

Justin Carville (ed.)

# VISUALIZING DUBLIN

VISUAL CULTURE, MODERNITY AND THE  
REPRESENTATION OF URBAN SPACE



Dublin has held an important place throughout Ireland's cultural history. The shifting configurations of the city's streetscapes have been marked by the ideological frameworks of imperialism, its architecture embedded within the cultural politics of the nation, and its monuments and sculptures mobilized to envision the economic ambitions of the state. This book examines the relationship of Dublin to Ireland's social history through the city's visual culture. Through specific case studies of Dublin's streetscapes, architecture and sculpture and its depiction in literature, photography and cinema, the contributors discuss the significance of visual experiences and representations of the city to our understanding of Irish cultural life, both past and present.

Drawing together scholars from across the arts, humanities and social sciences, the collection addresses two emerging themes in Irish studies: the intersection of the city with cultural politics, and the role of the visual in projecting Irish cultural identity. The essays not only ask new questions of existing cultural histories but also identify previously unexplored visual representations of the city. The book's interdisciplinary approach seeks to broaden established understandings of visual culture within Irish studies to incorporate not only visual artefacts, but also textual descriptions and ocular experiences that contribute to how we come to look at, see and experience both Dublin and Ireland.

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## Visualizing Dublin

# Reimagining Ireland

Volume 48

Edited by Dr Eamon Maher  
Institute of Technology, Tallaght



PETER LANG

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Representation of Urban Space



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## Acknowledgments

This book grew out of a series of conversations with colleagues on the increasing emergence over the last three decades of Dublin as a subject of analysis within the humanities and social sciences. Foremost amongst these discussions was that although many scholarly monographs on the cultural history of Dublin included illustrations of the architecture, monuments, street-views and sculpture of the city, few paid any attention to the aesthetics or signifying effects of the types of visual imagery reproduced in their pages, or of the images material codifications of Dublin as either an Imperial, colonial or post-colonial city. The book has thus developed out of the shared interest of the contributors in the relationship between the visual and the broader cultural history of the city; the connections between the aesthetics and politics of the image and the representation of Dublin through specific media in particular historical contexts. That these fledgling conversations and shared interests have made it into print in the pages that follow is very much due to the belief, patience, professionalism and good-will of a select group of people.

I am eternally grateful to the editor of the *Reimagining Ireland* series Eamon Maher for his enthusiasm and support of the project since its inception and for agreeing to include the book alongside such an exciting collection of Irish Studies scholarship. In the face of numerous delays and missed deadlines Commissioning Editor Christabel Scaife has been both patient and polite throughout the process of completing the book. Together with the rest of the team at Peter Lang, Christabel has overseen the publication of the collection with great professionalism which is much appreciated by myself and the contributors.

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Finally I would like to sincerely thank all the contributors to the book for their essays which have greatly expanded my knowledge of the city and its cultural history. How I see the city will never be the same.

JUSTIN CARVILLE

## Introduction: Visual Culture and the Making of Modern Dublin

In 1929 Dublin Corporation published *A Book of Dublin*. The aim of the publication was to bring together writers and artists within the covers of a single book in a civic commemoration of the history, antiquities and commerce of the post-independence and post-civil war capital city. In keeping with the civic tone of the publication, the book was conveyed as entirely a product of the city; its paper made by a Dublin mill, its pages filled by the words of Dublin writers, its printing and graphic illustrations ‘the work of Dublin hands.’<sup>1</sup> This present book of Dublin is somewhat more international in terms of its range of contributors and significantly more globalized in the geographic scope of its production. Yet like *The Book of Dublin* – which attempted to reconcile the heritage of the city with its emerging modernization – the authors of the essays in the following pages are all concerned with the cultural history of Dublin. They are particularly concerned with how the cultural history of the city as it intersects with a visual culture that attempts to project a unitary geographical representation of Dublin in colonial, post-colonial and global contexts. The contributors to *Visualizing Dublin* all take as their main subject of analysis the visual representation and visualizing effects of the city through an exploration of its architectural forms and spatial configurations, as well as the role of graphic imagery, sculpture, photography and cinema in the mediated expressions and shaping of ocular experiences of Dublin from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Although writing from different disciplinary perspectives with their own established methods and

1 *A Book of Dublin* (Dublin: Dublin Corporation, 1929), p. 6.

methodologies for analysing visual practices and representations, the essays share a concern with the connections between representations of Dublin and cultural politics in the expression of place. They look intently at that which is frequently overlooked in much of the discussions of Irish culture; the relationship between the visual and cultural history.

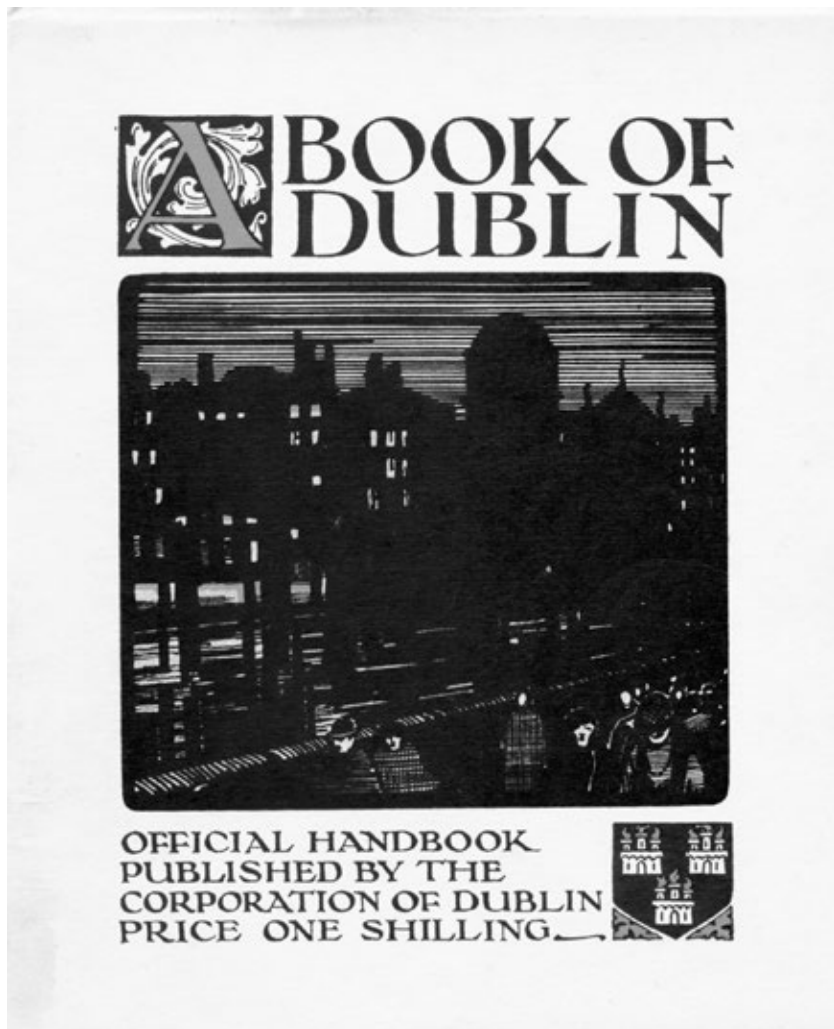


Figure 1 Maurice McGonigal, cover illustration, *A Book of Dublin*, 1929.

This relationship of the cultural and the visual fields was glaringly obvious in a publication such as *A Book of Dublin* yet was made to appear transparent. Although the publication included essays on the heritage of the city with graphic depictions of its architecture and monuments, *A Book of Dublin* largely overlooked the relationship between the cultural history of the built environment and the production, circulation and distribution of imagery of the city. Illustrated with drawings, linocuts, etchings and charcoal sketches by artists such as Paul Henry, Harry Kernoff, Maurice McGonigal and Estella F. Solomons, amongst others, the publication comprised a series of textual vignettes on the heritage and commercial modernity of the city accompanied by the visual depiction of Dublin's historic and modern built environment. Like the text which proposed to convey to the reader a coherent representation of Dublin's heritage as it combined with its industrial development and economic commercialization, the illustrations attempted to ameliorate the tensions of tradition and modernity through the aesthetic softening of the urban fabric of the city. The charcoal drawings of Henry in particular rendered the rectilinear lines of concrete and stone, and the towering chimney stacks of industrial energy production with a hazy monochromaticity. Less a depiction of the Dublin cityscape and more of an impression of its texture, Henry's illustrations combined the city's meteorological atmosphere with its physical environment to create a sensation of the city as mystifying yet unthreatening. Such illustrations thus offered perceptions of Dublin which contributed as much to the shaping of ocular experiences of the city as they provided pictorial depictions of its historic and contemporary landmarks. Yet in the introductory remarks to *A Book of Dublin*, the editor Bulmer Hobson clearly identified the textual as the most significant form for creating impressions of Dublin. Proclaiming authoritatively its writers and thinkers to be the city's most significant cultural attribute, he asks rhetorically; 'How many cities can claim sons who have exercised so profound an influence upon literature?' His response is to advise the reader that; 'While other places may boast their antiquity, their giant industries, or their round of pleasures, let it be Dublin's boast that she has contributed to advance the bounds of human thought, and added a little to the intellectual stature of mankind'.<sup>2</sup>

2 Bulmer Hobson, *A Book of Dublin*, p. 6.

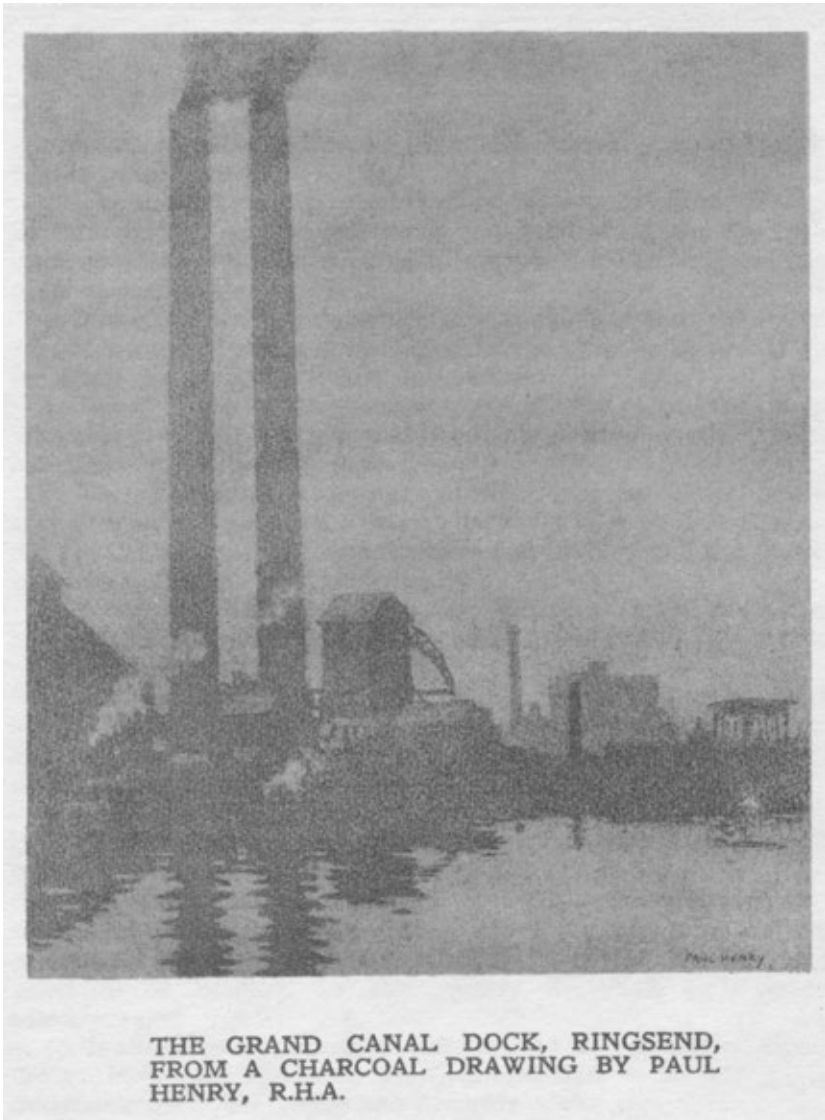


Figure 2 Paul Henry, *The Grand Canal Dock, Ringsend*, reproduction from charcoal drawing, from *A Book of Dublin*, 1929.



Hobson's remarks, brief as they are, would no doubt resonate with a contemporary political culture that preaches the virtues of a 'smart' or knowledge economy as the answer to unshackle Ireland from the grip of its current financial crisis. However, more significantly to the discussion that follows, the identification of the literary and intellectual achievements of Dublin's writers demonstrates an unwavering emphasis towards the textual as the dominant form for the creative perceptions that establish cultural impressions of the city. For Hobson, Dublin was not just a text to be read and deciphered as the reader navigated their way through its historical topographies and along its streetscapes, more importantly Dublin's architecture and civic spaces provided a spatial backdrop against which Hobson's list of great men of science and letters – and their literary and intellectual achievements – could be geographically situated. In a provocative intervention into both literary Irish studies and the cultural politics of Dublin's architecture and urban design, Andrew Kincaid remarks that 'one of the pitfalls that literary approaches of Dublin has led us into is that the textual city has come to take on a greater degree of reality and importance than the physical city', concluding that 'a city is more than language, more than pages of a book'.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this publication is to begin to move out of the shadows cast by the literary tradition that dominates perceptions of Dublin explored in Irish studies scholarship, and to posit instead an expanded approach that is attuned to the pictorial and the textual as forms of visualizing the city. It is concerned with Dublin as an ocular experience that is both the subject of the viewers gaze and an instrument that shapes how the viewer looks at the spatial configurations of the city's streets, architecture, and monuments. In addition the book aims to explore how such cultural practices in turn shape the viewers experiences of the visualization of Dublin's historical memory.

*Visualizing Dublin* takes its place amongst a growing body of literature on urban Ireland in general and of Dublin in particular. In the introduction to a special issue of *Eire-Ireland* on Irish urban culture, Joseph Valente

3 Andrew Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies and the Built Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. xix–xv.

notes that the city and its cultural effects 'has been seen to bear something of privative existence: it is a part of the country that is not of "the land" and as such detracts in some measure from the higher truth of the nation.'<sup>4</sup> The apparent alien-ness of Dublin to the nation, for example, has even been commented upon by foreign travellers to the city. Writing to Karl Marx in 1856, Frederick Engels commented of the cultural distinctiveness of the city from the rest of the country by noting that it had 'quite the character of a small one-time capital, all English built too.'<sup>5</sup> Despite the paucity of scholarly analysis of urban Ireland from the field of Irish studies there has been an increased interest in the cultural history of Dublin through studies of the city's architecture, urban planning and cultural geography. Survey histories such as Maurice Craig's classic *Dublin 1660–1860*, Siobhán Kilfeather's *Dublin: A Cultural and Literary History* and recently Padraig Yeates's more concentrated history *A City in Wartime: Dublin 1914–18*, have been joined by an increasing number of focused cultural histories in the form of monographs and edited volumes exploring the architecture, sculpture and cultural geography of the city.<sup>6</sup> Yvonne Whelan's *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, and the 'Making of Dublin City' series have all provided ground-breaking insights into the links between the built environment and cultural politics, and the recent edited volume *Portraits of the City* has brought an added dimension to the study of Dublin's urban landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

- 4 Joseph Valente, 'Editor's Introduction' *Éire-Ireland* Vol. 45 No. 1&2 (2010), p. 6.
- 5 Frederick Engels, 'Engels to Marx', 23 May 1856 in *Marx-Engels: Ireland and the Irish Question* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 93.
- 6 Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660–1860: The Shaping of a City* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2006); Siobhán Kilfeather, *Dublin: A Cultural and Literary History* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2005); Padraig Yeates, *A City in Wartime: Dublin 1914–1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan).
- 7 Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2003); J. Brady and A. Simms (eds), *Dublin Through Space & Time c. 900–1900* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001); Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910–1940: Shaping the City and Suburbs* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002); Gary A. Boyd, *Dublin 1745–1922: Hospitals, Spectacle & Vice* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005); Niamh Moore, *Dublin Docklands Reinvented: The Post-industrial Regeneration of a European Quarter* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2008).

With the exception of Kincaid's study of post-colonialism and urban planning, there has been less sustained analysis of Dublin from literary and cultural Irish studies. The aim of this collection of essays is to bring Irish studies together with a diverse range of disciplinary approaches to the study of Dublin, through an exploration of the city's visual culture. As an inter-disciplinary field visual culture studies provides a productive meeting point between the disciplines of architectural history, media studies, art history, cultural geography, sociology and literary Irish studies. It provides a space not only for comparison and dialogue between the different epistemological concerns of the humanities and social sciences, but also one of friction between theoretical models and conceptions of visual texts and experiences. Thus *Visualizing Dublin* further develops the potential for avenues of inquiry into the study of the city through its inter-disciplinary approach to the visual culture of Dublin by drawing together established and emerging scholars across the fields of literary Irish studies, art history, architecture, film studies, sociology and visual studies. In addition to exploring an alternative cultural history of Dublin, the book's contributors all bring distinctive historical methods, methodologies and analytical frameworks to the representation and everyday visual experiences of the city.

## Visual Culture and Modern Dublin

Despite the profuse use of graphic imagery and illustrations throughout *A Book of Dublin* little commentary is offered on the role of the *visual* in forging historical and contemporary experiences of the city. Even when discussing the importance of the Irish Parliament's passing of the Act to establish the Commissioners for the Making of Wide and Convenient Streets and Passages in 1757 – an initiative that led to the reorientation of the geography of the city which subsequently established the foundations for the emergence of modern Dublin – the role of the planning and

architectural design of the built environment toward radically altering visual experiences of the streetscape are overlooked. As Edel Sheridan has observed, the 'eighteenth-century streetscapes of Dublin are a monument to the aesthetic ideals of the upper classes of that time, ideals that sprang from Ireland's openness to European influences and trends'.<sup>8</sup> The forging of modern Dublin through the application of aesthetic philosophy to the built environment not only introduced new vistas to the streetscape through the opening up of urban space, but also ensured the interweaving of the visual and the political as Dublin was re-wrought as a representation of the political aspirations and ideologies of those who had the power to reconstruct the city's streetscape. As early as the previous century a speech made at the Tholsel declared 'Corporations are the creatures of the monarchy, and therefore, they have a particular obligation beyond other subjects at large to depend upon the monarchy and to uphold it,' suggesting that ultimately; 'this city may be an example to the greatest cities of the world, of a most submissive and implicit loyalty'.<sup>9</sup> This civic loyalty, materialized in the visualized and visualizing effects of colonial urbanization, ensured that colonial rule was not just represented in the architecture and monarchical statuary dispersed across Dublin's streetscapes, but was also reproduced through the ocular experiences formed through the reorganization of the city's historical and mnemonic topographies. The opening up of urban space and the construction of vistas and streetscapes orientated the viewers gaze toward the monarchical statuary, monuments and buildings that expressed Dublin's position as a colonial city. Urban planning and vision became strategically coalesced around the ideology of colonialism to the extent that practices of looking at the cityscape, and the perspectives adopted through its pictorial representation, became increasingly inflected with the cultural politics of imperialism.

8 E. Sheridan, 'Designing the Capital City: Dublin c.1660–1810' in J. Brady and A. Simms (eds), *Dublin Through Space & Time* (Dublin: Four Courts Press), p. 71.

9 Sheridan, p. 72.



Figure 3 Frederick Holland Mares, *Sackville Street*, albumen print from *Photographs of Dublin with Descriptive Letterpress*, 1867.

The significance of the links between the architectural and visual restructuring of Dublin with the cultural politics of imperialism would surely not have been lost on the books editors and contributors, yet it received little acknowledgment. The publication of *A Book of Dublin* was itself bound to the shifting political terrain of the city and of the nation as a whole. The year of its publication, 1929, marked the reopening of the GPO on O'Connell Street after its destruction during the 1916 Easter Rising. The city also hosted a Civic Week in 1929 which included seven episodic performances of Micheál Mac Liammóir's *The Ford of the Hurdles: A Masque of Dublin* which as Joan Fitzpatrick Dean has observed brought 'history much closer to the present day,' while acknowledging 'the English colonial presence in Ireland'.<sup>10</sup> A lavish spectacle of historical pageantry that combined modernist scenography with nationalist history in a public performance of nation building, *The Ford of the Hurdles* projected a distinctly Irish history told through the backdrop of the city. In addition Dublin Corporation was itself only recently re-established as an elected body after its suspension during the midst of the destruction of parts of the city due to the Civil War. At the time of its publication therefore, *A Book of Dublin* portrayed a city which was in its infancy in attempting to establish itself as the capital of a sovereign nation. The urban vistas and monarchical statuary that had been established by the Wide Street Commissioners to project Dublin as the second city of the Empire had been overlaid by the discourse of political nationalism, and the cultural myths of colonial resistance and revolution. Just beginning to become secreted into the urban fabric of Dublin's streetscapes, the narratives of rebellion, martyrdom and nationalism shifted the mnemonic significance of the city's dominant architectural buildings, monuments and thoroughfares. If the city is a text, then the syntax of Dublin was beginning to be re-written and read in a different way. Yet the urban geography of the colonial project was still present, not just in the built form of its architectural facades and grand monuments but also in the points of view, perspectives and vantage points that envisioned how the city was to be visually experienced.

10 Joan Fitzpatrick Dean, 'Rewriting the Past: Historical Pageantry in the Dublin Civic Weeks of 1927 and 1929', *New Hibernia Review* 13. 1. (2009), p. 36.

The imaginative urban geographies of colonialism such as that evidenced by the policies and tactics of the Wide Street Commissioners are at their core exercises in visual imperialism, not just reaching out to spatialize ideology but also extending the temporal reach of colonial history. Leaving its traces not only in the grandiose constructions of buildings and monuments but also in its rationalization of urban space, the colonial urban vision marks the historical topographies of cities through the 'scopic regimes' – to borrow Martin Jay's famous term – that established how the city was to be visually experienced.<sup>11</sup> The scopic regime of colonial urban vision – the effects of which could be found in the discursive depictions of the city in literary texts, prose and travelogues, and the material image objects of prints, drawings, paintings and later photographs and film, – might best be described as established structures of feeling, ocular experiences and modes of perception, communication and production of representations of urban space. Like ideology vision is all pervasive yet is not visible to the eye. Vision as such cannot be pictorially represented. All that can be identified are its affects. While Dublin may have been politically established as the capital city of the fledgling Irish Free state when *A Book of Dublin* was published, the affects of colonial urbanization stubbornly lingered across the cityscape and its representations. This spectre of colonial urbanization exists not just as inscriptions upon the Dublin streetscape, in bricks and mortar as it were, but more persistently in the ocular practices of looking and technologies of pictorial representation mobilized to structure a unified geographic representation of the city.

Yvonne Whelan has charted the contested practices of meaning making of the urban fabric of Dublin's streetscapes. For Whelan such contestation can be charted in everything from the politics of public statuary and civic urban design, to street naming within the project of nation building. Through what she identifies as the contested iconography of identity, Whelan has demonstrated how colonial urban design has clashed with the pursuit of national identity through architecture, monumental statuary and

11 M. Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity' in H. Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), pp. 3–23.

city planning.<sup>12</sup> The effect of visual culture within this contestation of the politics of place is more than just the treatment of the city as palimpsest, more complex than Dublin's urban spaces as layered with the physical and discursive traces of conflicting histories. It also involves what Joan Ramon Resina has termed the 'after-image' of the city, the lingering image of urban space that continues to fill the ocular perception of the city after the pictorial or transient optical experience that stimulates the eye has vanished from view. For Resina, the concept of after-image 'denotes a visual sensation that lingers after the stimulus that provoked it has disappeared, and opens the idea of "image" to a cluster of theoretical possibilities based on temporal displacement, sequentiality, suppression and engagement'.<sup>13</sup> The concept of after-image crucially accounts for those moments when cultural transformations which shift perceptions of the city are still inflected by the image of what political, architectural and violent transformation of urban space has sought to replace.

Ramon's concept of the city's after-image demonstrates how significant visual culture is to understanding how ocular perceptions, pictorial representations and visual experiences are to shaping understandings of Dublin's cultural history. Through such a theoretical paradigm it becomes significantly more possible to imagine how a publication such as *A Book of Dublin* in its role as forging new perceptions of the nation's capital city was still culturally inflected with the spectral imagery of colonialism and urban revolution. Even as late as 1967, the year following the fifty-year anniversary of the Easter Rising, V. S. Pritchett, writing in *Dublin: A Portrait* – a publication illustrated with photographs by the German photographer Evelyn Hofer – would remark; 'This city that looks more like London than any other in the British Isles is also the most foreign,' further exclaiming; 'If not foreign, Dublin is haunted by foreignness'. Pritchett was initially writing of the social relations of the city's inhabitants yet expressed similar

12 Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: UCD Press, 2003).

13 Joan Ramon Resina, 'The Concept of After-Image and the Scopic Apprehension of the City' in Joan Ramon Resina and Dieter Ingenschay (eds), *After-Images of the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 1.



sentiments when commenting on the appearance of the city's built environment; 'Dublin is a capital city and looks like one. It is the capital of what is now the Irish Republic, but the independent and republican phases are so short – forty years compared with, say 900 years of first clan or tribal and then colonial history – that the place is both less and more than it seems. One is confused by double vision and half-shades'.<sup>14</sup> This oscillation between deficit and excess, and the unevenness of the cultural politics of place refracted through the city's architecture, urban planning and visual representation suggests an experience of Dublin not as a unitary geographical representation but as a vast visual montage of contending images that overlap, obscure and blend into each others' visualizing affects. Thus *A Book of Dublin*, despite its attempts to mask the city's urban space as configured by colonialism, or the spectacular rupture of the second city of the empire's main commercial thoroughfares and civic spaces by the destruction wrought on its architectural fabric by rebellion and later civil war, was nevertheless infused with the imagery and visualizing effects of the cultural history of Dublin as they bled through to a more politically ambiguous representation of the city. It is through such lingering traces of the after-image of Dublin, either in its spatial configuration in the image of those who have governed it, or the city's representation in literary texts, tourist travelogues, graphic imagery, cinema and photography, that the spectator is confronted time and again with the image of the past in the present. This image of the past which seeps through into the spectators' contemporary visual experience of the city is not simply a visual representation, such as an image bounded by the pictorial organization of space. Through its visual stimulus below the conscious threshold of retinal perception, the image of the past is secreted away in the material conditions of the city's shaping of optical perception itself. Walter Benjamin was to refer to this as architecture's ability to conform habit upon optical reception of the built environment, a sort of training of visual perception under the forces urban modernity.<sup>15</sup> The continued impact of colonial urbanization is thus

14 V. S. Pritchett, *Dublin: A Portrait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 21, 27.

15 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations*, Trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 233.

not just through the visible traces and signs of colonialism marked upon the cityscape by statuary and architectural design, or indeed its pictorial representation, but more pervasively it is through the city's discursive re-organization of visual perception, its ordering and regulating of practices of looking at urban space that the after-image of Dublin's past continually confronts the contemporary spectator.

The essays collected in this book discuss the cultural history and visual representation of the city that frequently emerges as an after-image in the temporally displaced visual culture of Dublin. As much as they illuminate the cultural and visual history of Dublin through its architecture, planning, graphic illustration, sculpture, photography, cinema and graffiti in the discussion of individual case studies, they also question the role of visual culture in projecting a unified geographic representation of the city through publications such as *A Book of Dublin*. Collectively the essays instead portray a Dublin that exists as a set of overlapping representations; a collection of conceptual frameworks, built environments, image objects, and flickering imagery across screens that shape perceptions of the city. Since the mid-eighteenth century the cityscape – at least those parts of it that may be identified with modern Dublin – existed in the pictorial form of architectural drawings and plans before being built. Buildings and monuments became representations of the cultural aspirations, economic success and political ideologies of those who lived and governed the city. Drawings, paintings, photographs, television and cinema represented the city in ways that not so much reflected but shaped how the city would be visually perceived in colonial, post-colonial and national contexts. The existence of Dublin in these series of representations does not present itself as a chronological trajectory of pictorial image objects but as a sort of visual montage, an overlapping of ocular experiences and imagery that continually act as a form of friction with both existing and emerging visual representations and experiences. The essays collected in the pages that follow illuminate some of the histories of the visual culture of Dublin that are frequently overlaid or grate against contemporary visual experiences of the city.

## This Book of Dublin

This particular book of Dublin is organized into four sections each comprising three essays. The opening section, *Architecture, Identity, Place* consists of a series of explorations of Dublin loosely orientated around the relationship between architecture, representation and the politics of identity. In the context of this section, representation does not only refer to the pictorial depiction of Dublin architecture but also to the city's architecture itself as a representation of established and emerging political identities. In the opening chapter, Jeffrey A. Cohen discusses Henry Shaw's *New City Pictorial Directory* published in 1850. Frequently cited in histories of Dublin and its illustrations reproduced to graphically depict commercial buildings of historical interest, *Shaw's Directory* has its own particular history within the visual culture of Dublin. As Cohen demonstrates, the graphic depiction of the Dublin streetscape as a commercial enterprise was linked to the phenomenon of publishing illustrated street directories that appeared in cities across Europe and North America from the mid-nineteenth century. Commenting on Shaw's promotion of the venture in mercantile and nationalistic terms, Cohen explores how the graphic representation of the frontal views of commercial buildings where anchored by the elaborate depiction of more public buildings, thus ensuring that *Shaw's Directory* contributed to forging an image of commercial streetscapes linked to the urban space and visual memory of Dublin.

Ian Morley's detailed account of the politics of design and planning of the Royal College of Science and Government Buildings in the early twentieth century, charts the relations between civic design and cultural identity. Discussing the relationship of architectural planning and building materials to the cultural politics of imperialism and an emerging nationalism, Morley's essay identifies how the debates of civic design reflected the tensions between Dublin's colonial administrators and the growing influence of nationalism within city planning. In contrast to the large public edifices of Edwardian Dublin discussed by Morley, Gary A. Boyd's contribution to the relations of architecture and cultural politics identifies ephemeral

architecture as a salient feature of Dublin's cultural history. For Boyd, ephemeral architecture is closely aligned with temporary appropriations of urban space that mobilize transient architectural forms in expressions of political idealism, religious devotion and cultural identity. Discussing a range of such practices from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first, he argues that such accelerated architectural practices can respond immediately to emerging political and economic shifts within urban culture.

The essays in the next section, *Modernity, Cinema, Cityscape*, explore issues of technological modernity, popular culture and cinema through specific case studies associated with the Dublin cityscape. Amongst the advertisements in *A Book of Dublin* is a promotion endorsing a visit to 'The Electricity House' on Grafton Street.<sup>16</sup> Sean Mannion's essay on the culture of electrification and street lighting explores this emerging phenomenon of technological modernity on Dublin's cityscape in the early twentieth century. Beginning with a discussion of the peripheral place of the city within Revivalist culture, he traces the spectacle of the electrification of Edwardian Dublin's streetscapes and events such as the Irish International Exhibition of 1907. Through these examples, Mannion identifies urban electrification as characteristic of the uneven modernization of colonial Dublin.

The following two essays examine the different effects of cinema on the cityscape. The first discusses the emergence of cinemas on Dublin's streetscape during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Denis Condon's essay on early cinema in the city begins by distinguishing the nomenclature of the 'picture house' as denoting the actual building that accommodated cinemagoers, from 'cinema' which designated the cultural institution that exhibited film. Condon's essay traces how the exhibition spaces that eventually came to be described generically as 'cinemas' transformed the geography of popular entertainment not only in the city centre but also in Dublin's suburbs as cinemas began to cater for specific audiences in different parts of the city. Paula Gilligan's essay on the French set designer Alexandre Trauner's role in the production of Yves Allégret's *La Jeune Folle* explores issues of inter-culturalism, scenography and the construction of

Dublin as cinematic space. Discussing Trauner's 1952 visit to the city in preparation for designing the scenography for Allégret's film of Civil War Dublin, Gilligan examines the influence of post-war French photography and cinema on the filmic cityscape created for the French cinemagoer.

The section *Art, Politics, Imaginative Geographies* includes three essays addressed to issues of the representation of politics and the politics of representation as they relate to how Dublin is perceived as place in the context of colonialism and nationalism. Justin Carville's essay on photography and the representation of the city's slums, examines the role of photography within discourses of urban poverty in late Victorian through to post Edwardian Dublin. Discussing debates about the photograph as evidence which emerged in two judicial reports into the social conditions of the city's working classes in 1913, Carville's essay explores how photography contributed to the spatializing of urban poverty in colonial Dublin. Identifying the intersection of aesthetics, religion and social reform within photographic discourse he proposes that photographs of Dublin's slums contributed to geographical imaginings of the city that transgressed conceptions of colonial Dublin formed through the mobilization of urban planning by the Wide Street Commissioners.

The following two essays examine different expressions of nationalism through the Dublin's streetscapes. Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch's essay discusses the ideological issues surrounding political sculpture on Dublin's streetscapes throughout the tumultuous period which ushered in the formation of the Irish Republic. Examining specific monuments erected from the early twentieth century, she explores the tensions surrounding the emergence of political sculpture before and after independence to examine questions around the expression of political ideologies through the erection of sculpture and monuments in public space. Through a careful analysis of the cultural politics that contextualized the erection of political monuments, Bhreathnach-Lynch's essay demonstrates how debates of nationalism and art in one historical period continue to have a salient effect on contemporary political discourse. Jennifer Way's essay on the role of the generic photographic depiction of O'Connell Street from the 1950s through to the early 1960s as projecting an image of Ireland's economic and commercial modernization, explores the significance of the period prior

to Lemass's economic rationalization of urban space. Beginning with the wide circulation of the stock photo of O'Connell Street in tourist publications and the wider print media, Way relates such visual expressions of the nation's modernity to the artist Sean Hillen's post-modern series of photo-montages *Irelantis* to expose the myths surrounding the nation's modernity as a radical rupture with the historical pastoralism it seemingly discards.

The aim of *Visualizing Dublin* is not only to explore the cultural history of Dublin through its pictorial representation and spatial configurations as a way of addressing questions of Irishness through alternative paradigms of cultural analysis. The book is also concerned with opening up the disciplinary scope of visual culture studies within the broader field of Irish studies. The inter-disciplinary framework of visual culture has left it open to easy appropriation by competing areas within the arts, humanities and social sciences to the extent that there are distinct disciplinary emphases of visual culture ranging from art-historical perspectives to cultural geography. Just as there are contending definitions of 'culture' between the arts and humanities and the social sciences, so too are there competing designations of visual culture. These are frequently manifested not only in differing methodologies but also in how visual materials are analysed as cultural forms. What has frequently been overlooked in Irish studies approaches to visual culture is that the field has been hugely influenced by the social sciences through what is usually referred to as 'visual studies'. In keeping with the inter-disciplinary ethos taken in this book, the final section *History, Aestheticization, Globalization* comprises essays by authors who employ sociological and ethnographic approaches to the visual culture of Dublin. The opening essay by Christopher Lowe discusses contemporary responses to architectural preservation of Georgian Dublin through the discussion forum of the online Irish architecture magazine *Archiseek*. Through an examination of online debates regarding the exclusion of 'Dutch Billies' from an official state proposal to have Georgian Dublin declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, Lowe draws on the writings of Theodor Adorno to explore how online respondents framed their postings within discourses of authenticity when debating the significance of Georgian architectural heritage.

Eamonn Slater's essay on a suburban housing estate in Ballybrack, provides a sociological analysis of how photography visualizes antiquity within the spatial construction of suburban development during the Celtic Tiger. Beginning with an analysis of the dialectical process of the photographic visualization of antiquity, Slater exposes the reification of history through its carefully crafted aestheticization in the process of speculative housing development. Writing on modernity's spatial configurations of history Sigfried Kracauer was to exclaim; 'it is as if the world itself has taken on a photographic face', as Slater's essay suggests, housing construction during the Celtic Tiger involved complex processes of aestheticizing history as part of the visualizing effects of suburban development.<sup>17</sup> Speculative development was bound up with the suburban estates 'photographability'. The final essay by Silvia Loeffler employs a different sociological approach to Lowe and Slater in that she embarks in what might be described as sociology of visual culture inflected with *flânerie* in the exploration of what she terms the blind spaces of Dublin's visual culture. As Chris Jenks has noted sociology is no longer caught up with the empiricism of observation. The strategies of the urban *flâneur* have provided a methodological structure for sociological observation; 'as an artful and interested encounter with the play of signifiers that make up the various semantic outcomes of epistemological engagement'.<sup>18</sup> Loeffler's essay traces what Tim Creswell has identified as those spaces of transgression that are out of place with established senses of belonging to urban place, those public spaces marked by graffiti and stencilling.<sup>19</sup> She maps Dublin's blind spots in a process of subjective critical reflection on the city's visual culture, exploring the significance of sensory experiences of desire and belonging in public space.

17 Sigfried Kracauer 'Photography' in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 58.

18 Chris Jenks, 'Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the *Flâneur*' in Chris Jenks (ed.), *Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 145.

19 Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

## Conclusion

Commenting on the National Lottery's 2010 advertising campaign in an online article for *Antenna*, Diane Negra observes that:

The Dublin represented by the ad is notable for two particular features – its heavy visual concentration on the corporate city centre (privileging locations like the newly-opened Convention Centre and the Samuel Beckett Bridge in particular and the International Services Centre and Docklands districts in general) and its careful multiculturalism – two elements that were central to Ireland's economic transformation and self-imaging during the Celtic Tiger years. Thus, the ad's transfixing effect on audiences is rooted partly in its symbolic reinstatement of the social and economic conditions of the boom.<sup>20</sup>

At the moment the state was in the midst of economic collapse the visualization of Dublin was re-orientated towards the configurations of corporate urbanization. The colonial streetscape that dominated visual perceptions of the city since the eighteenth century has been replaced by a new visual perspective, an alternative vantage point which seeks to excise the past. National Lottery advertisements, intros to RTE and TV<sub>3</sub> broadcasts of televisual tabloid journalism and dramas, political party broadcasts and corporate advertising have all incorporated the view from the south across the Samuel Beckett Bridge as recurring visual trope in the depiction of Dublin. This re-orientation of the mediated vista of the cityscape is more than a shift in pictorial organization of urban space. As Negra's analysis suggests, it marks a new phase of investment in visual culture within the ideology of nation. Seemingly devoid of architectural markers of the past it projects an image of Dublin as a modern, globalized and globalizing city. Even the inscription of the city's 'Irishness' through the avant-garde literary figure of Beckett does not gesture towards history but rather a liberal conception of the creative industries that rests more easily with the

20 Diane Negra, 'Over the Rainbow: Selling the National Lottery in Post Celtic Tiger Ireland', *Antenna*, <<http://blog.comarts.wisc.edu/2010/10/08/over-the-rainbow-selling-the-national-lottery-in-post-celtic-tiger-ireland>>. Accessed 25 October 2012.



myth of a knowledge economy. But, as Negra notes, this too is an image of a more recent past, a trauma that such recent visualizations of the city attempt to mask. Dublin's visual culture needs to be explored not only for what is revealed in the city's pictorial representations and their ideological effects but also for what is hidden by them. Analysis of the cultural history of Dublin requires attention to those visual phenomena of the urban fabric that remain outside the perceptual field that is established by visualizations of the city. A few hundred yards down river from the National Convention Centre on the North side of the river, a space that is outside the frame of the corporate Dublin projected through advertisements such as the National Lottery campaign, is the relic of the once proposed headquarters of the Anglo Irish Bank. A monument to the myth of the Celtic Tiger, it is reminder that the past will always have the potential to bleed through emerging configurations of Dublin's visual culture.



PART I

Architecture, Identity, Place



JEFFREY A. COHEN

## Dublin Streets Sideways: Henry Shaw's 1850 *Pictorial Directory*<sup>1</sup>

One of the most unusual portraits of Dublin was a very selective one that, in its own way, was unparalleled in its inclusiveness and detail. In February 1850 after many months of preparation, a newspaper publisher named Henry Shaw issued his *New City Pictorial Directory*. Among its pages of listings and an account of recent events were seventy-six plates, each with long, flat-on views delineating all the buildings along selected stretches of Dublin's most commercially active streets.

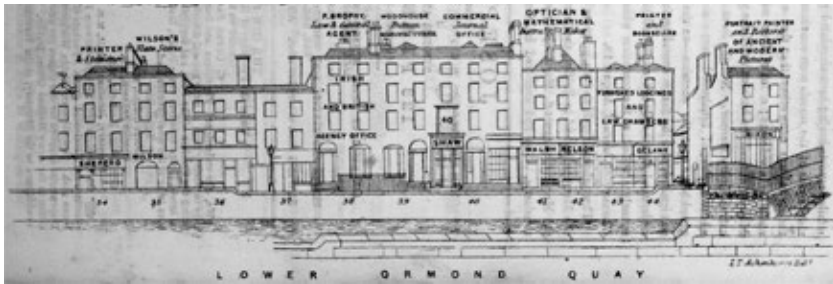


Figure 1 Detail of plate showing 34–44 Lower Ormond Quay, from Henry Shaw, *New City Pictorial Directory*, 1850 (Dublin, 1850) (Courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin). Shaw's office is just right of centre, at no. 40.

- 1 My gratitude to the Worcester-Eisenbrandt Foundation of Baltimore for its generous support of much of the research upon which this paper is based. Thanks also to professors Edward McParland of Trinity College Dublin and Joseph Brady of University College Dublin for helping introduce a visitor to the historic evolution of their city.

It was a remarkable venture, perhaps the only one of its kind in Ireland in that era, one born of functional, entrepreneurial motives: the images were intended to serve the merchants whose shops, offices, and warehouses these plates depicted and identified, the latter for a fee. The images were also intended to encourage popular acquisition of this unusual directory, which came free with the purchase of a subscription to Shaw's newspaper, the *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*. The publication has since come to have even more value, sixteen decades later, as a record of the city's then recently transformed commercial geography, its built form at that time, and by comparison, its evolution since.<sup>2</sup>

Henry Shaw (fl. ca. 1820s–1860s) came from an enterprising Dublin family of printers, stationers, and occasionally publishers.<sup>3</sup> In late 1848 he launched the *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, in its first issue explaining his business plan: this new publication would be primarily an advertising newspaper, with 7,000 copies to be distributed gratuitously each Saturday to the residences of 'the nobility, the gentry, merchants and traders of the city and suburbs of Dublin', who could choose to retain it for a penny each week, or to subscribe.<sup>4</sup> Half the space in the paper would be devoted to trade, while the other half would offer 'subjects of a literary character' intended to encourage readership. The scheme was 'all designed for the purpose of inducing a circulation which would give the advertiser unparalleled advantages'.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 Shaw's 1850 directory was republished in 1988 by the Friar's Bush Press in Belfast under the title *The Dublin Pictorial Guide & Directory*, with a helpful introduction by Kevin B. Nowlan.
- 3 His father William had been in this business since the 1820s, and later brought in his sons. My thanks to Charles Benson of Trinity College Library for sharing his notes on Henry, William, and Lorenzo F. Shaw as printers and publishers in the mid-nineteenth century. Other siblings include Eliza Shaw and Dr George Ferdinand Shaw (1821–1899), a professor at Trinity College who served as the first editor of *The Irish Times* in 1859. In 1844 Eliza married George Bomford Wheeler, who would become the paper's second editor. 'Other Bomfords', (<[http://www.bomford.net/other\\_bomfords.htm](http://www.bomford.net/other_bomfords.htm), accessed 6 July 2011>).
- 4 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 23 December 1848.
- 5 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 5 January 1850.

Shaw clearly saw his audience in his fellow merchant-adventurers of a new age, effectively articulating their mutual challenge in that first issue:

The principle of keen competition, so actively carried throughout the various ramifications of commercial life, renders it the indispensable duty of every mercantile man, who does not wish to be overcome by the pressure, or outstripped by his more fortunate competitor, to avail himself of every opportunity to place his establishment PROMINENTLY before the public – to have ‘his local habitation and his name’ as familiar as household words to all who may possibly become his customers, and thus secure the legitimate object of his ambition, a fair share of public patronage.<sup>6</sup>

This was his plan for the *Commercial Journal*, and it would also be a purpose precisely served by the *Pictorial Directory*, which emerged as a prospect only a few months later. In early February 1849 Shaw explained that the directories he had used for distributing his newspaper were quite inaccurate, requiring a substantial revision of the listings, and that this led him to the idea of offering a revised new city directory, free to newspaper subscribers and an inducement to new ones, intended to help secure a sustaining income stream for the *Commercial Journal*.<sup>7</sup>

Over the succeeding months, Shaw's newspaper tracked the progress of this venture in great detail, explaining the business calculus behind it, as well as its logistical challenges. In mid-March 1849 Shaw announced that:

[O]ur Directory will present a feature never attempted in any similar work published in this country, and the adoption of which warrants the title we have assumed – viz., the Pictorial Directory. In addition to the beautiful public buildings, houses of worship, railway stations, &c., many of which have sprung up during the past few years, which will embellish its pages, the merchant or trader will now, for the first time, have the opportunity of employing artistic taste in bringing his establishment prominently before the public eye. The improvements in Shop Architecture recently effected can here be introduced with advantage, while the superiority of this mode of publicity to a mere literary advertisement needs no comment.<sup>8</sup>

6 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 23 December 1848.

7 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 10 February 1849.

8 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 17 March 1849.

