce, 1986, p.548).

Did Joyce deliberately move the University across St. Stephen's Green from the southside to the northside? Thom's directory notes that “Peacocke, His Grace the Most Revd Joseph F., D.D., Lord Archbishop of Dublin, Bishop of Glendalough and Kildare, the Palace” (Thom's 1904, p.1597), lives at 16 Stephen's Green North and that the University Club is situated next door at number 17. Has Joyce made a mistake, or is he poking fun at the real power base as not being Catholic

University's on the south side of the green, but rather being the Church of Ireland Archbishop on the north? Perhaps he is looking north to his family home in Cabra? All of these and or a simple typographic error could be true. Joyce loved multiplicities of meanings and wordplay and he was to develop both in *Finnegans Wake*. Most likely he would be pleased with the ambiguities.

One curious aspect is Joyce's relationship with the two Universities, Trinity College Dublin and The Royal University. Trinity College is referred to in the writings and events are hinted as taking place within it, but it is never walked through by any of his principal characters. Joyce may have felt a resentment towards Trinity College as the following pieces may indicate. A joke is made in *Dubliners*,

—Do you know Trinity College?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Well, drive bang up against Trinity College gates, said Mr. Browne, and then we'll tell you where to go. You understand now?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Make like a bird for Trinity College.

—Right, sir, said the cabman.

The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.

(Joyce. 2006, p.182)

Every citizen of Dublin knew where Trinity College was, particularly cabmen, so a joke is being played on the cabman, who almost certainly never attended the mainly protestant institution.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young* the façade is unfavourably described.

The grey block of Trinity on his left, set heavily in the city's ignorance like a great dull stone set in a cumbrous ring, pulled his mind downward: and while he was striving this way and that to free his feet from the fetters of the reformed conscience he came upon the droll statue of the national poet of Ireland.

(Joyce, 2000, p.151)

Things don't improve for Trinity College in *Ulysses*, "His smile faded as he walked, a heavy cloud hiding the sun slowly, shadowing Trinity's surly front" (Joyce, 1986, p.134).

Joyce wanted to study in Trinity, but was excluded as were most Catholics at the time. Perhaps this is why the College is unfavourably described and why the Trinity Medical students are much mocked in *Ulysses*. And it's not just the students, "Provost's house. The reverend Dr Salmon: tinned salmon. Well tinned in there. Like a mortuary chapel. Wouldn't live in it if they paid me" (Joyce, 1986, p.135). It seems Trinity College wasn't even good enough for the brothel owner Bella Cohen, who

sent her own son to Oxford (Joyce, 1986, p.477), all the while entertaining the Trinity medical students in her premises in Nighttown.

Manipulating Time

Ulysses is famous as being set on the day James Joyce had his first date with Nora Barnacle, 16 June 1904. The story extends into the early hours of the 17 June.

Joyce finished the novel in Paris in 1921 and had the benefit of hindsight with the writing, the novel being completed after many significant events in Dublin and around the world, had taken place, most notably the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916.

Joyce weaved real events into *Ulysses*. Although Joyce may have had some affection for his hapless character, Bob Doran, he had none for Reuben J. Dodd, junior and senior, both of whom appear in *Ulysses*.

Reuben J. Dodd was his classmate at Belvedere College and he had a long standing grudge against him. Dodd senior was a Dublin Solicitor who foreclosed on loans on properties in Cork, held by Joyce's father, John Stanislaus, hastening the Joyce family's descent into poverty. Ellmann (1982 p.38,39) describes how in 1911 Dodd Jr. jumped in the Liffey to drown himself after a failed romance. He was rescued by Moses Goldin, to whose wife, Dodd senior grudgingly gave the small sum of 2s. 6d.

It wasn't just Joyce who held Dodd junior and senior in low esteem. "Mr. Dodd thinks his son is worth half a crown. We wouldn't give that for a whole family of Dodd's" (Irish Worker, December 2, 1911, quoted in Ellmann 1982, p 38,39).

Reuben Dodd junior did jump into the River Liffey, but his immersion took place in 1911, the story being repurposed by Joyce and set into the *Hades* episode of *Ulysses* in 1904, indicating how Joyce kept current on Irish matters whilst abroad and how he moved times and events to suit his own purposes, in this case score settling an old injustice. In the case of the Rueben J. Dodd's he used their real names in *Ulysses*.

—That's an awfully good one that's going the rounds about Reuben J and the son.

—About the boatman? Mr Power asked.

—Yes. Isn't it awfully good?

—What is that? Mr Dedalus asked. I didn't hear it.

—There was a girl in the case, Mr Bloom began, and he determined to send him to the Isle of Man out of harm's way but when they were both ...

—What? Mr Dedalus asked. That confirmed bloody hobbledehoy is it?

—Yes, Mr Bloom said. They were both on the way to the boat and he tried to drown.....