In this last point, Shaw referred to the opportunity here for illustrations of shopfronts rather than the usual text-only notices. At this point, in addition to images of civic landmarks, the undertaking seemed predicated on many quarter- to full-page illustrated advertisements for individual businesses (for one to four pounds each), to be inserted in their proper sequence in a geographically arranged part of the directory. Already calling this ‘the Pictorial Directory’, he noted that he had ‘at considerable expense specially engaged a staff of artists’ for the graphic work.<sup>9</sup>

The following week, Shaw published a prospectus that formalized his idea. It would be published on 1 January 1850, to be sold for six shillings or provided gratuitously to those who subscribed for a year to the *Commercial Journal*. It would offer opportunities to the manufacturer ‘who wishes Pictorially to exhibit’ improvements in his profession, ‘to the Engineer, for the illustration of his plans, diagrams, or models’, and similar advertising means for the designer, trader, and shopkeeper.<sup>10</sup> Here Shaw was referencing individual advertisements with images that were not only of building exteriors, but over the next eight months, the project more explicitly identified the format of continuous street-views, as in a notice of 10 November:

I am now proceeding to take the streets of the city in regular order, and [for] such of the leading thoroughfares as are sufficiently attractive, I am engaging a geometrical view of the houses thereabouts; to those who desire to have their establishments lettered, a trifling charge will be made.<sup>11</sup>

Shaw would include multiple-block portions of selected streets to be drawn in comprehensive ‘geometrical’, or orthographic elevations, pointedly choosing locations that held ‘sufficiently attractive’ qualities in their concentrations of potential advertisers. The coverage on some plates may have been shifted to reach landmarks that would help locate nearby shops more recognizably, which also added a more general kind of visual interest to attract purchasers or subscribers.

9 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 17 March 1849.

10 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 24 March 1849.

11 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 10 November 1849.



The final directory would indeed combine both forms of illustration, with a number of individual advertisements, some of business buildings and some of products, as well as the continuous street-front elevations that would allow many more businesses to pay at lesser rates. That 'trifling charge' for 'lettering or placing the Name of the Establishment and Business thereon' was to be 'Ten Shillings per House', and Shaw was ultimately able to place hundreds of such listings. He further spelled out this scheme of streetscape fronts on 17 November 1849: 'The Pictorial Embellishments are of the most unique order, having whole lengths of houses in the Principal Streets of our Beautiful City – *Engraved on Steel*, and introduced throughout the Street Directory pages, in their proper positions.' Already, he announced, 'many of the Skeleton Engravings' were ready for inspection at the newspaper office, and the following week he listed them, along with the 'prominent buildings' on each. Then, on 8 December, he listed the thirty business streets that 'have been accurately surveyed', with 'elevations of upwards of fifteen hundred houses therein beautifully outlined and engraved on steel'. For each street, he listed those who had 'already secured prominence by Lettering, that is, by the business and name inserted over and thereon'. A list of thirty-two streets on 29 December added Great Britain Street (now Parnell) and somewhat incongruously, Queen Square – which promoted a residential development through a perspectival view, rather than commercial streetscapes through elevational views. Later additions to the ultimate publication would include Castle Street, Chancery Lane, and Cork Hill, all among the westernmost streets illustrated, while November's plan to include King's Inn Quay and High Street, still further west, did not come to fruition.<sup>12</sup>

12 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 17 November, 8 December, 29 December 1849.

## Models

How Shaw came to this notion is not certain, and one can indeed follow his logical progress toward its form in his explanations of the advantages of illustrated advertisements, and of arranging them in a geographical sequence, some time before he arrived at this notion of illustrating whole streetscapes. But he could easily have known of some very specific models, both for similar ways of representing city streetscapes and similar strategies for profiting from such an undertaking that had appeared over the previous twelve years.

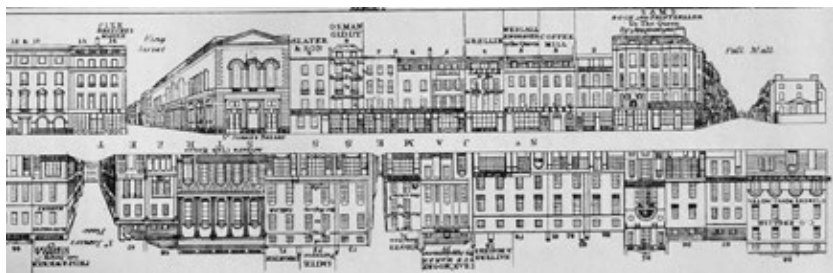


Figure 2 Detail of St James Street near Pall Mall, from J. Tallis, *Tallis's London Street Views* (London, 1838–1840, 1847), from E. Beresford Chancellor, *Memorials of St James's Street* (London, 1922).

The earliest publication to take on this form and extended scope was almost certainly that initiated by John Tallis (1818–1876) in London. Between 1838 and 1840, Tallis had issued 88 small paperbound booklets as a series titled *Tallis's London Street Views*. Each booklet featured a long plate, about seventeen inches across, that typically combined four long strips of views in near elevation. Preceding and following this were pages with paragraphs offering historical and descriptive notes, a 'street directory' for each separately issued number, and additional advertisements.<sup>13</sup>

13 See Peter Jackson, *John Tallis's London Street Views, 1838–1840* (London: [For] The London Topographical Society by Natali & Maurice, 1969), which offers a full reprint of the plates with substantial research on the publication and Tallis.

Tallis provided street address numbers for nearly all buildings, but for businesses that subscribed as paid advertisers he added text above their facades giving the firm's name and identifying its product or service. He sometimes also depicted names on subscribers' signboards, while other labels identified churches and civic landmarks, along with the intersecting streets that would help provide locational cues for the nearby businesses.

As Tallis explained in his booklets, each plate depicted 'upwards of one hundred buildings ... elegantly engraved on steel'. He touted the whole as a resource for both the shopper and the more casual visitor from afar. It offered:

[A] commercial directory corrected every month, the whole forming a complete stranger's guide through London, and by reference, from the directory to the engraving, will be seen all the public buildings, places of amusement, tradesmen's shops, name and trade of every occupant, &c. &c., to which is added an index map of the streets, from a new actual survey, now making, at a cost of upwards of one thousand pounds; and a faithful history and description of every object worthy of notice, intended to assist strangers visiting the metropolis, though all its mazes without a guide.

These thin booklets could be purchased separately for a penny-and-a-half to two pence each. Tallis intended to derive income through multiple means: from their purchase by the consuming public, from payments by the subscribing businesses for 'lettering', and from some separate advertisements on the accompanying pages. The undertaking must have proved rewarding, and in an 1847 supplement Tallis added eighteen more issues and views, mostly along streets he had depicted earlier.<sup>14</sup>

Tallis published some similarly conceived street-views of Gravesend, downriver from London, in 1839, and others soon picked up on the idea, emulating this enterprise in different cities. Some of those depicted commercial streetscapes nearer to Dublin but in publications now only

14 In 1839 Tallis had published a smaller set of views, publishing *A comprehensive gazetteer of Gravesend with its environs being a complete guide for visitors ... to which is added a general directory of Gravesend and illustrations on steel*, with some similar plates, and Peter Jackson reports that Tallis may also have been responsible for a plate of Bell Street in Birmingham from 1840 (likely referring to a plate of Bull Street that survives in a reproduction). Jackson, *Tallis's London*, p. 17.

fragmentarily known – although they may have been more familiar to Henry Shaw, who had a second office in Liverpool. In the early 1840s a set of street views of Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, Wells, and other cities was issued on large sheets in a quite elusive publication.<sup>15</sup> Even more mysterious and closer to Dublin was what appears to have been a similarly formatted view-series showing streets in Manchester and Birmingham, to this point known only through later nineteenth-century reprints.<sup>16</sup>

15 This volume or series was titled *Historical, pictorial, and topographical illustrations of the counties of Somerset, Gloucester, Wilts, and Monmouth, with specimens of the architecture, and street views of Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Wells, Salisbury, Monmouth, &c.* It was published in London 'for the proprietors, by E. A. Sargeant', of 22 Margaret Street, Wilmington Square, and printed by W. J. Sears, 3 & 4 Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. Tallis may have had no hand in this. To date its separated plates have been encountered in collections in Bristol and Bath, in the latter case with the local views excised from their original composite sheets. Two sheets of Bristol views from this publication are preserved in the Braikenridge Collection in the Bristol Reference Library (items XIX-5, and XX-297). These and the Bath plates have been locally assigned dates of 1842 and ca. 1840. See James Lees-Milne and David Ford, *Images of Bath* (Richmond-Upon-Thames: St Helena's Press, 1982), items 888–894 and p. 343, and also 'Bath in Time', a collection of images of Bath placed on-line (<<http://www.bathintime.co.uk/>>), nos. 11472–11474 and 13139–13142.

16 The Manchester plate is known via a later image, which identified its date as 1840, that appeared in an 1880 volume by Richard Wright Procter. There had been a whole chapter on one of the city's principal streets, 'Deansgate and Its Byways' in an earlier book by Procter, from 1874, where he had briefly entertained the idea of 'reproducing and here inserting a panoramic view – drawn about 1830 – of a portion of modern Deansgate, enlivened on each hand by familiar names, signboards, and shops'. For the 1880 volume, Procter commissioned a photolithographic reproduction for a fold-out image identified in the frontmatter as 'drawn about 1840'; a reference to one depicted building having been demolished in summer 1845, and probably other evidence encountered in the years between these books must have supported this later date. Richard Wright Procter, *Memorials of Manchester Streets* (Manchester: T. Sutcliffe, 1874), p. 212; Procter, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester* (Manchester: Palmer & Howe, 1880), p. xx and illustration following p. 38. (The inscription 'Palmer & Howe, Manchester' at bottom on this sheet refers to the publisher of the photo-lithograph in 1880 rather than in the 1840s.) My thanks to Michael Powell of Chetham's Library in Manchester and Mark Crinson of the University of Manchester for helping track this down.

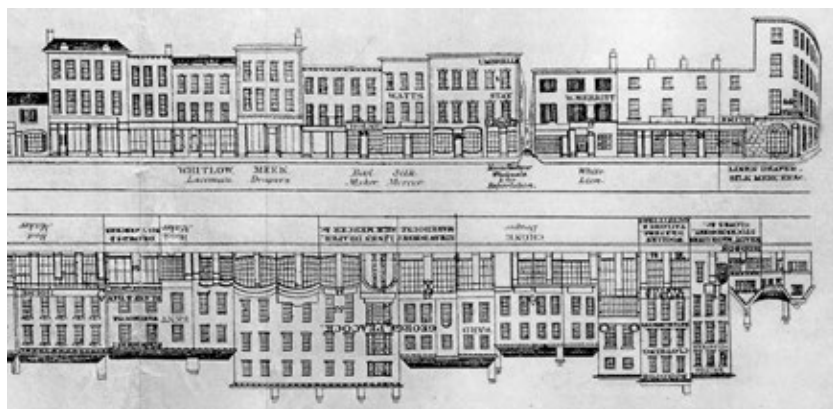


Figure 3 Detail of view of 'Deansgate, Manchester A. D. 1840', as reproduced in Richard Wright Procter, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester* (Manchester, 1880).

By the last years of the 1840s, this general model reached further shores. In New York City, the firm of Jones, Newman, and J. S. Ewbank published *The Illuminated Pictorial Directory of New York* in 1848, and Edward Jones followed this in 1849 with street-view series tracking Maiden Lane and Fulton Street in the city's emerging downtown. Two years later its influence was clear in *Rae's Philadelphia Pictorial Directory and Panoramic Advertiser*, published by Julio H. Rae; this depicted buildings on both sides of Chestnut Street between Second and Tenth streets, taking in that city's preeminent retail corridor in sixteen plates with advertisements. With some important differences in terms of presentation, all these echoed Tallis' conceptions visually and operationally, setting rates for identification on the long strip views, and publishing them in small booklets with additional advertising.<sup>17</sup>

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The Birmingham plate, titled 'Bull Street, Birmingham, in 1840', was reproduced in Eliezer Edwards, *Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men* (Birmingham: Midland Educational Trading Company Limited, 1877).

17 See J. Cohen, 'Corridors of Consumption: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Commercial Space and the Architectural Reinvention of Downtown', in Louisa Iarocci (ed.), *Visual Merchandising: The Image of Selling* (London: Ashgate, 2013).

More of a departure, if in avowed motive more than form, was the inclusion of twenty street-view plates in much the same format that were featured in Joseph Fowles' *Sydney in 1848*. In his introduction, Fowles explained:

We shall endeavour to represent Sydney as it really is – to exhibit its spacious Gas-lit Streets, crowded by an active and thriving Population – its Public Edifices, and its sumptuous Shops, which boldly claim a comparison with those of London itself: and to shew that the Colonists have not been inattentive to matters of higher import, we shall display to our Readers the beautiful and commodious Buildings raised by piety and industry for the use of Religion.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of business strategy, though, Shaw's effort might also have been inspired by a slightly earlier group of widely distributed city views that were connected with newspaper rivalries in 1840s London, such as that between the *Illustrated London News* and the *Pictorial Times*. These views varied in format. Rather than the bounded corridors of city streets, some long panoramic woodcuts followed London's frontage on the Thames, assembling waterfront landmarks in sequence, along with the scenery of steeples and domes that ascended over them. Others rose high above the cityscape, rendering it from a slightly angled vantage point that often obliquely depicted two faces of many foreground blocks in recognizable detail – as in the case of the aerial view of Dublin published in June 1846 as a supplement for subscribers of the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>19</sup> Three years later, newspaper publisher I. Whitelaw engaged a young Scottish architect, Robert

18 Fowles' book was reprinted in 1878, reissued much later in facsimile with a forward by Morton Herman and with notes on the plates in 1962, and then again in 1973 by Ure Smith in association with the National Trust of Australia.

19 Over a meter across, this Dublin view (engraved by Smyth) was a more embracing aerial view that showed buildings and blocks in remarkable detail, foregrounding (and casting sunshine on) the better part of the city, toward the southeast. Joseph Brady and Anngret Simms (eds), *Dublin through Space & Time* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 180–184, 224–226; Brady to author, 25 August 2011. See Ralph Hyde's notes on these London views, along with digital images of these riverfront panoramas on the 'Motco Image Database' website, posted at <<http://www.motco.com/panoramas/001/>> (consulted 20 July 2007), and the 1966 reprint of the *Grand Architectural Panorama* by the London Topographical Society.

Sandeman (c. 1826–1886), to draw streetscapes that were published as *The Grand Architectural Panorama of London; Regent Street to Westminster Abbey*, which was issued as a single extended sequence just 4.5 inches high but 22 feet 6 inches long.<sup>20</sup> Such views were issued in a folded-up form between hard covers, sometimes initially conceived as enticements for newspaper subscribers, but most were soon offered for sale to non-subscribers as well.

Whitelaw's *Grand Architectural Panorama* showed one side of a continuous sequence of streets – the west side of a somewhat sinuous route northward from the Abbey up Whitehall to Charing Cross, then up Regent Street to Langham Place – in flat-on elevations, except where non-orthogonal vistas were encountered. It differed from Tallis' thin-lined outline views and most of their progeny in showing more shading and texture, a firmer sense orthographic projection, and foregrounds of very well-populated and trafficked street scenes. In this regard, the *Grand Architectural Panorama* resembled a type of publication more common on the European continent than in England and Ireland. Entrepreneurial artists in several cities devised such long views for consumption by newly mobile classes who were drawn to see and experience the Unter den Linden in Berlin, the Grand Boulevards in Paris, or the Nevsky Prospekt in St Petersburg. Since the 1820s, these destinations of desire had been captured in long prints that were folded or rolled into easily salable forms, anticipating demand as a keepsake for visitors, one that would capitalize on the multiplicity and extent of these places rather than representing them in the more common perspectival views carefully framed to focus on singular landmark structures.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike most Continental examples, however, *The Grand Architectural Panorama* textually identified a great many businesses, its notable inclusiveness

20 Jackson, *Tallis's London*, p. 10n; Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, 'The Grand Architectural Panorama of London, 1849' *London Topographical Record* 23 (1972): 111–118.

21 See, for example, reprints such as *Panorama of Nevsky Prospekt* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1974), Adrien Provost et al, *Paris Romantique: panorama des grands boulevards* (Paris: Hervas, 1989), and Hans-Werner Klünner, *Panorama der Strasse Unter den Linden vom Jahre 1820* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1991). See also J. Cohen, 'A Streetscape named Desire: Long Views through the Emerging Bourgeois City', in Gillian O'Brien and Finola O'Kane (eds), *Portraits of the City: Dublin and the Wider World* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012).

possibly reflecting a rather modest fee multiplied many times; Whitelaw et al may have seen their primary source of revenue in presenting these views as items for sale rather than in collecting higher payments for such identification. In such views generally, especially some proffered by newspaper publishers, Shaw may have come upon a model that had proven quite effective in attracting popular attention.

## Production

In late 1849, Shaw was not only hustling for paying supporters for his new directory, he was also pressing to finish it for distribution at the start of the new year, as he had promised. On 24 November he continued: 'We have at present employed almost every engraver and draftsman who have presented themselves for work at our office, and require some few more to complete such portions of the city as we have enumerated ...'. Shaw's desire was immediate and the plates varied noticeably in how buildings were rendered and inscriptions lettered. He did indeed cast a wide net for delineators as his deadline approached; rather than entrusting the task entirely to the more than two-dozen established professional architects listed in an 1849 city directory, he farmed out much of the work to mainly younger draftsmen and architects, as had Whitelaw in engaging Sandeman. Many of them were individually credited in small print on their plates, the most prolific being the more experienced John Talbot Ashenhurst (at the Royal Dublin Society's School of Architectural Drawing in 1836–1837), John Joseph Lyons (there c. 1828–1880), and James Healy (at the school in 1844–1845). More rarely indicated were J. O'Gorman Toomey, F. Kiernan, and M. Martin, some of whom seem to have been still involved in their studies in the 1840s, while N. Hynes was twice identified as engraver.<sup>22</sup>

22 A Michael Martin had entered the drawing school in 1842 and an M. B. Martin exhibited drawings at the Royal Hibernian Academy in the late 1840s along with



On 9 December Shaw listed his subscribers for 'lettering' their business names on the plates, and warned that others who might be interested should come in immediately if they did not want to be represented by a blank façade. Just before the close of the year, on 29 December, Shaw touted the forthcoming directory further, commenting on its value in mercantile and even nationalistic terms. As to the former, he put into words a key notion: referencing the hitherto cautious use of illustrations in newspaper advertisements and handbills, he explained that:

[M]any calculated that the outward appearance thus delineated of an establishment would be more likely to ensure public recognition, than a mere detail of the number and business of the house. But those who are experienced in such matters must be aware that the appearance of a house when displayed in an *isolated picture* is very different from its real appearance as seen in a street where it is placed in juxtaposition with other houses whose display may distract the view of the beholder. It is well known that in establishing a recognition of any house, we more immediately attach attention to *position* than to its *form*, much more to the buildings or noted residences that surround it than to its own peculiarity of structure. Thus many houses are known as being 'opposite the Post Office' or as being 'three' 'four', or 'five doors' from the Bank, Exchange, College &c. &c ...<sup>23</sup>

In accord with this value placed on location relative to landmarks, Shaw's draftsmen took pains to carefully depict and label the more elaborated public buildings among these streetscapes, which served to help anchor their commercial neighbours in urban space and visual memory.

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Lyons. Toomey could be the John Toomey who won a premium in 1850. Lyons would go on to prominence as the founder of the *Dublin Builder*, Ireland's leading early architectural journal. See the Irish Architectural Archive's 'Biographical Dictionary of Irish Architects', now accessible as a searchable on-line database [<http://www.dia.ie/>]; Gitta Willemson, comp., *The Dublin Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners, 1746–1876* (Dublin: Royal Dublin Society, 2000), p. 95. My thanks to Simon Lincoln, Ann Martha Rowan, and David Griffin of the Irish Architectural Archive for their cordial assistance.

23 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 29 December 1849.

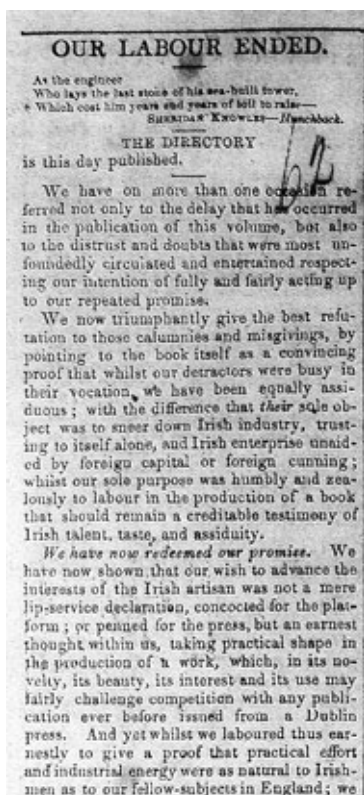


Figure 4 'Our Labour Ended,' from *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*,  
9 February 1850.

Ever the promoter, Shaw continued his celebration of the forthcoming directory, focusing on the great value of its street-view plates: with this in his hands, 'at a glance the stranger can see at what place he must direct his steps for any article of merchandise he may require'. He imagined a copy on the table of the coffee-room in the visitor's hotel, and closed with the claim that it held 'advantages which no other Directory ever before presented'. He declared that this was the 'last day' to sign up for a listing in the street views, a hint that it would not be ready by new year's day as promised. On 12 January it was still the last day, but Shaw explained that the directory

could easily have been completed earlier if he hadn't been so intent on its quality and novel form. He further asserted that 'the work shall remain a fitting monument of Irish industry and Irish talent', focusing on its being a proud thing rather than a late one. Indeed, he claimed, it was something he intended to present the following year, in a splendidly embellished version, at the Great Industrial Exhibition in London.<sup>24</sup>

When the *Pictorial Directory* finally came out on 9 February 1850, an editorial, 'Our Labour Ended', refuted the 'calumnies' and accusations leveled by detractors.

The Engravings have all been made from drawings taken on the spot by our own artists. Accuracy of detail has been specially aimed at in this novel and interesting feature of our Directory; and, at the same time, we have striven to give an artistic finish to the engravings, without deteriorating from their value as correct representations of the various mercantile establishments and public buildings. The plan of having each shopkeeper's name and calling lettered on the plate, is a rare and unique advantage to advertisers. Many who never read an advertisement will examine a print with interest, and actual pictorial illustration will retain its impression on the memory longer than the most elaborate advertisement.<sup>25</sup>

The plates clearly echoed Tallis' London scheme, in conception and appearance, but they were integrated into a different kind of publication – a book of a few hundred pages that also offered two city directories, one organized alphabetically and the other by street, separate listings of government departments, of banks, and of lawyers, a calendar, and a review of the previous year's events. Partial- and full-page advertisements, many illustrated, were interspersed through the volume. In fact, Shaw had arrived at a vehicle for distributing advertising images – integrating them into street views and into a volume with such useful textual materials as the directory and calendar – that was more effective than presenting street-views without these other attractions, and that could come closer to selling a collection of advertisements, usually not as appealing an offering.

24 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 12 January 1850.

25 'Preface', *New City Pictorial Directory*, 1850, n.p.

Shaw now triumphantly underscored the virtues of the *Pictorial Directory*:

[E]ach plate represents the public buildings, shops, offices, hotels, and private houses in each street, precisely as they appear to the spectator standing on the opposite side of the street. Every window, every pillar, every ornament, every balcony, every balustrade, every jutting, every doorway, and every piece of architecture, masonry, stonework or woodwork in each public building, shop, hotel, office or private dwelling is accurately delineated. Thus a complete '*Panorama of the City*' is given in a series of Plates. Sitting in his library chair, the country gentleman may walk though Sackville-street, without being jostled by the crowd, may promenade Grafton-street, without disturbance from 'the cars rattling o'er the stony street;' and may stroll round Stephen's-green without fear of catching cold.<sup>26</sup>

With this in hand, one could avoid crowding and disease, and the volume would even appeal to countrymen abroad, countering 'the bitterness of exile and the reverses of fate'. All this would still come free with a prepaid annual subscription to the newspaper, and it would be a recurring resource: the added value that came in the form of the 'Retrospective Review of the events of the Past Year', written 'in a style of calm criticism and impartial judgment', was intended to be the first in a yearly series.<sup>27</sup>

## Commercial Dublin Depicted

As published, Shaw's *New City Pictorial Directory* included 76 full-page plates of street views in nearly frontal outlines. Most views were effectively splayed, with one block-face inverted with respect to the other, but several plates depicted one-sided quay-facing blocks so that a second tier on the page, aligned like the first, would continue the breadth of coverage. A few exceptions, such as the plate of Cork Hill, offered just one tier, or presented buildings more obliquely, as for Chancery Lane and Christ Church Place.

26 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 9 February 1850.

27 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 9 February 1850.

Beyond the frontal plane of the facades, orthogonality was often abandoned, so as to more effectively portray rising chimneys, flanks visible at corners, and architectural elements that projected or receded from the frontal plane. Intersecting streetscapes were often treated perspectively, with obliquely converging horizontals.

Two full-page plates in the *Pictorial Directory* were exceptional, one a perspectival view of Ballygihen opposite the title page. A caption several pages further along identified a motive: it described 'the handsome Marine residences, recently erected by P. V. Fitzpatrick, Esq.' along the seaside below present-day Dun Laoghaire, about 12 km south of central Dublin, and exemplified Shaw's 'intention of extending the plan' of the next directory, for 1851, to 'the leading suburban districts'. The other plate was the aforementioned perspectival view of 'Queen Square', now Pearse Square, a development begun in 1839 and nearly completed by 1850 that comprised over forty relatively modest attached townhouses lining three sides of a large green space. These were situated well east of the heart of the city, near the Grand Canal Docks and somewhat isolated from wealthier districts by the railroad and the river. A caption generously touted its advantages. In these speculative projects avid for buyers, Shaw glimpsed a promise of potential new advertisers; in addition to his staple of merchants downtown, he could turn to promoters of residential real estate ventures at the edges of the city.

Those central mercantile streets, though, were the main subject of the directory's images, and they present a very particular way of looking at a specific type of place, one shaped around selling and the forms, rendered physically on the street and in lines on paper, that served its functional ends. An instructive contrast is posited by comparing Shaw's streetscapes with those produced several decades before for Dublin's 'Wide Streets Commissioners'. As Edward McParland and Edel Sheridan have chronicled, the Wide Streets Commission began its work in 1758. Their early efforts stipulated effects of regularity and breadth in both the planning of streets and the treatment of facades; a document of 1766 proscribes 'projecting Windows or Signs', and later elevations approved by the Commissioners enforced a larger-scale coherence and grandeur on developers, often in the

form of block-long designs that would be adhered to even when construction of portions was taken up by different owners and builders.<sup>28</sup>

Many of these block elevations provided a unifying ground-floor design, often rusticated with channeled stonework as a 'basement' that was heavier and less open than later merchants would have wished, even where the design integrated arched windows specifically meant to accommodate shops. These basement stories offered visual support for the residential floors above, sometimes presenting the architectural imagery of a solid base below giant pilasters joining two upper stories. A top story might rise above those and their cornice, with attic windows that were closer to square in proportion, reasserting horizontal cohesion. On many of these blocks from the later eighteenth century, though, the upper stories of grand residential facades erected in long terraces were strikingly reserved, with a planarity sometimes unrelieved even by attic-defining cornices or intermediate beltcourses. Most relied more on the appeal of their elaborated entries and the collective, space-defining compositional unity that they created at an urban scale than on the degree of classical embellishment found in such drawings.

Where shops were integrated into the ground floor in such designs, their windows were often expected to align in width with the single windows above. The uniformity and contained elevational presence of these shops offered an image of gentility over trade, if at the expense of what shopowners might have wanted: visual distinction for the individual shop within the long range, and more open, prominent display windows. In some later cases, as on Westmoreland and D'Olier streets, completed in 1801, the integral shop windows were far more generous, although individual commercial identity was still decidedly subsumed within the larger horizontal design at the scale of the block.

By the late 1840s, however, Shaw's images make clear that merchants even on such grand streets were widely able to fulfill both kinds of essential

28 Edward McParland, 'The Wide Streets Commissioners: Their Importance for Dublin Architecture in the Late 18th – Early 19th Century', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, 15, no. 1 (1972): 1–27 (6); Edel Sheridan, 'Designing the capital city: Dublin c. 1660–1810', in Brady and Simms, esp. pp. 108–135.

desiderata, enlarging openings for display and light, and elaborating their ground-story shopfront or even their whole façade to identify themselves far more distinctly in the streetscape. Shaw's views capture an incipient moment when such motives led businessmen to more fully transform their buildings in order to have them stand out, perhaps part of what Shaw referenced in his allusion to 'the improvements in Shop Architecture' of the day, and explaining his insistence on recording every pilaster, balustrade, and projection, mentioned above. This was very much in accord with Shaw's well-articulated goal of visually promoting locational identity. Such motives were indeed enacted beyond these paper surrogates, on commercial streets that were beginning to recast parts of the city's centre from a vision of great collective horizontal pieces to one of insistent vertical ones – parts of what Shaw recognized as a new, visually competitive urban landscape that was no longer to be contained by genteel uniformities.

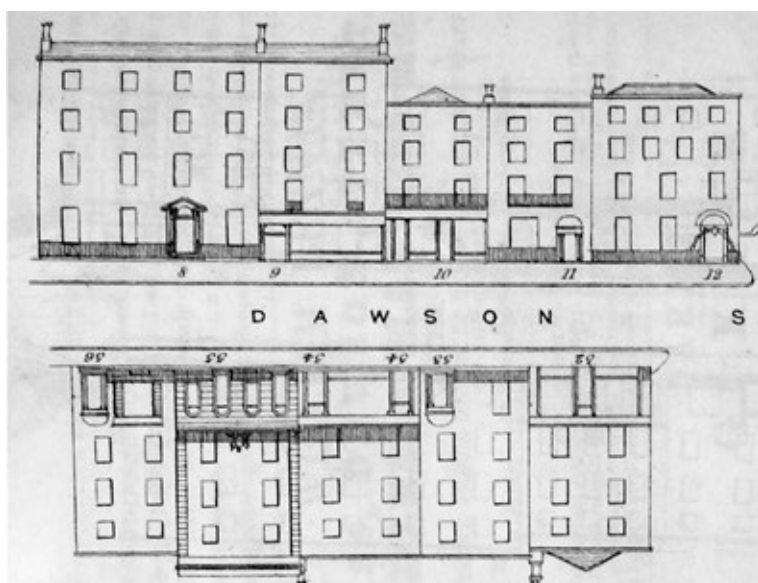


Figure 5 Excerpt from Shaw's 1850 *Pictorial Directory* showing 8–12 and 52–56 Dawson Street. Note the still residential fronts at nos. 11 and 53.

The face of commerce recorded by Shaw took several different forms. Many buildings, both those guided by designs for whole blocks and those that took their form more incrementally, were constructed with integral storefronts. But in what appears to have been the more common situation on many streets, a ground-story shopfront was inserted into a relatively normative townhouse three or four stories tall and two or three bays wide. That many shops were alterations to former houses is hinted at by very similar adjoining properties that retained their residential form in Shaw's images – such as 75–77 and 107–108 Capel Street, along that street's northernmost blocks, or 11 and 53 Dawson Street. Modestly enlarged windows, removed iron palisades, or, more overtly, signboards, whether blank or lettered, are sometimes the only marks of commercial use; the persistence of domestic appearances on several quayside plates may mean that mercantile activity operating out of houses was common there, especially for office functions such as brokerages rather than retail shops.

Such buildings adapted for commerce would often retain their old domestic plainness and planarity above the ground story, but a building inviting the patronage of a broad public had to mark itself more noticeably in the streetscape, firstly to proffer its identity as something other than private domestic space, and secondly as a venue distinct from its neighbours, identifiable, recognizable, and even memorable. They accomplished these goals most immediately in terms of signage, whether painted directly on walls, or applied on boards – and where so many businessmen rented, reserving their capital for inventory, staff, and promotion, the latter had the advantage of being movable when quarters changed.

Some measure of distinction could be won by colour, in paint, tinted stucco, or even stonework that would set fronts off from the ubiquitous brick, but in Shaw's plates, one detects many efforts to use more architectural means to distinguish stores, such as frontal displays of quoins, pilasters, elaborated entablatures, and rooftop balustrades that marked a single building and set it apart from its neighbours. More insistent means took the form of multiplied window pediments, heavily moulded surrounds, or devices centred horizontally between windows. Ground-story storefronts were sometimes given further presence though unifying arched treatments that offered a greater sense of order, monumentality, and solidity to what



could otherwise seem like an ad-hoc, asymmetrical rhythm of doorways and windows, and they could also provide such shops with more height and natural light.



Figure 6 12–18 Grafton Street, photomontage from 2010 (author) and from Shaw's *Pictorial Directory*, 1850. Note that the treatment of Brown, Thomas & Co. was extended to include a third storefront at no. 15 some time after the 1850 plate.

Among the streetscapes in the *Pictorial Directory* with the most notable degree of investment in this type of commercial architectural makeover were parts of Dame, Lower Sackville, and Grafton streets. On the east side of the latter of these, for example, from numbers 12 to 17, was a series of four-story stores richly endowed with such features, mostly in moulded stucco, it seems. The apogee was in two adjoining structures for Brown, Thomas & Co., 'general drapers', a firm that commenced at no. 16 in 1848 and then extended to each side in the years following.<sup>29</sup> The two fronts for

29 For a later elevation of Brown, Thomas, & Co., see Brady and Simms, fig. 103. An account of the company's history is given in a Wikipedia entry, 'Brown Thomas', <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown\\_Thomas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Thomas)>, consulted 16 July 2011.

Brown Thomas depicted by Shaw displayed a full panoply of effects, even in just its narrow initial portion; its stucco surfaces, projecting bow, and density of architectural elements set it off, and marked a far cry from the grand, chaste uniformities of the red-brick Georgian terraces. It broached a distinctive language of form that would emerge topically as 'street architecture', more assertive in three dimensions, crowded with heavily moulded elements, bringing classical forms into more vertical compositions, and offering curves in elevation and plan that distanced such buildings from both the old and the more prosaic.

This was probably close to the sort of thing Shaw meant by those recent 'improvements in Shop Architecture', and the firm's investment in the 'lettered' representation in Shaw's directory aligned directly with its investment in such an elaborated facade. Shaw's directory depicted the up-and-down staccato rhythms of individual merchants clamoring for the attention, for the feet, and for the money of passersby, creating composite portraits of the nineteenth-century city that contrasted visibly with the broader harmonies put forward in the proudest portrayals of its eighteenth-century antecedent.

## Coverage

The Dublin in Shaw's selected views was clearly a picture of a vibrant commercial city, one proffering itself to consumers of these goods and services sold in small shops along the main streets. Isaac Slater's 1846 directory assessed the city's external trade and manufacturing in measured terms, reflecting dimmed recent fortunes with a hope for revival, but noted that

The domestic trade of Dublin is very considerable: The shops that line the principal streets are handsome, and their stocks invitingly displayed; indeed, many of them are elegantly fitted up. Several of the drapers' establishments are upon a scale of great

magnitude, and, at spring and autumn, are crowded with country buyers purchasing their stocks, adapted to these seasons.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of population, Shaw's Dublin was an enlarged city: over the previous half century, it had grown from about 182,000 to 258,000 (in 1852). This was substantial growth, but not nearly on the scale that had brought leading industrialized cities like Manchester (including Salford) from about 90,000 to 389,000 between 1800 and 1850, Birmingham from 71,000 to 233,000, or Liverpool from 82,000 to 376,000. In 1841 Dublin's population was reportedly about 233,000, suggesting that a substantial amount of that population increase, nearly a third, was quite recent in 1850. But as Jacinta Prunty explains, the heart of the city had been losing its more aristocratic residents since the start of the century with the removal of Ireland's governance to Westminster, while many of Dublin's new arrivals were poorer immigrants from the Irish countryside. Exacerbating this pattern, new wealth from industry and commerce was settling along the city's peripheries, in suburban residential districts outside its canal ring. The physical persistence of the most recognized old genteel streetscapes masked the fact that this was a changing city, with many of the older townhouses adapted to serve as stores or, especially among secondary streetscapes, as tenements.<sup>31</sup>

Shaw perceived that the city had changed in other ways, grown beyond the familiarities of small size and the scope of long-established local patronage. These depicted streetscapes were corridors of tightly clustered commercial frontages, key elements of a new city beckoning patronage by strangers – shoppers from the bourgeois suburbs, country townsfolk on excursions, or visitors from more distant places. They offered for sale retail goods often manufactured elsewhere, parts of an emporium of objects and

30 Isaac Slater, *National Commercial Directory of Ireland including ... alphabetical directories of Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick* (Manchester and London: I. Slater, 1846), p. 10.

31 Adna Ferrin Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (orig. publ. NY, 1899), (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 450, puts Dublin's population at about 160,000 in 1800, and 261,700 in 1850; Slater, *National Commercial Directory of Ireland*, p. 19; Jacinta Prunty, 'Improving the urban environment: Public health and housing in nineteenth-century Dublin', in Brady and Simms, esp. pp. 166–191.

recreations avidly sought by purchasers for whom they marked standing in a new economic landscape.

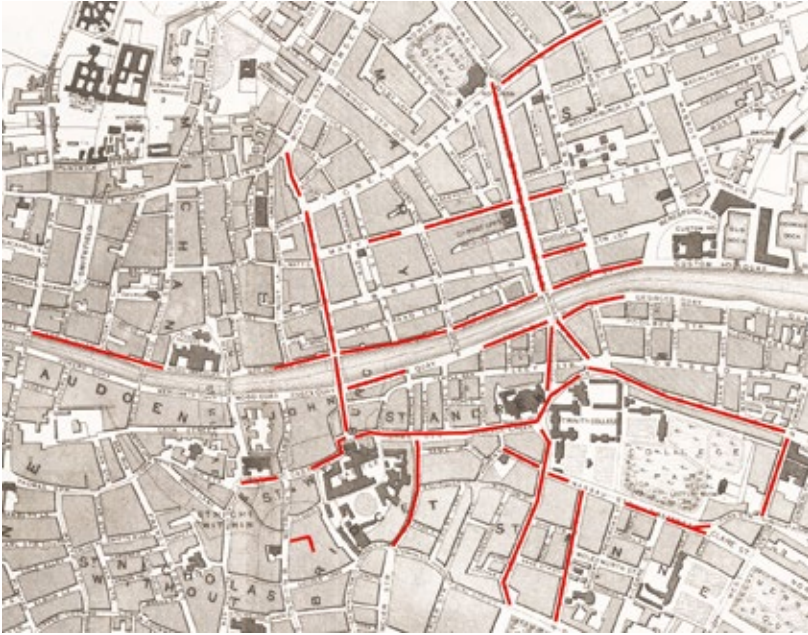


Figure 7 A rough mapping of the street coverage in Shaw's *Pictorial Directory* of 1850, marked on central part of John Rankin, del. and engr., 'Dublin' (London: John Tallis & Co., 1851).

As the pattern of Shaw's plates delineates, that landscape of consumption comprised a loose lattice of intersecting streets both north and south of the Liffey. There were two principal north-south routes crossing the river: one along Sackville (O'Connell) Street (seven plates), continuing as Westmoreland (two plates) and Grafton (six plates) streets; and the other following Capel Street (seven plates)<sup>32</sup> and continuing as Essex Bridge and

32 Curiously, there was a gap in coverage between the two northernmost of these plates, leaving out the stretches of 63–71 and 95–104 Capel.

Parliament Street. There were effectively three major east-west routes, one forked: the preeminent one followed Castle Street, Cork Hill, and Dame Street (four plates) to College Green, and then led to one branch going north of Trinity College along College and Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse; four plates), while the other branch went south of the College, breaking off onto Suffolk and following Nassau and Leinster streets. A counterpart north of the Liffey tracked along Mary, Henry (three plates) and Earl streets. The third east-west corridor lined both sides of the river, in the sometimes discontinuous set of one-sided blockfaces of the quays (together, eleven plates). Four streetscapes joined to this network for somewhat smaller stretches: Great Britain (Parnell; four plates), Great George (four plates), and Dawson (four plates) streets, along with Westland Row (three plates).

The composite portrait of Dublin in these images was a purposefully selective vision that overlapped and set itself off from a few different geographies of the city. Observing their roughly plotted distribution on a map, one cannot fail to notice that Shaw's commercial lattice clearly favoured the eastern portion of the city: south of the Liffey, only a few disconnected street fragments lay west of the castle, and none lay west of Christ Church Cathedral (all of these among the last streets Shaw chose to include, during the winter of 1849–1850, perhaps holding out hope for more patronage here); north of the river, only two quayside blocks represented the districts west of Capel Street. Shaw's street choices adhered to what Edel Sheridan would refer to as a 'spatial gradient of social topography' that had grown over the course of the eighteenth century, as the city had increasingly embodied patterns of differentiation between eastern parts of the city that were home to much of the gentry and the middle classes, and the more densely populated precincts closer to the old medieval core in the west, where one would find more of the lesser merchants, the working classes, and the poor.<sup>33</sup>

33 See especially Edel Sheridan, 'Living in the capital city: Dublin in the eighteenth century', in Brady and Simms, pp. 136–158, particularly the maps displaying different measures of the city's social geography.

By Shaw's moment in the mid-nineteenth century much had changed within this social setting, especially with the departure of members of the gentry after the Act of Union in 1801. This removed many of them from the city's grand genteel urban spaces – St Stephen's Green, Merrion Square, Rutland (Parnell) Square, and Gardiner Street – and thus removed many who had been the principal consumers of luxury products in the eighteenth century. The mapping of Shaw's depicted blocks shows that he chose streets that were clustered near those more elite and prosperous sectors of the city, yet that such intense retail use had not invaded the frontages on those squares to the same degree as on adjoining through-streets; they apparently continued to hold out as a residential refuge, if probably starting to integrate professional offices and other higher-end, non-retail commercial uses.<sup>34</sup>

Shaw's street-views also skirted another adjacent setting, that in the interiors of some of the same blocks whose fronts he had depicted, settings heavily populated by the city's poor and working classes in 'low-value' houses and tenements that occupied landscapes scarcely visible and sometimes not even accessible from these key prominent commercial corridors. The urban landscapes developed by some of the large estates, such as the Gardiner and Fitzwilliam estates, had sometimes favoured quite long, uninterrupted block-fronts, with no frequent rhythm of intersecting perpendiculars. Some reached as much as several hundred feet between cross streets – removing the world of these main urban corridors further from that of the secondary and tertiary streets, mews passages, and the dead-end courts of the block interiors.

Shaw's shop-corridors effectively made up a more connective landscape, one that clung to key routes of movement and visibility. Rather than cultivating the patronage mainly of the nearby gentry, they addressed customers on the move, both consumers who resided in other parts of the city and those who visited from further off, including such 'country buyers'

34 Joseph Brady describes a very similar commercial geography along these same corridors about sixty years later, by which time the grand squares accommodated some elite hotels and white-collar offices. See Brady, 'The Heart of the City: Commercial Dublin, c. 1890–1915', in Brady and Simms, pp. 282–340.

as Slater mentioned in 1846.<sup>35</sup> A significant clientele probably came from the middle classes and newer wealth that had settled in another nearby yet distinct landscape, a growing suburban ring just beyond the city's edges; its denizens would travel by carriage, train, and omnibus back to the city's eastern core to acquire the modern class-connoting goods often manufactured afar but retailed along these connected streets.

Yet another foil for Shaw's chosen streets was that represented in the best-known images of the city. His depictions only glimpsed the monumental civic landmarks that were the fodder of visitors' *vedute* of the late eighteenth-century city, especially those of James Malton. Shaw almost impishly took some of these in only in passing. He found purpose in bringing them in where they adjoined commercial stretches, helping position his clients amid the more embellished and recognizable civic landscapes, but those landmarks were decentred from their usual dominance in dramatically perspectival views. Those grand stone lions had to wait their turn on the street, but ultimately Shaw recognized their added appeal for purchasers or subscribers to the directory who might enjoy it as a visitor's guide and keepsake, something also claimed as an attraction by the producers of the similar London and New York examples.

In terms of advertising coverage, typically fewer than half the storefronts in any plate were 'lettered' with legible signboards and further text describing their full name and line of trade. On some plates, only one or two were so identified – such as all four plates of Dawson Street or the northernmost two plates of Upper Sackville Street – whose west side mainly shows houses with their iron palisade fences, although the outlines of signboards (if unlettered) indicates that some properties at the upper end of the street were already stores or offices. On Upper Sackville, paid advertisers on the eastern side and the presence of more shop windows there may have led Shaw to see advertising promise in the houses opposite them, but he may also have been interested in capturing the landmarks and continuity of this grandest and most public of streets, leading all the way up to the monumental Lying-In (Rotunda) Hospital at its head.

35 Brady and Simms, pp. 150, 179, 186.

Dawson Street was rich in civic landmarks such as the Mansion House, St Ann's Church, the Reform Club, and the equestrian statue of George I. It also offered glimpses of St Stephen's Green, at one end, and the fence of Trinity College at the other. This may have led Shaw to take on its whole length in four plates – despite just three advertisers in total – although he may have seen far greater promise in what appears, from their windows and signs, to have been as many as two dozen other shops along the street.

In his most successful plates, though, Shaw fared far better – such as on Bachelor's Walk, which had as many as seventeen of twenty-nine facades with lettered identifications, or the two blocks of Lower Sackville Street south of the General Post Office, with fifteen of twenty-two and fourteen of twenty facades lettered. The block of Lower Ormond Quay that held Shaw's own office (no. 40 in Figure 1, above) was another very successful one, with fifteen of his twenty-two neighbours having signed on. But blocks this rich in subscribers were definitely the exception rather than the rule, and many plates were quite sparse in terms of advertisers.

## Footprints

Aligning these blockfronts with their building footprints on nearly coeval plans – as recorded in an Ordnance Survey set of detailed maps made in 1838 and updated in 1847 – one can observe a bit more about these urban landscapes.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the streets Shaw chose to depict were those most transformed for commerce, especially the sequences along Sackville and Capel, Dame and Henry streets, and along the quays. By the 1850s they were generally lined by tall, narrow store buildings, many of them built as residences and later adapted to business. Their footprints often reflected their

36 According to its caption, surveyed for the Ordnance Survey Office in 1838 by Captains Bordes and Tucker, R. E., engraved by Captains Larcom and Cameron, R. E., 1846–1847, and corrected to 1847.



prior residential form, with a front volume along the street that extended two rooms deep, and frequently narrowed beyond that to an ell along one side of a rear yard.

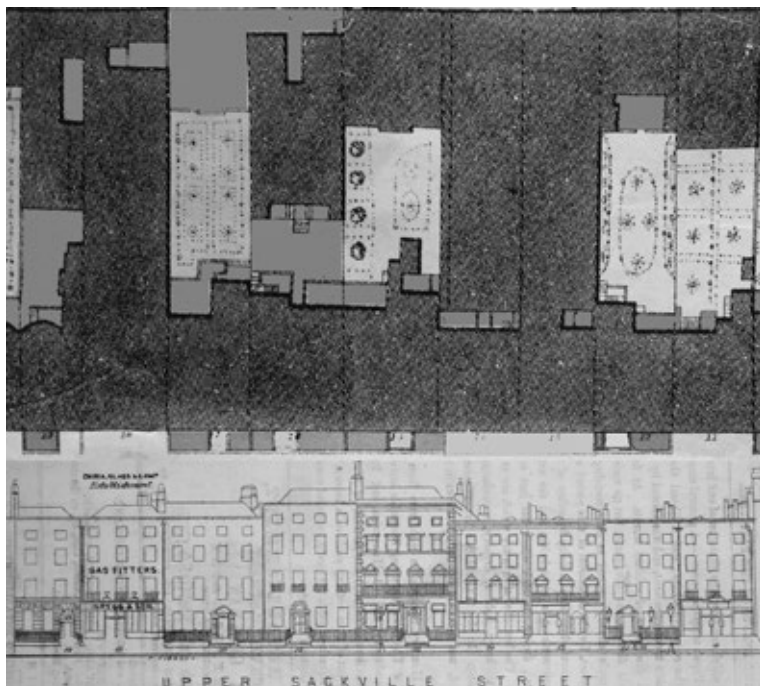


Figure 8 11–19 Upper Sackville (O'Connell) Street in details from Shaw's *Pictorial Directory*, 1850 (below) and from Bordes and Tucker, Dublin Ordnance Survey, surveyed 1838 and corrected to 1847, pl. 14 (above).

In elite residential districts, the Ordnance Survey plans reveal fenced-off sunken basement 'areas' allowing front windows a level below grade, while what was effectively a bridge crossing the area would lead to the front entry – something one also finds in Shaw's elevations where a grander house retains its older form. Sunken service areas behind houses were distinguished from decorative gardens whose landscape patterns were specifically or generically transcribed, as on the plate showing 11–19 Upper Sackville Street. But where the front-rooms at ground level were converted

to a store, the sunken areas were usually covered over to allow pedestrians to approach the shop windows, as the footprints of nos. 11 and 18 show; and in no. 18, one finds that in the one case where there was an advertised, 'lettered' firm in this sequence – for Gregg & Son, sellers of china, glass and lamps, and gas fitters – the lot-wide breadth of the building volume extended much more deeply from the street.

These houses on Upper Sackville had been large ones, several of them four window-registers across and four full stories tall, and eventually some would accommodate large shops. On the far narrower Capel Street, paralleling it to the west, one found a lesser version of similar patterns. The block that embraced numbers 150–61 showed some differences: buildings were two window-registers across, without surviving areaways. Some fronts rose a full three stories above the shop, and these tended to be the ones whose footprints ran deeper with nearly full-lot coverage, probably supplying further space for business inventories and processes that outstripped a store's need for a rear yard.

While the old residential and mixed-use blocks had many more hollows in the block interior, newer business buildings often extended much further in depth as solid rectangular volumes. As a result, the footprints on blocks with buildings more fully dedicated to commerce showed a great deal more solid hatching reaching back from the street, with a built density and scarcity of open space that was characteristic of business districts.

## Afterlife

It is not clear how many subscribers Shaw's *Pictorial Directory* attracted to his newspaper, but as he was preparing the 1850 version, he was already looking ahead to the prospect of a second edition, anticipating that the one for 1851, with 'its extended interest and enlarged matter, shall be a worthy

successor to our present publication.<sup>37</sup> In some surviving copies, a few plates reveal minor variants, possibly additions as new advertisers stepped forward late in the process after a first printing of the 1850 edition, if not quite a full 1851 edition, but that was not to be.<sup>38</sup> As Kevin B. Nowlan states in his introduction to the 1988 reprint of Shaw's *Pictorial Directory*, 'the 1850 edition appears to have been the only one ever published',<sup>39</sup> and this was not that unusual an outcome. In 1847 Tallis had touted his extended London series under the larger rubric of 'Tallis's Street Views and Pictorial Directory of England, Scotland, and Ireland; illustrated by a series of engravings of the principal streets, public edifices, &c. of London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and all the leading cities and towns in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland',<sup>40</sup> but that grander ambition seems to have outstripped actuality. The same was true of Rae's *Philadelphia Pictorial Directory and Panoramic Advertiser*. Rae's announced expectations for subsequent editions were only very modestly attained in 1852, with some pasted-over emendations and additions to plates, and then this too was then abandoned.<sup>41</sup>

37 *Commercial Journal & Family Herald*, 9 February 1850.

38 A version of the *Pictorial Directory* at the Irish Architectural Archive that seems otherwise identical to the one reprinted in 1988 shows some differences, including an additional lettered facade at 29 College Green in lettering on one plate and two more at 8 and 9 College Green on another. On the Christ Church Place plate, this later version substituted more decorative fonts for J. and J. Wright's cloth and umbrella shop, labelled on the opposite side of the street, but here with this additional indication of its location.

39 *The Dublin Pictorial Guide and Directory of 1850, Henry Shaw*, reprint with an introduction by Kevin B. Nowlan (Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1988).

40 *Daily News* (London), 15 April 1847.

41 Rae's preface noted that he intended 'to issue the Panoramic View annually, giving all the alterations in the structures, and the changes in the business of Chestnut Street', and the pasted slips with additional business names found in some issues may reflect that effort. These volumes still bear the same title page, but the outside board covers, mostly given to block advertisement, start with '1852 Panorama 1852'. That may be as far as his serial plan went; Rae had proposed in his preface to turn next to Market Street, from the Delaware to Broad Street, but apparently this did not reach fruition, and Rae himself moved on.

The *Commercial Journal & Family Herald* would carry on for decades, but under new ownership, as Shaw soon faced insolvency and was forced to surrender the newspaper at auction in September 1854.<sup>42</sup> Despite his disappointment, though, he, like Tallis and Rae, left a uniquely informative record of their city at a critical moment of change. They captured the state of whole streetscapes that bore the marks of the recent repurposing of many properties for business functions, and in ways that were substantial enough to be visibly, architecturally transformative – if sometimes just on the ground story and through their assertive signage. Because of their extended, if selective focus, these views also captured more of the scope of this type of change that had just occurred over the previous decades. That scope was a critical aspect that made such changes so consequential, and that had turned the core of the city into a new kind of place in the mid-nineteenth century.

In key commercial thoroughfares in New York City and Philadelphia, as in the old financial district of London, that incarnation of the city was quickly consumed, within a generation or two, by the rising value of commercial real estate, by larger aggregations of capital, and by new technological abilities to build in successively larger pieces, both taller and broader. By the turn of the century there was virtually no recognizable survival of this earlier iteration of the central business district along many of the depicted blocks of those two American cities, only occasional reminders of that city of smaller pieces.

Certainly that was also true in some parts of Dublin. One can very roughly count what appear to be surviving pieces along these routes: on the key shopping venue of Henry Street, for instance, perhaps just four out of about sixty buildings recognizably retained their 1850 appearance in 2010; and on O'Connell, where some townhouses were still visible in 1850, only about a dozen out of ten times that number of buildings seemed

42 *Nation* (Dublin), 2 September 1854; *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), 23, 25, 29 1854. There was more than one Henry Shaw in Dublin, but a notice titled 'Improved Wet Gas Meter' in the *Freeman's Journal* for 23 October 1861 stated that this was the invention of 'Mr Henry Shaw of Lower Ormond Quay', suggesting that Shaw had by then turned to other enterprises.

to have survived into 2010. Both streets were subject to substantial destruction during the political upheavals of the early twentieth century, making this a special case, but mercantile forces were also remarkably potent. As elsewhere, blocks that have been constant objects of commercial developers' ambitions have typically been substantially rebuilt, while other blocks have been more persistent in form.



Figure 9 129–144 Capel St., photomontage in 2010 (author) and from Shaw's *Pictorial Directory*, 1850.

A striking proportion of Shaw's plates, though, show at least some buildings that remain, despite processes of commercial rebuilding that continued through much of the nineteenth century. On Dame Street, with many key financial institutions, about 27 of 86 buildings survived, and on Capel Street – narrower and with smaller buildings, but intensely commercialized – some 82 of 153, well over half, appear to have retained much of their 1850s form. Some of the quays, too, are still quite recognizable: Bachelor's Walk has about twenty of twenty-eight depicted buildings, while Lower Ormond Quay, site of Shaw's own office at no. 40 (Figure 1, above), retained about half of the forty-five buildings shown.

Overall, a striking amount of Shaw's commercial city survives today. Of all the cities recorded in such mid-nineteenth-century street views, the central business streets of Dublin appear to have retained the greatest proportion of the built fabric depicted in such illustrations a century and

a half earlier. Not only is the scale of that earlier downtown cityscape – of two to four stories, and fifteen- to thirty-foot frontages – often largely intact, so are many of the actual buildings.

Some of that survival is doubtlessly owed more to the periodic dimming of the central city's economic vitality for some long stretches – such as what Maurice Craig referred to as 'an era of slow decay and fitful growth' in the late nineteenth century that continued later – than to the power of popular appreciation and mechanisms of historic preservation.<sup>43</sup> And the 'Celtic Tiger' of the most recent economic boom centred much new development further downriver, to the east, and further into the city's suburban peripheries rather than demanding wholesale rebuilding in the historic core. But the partly accidental result is that Dublin's old commercial streetscapes now embody an increasingly rare experiential asset in which the attraction of such walkable and functioning historic urban landscapes helps sustain an industry of visitation. Their scale and texture may always be more vulnerable than monumental institutional landmarks or the great Georgian squares and terraces, and existing protections will doubtlessly be tested, small piece by small piece, during Dublin's next wave of prosperity. Some recent publications, though, focus new attention on these vibrant historic streetscapes, with whole volumes dedicated to building-by-building research along Capel and Pearse streets – using Shaw's plates as evidentiary footholds.<sup>44</sup> They promise to enhance an understanding and an appreciation of this key chapter of our urban past.

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Of all the ways one might visualize such a complex and changeful place as a large city in the nineteenth century, Shaw's had to be one of the most atypical, cutting narrow transects through its fabric. In important ways, these complemented the more conventional views, which typically overlooked

43 Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660–1860* (orig. pub. 1952; Dublin: A. Figgis, 1980), p. 307.

44 Such as Olwyn James, *Capel Street, Dr: A Study of the Past, A Vision for the Future* (Dublin, 2001), and Katriona Byrne, *Pearse Street D2: A Study of the Past, A Vision for the Future* (Dublin, 2001), both published by the Dublin Civic Trust.

such commercial landscapes entirely, favouring the civic landmarks and spaces, or the more distanced and embracing views that more often served popular appetites for urban images – or even the romanticized views of venerable pockets of survival of the past, or of the picturesque poor. Those places of civic representation appeared only more incidentally in Shaw's views, and the romanticized ones much less. But this complement in quotidian commercial streetscapes, born of a completely different basis for graphic inclusion, a mercantile mechanism, actually depicts a critical and often-erased element of the nineteenth-century city. These views capture the commercial vitality at the core of that once-new city, and in that they constituted a portrait that mapped more critically to the transforming economic reality of the city of that day than did the more commonly depicted monuments of political, religious, and aristocratic continuities in Dublin's urban landscape.





## Place, Race and Grand Architectural Statements: Civic Design in Early-1900s Dublin

Civic design, described as the art of architecture applied to town building<sup>1</sup> and an extension of an architect's sphere of influence,<sup>2</sup> is a relatively unknown component of Irish urban history and visual culture. Yet with reference to the narrative of Ireland's visual culture civic design has had an important input, particularly during the early years of the twentieth century when it had a profound effect upon the appearance and plan of Dublin given its use by the British government to help express authority over the native population.<sup>3</sup> Whilst civic design at that time was employed to articulate Britain's political command and control over Ireland for those who sought to remove British sovereignty the use of civic design, in contrast, established a nexus between buildings, their design, the 'Irish nation', and thus 'Irish' history, culture, and identity. One means through which this was to be brought about was by architectural projects involving the use of local stones, the employment of design styles similar to those evident in Dublin's pre-British heritage, and the application of the intellect of Irish-born architects. One project in particular, the monumental Royal College of Science and Government Buildings on Upper Merrion Street, personified this state of affairs.

- 1 T. Adams, *Recent Advances in Town Planning* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1932), pp. 2–3.
- 2 W. Hegemann and E. Peets, *The American Vitruvius* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co. 1922), p. 1.
- 3 I. Morley, 'Civic design and national identity: the example of Edwardian Ireland', *Planning Perspectives* 26.3 (2011), pp. 465–486.

Designed in 1904 by the English architect Aston Webb, with the assistance of Irish designer, Thomas Manly Deane, the Royal College of Science and Government Buildings were erected on a site within Dublin's cultural quarter of Kildare Street and Merrion Street. Introducing modern architectural and planning matters to Dublin for the first time the college building came to represent much more than an artistic exercise – it symbolized matters of race, politics, and culture – but notably too it was designed and constructed during an age when there was a dreamy belief that by congregating numerous educational and cultural institutions into one area of Dublin a district similar to South Kensington in London would be established.<sup>4</sup> To persons of Irish patriotic leanings the area and the new college building within it would also be fundamental to championing 'Irishness', and likewise de-Anglicizing Ireland in light of the perceived compromised sense of nationhood borne from British sovereignty. For the British though a different cultural reading and identity of the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district identity existed: an environmental character tied to the elevation of the local cultural fabric because of Britain's imperial presence. As this essay shall explicate, within this interplay of culture, architecture, representations of identity and power, the new college edifice, Britain's grandest civic design scheme in Edwardian Ireland, sat.

The early 1900s in Britain saw the rise of urban planning in the form of establishing low-density residential areas after the passing of the watershed *Housing, Town Planning, Etc. Act in 1909*<sup>5</sup> and grandiose civic design projects in London and large-sized provincial settlements such as Liverpool and Cardiff. In Dublin in 1904 and 1912, a settlement then under the jurisdiction of the British government in Westminster, two monumental civic edifices were built. The buildings, Royal College of Science on Upper Merrion Street and the University College on Earlsfort Terrace, not only redefined the cityscape but due to the changing political situation in Ireland

4 T. F. Ryan, *The History and Architecture of Sir Aston Webb's College of Science and Government Buildings* (MA Dissertation, University College Dublin, 1991), p. 11.

5 S. M. Gaskell, 'The suburb salubrious: town planning in practice', in A. Sutcliffe (ed.), *British Town Planning: The Formative Years* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), p. 19.

became embroiled in debates as to how the buildings expressed the 'Irish nation' rather than 'British imperialism'.



Figure 1 The Royal College of Science building as it appears today. Source: Ian Morley.

Due to the acknowledged presence of social problems in Ireland under British rule, and Irish historiography's focus on the problems the country experienced during its reign, there has been the transmission of a historical image in which Ireland's state of being during the nineteenth century reflected a society in a state of regress. Yet, this generalized image is not without flaws. In architectural terms at least the 1800s was a time when great advancements were made in Ireland. During the nineteenth century a major evolutionary component of Irish architecture was the implementation of colour<sup>6</sup> within design schemes. In this period there were developments in

6 P. O' Donovan, 'Introduction', in J. Murphy and P. O' Donovan (eds), *Irish Shop Fronts* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), p. ii.

the design of churches, public edifices, and also shops, and in the largest cities of the island, i.e. Belfast and Dublin, construction of grand new public edifices took place which created new architectural landmarks<sup>7</sup> (Figure 2). In terms of civic design in Ireland the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries should not be downplayed. Crucially this history of civic design practice in Ireland must be grasped within a framework of Irish society's relationship with Britain.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2 The National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin. Source: Ian Morley.

7 P. Liddy, *Dublin be Proud* (Dublin: Chadworth Ltd., 1987), p. 4.

8 Morley, *Planning Perspectives*, pp. 466–467.

## Britain, Ireland and Civic Design

In 1801 the passing of the Acts of Union incorporated Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain. As a result of this political development Ireland was governed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in Whitehall, resulting in architectural advancement becoming realigned in accord with developments on the British mainland.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding numerous British ideas and customs affecting design practices in Ireland what set the Irish urban environment and its buildings apart from those in England, Scotland, and Wales was not so much local design originality but a debate amongst the Irish as to their identity, and the responsibility architects had in upholding 'Irishness'. Such discourse, tied to aesthetics and the rejection of a sense of citizenship established under British hegemony,<sup>10</sup> came to a peak in the early 1900s, a time when two new large-scale education buildings in Dublin were constructed. As such the previously mentioned Royal College of Science, and the University College too, echoed broader debate in Irish society regarding what it meant to be Irish, and the role architecture had in promoting 'Irishness'.

The final years of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth century was, as already indicated, a significant era for the practice of civic design in Ireland. Defined loosely as the art of architecture applied to a greater spatial dimension, civic design with its ideal of tying new public edifices to the existing urban environment was an important component in the evolution of cityscapes in Edwardian Ireland. As Kincaid<sup>11</sup> has asserted, history is written into architecture and so onto cities, and such a statement holds great weight when examining the evolution of Dublin in the early 1900s and the nature of public edifices erected at that time. In this setting

9 J. Brady, 'Dublin at the turn of the century', in Brady and Simms, *Dublin Through Time and Space* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 222–223.

10 R. Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 93.

11 A. Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. xiii.

the Royal College of Science and University College must be recognized as being designed/constructed at an important instant in Dublin and Ireland's history in light of nationalist moves to overthrow British rule, and the emergence of the Home Rule Bill in 1912. Buildings, such as the Royal College of Science thus became instruments onto which Irish politicians, the public, and architects attached various cultural and political values: the ideology of native progress, the hope of ousting British control, and the asserting of Irish sovereignty.

Erected from 1904 on a site close to Merrion Square, of 360 feet in length and more than 300 feet in width,<sup>12</sup> the scale as well as the status<sup>13</sup> of the Royal College of Science as one of Ireland's premier higher educational institutions make it necessary to grasp the broad contexts within Irish society so as to adequately comprehend the form and meaning of civic design in Ireland at the start of the last century. Erected, it was said at a time that was the dawn of a brighter future for Ireland,<sup>14</sup> the construction of the Royal College not only introduced the art of modern civic design to Dublin for the first time but due to the shifting ideological climate the application of civic design reflected the ill feeling between the British government and Irish nationalists.<sup>15</sup> As such the College building came to symbolize much more than an artistic exercise: it represented politics, race, and citizenship.

12 *The Builder* 91 (1906), p. 430.

13 C. Casey, *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 560.

14 'The New College of Science', *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 45.6 (1904), p. 281.

15 Morley, *Planning Perspectives*, p. 467.



Figure 3 A view of the entrance gates, main entrance, and dome of the Royal College of Science. Source: Ian Morley.

Arising from the growth of the Irish Geological Museum at St Stephen's Green, and founded to help develop local industry,<sup>16</sup> science teaching, and research, the Royal College of Science's success in developing new courses and in attracting students meant that by the late-1890s it had outgrown its original premises. Such a scenario threw out a number of architectural and planning conundrums. Where in Dublin should any new college building be erected? What size should the new building be? Which architect was to be employed to design the building? What aesthetic style and materials were to be used? How could they help promote the identity of the college? And what broad contextual matters must also be taken into consideration when designing the building? Concerning this last question, *The Irish Times*

16 E. L. Hull, *Report of the Dean of the College of Science for Ireland*, 1882 (National Archives of Ireland, 1901/2465, 1901/23670, 1901/23980, 1901/24474, 1901/24672) p. 2.

spelled out that there was a need to marry practical and idealistic considerations so that the college could better meet the demands of its students,<sup>17</sup> cope more adequately with burgeoning national requirements, help more fully contribute to the expansion of the number of Irish teachers of science and technical subjects, and build up its research standing.<sup>18</sup> With reference to pragmatic matters, it was argued that any new building must be sited close to the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction offices on Merrion Street Upper. This it was reasoned would ensure an elevation in managerial efficiency within the college. In addition, there was a desire to assemble a number of educational and cultural institutions within one place in Dublin. This it was thought would lead to the establishment of a cultural core akin to South Kensington (in the west of London), albeit in this case a cultural core of Irish character. To entwine both pragmatic and idealistic demands only one possible locale in Central Dublin was pertinent for the new edifice, the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district: a locale universally known by the start of the twentieth century to be the cultural heart of Dublin.<sup>19</sup>

In understanding the importance of the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district it is worth comprehending how the area was 'read' in the milieu of transformations within Irish society in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As a consequence, for instance, of the rise of Irish nationalism it was an area that by the start of the twentieth century possessed different values to the British and Irish populations.<sup>20</sup> Different interpretations regarding the structure and meaning of the environment existed by the time a site on Merrion Street Upper was selected for the new college. To persons with Irish patriotic loyalty the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district was perceived as being Irish, a quarter fundamental to championing 'Irishness'<sup>21</sup>

17 *The Irish Times*, 23 September 1902, p. 6.

18 Ryan, p. 11.

19 Kincaid, p. 20.

20 Y. Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), pp. 53–56.

21 R. Colls, 'Englishness and political culture', in R. Colls and P. Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 40.



and concurrently 'de-Anglicising' Ireland,<sup>22</sup> i.e. removing the allegedly compromised sense of nationhood borne under British rule after 1801. For the British the district had a very different meaning and identity formed through acknowledging cultural advancement in Ireland via the physical presence of British people, and their culture, in Dublin. This presence, in their opinion, had led to a rising of the cultural stock of Irish society, and in so doing had helped elevate<sup>23</sup> the cultural condition of the perceived 'inferior Celt'.<sup>24</sup> The many public buildings in the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district were accordingly understood by the British to have exclusively emanated from the elevation of the local cultural fabric and the social order they had brought into Dublin by Irish society and its capital city being tied to Britain's imperial project. Evidently within this interplay of culture, identity, environment, and representations of power<sup>25</sup> the new college edifice, the peak of British support for technical learning in Ireland, would be placed.

## Designing the College of Science, Nationality of Architects, and Building Materials

In August 1903, with the passing of the Public Office Site (Dublin) Act, authorization was granted to construct what was to become known as the Royal College of Science and Government Buildings (hereafter known as the College of Science) on a site on Upper Merrion Street. However by this time conflicting opinions existed as to the architectural form the college

22 M. Suzman, *Ethnic Nationalism and State Power* (Basingstoke: Houndmills, 1999), p. 23.

23 J. Marriott, *The Other Empire* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 29.

24 J. MacLaughlin, 'Pestilence on their backs, famines in their stomachs', in C. Graham and R. Kirkland (eds), *Ireland and Cultural Theory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 56.

25 Whelan, p. 111.

building should take,<sup>26</sup> and as articles in Irish newspapers and debates held in Westminster at that time demonstrated, the design of the college was discussed not only in architectural but also in cultural, racial, and political terms. Questions, for instance, were also raised with regards to the nationality of the building's architect, and as an examination of Irish newspapers from the early 1900s reveals, for many of Dublin's citizens the design of the new college should be done so by an Irish national.<sup>27</sup> This, it was said, would provide 'the best results as far as local design and effective design were concerned'.<sup>28</sup> To support such a claim evidence was often supplied in the form of comments about esteemed edifices such as the museum and library on Kildare Street, designed by an Irishman, Thomas Newenham Deane, took on great value in that it was thought of as beautiful *and* Irish in architectural nature. It must be emphasized that in light of the attention put on 'Irish buildings', and also Irish designers,<sup>29</sup> great interest arose amongst the nationalist community<sup>30</sup> upon the need to select a home-based architect for the new college edifice, a professional who nationalists believed was most able to put into built form the needs and aspirations of Irish people.<sup>31</sup> However, as far as the British were concerned this hope was impractical due to the 'special nature' of the scheme which necessitated, in contradiction to local opinion, an outside expert.<sup>32</sup> By early 1904 the decision to thus commission a non-Irish design specialist was confirmed: Aston Webb was appointed architect for the College of Science scheme with Thomas Manly Deane, the son of Thomas Newenham Deane, as his assistant. In a way this decision, despite boisterous disapproval in Ireland, was not unforeseen. By

26 Ryan, p. 24.

27 'The Royal College of Science', *The Irish Times*, 1 September 1903.

28 'Royal College of Science', *The Irish Times*, 31 August 1903, p. 4.

29 Board of Works letters, 1901 (National Archives of Ireland, 1901/2465, 1901/23670, 1901/23980, 1901/24474 and 1901/24672).

30 Morley, *Planning Perspectives*, pp. 470–471.

31 Whelan, pp. 53–77.

32 A. Gibney, 'Continuity and change in the OPW 1900–2000', in T. Brown, A. Gibney, M. O' Doherty and C. Pegum (eds), *Building for Government: the Architecture of State Buildings OPW: Ireland 1900–2000* (Dublin: Town House and Country House, 1999), p. 18.

1904 Webb was a professional of enormous repute given his many competition wins, his commissions for civic authorities, and his lofty vocational status. Simply put, Webb was the leading late-Victorian and Edwardian British civic designer. As the former president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the designer of monumental schemes from the mid-1880s such as the Victoria and Albert Museum Extension (South Kensington, London), Royal Naval College (Dartmouth), Christ's Hospital (Horsham), Birmingham Law Courts and Birmingham University, and the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme (in Central London), Webb had a vast amount of knowledge and experience of designing large-scale public buildings, a depth of familiarity and expertise it should be noted that was unmatched in both British and Irish architectural circles by circa 1904.<sup>33</sup> However, Irish feelings about the choice of Webb for the new college in Dublin showed the existence of deep agitation.<sup>34</sup> The British decision to employ Webb, to utilize his skills instead of having an Irishman as the principal architect, mirrored in many people's eyes the general process of British governmental decision-making in Ireland. Therefore even before Webb had begun to design the new building it added evidence to the view amongst many Irish that the development of the Kildare Street/Merrion Street district was merely an articulation of British hegemony in Ireland. In light of this conflict was to arise with regards to the identity the building physically and symbolically 'possessed'.

In coming to terms with how in Edwardian Dublin civic design was an expression of Irish and British tension it should be noted that from as early as 1901 there was Irish petitioning against the selection of an English architect for the new college building. Due to such lobbying in late 1903 a promise was made by the British to abide by the request.<sup>35</sup> Yet it is unclear whether the assurance put forward by the government was merely to subdue Irish discontent or was in actuality a genuine agreement to employ an Irish

33 I. Morley, *The Contribution of Sir Aston Webb to the Development of Modern British Town Planning, c.1900–10* (MA Dissertation, University of Leicester, 1995).

34 *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 45, 23 April 1904, p. 237.

35 Morley, *Planning Perspectives*, p. 471.

architect. Unfortunately there is little evidence to confirm either of the possibilities although the issue of an Irish designer for many local citizens Thomas Manly Deane appeared to be the architect most capable of handling the design of any new college building. Evidently with the appointment of Aston Webb in 1904 many Irish designers, and members of the public too, saw the decision as unfair. Caulfield Orpen, the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI), in May 1904<sup>36</sup> declared that the decision to employ an English architect exhibited a prejudiced attitude amongst those in authority. In Orpen's opinion the selection of Webb displayed two matters: it implied that Ireland had no professional designers of either skill or repute required to implement any project of grandeur/significance in the country; it displayed racism on the part of the British.<sup>37</sup> Notwithstanding the ferocity of criticism levelled at the British government for the commissioning of Webb and Deane there was an air of resignation in Ireland that the decision was irreversible.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore once Webb and Deane combined their intelligence to design the college public suspicion arose that Deane's input was, at best, minimal and his name was merely attached to the project so as to appease detractors who were dismayed by the decision to name Webb as principal designer:<sup>39</sup> 'it is now generally believed that the design is entirely the work of Mr Webb, Mr Deane being associated with him purely as a sop to Irish sentiment'.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the new college building was 'read' by many persons in Dublin and Ireland as being exclusively British, with its structural and aesthetic form being the upshot of an English, not an Irish mind. Thus the edifice was perceived to not have any tie to the 'Irish nation' despite by name at least the Royal College being an institution established to serve the people of Ireland.

36 *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 45, 7 May 1904, p. 282.

37 *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 45, 7 May 1904, p. 281.

38 Ryan, p. 41.

39 *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 45, 7 May 1904, p. 282.

40 Ryan, p. 62.



Figure 4 The contrasting colour and texture of Irish Granite and Portland Stone.  
Source: Ian Morley.

## The Concept and Evolution of the ‘Irish Nation’, and Representing the Irish Nation in Dublin

From the late nineteenth century a longing existed amongst many Irish citizens to design/erect public buildings of a ‘home-grown character’. Whereas modernist thought is generally known to have encouraged universalist impulses so that a nation could take a root in the modern world, the distinct nature of modernism in Ireland had a different outcome: it aided the recovery of national history, identity, and culture,<sup>41</sup> and importantly in turn

41 R. Begam, ‘Joyce’s Trojan Horse’, in R. Begam and M. Valdez Moses (eds), *Modernism and Colonialism* (London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 186–187.

this brought forth new imagery of 'Irish community' and 'Irish progress'. Within this milieu fundamental to ensuring that the new college building would have a native identity was, as already touched upon, its design coming from an 'Irish mind', i.e. the design deriving from an Irish architect and his intellect. Important as well was the Irish desire to use building materials from local sources. To emphasize this point, William Field, MP for Dublin St Patrick's, along with the trade journal *The Irish Builder and Engineer*,<sup>42</sup> appealed for the college building's foundation stone to be excavated from an Irish quarry.<sup>43</sup> There are two reasons for this: it would ensure that the building's most symbolic piece of masonry was obtained from an Irish source;<sup>44</sup> if the founding stone of the building originated from an Irish quarry then it was believed that the rest of the masonry required to complete the construction of the edifice would come from Ireland. Together this would grant Irish prestige and permanence. However such an assumption, despite the use of Newry Granite for the foundation stone and guarantees from Webb and Deane,<sup>45</sup> ultimately proved to be wrong as the entire building scheme did not only use Irish stones, it also used masonry from Britain in the form of Portland Stone, a type of masonry commonly used in British civic design from about 1900.<sup>46</sup>

42 *The Irish Builder and Engineer*, 1904, p. 237.

43 P. Maume, *Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891–1918* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), p. 48.

44 E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Tradition', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4.

45 Ryan, p. 49.

46 I. Morley, *British Provincial Civic Design and the Building of Late-Victorian and Edwardian Cities, 1880–1914*, pp. 155–158.



Figure 5 The contrasting colour and texture of Irish Granite and Portland Stone.  
Source: Ian Morley.

At first glance the decision by the British government to not wholly use Irish masonry might appear somewhat trivial. However, it went against the late-Victorian and Edwardian British civic design tradition of only using one type of masonry for a grand public edifice.<sup>47</sup> In the evolving cultural and political context of Edwardian Ireland<sup>48</sup> the choice of Irish *and* British stones together within a single architectural composition was not well received. Hence the use of Portland Stone for decorative purposes – said to be a ‘wanton act ... at a time when quarries of beautiful white granite in Co. Dublin were almost idle’ – drew scathing criticism from some Irish politicians and nationalist sections of the media, e.g. *United Irishman*.<sup>49</sup> Yet, with

47 Morley, *British Provincial Civic Design*, p. 155.

48 J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 151.

49 Maume, p. 48.

reference again to British civic design practice, the use of Portland Stone was, in light of British fashions in civic design by 1900, almost inevitable. Given that the new public edifice was large, costly,<sup>50</sup> and defined by the British as of great importance,<sup>51</sup> it would therefore be expected that they would utilize a material which they were wholly familiar with the properties of when constructing ornamentation. As British experience from the time of Christopher Wren had revealed, Portland Stone was durable and had aesthetic qualities when applied to urban settings, including resistance to damp, polluted air,<sup>52</sup> and weathering.<sup>53</sup> What's more Aston Webb had prior experience of using Portland Stone for large-sized urban buildings. In light of Webb and British designers' knowledge of modern design and masonry, Irish Granite was arguably a 'risk' even though it was known to weather well in damp climates like the one found in Dublin. Irish stones such as granite were also more problematic when trying to work it into small blocks for detailing edifices, and given Webb's distinct treatment of rustication by the early 1900s this was an important factor in his taking up of Portland Stone/rejection of locally quarried stone in Dublin. Portland Stone offered him much greater flexibility during an age when fashionable design consisted of the play on lines and shadows within architectural compositions<sup>54</sup> (Figure 6). Continuing this aesthetic appreciation Portland Stone was a fashionable material too to the British by the onset of the Edwardian period when the style of Christopher Wren was of great inspiration. For this reason it has to be understood that Portland Stone was by about 1900 a somewhat idealized masonry type<sup>55</sup> for the British, and in the context of designing a new grand public building in Dublin it

50 Ryan, p. 64.

51 Gibney, *Building for Government*, p. 18.

52 B. G. Blore, *The Stones of Britain* (London: L. Hill, 1957), p. 66.

53 A. Sutcliffe, *London: An Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 212.

54 C. Middleton, *The Beaux Arts and Nineteenth Century Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

55 I. Dungavell, *The Architectural Career of Sir Aston Webb (1849–1930)* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1999), p. 282.



was highly unlikely that any other building material, be it from Ireland, France<sup>56</sup> or elsewhere, would have been used in early-1900s Dublin for such an important scheme to the British, a scheme for a building edifice that represented the peak of technical education in Ireland under British administration.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 6 Webb's treatment of the stonework allowed for the play of sunlight and shadows, a fashionable trait of Edwardian architecture, upon the walls of the Royal College of Science. Source: Ian Morley.

According to Benedict Anderson the nation is 'an imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign',<sup>58</sup> an idea tied with the grasp of the 'native'. Allied to the notion of the 'native'

56 Letter dated 9 December 1906 by T. F. Foley, Secretary of the Board of Works.

57 Casey, *The Buildings of Ireland*, p. 560.

58 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 4.

is citizenship, i.e. being members of a society and the obligations they perceive as having to that society.<sup>59</sup> Within this milieu various agents are recognized as helping augment the importance and value of the 'native',<sup>60</sup> and with it the grasp of identity people possess. Architecture can, for example, help augment the uniqueness people perceive of themselves, and where they reside. Significantly, as civic design is known to be a continuation of architecture, an art that is shaped by historical, legal, cultural, political, economic, social, and artistic considerations,<sup>61</sup> a variety of factors must be appreciated as a matter of course when seeking to identify how abstract matters such as identity and nationhood affected town building in a city such as Dublin.

In appreciating the meaning of civic design in Edwardian Dublin thought must be given to four conceptual factors<sup>62</sup> which grant meaning to buildings: denotation, exemplification, metaphorical expression, and mediated reference. With regards to denotation it relates to what the building's name, building's history, architect, etc., represent. Exemplification on the other hand centres upon the idea of how a building makes visible its 'build'. With regards to metaphorical expression, it is the means through which a structure comes to possess and put across certain properties. In contrast mediated references centres upon how a building refers to, through the form of its composition, some of its structural properties, and not others. Appreciated on an individual, and also on a collective level, these four matters help breakdown the symbolism associated with a building. For Irish citizens the new College of Science was to express in its design 'Irishness'. The ramifications of the building being designed by an Englishman, and being composed with English stone decoration, suggested to many Irish citizens that the fundamentals of the college building were deficient in Irish

59 D. Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 1–2.

60 E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

61 Morley, *British Provincial Civic Design*, pp. 11–14.

62 N. Goodman and C. Elgin, *Reconceptions of Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), pp. 33–44.

character/of an Anglo nature.<sup>63</sup> Whilst, rather surprisingly, few people in Ireland had any personal quarrel with Aston Webb *per se*<sup>64</sup> – indeed, the college's architectural style when put on display for the first time was recognized in Ireland as being in keeping with the style and quality of buildings in Dublin erected during the late 1700s<sup>65</sup> – many objected to the fact that a non-Irish national designed a building expected by many people to be 'Irish'. Likewise few disagreed with the aesthetic style of Webb's college building.<sup>66</sup> Even though the building's form was ultimately modified in 1906 from a Classical to a Baroque style the second version of the edifice was still perceived as being allied to local aesthetic 'traditions'. However because the building derived from an Englishman's mind/not the mind of an Irish architect, it meant the building received a 'non-native' status, whilst the use of Portland Stone on prominent parts of the main elevation, e.g. the corner points, exemplified the edifice as a 'British/non-Irish' composition. By drawing the on-looking eye to the college's corner points, for instance, a common component in late-Victorian and Edwardian civic design in Britain, Aston Webb to many Irish people gave the building a character that was 'Anglo-centred'.<sup>67</sup> Metaphorically therefore it expressed an 'English' not an 'Irish' nature.<sup>68</sup> As such the new college 'spoke' more to/of Britain than it did to/of Ireland and its culture.

Taking into account the changing nature of Irish society from the late 1800s, and the disposition of Irish nationalist politics at that time, it is possible to understand why Aston Webb's decision to not exclusively use Irish masonry for the College of Science building could have been broadly interpreted as being politically motivated, that is to say that it was a deliberate act to thwart the cultural and political identity of the 'Irish community'.

63 *The Irish Builder and Engineer*, 14 December 1907, p. 846.

64 *The Irish Builder and Engineer*, 25 March 1905, p. 18.

65 *The Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Education*, October 1911–July 1912.

66 *The Irish Builder and Engineer*, 1904, p. 281.

67 D. Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

68 R. English, *Irish Freedom* (London: Macmillan, 2006), p. 432.

Moreover, as Portland Stone had a strong association with British imperialism, given its use in American and Caribbean colonies in the 1700s,<sup>69</sup> and its application in Dublin after 1801 when Nelson's Pillar was erected,<sup>70</sup> utilizing the stone for the college offered evidence that the material was intrinsically linked to British hegemony over territories beyond the British mainland. For those yearning to pronounce their Irish/non-British nationality civic design in Dublin offered an opportunity to put local ideologies/traditions/identity into tangible structural form. But to accomplish this any building had to possess certain basic qualities: be aesthetically consistent with the existing built environment and its 'native' form; be made of quality indigenous materials; be graciously ornamented; be designed by a local professional. Without these elements working in unison any edifice would not symbolize an Irish state of being, and with the rise of nationalist sentiment during the Edwardian age many citizens were outraged at the alleged hijacking of the college design for British imperial purposes in light of these four elements not being exercised simultaneously.<sup>71</sup> In contrast to this situation when a second large-scale building, the University College, was erected in Dublin in 1912 the public reaction and reaction of Irish architects, as shall now be explained, contrasted greatly.

## 'Irish Civic Design': The University College

The year 1912 is an important one in Irish history. Commonly the year is acknowledged because of the reading of the Home Rule Bill in Parliament at Westminster, London. However in the history of Ireland's visual culture the

69 J. D. Ross, 'Colonial architecture in Jamaica,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 10.3 (1951), p. 24.

70 Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p. 43.

71 Z. Çelik, *Empire, Architecture and the City* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2008), p. 161.

year also has great importance. In 1912 the narrative of civic design in Dublin shifted as a consequence of the new University College building being erected.<sup>72</sup> There are various reasons to explicate why the new University College building was allied to an Irish identity rather than a British one. Firstly, the University College formed part of the newly formed National University of Ireland, a de facto Irish/Catholic institution. It was the result of an expansion of cultural attitudes within Ireland, and local demand to transform education in the country. Secondly, no architect was commissioned directly to design the University College. Instead a competition was held. Thirdly, entrants for the aforementioned design competition had to both live and work in Ireland. This ultimately meant the contest was only open to Irish professionals. Furthermore, two other notable issues must be appreciated as being of worth once the building design by R. M. Butler was put into built form: its Classically-inspired character was understood to compliment Dublin's pre-British architectural heritage,<sup>73</sup> and the taste of local society at that time. It was remarked upon that its style represented a progressive step in modern Irish design;<sup>74</sup> the edifice was solely from a limestone from Stadbally in County Laois.

For these reasons Butler's buildings must be seen to speak a different 'grammar' to Webb and Deane's edifice, even though in actuality the principal facades of both buildings were each were inspired by, and were formed in the manner of, Classical architecture.<sup>75</sup> So why was the reaction to the University College so different (compared to the Royal College of Science)? Regarding the visual culture of Dublin it must be accepted that from the onset the University College was 'sold' as being Irish. As noted, only Irish designers could enter the design contest for the building. Additionally, the winning design made reference to one of Dublin's most outstanding pieces of Classical architecture: the Custom House. Notably too the design

72 P. Butler and P. O' Kelly, *The National Concert Hall at Earlsfort Terrace* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2000), p. 74.

73 R. M. Butler, 'The Custom House, Dublin and its Architect', *The Irish Builder and Engineer* 62 (1921), p. 798.

74 R. M. Butler, 'A native style of architecture', 1925.

75 Morley, *Planning Perspectives*, p. 476.

competition took place at a time when discourse on Irish architecture was on the increase, and as a former president of the Architects Association of Ireland (AAI), R. M. Butler must be known to be an active contributor to the debate about this time, and in the subsequent years. By way of offering an example of Butler's prolonged vocational influence, he was the author of the column 'Topical Touches' in the *Irish Builder and Engineer*, a journal he went on to edit and publish some of his most persuasive works, e.g. the article 'A Native Style of Architecture' following the independence of Ireland in 1922.

## Conclusion

This essay has introduced some of the agents acting upon the form and meaning of civic design in the early years of the twentieth century in Dublin by discussing two buildings in the city, the College of Science and University College. As has been shown the evolving contexts within the city played vital roles in how each building was read both before construction began, and after each edifice was opened. To emphasize this point the University College's design was tied with Irish architecture, and after the building opened the nationalist element was enforced by the institution being a hotbed of Irish nationalist politics. In contrast to this the College of Science and its design became associated with British architecture although, ironically, after Irish independence in 1922 the building arguably became the most important Irish building in Dublin *and* Ireland when its name and use was changed to the Government Buildings given its role as the seat of the Irish Free State's parliament. Today its place in Irish politics is retained by the building housing the Department of the Taoiseach, i.e. the office of the head of Ireland's government.

The narrative of the evolution of Dublin's visual culture and cityscape, as this work demonstrates, requires reading Edwardian art in the city within frameworks of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'.<sup>76</sup> Such awareness is important for three reasons. Firstly, it affords an opportunity to reconsider Irish town building in the past and how, if at all, architects and planners were able to shape local culture, identity, and nation-building. Secondly, with awareness to visual historiography it pushes subjects such as architecture and civic design away from being exercises of structural forms into cultural descriptions that can reveal the connection between a building, the already-built environment, and broader changes/events/evolutions within a society. Finally, the study of civic design in Dublin provides a notable case study in urban design during an age when there was an increase in city centre design and the construction of civic buildings,<sup>77</sup> physical entities that not only allowed for the growth of municipal governments but the expressing of civic pride, civic status and the identity of expanding settlements.<sup>78</sup> Whilst architectural and urban historians have taken great strides to reveal what practices comprised design at that time, there is still much to learn about the *meaning* of design and the environments forged in the past, and how people identified themselves with the landmark edifices in such settings. In this regards there is still much to garner about the whats, hows, and whys of the composition of urban settings: what buildings mean; what environments mean; how society determines what they mean; how they came into being; why buildings created in the past matter; why environments created in the past matter.

76 P. Wiessener, 'Style and changing relations between the individual and society', in I. Hodder (ed.), *The Meaning of Things: Material Culture and Symbolic Expression* (London: Harper Collins, 1989), pp. 56–63.

77 Morley, *British Provincial Civic Design*, pp. 62–63.

78 R. A. Fellows, *Edwardian Civic Buildings and their Details* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 1999).





GARY A. BOYD

## Dublin's Ephemeral and Imaginary Architectures

### Introduction

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the past, present and future – in the form of palpable ghosts, over-aged bodies with vivid memories, sensual relationships and vague prophesies – collide regularly within the urban space of *Macondo*, an indefinitely located settlement reclaimed from the swamps of Central America. Finally, the prophesies cease, save one, and accordingly the town – now without future – is overtaken by a creeping obsolescence which, in the final pages, takes the form of a divine wind that reduces its urban decrepitude to fragments and dust. The town disappears to remain only within the pages of the book.

In the *City of God* St Augustine defined the city as an embrace between its built form (*urbs*) and the cultures, practices and emotions that it contains (*civitas*). This can be understood as a dynamic or dialectical unison where the relationship between *urbs* and *civitas* continually reproduces further iterations of its constituent elements which in turn continue the entanglement anew. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Marquez alters perceptions of time to map the impact of the ephemeral, the irrational and the emotional on the forming and reforming of architecture and space. The normally vague and incremental process of history is rendered an active and visible agent as it is collapsed onto the present. The novel also intones that it is ephemeral patterns – structures and systems of communication and memory – that endure while the solid, concrete and physical is rendered vulnerable. The essentially transient nature of architecture is something that has been recognized as accelerating during the modern period. Borrowing the title from Karl Marx, Marshall Berman's book *All that's*

*Solid Melts into Air*, for example, enlists another series of writers – Marx, Yeats, Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, etc. – to expose and explore the disruptions to space which he concurs are structurally inevitable in a capitalist mode of accumulation. Marx's stark description of the development of communications and infrastructural technologies as 'the annihilation of space by time'<sup>1</sup> resonates, then, with Marquez's evocations.