—Drown Barabbas! Mr Dedalus cried. I wish to Christ he did!

Mr Power sent a long laugh down his shaded nostrils.

—No, Mr Bloom said, the son himself...

Martin Cunningham thwarted his speech rudely:

—Reuben and the son were piking it down the quay next the river on their way to the Isle of Man boat and the young chiseller suddenly got loose and over the wall with him into the Liffey.

—For God's sake! Mr Dedalus exclaimed in fright. Is he dead?

—Dead! Martin Cunningham cried. Not he! A boatman got a pole and fished him out by the slack of the breeches and he was landed up to the father on the quay more dead than alive. Half the town was there.

—Yes, Mr Bloom said. But the funny part is...

—And Reuben J, Martin Cunningham said, gave the boatman a florin for saving his son's life.

A stifled sigh came from under Mr Power's hand.

—O, he did, Martin Cunningham affirmed. Like a hero. A silver florin.

—Isn't it awfully good? Mr Bloom said eagerly.

—One and eightpence too much, Mr Dedalus said drily.

(Joyce, 1986, p.78)

Joyce gave many of the best lines to Simon Dedalus, who is based on his father John Stanislaus Joyce. But he did not have the last laugh. Reuben J. Dodd Junior also had a long memory and also held a grudge. As Nicholson notes, “The BBC broadcast this section of the novel in the 1950s and thought it was a great joke when someone claiming to be Reuben J. Dodd Junior brought a libel suit against them Dodd won his case” (Nicholson, 2015, p. 51).

Apart from moving actual events around and playing with chronology, Joyce also played with real and imagined time. Gifford and Seidman (1989, p.3) write of the length of the *Penelope* episode at the end of *Ulysses* as being 3 hours if read aloud, “Is that the order of time Joyce is imitating? Or is the muttering voice of the prose in turn imitating the foreshortened time and kaleidoscopic scatter of image we experience at brief spells of insomnia, an hour or less by the clock?”

The episode is perhaps better known as Molly Bloom’s soliloquy and closes off the novel at the end of the day. The difference of real and imagined time, or dreamtime may be designed to complete the day and take us to sunrise on 17 June 1904 which the authors note, is at 3:33 am.

Manipulation Molly

Of course the biggest manipulation is when Joyce places the constructed character of Molly Bloom, in an adulterous act with Blazes Boylan, in 7 Eccles Street on the afternoon of 16 June 1904. Here he mixes real persons, real places and real time into a fiction. Molly Bloom is Nora Barnacle, 7 Eccles Street is the home of his friend J.F. Byrne and the 16 June 1904 is the day Joyce first met Nora Barnacle.

It was in 7 Eccles Street that Byrne told him that Nora Barnacle had not been unfaithful to him when they began going out in Dublin in 1904 and that she had not been going out with his former University friend Cosgrave on alternate nights.

'I had never before seen anything to approach the frightening condition that convulsed him,' recalled Byrne. 'He wept and groaned and gesticulated in futile impotence.' Byrne calmed him down by saying that Cosgrave was out to cause trouble and that what he said to Nora was 'a blasted lie', probably cooked up by Gogarty and company.

(Bowker, 2012, p.180)

The way Joyce reimagines these events and places them into *Ulysses* is daring. Codifying and manipulating real events in his novel, he is sending messages from exile that he knew would be understood in Dublin.

City as play

In manipulating people, places and time, Joyce was playing with the city, and playing with its observers, in effect creating gamification of the city.

Joyce was not alone in playing with the City. In Karl Whitney's recent book, *Hidden City, Adventures and Explorations in Dublin*, he travels through Dublin creating games based around journeys on public transport, making sets of rules, as each game needs. In the chapter "James Joyce Lived Here" (Whitney, 2014, p.64-98) he tries to visit all of the houses where Joyce lived in Dublin, in one day, in chronological order.

Joyce lived in 20 houses in his first twenty years from 1882 to 1902 when the family moved to Saint Peter's Terrace in Cabra. And when he left Cabra he moved to Shelbourne Road, Sandymount and Sandycove. Unsurprisingly visiting all of these houses by public transport and in sequence proves to be an impossible task, and Whitney has to modify his game, visiting the houses out of sequence.

In the Chapter *The Bus Game*, he creates rules so that public transport will take him to random, unexpected places and he writes of the Situationists in Paris,

In the 1950s, the Situationist International, a Paris-based avant-garde-group, engaged in what they called the *dérive* – a playful drift across the city which members would make by foot, or sometimes by taxi, often having no idea where they'd end up. The aim was to jolt participants out of habit and routine and into a new awareness of the city. The Situationists thought of the *dérive*, which could last for several days, as a kind of a utopian escape from the city's increasingly divided functions of work, travel and leisure.