While all architecture may be ultimately transient, the idea of a self-consciously ephemeral architecture seems like a contradiction in terms. Writing in the first century BC, the Augustan theorist Vitruvius defined architecture as that which possesses *firmitas*, *commoditas* and *venustas*: solidity, utility and beauty. In his book *Immaterial Architecture*, Jonathan Hill contends that this is a perception that endures and that architecture tends to be both imagined as and expected to be, material: 'solid, stable and reassuring'.<sup>2</sup> Bonnemaïson, Eisenbach and Gonzalez argue, however, that the practice of making installations along with 'festival architecture, set designs, exhibitions and exposition pavilions' represents an architecture that is freed from the mandates of *firmitas* and *commoditas* and can instead more fully explore the possibilities of *venustas*. Unburdened by the vicissitudes of traditional construction – its materiality, inordinate length and bureaucracy – installations and similar structures represent a type of speeded-up architecture which is able to respond, more or less immediately, to social, political, economic contexts or other *zeitgeists*. What is created within transient buildings and immaterial projects, then, is an architecture that is potentially dense with distilled meaning, a signifying architecture which can approach the qualities of rhetoric (Bonnemaïson, Eisenbach and Gonzalez).<sup>3</sup>

This, however, is arguably a position of reclamation. Victor Hugo's prophesy, uttered in the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, of *ceci tuera cela* – the book will kill the building – sought to mark the moment when the

1 K. Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 538–539.

2 J. Hill, *Immaterial Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

3 S. Bonnemaïson, R. Eisenbach, and R. Gonzalez, 'Introduction' *JAE: Journal of Architectural Education* 59, no. 4 (2006), pp. 2–3.

function of buildings as mass media began an irrevocable, if never entirely completed, decline. Ephemeral architectures can relate, therefore, not only to the project of the medieval cathedral, but also and perhaps paradoxically the aims of the monument. But whereas the cathedral and the monument seek to literally ossify knowledge and memory, the transient and immaterial in architecture must rely on other tactics in order to fix and define meanings and interrupt the passage of time. A fleeting architecture where *urbs* is barely there is arguably an architecture which is most symptomatic of the 'liquid modernity' of late capitalism.<sup>4</sup> In Ireland, the tensions of modernism and capital accumulation have been complicated by colonial and post-colonial interests and agendas. Within the struggle to impose or define identities within the contested territories of its capital city Dublin, temporary appropriations of space, the creation of momentary architectures and idealist projections have played a critical if often under-acknowledged role. To examine these strategies can offer a momentary vision of a society unburdened by reality: a barometer of idealism.

## Pleasure Gardens and the Politics of Dreaming

In the eighteenth century, ephemeral architecture in Dublin emerged from the enclosure of the theatre and the space of set-design into the open air of an embryonic public realm. For Miles Ogborn,<sup>5</sup> the pleasure garden represents one of the key spaces of modernity, an essential site for what Jürgen Habermas<sup>6</sup> considered the development of the bourgeois culture and civil society that would ultimately remake urban space. Following the

4 Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

5 M. Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680–1780* (London: Guildford Press, 1998).

6 J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (London: Polity Press, 1992).

precedent of London's Vauxhall and Ranelagh, by the mid-century Dublin had a series of new outdoor resorts of parade and entertainment which included: the New Pleasure Gardens, Marlborough Bowling Green, the City Basin, and the city's own Ranelagh Gardens on the city's southern fringes. Ranelagh and the New Pleasure Gardens were the two most significant of these commercial concerns, each dependent on an entrance fee for their continued survival and, in the case of the latter, to provide funds for the maternity hospital whose magnificent Palladian architecture offered an oftentimes porous backdrop to its entertainments. Competition between resorts manifested itself in a continual turnover of evermore novel and exotic phenomenon and spectacular interventions to titillate and entice more visitors. But the lighting effects, tumblers, rope-dancers and balloon flights of Ranelagh<sup>7</sup> were ultimately eclipsed by the synergy of attractions at the New Pleasure Gardens where landscape, planting, music, painted backdrops, along with temporary buildings and structures merged to produce a 'dream-like' atmosphere where social hierarchies could be loosened and sexual mores suspended.<sup>8</sup>

Architecturally – as advertised in the relatively new phenomenon of newspapers – paying visitors to the gardens could experience such transitory moments as Pluto's Palace, a Satyr's Cave, an artificial and transportable waterfall complete with flying bird, a new orchestra, and an illuminated temple which could be taken down and put up according to the dictates of the occasion. Indeed, occasion was critical to the functioning of the New Pleasure Gardens. The calendar of spectacle was inextricably linked to the temporal rhythms of patriotic and regal events and commemorations: illuminations for the King's marriage and coronation; fireworks in celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Aughrim and so on.<sup>9</sup> While

7 B. Boydell, *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992).

8 G. A. Boyd, *Dublin 1745–1922: Hospital Spectacle and Vice* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).

9 Various papers of the Rotunda Hospital Records in the National Archives, Dublin. A flurry of newspapers began in eighteenth-century Dublin: *Impartial Occurrences* (1703–1788), *Dublin Courant or Flying Post* (1705–1856), *Dublin Gazette* (1706–?),

the gardens may have allowed a slackening in social relationships and the potential of hitherto impossible mixtures of class and gender, its architectures, spectaculars, music and other entertainments were also about the dissemination of the culture, manners and religious beliefs of a particular Protestant Anglo-Irish identity. It is no coincidence that the form of the maternity hospital and New Pleasure Gardens echoed that of Kildare House and its gardens, the city residence of the Earl of Kildare, Ireland's preeminent aristocrat. Or that the board of governors of the hospital and its sub-committee of gentlemen tasked with sourcing entertainments for the gardens came from a similar social and religious stratum whose fortunes were inextricably linked to the elevation of William of Orange and the victories of 1690.

Charles Baudelaire's oft-repeated definition of the essential duality of modernity – 'by modernity I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable' – provides a useful means to understand the pleasure garden in Dublin.<sup>10</sup> The arrival of the new Anglo-Irish in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries both coincided with and precipitated a revolutionary transformation in the way the agricultural landscape and the ownership of land was organized: all previously fast-fixed relationships and were being suppressed and dissolved. The pleasure garden can be seen as a tactic in a strategy of denial where the fleeting took the forms of a classical architecture – temporary temples, mythological palaces, etc. – to evoke the legitimacy of the antique, the immutable qualities of tradition and of the permanent. Ephemeral architecture, immersed in spectacle and connected to event, is enlisted as one of the devices used to confer a history, to naturalize specific political proclivities and economic policies – to reinforce an only recently confirmed hegemony by implicitly stating that it has always been.

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*Faulkner's Dublin Journal* (1725–1825), *Saunders's News-letter* (1746–1879) *Hunter's Dublin Chronicle* (1760–1817), *Hibernian Journal* (1771–1821), *McGee's Weekly Packet* (1777–1796), *Dublin Evening Post* (1778–1875), *Dublin Morning Post* (1784–1831).  
 10 C. Baudelaire (1863), 'The Painter of Modern Life' in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), p. 13.

## Promises and Threats: Dublin's Paper Architectures and the Spaces of Emptiness<sup>11</sup>

The precision of the cultural messages transmitted in the rarefied atmosphere of the theatre or pleasure gardens are inevitably muddled in the public spaces of the city. Once exposed to the vagaries of time, the meaning and identities inscribed onto the built landscape slip as everyday use eclipses ideologies. If endurance has conspired to drain the magnificent public architecture of Georgian Dublin of its function as media then two moments, one immaterial and one ephemeral, continue to provide fragments of the original message. James Malton's paintings *Dublin Views* record the beauty of Dublin streetscape in the final years of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Here, despite the appearance of beggars, prostitutes and other emissaries from the back-lands, all is composed, harmonious and controlled. A theatrical set-design city, impossible in reality is achieved in Malton's distillation, an immaterial, paper architecture that speaks of legitimacy. The other example marks the moment when O'Connell Street (formerly Sackville Street) – apparently degraded by over a century of commerce – is resurrected as the magnificent site of spectacle by the appropriation of the General Post Office by Irish rebels at Easter 1916. In what could now be termed an act of *detournement*, the tragedy of Padraig Pearse *et al* momentarily purges the street of its commercial clutter and translates the meaning of the post office from imperial bureaucracy to one of nationalist sacrifice.

Malton used the geometrical discipline of perspective to mediate between a real and imagined Dublin. While such views purport to depict form and space accurately, his portrayals share the characteristic of all perspectives by being neither fully objective nor subjective. While the viewer's position is apparently that of a person immersed in the street, the image

11 The term 'promises and threats' is taken from Paul Keogh, 'Leon Krier and the Reconstruction of the Traditional City' in G. Cahill and L. Kealy (eds), *The Dublin City Quays: Projects* (Dublin: School of Architecture, University College Dublin, 1986), pp. 55–57.

12 M. Craig, *Georgian Dublin: James Malton* (Dublin: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1964).

is created according to the privileged and detached viewpoint of a single, static, unwavering eye. It is a naturalizing construct where its own artifice is denied or sublimated, while it edits the landscape to compose figures, occasionally re-position buildings according to the logic of a geometrically determined space, or improve minor architectural and urban solecisms. Drawing is privileged in that, unlike the photograph, it can both project both backwards and forwards in time. In the twentieth century, Dublin experienced three other conspicuous moments when the future of the city was presented most evocatively and polemically through the medium of the drawing. In 1922, in the midst of its bitter and brutal civil war, Ireland witnessed the production and dissemination of two architecturally inspired visions of a new post-independent and post-partition Dublin: the *Greater Dublin Reconstruction Movement* (GDRM) and Patrick Abercrombie's *Dublin of the Future: The New Town Plan*. The schemes differed in many ways, but not least in their origins. While GDRM was established in 1922 in a time of unprecedented upheaval and division in Irish society, *Dublin of the Future* was the result of a competition set in the relative calm of 1914, when Home Rule still offered the most realistic means of Irish autonomy. Partition, therefore, relieved the GDRM of the responsibility of catering for Unionist sensitivities. Consequently, as the movement set out to propose a framework for the rebuilding of a city whose destruction had extended considerably further than the limited areas of 1916, it recast Dublin with an Irish Nationalist (and Catholic) identity. This is described most evocatively in a perspective drawing taken from an indefinite position by the river showing a massive new Catholic National Basilica rising luminously behind a row of darkened Georgian houses on the quay – another drawing reveals that it occupies part of the site of Dublin Castle, traditionally the seat of British bureaucracy in Ireland – and dwarfing the adjacent Protestant Christchurch Cathedral. It was to be 'a fitting symbol of the final nationalising of the Pale'.<sup>13</sup> Other perspective drawings show a similar imposition of a layer of grandeur on what were essentially buildings and

13 Frank C. Mears, member of GDRM cited in H. Campbell, *Interpreting the City: Dublin and the Culture of Nationalism* (unpublished Master's thesis, University College Dublin, 1994), p. 46.





Abercrombie's project emptied the city of its population in another way. *Dublin of the Future* was predicated on the generic principles of Town Planning, which was considered to be a new, scientific means of understanding urban space and defining its futures.<sup>14</sup> Abercrombie underscored the scientific basis of his scheme by defining the city as a 'sick body'. His 'cure' was designed to avoid both 'the piecemeal tinkering which have been allowed in the past' and superficial 'salves', by prescribing the application, to the entire Dublin area, of a dense network of transport nodes and routes to create an unclogged free-flowing city.<sup>15</sup> If the particular, perspectival view of a monumental moment was the defining drawing of the GDRM, then the plan – abstract and notionally objective – was both generator of, and principle means of describing *Dublin of the Future*. Thus, a systemic network is layered onto the city, sometimes aligning with existing routes, at other times blithely cutting through fabric to create new channels. Medical metaphors, stressing the need for increased circulation, underscore the radial nature of the scheme. However, like the GDRM example cited above, many of the accompanying perspectives are taken from the air. They gaze down beatifically onto a city whose focus is called the Traffic Centre, where Christchurch cathedral is a traffic island, and whose new integrated transport system has effectively allowed the inner city to be denuded not only of insalubrious industry but also of its agents, the working classes. Both are relocated in homogeneous 'extra urban' areas. Denied of a large part of its population, north central Dublin was free to follow the logic of the radial plan and accept the role of the city's traffic hub, embodying express route-ways rather than pedestrian spaces or workers' housing.<sup>16</sup>

Emerging from a symposium in 1986, designed to provide ideas and research about the river, a publication, *Dublin City Quays: Projects*<sup>17</sup> provides details of two never-built projects: a huge transport interchange

14 *Irish Builder*, 1923, p. 157.

15 P. Abercrombie, *Dublin of the Future: The New Town Plan*, Volume One of the Publications of the Civic Institute of Ireland (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1922).

16 Abercrombie.

17 G. Cahill and L. Kealy.

which threatened to destroy the Georgian buildings lining the quays, and the promotion of its antithesis, a series of smaller interventions that sought to knit existing urban fabric together and suggest alternative functions for the inner city's river-front. Commissioned by *Córas Iompair Éireann* (CIE), the State-controlled body responsible for the Irish transport system, and designed by the American architecture practice *Skidmore Owings Merrill* (SOM) the proposal of the central transport hub was a legacy of Abercrombie's plan for a city of movement.<sup>18</sup> The design involved the total erasure of sites on both sides of the river (including a large part of the Temple Bar area) and their re-making as emphatically modernist architectural spaces: a concrete slab mega-structural landscape of plaza with associated retail and occasional cultural buildings at ground level, subterranean bus termini and underground rail links below; and above, a series of office blocks and a luxury hotel, etc. This was an architecture predicated on abstract formulae: statistical research into the transport needs of a city the size of greater Dublin; predictions about growth and future requirements; theories about continual and future suburbanization; rates of flow and the timing of buses and trains; densities of crowds and the circulation of pedestrians and transport users; the coordination and centralization of bus routes; the circulation and turning circle of individual buses, and so on.<sup>19</sup> The SOM project precipitated a moment of crisis where decades of acute indifference to heritage – in the form of monolithic modernism as well as the continued neglect of the buildings along the quays – provoked a critique whose most conspicuous resolution was not any sort of transport solution for an increasingly congested city but, rather the piecemeal development of Temple Bar as a cultural quarter, residential area and urban playground for young adults.

The *Dublin City Quays Projects* featured work from many of the young architects whom, as Group 91, would become involved in the redesign of Temple Bar and can be seen as its theoretical and polemical progenitor. The projects divided the river and its environs, from the Phoenix Park to

18 J. Clancy, 'The Dublin Transport Centre Development' in Cahill and Kealy, p. 27.

19 Clancy, pp. 27–29.

the Irish Sea, into a series of sections each of which was deemed to have a distinct urban character according either to its position in the city or its constituent elements. Each section was addressed by a small team of architects. In general, however, the schemes are consistent. Deeply influenced by the writing of Aldo Rossi and Leon Krier and other postmodernist theories, they counter the perceived spatial and organizational abstractions of late modernism by seeking to respond to existing context through the use of a syntax of typologies: streets, arcades, courtyards, urban blocks, etc. According to an introductory essay by one of the participants Paul Keogh<sup>20</sup> these archetypes were essential to the fabric of what is vaguely termed the 'traditional city'. The latter's projected translation into 1980s Dublin was to create an aesthetically considered city where space, layered with recognizable forms, would be filled with meaning and mediated by ideas of time and history: the production of *place*. In the many beautifully crafted drawings that edify the pages of the publication it is, once again, the bird's-eye views – this time in both axonometric and perspective – that are most evocative of the scheme's intentions and characteristics.

They show a city dominated by architectural gesture, where icons and other fragments borrowed from an imagined and imaginary canon of European architectural heritage – Asplund's library, Michelangelo's *campidoglio*, Bramante's Belvedere courtyard and so on – articulate spaces and ceremonial routes disciplined by new symmetries and interrupted by moments of vista when vision is terminated. Elsewhere, irregularities in existing fabric are tidied up often according to the geometries of a grid which inscribes itself into the paving of street and plazas; or a historic monument, hitherto submerged under the accretions of decades of urban matter, is made visible again to the public realm and framed at the end of a plaza. Sometimes, the viewpoint drifts downward to hover somewhere a few metres above head-height. From here, more details of the interventions can be seen: the vast entrance plaza to the city at Heuston Station is punctuated by statues caught in salute; the entrance to the Phoenix Park

20 P. Keogh, 'Leon Krier and the Reconstruction of the Traditional City' in Cahill and Kealy, pp. 55–57.

has been formalized into a triumphal arch; stone-clad arcades focus views of James Gandon's Custom House. The *Dublin Quays Project* evokes some of the same dreaming, melancholic qualities of the GDRM and, like the GDRM, reconfigures a city beset with economic woe with often fantastical speculations. In its polemic against modernist architecture, it provides an unintentional allegory of the city: its monuments, a sepulchral tribute to a Dublin in decline; its bombastic buildings speak of a real physical despair and demolition; the vast emptiness of the spaces proposed and the enigmas of the one or two isolated figures that occupy them emphasize the de-population of the inner city and flight to the suburbs. A polemic without politics, its legacy endures in the ether of Temple Bar.

### Spatial Practices: Peripatetics and the Articulation of the Spectacle

In July 1979 – as part of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland (the first to the island by a pontiff) – Ronald Tallon of the eminent Irish architectural practice Scott Tallon Walker was asked to coordinate the spatial organization of a Mass in the city's Phoenix Park. The design had to resolve the ceremonial requirements of a religious gathering on a vast scale (over 1.25 million participants) as well as the bodily functions of the worshippers. The site was an un-serviced part of the park called The Fifteen Acres and all the spatial and technological planning and execution – car-parking, toilets, catering, robing/disrobing, security, sound, circulation, disabled access and the logistics of Communion – had to be completed within eight weeks.



Figure 2. Papal Cross, Phoenix Park, from Masterton, *The Phoenix Park, Dublin 29th September 1979: Pastoral Visit of Pope John Paul II*. Dublin, Academy Editions, 1979.

The only features left on the site today correspond to the position of the Pope and the altar during the ceremony – a raised grassy mound topped by a large cross made from a series of steel I-sections welded together.

The mound – described by the architect as a *dais* – was the focal point of the event and contained a steel and canvas *baldacchino* covering the Pope's seat and altar as well as similar canopies to shelter other dignitaries. Immediately behind was a straight row of sixty masts bearing banners in the Vatican colours. Images from the occasion show the *dais* as a classical *stereobate* with continuous rows of steps on all four sides. These steps have the appearance of the solidity of stone but in reality they were fashioned in timber and covered with grey carpet 'to look like an elegant, low, granite, ziggurat'. Meanwhile, the congregation was seated in corrals made from timber thinnings from Irish State forests; for hospitality, marquees were reused from a North Sea oil exhibition; and the toilets were rudimentary timber constructions with plastic sheeting for doors.<sup>21</sup>

The arrangements made for the Pope's visit at Phoenix Park perhaps represent the purest definition of ephemeral architecture, an architecture which came into being to articulate a single, momentary event. Within this, both the duality of St Augustine's *urbs* and *civitas*, and Baudelaire's description of modernity as the fleeting and eternal are expressed. One aspect of the Pope's visit was about hard logistics and the organization and control of flows and the management of time – the estimated rate of people per metre entering through the park gates: eighty per minute (meaning the congregation would take three hours to assemble); the length, speed and duration of the Pope's exit as he weaved through the crowd in the Pope-mobile: '3.295 miles at five miles an hour ... forty seven minutes',<sup>22</sup> and so on. Against these temporal calculations the architecture was also, simultaneously, about denying the contingent and, for the duration of the spectacle at least, conveying a sense of stasis, of timelessness. Both the tactics and atmosphere designed for the Pope's visit in 1979 had been rehearsed on two previous occasions in Dublin in the years following Irish independence: the celebrations surrounding the centenary of Catholic Emancipation (1929) and those of the Eucharistic Congress (1932). Both occasions saw

21 Tallon in P. Masterton, *The Phoenix Park, Dublin 29th September 1979: Pastoral Visit of Pope John Paul II* (Dublin: Academy Editions, 1981), p. 138.

22 Tallon, p. 137.

temporary structures erected and vast crowds assembled on the same site in the Phoenix Park as used in the Pope's visit. The following is extracted from the *Advance Programme* for the events of 1929:

The Fifteen Acres will be laid out in 42 sections, 212 feet by 100 feet, each to accommodate 4,800 persons. The total number who will be accommodated in these sections will be 200,000 persons. Passage-ways 40 feet wide will divide the gathering into quarters, which in turn will be intersected by passage-ways 20 feet wide. The entire area thus occupied will measure 460 by 330 yards. Accommodation for about 40,000 children will be provided on either flank of the gathering. The altar will be placed at the top of the gathering, about 150 yards to the left of the Chief Secretary's Lodge. An area in front of the altar, 310 by 110 yards, will be reserved for priests, for members of the Dáil and Senate, etc. Amplifiers will enable the entire gathering to follow the Intoning and the Music of the Mass.<sup>23</sup>

This description of a spatial discipline being imposed upon the site and its occupants is reinforced by both the accompanying diagrams and the fact that the events were organized by General Eoin O'Duffy, the Chief of Police. The layout is deeply reminiscent of a hierarchically organized army, arranged into phalanxes and orientated towards a single, privileged focal point. Accordingly, the architectures of Emancipation Week and the Eucharistic Congress have been seen to have aesthetic similarities to the mass Fascist spectacles which were being organized about the same time in Germany and Italy. Rituals involving the geometric ordering and disciplining of people and matter in space, however, also have a much longer and varied history both in Christianity and elsewhere. Richard Sennett writes that religious architecture in the medieval city retained a precision that was both spiritually meaningful and necessary. He suggests that church and monastery builders sought to create deliberate acts of counterpoint between the exquisitely crafted order of sacred space and the irregular and indifferent urban fabric that surrounded it.<sup>24</sup> Geometry and the order-

23 Anon., *Advanced Programme – Catholic Emancipation Centenary Celebrations, Dublin June 16th to 23rd* (Dublin, 1929), p. 27.

24 R. Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 13.

ing or disciplining of elements are seen as both archetypal signifiers and means of reclaiming spiritual from profane space. Often the founding of a new settlement or the construction of a religious building was preceded by spatial practices that evoked and summoned the divine qualities of the building that was to be.

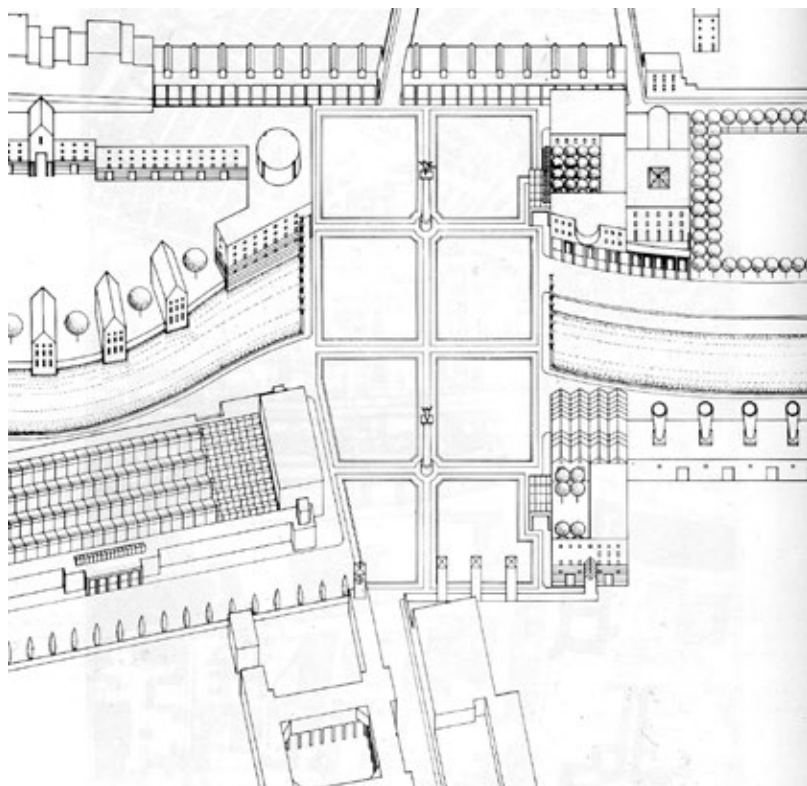


Figure 3 Drawing of aerial view of a proposed new square at Heuston Station, taken from Gerry and Loughlin Kealy (eds), *Dublin City Quays: Projects*, 1986.

Ronald Tallon's description of the layout for the Pope's visit in 1979, conveys not a barracks or an army camp but rather the evolved settlement of a city, 'the corrals are laid out on a grid like a small American city with major routes forty feet wide and minor routes thirty feet wide to ensure



easy movement and access ....'<sup>25</sup> If this was a temporary holy city in the park, then the events of the Eucharistic Congress were described as having transformed the whole of Dublin momentarily into a vast cathedral. In fact, the similarities between the interventions of the two events in the park are striking. Their symmetrical hierarchies and axes, ordered congregations, raised *daises* with *baldachins* speak of the continuing traditions of the church not only in the forty-seven years between the two occasions but also further backwards, into immemorial. At the Eucharistic Congress an architecture of triumphant classicism – designed by John Joseph Robinson and including a colonnade behind the altar and the progenitor of the triumphal arch at the entrance to park seen in the *Dublin City Quays* project – sought to emphasize this, albeit in timber and other lightweight materials disguised as stone. For the Pope's visit – with the exception of the carpeted steps – the architecture is more candid about expressing its modernity, perhaps reflecting the state of a nation that was no longer new and vulnerable. And yet one fundamental difference remains between the Pope's visit and the two previous celebrations: neither Emancipation Week nor the Eucharistic Congress confined their rituals to the park. And while for the latter the city was festooned with many temporary installations and embellishments ranging from search-lights to Celtic round towers, the most profound aspect of the two occasions was arguably one of spatial practice. In both 1929 and 1932, the vast congregations assembled at the Fifteen Acres exited the park in formation through the triumphal arch and marched, twelve abreast, along both sets of quays of the River Liffey in a peripatetic procession which penetrated the heart of the city. For the Eucharistic Congress, an altar was set up on O'Connell Street Bridge and this formed the focal point for the million or so citizens who lined the quays and filled up the adjacent streets: Westmoreland Street, D'Olier Street and O'Connell Street. Disciplined and ordered, it was the temporary, spectacular appropriation of a city by a church consisting only of its congregation, the reclamation of a series of theatrical spaces whose origins lie in a Protestant Anglo-Irish agenda and in the dreaming world of the pleasure garden.

25 Tallon, p. 137.

By 1979, however, despite the devotions in the park, the compulsion to re-inscribe an Irish Catholic identity on city centre space, so critical to the new Irish State, was no longer acute. And, moreover, Dublin was a city for whom mass, religious spectacle and indeed, the idea of any metanarrative was no longer unproblematic.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusions: Festivals, Pavilions and the City of Images

In the novel *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino, the narrator describes the city of *Sophronia* as consisting of two half-cities. One is a fairground city with 'a great roller coaster, the carousel with chain-spokes, the Ferris wheel of spinning cages', etc. The other city is of solid matter, 'of stone, marble and cement, with the bank, the factories, the palaces, the slaughterhouses and all the rest'. One of these half-cities, explains the narrator, 'is permanent the other is temporary and when the period of its sojourn is over, they uproot it, dismantle it, and take it off, transplanting it to the vacant lots of another city'. And so, he continues, 'every year the day comes when the workmen remove the marble pediments, lower the walls, the cement pylons, take down the Ministry, the monument, the docks, the petroleum refinery, the hospital, load them on to trailers, to follow from stand to stand their annual itinerary'.<sup>27</sup> Calvino's deliberate reversal of the expected is both apposite and prescient. Published in 1972, one year after the dissolution of the gold-dollar standard and one year before the oil crisis of 1973, *Sophronia* not only dramatizes the condition of transiency systemic to the modern city, it also seems to indicate a new level of intensity. In addition it suggests the forms that the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century city will take and the functions that will be accommodated there.

26 The Pope did, however, travel by motorcade through the city of Dublin.

27 I. Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 63.



Figure 4 Julian Opie's walking figure at the Hugh Lane Gallery.  
Photograph by Gary A. Boyd.

The advent of what is often called Post-Fordism or flexible accumulation has involved the reduction of the solid, production-based industries that had dominated many Western European and North American cities for over a hundred years. The end of the city as a work-shop has involved global and localized spatial and social trends and tactics: out-sourcing, the casualization of labour, flexible contracts, and the reduction of State Welfare provision, etc. City centre urban space becomes more and more defined by the provision of financial and other services, and the promotion of tourism (including the proliferation of festivals), leisure, and other aspects of consumption and lifestyle. For the economic geographer David Harvey, the increasing liquidity of capital and its ability to disinvest and reinvest both globally and instantaneously creates cultural consequences.

Just as capital has been apparently liberated from previous constraints, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* he suggests that architectural forms and icons have also been unhinged from fixed meanings to become free-floating signifiers, raw materials that can be manipulated to form collages or palimpsests in urban space.<sup>28</sup>

In her book about the iconography of public space in Dublin, Yvonne Whelan identifies the 1960s as a fault-line, suggesting that twentieth-century iconography before this date often referred to a body of ideas connected with an Irish national identity, its religious aspects, and the inception of the State. Since then, she writes, iconography and monumentality in the city has become less representative or figurative and more abstract and apparently politically neutral.<sup>29</sup> One of the examples she cites demonstrates this. In 1966, the IRA blew up Nelson's Pillar located at the centre of O'Connell Street, an act of conspicuous destruction that attempted to re-activate a British identity and political ideology on an object which had more or less been eclipsed by the passage of time and its everyday use as a meeting point and viewing platform for the city. In 1988, a competition called The Pillar Project was launched to provoke collaboration between artists and architectures in creating a new icon for the city and by extension, a rejuvenation of O'Connell Street. The projects which formed a public exhibition and later a book were an eclectic mixture of forms borrowed from a series of sources: classical architecture, late-modernism, de Stijl, fairground imagery, Russian constructivism, etc. The winner, announced on television after a public vote, was a huge triumphal arch which, in the accompanying image, straddled an O'Connell Street articulated by pavement cafés, festooned in bunting and in the midst of the festivities of a St Patrick's Day parade.

28 D. Harvey, *Condition of Post-Modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London: Blackwell, 1991).

29 Y. Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Press, 2003), p. 235.



Figure 5 Front cover, Eucharistic Congress Record, *Irish Independent*, 1932.

The triumphal arch created at the entrance to the park for the Eucharistic Congress showed some fidelity to the original meaning and purpose of the typology: the marking of a moment of transition where a triumphant, returning army received purification as it entered a city. In the *Dublin City Quays Project* the device is still used as an entrance to the city, part of the series of archetypes used to delineate, embellish and enclose street and square as well as stitch urban space together. In the Pillar Project, the winning proposal – in what the post-modernist theorist Robert Venturi might have described approvingly as an architecture of *both and* – provides a plethora of detached cultural referents and the emphatic separation of meaning from form: muscular rustication, Doric columns in a reflective material, an embossed harp and a ‘wind-powered kinetic sculpture of interconnecting stainless steel panel [taking] the form of an eternal flame ... symbolic of a city where the spirit is never extinguished despite the passing of time.’<sup>30</sup>

The permanency of festival and event, evoked in Calvino’s description of *Sophronia*, has become reality in the contemporary city. But if Emancipation Week and the Eucharist Congress could be understood as representing defining moments in the creation of a Catholic identity for the new State then – as Whelan has argued for the monument – large festivals in late twentieth- and twenty-first-century Dublin are now more ideologically nebulous: Dublin’s Millennium (1988), Dublin: European City of Culture (1991), Tall Ships Race (1998), the Millennium (2000). For the last event, the Dublin architecture practice Hassett Ducatez designed a large digital clock-face, submerged just under the surface of the River Liffey at O’Connell Bridge. Called the Millennium Clock, this device presented a countdown measured in second to the year two thousand: a recording and registering of something in-determinant that is, in any case, passing. Postcards which stated the exact moment of purchase could be bought from a kiosk in O’Connell Street. The resolution of the Nelson’s Pillar site was marked by a similar level of abstraction for the same international occasion. Ian Ritchie’s *Dublin Spire*, a tapering spike in polished steel sections admits to no obvious references. It confronts the skyline as a smear,

30 Kinsella and McCarthy in J. O’Regan (ed.) *A Monument in the City: Nelson’s Pillar and its Aftermath* (Cork: Gandon Editions, 1998), p. 50.

a blur that, from the distance of the camera lens, seems to deny its own materiality. Twentieth-century Marxist writers such as Ernest Mandel, Henri Lefebvre and Herbert Marcuse recognized a tendency for late-capitalism to accelerate its attempts to colonize new markets and penetrate hitherto uncommodified aspects of public and private life. For David Harvey and others this has resulted in the increased production and circulation of images and simulacra which, in turn, impact on the making of space within the city and elsewhere. The idealism of the image, achievable first of all within the moment of an event, is stretched in time and space to cover a limited geographical area.

In 2003, Dublin Council announced a scheme to designate a section of the city centre from Parnell Square to St Stephen's Green – an area which attracts 6 million visitors per year – as a 'front parlour', and called for the banishment of homeless people, beggars and other non-desirables from within its precincts.<sup>31</sup> Only now can the perfectings of Malton and the emptying of certain aspects of the city seen in the other paper architectures be achieved in real space and time. The space produced is no longer that of an inscription of Irish identity, or a culture defined by religion, nor are the meanings of monuments and iconography any longer clear. It is a space perhaps summarized by the LED peripatetics of Julian Opie's everyman/woman sculptures which appeared in O'Connell Street and Parnell Square in 2008. Showing a series of monochrome digitized figures performing endless repetitive actions, they are compulsive, alluring, static and without identity – spaces of ambiguous meaning and prescribed behaviours.

## Acknowledgements

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31 *The Irish Times*, 25 October 2003.





PART II

Modernity, Cinema, Cityscape



## Celtic Arc Light: The Electric Light in Early Twentieth-Century Dublin

The electric light defined the visual culture of the early twentieth-century metropolis. As historians such as Wolfgang Schivelbusch have documented, this technology did so as it entered everyday urban life in the 1880s due to both its unprecedented separation of light from fire and its incredible brightness.<sup>1</sup> The electric light, as many contemporaries believed, had liberated humanity from reliance on natural light, further intensifying the burgeoning urban nightlife already initiated by gaslight.<sup>2</sup> As the historian David E. Nye has chronicled, at this moment the metropolis transformed into an 'electric cityscape,' a 'universe of signs' overwhelming spectators with their 'sheer size and magnificence.'<sup>3</sup> The pulsating energy of such spectacle contributed to the fact that, as the historian Joachim Schlör points out, by 1900 '[m]ore than ever before, light was a big city's mark of modernity, and its absence was felt as a lack.'<sup>4</sup> The electric light thus featured centrally in international exhibitions and amusement parks throughout the

- 1 W. Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Angela Davies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995; first published 1983), p. 23.
- 2 C. Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 165; J. Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London, 1840–1930*, trans. Pierre Gottfried Imhof and Dafydd Rees Roberts (London: Reaktion Books, 1998; first published 1991), pp. 19–20.
- 3 D. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 173; D. Nye, *Narratives and Spaces: Technology and the Construction of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 88.
- 4 Schlör, *Nights in the Big City*, p. 66.

world. The sights of such electrified spaces provided a powerful metonym for modernity, a point upon which artists seized: both David E. Nye and the literary critic William Chapman Sharpe have identified the electrified city's visage as the fundamental wellspring of modernism.<sup>5</sup>

Yet such realities would seem alien to both the art and urban culture of Ireland at this same time for two reasons. For one, many members of the Revival, the ascendant force within early twentieth-century Irish culture, actively abjured the city.<sup>6</sup> Revivalists did so, as Seamus Deane points out, to oppose a commercial and technological modernity identified with Britain and most evident in Ireland within cities such as Dublin. Instead, they turned to the Irish countryside as repository of an authentic and unique national identity, thereby establishing the country's credentials for political autonomy.<sup>7</sup> While such a move made sense as a strategy for cultural decolonization,<sup>8</sup> it contributed little to the study of Dublin's visual culture during its incipient electrification. Rather, many Revivalists defined their aesthetic explicitly against the city's electric lights, as when Patrick Pearse called the Irish 'a race whose literature is as different from the unnatural literature of to-day as the pure radiance of the sun is different from the hideous glare of the electric light,' or when W. B. Yeats admitted, '[w]hen I stand upon O'Connell Bridge in the half-light and notice ... all those electric signs, where modern heterogeneity has taken physical form, a vague hatred comes up out of my own dark.'<sup>9</sup> Opting for pastoral twilight over urban electricity meant that, as Joseph Valente noted recently, the city's role in

- 5 Nye, *Narratives and Spaces*, p. 88; W. Sharpe, *New York Nocturne: The City After Dark in Literature, Painting, and Photography, 1850–1950* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 8.
- 6 D. Kiberd, 'The City in Irish Culture,' 2002, in *The Irish Writer and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 289–302, p. 291.
- 7 S. Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 52–53, 93–94.
- 8 G. Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 71; E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994, first published 1993), pp. 232–233.
- 9 P. Pearse, 'The Intellectual Future of the Gael' in *Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics* (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1898), pp. 46–59, p. 51; W. B. Yeats, 'Essays for the Scribner

Irish culture has been neglected prior to the Celtic Tiger.<sup>10</sup> This neglect would seem to ensure that the visual culture of urban electrification would remain absent from cultural discourse in colonial Ireland.

Valente's observation touches upon a second reason why Dublin seems an unpropitious site for studying the electrified metropolis' visual culture. For by highlighting the longstanding lack of a thriving urbanism within Ireland, Valente highlights the gulf between Dublin and the cities that defined urban modernity at the twentieth century's turn. Dublin gained fame at this time not as a city of electric spectacle, but rather as a city of dreadful poverty largely banished from the public life of other European cities.<sup>11</sup> This has led literary critics such as Jeri Johnson to argue that Dublin at this time resembled not a modern city, but rather an archaic village, suggesting that early twentieth-century Dublin lacked the electric spectacles so central to urban modernity in other European capitals and so formative of modernist aesthetics.<sup>12</sup> It was exactly this deficiency that Brendan Behan noted when, upon returning to Dublin from Manhattan as late as 1964, he remarked how 'anybody returning home after going to New York will find their native spot pretty dark too.'<sup>13</sup>

Yet in spite of Behan's suggestion, Dublin did not lack its own moments of incandescence, which I hope to recapture in this essay. I will push back against the image of early twentieth-century Dublin as an area of darkness by recovering examples of electric spectacle within the city's visual culture prior to independence, before the Shannon Scheme placed electrification at the centre of Irish national consciousness and historiography.<sup>14</sup> By focus-

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Edition, 1937, in Richard J. Finneran (ed.), *The Yeats Reader: A Portable Compendium of Poetry, Drama, and Prose* (New York: Scribner, 1997), pp. 404–421, p. 415.

10 J. Valente, 'Editor's Introduction,' *Urban Ireland*, spec. issue of *Éire-Ireland* 45.1–2 (Spring/Summer 2010), pp. 5–10, p. 9.

11 J. O'Brien, *'Dear, Dirty Dublin': A City in Distress, 1899–1916* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 34.

12 J. Johnson, 'Literary Geography: Joyce, Woolf and the City,' *City* 4.2 (2000), pp. 199–214, p. 204.

13 Quoted in Sharpe, p. 6.

14 M. Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 132, 152.

ing on the overwhelming lights both of major thoroughfares and the 1907 Irish International Exhibition, I will stress that colonial Dublin could offer displays of light similar to those central to the urban modernity of Paris and London. Furthermore, I will suggest that, just as it did in these other metropolises, Dublin's electric lights reflected modernity's essence. Yet my essay proceeds from the premise, chronicled in Irish Studies scholarship, that within Ireland such modernity assumed a complex form, distinguished not by uniform and progressive modernization, but rather by the persistent uneven development that scholars such as Benita Parry have found constitutive of colonial modernity, in which pre-modern and modern realities coexisted.<sup>15</sup> The visual culture of early twentieth-century Dublin nightlife, where modern electrified spectacle stood alongside unparalleled urban dilapidation, deindustrialization, and poverty, provided Irish artists with an icon for this colonial condition.

Yet before this manichean quality of electrified Dublin's visual culture can be elucidated, one must first recognize how by 1900 the electric light offered Dubliners a potent talisman of modernity much as it did for their Euro-American counterparts, as a scene from the prehistory of Irish electrification helps to illustrate. Dubliners received an early glimpse of the electric light that would dominate the twentieth-century urban skyline with Queen Victoria's visit to the country in August 1849, for which the Lord Mayor of Dublin decreed 'general illumination of the city on the night of Her Majesty's entry.'<sup>16</sup> The masterstroke of this effort came with an electric light placed atop Nelson's Pillar, praised by contemporaries as 'a grand feature.'<sup>17</sup> Newspapers reported how on the night that planners first tested this light 'the windows of the houses in the vicinity were thronged

15 B. Parry, 'The Presence of the Past in Peripheral Modernities' in Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (eds), *Beyond the Black Atlantic: Relocating Modernization and Technology* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 13–28, pp. 13, 15–16.

16 Quoted in C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845–1849* (London: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 389.

17 Quoted in Woodham-Smith, p. 392.

with spectators [and] the street in front was also densely crowded.<sup>18</sup> The massive and expectant crowd, according to contemporary accounts, was not disappointed, as they marveled at how this new light ‘could be compared to nothing at all usually associated with the colour and intensity of artificial light of any kind.’ Rather, it seemed as if ‘subdued day-light’ had suddenly dawned in the middle of the night, illuminating Sackville Street so thoroughly that ‘from the Rotundo nearly to the Post-office, the clearest and most beautiful light pervaded, lighting up every object, and rendering the reading of print a matter of facility.’ The crowd struggled to comprehend the novel effects of electricity, which while providing the clarity of daylight also seemed to improve upon the night skies, so that ‘[t]he appearance and colour of this beautiful light was most aptly and justly compared, both in the varying and fluitant character of its rays, and their tendency upwards, to the phenomena of the *Aurora borealis*.’ Planners were right to worry, as the historian Cecil Woodham-Smith relates, that the light might need to be turned off occasionally during the Queen’s procession to avoid overshadowing the accompanying gaslight,<sup>19</sup> for at this early appearance of electric light in Dublin ‘every renewed outburst of brilliancy was greeted with the heartiest cheers.’<sup>20</sup> This was light fit for royalty, and it attracted vast crowds for each night of the Queen’s visit to the Irish capital.

For the four days of Victoria’s visit, then, Dublin shone as a capital of electrified urban modernity, insofar as newspaper reporting upon the event echoed international reactions to early electrification from the mid-nineteenth century on. The supersession of nature, the technological simulation of moonlight and sunlight, the shock and spectacle of the electric light’s unprecedented effects and brightness – all of these, as Schivelbusch points out, would figure centrally in the public response to urban electrification at the twentieth century’s turn, and all of these circulated within Dublin

18 This quote, as well as all subsequent quotations until otherwise noted, come from ‘The Electric Light,’ *The Nenagh Guardian*, 18 August 1849.

19 Woodham-Smith, p. 392.

20 ‘The Electric Light.’

in response to the arc light atop Nelson's Pillar.<sup>21</sup> Dubliners, for instance, preceded by sixty years the New Yorkers who would compare the electric light displays staged for the 1909 Hudson–Fulton Celebration to the aurora borealis.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the hullabaloo surrounding the electric light in 1849 distinguished the Irish capital as eminently modern.

This sense of the electric light's modernity further developed within Dublin after Queen Victoria's 1849 visit. For instance, the technology inspired the same 'nineteenth-century fantasies involving light' that Schivelbusch unearthed in the broader Euro-American reception of electricity:<sup>23</sup> just as the French architect Jules Bourdelais imagined constructing in 1889 a Sun Tower to illumine all of Paris by a single electric light, in 1868 a writer for the *Nation* could envisage placing an electric ship beacon above Carlisle Bridge so that 'it would illuminate Sackville-street so thoroughly that the night cabmen at the Rotundo could relieve the tedium of their waits by perusing the newspaper.'<sup>24</sup> By 1880 crowds marveled over the Dublin Electric Light Company's initial yet ultimately unsuccessful attempt to illuminate the city's main streets.<sup>25</sup> Just as, according to Schivelbusch, contemporaries throughout the world found evidence for an epochal shift in the improvement of electric light over gas, Dubliners in 1880 noted how 'the College side of Nassau Street is a blaze of light and the chain side of Saint Stephen's Green [lit by gas] is dark only in comparison with the opposite side where the new lights are placed.'<sup>26</sup> This comparison, as it did in other cities, translated a change in illumination into a temporal rupture, so that the visual qualities of electric light announced a modernity divorced from a now-gloomy, gaslit past.<sup>27</sup>

21 See Schivelbusch, pp. 55, 115.

22 Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, p. 164.

23 Schivelbusch, p. 3.

24 Schivelbusch, p. 128; 'A Singular Adventure,' *Nation*, 21 November 1868.

25 'Dublin Rejects the Electric Light,' *Irish Builder* 24.530, 15 January 1882, p. 30.

26 Schivelbusch, pp. 69, 115–18; quoted in P. Molumby, 'Lighting Dublin,' *The Capuchin Annual* (1973), pp. 75–85, 79.

27 Schivelbusch, p. 69.



Though Dublin would have to wait a few more years for permanent electrification, this equivalence of electric light and modernity persisted within Irish public discourse. Dublin hotels recognized the power of this correlation, and followed the international trend of using the electric light's modernity to attract customers,<sup>28</sup> the technology featuring centrally in their advertising throughout the early twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Thus when by 1894 the Dublin Corporation finally laid electric mains beneath the city's central streets, Dubliners were prepared to praise their city as a capital of electrified modernity.<sup>30</sup> It was exactly upon the edge of one such street – Grafton Street, with its 'pale globes of light' and surging crowds – that Jimmy Doyle, the protagonist of James Joyce's short story 'After the Race,' came to believe that his native Dublin had assumed 'the mask of a capital.'<sup>31</sup> Doyle's sentiment, inspired in 1903,<sup>32</sup> was one shared by many real-life Dubliners, and it received additional confirmation from the installation within their city of the most advanced electrified urban transit system in the world by 1899.<sup>33</sup>

If Dubliners needed any further assurance that their city resembled a capital of metropolitan modernity, they needed to look no further than the fantastic displays of electricity on hand at the 1907 Irish International Exhibition, which offered electric spectacles worthy of those within major cities and international expositions throughout the world at this time.<sup>34</sup> The octagonal dome of the Grand Central Palace, the Exhibition's main building, 'at night scintillated with the flashing of thousands of vari-coloured

28 D. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 49.

29 For examples, see E. Cosgrave and L. Strangways, *The Dictionary of Dublin: Being a Comprehensive Guide to the City and Its Neighbourhood* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1895), pp. 1, 300.