(Whitney, 2014, p.143,144)

In 2014 I created my own game. Looking for an interesting way to celebrate Bloomsday, I created a half marathon route from the Tower in Sandycove to Glasnevin Cemetery. The route reflected several of the episodes in *Ulysses* where the primary movement is northwards towards the city, a move that reflects the Joyce family's decline from a prosperous life beside the seafront in Bray and the move northwards to poverty in the inner city.

It is quite simple to run a route in the city from point a to point b. The half marathon route was designed to cover content that appears in Joyce's life and in his novels, as well as being an attractive run in itself. It starts from the Martello Tower where both James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus reside in 1904 and where the novel *Ulysses* begins. It goes past Blackrock Park where young Stephen Dedalus learns to run in *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man*, onto Sandymount Strand where the mature Stephen wonders "Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?" (Joyce 1986, p.31), to the rear of Mary, star of the sea, where Leopold Bloom practices the art of Onan. It heads north through the inner city and several of the houses Joyce lived in, past the schools he attended, and Belvedere College in particular, along Hardwicke Street where Joyce lived and Bob Doran found himself forced into marriage with the *Boarding House* landlady's daughter in *Dubliners*, along Eccles Street and into Fontenoy Street where Joyce wrote the most salacious of letters to Nora Barnacle, ending up, as did Paddy Dignam and his funeral cortège, at Glasnevin Cemetery.

Out of this run came the blog, www.jj21k.com, discovering Dublin by reading and running. A half marathon is 21 kilometres long, hence the title. The blog contains numerous runs about topics related to Joyce and the City. The development of tramlines, the history of Jammet's restaurant and the smells of Dublin being some.

In doing this, like Whitney, I too am creating a game, a way of having fun in the city. I am the main player of the game and the readers of the blog www.jj21k.com are

observers. But others can play too. In the half marathon the winner is not the person who runs the half marathon in the quickest time. There is a quiz at the end with 21 questions, all related to the run, the participants choosing easy or hard questions. For each correct hard question answered, three minutes of time is subtracted from the running time and for each correct easy question answered, one minute. A pointless game perhaps, but the winner would be someone who had a balanced life of reading and running, someone who did not need to get out more.

In *Ulysses* Leopold Bloom thinks, “Good puzzle would be cross Dublin without passing a pub. Save it they can't” (Joyce, 1986, p.48). In June 2011 Computer Programmer Rory McCann used computers to solve the puzzle. He plotted the locations of the public houses and he used algorithms to avoid them. To solve the puzzle, he also set rules, and you can read about his solution on Maps on Kindle online (McCann, R., 2014)

I decided to solve the same puzzle but using different rules, choosing a route that Joyce or Leopold Bloom may have used. The starting point is 7 St. Peter's Terrace Cabra, with an end point of 60 Shelbourne Road. This is the journey Joyce made when he left his family home, moving from the northside of Dublin to the southside, reversing the direction his family had moved in as they went further into economic decline. The route links points north and south of the city that are outside the Dublin Street Directory as outlined in Thom's, Saint Peter's Terrace being listed as being in Phibsborough, and Fitzwilliam Quay in Ringsend, both in the County Dublin Directory.

Numerous preparatory runs were made, as well as walks and map studying. The solution works in the present day. It does not pass any pubs, but does pass a wine bar, one that only opens three nights a week and is hardly a pub. My game, and to an extent, my rules.

Of course the puzzle will not be solved until you can prove that it could be done in 1904, something that is the subject of further research. But as has been noted, why bother? A simple solution to cross Dublin without passing a pub is simply to go into all of them.

Conclusion

Cities are the largest designed objects we create and within them are held a multiplicity of designed objects. Architects, road engineers, product designers, systems designers, all design parts of the city, usually with imagined end users and their intentions in mind. Cities cannot be frozen in time like Zeno's arrow, they are fluid and take unexpected turns for those who use them.

As Calvino (1979, p.13) has noted, the city does not consist of objects, but rather the relationship between them, events and time. So are cities ultimately designed by their users and by participating in the city, are we actually planning it, a Dublin designed and determined by the Dubliner?

How real is Joyce's Dublin and is his version of Dublin any less real than Karl Whitney's or mine, or yours? Joyce's Dublin is neither real nor imagined, like all our cities, it is just that, a personal city, a curated city.

It is often commented on that nobody does any real work in Joyce's writings. The main protagonists spend much of their time walking from one drinking establishment to another. Stanislaus Joyce, his younger brother wrote,

I hate this City life—the chartered life, the love of work for its own sake, the task-work quite contemptible in itself but that by doing it one earns the means to support life. Cities were built to be lived in, not for, and these city-men sacrifice their lives to the City they live in.

(Joyce, S. 1971, p.111)

James Joyce certainly did not love work for its own sake. He did not work for his native city, but he found a lasting way for it, and its residents, to work for him.

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<http://www.jj21k.com>