30 Molumby, p. 81.

31 J. Joyce, *Dubliners* (New York: Penguin, 1993, first published 1913), pp. 38–39.

32 D. Gifford, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 52.

33 H. Kenner, *The Mechanic Muse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 11.

34 p. 54.

electric lights' that changed colour regularly.<sup>35</sup> Nearby gleamed fairy lights of a far different variety than those 'unaccountable lights moving over the fields among the cattle' hunted after by Yeats in Ireland's west.<sup>36</sup> The Exhibition's Official Record recalls how these manmade fairy lights 'gleamed brightly all over the grounds, while the architectural beauties of the Exhibition palaces were, as usual, outlined in countless numbers of electric lights.'<sup>37</sup> An additional 12,000 fairy lights covered the Exhibition's art gallery.<sup>38</sup> Above the grounds loomed that 'universe of signs' noted by Nye as typifying the electric cityscape, including a flashing "'Singleite" electric sign' and signs in the shape of both the British royal monogram, erected in honour of King Edward VII's visit to the fair, and the shamrock.<sup>39</sup> These lights were complemented by 520 arc lamps and by electrically-illuminated fountains,<sup>40</sup> ensuring that the grounds of Herbert Park remained 'blazing with arc lamps' throughout the night.<sup>41</sup> Just as the famous Electric Tower at New York's Coney Island could be seen thirty miles out at sea,<sup>42</sup> the bright lights of the Grand Central Palace dome were visible to fishermen well into the Irish Channel.<sup>43</sup> Just as they did along Grafton Street in 1880, the Exhibition's electric lights made gas seem passé, as reporters for *The*

35 *Electric Light and Power Installation at Irish International Exhibition: Extract from 'The Electrical Review'* (Dublin and Belfast: 1907), p. 971; K. Finlay, *The Biggest Show in Town: Record of the International Exhibition, Dublin 1907* (Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing, 2007) p. 59.

36 W. B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1902, first published 1893), p. 91.

37 Quoted in Finlay, pp. 106–107.

38 B. Siggins, *The Great White Fair: The Herbert Park Exhibition of 1907* (Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing, 2007), p. 70.

39 'International Exhibition (Dublin)', *The Electrical Review* 61.1, 547 (19 July 1907), pp. 114–116, p. 115; Finlay, p. 107.

40 E. Cosgrave, *Visitor's Guide to Dublin and Neighborhood: Giving a Complete Dictionary of Dublin* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1907), pp. viii, xix; *Electric Light*, p. 971.

41 'International Exhibition (Dublin)', p. 115.

42 J. Jakle, *City Lights: Illuminating the American Night* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 173–174.

43 M. Radford, 'Celebrating a New Ireland: The International Exhibition at Dublin', *Everybody's Magazine* 17.4 (Oct. 1907), pp. 488–497, p. 492.

*Electrical Review* complained of 'the general effect of the forest of poles and lanterns' required by the amount of gas lamps needed to compete with electricity's brightness, which they concluded 'must strike the most enamoured gas-man as barbarously ugly.'<sup>44</sup>

Such electrified extravaganza provided visual proof that modernity had arrived to Dublin. When one journalist gushingly declared the 1907 Irish International Exhibition a 'Dreamland of Fairy Palaces,'<sup>45</sup> he situated its electric spectacles within an international visual culture of modernity, invoking the same language used by contemporaries to describe events such as the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition – dubbed by *The Dial* a 'Fairyland' – and the Paris World's Fair of 1900 – at which observers claimed '[t]he Electricity Fairy triumphs.'<sup>46</sup> And this implicit comparison exemplified a broader fixation upon Dublin's electrified skyline, along with its electric transit system, as a sign of the city's metropolitan status. To cite one example, in the same year of the Irish International Exhibition, Samuel A. Ossory Fitzpatrick could confidently announce in his guidebook *Dublin: A Historical and Topographical Account of the City* (1907) that the Irish capital had 'cast off the idiosyncrasies of a provincial metropolis, and ha[d] put on the cosmopolitan sameness characteristic of modern European capitals.'<sup>47</sup> Fitzpatrick backed up this boast by observing how Dublin's 'streets are wide, well kept, and well lighted, and she possesses in her electric tram a system of internal communication unsurpassed in any European city,' framing the Irish capital as an electric cityscape indistinguishable from those emerging throughout Europe at this time.<sup>48</sup>

44 *Electric Light and Power Installation*, p. 971.

45 Quoted in Finlay, p. 26.

46 Quoted in R. Kargon, 'The Counterrevolution of Progress: A Civic Culture of Modernity in Chicago, 1880–1910' in Miriam R. Levin et al, *Urban Modernity: Cultural Innovation in the Second Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 133–166, p. 153; quoted in R. Garelick, *Electric Salome: Loie Fuller's Performance of Modernism* (Princeton; Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 69.

47 S. Fitzpatrick, *Dublin: A Historical and Topographical Account of the City* (New York: Methuen, 1907), p. 327.

48 Fitzpatrick, p. 328.

It was exactly the spectacle of such a City of Light upon which the Irish artist Cecil Salkeld drew to depict Dublin in *Cinema*, a woodcut dating from 1922–1925.<sup>49</sup> Salkeld portrays a bustling Irish nightlife illuminated by electric globes and electric signs for a cinema and bar; an automobile entering in the left background strengthens the scene's modernity. That nothing firmly locates this image in Dublin only further confirms Fitzpatrick's belief that the Irish capital has assumed 'the cosmopolitan sameness characteristic of modern European capitals.' Moreover, Dublin's claim to modernity gains greater credence from the style of Salkeld's work. As noted earlier, scholars have linked the fascination spurred by the city's electrified skyline to the development of modernist aesthetics. In *Cinema* Salkeld seems to confirm this hypothesis by implying an analogy between the electric lights depicted in the woodcut and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* style that distinguished his overall oeuvre.<sup>50</sup> The regular lines of electric light depicted in the composition motivate on the level of content the piece's stylistic 'emphasis on line and form,' observed by the art critic S. B. Kennedy.<sup>51</sup> In Salkeld's woodcut, Dublin appears as a modern European capital through both the visual energy of its electrified skyline and the way in which this skyline inspires modernist style.

In all of these instances, then, Dublin offers those sights definitive of urban modernity within Europe and America by 1900. Much like Paris, early twentieth-century Dublin appears as a city of 'flaming lights which emblazon the name' of music-halls 'across the water, whose reflections flow like rivers of light across the darkness of the Liffey,' as Seumas O'Sullivan described it in 1917.<sup>52</sup> These accounts, by emphasizing urban electric spectacle, do much to correct the predominant Revivalist depiction of Ireland as an ancient land of unspoilt pastures and anti-modern ideals, as they

49 I thank Luke Gibbons for bringing this work to my attention.

50 S. Kennedy, *Irish Art & Modernism: 1880–1950* (Belfast: Published for the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art by the Institute of Irish Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast, 1991), p. 41.

51 Kennedy, p. 42.

52 S. O'Sullivan, *Mud and Purple: Pages from the Diary of a Dublin Man* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1917; 1918), p. 52.

emphasize instead the country's participation in contemporary international trends of urbanization. However, these same accounts, by singularly fixating upon the visual qualities of Dublin's electrified streets, distort the distinctive realities of Irish urban experience as equally as did Revivalists by neglecting the city. They do so inasmuch as the cited instances of electric spectacle, meant to advertise Dublin's metropolitan modernity, stood alongside pockets of deepest darkness – a darkness blanketing the staggering infrastructural underdevelopment and poverty that plagued much of the city. As noted earlier, Dublin gained international notoriety at the moment of incipient electrification not as the City of Light depicted by apologists for Dublin's modernity, but as a centre of expansive slums largely eradicated from the public life of other major cities. The city's mortality rate exceeded that of all other European and American cities – a fact stemming from the six thousand tenements in which, according to the 1911 census, over a third of Dublin's families lived.<sup>53</sup> These conditions persisted well into the 1930s, when the city's slums were considered Europe's worst,<sup>54</sup> and they seriously place into doubt the 'cosmopolitan sameness characteristic of modern European capitals' found by Fitzpatrick in Dublin's well-lit streets and electrified trams. This urban degradation rather suggests that, as much as the electric spectacles I have reviewed advertised modernity, Dublin seemed mired within an archaic past long left behind by the major cities of Europe and America.

This dire and widespread infrastructural impoverishment did more than simply belie the message of modernity otherwise conveyed by Dublin's electric spectacle. It decisively militated against the city's widespread electrification, ensuring that the sights so praised by Fitzpatrick and others would remain absent from much of the Irish capital. Dublin's electrical engineers alluded to this when they declared the city 'a somewhat difficult city from the electricity suppliers' point of view' because '[t]here is no great density of

53 O'Brien, pp. 102, 109.

54 K. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (New York: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), p. 1.

either population or of industry.<sup>55</sup> While it was certainly true that Dublin suffered from chronic underindustrialization, as did the entirety of Ireland besides Belfast, the city did not lack population density. Rather, the historian Joseph V. O'Brien points out that by 1900 'over 72,000 [Dubliners] (one quarter of the population) lived in 21,747 single rooms of which 12,925 were occupied by three or more persons'; twenty-five years later, Dublin's population density of 38.5 persons per acre nearly doubled that of Britain's twenty largest cities.<sup>56</sup> Thus Dublin's electrical engineers meant not to say that their city lacked population density per se, but rather the density of wealth required to fund widespread electrification. The degradation of Dublin's many tenements, only a quarter of which were structurally sound, meant that any attempt to wire them for electricity risked collapse, regardless of their residents' inability to afford this new energy supply.<sup>57</sup>

These realities contributed to a discourse undercutting the image of Dublin as a City of Light. In spite of the lavish displays of electricity lauded by propagandists for the city's metropolitan modernity, nocturnal Dublin also offered a darkness equally spectacular in scope. While by 1899 London's streets featured one electric light per inhabitant, Dublin had only 0.087 lights.<sup>58</sup> A year's passing brought little improvement, the Irish capital by then having only eighty public street lamps, 250 private customers, and a power station that could not sufficiently power the General Post Office.<sup>59</sup> For this reason *The Irish Times* complained of how by 1900 'the great majority of [Dublin's] streets are plunged in almost Cimmerian darkness as soon as the shops are shut.'<sup>60</sup> Even though the city's skyline did improve, by 1909 'consist[ing] of 4,444 gas lamps, 146 metallic-filament lamps, and 557 arc lamps', such numbers still paled in comparison to the 1,000 arc

55 *City of Dublin Electricity Department 1892-1928* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 13.

56 O'Brien, p. 130; Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, p. 12.

57 V. Sherry, *James Joyce: 'Ulysses'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, first published 1994), p. 7; Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, p. 9.

58 C. Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 245, 187.

59 *Parliamentary Debates: Fourth Series. Seventh Session of the Twenty-Sixth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 82 (London, 1900), p. 260.

60 Quoted in O'Brien, p. 68.

lamps and over 200,000 incandescent lamps lighting London's streets by 1890.<sup>61</sup> Thirteen years later, when even the city's own electrical engineers claimed '[f]or years no house was considered modern ... unless it had electric light,'<sup>62</sup> only 33 per cent of Dublin's houses had electricity, compared to 87 per cent and 99 per cent of the houses in Amsterdam and Copenhagen at this same time, respectively.<sup>63</sup> A third of Dubliners rather resided in spaces illuminated only by candle and paraffin oil lamp, their streets often lit not by electricity but by gas.<sup>64</sup> The oral testimony compiled by Kevin C. Kearns of Dublin's early twentieth-century tenement residents confirms this sense that electric light – and sometimes even gaslight – remained rare in these areas throughout the 1930s.<sup>65</sup>

Thus alongside those gushing paeans to the bright lights of the 1907 Irish International Exhibition, the Irish public also heard reports as late as 1937 claiming that the eyesight of children who lived in the city's basement tenements 'resembled miners who work in the dark.'<sup>66</sup> Rather than the blazing arc lights and electric signs depicted by Salkeld and O'Sullivan, such incredible darkness perhaps better typified a country with Europe's second-lowest rate of electrification by 1922.<sup>67</sup> It contributed to a recurring sense within contemporary accounts that Dublin lagged behind, rather than rivaled, the capitals of electrified modernity.

At this early twentieth-century moment, then, circulated two contradictory images of Dublin as a city of scintillating light and a city of dreadful darkness. Yet this very contradiction gestures to a peculiar feature

61 O'Brien, p. 68; F. Bailey, 'Electric Lighting Progress in London,' *Journal of the Society of Arts* 39.1, 986 (12 Dec. 1890), pp. 51–60, pp. 58–59.

62 *City of Dublin Electricity Department*, p. 19.

63 M. Manning and M. McDowell, *Electric Supply in Ireland: The History of the ESB* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1984), p. 16.

64 Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, pp. 4, 27; O'Brien, p. 168.

65 K. Kearns, *Dublin Street Life and Lore: An Oral History* (Dun Laoghaire: Glendale, 1991), p. 93; Kearns, *Tenement*, pp. 83, 200.

66 Quoted in Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life* t, p. 13.

67 L. Schoen, 'The Irish Free State and the Electricity Industry, 1922–1927' in Andy Bielenberg (ed.), *The Shannon Scheme and the Electrification of the Irish Free State* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2002), pp. 28–47, p. 29.

of colonial Ireland's experience of modernity that will help to understand the visual culture of electric light in early twentieth-century Dublin. For as numerous scholars have pointed out, Ireland's long history of colonization itself bred contradiction, insofar as it simultaneously and ambiguously cultivated markers of advanced development and extreme underdevelopment. Terry Eagleton has compellingly catalogued myriad examples of how the hypermodern abutted the seemingly primeval within the economic, technological, and cultural space of Ireland.<sup>68</sup> This coequality of progress and regression reached its epitome with the Great Famine, the outbreak of seemingly atavistic starvation facilitating the shock modernization of Irish life.<sup>69</sup> This event thus testified powerfully to that 'disorienting mixture of the archaic and the modern' that Marjorie Howes argues resulted from British 'colonial intervention.'<sup>70</sup>

The electric light was not exempt from this 'disorienting mixture' that otherwise defined Irish colonial modernity. This becomes clear when we recognize how that early arc light shimmering atop Nelson's Pillar in 1849, which did so much to announce Dublin's emergent modernity, premiered amidst the unspeakable catastrophe of the Great Famine. Crowds cheered the electricity emblazoning Sackville Street while millions of their compatriots starved to death or emigrated. Just when the electric light, with its simulation of daylight and aurora borealis, suggested to Dubliners the possibility of technology's triumph over nature, nature had traumatized Ireland through massive crop failure. The electric light's shocking novelty thus elicited an additional shock in Ireland: that the apex of technological modernity could coincide with the height of barbaric suffering. The Nelson's Pillar arc light gave visual form to that admixture of development and underdevelopment that marked Irish colonial modernity.

68 T. Eagleton, 'The Archaic Avant-Garde', in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 273–319, pp. 274–280.

69 J. Cleary, 'Capital and Culture in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Changing Configurations' in *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2006), pp. 76–110, p. 88.

70 M. Howes, "'Goodbye Ireland I'm going to Gort': James Joyce" in *Colonial Crossings: Figures in Irish Literary History* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2006), pp. 67–78, p. 69.



Though they did so in less dramatic form, I want to argue that Dublin's electric lights persisted as such an emblem for the uneven development at the heart of colonial Ireland. For not only did the city coincidentally contain spaces of hypermodern electric spectacle and seemingly archaic darkness, but these two drastically different cityscapes often bordered one another, a condition created by the Irish capital's unique history as a colonial metropolis. Within most other major capitals of Europe and America, the electric light emerged at a moment when poverty had been pushed to the margins of the city. Within London, for instance, a century of steady urban development effectively segregated brilliantly lit areas such as Piccadilly Circus from the city's remaining slums. Dublin's heyday, however, long preceded the moment of urban electrification, as in the late seventeenth century when the city's resplendent Georgian infrastructure rapidly rose to facilitate Ireland's economic integration into the British Empire as England's breadbasket.<sup>71</sup> The Act of Union just as rapidly reversed this urban explosion, leading to an exodus of power and wealth from the Irish capital.<sup>72</sup> Bereft of its former consumer base for luxury goods and clerical services,<sup>73</sup> and without any industrial base to provide employment or to generate wealth for infrastructural improvement,<sup>74</sup> slum growth exploded within Dublin. This meant that the city's tenements – in which, as we have seen, electricity remained rare exactly because of Dublin's lack of industry and wealth – were not spatially separated from the city's most advanced areas, appearing within every quarter of Dublin city.<sup>75</sup>

71 K. Whelan, 'Ireland in the World-System 1600–1800' in Hans Jürgen Nitz (ed.), *The Early-Modern World-System in Geographical Perspective* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1993), pp. 204–218, pp. 206–207.

72 J. Prunty, 'Public Health and Housing in Nineteenth-Century Dublin' in Joseph Brady and Anngrét Simms (eds), *Dublin Through Space and Time (c.900–1900)* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 166–220, p. 166.

73 Whelan, p. 208.

74 J. Brady, 'The Heart of the City: Commercial Dublin, c.1890–1915' in *Dublin Through Space and Time*, pp. 221–281, p. 303.

75 J. Brady, 'Series Editor's Introduction,' in Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910–1940: Shaping the City & Suburbs* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), p. 31; O'Brien, pp. 32, 147.

This spatial ubiquity of slumland held profound implications for the visual culture of electricity in early twentieth-century Dublin. For it meant that the modernity advertised by Dublin's electric spectacles would inevitably be experienced alongside unelectrified, dilapidated areas undercutting any such optimistic faith in modern progress. As the Irish-language writer Liam Ó Rinn pointed out in the 1930s, '[p]overty and wealth are within a footstep of each other in Dublin. Turn to your right or your left off of the finest streets and you are in the midst of the poor streets – the "slums."<sup>76</sup> O'Connell Street, Dublin's most brightly-lit thoroughfare, might on its surface have demonstrated the technological energy of electrified urban modernity, yet this message disappeared above the street's glittering ground-floor stores, where tenements proliferated.<sup>77</sup> While in cities such as New York the brilliancy of electric light might announce modernity as the unambiguous triumph of technological progress,<sup>78</sup> within Dublin electricity could not but highlight the coexistence of such progress with the human suffering and infrastructural regression existing at its edges.

Such parataxis of electrified modernity and darkened, archaic slums epitomizes that 'disorienting mixture' at the heart of the Irish colonial experience of uneven development, where the hypermodern and the putatively premodern stood side by side.<sup>79</sup> This explains the deeper rationale behind James Joyce's claim that Dublin, when viewed from Grafton Street at night, 'wore the mask of a capital.'<sup>80</sup> The street's scintillating lights presented Dubliners with an icon of achieved urban modernity, much as it did throughout Europe and America at this time. Yet this modern skyline could not shed its masklike quality insofar as it could not mask the urban dilapidation at its edges: thanks to the ubiquity of Dublin's slums, the electric light could not with its blinding glare distract attention from

76 Quoted in P. O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 209.

77 Brady, 'The Heart of the City', p. 340.

78 Nye, *Electrifying America*, p. 35.

79 Howes, p. 166.

80 Joyce, *Dubliners*, p. 39.

unlit areas of urban poverty as it could in other cities.<sup>81</sup> It is this simultaneity of progress and regression that writers praising Dublin's electrified modernity ultimately fail to mask. While Samuel A. Ossory Fitzpatrick can point to Dublin's electrified streets as a sign of the city's 'cosmopolitan sameness characteristic of modern European capitals,' he must inevitably admit how '[i]n the trading competition of the times we live in Dublin has, as a manufacturing or even as a distributing centre, fallen into the background.'<sup>82</sup> Likewise, this urban simultaneity might also explain why the electric lights so central to Cecil Salkeld's *Cinema* gain their emphasis by an equally omnipresent, sinister darkness. Yet to focus, as others have, solely upon the city's collapsing infrastructure, thereby pushing Dublin into a temporal urban past, equally masks the meaning of the Irish capital's skyline. Rather, the contiguity of electric light and penumbral poverty demonstrates how, as Seamus Deane glosses Joyce's line in 'After the Race,' '[m]odernity wears the mask of capital because capital comprises both underdevelopment and development, not as opposites, but as contiguous conditions.'<sup>83</sup> By visualizing this truth within its electrified skyline, Dublin provided an able capital for its country.

This explains why in much pre-independence fiction about Dublin the electric light appears intimately interwoven with darkness and urban degradation. Joyce's *Dubliners*, as I have suggested, does exactly this, insofar as the 'pale globes of light' shimmering above Grafton Street appear alongside the penumbral settings otherwise noted by Seamus Deane throughout the rest of the collection.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, the first arc light in *Ulysses* appears within the Monto, one of Dublin's most notorious slums.<sup>85</sup> Yet other less famous Irish artists also emphasized this contradictory propinquity of electric light and urban underdevelopment as a fundamental quality of Dublin's

81 Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, p. 60.

82 Fitzpatrick, pp. 327, 340.

83 S. Deane, 'Dead Ends: Joyce's Finest Moments' in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (eds), *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 21–36, p. 26.

84 Deane, p. 21.

85 J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1990, first published 1922), 15.150–151; Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, pp. 61, 64, 67; O'Brien, *Dear*, p. 40.

skyline. It features centrally, for instance, in James Stephens's first novel, *The Charwoman's Daughter* (1912), which chronicles the life of its eponymous protagonist Mary Makebelieve residing in one of Dublin's many unelectrified tenements, illuminated only by firelight. Yet Mary can step outside this darkened domicile and 'in a few moments' join 'the crowd which passes and repasses nightly from the Rotunda up the broad pathways of Sackville Street ... and on through the brilliant lights of Grafton Street.'<sup>86</sup> With a few steps Mary circulates between her decaying slum and a streetscape redolent with all of the markers of metropolitan modernity, glistening with electric light and humming with electric trams and automobiles.<sup>87</sup>

This same disjunction amongst proximate spaces of electrified modernity and urban impoverishment assumes a central role in Kenneth Sarr's *The Passing: A Tragedy in One Act* (1924). This short piece, which won the prize for best play at the 1924 Tailteann Games, was written in the years preceding Irish independence,<sup>88</sup> and it concisely captures the schizophrenic contiguity of electric light and unelectrified darkness that I am arguing defined the nocturnal visual culture of early twentieth-century Dublin. The play begins with its mentally impaired protagonist, Jimmie, gazing out of a window located at the stage's right background '[s]treaming with light from street lamp outside,' a vantage point from which he describes a scene encapsulating the energy of the modern electric cityscape.<sup>89</sup> He raves over the Saturday night crowd as they circulate amongst the city's electric lights, yelling directly at a street lamp, '[t]he tracks is shining and the poles and the wires!'<sup>90</sup> Likewise, he marvels over Dublin's electrified transit system, shouting, '[t]here's the last tram, buzzing home like an old blue-bottle, only red. There y'are, bobbing and swerving round the corner.'<sup>91</sup> In his excited descriptions, Jimmie captures the energy surrounding the electric cityscape at the moment of its emergence.

86 J. Stephens, *The Charwoman's Daughter* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912), p. 86.

87 Stephens, pp. 86, 88.

88 P. Reynolds, *Modernism, Drama, and the Audience for Irish Spectacle* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 186.

89 K. Sarr, *The Passing: A Tragedy in One Act* (Dublin; Cork: Talbot Press, 1924), p. 7.

90 Sarr, p. 8.

91 Sarr, p. 8.

The audience, however, cannot see this modern scene: they can see only the setting from which Jimmie views it, '[a]n *Attic Tenement Room down the Quays of Dublin* ... [1]it only by reflection street lamp outside.'<sup>92</sup> In his single-minded excitement over the city's bright lights, Jimmie remains oblivious to the fact that behind him his mother Nann, driven to prostitution by poverty, is slowly dying in their disheveled, dark room. In this way the play stages an intriguing allegory of Dublin's distinctive topography, where shimmering lights stand alongside unspeakable darkness and poverty without any sense of coherence. A significant amount of the play is driven not by dialogue, but by the disjunction between Jimmie's monologue on the vibrant street scene and his mother's ignored cries of pain and pleas for help, a communication breakdown powerfully suggesting the radical dissonance between the message of modernity offered by Dublin's opulent, electrified nightlife and the realities of its overwhelming slums.

All of these works, by describing a Dublin nightlife marked by the contiguity of electric light and urban underdevelopment, describe a city drastically different from the electric cityscape traditionally considered emblematic of urban modernity and modernism. Yet they nevertheless capture the distinctive visuality of an electrifying Dublin, insofar as they sketch a skyline sharply divided between darkness and electric light. It is this legible division, I have argued, that allows Dublin's electric lights to evoke the Irish experience of colonial modernity, where technological progress and archaic regression were cultivated equally by uneven development. Yet I want to conclude by briefly pointing out how all of these texts, working from this fractured urban landscape, nevertheless generate the kinds of stylistic experimentation redolent of the modernism supposedly native to the major capitals of Europe and America – the phantasmagoria that marks 'Circe,' the narrative voice within *The Charwoman's Daughter* that veers irreconcilably between fairytale and brutal realism,<sup>93</sup> and the avant-garde techniques of Sarr's play, with its fragmented dialogue, its expressionistic lighting, and its use of a mechanical whistle to represent the shriek of

92 Sarr, p. 7.

93 J. Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993, first published 1987), p. 260.

seagulls during the play's surrealist climax.<sup>94</sup> This suggests that a further, unexpected prescience might be found within the nocturnal skyline of the Irish metropolis. As Mike Davis has stressed, our contemporary moment of global urbanization finds its most compelling precedent not in Paris, but rather in Victorian Dublin. With its combination of urban poverty and deindustrialization cultivated by an outside power, Davis argues that Dublin anticipates the plight of the megacities sprawling across today's Global South.<sup>95</sup>

All of this suggests that in the visual qualities of its electrifying skyline Dublin was not insufficiently modern, but rather proleptically so. The shocking propinquity of electric light and tenement within the works of James Stephens and Kenneth Sarr seems to anticipate the surprise expressed by the hero of Chinua Achebe's 1960 novel *No Longer At Ease*, who when entering the slums of Lagos reflects, '[h]e had not thought places like this stood side by side with the cars, electric lights, and brightly dressed girls.'<sup>96</sup> Just as such proximity of poverty and electricity led Liam Ó Rinn to declare Dublin 'an apple of which three quarters is rotten,'<sup>97</sup> Achebe likewise describe Lagos, with its wealthy, electrified areas surrounded by destitute slums, as 'twin kernels separated by a thin wall in a palm-nut shell ... [with] one kernel ... shiny black and alive, the other powdery white and dead.'<sup>98</sup> Achebe's novel testifies to how, as Ian Baucom has argued, modernism now flourishes within the cities of postcolonial Africa, where the border zones between these cities' electrified cores and their crumbling slums spectacularize the truth of modernity as a global process of uneven development.<sup>99</sup> Yet this same border between darkened slum and electric light defined

94 Reynolds, p. 186.

95 M. Davis, 'Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat', *New Left Review* 26 (March–April 2004), pp. 5–34, pp. 10–11, 18–23.

96 C. Achebe, *No Longer At Ease*, 1960, in *The African Trilogy: Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), pp. 149–286, p. 164.

97 Quoted in O'Leary, p. 209.

98 Achebe, p. 166.

99 I. Baucom, 'Township Modernism' in *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, pp. 63–76, pp. 72–73.

both the visual culture of nocturnal Dublin and the art generated by it. It is this anticipation, I would argue, that points to the deep meaning of the electric light in early twentieth-century Dublin: as an avatar of Ireland's participation within the persisting global realities of uneven development.





DENIS CONDON

## ‘Temples to the Art of Cinematography’: The Cinema on the Dublin Streetscape, 1910–1920

### Picture Houses and the Second Birth of Cinema

Few that recall the days before ‘Electric Theatres’ became the vogue will need reminding that the earlier home of the ‘movies’ was almost invariably an old store or shop that happened to be vacant. Some enterprising individual would rent it, sweep out the dirt, fill up – or partially fill up – the floor space with ordinary wooden chairs, place a screen at one end of the fit-up and a projecting machine at the other and his ‘theatre’ was complete. Hardly more than a decade ago this primitive environment was so common that it was allowed to pass without adverse comment, yet the picture theatre of to-day is a palace by comparison, and, appropriately enough, is often called by that name. The last word in scientific construction and luxurious appointment still, however, remains to be said, but unless we are greatly mistaken, Dublin’s new super cinema – which is to occupy the site of the old ‘Freeman’s Journal’ office in Prince’s Street – will mark an immense advance on anything hitherto achieved. [...] ‘La Scala,’ as it is to be called, has been planned as a colossal temple to the art of cinematography.<sup>1</sup>

So comments an anonymous columnist in Ireland’s first cinema magazine, the *Irish Limelight*, in April 1918, recalling, as the article’s title puts it, ‘The side show of yesterday’. Despite the title, the writer is interested in the primitive ‘fit-ups’ of the late 1900s or early 1910s chiefly for the colourful contrast they present to the existing ‘electric theatres’ and ‘picture palaces’ of the mid- to late-1910s and the coming ‘super cinemas’ of the 1920s. Nevertheless, the article offers a vivid glimpse of the early development of the cinema in Dublin and how it was viewed by an interested observer

1 ‘The side show of yesterday’, *Irish Limelight* 2, no. 4 (April 1918), p. 4.

of these ongoing developments. When it opened on 20 August 1920, La Scala would confirm the writer's prediction that it was the pinnacle to that point in Ireland of both cinema construction and the experience of going to the pictures. It also epitomized the way in which watching films would in the 1920s become integral to the full evening's entertainment at large venues also offering restaurants, cafes, bars, ballrooms and live stage shows. Several of the premises providing such entertainment in the 1920s would occupy landmark sites in the centre of the city and they could do so because of the destruction of buildings during the 1916 Rising. The redeveloped site of the Hotel Metropole in Sackville/O'Connell Street<sup>2</sup> adjacent to both La Scala and the General Post Office (GPO) retained the name Metropole when it reopened in February 1922, but it was no longer a hotel; it was an entertainment complex at which patrons could eat, drink and dance in an evening whose core activity was attending a film show at the 1,000-seat cinema. Cinemas, or film-led entertainment complexes of this kind, would fill other large gaps in the streetscape as the new medium came to occupy prime sites in the city, making literally concrete the cinema's growing dominance in Ireland's media landscape. Most symbolically significant in this development was La Scala's construction on the sites of two Irish publishing giants, *The Freeman's Journal* newspaper and the Alex Thom publishing house.

Rather than newspapers or book publishing, however, the medium that cinema was more fully displacing or subsuming was popular theatre. Both *The Freeman's Journal* and Alex Thom would continue as going concerns in other premises, but the ill-fated Coliseum Theatre, a 3,000-seat music hall located behind the GPO had only been offering a variety programme including some film for just over a year when it was destroyed

- 2 Although Dublin Corporation had been prevented in the 1880s by residents and traders from changing the name of Sackville Street to honour Catholic nationalist hero Daniel O'Connell, most nationalists referred to it as O'Connell Street. Except when quoting contemporary sources, I will refer to it as O'Connell Street but to the Provincial Cinematograph Theatres' picture house in that street as the Sackville.

in the fighting of 1916.<sup>3</sup> Its proprietors, Premier Palace Theatres, did not rebuild the Coliseum, but the construction of the 3,200-seat La Scala offering film-based shows on a site next to it is indicative of contemporary trends in entertainment that were by no means unique to Dublin. In the late 1910s and 1920s in cities all over the developed world, large and luxuriously appointed buildings were erected for the theatrical presentation of moving pictures to popular audiences. In Dublin as elsewhere, the concentration of these new cinema buildings in landmark city-centre premises after 1920 was just one way in which cinema constituted a challenge to existing entertainment providers. The cinema was also a more pervasive medium than the theatre, encouraging the opening of entertainment venues in parts of the city where they had never existed before, and so providing professionally-made entertainment in the suburbs as well as in the city centre.

What happened by 1920, then, was that a new medium – the cinema – had fully emerged in Dublin in a way that was apparent on the streets in the shape of a building – the cinema. Indeed, it is worth making a terminological distinction between these two uses of the word 'cinema' to distinguish between what was in the 1910s most often called the 'picture house' – the individual building where people went specifically to watch films – and the cinema – the cultural institution of which the picture houses were but the exhibition spaces. Cinema would eventually become the generic for both the building – although apart from picture house such other terms as cinematograph theatre, picture theatre and electric theatre were also common before cinema became the stable generic term – and institution, which is constituted of such industrial and cultural practices as filmmaking, the distribution or renting of film, the exhibition practices that evolved internationally and regionally, cinema-going as a regular practice, regulation in the form of building codes and of censorship, and various forms of writing and speaking about the cinema. The beginning of cinema's emergence as an institution is generally said to have occurred around 1910, when it experienced a second birth fifteen years after a first

3 Denis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema, 1895–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), pp. 93–94.

birth had delivered such devices as the moving-picture camera and projector.<sup>4</sup> Although citizens going about their business in the streets of Dublin were likely unaware of the momentous cultural shift that the arrival of institutional cinema represented, they could not have failed to notice the spread of picture houses all over the city.

Beginning in earnest in 1910, a boom in the construction of new picture houses in Dublin and the adapting of existing buildings as dedicated film venues had a significant impact on the building trade, on the nature of popular entertainment, and on patterns of sociability in the city. The arrival of picture houses created on many of the city's streets a new 'place of public resort' in the form of an entertainment venue that was often accessible to a popular audience with even the minimum of disposable income. Some picture house proprietors, however, targeted a more lucrative middle-class audience, and this became increasingly the norm during the 1910s, with the construction of ever-larger auditoria offering increasingly lavish comforts, large orchestras and long 'feature' films tailored to the perceived tastes of the middle class. Nevertheless, even at their initial appearance at the start of the decade, these buildings frequently presented an attractively decorated facade and lobby intended to draw patrons into the auditorium within, and unlike the theatres, the picture houses frequently operated both day and night, seven days a week. The building industry was interested in the construction of these picture houses not only because they offered outlets for the crafts of their members, but also because as a matter of course they required the use of new buildings materials such as structural steel and reinforced concrete in order to comply with the 1909 Cinematograph Act's stipulation that 'cinematograph theatres' be protected against fire. The industry initially saw the pre-World War I boom in picture house construction as a 'craze' similar to the recent boom in the construction of roller-skating rinks, and during the war, the picture house construction suffered not only from a general decline in construction

4 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, 'A medium is always born twice ...', *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005), p. 13. Delegates at The Second Birth of Cinema: A Centenary Conference, Newcastle University, 1–2 July 2011, largely agreed that 1911 marked the second birth of cinema.

because of the scarcity of material but also from the destruction along with the Hotel Metropole and the Coliseum Theatre of some city-centre picture houses in the fighting of 1916. As the epigraph shows, these were merely setbacks before the continuation of picture house building after the war on an even more ambitious scale, when La Scala became the 'last word in scientific construction', a discourse in concrete and steel that had begun a decade earlier. Once these buildings were constructed, most of Dublin's citizens encountered them as members of audiences but for some, they were places of business and employment both for speculators and owners and for the managers and workers in various roles who operated them. As an increasingly visible part of the city's social fabric, picture houses not only attracted national and local governmental regulation but also became the locus of protests by such groups as the Dublin Vigilance Committee intent on policing what audiences could see in an Ireland moving towards some form of self-government.

The second birth of cinema – its institutional emergence – occurred in Dublin when the practice of visiting a picture house began to be an established habit for a mass audience. By 1910, middle-class audiences had shown that they would patronize the Irish Animated Picture Company's long-established seasons of pictures at the Rotunda; large working-class audiences had shown they would support the daily picture-based shows at the People's Popular Picture Palace, which operated at the former Queen's Theatre between March 1908 and January 1909; and a small number of other important early film venues had appeared, the best known of which is the Cinematograph Volta, which was opened in Mary Street on 20 December 1909 by author James Joyce and his business partners from Trieste.<sup>5</sup> What changed during the 1910s was that it became common for people of all classes regularly to visit a picture house, and this provided the basis for the cinema as serious business. As such, the People's Popular Picture House and the Volta do not yet constitute the second birth of cinema, which likely occurred when the few Irish exhibitors faced competition from British

5 Luke McKernan, 'James Joyce's cinema', *Film and Film Culture* 3 (2004), pp. 7–20; Kevin Rockett, "Something rich and strange": James Joyce, Beatrice Cenci and the Volta', *Film and Film Culture* 3 (2004), pp. 21–34; Condon, pp. 218–219.

firms determined to exploit the lucrative opportunities they perceived in Dublin because they were already exploiting similar opportunities in cities in Britain. The second birth of cinema in Dublin, therefore, likely occurred as Irish exhibitors responded to the arrival in 1910 of the British company Provincial Cinematograph Theatres, which opened the Sackville Picture House, acquired the Volta by buying out Joyce and his partners, and began work on a luxury picture house on Grafton Street, the city's most fashionable thoroughfare. Ordinary Dubliners were mostly unaware of the struggles between rival firms; they were enjoying a new entertainment provided in such novel public spaces as the Sackville Picture House.

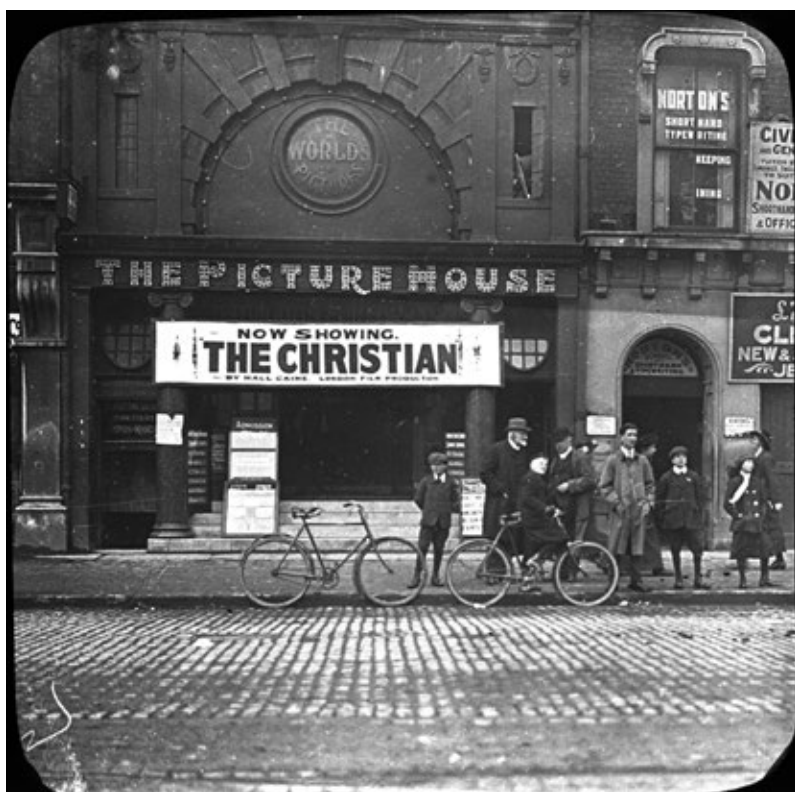


Figure 1 The oldest known photograph of the Sackville Picture House, 51 Lower Sackville/O'Connell Street. © RTÉ Still Library.

The image of the Sackville that features in Figure 1 is one of the oldest surviving photographs of a Dublin picture house from the 1910s. It offers a good deal of information about the facade of the building around the middle of the decade as well as presenting such other fascinating incidental details as the ways in which the management used the exterior of the premises to address potential patrons and the dress and demeanour of a group of passersby. The photograph comes with the estimated date of 1915, based on the release date of *The Christian*, the film advertised so prominently on the banner strung across the picture house's entrance. Produced by the London Film Company, this film was an adaptation of the hit novel and play of the same name by Hall Caine, whose son Derwent Hall Caine starred on screen. Although it is a useful image for considering Dublin's early picture houses, further contextual details are required to establish what it reveals about the Sackville Picture House in 1910 and perhaps to illuminate the reasons that the photographer composed the image to include a group of people who are mostly unaware of the camera because they are intently watching an event unfolding well to frame right.

Research on the exhibition of *The Christian* in Dublin indicates that rather than in 1915, this photograph was taken in April 1916 and shows how the experience and geography of Dublin picture-going changed during the 1910s. *The Christian* was first shown by Provincial Cinematograph Theatres in the company's most prestigious Dublin venue, the Grafton Picture House, from 13 to 18 March 1916. This six-day engagement was twice the usual period for which a film was exhibited, and the run occurred during the week that included St Patrick's Day, which many Dubliners celebrated by attending entertainments. To ensure audiences that were as large as possible for an appropriately religious-themed film during the festival of Ireland's patron saint, the company placed more illustrated advertisements than it usually did in newspapers (Figure 2). The company's choice of the Grafton rather than the Sackville for the first showing of this important film is indicative of the Grafton's precedence. The Sackville had been hailed as a prestige venue when it opened in 1910, but the arrival of the luxuriously appointed and better-located Grafton on 17 April 1911 eclipsed the more modest comforts of the Sackville. By 1916, the Grafton had long received most of the illustrated newspaper advertisements that distinguished Provincial's publicity strategy from that of other Dublin

exhibitors. *The Christian* followed the release pattern whereby films that had had a successful first run at the Grafton reappeared shortly afterwards for a second run at the Sackville.



Figure 2 Provincial Cinematograph Theatres' publicity was distinguished by such striking illustrated advertisements as those for *The Christian*'s run at the Grafton in March 1916 and for an episode of the popular serial *The Exploits of Elaine* at the Sackville in 1915.

*The Christian* was held over for showing at the Sackville for the second major religious festival in early 1916, Easter. Although it did not benefit from a campaign of illustrated advertisements similar to the one that had accompanied the run at the Grafton, it did receive a substantial preview in the *Evening Telegraph*'s 'Music and the drama' column on the Saturday before its scheduled opening at 1pm on Easter Monday 1916. Given that



this was almost exactly the time that insurgents occupied buildings around the city – including the nearby GPO – at the start of the Easter Rising, it is unlikely that *The Christian* ever entertained audiences at the Sackville. It is not surprising, then, that the people in the photograph appear unaware of the photographer when the spectacle of the Rising likely commands their attention. Therefore, the facts that this photograph was taken during Easter week 1916 and that the Sackville was no longer the first-run venue it had been should be taken into account in assessing this photograph as a source evidence of how the building looked to contemporary observers when it first appeared on the streetscape in 1910.

Newspaper accounts in 1910 indicate how Provincial Cinematograph Theatres wished the public in Dublin to see their new picture house. The Dublin Cinematograph Theatre – which would soon be renamed the Picture House, 51 Lower Sackville Street – opened to the public for the first time on Saturday, 9 April 1910. The building had been designed by Provincial's resident architect, J. R. Naylor and would be managed by Walter Huish.<sup>6</sup> To ensure favourable press coverage of the opening, R. T. Jupp, managing director of Provincial Cinematograph Theatres and the newly formed Dublin Cinematograph Company, held an inauguration dinner on the preceding Thursday evening and a reception for the press at the picture house on Friday. Addressing the main employees of the Dublin Company, a group of prominent citizens and representatives of the press at dinner in the Hotel Metropole in O'Connell Street, Jupp stressed the proven profitability of the company's methods of film exhibition, implicitly distinguishing the company from other exhibitors in the city.<sup>7</sup> Although the company offered film programmes that were high class and suitable to be viewed by women and children, they differed, he implied, from the high class and respectable shows then being offered by the IAPC at the Rotunda in running continuously and thereby offering patrons the flexibility of dropping in at any time during between the hours of 2 and 10.30pm. That continuous

6 'Dublin cinematograph theatre: inauguration dinner', *Evening Telegraph*, 8 April 1910, p. 2.

7 'Dublin cinematograph theatre'.

performances were the most profitable form of exhibition, he explained, was demonstrated by the 50 per cent return on their investment that shareholders in the publicly listed London company received.<sup>8</sup> Although Jupp clearly felt that continuous performances required explanation for patrons more familiar with theatrical shows beginning at advertised times, the writer of the *Irish Times*' 'Fashionable Intelligence' column who had attended the press reception at the picture house on 8 April duly extolled the merits of the system. This writer described the Sackville as a 'great addition to the entertainments of the city', particularly for the 'ladies shopping' that were the column's main readership because 'it can be entered at any time, and a complete performance witnessed'. Continuous performances of a programme of the one-reel (fifteen-minute) films of the time were particularly suited to such passing custom, with the further attraction for patrons of the Sackville that afternoon tea was provided free of charge (Figure 3).<sup>9</sup> Although audiences did enjoy the flexibility that continuous performances provided, this system would prove more difficult to reconcile with the long feature films that were just beginning to be produced.

Reporters described the building as being 'extremely comfortable, [...] beautifully upholstered and decorated, and lighted in the most up-to-date fashion'. A particular feature of the customizing of the premises for showing films was the raking of the floor, 'giving an equally good view of the pictures from all parts of the building'.<sup>10</sup> As much as the decoration and upholstery, however, journalists who were given a tour of the building stressed its safety. 'A glance at the operating room', commented a writer in the *Irish Times* 'which is entirely separate from the public portion of the building, was sufficient to show not only that the most up-to-date machines are employed, but that the safety provisions more than comply with the most stringent regulations of the recent [Cinematograph] Act'.<sup>11</sup>

8 'Dublin cinematograph theatre'. Jupp was also preparing potential investors for the share prospectus that would appear in the newspapers in early May, see 'Provincial Cinematograph Theatres, Limited', *The Irish Times*, 9 May 1910, p. 5.

9 'Fashionable Intelligence', *The Irish Times*, 9 April 1910, p. 8.

10 'Dublin cinematograph theatre', *Irish Independent*, 9 April 1910, p. 6.

11 'Dublin cinematograph theatre', *The Irish Times*, 9 April 1910, p. 8.

The emphasis on public safety as well as respectability was underlined by the fact that the opening ceremony was performed – 'in the presence of a large number of influential citizens' – by chief sanitary officer Sir Charles Cameron, who opined prophetically given the imminent picture-house boom that 'the larger the number of places of amusement in a city the greater the success of each individual establishment'.<sup>12</sup>

The writings of one regular picture goer in 1910 allow us to get beyond the managed media events the company had arranged for the opening. Dublin architect Joseph Holloway's unpublished diary – running to some 25 million words – is usually seen as a source of information on the theatrical productions he attended on an almost obsessive basis between the 1890s and 1940s. During the summer of 1910, when many of the theatres he favoured were closed, Holloway switched his allegiance for a time to the Sackville, and his entries offer compelling evidence not just of the opening of a new entertainment venue but of what might properly be seen as the second birth of cinema: the habitual visiting of the picture house. An entry for the evening of Thursday, 21 July 1910 reveals that

Mother, Eileen & I went down to the Picture Theatre after tea & thought the programme good – a few American dramatic pictures were very effective. The place was crowded as usual. Pictures are rapidly taking the place of the plays with the ordinary amusement seeker.<sup>13</sup>

Although brief, this entry records that Holloway accompanied his eighty-year-old mother, Anne, and twenty-two-year-old niece, Eileen O'Malley, across the city from their home in Northumberland Road to the Sackville. Anne Holloway appears to have been making her debut, but Joseph Holloway had attended this picture house on four previous occasions since it opened in April, bringing Eileen with him for his first visit on 18 June. As such, this latest visit was remarkable for little other than that it was the first time that all three members of the family – each representing

12 'Dublin cinematograph theatre', *Irish Independent*, 9 April 1910, p. 6.

13 National Library of Ireland (NLI), Manuscript 1810, *Joseph Holloway Diaries*, 21 July 1910, pp. 76–77.

a different generation – attended this picture house together. But it is precisely its ordinariness that makes this event interesting because it indicates the practice of cinema-going becoming a habit. Joseph and Eileen had been sufficiently entertained by their previous visits to recommend it to Anne, and she would enjoy the experience enough to repeat it on several return visits that year.

Holloway records his enjoyment of the entertainment on 21 July, commenting on the effectiveness of the ‘American dramatic pictures’. Holloway did not name any of the films, and the Sackville was no longer advertising regularly in the press. Doubtless, the films presented would have resembled those on the Sackville’s opening programme, during the week of 9 April, when it had shown seven films: *The cowboy and the squaw: a story of the West*, *Winter sports in the Vosges Mountains*, *Ideal army life*, *A strange friendship: Persian kitten and parrot*, *His last burglary*, *Recent eruption of Mount Etna* and *The dancing tabloid*, the last described by the *Evening Telegraph*’s reviewer as ‘a highly diverting picture’.<sup>14</sup> The practice of mixing short fictional subjects with short factual subjects, without any one film appearing as the highlight or ‘feature’ of the programme – as *The Christian* would be in 1916 – was standard for this period. Occasionally, an item on the programme would reward special advertising, but this did not mean that it was a feature film in the sense that it would be later used. On the week following the visit with his family, for example, Joseph Holloway returned to the Sackville to see and hear *The Byeways of Byron* (Figure 3). Consisting of filmed scenes accompanied by a lecture delivered live by the film’s maker J. W. Gilbert Smith, *The Byeways of Byron* was certainly the featured item on the programme and one that justified special advertising. Unlike *The Christian*, however, it was the elements of the live lecture format emphasizing the literary connotations of Byron’s name that justified the special appeal to middle-class audiences.

14 ‘The cinematograph theatre’, *Evening Telegraph*, 12 April 1910, p. 2.

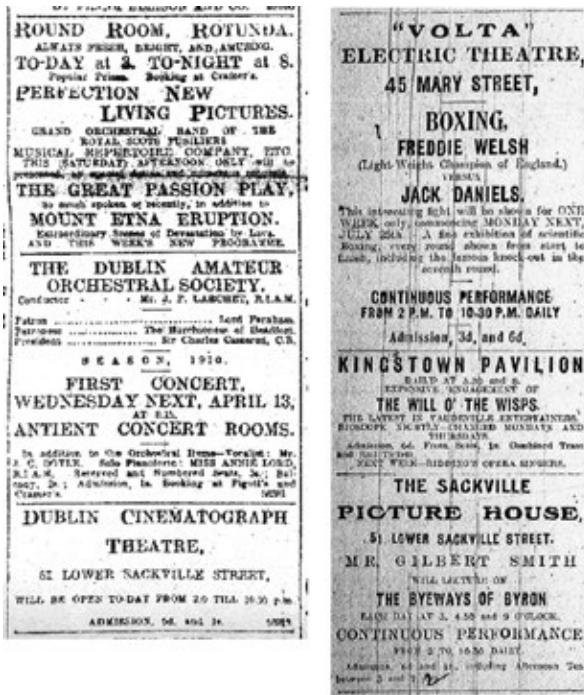


Figure 3 Amusements columns advertising picture houses in 1910. On the left, the IAPC's New Living Pictures season was well under way at the Rotunda on the opening night of the Dublin Cinematograph Theatre, soon to be renamed the Sackville Picture House (*Evening Telegraph*, 9 April 1910, p. 1). On the right, the class composition of the audiences at the Volta and the Sackville are reflected in the different programmes offered (*Dublin Evening Mail*, 23 July 1910, p. 2).

Rather than the details of particular short films, Holloway was more concerned by the way in which the picture houses appeared to be displacing the theatre. As a committed lover of the theatre, this was of some concern to him, and he had commented after a visit a few days previously to the Volta: 'Fancy I been driven to seek amusement at the "Volta", & then you may know to what a state Dublin has fallen as an artistic centre.'<sup>15</sup> It appears,

however, that it was the class composition of the audience rather than the nature of the entertainment that prompted him to bring his mother and niece to the Sackville instead of to the Volta. Both venues had a seating capacity of under 500 – the Volta with 420 seats and the Sackville with 270 – and therefore could not be socially stratified to the same time-honoured degree as the much larger theatres, a fact that many early picture houses advertised as making them more democratic or ‘popular’ entertainment venues. Nevertheless, although the Sackville attracted a different class of patron to the Volta, both venues retained a level of class division in their auditoria based on admission pricing, with the higher-paying patrons typically given a better view of the screen and a more comfortable seat. The Sackville charged an admission of 1 shilling (1s.) to the balcony or sixpence (6d.) for the stalls, and the Volta charged 6d. for the individual seats at the front or 3d. for the benches. However, it seems that the Volta was not well patronized by the middle classes at this point because Holloway notes of his visit there on 16 July that ‘[t]he 3d seats were well filled, but the sixpenny ones were mostly unoccupied.’<sup>16</sup> Located near Mary Street’s junction with Jervis Street, the Volta was close to some of Dublin’s worst slums, and as such, this was not one of the areas usually visited by middle-class families for an evening’s entertainment. By contrast, the Sackville was located in such a thoroughly respectable area of the city that it could be visited even by unaccompanied middle-class women who read the *Irish Times*’ ‘Fashionable Intelligence’ column.

Having the right location was vital in establishing the picture house as a habitual entertainment destination for the middle classes and in facilitating cinema’s second birth in Dublin. As the cinema became a true institution in the 1910s, however, it would fundamentally alter Dubliners’ perceptions of where they should go for amusement.

## Protests at the Bohemian Picture Theatre, 1915

Cinema fundamentally changed the geography of entertainment in Dublin. Their city-centre locations were vital to the business strategies pursued by the owners of such early picture houses as the Sackville, but the habit of going to the pictures developed during the 1910s so that the entertainment was available in practically all parts of the city. This would be remarkable enough if the suburban picture houses were small venues catering for a local audience, but many were larger than those being built in the city centre and therefore required an audience that would travel to them at a time before the widespread availability of personal transport. In early 1910, although several theatres and mixed-use venues showed films regularly, only the Volta and the Sackville, and possibly the Abercorn Hall on Harcourt Road and the Coliseum in Redmond's Hill acted as full-time picture houses.<sup>17</sup> By 1915, Dublin Corporation, which had become the issuing authority for licences to show films under the 1909 Cinematograph Act, was issuing almost thirty licences a year.<sup>18</sup> In his report for the final quarter of 1914, Walter Butler, the Corporation's inspector of theatres, listed twenty-five premises in the city seeking renewal of their licences for 1915, and two other premises that would soon receive a licence. These twenty-seven licensed premises – a number that remained remarkably stable for the rest of the decade – included the large city-centre theatres: the Theatre Royal in Hawkins Street, the Tivoli Theatre on Burgh Quay, the Empire Theatre of Varieties on Dame Street and the Queen's Theatre in Great Brunswick (now Pearse) Street. The Gaiety Theatre in South King Street had also applied for and received a temporary licence for showing films for a week in October 1914. All these theatres were located on the south side of the River Liffey – which bisects the city – with the Tivoli, Theatre Royal and Queen's clustered within a few streets of each other between Burgh Quay and Brunswick Street, and

17 'Dublin sessions', *The Irish Times*, 25 March 1910, p. 2. The latter two venues were granted cinematograph licenses in 1910, but no evidence has yet come to light on the kind of entertainment they provided at this time.

18 Dublin Corporation, *Committee Reports*, 1917, Vol. 2, Item 88, pp. 6–8.

the Gaiety and Empire a short walk away up Grafton Street and Dame Street respectively. These theatres, therefore, roughly defined the limits of the city's main commercial core on the south side of the river. The theatres very rarely showed films as their main entertainment in the 1910s but rather screened them as part of or as a supplement to a more extensive variety, dramatic or musical show. The only theatre that operated on a sustained basis on the north side of the Liffey was the Abbey, which was located in a building redesigned by Joseph Holloway on Abbey Street just a block from O'Connell Street, but the Abbey did not hold a licence to show films.

Almost all the other venues seeking licences for 1915 were picture houses in which the film show accompanied by live music was the main form of entertainment. Several of the picture houses were located within the theatre ring described above, catering for the extensive passing trade in the city centre and for those who lived in or near the centre or travelled into it for their entertainment. The picture houses, however, also penetrated far into the city's residential areas. So, on or close to O'Connell Street could be found the Sackville and Grand Cinema on Lower O'Connell Street; the soon-to-open Pillar Picture House close to Nelson's Column at the mid-point of the street; and the Round Room of the Rotunda at the northern extremity of O'Connell Street, where it almost faced the Cosy Cinema in Parnell Street. The picture houses also pushed further east and west of O'Connell Street: the stroller toward the Volta on Mary Street would first encounter the World's Fair on Henry Street, and passing the Volta, see the Mary Street Picture House before continuing into Capel Street at the edge of the shopping district to visit the Irish Cinema. Walking east from Nelson's Column down North Earl Street and into Talbot Street, an amusement seeker would first see the Masterpiece Theatre and would almost have reached Amiens Street Station before coming upon the Electric Theatre. On the south side of the river, the stroller would not have far to go past the Queen's Theatre to come across the Brunswick Cinema, and both the Grafton Picture House and Dame Street Picture House also fell comfortably within the fashionable parts of the city. However, picture houses were also located at the very furthest points of the city covered by the Corporation's remit, and beyond, through the adjacent suburban townships of Pembroke and Rathmines and into south county Dublin as far as Blackrock and Kingstown. Many of these would have required



local audiences or spectators induced by advertised attractions to travel to suburban venues by tram or train. Two picture houses met the entertainment seeker on Lower Camden Street, the Camden Picture House and the Theatre de Luxe. Continuing up Camden Street towards the Grand Canal and the city limits, the pleasure seeker might discover the Picturedrome at the Abercorn Hall on Harcourt Road. If the picture-goer instead travelled out southwest from the city centre, he or she might encounter the People's Picture Palace in Thomas Street. Both east and west of the city on the north side, one could see pictures at the Town Hall, Clontarf, or when heading towards the Phoenix Park visit the Phoenix Picture Palace on Ellis's Quay. Heading north of O'Connell Street, one could drop in to see a picture at the Dorset Picture House on Granby Row on the way to catch a train at the Broadstone Station, as the Irish correspondent of the British cinema trade journal *Bioscope* suggested.<sup>19</sup> Or, before leaving the city by crossing the Royal Canal – perhaps to visit the Botanic Gardens or Prospect Cemetery in Glasnevin – one could choose to visit one of the rival pictures houses in Phibsboro, the Phibsboro Picture House or the Bohemian Picture Theatre.



Figure 4 This elaborate letterhead incorporates an early film projector casting onto the paper the only known image of the Bohemian Picture Theatre in the 1910s. This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

19 'Pictures in Ireland: by "Paddy"', *Bioscope*, 14 March 1912, p. 753.

The remarkable change in the geography of entertainment in the city brought about by the pre-war boom in building these picture houses is epitomized by these last mentioned premises – the Phibsboro Picture House and the Bohemian Picture Theatre. When these picture houses opened within weeks of each other in mid-1914, they provided Phibsboro, on the northern edge of city, with its first purpose-built venues for professionally produced entertainment. As such, they were well placed to take advantage both of the increased population in this part the city and of the tram service that brought not only residents from the city but also those on excursions to the Phoenix Park and the Botanic Gardens.<sup>20</sup> The keen competition between them began in the building stage, when both were increased in size and provided with further decorative features, the *Irish Builder* commending the Phibsboro's added 'brickwork and terra cotta dressings, [which] will present a more handsome and bolder appearance than the original design.'<sup>21</sup> However, the Bohemian would be the larger of the two with approximately a thousand seats, and to design it, the twenty-four-year-old owner Frederick Arthur Sparling engaged Dublin's most prominent cinema architect, George L. O'Connor. Having already drawn the plans for the Mary Street Picture House and the Rathmines Picture Palace, O'Connor was said to be making 'a speciality of designing cinema theatres.'<sup>22</sup> His design for the Bohemian resembled that of the Rathmines Picture Palace in incorporating two shops on either side of the entrance, each only a single storey in order not to block the view of the theatre itself, whose front was 'finished in red brick and chiselled limestone dressings, gables and finials' (Figure 4).<sup>23</sup> Although set back from the street, the picture house announced itself with a canopy that extended between the shops, and patrons entered the auditorium by climbing a set of steps to the lobby.

20 Mary E. Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History 1860–1914* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1985), pp. 118–119.

21 'Building news', *Irish Builder*, 30 August 1913, p. 563.

22 'Another new cinema theatre for Dublin', *Irish Builder*, 31 January 1914, p. 72.

23 'More cinema theatres for Dublin', *Irish Builder*, 16 August 1913, p. 536.

Inside, a wide stairs led to a spacious gallery, while an auditorium 104 feet by 38 feet was furnished with seats and carpets in shades of blue and topped by an elliptical ceiling finished in decorative fibrous plaster.<sup>24</sup>

In the latter half of the 1910s, Sparling and his manager Ernest Matthewson successfully matched the attractive and comfortable premises with elements of a show that consistently drew large numbers of higher-paying middle-class patrons to the Bohemian. Although films continued to be presented in programmes, a hierarchy of film attractions was developing at the top of which were multi-reel films whose titles were advertised at the front of picture houses, in newspapers and magazines, and on hoardings and handbills. These films increasingly featured star actors known to the audience, and they were sometimes adaptations of literary or musical works that were favoured for their instant recognisability and high-cultural connotations. Occasionally as the 1910s progressed, certain films gained a reputation as artistic works in their own right; in December 1917, for example, the Bohemian was the first Dublin picture house to show D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (USA: Epoch, 1915). As well as the right films, a first-class picture house in the mid-1910s had to provide appropriate musical accompaniment for the pictures and a suitable programme of music between films. At the Bohemian, music was provided by an orchestra under the direction of Percy Carver, and the management enhanced their musical offerings in 1916 by hiring cellist Clyde Twelvetees – a well-respected Dublin concert musician – as the orchestra's resident soloist, and engaging such other musicians as the violinist Signor Simonetti from time to time (Figure 5).

24 'More cinema theatres for Dublin', and 'Bohemian Theatre', *The Irish Times*, 9 June 1914, p. 5.

**PICTURE PHIBSBORO' BOHEMIAN THEATRE, PHIBSBORO'**  
 (MONDAY NEXT), POSITIVELY FOR ONE WEEK ONLY,  
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**PRICES** **WE** **2 to 10.30 P.M.**  
**AS USUAL.** **PAY** **CONTINUOUS.**  
**YOUR TAX.**

Figure 5 The exhibition of *Carmen* (USA: Lasky, 1915) allowed the management of the Bohemian to provide a wide range of musical attractions in addition to the resident soloists Clyde Twelvetrees and Signor Simonetti. *Dublin Evening Mail*, 26 August 1916, p. 2.

Although the Bohemian's success offers an example of how cinema itself become an established institution in Ireland, events at the Bohemian also epitomized the opposition that cinema would face. While on occasions throughout the 1910s nationalist and unionist groups attempted to use the cinema to promote their causes, groups associated with the campaign to bring the cinema under the control of the Irish Catholic church were most active in confronting it as an institution with almost as many local branches as the church itself. In September 1915, the Bohemian became an important

site of protest for a group determined to make Dublin Corporation introduce film censorship.<sup>25</sup> The incident began on the evening of Tuesday, 14 September, when William Larkin loudly demanded film censorship during the screening of the feature *A Modern Magdalen* (USA: Life Photo Film, 1915). He alleged later that the protest was particularly justified by a scene of indecent dancing. His shouting caused a panic that cleared the auditorium, and on the steps of the building's vestibule, Larkin briefly addressed the departing patrons on the need for censorship before being arrested by a constable responding to a complaint by Sparling. During his subsequent court appearances, it became clear that Larkin was not acting alone, and that he had used the same tactic of interrupting screenings on several previous occasions to gain publicity for the Catholic Church-based Dublin Vigilance Committee's film censorship campaign. Indeed, Sparling testified that he had summoned the police because he had had direct experience of Larkin's previous vocal objections to films at the Sandford Picture House in the south-city suburb of Ranelagh and at the Bohemian during the run of *Neptune's Daughter* (USA: Universal, 1914), starring Australian swimmer Annette Kellerman.<sup>26</sup> The timing of the protest against *A Modern Magdalen*, however, was particularly important in maintaining publicity for the Vigilance Committee's embryonic film censorship campaign, which had for the first time received substantial attention at a rally in early September 1915 alongside the Committee's established campaigns against 'evil literature' and music halls.<sup>27</sup> However, events in court did not all go Larkin's way. Ordinary cinemagoers refuted his claim that the film was indecent, and on seeing the film, the judge agreed with them, fining Larkin. This set back but did not end Larkin's confrontational approach to the campaign for film censorship that other members of the Committee would successfully pursue by lobbying the Corporation.<sup>28</sup> Larkin continued

25 Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 47–48.

26 'Panic in picture theatre: scene last night', *Evening Telegraph*, 15 September 1915, p. 6.

27 'Vigilance work: Dublin celebration: views of the bishops', *Irish Independent*, 6 September 1915, p. 6; Rockett, pp. 46–47.

28 Condon, pp. 228–229.

to use the public space of the cinema – and the courtroom – as a forum where Irish Catholicism needed to be performed in order to reassert the primacy of the church over the cinematographic temple.

During the 1910s, then, picture houses would become a pervasive presence on Dublin's streetscape, reflecting the increasing popularity of the entertainment they offered among an ever-larger proportion of the city's population. By the end of the decade, architecturally interesting picture houses would occupy not only important sites in the city centre but also prominent locations in the expanding suburbs, indicating cinema's growing dominance of the mediascape. These developments alerted groups concerned with controlling public morality to the need to carry on the ideological struggle in these spaces, too.

PAULA GILLIGAN

## Between Guinness and Holy Water: Alexandre Trauner's Dublin

TRAUNER: Dublin, I wouldn't really recommend it to people ...

DOISNEAU: There are better places for Honeymoons ...

TRAUNER: But me, I loved it very much! I was very happy in Dublin.<sup>1</sup>

Alexandre Trauner remains one of the most famous and revered set-designers in the history of cinema. His recreations of Paris for a series of films in the 1930s became iconic, and Trauner's drawings for the sets fetch hundreds of thousands of Euros in today's market.<sup>2</sup> Trauner's filmography includes key masterworks of French and US cinema for every decade he worked, designing sets over six decades for films such as *Quai De Brumes* (Carne, 1938); *Remorques* (Gremillion, 1939); *Les Enfants de Paradis* (Carne, 1944), *Manèges* (Allégret, 1950), *Othello* (Welles, 1952); *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1959); *The Night of the Generals* (Litvak, 1966); *Monsieur Klein* (Losey, 1975); *Subway* (Bresson, 1984) and *Around Midnight* (Tavernier, 1985). Born and educated in Budapest, where he was trained in the School of Fine Arts, Trauner left Hungary in the late 1920s because of the increasing anti-Semitism of its political culture, and trained with the legendary Russian designer Lzare Meerson. Working in the French film industry since 1928, it is easy to forget Trauner was not French; however, as French cinema historian Jill Forbes points out, the force of his cinematic vision of Paris in

1 Alexandre Trauner in conversation with Robert Doisneau, Alexandre Trauner, *Dans Les Rues de Dublin* (Paris: Fondation Nationale de la Photographie, 1986).

2 A photo of the designer at work on the set of *Remorques* (Gremillion, 1939) is offered at a starting price of €1,000 on ebay as I write.

his films stemmed precisely from his ability to look at the locations he was required to reproduce through scenography with a degree of unfamiliarity.<sup>3</sup> The impact of Trauner's scenographic vision of urban space is such that French cinema historians have declared him the greatest set designer of his generation, inspiring all scenographers who have followed in his wake; his mark on French cinematic culture led the poet Jacques Prevert to describe him as 'an architect of dreams of plaster, light, and wind'.<sup>4</sup>

### Trauner's *Dans Les Rues de Dublin*

In 1952, Trauner came to Dublin to research the set-design for a film directed by Yves Allégret, *La Jeune Folle*. *La Jeune Folle* is a French film about the Irish Civil War by a director whose fame stems from his role in the development of French film noir. The film was produced in post-war France but its diegetic time is Dublin, 1922. Yves Allégret's work enjoyed a high profile in its time, and the vast majority of his films were part of *L'Âge d'Or du Cinéma* and *Mémoire du Cinéma* collections up until the 1990s. More recently, however, as Raymond Chirat has pointed out, Allégret's films have largely been forgotten within the canon of French cinema studies.<sup>5</sup> Chirat considers this a grave mistake, precisely because of the astonishing team that Allégret assembled for this film, Trauner, Roger Hubert, Jacques Sigurd, and above all the actor Daniele Delorme whom Chirat describes as the pivot of the film.<sup>6</sup>

3 Jill Forbes, 'To the Distant Observer' in Will Higbee and Sarah Leahy Studies (eds), *Studies in French Cinema: UK Perspectives 1985–2010* (Bristol: Intellect Press, 2011) p. 281.

4 Françoise Puaux, *Le Décor du Cinéma* (Paris: Cahier du Cinéma; Les Petits Cahiers, 2008), p. 43.

5 In his recent introduction to the film, screened as part of the Cinematheque Francais series on key films of the 1950s.

6 Raymond Chirat, Projection 16mm: *La Jeune Folle* de Yves Allegret, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFgwz\\_kv6Yc&desktop\\_uri](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFgwz_kv6Yc&desktop_uri), accessed 1 October 2013.



Shot in black and white, *La Jeune Folle* stars Danièle Délorne, nominated 'l'ingénue' of French cinema and 'the central figure of the cinematic universe' of Jacqueline Audry, one of the most successful female film directors in cinema history.<sup>7</sup> The plot revolves around the main character played by Délorne, Catherine, an orphan who has been taken in by the nuns during the Civil War. She has a younger brother, Kevin, a member of an outlawed republican gang, who is shot by the gang-leader as an informer. Catherine runs away to seek Kevin in Dublin where she meets and falls in love with Kevin's killer, Steve. When Catherine learns of her brother's death she sets out to assassinate the Chief of Police as vengeance but at the last minute her nerve fails her and she is saved by Steve. Steve reveals to Catherine that he has killed Kevin and she kills him with his own gun.

The screenplay *La Jeune Folle*, written by the celebrated Jacques Sigurd, was based on a novel by Catherine Beauchamp, the pen-name of Breton writer Meavenn. The first French film to be set in Ireland, *La Jeune Folle* represented a departure from the earlier 1930s films designed by Trauner largely because there was the possibility that some of the film could be shot on location. In the 1930s difficulties with sound recordings meant that the majority of urban-based films had to be shot entirely in studio. Although technology for urban location film recording existed in the 1950s, the financial cost to French studios was beyond the budget for the production. The lack of technical sophistication in French cinema, along with a limited production budget thus meant that only a limited amount of time could be spent on location.<sup>8</sup> The rest of the film was shot in studio in France, as Trauner later admitted '[t]here was no question of shooting on location.'<sup>9</sup>

7 Audry's films include *Gigi* (1948), *Minnie*, *L'ingénue Liberti* (1950), *Olivia* (1951), *Huis Clos* (1954), with Délorne in the leading role. See Sicilier (1957), p. 134.

8 Alan Williams, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 423.

9 'Il n'était pas question de tourner sur place et on a fait une semaine ou dix jours d'extérieurs, de plans éloignés avec des doublures, tandis que toutes les scènes réellement jouées étaient mises en scène au studio de Joinville, avec beaucoup d'astuces de décoration de tulles pour donner un effet d'éloignement dans le brouillard comme dans *Le Quai de Brumes*.' Jacques Trauner interviewed by Jean Pierre Berthoné, *Trauner: Décors de Cinéma* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), p. 114.

In spite of the fact that some shots of *La Jeune Folle* were taken in Dublin, the film retains few landmark site-specific scenes. For the average spectator, and particularly the French spectator, it is difficult to identify the exact scenographic location of the film, with the exception of the view of Dublin's Halfpenny Bridge, which appears behind Delorme and Vidal in a trompe-l'oeil painted backdrop. Although this filmic scene forms one of the key publicity shots for *La Jeune Folle*, this urban view of Dublin's iconographic architecture is rarely used in the scenography of the film itself.

Faced with the challenge of recreating an unknown city of the 1920s in Joinville, and on a shoestring budget, Trauner found himself in Dublin with his Leica, the camera of choice for that generation, in 1952. He wandered the streets taking photographs in the company of Irish set designer Tony Inglis, whom he met for the first time on this trip.<sup>10</sup> Trauner's photographs of Dublin were published as a book by Éditions de Lyons in 1953, and launched during the cinema release of the film. These photographs were then re-published, along with a transcript of a dialogue between Trauner and the street photographer Robert Doisneau, by the Fondation Nationale De La Photographie in 1986, the 'year of Trauner', when a major retrospective of his work was taking place throughout France.<sup>11</sup>

For Trauner, the process of the design for a film followed three stages: documentation, the maquette (colour sketch) and construction.<sup>12</sup> Originally as part of his research for the film, Trauner took photographs which he developed himself on site in order to develop drawings for the design. He then used these when he recreated some of the scenes in the studio in Paris.<sup>13</sup> In his interview with Doisneau, he describes this process as 'taking notes'. Trauner is adamant that this activity cannot be regarded as photography. He admits to Doisneau that 'I am not really a photographer, for me it's an

10 This was the beginning of a life-long friendship – Trauner went on to work with Inglis on John Huston's *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975), for which they were nominated for an Oscar.

11 The dialogue was recorded by Carole Naggat, presented in French, and with an English version in the appendix – however, I have translated the French dialogue for this essay.

12 Forbes, p. 281.

13 Trauner's images were published as a book of photographs by Éditions de Lyons in 1953.

aid, before we drew, we did sketches, now we just press a button'.<sup>14</sup> A few days into the visit, when he had the necessary shots for the set, he noted that he had abandoned the design process and began to look around the city as a traveller. He began to notice things – a 'little something in Dublin which intrigued him', and he stopped making 'notes' and began to take 'photographs'. He says that the photograph, as a form in and of itself, asserted itself – 'le Photo prend son place'.

The 1986 version of *Dans Les Rues de Dublin* was not published as a spin-off to the film, but as a book of photographs in their own right now included as part of the national photographic collection of France. Thus Sonia Bove advises the reader that Trauner's photos of Dublin be seen as 'images of an Irish walk', and describes Trauner's eye as 'tender and generous'. Thus while *La Jeune Folle* is given as the reason Trauner came to Dublin in books on the film such as Berthoné's *Trauner: Décors de Cinéma*,<sup>15</sup> the interview with Doisneau suggest that the reverse was true; that Dublin and his photographic travelogue of the city's urban space was the reason Trauner agreed to design scenography for the film. As he reflects in his interview with Doisneau:

I went to Dublin for a film by Yves Allégret, *La Jeune Folle*. It was about the history of Sinn Féin, the Irish revolutionary organization. Personally, my revolution consisted in going to Dublin and drinking a fair bit. We started on the light stuff – beer, and then went on to the whiskey. During this period of scouting locations, (I wanted to see what we needed to do on site, and what we needed to do in the studios at Joinville), I didn't sleep a wink; the whiskey ... Dublin is a city between Guinness and Holy Water, very pious and very atheist at the same time. You only have to look at their literature.<sup>16</sup>

For Trauner the documentation phase of the process did not only involve location scouting but also an immersion in the existing visual and literary tradition of the locale. Trauner's reference to the literature displays a knowledge of Irish writing that is more complex than it appears. It might appear that he is referencing the obvious, Joyce, but in this quote he is

14 Trauner, p. 4.

15 Berthoné, p. 114.

16 Trauner, p. 3.

closer to other later writers – notably O’Flaherty – who were very well known in France. This is hardly surprising given that Ford’s adaptation of O’Flaherty’s *The Informer* is not just of interest to Irish studies, or to fans of John Ford, its décor and scenography became the benchmark for studio recreations of Dublin.<sup>17</sup> *La Jeune Folle* pays homage to Ford’s film, in the way it uses fog, and poster-bills, and the costumes of the Sinn Féin activists in its creation of the urban cinematic space of Dublin.



Figure 1 Advertisement for *La Jeune Folle*, from *Cinémond*, 23 May 1952.

17 See Paula Gilligan – essay in journal of *Early Popular Visual Cultures*.

In the interview between Doisneau and Trauner, Doisneau's reply to Trauner's description of his experience of Dublin, reacts not to the Dublin of Trauner's oral account, nor to the Dublin of the literary canon, but to Trauner's own photographs. Doisneau retorts that:

these two liquids (beer and whiskey) are the fuel for the motor which lets you get away from it – to escape a setting which is difficult to put up with. Myself, I have never gone to Dublin, will never go, but I can imagine it – it's crap. There's fog, there's soot, and there's a greasy aspect to it – there it is – yes greasy. It reminds me of Rouen, a particularly awful bistro which was called '*Everything for the gob*'. It was as greasy as that ...

The presence of Doisneau and his contribution to the discussion of Trauner's depiction of Dublin, combined with references to the photographer Brassai in the 1986 book, suggest that this set of photographs can be read as examples of the same photographic school of post-World War II documentary realism. In many ways this categorization of the photographs is apt; in framing, composition, and in subject matter, they belong to the photographic tradition described as French Humanism. Peter Hamilton Thézy, argues that 'visually, French humanism was greatly influenced by the poetic realism of Hungarian photographers like Kertész, who worked in Paris between 1925 and 1934, and Brassai, whose *Paris de Nuit* (1934) was almost a textbook for the movement'. Trauner worked with Brassai on his project of Parisian nocturnal life, claiming in the *Dans Les Rues de Dublin* interview that he often assisted Brassai on his night-shoots. Trauner held the magnesium flashlight, and watched as Brassai manipulated the light on the subjects, using a roll of white material as a reflector. The subject matter of *Dans les Rues de Dublin* is, at first glance, fairly typical of the subject matter to the documentary realist tradition. As Trauner observed, he enjoyed the light in Dublin and the colours, which allowed him to pursue the aesthetic conventions of post-war documentary photography:

I remember the colours in Dublin: brown and grey were predominant, a warm grey for the cobblestones. The skin of the people was of a beautiful tint – the skin of red-haired people who needed to be washed clean, cared for, and scrubbed up a bit!<sup>18</sup>

A majority of the photographs in this collection are group shots, and portraits. There are few photographs we could describe as location stills. The time is winter – before Christmas – we can see seasonal cards in the windows, the streets are wet, and the people look cold. While some of the images selected for publication are of particular significance for the film, the rest are of women and children within the confines of the popular quarters of the Liberties in Dublin – only one photo includes a male figure. The absence of men, and the paucity of young adults, may not be unconnected to the historical context of the photographs, since 1951, the lowest figure of Irish immigration to Britain alone averaged 30,000, the majority of these emigrants were aged between twenty and twenty-five.<sup>19</sup> In one photograph, a group of very young women (they look about sixteen) stand in a doorway – they are a rare sight in 1950s Ireland, and one has to presume that they will take the boat before long. Doisneau and Trauner talk about this aspect of Dublin life. Trauner says that Dublin is not only greasy like Rouen, but ‘its port as well’. Doisneau retorts ‘that’s the reason people want to clear out of it’.<sup>20</sup> Trauner testifies to the relative comfort of those among those who could afford it, those who stayed:

I stayed in the Bristol, not far from the Guinness Industrial complex. French people went there because the food was good and the people were nice. It was just after the war – conditions were miserable in London. But in Dublin, we had everything we needed. When the English, you know, used to come to buy goods, the customs men would always pick them out immediately and confiscate their hams and their stuff.<sup>21</sup>

We are reminded of the view that 1950s Ireland was a country prepared to expel 50 per cent of its young people in order to maintain its standard of living.<sup>22</sup> Doisneau, looking at Trauner’s photographs, which present a stark contrast to this image of comfort and good eating, states that Dublin is not an environment that caresses, that cushions and protects its inhab-

19 J. A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1963), p. 19.

20 Trauner, p. 2.

21 Trauner, p. 3.

22 See Joe Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 341–359.

itants; 'A person, young and tender, in the middle of that, it's a shock.'<sup>23</sup> He uses the word *setting* deliberately to describe how this environment frames its denizens; 'The setting is not even aggressive as such, but absurd. I say *décor* because there is a rectangle, there it is, the theatre, and these are its characters'.

The characters are mostly children, dressed in an assortment of dirty and ill-fitting clothes, against backdrops of workers' cottages, boarded-up windows, corrugated sheeting, and derelict, barren lanes, they were shy but willing subjects. They are, in spite of their condition, all smiling, 'playing their little games, acting out their little dramas'. The comment regarding Trauner's 'generous eye' also references another key aspect of traditions of French humanism, its social conscience. Trauner recalled Brassai, who had spent time photographing the workers in the sewers of Paris, particularly when photographing the children, mostly because as he says, 'the children smelled bad' – it was the 'odour of misery, and misery always smells bad'.<sup>24</sup> He is also shocked at the extent in which alcohol, notably that produced by Guinness, about which he is unusual in expressing no particular romanticism, permeated the life of the ordinary people in the area:

There (around the Guinness factory) it was a wasteland. They had knocked down the walls, and they had put in barriers to block cars (but not bicycles) they had thrown a bit of asphalt on it. And always in the background, the chimneys of the Guinness factory [...] But above all I remember the smells – the odour of the pubs. They always have wooden floors – it was absolutely nauseating, it stayed in your nostrils, it pursued you; it smelled of beer vomit, and of beer that had soaked in.<sup>25</sup>

Trauner's pictures of the poor quarters of Dublin do not represent a particular departure from the kind of imagery one finds in the travelogues and tourist publications of that decade. The poor children of Dublin figure strongly in these publications – however they are generally to be found in front of a Georgian doorway, the impressive houses of former Imperial grandeur add a picaresque quality to the images of urchins playing in their shadow.

23 Trauner, p. 3.

24 Trauner, p. 5.

25 Trauner, p. 5.

Nine years on from Trauner's visit, the Irish writer Kate O'Brien, introducing a collection of photographs by the Irish photographer R. S. McGowan, published as part of the Famous Cities of the World Series, felt optimistic enough to declare:

I showed these photographs to an English friend, a painter who knows Ireland well, who has often worked there and loves its whole ambience, as painter-material. She smiled affectionately at times, murmuring, 'how old fashioned they look!' I knew what she meant. These children, sitting in glorious eighteenth-century doorways, or hanging over Liffey walls, or awaiting their turn at the Horse Show, do look old-fashioned in that they look truly shy, but also friendly, and a bit puzzled by the picture-taker's interest in them. Also their clothes – though mostly quite good, for in Ireland too, thank God, we are eliminating the great savageries of poverty – they too look old-fashioned.<sup>26</sup>

In McGowan's photographs, while there are some nods to documentary realism, the people mostly serve as 'colour' for the architecture, which is either classic or modern. Far from the sooty industrial wasteland of Trauner's photographs, the Guinness factory is represented by a modern canteen – its workers well-scrubbed and elegantly shod. Where there are the portraits of the children of the Georgian slums – and these are lovely photos – the children are neatly dressed and the captions proclaim 'confident couple'; 'gay sextet'; 'bashful trio'. McGowan's photographs promote the Ireland as imagined by Lemass, whom Joe Lee describes as having an interest in improving the lot of the urban poor, unlike de Valera.<sup>27</sup>

26 R. S. McGowan, *Dublin and Cork*, with introduction by Kate O'Brien (London: Spring Books, 1961), p. 5. The book is clearly targeting the more elite European tourist market, as O'Brien's introduction is translated into French and German.

27 Joe Lee, *The Age of de Valera* (Dublin: Ward River Press, 1982), p. 25.





Figure 2 Production still, *La Jeune Folle*, from *Cinémonde*, 23 May 1952.

## Trauner as Designer: The Visual Cultures of *La Jeune Folle*

Any person who is familiar with the book of Trauner's photographs might assume that the photographs represent the key reference for the design of the film, particularly as Trauner was so adamant about the importance of the first phase of documentation in designs. Such assumptions are incorrect and misinterpret the historical context of 1950s post-war French photography. I am in agreement with Trauner, that the photographs are not the same as notes for a design, and constitute a different work of art. At the same time they are fascinating for what they reveal about the process

of set design from the perspective of one of its greatest masters. Although Trauner is generally known for the hyper-realism of his recreations of the street scenes of Paris, his description of his methodology in the creation of *La Jeune Folle's* design, emphasizes atmosphere over reproduction, largely because of the limits of what could be achieved: '[w]e took exterior shots over a week or ten days, long shots with stand-ins, while all the actual acted scenes were set up in the studio in Joinville, with a lot of tricks of décor such as the use of tulle drapes to give the effect of distance in the fog like in *Le Quai de Brumes*'.<sup>28</sup> But there is more at stake in the design than limits of budget and geography.

As a set designer, Trauner detested what he called 'primary realism' (au premier degree), his sets of Paris of the 1940s as cinema historian Jill Forbes argues, function more like the nineteenth-century drawings which inspired them, as an 'idealization' of the location – fitting in more with the horizon of expectation of the audience than any known reality. Forbes has demonstrated that Trauner researched the historical archive, even when the setting was contemporary. He looked for locations whose salience and exemplarity was already established. The book on which *La Jeune Folle* is based offers little in way of guidance. Its map is vague and ill-defined, the only specific references are to O'Connell Street, to the Four Courts, and to the Chief Justice's house, 'three streets away as you walk towards O'Connell street' (it is possibly Henrietta Street, which could be regarded as three streets before, if you travel via Constitution Hill and Mary's Place).<sup>29</sup> In the film this place is described as St James' Green, a place that does not exist, but which perhaps refers to St Stephen's Green, but also could refer to St James' Place in Inchicore, which is close to the Liberties area, where Trauner took most of his photographs. In researching the locations for the base of the Sinn Féin 'gang', Trauner had difficulty finding the Irish

28 Alexandre Trauner interviewed by Jean Piere Berthoné in Berthoné, p. 114.

29 I am indebted to Giles Boucherit, the Librarian for the Centre for Celtic Studies at the University of Rennes, who researched the matter of locations in the Breton edition for me (the French version is out of print and impossible to locate), for this information. Maevenn (Catherine Beauchamp), *Ar Follz Yaouank* (Breton language edition), *Hor Yezh*, no. 82 (Brest: Al Liamm, 1973).

equivalent of the popular quarters of Paris, and of Le Havre. He observed that it was as if the same location repeats itself over and over again, like in London.<sup>30</sup> While the idealization of the popular quarters of Paris involves sets that are, as Forbes argues, longer, more brightly lit, crowded and more utopian than the reality, the opposite is true of the poorer quarters of *La Jeune Folle*.<sup>31</sup>

The Dublin of the film is a city of narrow, anonymous streets, dank, gloomy, dark, and menacing, and inhabited by a band of sinister children in motley costumes. The representation of the children is the detail, which tells us that the Dublin of *La Jeune Folle* is not intended as a realist representation of Dublin and her citizens, even as they were in the nineteenth century. No doubt Trauner read Joyce's *Ulysses*, but there is little evidence of the world of the novel in the film. Ford's adaptation of O'Flaherty's *The Informer* is another possible reference. While the 1920s Dublin of Ford's film is, as Jean-Louis Bourget describes it, a typically cinematographic space, neither totally real nor totally imaginary, the décor functions to give the 'quintessence' of the real city.<sup>32</sup> *La Jeune Folle* pays homage to Ford's film, in the way it uses fog, and poster-bills, and the costumes of the Sinn Féin activists, but otherwise the décor is very different. The key indices of *The Informer* are iconic signifiers of the Georgian streets of the North Dublin slums, nowhere are these referenced in *La Jeune Folle*.

Rather closer parallels are to be found in popular illustrations of Dublin printed in nineteenth-century publications. It is not too far-fetched to assume that Trauner had researched these texts in the libraries in France before going to Dublin. Jill Forbes has demonstrated that in his preparation for many of his most well known films he relied on nineteenth-century

30 Trauner, p. 5.

31 See Forbes on the design of 'Les Portes de La Nuit', p. 284.

32 'Il décline les signes à la fois convenus et authentiques d'une atmosphère dublinoise, les lettres de style gaélique de l'enseigne Dunboy house, les grilles qui séparent le trottoir du sous sol des immeubles, les portes néo-classique avec leurs marteaux et leurs impostes. De manière plus discrète peut-être, ces éléments décoratifs jouent donc le même rôle de repères, de notations, exotiques et précises, de couleur locale qui est assigné à la musique'. Jean-Loup Bourget, *John Ford* (Paris: Rivages, 1990), p. 95.

illustrations from London, as well as for Paris.<sup>33</sup> The references to the Dublin of nineteenth-century French visual cultures in *La Jeune Folle* demonstrate the gap between the work of Trauner as photographer and the work of Trauner as set designer. It also illuminates the difference between the visualization of Dublin in the photographic tradition of documentary realism and the city as imagined within the traditions of French film noir.

French tourist literature and imagery of this period generally combines romanticism and primitivism in its fascination with Connemara and the West with a distaste for Dublin.<sup>34</sup> Usually this manifests itself in very limited accounts of Dublin in the travelogues. This may come as a surprise; after all, Dublin as it is promoted to tourists from the Irish perspective, is concerned to emphasize its status as a capital city, on par with other capitals of Europe. To give one example, in *Dublin and Cork*, Kate O'Brien writes: 'Wherever one walks in Dublin, one cannot lift one's eyes to the end of the street without seeing blue hills or lapping water. This is perennially wonderful, when the streets are so wide and stately, so very much the streets of a capital city'.<sup>35</sup> From as early as the 1880s, Irish businesses such as Todd & Burns & Co., who had experience of trading in France, were determined to meet European standards of shopping and their shops had all the glamour of the Bon Marche Department stores.<sup>36</sup> Their efforts met indifference in French travellers at the time, travellers such as Mademoiselle Anne De Bovet. Her travelogue 'Trois Mois en Irlande', published in the nineteenth-century French illustrated travel magazine, *Le Tour De Monde*, presents us with a typical example of the Dublin of the nineteenth-century French imagination.

33 Forbes, p. 282.

34 For an analysis of French travel literature and Ireland, see Paula Gilligan 'A Taxi to The West: The Ireland Text in Yves Boisset's *Le Taxi Mauve/The Purple Taxi*' (co-production France-Ireland, 1977) in Ruth Barton and Harvey O'Brien (eds) *Keeping It Real: The Fictions and Non-fictions of Film and Television in Modern Ireland* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), pp. 159–172.

35 McGowan, p. 4.

36 Stephanie Rains, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin: 1850–1916* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), p. 137.

De Bovet, like most French travel writers, is not particularly interested in Irish displays of cosmopolitanism. Having spent more than two pages describing the old clothes and rag stalls of Patrick Street, and its surrounds (a tradition carried on in Francis Street until the 1990s), she is brief in her summation of the wide and stately streets of Dublin's consumer thoroughfares:

There are not only rags to be had in Dublin; but only the rag and bone shops have character. The shopping streets resemble all those of big English cities and are boarded by stores which rival London. In the South side, on the right bank, is the quarter of the beau monde. Saint Stephen's Green is more than a square: it is a truly English Park.<sup>37</sup>

As a city, Dublin has historically managed to combine magnificent department stores, wide boulevards, and the grand streetscapes of the Empire, with extreme poverty and political violence, all within its relatively small confines. Dublin's sign for the French is modernity, but the extent to which the city hurled 'the little streets upon the great' and exposed the underside of capitalism has always both attracted and repelled French travellers in equal measure.

In the illustrations of De Bovet's travelogue, while the peasants of the west are clean shirted, stern, and uniformly kitted out in woollen trousers, neat waistcoats, and tidy shawls, the denizens of Dublin present a more troubling spectacle. The author Mademoiselle Anne De Bovet (the name suggests the upper classes) does not bother to say more on these capital streets, but like Trauner, and, interestingly, in exactly the same quarters of the city, she prefers to immerse herself in the odours and 'character' of the backstreets of the Liberties. Like Trauner, she is shocked at the squalor of Dublin's famous pub culture:

Pressed together like sheep in a pen, the clients of these depressing places drink standing up, leaning against the counter, or against a wall, in an atmosphere plagued with alcoholic fumes, thick with tobacco smoke, stinking of farts. They talk quietly enough at first.<sup>38</sup>

37 Anne De Bovet, 'Trois Mois En Irlande', *Le Tour De Monde: Nouveau Journal Des Voyages* (Paris: Le Tour De Monde, 1889), p. 23.

38 De Bovet, p. 24.

In spite of her disgust, and her strong advice to readers 'not to tarry in these cut-throat quarters,' she took time to take a sketch of the scene which was turned into an illustration for the magazine by the artist Tofani. She is particularly outraged at the spectacle of drunkenness among Irish women, again described in great detail. The figure of the drunk and disorderly woman appears also in *La Jeune Folle*, and is equally condemned by the narrative. More significantly, De Bovet's description of the costumes of the poor in Dublin is more closely matched in the film, than in the photographs. For De Bovet writes of the extraordinary dress – worn by the denizens of the poor quarters:

The costume of the poor girls of Dublin defies description. There is not one of them who has ever worn clothes made for her – bargain boutiques such as you find in the popular quarters of Paris don't exist. It seems that the cast-offs of the whole world are imported to Ireland to meet the needs of the rag shops – (...) The Irish have a passion for fancy cast-off furbelows which is not matched by a passion for needle and thread – if you want to see Dublin misery in all its abjection, you only need to take a walk by Patrick Street.<sup>39</sup>

In her analysis of Trauner's work, Forbes notes that his sets were not intended to be 'authentic' in a zealous piece by piece remake of the location, but instead they 'were intended to carry a powerful emotional charge driving from the activation of artistic memories of places which often no longer existed – a notion of Dublin in the 1920s for example, but a notion which struck a chord not with Dubliners, but with a French post-war audience,

39 '[S]kirts of floating silk; shiny with grease, and with more holes than a sieve; velvet cloaks of an undecided hue, still embroidered with jet beads on one side; and garnished with frayed shreds on the other; close cropped hair, smelling of trouble, stiff with grime, and ridden with vermin; plush hats already with green-mould, decorated with something that back in earlier times must have been a bunch of feathers or maybe a posy of roses, and under all that, bare legs and bare feet'. De Bovet mentions that a majority of the clothes hawkers are Jewish – she reveals her anti-Semitism in her description of these Dubliners. De Bovet, p. 23.

stuck in what the great film historian Jean-Pierre Jeancolas described as nothing more than 'fifteen years of the Thirties'.<sup>40</sup>

Trauner's reference to the spatial similarity between *La Jeune Folle* and Carné's *Quai des Brumes* (1938) is significant in this respect. Trauner's masterwork, *Le Jour se Lève* (Marcel Carné, 1939), was also a re-presentation rather than reproduction of the imagined essence of another city, Paris:

Le Jour se Lève, emblematic film of the 1930s, as a result of the thorough analysis made by André Bazin, was shot entirely in the studio: everything in it a lovely reconstruction of a suburban architecture re-thought out – 'quintessenciée' by the set designer Alexander Trauner. This set is magnified by an artificial light distributed by the chief-operator Curt Courant ... Realism, yes, but without the effect of the real.<sup>41</sup>

The same sense of artificial realism in *La Jeune Folle* was produced by a similar methodology. The sets have detailed touches, which almost give them the feel of social documentary and yet are composed as carefully as a painter would a canvas. Stylization is applied over a naturalistic base so that the décor functions beyond the decorative. In Trauner's view, the purpose of the set designer was to help the mise-en-scène so that the spectator had an immediate grasp of the character's psychology.<sup>42</sup> The preferred spectator was obviously French.

The logic behind this kind of scenography can be seen in features that appear absurd to an Irish eye, the sight of a harpist sitting with an Irish concert harp in the middle of a reconstructed slum for example. The shawl Delorme wears signifies the 'innocent country-girl' from the French perspective, but no Irish settler women of her age (and few young traveller women either) wore shawls at that time. The exception were the travellers – Trauner photographs one woman in a black shawl but fails to make the

40 Jeancolas said 'the French and in particular, the French of the provinces, with an astonishing regularity, consumed those films which had changed little since the 1930s, since cinema had introduced the talkies', Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *Le Cinéma des Français: La V<sup>e</sup> République, 1958–1978* (Paris: Stock, 1979), p. 98.

41 See Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, *Histoire du Cinéma Français* (Paris: Nathan, 1995), pp. 47–48.

42 Nowell-Smith (1994), p. 350.

connection between her outfit and the Traveller encampment at the foot of St Audoen's Church. Chiang Yee, a Chinese artist, who produced an illustrated journal of his experience of 1952 Dublin, followed three of these shawled women, who led him to the encampment, which, like Trauner, he also captured in a sketch for his book.<sup>43</sup>

Non-French audiences felt alienated from the costumes of the children, and from both the set and the action, finding neither 'authentic':

It is a melancholy chaos that director Yves Allégret has compounded with moody lighting, solemn timing and weird effects. His photographic poetry of Dublin streets and sleazy rooms is accented out of proportion by the heaviness with which the action is performed. And a business with Halloween urchins, which could be stunningly grotesque, becomes a bit stagey and distracting because of its contrivance and the accents of its kids.<sup>44</sup>

This response by the *New York Times* critic Crowther is not replicated in French film criticism. Loucelles, to give one example, believes that Trauner 'totally reconstituted Dublin in the studio' for *La Jeune Folle* (1952).<sup>45</sup> Trauner's photographs cast light on the true role of the designer in the creation of this cinematographic space – above all the designer's job is to translate the director's vision, and the vision of the scriptwriter into a recognizable frame for the action. The essential humanism of Trauner's eye as represented by the photographs is gone in the film.

Yves Allégret is synonymous with film noir in French criticism: '[w]ith *Dédé d'Anvers*, *Une si Jolie Petite Plage*, and *Manèges*, the younger brother of Marc Allégret appeared after the war as the best representative of the French film noir'.<sup>46</sup> In *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, Allégret's *La Jeune Folle* is heralded by the sobering caption 'De La Rigueur Avant Toute Chose/Rigour before

43 Chian Yee, *The Silent Traveller in Dublin* (London: Methuen, 1953), p. 38.

44 Bosley Crowther, "Desperate Decision" Is Presented at World, 'The Screen in Review', *New York Times*, 9 November 1954.

45 'Les auteurs n'ont osé ni reconstituer carrément Dublin en studio comme fera Yves Allégret dans *La Jeune Folle*, 1952, ni transposer cette réalité irlandaise à Paris'. Loucelles (1986), p. 1199.

46 Avec *Dédé d'Anvers*, *Une Si Jolie Petite Plage* et *Manèges*, le jeune frère de Marc Allégret apparut après la guerre comme le meilleur représentant du film noir à la Française'. Tulard (1982), p. 16.



everything'.<sup>47</sup> Severity, not passionate abandon, is its keynote, a reflection of the mood of the times. The films of the post-Occupation French film noir are striking for their unrelenting negativity and their pessimistic view of the human condition. They are a continuance of a genre that came to dominate French cinema before the war. As Jeancolas said, the pre-war French cinema was of 'a realism which, for several years, explored a morbid hopeless seam which, until the war, succeeded in offering society a reflection of its collective unconscious, an image which was the inverse and the negative of the optimism of Spring 1936 and of the nationalist triumphalism of the winter of 1938–39'.<sup>48</sup> René Clement vaunts Allégret as the master of the post-war period precisely because of this 'pitiless' worldview.<sup>49</sup>

Although the films of this period had demonstrably much in common with the films of the 1930s, direct transference of the genre such as Carné's *Les Portes de la Nuit* (1946) were not popular with audiences not prepared to face up to their role in Nazi-occupied France.<sup>50</sup> The trauma of the Occupation could not be explored openly. The strategy in French cinema was generally to replace description with substitute narratives. Robert Buss posits the theory that the gangster text of the film noir, particularly those like Becker's *Touchez pas au Grisbi* (1954), were hugely popular because they provided a structure in which to explore the Occupation as civil war, the French against the French.<sup>51</sup> The gangster film presents an ambivalent

47 Jean-José Richer, 'De la rigueur avant toute chose', *Cahiers du Cinéma* (17 November 1952), pp. 43, 45.

48 Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, '15 Ans d'Années Trente', *Le Cinéma des Français 1929–1944* (Paris: Stock, 1983), p. 268.

49 Yves [Allégret] made his five masterworks from 1945 to 1950 under the sign of a certain engagement and an unpying description of the after-war period. His refusal to conform was evident from the moment that Simone Signoret (*Dedée d'Anvers*, 1947), appeared in a world troubled by crimes, money and passion, when the rain bathed the despair of a generation lost in the world conflict and for whom the post-war world brought no prospect of a future (*Une Si Jolie Petite Plage*, 1948). Prédal (1996), p. 29.

50 Prédal (1996), p. 32.

51 The theme of gangster law and betrayal are at the heart of the film considered among Yves Allégret's greatest work, *Dedée d'Anvers*. See Robert Buss, *French Film Noir* (London: Boyars, 1988), pp. 29–31.

world where the police are largely ineffectual or corrupt and where the streets are the sites of betrayal, drunkenness and of an army in the shadows. *La Jeune Folle* straddles both the gangster genre and the civil war genre within the frame of its subset genre, the Irish Revolution and civil war film.<sup>52</sup> At a purely iconographic level, *La Jeune Folle* is in the tradition of the film noir gangster genre. Take away the civil war context and the plot could easily be that of inter-rivalry and betrayal in an Apache gang. The republicans are fitted out in belted Macs and fedoras and armed with automatics, reminiscent of Ford's Irish/American 1930s gangster films. The IRA cell meetings take place in the backrooms of bars and in side-street café's, apache territory.

The use of scenography as an outer reflection of the character's psychological state is a feature of post-war film noir and has its origins in the poetic realism of the 1930s. An emphasis on realism, however, denies the more alienating effect of décors of the Expressionist school. Trauner's set reproduces the signature iconographic space of the film noir in a predominance of badly lit doorways, alleyways and stairwells thus locating the film in that genre. However, as Alan Williams argues, the contemporary reality that serves as a background and context for these tales of deception and betrayal is inevitably associated with and inflected by the extreme neurotic emotion that they generate. He comments that, as a result, the settings do not give an impression of having an existence independent of the film, despite the real location shots.<sup>53</sup> *La Jeune Folle* is not, therefore, as it might appear on first approaching this film, 'about' the Irish Civil War, or about Dublin, a departure from Allégret's other work dealing directly with the underworld of 1940s and 1950s France, but a development from that line complicated by the war theme.<sup>54</sup> In spite of its 1921 setting, some

52 While *La Jeune Folle*'s theme may appear to be a deviation from his other work, in fact, Allégret's own cinema background was initially in military film. See Jeancolas, *Le Cinéma des Français 1929-1944*, p. 335.

53 Williams, p. 280.

54 Reviews of the film confirm that finally it is not just about the Irish problem but has other French agendas: '[I]t is because (of these other agendas) that one cannot in truth reproach the authors of *La Jeune Folle* with not paying enough attention

features of *La Jeune Folle* mark it as a post-World War II film and indicate the uniquely devastating disruption of ordinary life perpetrated as part of that experience.

In *La Jeune Folle* the children of Dublin are constructed as informers and agents of the Government, independent of their adult community, and are a source of menace. This representation occurs nowhere in any history of the Irish Civil War, nor in pre-World War II France.<sup>55</sup> It is a post-Vichy/Nazi phenomenon and was unknown prior to the Third Reich. The children have a uniform of sorts as they are dressed in weird costumes, for Halloween. The boys dressed as girls and the girls in blackened-face make-up. The photographs suggest that Trauner was there over Christmas – it may be the case that he saw Wren Boys. The blackened faces are not a Halloween tradition. Nevertheless, this mask is not accidental. The informer is hidden behind the mask of Everyman. 'Le mouchard' is your neighbour, your spouse, son, daughter, the child of seven watching you with innocent eyes. As Jeancolas describes it, 'we are cowards, we are afraid, we inform.'<sup>56</sup>

According to Jill Forbes, one of the principle methods by which set design achieves an impression of authenticity in its audiences is through metonymic exemplarity. The research, the attention to detail, the selection of ordinary objects in the environment, is key to the art of the set designer. The French surrealist poet Louis Aragon in his famous essay, 'Du Décor' argues that the business of the designer is not 'the faithful reproduction of the Thomas Cook agency brought to our door, but the magnification of such objects, without which artifice, our weak sensibility is incapable of sustaining the superior life of poetry.'<sup>57</sup>

The oddity in *La Jeune Folle*, its attempt to reflect the disturbed mental state of its heroine, is communicated through the set, which is often, in the

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to the revolutionary party, using it merely as a historic frame. This is not a film on the Sinn Féiners and given the facts, never was one. Richer, p. 46.

55 See Paula Gilligan, *Dream Country: The Ireland Text in French Cinema, 1937–1977*, unpublished PhD thesis, held in Trinity College Library, 2002, pp. 121–54.

56 'On est lache, on a peur, on moucharde'. Jeancolas, *Le Cinéma des Français 1929–1944*, p. 341.

57 Louis Aragon, 'Du Décor' in *Le Point, Constantes du Cinema Francais*, vol. LIX (Paris, 1962), p. 26.

case of films designed by Trauner, one of the ‘principle actors’.<sup>58</sup> There is a brilliant example of this in the film – the room of Kevin the informer is bizarre – it is filled with statues of Our Lady, crucifixes, and holy pictures, to a degree which would be considered unnatural in an Irish home at the time. It references a fanatical and primitive Catholicism, which had a very specific resonance in the context of collaborationist France.<sup>59</sup> There are equally surrealist moments for French audiences but these are communicated through the soundtrack of the film, rather than through its visual cultures. French audiences are confronted with the film’s Frenchness, and therefore with its reference to their own experience, when the menacing band of supposedly Irish children greet Catherine (Delorme) with a perfectly accented version of *Allouette, Gentil Allouette, Je te plumerais*.

## The Bells of St Audoen’s

While the photographs could be taken in any poor industrialized city in the UK, or in Ireland, the reference to the noises in *Dans Les Rues de Dublin* is the moment of recognition, of the local, for anyone familiar with the Liberties. Trauner says ‘looking at the photos, I remember the noises; there were bells pealing, a lot of bells, endless bells ringing out. I couldn’t photograph – bells that pursued you everywhere’.<sup>60</sup> Trauner possibly was not aware that the bells of the mediaeval Protestant church of St Audoen’s are the loudest in Europe, and attracts bell-ringers from near and far.<sup>61</sup> It

58 Forbes, p. 282.

59 See Paula Gilligan, ‘Banned Text/Censored Images: The Avant-Garde as Resistance in Jeff Musso’s *Le Puritan* (1937)’ in Michel Baridon (ed.) *Interfaces, Les Avant-Gardes* (Bourgogne: CNRS, June 1998).

60 Trauner, p. 5.

61 I learned this fact when I worked in St Audoen’s National School. In 1995 there was a festival of bell ringers held in St Audoen’s. Bell ringers from all over Europe were queuing out the steps and all along Cook Street to ring the famous bell. After two

is a reminder that the book and the film are valuable documents not only for enthusiasts of French film design, but also for Dubliners. Trauner's Dublin, in photographs and in the films, is of great significance as a record of a Dublin that has been under attack by city planners for the past twenty years. The diegetic map of *La Jeune Folle* stays within the Liberties area – Catherine enters the area around Temple Bar and then remains largely within these confines. Trauner's photographs also stay within the area from Temple Bar to James Street – we can see Cook Street, Cornmarket, School House Lane, the area around Mary's Place, and Warrenmount. The connection here is not a quarter (although Temple Bar Properties have adopted the term in their effort at 'left-Bankism'), but parishes – St Michael and John's (in Temple Bar), St Audoen's (Protestant and Catholic), St Luke's (Huguenot), St James', St Thomas', St Catherine's, and Adam & Eve's (which still caters for the rough-sleeper and the poor of the area). The first Irish synagogue was also near Temple Bar. This was all one area, connected in a complex and organic way via the parishes (Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic).<sup>62</sup> The denizens of the Liberties could move between these spaces in a flow or at least they could before their quarter was carved up by motorways, dissected by the wall of Stephenson's functionalist Corporation office block, reconstructed and gentrified by Temple Bar Properties. Unlike Paris, where, arguably, the architecture creates a quarter, in Dublin, the ordinary people confer distinction and character on these anonymous streets. Trauner's photographs are a visual record of the traveller community of

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days of this, our caretaker, a local man, went over to ask the Rector to stop the bells. The Rector refused, and asked the caretaker to refrain from swearing. The caretaker retorted he would 'stop effen swearing when they stopped the effen bells'.

- 62 St Audoen's was traditionally the parish of the travellers, and where they held their funerals, right up until the 1980s – I taught the Liberties' travellers' School Street in that period. The travellers moved down to Bridgefort Street, opposite Oliver Bond, but they were subjected to harassment and vandalism and moved on from there. Under the Fianna Fáil Government-led privatization of the public housing stock scheme of the early 1990s, many of the families in the cottages in Cook Street sold their houses and moved out to the suburbs.

Dublin.<sup>63</sup> The travellers, along with many of the poorer citizens of Temple Bar, and the area around it, have been expelled from the city. The road which cut the Coombe in half, and which led to its disintegration as a socially cohesive community, also obliterated a crossroads that was known locally as the 'Four Corners of Hell' because there was a pub on each corner. Trauner has reconstituted his own four corners of hell, 'between Guinness and Holy Water', in *La Jeune Folle*. I personally 'commune' to borrow Aragon's phrase, with the ordinary/marvellous poetry of Trauner's Dublin, when I see this scene – one of these reconstituted pubs boasts the legend 'Gilligan's'.

63 Dublin artist Moira Tierney's beautiful film of the traveller children of John Rogerson's Quays, *Tiger Me Bollix* (1998), is also a visual record of their presence and absence.

PART III

Art, Politics, Imaginative Geographies





JUSTIN CARVILLE

## ‘The Glad Smile of God’s Sunlight’: Photography and the Imaginative Geography of Darkest Dublin

Dublin was not then, and it is not now, a dirty city; it is an untidy city.<sup>1</sup>

— CANON F. F. CARMICHAEL

Held in the photographic archive of the *National Library of Ireland* is a large photographic album bound by brown leather backed boards embossed with a gold leaf inscription *John’s Lane Mullinahack* on the cover and the year 1890 along the spine. On the inside front page of the album is a handwritten inscription which reads; ‘Presented to Spencer Harty C. E. by James Talbot Power, Christmas 1890.’<sup>2</sup> Inside the covers of the album are pasted forty-five Platinum paper prints with handwritten descriptions of the location, point of view and date at the bottom of each page.

The provenance of the album is uncertain but it is likely that Sir James Talbot Power of *John Power & Son Whiskey Distiller’s* penned the inscription. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century *Powers Distillery* occupied a six acre site including the Guinness and Watkin’s Breweries that stretched down to the quays from John’s Lane.<sup>3</sup> Expanding their premises along Dublin’s quays, *Powers Distillery* demolished tenement slums in

1 Cannon F. F. Carmichael, LL. D. *Dublin: A Lecture* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1907) p. 15.

2 *John’s Lane Mullinahack Photographic Album*, NLI Photograph Album 7.

3 J. Brady ‘The Heart of the City: Commercial Dublin, c.1890–1915’ in J. Brady & A. Simms (eds), *Dublin Through Space & Time c.900–1900* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001) p. 306; M. Daly, *Dublin the Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History, 1860–1914* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1984) pp. 26–30.

John's Lane West and Mullinahack Lane to clear construction space for the erection of bonded warehouses and stores.<sup>4</sup> The photographs compiled in the album are of the geographical vicinity of *Powers Distillery*, and the street names embossed on the cover were incorporated into the company's expansion throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The authorship of the photographs, however, is not of particular concern to the discussion that follows, but geography is. John's Lane was on the fringes of the thoroughfares constructed by the Wide Street Commissioners when modern Dublin was emerging as a symbolic statement of colonial urban planning.<sup>5</sup> A hidden symptom of the political, economic and social residue of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetic remodelling of Dublin as the city beautiful, and of the 1801 Act of Union, this was an area that colloquially became known as 'Darkest Dublin'. It was a part of city whose congested narrow laneways became synonymous with the emergence of public health discourse and the identification of Dublin's tenements as cultivating the physical and moral depravity of its inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> The designation Darkest Dublin for this shadowy cartographic blind-spot of the city has a particular photographic inflection. Darkest Dublin is the title of a lantern slide collection of photographs of the city's tenement housing and urban slums originally produced for the 1914 Parliamentary report into the condition of Dublin Housing.<sup>7</sup> The introduction of photographs as evidence of the conditions of Dublin's tenement housing into the inquiry proceedings was bound up with the emergence of photography's

4 J. Prunty, *Dublin Slums, 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Cork: Cork University Press) p. 150.

5 See E. Sheridan, 'Designing the Capital City: Dublin, c. 1660–1810' in J. Brady and A. Simms, *Dublin Through Space & Time* and A. Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies and the Built Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

6 On the emergence of public health discourse and municipal responses to the sanitary conditions of Dublin's tenements see the chapter 'A Matter of Life and Death: Public Health 1800–1900' in Prunty, *Dublin Slums*, pp. 62–108.

7 *Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to Inquire into the Housing Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin – With Minutes of Evidence, With Appendices* (Dublin: 7 February 1914).

currency as juridical proof in the late nineteenth century. However, the evidentiary value of these photographs, what we might term their semiotic coding of the actual, gave way under the weight of their ability to induce more culturally affective geographical imaginings of Dublin's slums. Such geographical imaginings infused photography with a range of discourses ranging from moral reform and urban planning, to visual aesthetics and the spectre of the uncontrollable spread of that most threatening of social diseases, 'urban poverty'. In the discussion that follows I want to explore the relations between photography and these discourses as they became woven into the imaginative geographies of Dublin's slums throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

### Reading the *John's Lane Mullinahack Album*

Past the inscription on the inside page, the first photograph of the *John's Lane Mullinahack* album is of the street whose name is embossed in gold leaf on the cover. Underneath the Platinum print is a short, neat, hand-written notation, 'Upper John's Lane West, Looking from Thomas Street, 20th Oct. 88'. The photograph depicts the narrow entrance of John's Lane flanked on either side by the three and four storey buildings that characterized the architecture in this part of the city. The signage of the shop on the right hand side reads 'Miscellaneous Depot' and 'Universal Sale Shop' and suspended by wire are suitcases, bags, trousers and overcoats in addition to framed paintings and a tin bath. An assortment of the bric-a-brac associated with the pawn-shop.

On the corner around which a crowd has gathered is that often overlooked symbol of urban modernity, the gas-light. The crowd have gathered outside the shop doorways of the buildings on either side of the lane, and on the right-hand foreground. Some children but mostly men dressed in suits, bowler hats and flat caps, stare curiously towards the apparatus whose mechanical exposure of light to the photo-chemical negative has rescued for eternity their witnessing of the taking of the photograph. One man has

his back turned to the camera looking into the window of the shop on the right hand-side of the lane. The figures of some, who have not remained still for the duration of the camera's exposure of the scene appear blurred, and the barely visible traces of others passing through the street appear as shadowy streaks across the surface of the print.



Figure 1 Anon, *Upper John's Lane West, Looking from Thomas Street, 20th Oct. 1888*. Platinum paper print from *John's Lane Mullinaback Album*. Reproduced with kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

This image of the street has been materialized in the form a Platinum print, a process involving exposing a negative in direct contact with paper sensitized with iron platinum salts and chemically developed in potassium oxalate. Although the process had been used by photographers since 1859, it was not until the process was manufactured commercially by William Willis

as the *Platinotype* in 1879 that the platinum printing process became popular with photographers.<sup>8</sup> Willis granted licences for the process to amateur and professional photographers for the sum of five shillings through his Platinotype Company, which supplied all the materials needed to produce Platinotype prints. The process became popular with commercial photographers because platinum was more stable than silver and Platinotype prints became renowned for their archival permanence.

This brief attempt at what Clifford Geertz describes as 'thick description' is partly to demonstrate that photography is a thoroughly material process.<sup>9</sup> Too often photographs are read as abstract objects torn from the technological, chemical and cultural contexts of their production. The identification of codes of signification, appraisals of photographic objectivity and the comparative judgement of the realism of the photograph measured against an equally abstract historical reality, frequently overlook this one undeniable detail; that in order for the photograph to exist someone had to put into motion a series of material processes of image production. Photographs are taken, the photographic image made using a combination of a mechanical apparatus, the exposure to light and agitation of photo-chemical substances and cultural practices of pictorial representation. It is indeed the particularities of these combinations of technology, chemistry and cultural image production that orientate how photographs come to be looked at, read and interpreted for their meanings. The close description of this photograph is also to tease out two areas of significance of the *John's Lane Mullinahack Album* to understanding the broader cultural role of photography in forming geographical imaginings of Dublin's slums; the practices of looking at photographs as visual registers of geographical information, and the role of the optical and photo-chemical materiality of the process of photography in shaping perceptions of urban space. These two areas frequently blur into each other but in the interest of clarity I want to briefly parse each into distinct categories of discussion.

8 H. Gernsheim (1988) *The History of Photography, Volume II: The Rise of Photography: The Age of Collodion, 1850–1880* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), p. 267.

9 C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 5–10.

Although the photographs in the *John's Lane Mullinahack Album* are not chronologically sequenced, neither are they randomly distributed throughout its pages. As a minor archive it has its own particular logic. The unity of this archive is imposed by technical practices of looking at place, and of the photograph as a vehicle of information exchange within and between organizations and individuals. As an archive of images it fulfils its function not by the empirical force of the individual photograph, but rather it is through the accumulated relationship of the photographs as a terrain of visual articulations of technical information that this particular archive operates. The subsequent two photographs of the album and their textual underscoring demonstrate the application of this accumulation of visual information. The second image to appear in the album is titled 'Thomas Street from Meath Street, towards Francis Street, 18th Oct. 1891'. Unlike the previous photograph nothing is in stasis, everything is in motion. Grey and black smudges camouflage the bodies of figures moving through the street. The carriage on the right-hand middle of the scene appears to have almost completely dissolved into the grey surface of the print. The greater the velocity of the objects passing in front of the camera's viewfinder the more indistinguishable from the monochromaticity of the Platinum print they appear to have become. Figure 2, 'Thomas Street from Francis Street looking towards Meath Street, 18th Oct. 1891', similarly records the spectre of bodies in motion passing through the scene framed by the camera's viewfinder.

Despite the chronological differences in date between the photographs, their sequencing is deliberate. Each photograph is a discrete view of the entrance to John's Lane, looking towards the opening then to the south and north along Thomas Street. Collectively, however, they provide a triad of viewpoints on a specific geographical area. The photographs have been mobilized collectively to create an impression of place. They map out the physical terrain of this urban environment from specific viewpoints, providing a visual reference point for the observer.



Figure 2 Anon, *Thomas Street from Meath Street, towards Francis Street*, 18th Oct. 1891. Platinum paper print *John's Lane Mullinahack Album*. Reproduced with kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

In the vernacular of nineteenth-century instrumental uses of photography, they are documents. As Steve Edwards observes, despite the ubiquity of the photographic document and our familiarity with ‘what they look like and what they do’, their ‘centrality to our culture’ is outweighed only by the ‘remarkably little critical attention paid to it’ as distinct form of photographic imagery.<sup>10</sup> Molly Nesbit has similarly observed that little in the way of writing or speaking about photographs as documents existed during the later part of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Photographs, she notes ‘were looked upon, quietly, approvingly, lethargically, and much of the time,

10 S. Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 16–17.

11 M. Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 14.

automatically'.<sup>12</sup> They were scrutinized without too much elaboration, being read silently by an observer who knew exactly what sort of information they required from the photograph; 'For a document was actually defined by an exchange, which is to say, by a viewer reading a certain kind of technical information from the picture and by the pictures ability to display just that technical sign'.<sup>13</sup> The specificity of a location, geographical perspective and date in the textual notations demonstrate the spatial as well as the temporal contexts in which the photographs construct a sense of place. This matrix of 'signifying processes', stem from the motivation to put this particular example of the photographic document to work as a kind of imaginative geography of place.<sup>14</sup>

The photographs establish a series of general viewing positions within a specific geographical area of Dublin. Everything speaks of an address to an observer of the photographs; coordinates are established 'from' one location 'Thomas Street' looking to another 'John's Lane' etc. As Jonathan Crary has noted the semantic differences between the terms used to describe cultural practices of looking – gaze, spectator, viewer etc. – are important as the subject who looks is 'both the historical product *and* the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification'. Thus to observe does not simply mean to look at, rather it means 'to conform one's action with, as in observing rules, codes, regulations, and practices. Though one who sees, an observer is more importantly one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations'.<sup>15</sup> As Nesbit notes the photographic document operates through an exchange of information to produce more knowledge; 'a technical look took command' which dissected the photograph 'surgically and brought away what it needed'. This was a practical looking that searched the document for technical signs 'lodged in the very appearance of the picture' and the document in turn 'engaged with an equally techni-

12 Nesbit, p. 14.

13 Nesbit, p. 17.

14 R. Barthes, 'The Photographic Message' in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 16–20.

15 J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT, 1991), pp. 5–6.



cal, but altogether human, and occasionally compassionate eye'.<sup>16</sup> As an archive of photographic documents the *John's Lane Mullinahack* album can be read as functioning as a kind technical spatializaion of knowledge, perhaps most adequately described as the geographical imagination.

The term geographical imagination has been used by David Harvey to demonstrate the significance of space and place in the meaning of cultural life.<sup>17</sup> Harvey's use of the geographical imagination to conceptualize the social construction of space and time has been broadened to incorporate photographic practices by a number of cultural geographers. The editors of a recent edited volume on the subject interpret Harvey's definition of the geographical imagination 'broadly to be the mechanism by which people come to know and situate themselves in space and time'.<sup>18</sup> Following Edward Said's use of the geographical imagination in his critique of the cultural politics of colonialism, the concept has been extended beyond positivist readings of geographical knowledge to more affective experiences of place.<sup>19</sup> Drawing on the work of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, Said notes that; 'the objective space of a house ... is less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel'. Said continues to suggest that; 'space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.' Ultimately for Said 'there something *more* than what appears to be merely positive knowledge', indeed 'there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to

16 Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums*, pp. 17.

17 D. Harvey, 'Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80. 3. (1990), pp. 418–434.

18 J. M. Schwartz and J. R. Ryan, 'Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination' in J. M. Schwartz and J. R. Ryan (eds), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I. B. Tauris: 2002), p. 6.

19 On the significance of Said's work on the development of the geographical imagination as a critical method of cultural analysis of human geography see; D. Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) and D. Gregory, 'Imaginative Geographies,' *Progress in Human Geography* 19. 4. (1995), pp. 447–485.

it and what is far away'.<sup>20</sup> As he has expressed it elsewhere, the geographical imagination is a complicated process as it necessarily involves not only empirical knowledge but also the work of cultural politics to imagine and give material form to distant places.<sup>21</sup>

Said's identification of the tensions between positivism and the cultural affect of the geographical imaginings of place raises interesting questions for the understanding of *John's Lane Mullinahack* album in constructing imaginative geographies of Dublin's slums and tenements. It has particular resonance in relation to the optical and photo-chemical materiality of photography in shaping perceptions of urban space and bringing into the horizon of legibility distant places. Although I want to avoid slipping into technological determinism in relation to the affective qualities of photography, the Platinotype had its own photo-chemical aesthetic, a kind of imaginative excess that extended the cultural impact of the photographic document beyond the positivist exchange of visual knowledge. Writing in his technical and aesthetic treatise on photography of 1889, Peter Henry Emerson, the canonical figurehead of nineteenth-century Pictorialism, advocated the Platinotype for photographers not only for its archival permanence, but also for its aesthetic properties. Stating that if the process was to become a lost art, photographers wishing to achieve the lofty ideals of artistic expression would never take another photograph, Emerson praised the Platinotype for its range of tonal effects noting; 'For low-toned effects, and for grey-day landscapes, the Platinotype process is unequalled'.<sup>22</sup> Although Emerson's subject of choice was the English rustic landscape, specifically the Norfolk Broads for which he was renowned, his advocacy of the Platinotype also influenced photographers of the urban life in the late nineteenth century.

The *John's Lane Mullinahack* album, with its combination of photographic documents, Platinotype prints and the organizational logic of its archive, can thus provide an insight into the place of photography in the broader geographical imaginings of Dublin's slums. Although produced

20 E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 55.

21 E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 5–6.

22 P. H. Emerson (1889) *Naturalistic Photography for the Students of the Art* (New York: Arno Press, [1889] 1973), pp. 132–137.

as documents, they are no less imaginative in their representation of urban space. They depict the city's slums from a specific vantage point that carefully organizes through the tonal effects produced by the photo-mechanical process and the textual descriptions at the bottom of photograph, the observer's perspective of this geographical terrain. The discrete formal choices made by the photographer of framing and vantage point, are ideological as much as technical conventions, signifying processes that mould the viewer's experience of urban space. This controlling of the observer is reinforced by the textual notations accompanying each photograph. The caption at the bottom of each photograph provides a geographical reference point for the viewer to orientate their gaze. It is no accident that the term 'looking' is frequently used in the notations, bringing an added sense of immediacy to the realism of the photographic image and heightening the observers sense of their presence in time and space.



Figure 3 Anon, *Lower Meeting House Lane, Looking Towards Wormwood Gate*, 20th Oct. 1888. Platinum paper print from *John's Lane Mullinaback Album*.  
Reproduced with kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

Within the process of geographical imaginings then, photography is frequently caught between the positivism of its visual articulations of technical information and the affective resonance of the photograph in what Kevin Robbins identifies as 'the psychic investments we make in vision and image'.<sup>23</sup> In the context of the photographic document these processes connect with desires, fantasies, anxieties and imaginings of place beyond the investment in the positivism of photography as vehicle of geographical knowledge. Photographs can thus be infused with more subjective knowledge of history and place. In the discussion that follows, I want to explore the cultural affect of photography in relation to broader context of Dublin's slums and in particular the role of the Darkest Dublin collection produced for the parliamentary report into Dublin housing of 1914.

## Photography and the Imaginative Geographies of Darkest Dublin

By the time photography appeared in archives and reports into nineteenth-century urban poverty, an image of city slums had already been constructed in literature, government reports and the popular press in which it was divided into light and dark.<sup>24</sup> The illuminated streets of commerce and consumerism, signifying progress and prosperity were set against the dim, impenetrable narrow streets that oppressed the senses of those individuals who were unlucky enough to stumble into them, and bred disease and moral depravity amongst those who resided within their congested boundaries. The terms used to differentiate between these images of the city, light and dark, were also part of the language of photography. They became part of a general lexicon of binary oppositions – good and evil, health and disease,

23 K. Robbins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 5.

24 R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth, 1993), pp. 215–232.

rich and poor – that became part of a discourse to differentiate between the co-existence of two contradictory urban spaces, used with dramatic effect by the Danish émigré turned journalist and briefly photographer Jacob Riis in his sensationalist articles and lectures on New York's slums *How the Other Half Lives*.<sup>25</sup> As Jacinta Prunty demonstrates in her masterful study of administrative, religious and medical intervention in Dublin's slum problem, this lexicon was an integral aspect of descriptions of Dublin in journalism and statistical surveys alike in their aim to persuade the reader of the urgency to resolve the city's housing crisis.<sup>26</sup>

Photography emerged into this already existing lexicon of the urban slum, giving textual descriptions pictorial authority and imbuing them with dramatic visual affect. As John Tagg notes, the discursive construction of photographic realism within systems of municipal and government administration of cities, emphasized photography's ability to illuminate the dark, impenetrable space of the tenement and slum.<sup>27</sup> Rendering transparent through the mechanical apparatus of photography what was optically impenetrable to the naked eye, the photographic document was perceived to allow the viewer to visually penetrate into every recess and corner of urban space. In 1913 the Government Board of Inquiry into Dublin's housing mobilized photography's power to shed light as it were on the dark-

25 J. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Amongst the Tenements of New York*, reprinted 1957, New York: Hill & Wang. For a revision of the humanist myth surrounding Riis's writing into the history of documentary see; M. Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

26 J. Prunty, *Dublin Slums*, p. 18. Commenting on a range of statistical and data based surveys of Dublin's slum problem she notes; 'The style of writing employed aimed at being persuasive yet reasoned, appealing not alone to the reader's common humanity but to his/her sense of logic ... Each introduced the reader to the topic as if writing about a foreign land, requesting that disbelief be suspended as this "exploration" commences, a voyage to "another world" where the "natives" were depicted as "denizens" and "poor creatures", despite the proximity of the slums to the wealthy districts.'

27 See the chapter 'Gods Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance and Photography in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds in J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: MacMillan, 1988).

ness of the slum that cast its shadow across the physical health and moral decline of its inhabitants. Much like the photographs of the *John's Lane Mullinahack* album, they appeared as simple documents, as if their visual stillness were silent testimony.<sup>28</sup> As we will see, however, the discourse of photography as witness could be inverted to draw out more culturally affective responses to its depiction of urban space.

The Inquiry originated from the collapse of tenement buildings on Church Street on 2 September 1913 in which seven people, including two children, died. The public outcry led to the establishment of a Departmental Committee charged with gathering evidence on the city's tenement housing.<sup>29</sup> The first public sitting of the inquiry took place on Tuesday 18 November 1913, and heard evidence from seventy-six witnesses over seventeen days. Members of the public as well as officials of Dublin Corporation gave evidence on oath and various charitable organizations and municipal authorities' submitted statistical data included in the report's findings. From the outset, the presentation and collation of precise, detailed data on the state of Dublin's tenement dwellings was established as a necessary objective of the inquiry. To convince the various agencies of the government to initiate the project of improving the housing of the city's working classes, the testimony provided needed to be not only detailed but verifiable. Charles H. O'Connor who presided over the public presentation of testimony to the inquiry, addressed those present on its opening day by drawing attention to the decline of the city's status and stressing the need for detailed evidence from witnesses; 'it must be so arranged as to suit the geographical position of Dublin. The more detailed information we can get the more correctly we can vouch the account, as it were to the Treasury, and the more likely are we in the end to gain what we all most sincerely desire to gain, the proper housing of the citizens of Dublin.'<sup>30</sup>

In the following days a series of experts gave evidence including the Mayor, City Architect and the head of the Public Health Department Sir

28 *Report of the Departmental Committee*, appendix unpaginated.

29 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 September 1913, 1.

30 *Report of the Departmental Committee*, pp. 2–3.

Charles Cameron. The submitted testimony, for all its accuracy, was not evidence in and of itself; it had to be verified to ensure it could be considered as legal evidence. In the introduction O'Connor stressed that material submitted to the inquiry had been thoroughly scrutinized to vouch its veracity through their inspection of the city's slums. Discussing their corroboration of the classification of housing by the Sanitary Division of Dublin Corporation they note; 'we have no hesitation in saying that it is no uncommon thing to find halls and landings, yards and closets of the houses in filthy condition, and in nearly every case human excreta is to be found scattered about the yards and on the floors of closets and in some cases even in the passages of the house itself'.<sup>31</sup> In addition to verifying submitted testimony the report's authors submitted their own report detailing the life of the 'poorer classes' and commissioned a series of photographs of Dublin's tenement districts;

There are in addition a large number of derelict sites and insanitary areas in the City, the exact acreage of which we have not been able to ascertain, but they represent a substantial quantity of land, and are enumerated in a schedule given in the appendix. We also submit a Map with these sites and areas marked thereon. They are in many instances occupied by ruins in various stages of decay, and in some cases are mounds of accumulated masonry and filth. They are to be seen in nearly all parts of poorer Dublin, and we have had photographs taken of them, which we print with this report, together with others showing typical tenement and small houses. In their present condition these sites and areas are an eyesore, and a reproach to the City.<sup>32</sup>

The place of maps and photographs demonstrate the significance of positivist representations of geographic knowledge to the inquiry. However, the closing sentiments of this passage evidence how easily geographic knowledge, moral reform and aestheticization could become coalesced in the geographical imaginings of place. The description of the slums as an 'eyesore', suggest how the slum problem was as much a spatial and aesthetic one as a human one.

31 *Report of the Departmental Committee*, p. 5.

32 *Report of the Departmental Committee*, p. 26.



Figure 4 *Engine Alley*, RSAI Lantern 7:13. Reproduced with kind permission of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

The photographs included in the report contribute to this geographical imagination of Dublin's slums. In between the introduction to the report by the appointed committee and the minutes of evidence submitted at the public hearings fifty-two photographs are reproduced across twelve pages. No accreditation is assigned to a photographer and little commentary on the photographs appears in the report. They depict the narrow lanes of slum districts, the decay of tenement housing, collapsed dwellings, and the congested courts that became a central feature of much moral outrage at the unsanitary living conditions of Dublin's working classes.



Although unaccredited in the report many of the photographs had in fact been presented to the inquiry by John Cooke, Honorary Treasurer of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. As a representative of the society Cooke gave evidence to the inquiry at one stage stating; 'I have collected a number of facts which I can give you, and I have a large number of photographs which I will show you.'<sup>33</sup> After which the President of the inquiry asks; 'These are taken showing actual conditions?' before requesting that Cooke 'read out some of the conditions.'<sup>34</sup> Cooke's evidence combined the visual evidence of photographs with detailed descriptions of what he terms 'specimen of houses and tenements taken from the slum areas'. Geographical co-ordinates – 'south-east', the 'Coombe and Liberties area' – are combined with statistics of family size, room measurements, rent charges, working class wages and living conditions of the city's poor. The photograph is positioned as mute visual witness to the accumulation of statistical information and factual observations of the city's tenements. A sort of relay is established between the photograph and eye-witness testimony in conveying geographical knowledge. However, despite the positivist tone of Cooke's evidence his description of the tenement districts was not without more affect imaginings of place. In his preamble to presenting the photograph he remarks; 'In all the streets, alleys and courts I treaded there was but one spot where nature was called upon to produce something, and bountifully she responded. In a most forbidding corner I found a miniature chrysanthemum garden, due to a working couple in a poor court. There are many dark spots in the city that might be made bright if the example were followed'. Cooke's impression of place borrows the metaphors of light and dark but incorporates productive labour as driving force of physical and moral reform, a theme he stresses elsewhere in his testimony. Here in this one dismal place the potential of progress can be evidenced in the aesthetic illumination of nature amongst the city's slums.

33 *Report of the Departmental Committee*, unpaginated.

34 Evidence of John Cooke, Fifth Public Sitting – Monday 24 November 1913, *Report of the Departmental Committee*.

Cooke's photographs also make up more than half the Darkest Dublin Collection in Royal Society of Antiquities of Ireland archives. Between these two collections of the Darkest Dublin photographs we find the existence of two quite different constructions of photographic realism; one that located photographic realism within the discourses of the law, the other in middle-class popular entertainment. Lantern slides such as *Darkest Dublin* collection were usually presented in the context of public lectures for a predominantly middle-class audience. As Maren Stange has noted in her account of Jacob Riis's use of photographic lantern slides in his lectures on New York's slums; 'The lectures embedded the evidentiary image in an elaborate discourse offering simultaneous entertainment and ideology, and from this the photograph, no matter how seemingly straightforward its reference, never stood apart.'<sup>35</sup> Such lectures usually drew on ideas of the colonial voyage to dramatize the narrator's position as explorer of the urban landscape and frequently injected a moral imperative into the motivation of the exposé.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Cooke's opening address to the inquiry contextualized his testimony as a journey in exploration of facts: 'I undertook a personal investigation of the whole slum, or tenement, or congested areas of the city, whatever be the name applied to them ... I went through poorer streets, penetrating into all the courts, lanes and alleys, entering into houses everywhere, and noting on the spot what came under my observation.'

Despite the reformist tone of much of the evidence the photographs in the report are presented as devoid of any moral or religious ideology. They are presented as legal documents that denote the reality of the testimony accompanying them in the report.<sup>37</sup> Cooke's first hand observation

35 Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life*, p. 2.

36 T. Gunning, 'Embarrassing Evidence: The Detective Camera and the Documentary Impulse' in J. M. Gaines and M. Renov (eds), *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 52.

37 One of the few historians to comment on the *Darkest Dublin* photographs used in the report, Prunty, notes; 'A further appendix to the 1914 report is a collection of fifty-five black and white photographs of decayed housing, popularly known as the "Darkest Dublin" collection (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland), some of

of the city's tenements is what invests photography with their purchase of the real. It is through the institutional authority of the inquiry committee and the discursive structures employed by them to authenticate the testimony presented at the inquiry, that photography attains its status as juridical evidence.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 5 *Forbes Cottages, Forbes Lane, off Marrowbone Lane*, RSAI Lantern 7:36. Reproduced with kind permission of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

which have already been introduced, and which describe the housing standards more effectively than any statistical tables'. *Dublin Slums*, pp. 170–171.

38 See; J. Tagg, 'A Means of Surveillance: The Photograph as Evidence in Law' and 'God's Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds' in *The Burden of Representation*, and 'The Proof of the Picture' in *Grounds of Dispute: Art History, Cultural Politics and the Discursive Field* (London: MacMillan, 1982).

In the only testimony to make explicit reference to photography in the report, the discourse of photography and its technical capabilities to record scientifically the reality of Dublin's tenements is used in a quite unorthodox way. Echoing Cooke's use of light and nature to convey the impression of place, Rev. William Farrell describing Thomas Court, draws on the discourse of photography not as evidence of the poor state of the tenement housing, but it is rather to its limitations in the face of abject poverty and moral depravity that he turns to construct an imaginative geography of Dublin's slums;

I may describe this court; it is a very objectionable little court containing two small tenements; it has no back of any kind; the windows look into the court. As you enter the court four water closets meet your gaze. They are so arranged as to be offensive to decency, being placed under the front windows of these poor tenements; and knowing how poor people attend to sanitary affairs these water closets can hardly conduce to physical health. This court is a pitiable sight on a wet day, with a small sink in the centre of it. Even on a bright day in summer it is sad, for the glad smile of god's sunlight barely lights the enclosure. I tried to have a photograph taken of it by a friend, but the Goertz lens of his camera failed to reproduce the picture. He told me he would try a longer exposure to reproduce the photograph I desired to get of this dismal slum. I made a fight and a protest against the re-opening of this court; I failed, and it is now full of human life – 28 persons – 13 children. Plants would wither there. What of the child-life?<sup>39</sup>

In his testimony, Rev. Farrell combines religion, moral decline, physical decay and the discourse of photography to construct an imaginative geography of the city's tenements. Perhaps the most evocative aspect of Farrell's statement is the combination of the discourse of photography with that of religion. Here the binary opposition of light and dark, the technical lexicon of photography and the biblical description of good and evil is combined to construct an impression of place. The photographic reality of this imaginative geography of Dublin's tenements is not to be found in the proof of the picture, however, but in its technical limitations. The darkness of the

39 Evidence of Rev William Farrell, B. A., C. C., Seventh Public Sitting – Wednesday 26 November 1913, *Report of the Departmental Committee*.

court, associated with the moral and physical decay of its inhabitants, is so pervasive that even divine presence of God's 'glad smile of sunlight' is unable to penetrate the enclosure. The technical and scientific veracity of photography are rendered powerless. It is the inability to present photographic testimony of the poor state of the tenements that is deployed here as photographic evidence corroborated by God as its eyewitness.

## Conclusion

Prunty's remarks that the *Darkest Dublin* photographs 'describe the housing standards more effectively than any statistical tables' are typical of the faith in the photographic image as a mute witness to the events exposed to the camera's lens that dominate historical discourse. The perceived ability of photographs to 'describe' the housing conditions of Dublin's tenements more effectively than 'statistical tables', confers on photography a dual function within historical discourse; its use as an unmediated visual depiction of the objects presented before the camera's lens and its related 'scientific' use as the repository of technical data. What Prunty appears to be gesturing at here is more than a perception of the photograph as transmitting immutable truths but also what Francis Haskell terms 'the impact of the image on the historical imagination'.<sup>40</sup> However, the historians' work of imagination through the image is also inflected by the affective qualities of cultural image production. The photograph operates not only as a sort of visual epistemology but also in the realm of cultural imaginings of time and space. Through practices of looking they generate feelings, emotions and sensations of place out there which are meaningful here. The photograph is thus not a mute witness but an active producer of visual experiences and haptic sensations of distant geographies and histories.

40 F. Haskell, *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 7.



## Political Sculpture in Twentieth-Century Dublin: Art as a Barometer of Political Expression

The public monument, executed as it is from inert materials such as bronze and stone, appears to inhabit the urban landscape in a 'fixed' way through its still and silent presence. Yet when analysed in the context of patronage, location, scale and choice of artistic style, such statuary, employed by governments and other political movements down through the centuries, offers a very tangible form of expression. The monument has the ability to visually articulate the various ideological beliefs and aspirations not only of those involved in its commissioning but equally those opposing it. In particular, because of its ability to transmit political ideas, a monument reveals not only the shifting nature of politics and power but acts as a barometer in the construction of national identities.

In the case of Dublin, a city that saw the transformation of political power from colonial rule to the establishment of an Irish republic in the twentieth century, the choice of monuments erected reveal the conflicted nature of the ideological concerns of the nation before and after Independence. This chapter examines a representative selection of monuments erected in the city centre during this period of historical change. Beginning with the erection of the monuments to Charles Stewart Parnell in Sackville Street (O'Connell Street) and that to Queen Victoria in Kildare Street, it goes on to compare and contrast the two cenotaphs raised in Leinster Lawn and the Gardens of Remembrance at Islandbridge and Parnell Square. The Cuchulainn memorial in the General Post Office (GPO), the Wolfe Tone memorial in St Stephen's Green and the Thomas Davis memorial in College Green are also considered, as is the Spire, now dominating O'Connell Street in this new millennium. A multi-layered reading reveals how these monuments represent, in a highly visible and

concrete way, the shifting nature of the ideas, practices and interests of the society that produced them while playing a substantial symbolic role in the fostering of narratives of national identity.

The monument to Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891) erected in 1911 at the north end of the city's main thoroughfare, Sackville Street, demonstrates the conflicted nature of political and national loyalty at the end of the nineteenth century. British administration of Ireland was located at Dublin Castle. Yet the local governance of the capital city was in the hands of the strongly nationalist Dublin Corporation which was intent on establishing a concrete sense of Irish national identity. While the monumental landscape of the city visually asserted British rule in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, by the end of the latter century Sackville Street had transformed into one reflecting nationalist aspirations. Five commemorative statues lined the street, and with the exception of Nelson's Pillar erected in 1809, all were dedicated to Irish men: nationalist politicians William Smith O'Brien (1852–1928) in 1870, Sir John Gray (1816–1875) in 1879, Daniel O'Connell (1775–1842) in 1882 as well as temperance preacher, Fr. Theobald Matthew (1790–1856) in 1893.

The decision to erect a statue to Parnell was originally meant to be one dedicated to British politician, William Gladstone (1809–1898).<sup>1</sup> However the suggestion was met with little enthusiasm by the Corporation. It passed a motion that 'no statue should be erected in Dublin in honour of any Englishman until at least the Irish people have raised a fitting monument to the memory of Charles Stewart Parnell.'<sup>2</sup> It was designed by the Dublin-born American, Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907) and took the form of a triangular shaft of Galway granite against which a statue of Parnell was placed. The laying of the foundation stone in October 1899 reveals the conflict between competing nationalist factions. There were

1 Gladstone was four times prime minister and therefore deeply involved in decisions regarding Ireland. The monument to him in Dublin was to be one of three, the other two destined for London and Edinburgh.

2 Dublin Corporation Minutes, 1898, no. 287, quoted in Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), p. 71.



moves to disrupt the stone laying by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) who had fallen out with Parnell over Home Rule. Their aim was to overthrow British rule in Ireland and to create an Irish republic. Yet by the time of the unveiling in 1911 these hostilities had faded.<sup>3</sup> The attendance of over fifty members of parliament with some members of the Catholic clergy indicated this change to a more 'Irish' political landscape in that decade.

The monument dedicated to Queen Victoria (1819–1837) and erected in 1908 also conveys the changing nature of political power in Ireland but with different consequences. In 1900 the Council of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) proposed that a monument be raised to Queen Victoria within the precincts of the society's grounds at Leinster House. At a time of ever-growing nationalist support, the statue was to provide a focus for loyal Irish support to the Queen. The appeal to the public for contributions stressed that the monument would focus on the personality of Queen Victoria rather than on her political persona. It would also commemorate the courage of Irish soldiers in the ongoing Boer War. This helped to ensure the flow of funds from the public. At official level this was helped too by a contribution of £500 which resulted from a single meeting of prominent citizens including the Lord Chief Justice, the Lord Mayor and principal officials. In all, £7,000 was raised. The commission, given to Irish sculptor, John Hughes (1865–1941), was completed in 1908 and erected the same year on the west front of Leinster House in Kildare Street.

Of flamboyant and elaborate style, it consisted of the central figure of the Queen, in bronze, seated on a raised richly carved, marble pedestal, dressed in full regalia. Incorporated in the angles of the three-sided plinth below were bronze figures symbolizing Victory and Peace and to single out those who had fought in the Boer War, the figure of Érin was depicted laying a wreath on the head of a dying man. The only concession to conveying a less powerful political presence was the discreet size of the throne on which the queen was placed.

3 The IRB by 1911 was numerically smaller at that point.

*The Irish Times* reporting on the unveiling ceremony was enthusiastic about the monument 'with its magnificently proportioned architectural background'.<sup>4</sup> Yet four decades later it was dismantled, removed from public view and the 4.6 metres high monument was now considered by the same newspaper as being 'repugnant to national feeling'.<sup>5</sup> It was noted with approval that ejection coincided with Ireland leaving the Commonwealth to become a republic.<sup>6</sup>

What had caused this sea change? Initially it became apparent that the sculptor himself was not happy with it. In the Spring of 1908 he wrote to the RDS expressing his view that he had modelled the statue on a much larger scale than was shown in the original sketch model. He even offered to have a second statue of the Queen cast in bronze in lieu of the one already in place. Nothing came of this.<sup>7</sup> However ultimately it was what the statue had come to symbolize and where it was sited that ensured its removal. After 1922 when Leinster House became the permanent location of the Irish parliament (Dáil), the appropriateness of having a former ruler on public display in a location, now the centre of Irish power, was queried. In August 1929, *The Star* published an article calling for the Queen's ejection from Leinster House. It argued that it misrepresented the national outlook towards British rule in Ireland 'in the eyes of strangers'.<sup>8</sup> Like the other monuments celebrating British heroes, it evoked memories 'which it would be in the best interests of all to forget'.<sup>9</sup> *The Irish Builder* stated '[a]s a work of art the statue leaves much to be desired'.<sup>10</sup> In 1933 *The Irish Times* reported a bizarre occurrence, which reveals the depth of the statue's unpopularity.<sup>11</sup> It reported that a wreath

4 *The Irish Times*, 17 February 1908, pp. 2–4 for a full report of the unveiling ceremony.

5 *The Irish Times*, 19 August 1929, p. 4.

6 Whelan, p. 198.

7 Alan Denson, *John Hughes Sculptor 1865–1941: A Documentary Biography* (Kendal: Alan Denson, 60, Low Fellside, 1969), p. 213.

8 *The Star*, 10 August 1929, p. 4.

9 *The Star*, 10 August, p. 1.

10 *The Irish Builder*, 25 December 1937, p. 118.

11 *The Irish Times*, 20 May 1933, quoted in Denson, *John Hughes*, p. 222.

made of leeks and broccoli was laid on the plinth by Osmond Grattan Esmonde, a member of the Cumann na nGaedheal party, now in opposition. Meanwhile, Eamonn O'Neill, from the same party, carried a huge stalk of rhubarb, supposed to represent a mace! Finally after much further debate the statue was removed to the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham on the 22 July 1948.<sup>12</sup>

The power of art in constructing a new pantheon of national heroes and the sifting nature of how a country perceives itself over time becomes obvious when the cenotaphs in Leinster Lawn are closely examined. The principal political monument erected after independence was a cenotaph, commissioned by the first Free State government, Cumann na nGaedheal, in memory of Arthur Griffith (1872–1922), President of the new parliament, who had died in August 1922 after a brief illness, and Michael Collins (1890–1922), Commander-in-Chief of the Free State army, who had been shot dead that same month in an ambush by anti-Treaty forces. The monument, to be ready in time for the first anniversary of their deaths, was to be located at the rear of Leinster House facing Merrion Square. Erected by the government in a period of immense political upheaval, and with uncharacteristic haste, this cenotaph can be interpreted as a move to legitimize the new rulers in the eyes of the citizenry by creating a new pantheon of Irish heroes. Equally the proposed location is significant. Already erected in the grounds of Leinster House were monuments to Queen Victoria on the Kildare Street side of the building and to Prince Albert by Henry Foley (1818–1874), erected in 1872, on the Merrion Square side. The new cenotaph, symbolic of the new order was to be placed in front of the Prince Albert statue, as if to lessen the political potency of the royals.

12 The statue was donated to Australia by Charles Haughey's government in 1987 and is on display in Sydney.



Figure 1 Fergus O'Connor, *Cenotaph to Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith*, c. 1930.  
Reproduced with kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.

The materials used for the edifice were wood and plaster because of the need to construct it so quickly. A stylized Celtic cross with a Gaelic inscription in the centre was designed by Professor George Atkinson (1891–1984) of the Metropolitan School of Art, and relief medallions of Griffith and Collins for the base were modelled by the well-known Dublin sculptor, Albert Power (1881–1945). These were of plaster but painted to look like bronze. The overall result was of a simple, rather stark edifice of no particular aesthetic merit. Yet in spite of its lack of artistry, this monument is important in that the design indicates a desire on the part of the new State to establish a distinctive ‘Irish Ireland’ identity. The use of a Christian symbol, the cross, and the insistence of an Irish inscription in Gaelic script on the monument, assertively proclaimed this new Irish identity; one in which a strong allegiance to Roman Catholicism intersected with an ancient pre-conquest past with a single ancient Gaelic tradition, culture and language. Such a concept sprang from a deep-rooted longing to resume a pre-invasion identity and to be as different as possible from its erstwhile

ruler. Britain was perceived to be an urban, industrial nation, thus Ireland promoted itself as a rural agricultural one. Britain was largely Protestant, therefore Ireland emphasized its allegiance to the Catholic faith. As Britain's mother tongue was English it became imperative that Irish would be the first language in Ireland.

Despite the political differences between the Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil parties, it fell to the latter who came to power in 1932, to replace this temporary cenotaph. Raymond McGrath (1903–1977), principal architect of the Office of Public Works (OPW) designed a twenty-metre high granite obelisk, finally erected in 1950. It is strikingly dissimilar to the original in that it is far less overtly 'Irish' in design. The obelisk, beyond a simple cross engraved into the shaft of the column, gives no hint of its country of origin. This stylistic change can be explained by the fact that it was erected in the post-war era, a time when the need to cling to an exclusively Catholic and Celtic tradition had begun to lessen its grip. Subsequently there is less reliance on external iconographical symbols. The more international design of the new cenotaph reflects and articulates this transformation.

The new State was at pains not only to officially project itself as different and distinctive but also to present itself as a homogeneous nation totally united against its former ruler. In the decades that followed independence, the handful who had been killed during or after the Easter Rising in 1916 were publically honoured while the 49,500 who had died abroad during the First World War were largely ignored or commemorated in a low-key manner. A study of the Gardens of Remembrance in Dublin at Islandbridge and Parnell Square, not only reveals the lack of any whole-hearted Irish commitment to the Great War but also makes visible a major fault line in the construction of post-colonial identity, that of reconciling the reality of those who fought in the Great War with the new construct of Ireland's history which insisted that the only true Irishman was one who fought or supported the Easter Rising.<sup>13</sup>

13 For a detailed account of these monuments see Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, 'Commemorating Whose Dead? A Study of Two Irish Gardens of Remembrance' in *Ireland's Art, Ireland's History: Representing Ireland, 1845 to Present* (Nebraska: Creighton University Press, 2007), pp. 203–215.



Figure 2 Edward Lutyens, *Islandbridge Memorial*.  
Photograph courtesy of Ann-Marie Curran, 2013.

In July of 1919 a meeting was held in Dublin by about one hundred men from North and South of the country who decided to erect a memorial to commemorate the 49,500 Irish officers and men who had died in the War.<sup>14</sup> After much discussion, it was decided to erect a Garden of Remembrance at Islandbridge, just outside the centre city. Designed by the English architect Edward Lutyens, this took the form of a memorial

14 When an appeal was made for public support, subscriptions came in freely and close on £50,000 was raised.

park, close to the river Liffey. Granite pergolas at either end of the lawn divide it from two circular terraced rose-gardens and at the ends of these pergolas stand four pavilions in which are housed copies of the names of the men who gave their lives in the Great War. It is truly classical in its architectural design.

While the Islandbridge Memorial was the result of the initiative of individuals, the Garden of Remembrance in Parnell Square, in the heart of the city, was a State commission initiated by the Fianna Fáil government. Pressure had been put on the government by those within the party itself, to erect a memorial dedicated to the memory of all those who gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom. The choice of location, Parnell Square, was a site associated with the fighting in Dublin in 1916. The form of the memorial, designed by architect Daithí Hanley, was an ornamental garden providing a suitable setting for a sculptural memorial. The design is redolent with motifs symbolizing links between an ancient Irish past and contemporary Ireland, such as the pool in the shape of a Christian cross, mosaic designs of ancient Celtic weapons and the statue of the mythical children of Lír dominating the garden. Thus in every way this memorial is utterly at odds to the non-specific style of the Islandbridge memorial.

Edna Longley in her essay on commemorating the Rising and the Battle of the Somme perceptively points out that commemorations are as selective as sympathies. 'They honour *our* dead', she writes, 'not your dead'.<sup>15</sup> When both Gardens of Remembrance are examined, it is clear that these sentiments underline the State's attitude towards honouring the Irishmen who died fighting alongside the allied army. For instance, government reaction to one of the schemes proposed by the Irish War Memorial Committee signifies the problematic nature of honouring Ireland's Great War dead.<sup>16</sup>

15 Edna Longley, 'The Rising, the Somme and Irish Memory', in *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p. 69.

16 Among the ideas considered was the building of a Great War Memorial Home, cottages with gardens and allotments for ex-service men, a public hall for concerts and other public uses, a gateway to the Phoenix Park and the removal of Nelson's Pillar to erect a commemorative memorial.

A memorial centrepiece and gates in the park at Merrion Square, a site almost directly opposite Dáil Éireann, was proposed. A bill was needed to obtain leave to alter the original terms of the Trust. This was approved in March 1926 by the judiciary. It then had to be passed by the Irish legislature. But this was unforthcoming. In fact it was soundly defeated: forty votes against to only thirteen in favour. A reading of the parliamentary debate on the issue reveals why so. Kevin O'Higgins, then Minister for Justice, argued that the Free State had come into being through the activities of the few dozen men who had fought unsuccessfully against the British army in Dublin during Easter week in 1916. Independence had not drawn its birth from the deaths of the 49,000 men who had fought for the allies. 'I do not want to see a little park in the front of this State's seat of government dedicated to the memory of those who fell in the War', he bluntly declared.<sup>17</sup> His sentiments were echoed by other republican sympathizers who felt that turning Merrion Square into a memorial of this kind was effectively creating a monument for 'England's army'.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly what was being ignored was the unpalatable truth that in 1916 a large section of the population was ambivalent about the Rising. It was only following the executions of its leaders that a majority in the country were united in condemning the action of the British. In the first decades of independence, these dead were accorded martyr status and their deaths were assiduously promoted in every area of Irish life. The actions of these men *now* defined Irish patriotism, loyalty and heroic sacrifice rather than Ireland's contribution to World War I. The reality of Irishmen going to fight with the British, especially since there was no compulsory conscription, did not fit easily into the current construct of the patriotic Irishman, one who was willing to lay down his life for Ireland, not for England or her allies.<sup>19</sup>

17 Extracts from Seanad debates, 7 April 1927, cols. 717–722.

18 Quote from a letter to *The Irish Times*, 27 July 1925, included as a cutting in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI), file S4156.

19 The recent visit by Queen Elizabeth II and President Mary McAleese to both gardens has served to redefine 'Irishness'. In honouring *all* the soldiers who died, be it



As a result of the government's refusal to go ahead with the Merrion Square scheme nothing was done for three years. Finally in 1929 the committee wrote to Taoiseach W. T. Cosgrave, to try move matters forward. His reply was in sharp contrast to that of his former Minister for Justice. He acknowledged the differences of opinion on how to commemorate the war dead in Ireland and he recognized that the project was 'dear to a big section of the citizens.'<sup>20</sup> He then outlined a plan for a memorial park on the banks of the Liffey at Islandbridge and promised government funding for it. Interestingly, the incoming Fianna Fáil government in 1932 accepted the plan and the project was completed in 1938. However it was not officially opened until 1988 thanks to a lack of any real commitment on the part of the government.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile the Garden of Remembrance at Parnell Square project was set in motion with alacrity by the same government and it enjoyed two openings! The first was when the layout was completed in 1966, the second when the *Children of Lir* statue by Oisín Kelly (1915–1981) was unveiled in 1971. In a carefully choreographed ceremony the forces of Church and State came together on 12 April 1966 for the first opening. Éamon de Valera, by then President of Ireland, opened the gate with an enlarged copy of the oldest known Irish key, which had been found at an excavation near the Hill of Tara. Those attending were reminded of the significance of the location and a hope was expressed that it would act as a constant reminder of the sacrifice of the hero soldiers to whom it was dedicated.

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for Ireland or on the side of Britain, the original conflicts of identity are now finally synthesized.

20 NAI file S8114, memorandum, 20 September 1935.

21 Éamon de Valera decided that any formal opening should be postponed owing to the tension of the international situation throughout Europe but, in particular, because of the possibility that conscription into the British army would include what he termed 'our fellow countrymen in the six counties'. See NAI file, S4156, 24 April 1939.



Figure 3 Clogher Cross, *Garden of Remembrance*, Dublin.  
Photograph courtesy of Ann-Marie Curran, 2013.

One important reason for a newly independent nation not only to rush to create 'new' heroes but to revive 'old' ones, lies in its need to establish quickly its own sense of national identity, one which would be made more glorious if rooted in a golden past. This harkening back to ancient heroes confirms a positive, affirming self-image. The bronze 1916 memorial in the General Post Office (GPO) in commemoration of those who had been killed in the Rising features the legendary hero of Ulster, Cuchulainn who predated the colonization of Ireland. The sculptor, Oliver Sheppard (1865–1941), had depicted him bravely meeting his death, having tied himself to a stone pillar to fight his foes to the last.<sup>22</sup> As a friend of Patrick Pearse, the sculptor knew that he had valued Cuchulainn as a hero who embodied the qualities of a Christian martyr: honour, truthfulness and courage. Hence the figure was presented in the manner reminiscent of the dying Christ.

By 1935, the GPO, the principal site of the fighting and the place from where the leaders of the Rising had read out their proclamation, had been re-built. It was proposed to erect the bronze in the main hall. But rather than wait until 1936, on the twentieth anniversary, de Valera decided to celebrate a year earlier. It was an event of massive ceremonies and a dramatic pageant. A review of thousands of regular troops and members of the Volunteer force took place. The general perception at the time was that he and his government had appropriated this historical cornerstone of national identity. As a result members of the opposition party who had fought alongside those in the Fianna Fáil party in 1916, refused to attend.

His republican opponents, who felt betrayed because he decided to continue the 'fight for freedom' through constitutional means, also boycotted the event. Indeed they were highly critical of the choice of hero chosen for the commemoration. Their mouthpiece, the radical *United Ireland Journal* complained that Cuchulainn was not as much a Gael as Fionn Mac Cumhaill, another mythological hero from the ancient past.<sup>23</sup>

22 The statue was not originally conceived as a memorial. Rather it had been sculpted by Sheppard as an ideal work in 1911–1912 for exhibition at the annual exhibition of the Royal Hibernian Academy, 1914 (no. 522). Taoiseach de Valera saw it in the collection of his friend, solicitor John Burke and it was the latter who persuaded him it to have it copied in bronze for the GPO memorial.

23 *United Ireland Journal*, 20 April 1935, quoted in Bhreathnach-Lynch, p. 192.

The latter was reputed to have fought much harder against foreigners. It disdainfully declared, 'there is nothing told of Cuchulainn that would make a representation of his death a suitable symbol for the struggle and sacrifice of 1916'. The editorial pointed out that there was a certain ambiguity in choosing the defender of Ulster as a symbol of nationalist ideology, given that it will still in British hands. But despite these reservations, the statue of Cuchulainn was duly unveiled and Taoiseach de Valera expressed the hope that it would 'serve to keep in the minds of the youth of this country the great deeds of those who went before us, and that it will also serve to spur us on to emulate their valour and their sacrifice'.<sup>24</sup>

By 1966, what Yvonne Whelan calls 'Dublin's symbolic geography' had radically changed from that of the beginning of the century.<sup>25</sup> O'Connell and Parnell 'bookended' O'Connell Street as if reclaiming this important city space for Irish rather than British heroes. These most Irish of heroes were augmented by memorials to Countess Markievicz (1868–1927), erected in St Stephen's Green 1932 and Sean Heuston (1891–1916) raised in the Phoenix Park in 1942. The Dublin Brigade memorial dedicated to members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was placed in front of the Custom House in 1956 and a 1916 memorial sited at Arbour Hill on the north side of the city was completed in 1956.

The locations of all these memorials were chosen specifically for their connection to those being honoured. The Countess was positioned in the Green, where she had served as Second-in-Command to Michael Mallin during the 1916 Rising. Heuston's memorial was close to Kingsbridge Station (subsequently renamed Heuston Station) where he had commanded the First Battalion Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers. The IRB dead had been killed in the War of Independence when the Custom House came under attack in 1921 while the Arbour Hill memorial, dedicated to all who died from 1916 to 1923 was sited in the location of their burial plot.

It is interesting to follow the fate of earlier monuments dedicated to British worthies in the twentieth century. The statue of George I

24 *The Irish Times*, 22 April 1935, p. 8.

25 Whelan, p. 228.

(1660–1727) that once stood in a prominent site on Essex Bridge was demoted in 1928 to a garden at the rear of the Mansion House and was later sold to the Barber Institute of Fine Art at the University of Birmingham. Queen Victoria was banished from public sight in Kildare Street in 1948 while her consort, Prince Albert, was moved to one side of Leinster Lawn and the second cenotaph was erected in his place. Other British worthies continued to be damaged or destroyed by more zealous nationalist groups. The statue of King William III (1650–1702) in College Green had been attacked and defaced on numerous occasions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The ultimate blow came in 1928 when it was badly damaged in an explosion and the remainder was removed to a lumber yard belonging to Dublin Corporation. In 1937 the monument to George II (1683–1760) in St Stephen's Green was blown to pieces. In March of 1966, the top of Nelson's Pillar (1758–1805) was blown up by a splinter group of the Republican movement known as *Saor Uladh*. The remainder was subsequently demolished by the army.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, some of these sites were subsequently appropriated by the State.

Monuments dedicated to Thomas Davis (1814–1845) and Wolfe Tone (1763–1798), both by artist Edward Delaney (1930–2009) are in locations formerly the domains of English kings. Davis was erected where previously the statue of William III had been erected and the Tone memorial in St Stephen's Green was once home to the George II statue. Both contemporary monuments were unveiled in Dublin in 1966 and 1967. Davis was a poet, journalist and Young Irelander. September 1945 marked his centenary and it became a vehicle for a show of Irish nationalism on the streets of the capital when a foundation stone of a statue dedicated to him was laid in College Green. Initially, architect Raymond McGrath had designed a memorial for Davis sited in St Stephen's Green where the statue dedicated to George II had stood. His design consisted of curved pavilions, flanking a fountain. But it was never executed and Delaney was invited to carry out the commission in the 1960s.

26 For a complete list of all the statues destroyed and removed in Dublin between 1922 and 1966 see Whelan, p. 158.



Figure 4 Edward Delaney, *Wolfe Tone*, St Stephens Green, Dublin.  
Photograph courtesy of Ann-Marie Curran, 2013.

Wolfe Tone was a leading figure in the United Irishmen Irish Independence movement and regarded as the father of Irish republicanism. The laying of a foundation stone to him at the northwest corner of St Stephen's Green in fact dated as far back as 1898, the centenary of his death. This provided an occasion for nationalists to commemorate a man whose loyalty was to Ireland rather than that of Great Britain. The event was marked by the largest public gathering since the unveiling of the O'Connell monument in 1882 and was conducted with much ceremony and pomp. Its site had been carefully chosen. This area of the city was regarded as being the centre of unionism, close as it was to College Green and Trinity College. Raising a monument to Tone in what was regarded as the most English part of the city, sent a potent signal to the Castle Administration. The original monument never materialized but Delaney's statue, nearly a century later in the same location, impressively embodies the aspirations for the original figure.<sup>27</sup> The figure was not to symbolize the trials and tribulations of Ireland but rather to represent him as a soldier of freedom, erect and proud, courageous and bold.<sup>28</sup>

Architectural historian, Judith Hill, points out that both Delaney statues mark a fresh direction towards a new kind of public art.<sup>29</sup> A modern artistic approach to statuary is immediately apparent in the move away from depicting realistic figures or the use of overtly Celtic motifs. The statues of Davis and Tone are not immediately recognizable. Their large scale, broad shapes crowned with small heads and briefly sketched facial features, are abstracted representations. This creates the idea of towering presences dominating the surrounding space. For the sculptor, the monuments were 'a source of inspiration for his art, not a form whose specific requirements had to be met.'<sup>30</sup>

27 In 1962 the Wolfe Tone project was set up by the Arts Council. A competition was held and an architect-sculptor partnership was envisaged. Noel Keating's winning entry suggested opening the corner of the Green, near the Shelbourne Hotel. The figure of Tone was to be placed directly in front of a granite screen, behind which was a Famine group.

28 Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, 1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual' in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy (eds), *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin: Townhouse, 1994), p. 115.

29 Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), p. 202.

30 Hill, p. 202.

The millennium spire which eventually replaced Nelson's Pillar, was designed by London architect, Ian Richie (b. 1947) in 1998. Erected in January 2003, it was the result of a competition by Dublin Corporation as part of the redevelopment of O'Connell Street. The objective was to erect a monument that would reaffirm the status of this most important of streets. Given its length, a monument with a strong vertical emphasis was required. The result is the officially titled Monument of Light (*An Túr Solais*), a pin-like monument, 121.2 metres high. Its overtly apolitical nature completes the transformation of the political monument over the century. The earliest cenotaph in Leinster Lawn and the Garden of Remembrance in Parnell Square rely on overtly Celtic iconography to express Irishness while the statues of Parnell, Countess Markievicz and Sean Heuston are in the traditional academic format. The universal classical architectural style of the garden at Islandbridge, completed in the 1930s stands apart, clearly articulating its 'otherness' in terms of its ideological intent. Raymond McGrath's cenotaph (1950) is the first political monument, commissioned by the State, to make a contemporary statement, followed by the abstracted but powerful representations of Davis and Tone and finally culminating in the artistic purity of the Spire.

As has been pointed out, public monuments sited throughout the city's landscape, from the beginning of the nineteenth century through to the opening decade of this one, provide important visual indicators of its changing political and cultural landscape. Equally, these solid structures are able to transmit diverging narratives of national identity. Decoding the public monument in ways other than in terms of its stylistic history, I believe, ensures a fuller interpretation of the cultural and political landscape not only for the art historian but the political historian and cultural geographer. Its significance is as important as the written word.



JENNIFER WAY

## O'Connell Street as the 'Nation's Main Street': The Image of Ireland's Modernity and Irelandis

In 1959, Taoiseach Sean Lemass initiated T. K. Whitaker's First Programme for Economic Expansion, encouraging foreign investment and multinational capital to come to the Republic of Ireland with the understanding that participating companies would export most of their production.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, *US News and World Report* said the initiatives were resulting in '[t]he old picture of Ireland as a backward little island of quaint peasants, periodic famines and mass emigration ... becoming outdated'.<sup>2</sup> The American magazine characterized Ireland's transformation in terms of progress facilitated by the Marshall Plan's Economic Cooperation Agreement and it concluded that '[a] dynamic brand of internationalism' was 'replacing the isolationism that led to Ireland's neutrality in World War II'.<sup>3</sup>

Of interest to this essay is a nearly standard photographic image featuring the O'Connell Bridge and Street Lower in central Dublin as seen from an undisclosed location above the south end of the bridge (Figures 1, 2, 5). It records buses, cars and pedestrians crossing the bridge and continues north to show the equally wide street flanked by business and retail spanning from the O'Connell Monument past a horizon visually marked by Nelson's Pillar. During the 1950s, as the Republic of Ireland continued to sign agreements with the United States to receive economic support,<sup>4</sup>

- 1 B. Girvin, *Between Two Worlds, Politics and Economy in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), p. 193.
- 2 'Ireland's Changing Face – Story of a New Boom', *U. S. News & World Report* 571.1 (1964), p. 84.
- 3 *U. S. News & World Report*.
- 4 B. Whelan, 'Ireland, the Marshall Plan, and U. S. Cold War Concerns', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006), p. 92.

iterations of the image routinely featured in popular, trade and government authored books and journals circulating in Ireland, and from Ireland to the United States and Europe. At the beginning of the decade an example appeared in Adolph Morath's *Portrait of Ireland*, 1951 (Figure 1) and at the end, an atypical colour representation graced the cover of the government-sponsored magazine, *Ireland of the Welcomes*, 1960 (Figure 2). I contend that during the 1950s and into the 1960s, the image served Ireland as a sign of what *US News and World Report* would celebrate in the 1960s – the nation's achievement of a pleasant urban space vitalized by a combination of transport, commerce and retail signifying its modernity especially for an international audience. In question here is the relationship of the image to two features of 'the old picture' that ostensibly, Ireland was leaving behind – its history and pastoralism.

By exploring the meaning and significance of the image I aim to contribute to a vital strand in the scholarship of Ireland's modernity that emphasizes material remaining understudied in comparison to text-based representations, a situation that many authors note and are remedying with important new publications.<sup>5</sup> My discussion of published photographs that were widely distributed in and beyond Ireland also engages with the growing body of work devoted to urban history and culture focusing on Dublin.<sup>6</sup> However, whereas much of the new scholarship revisits the 1960s, long considered by historians as the decade when 'a decisive break was made with the Ireland created at the time of Independence',<sup>7</sup> and emphasizes architecture and urban space,<sup>8</sup> I stress the period prior to the

5 For example, G. Baylis, S. Edge, 'The Great Famine: Absence, Memory and Photography', *Cultural Studies* 24, no. 6 (November 2010), pp. 778–800 and J. Carville, *Photography and Ireland* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

6 Such as Y. Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), and N. Moore, Y. Whelan, *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

7 E. Hanna, 'Dublin's North Inner City, Preservationism, and Irish Modernity in the 1960s', *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 4 (2010), p. 1016.

8 A. Kincaid, 'Memory and the City: Urban Renewal and Literary Memories in Contemporary Dublin', *College Literature* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2005), p. 22.

Lemassian 'reorganization of the city – planning, construction, suburbanization, inner-city renewal along corporate lines.'<sup>9</sup>



55. O'Connell Street, showing the statue of O'Connell the Liberator, and Nelson's Pillar in the background.

Figure 1 Adolph Morath, *Portrait of Ireland*, Max Parrish, 1951.

9 Kincaid, pp. 22–23.

In addition, I relate the photographic images of O'Connell Bridge and Street to a contemporary work of art. Interpretations of *Irelantis*, 1994–1999, Sean Hillen's series of twenty-eight small collages of landscapes and seascapes, emphasize its postmodern, satirical treatment of Irish popular culture and myth,<sup>10</sup> thus rendering the nation as 'a utopian symbol removed from lived reality and projected into some far away future'.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, in 2011, as the Republic of Ireland faced severe economic challenges, Fintan O'Toole said the era in which viewers live, impacts on how they make sense of the series.

Even if you look again at those well-known *Irelantis* images, they are not at all the same as they were a decade ago. Back then, their humour was the most obvious thing about them. They seemed to make some kind of sense of a postmodern, hyper-globalised Ireland in which space and time were jumbled up together. Their wit and invention made this condition seem like something we could live with. What you see now in the *Irelantis* images, however, is above all the approach of the apocalypse. The montages are full of explosions, inundations, precipices, whirlpools, lightning storms and earthquakes ... Fabulous inventions they may be, but Hillen's creations now seem weirdly prescient and ruefully realistic.<sup>12</sup>

O'Toole hints at the importance of considering the ways *Irelantis* relates to reality. Consequently, *Irelantis* serves my project by highlighting historical reality through retrospection. That is to say, *Irelantis* captures a manner of perceiving and making sense of the photographic images of central Dublin published a half century earlier. Moreover, in *Irelantis*, juxtapositions of content that we may, at first glance, consider to be contradictory, in actuality interrelated discursively. In addition to looking backwards, also, they alert us to the trajectory of certain themes spanning the mid- to late twentieth century. Therefore, following the next section I discuss how Hillen's *The Oracle of O'Connell Street Bridge, Irelantis*, 1995

10 See, for example, C. Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001) and R. Boland, 'Hillen's Hindsight', *The Irish Times*, 9 October 1999, p. 43.

11 R. Kearney, 'Utopia and Reality', *The Irish Times*, 1 December 2001, p. 51.

12 F. O'Toole, 'The darker side of "Irelantis" was lost on us a decade ago', *The Irish Times*, 19 February 2011.

(Figure 3) and *Boating on the Liffey, Irelantis*, 1996 (Figure 4) reify situations familiar to that earlier era. In the conclusion, I return to these scenes in order to touch on questions of heritage they seem to have posed for late twentieth-century viewers.

## Modernity and Political History on the '[N]ation's Main Street' During the 1950s

Metaphorically speaking, Dublin is in the middle of Ireland and, in a sense, O'Connell Street is the nation's Main Street.<sup>13</sup>

As government officials, intellectuals and the press in Ireland and the United States recommended that 'Ireland's immediate, biggest and No. 1 dollar earner must be her tourist industry',<sup>14</sup> the present and future nation they desired resonated in photographic images that transposed the area of O'Connell Bridge and Street into a sign of modernity for viewers in Ireland and abroad. Early examples appeared in The Irish Tourist Association's *Introducing Ireland*, 1951, a 'book [that] is intended to portray in pictures some of the many facets of the scenery, life and industry of Ireland' largely for American business and tourists', and *Portrait of Ireland*, 1951, published in London yet 'Dedicated to Irish Men and Women All Over the World'. *Irish Illustrated* shared this orientation. Beginning in 1956, the 'monthly news-photo magazine, printed and published in Ireland' promoted 'Irish interests in tourism, industry, trade and politics' in 'pictorial news and essays of Irish (and subsequently Irish-American) affairs' that 'serve as a link between the Irish at home and the Irish in all other areas of the world'. Consequently, some authors fostered the link by transpos-

13 S. Rynne, *All Ireland* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1956), p. 15.

14 H. G. Smith, 'Ireland Entering a Prosperous Era', *New York Times*, 4 January 1950, p. 60.

ing features of Ireland into characteristics of place familiar to American readers. By asserting that 'O'Connell Street is the nation's Main Street',<sup>15</sup> Rynne, author of *All Ireland*, 1956, not only conflated the bridge and street area with the Republic. Additionally, he implied that the site contains what popular culture treated as a mainstay of American cities and towns – a clearly demarcated geographic, commercial and civic core. Writing in *Holiday*, Seamus Kelly explained, 'flying over central Dublin, you will see below you the familiar pattern of an American town – rectangular streets and squares as regular as graph paper'.<sup>16</sup>

As they iterated central Dublin as a sign of Ireland's aspirations for modernity, photographs of the bridge and street also conveyed something about its 'place in the world'.<sup>17</sup> Primarily, they achieved this by touching on Ireland's history of being ruled by Britain and concomitant efforts to achieve political sovereignty. To this point, they employed a heritage approach, a 'selective use of the past for contemporary purposes ... heritage can be seen as an aggregation of myths, values and inheritances determined and defined by the needs of societies in the present'.<sup>18</sup> For the Republic of Ireland, those needs included cultivating tourism as an economic mainstay. Correspondingly, images depicting what was being heralded as the heart of the commercial sector of its capital city, or 'Main Street', also referenced specific monuments, buildings and streets as 'icons of identity and spatializations of [their] history',<sup>19</sup> meaning, in the words of *Irish Illustrated*, for the benefit of an extended nation – both 'the Irish at home and the Irish in all other areas of the world', such as Irish of the diasporas, the émigrés and their progeny.

15 Rynne, p. 15.

16 S. Kelly, 'Dublin', *Holiday* 19, no.1 (January 1956), 38.

17 Fox, 'Ireland Harnesses Industry to Marshall Plan Economy: Champion Jersey Heifer', *The Christian Science Monitor* (11 April 1950), p. 6.

18 S. McDowell, 'Heritage, Memory and Identity', in B. Graham, P. Howard (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 37.

19 McDowell, p. 40.

Publications facilitated this work by hinting at a united nation. In *All Ireland*, Rynne described Ireland as having thirty-two counties in total, which means he considered the number of counties in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland to constitute Éire as a single entity. Rynne also used the geographic unity of an island to transcend the politics of partition: 'This book commenced with pictures of the Irish coast; it is fitting then that the last picture should again remind you that Ireland is an island'. The theme of Éire as one nation resonated in commentary about the O'Connell Bridge and Street. In the first issue of *Irish Illustrated*, the article 'Dublin Re-Visited', which reproduced a large photograph of 'O'Connell Street', asserted, 'When you arrive in Dublin you are in the centre of all things Irish', as if to mean, you are in the centre of an inclusive totality of what is Irish. When Rynne proclaimed, 'Dublin is in the middle of Ireland and, in a sense, O'Connell Street is the nation's Main Street',<sup>20</sup> he invited readers at home as well as those located throughout the world to appreciate Ireland as one nation, north combined with south, for which Dublin serves as the privileged core. This tendency surfaced in captions too. In *Introducing Ireland*, the photograph for the caption, '66. O'Connell Street, Dublin' does not show any government buildings. Nevertheless, the caption describes the location of the photograph as the 'centre of the capital city of Ireland ...'<sup>21</sup> (Figure 1).

In other ways, captions and commentary about photographic images of O'Connell Bridge and Street interjected the politics of Ireland's history into the site. Whelan reminds us that colonialism and nationalism equally motivated the semiotics of Dublin's public places during the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Narratives of national identity resonated during the 1950s, too. 'As every Irishman remembers, O'Connell Street was the scene of some of the bitterest fighting during the Easter Rising of 1916. The General Post Office ... stands halfway along it ...',<sup>23</sup> James Lavers extolled in 'Strolling

20 McDowell, p. 15.

21 *Introducing Ireland* (Dublin, 1951).

22 Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p. 228.

23 J. Laver, 'Strolling down O'Connell Street', *Ireland of the Welcomes* 1, no. 1 (1952) p. 16.

down O'Connell Street'. On the other hand, some links between the site and Ireland's long quest for political autonomy were visualized but not verbalized. The prime example involves the namesake of the bridge and street. Although proposed in 1884,<sup>24</sup> then occurring in usage,<sup>25</sup> Sackville Street, named for 'a former Lord Lieutenant, Lionel Cranfield Sackville, the first Duke of Dorset,'<sup>26</sup> became O'Connell Street in 1924.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in addition to the O'Connell Monument, the name of the bridge and street evokes the history of Ireland as shaped by the man who achieved Catholic Emancipation and went on to crusade for the repeal of the Act of Union. There is also the possibility that mention of the name O'Connell in the title or description of photographs elicited an awareness 'of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts,'<sup>28</sup> such as expatriates' hopes for a united Ireland free of connections to Britain in the north, or their consciousness of strife separating Ireland into two political states.

Some authors disparaged signs that modernity was taking precedence over historical commemoration. In light of 'the fact that O'Connell Street has been the site of great political history', Rynne thought Ireland was superficial in its modern tourist industry epitomized by a 'large modern hotel (with tourists sitting out in the portico) and the numerous cafeterias with their juke boxes, iced drinks and peanut stands.'<sup>29</sup> Yet, insofar as many structures in the area of the bridge and street referenced Irish history, their appearance in widely circulated photographs could be said to have promoted a 'selective use of the past for contemporary purposes', such as compelling potential American and British tourists to reflect on Ireland's 'great political history'. The visual treatment of Nelson's Pillar is a case in point. Whelan explains that between its unveiling in 1909<sup>30</sup> and before

24 Whelan, p. 107.

25 Whelan, p. 103.

26 Whelan, p. 101.

27 Whelan, pp. 58–59.

28 E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 51.

29 Rynne, p. 16.

30 Whelan, p. 201.



it was blown up in 1966,<sup>31</sup> it 'acted as a focus for the divergent views of Dubliners through a period of radical political and social change. While for some the Pillar had become a jarring symbol of colonial rule, for others it constituted an obstruction to the flow of traffic through an ever-expanding city'. During the 1950s, Nelson's Pillar marked the northern horizon in many widely circulated photographic images of the bridge. What is more, sometimes it appeared in close proximity to other monuments, and the juxtapositions allowed viewers to consider how together, they narrated Ireland's past. For example, Hinde, in his postcard, used light grey to pick out the facade of the General Post Office from among a block of adjacent buildings in shadows (Figure 5). Perhaps to indicate that the site has great spatial presence and feels all encompassing, Hinde widened the scene while compressing its distance, including between built structures. One result is that the O'Connell Monument, which in actuality is nearer to the bridge than the GPO or adjacent Nelson's Pillar, nevertheless visually appears horizontally clustered with the two monuments in the middle ground centre of the composition and together, the GPO, O'Connell Monument and Nelson's Pillar evoke many historical situations and events ranging from Ireland's colonial history and efforts at sovereignty, the Easter Rising, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and later repair of the GPO by the Irish Free State, and imperial Britain's military dominance, including Irish sailors who served Nelson in breaking the Napoleonic blockade by France and Spain.<sup>32</sup> To similar effect, the photograph Sheridan published in 'Looking at Dublin', hones in on the profile of a female allegorical figure at the base of the O'Connell Monument. She appears to hold the facade of the General Post Office and Nelson's Pillar equally in her gaze, as if compelling readers to inquire about the relationship of the historical events and individuals they memorialize.

31 Whelan, p. 206.

32 Whelan, p. 203.

# IRELAND

OF THE WELCOMES

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Figure 2 'O'Connell Street, Dublin', cover of *Ireland of the Welcomes* 9 no. 1, May-June 1960.

From the visual treatment of monuments along O'Connell Street, viewers may have gleaned a message about the nation's ability to remember its history within its flourishing modernity. To be sure, in 'Strolling down O'Connell Street', Lavers alleged that Nelson's Pillar and, perhaps by inference, the famous British officer who is its subject, appear to carry greater significance than the monument and person of Ireland's Liberator, wrapped in his 'repeal cloak, and standing upon a great bronze drum, around which are grouped such oddly assorted personifications as Patriotism and the People, Eloquence and the Arts, Commerce and Courage, and Erin breaking her chains':<sup>33</sup> '[t]here is a much higher monument than O'Connell's in the very centre of O'Connell Street, a tall column, one of the highest in these islands, surmounted by the figure of – Nelson'.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, what intrigued Rynne was Ireland's ability to accommodate evidence of a powerful Britain who once ruled over her. 'The Republic of Ireland can easily digest all such symbols of foreign domination',<sup>35</sup> including Nelson's Pillar. 'Truth to tell, Ireland meant nothing to Nelson, or Nelson to Ireland, but the Pillar is pleasing to the eye'.<sup>36</sup> Rynne anticipated what film scholar Harvey O'Brien observes about the 'depoliticized political history' espoused by the historical documentary films that Gael-Linn began sponsoring during the 1950s:<sup>37</sup> 'in presenting the facts as incontestable documentary images of the period, the internal contradictions and meta-narratives of the history itself are ignored, and the only conflicts presented are those between Ireland and England (with the further notable absence of detailed discussion of the status and role of Northern Ireland in the Civil War)'.<sup>38</sup> To this point, the period's ubiquitous photographs of the O'Connell Bridge and Street omitted references that could have verged on polemics, such as contemporary debates about removing Nelson's Pillar or an attempt to destroy it that

33 Whelan, p. 63.

34 Laver, p. 15.

35 Rynne, p. 16.

36 Rynne, p. 16.

37 H. O'Brien, 'Projecting the past: historical documentary in Ireland', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 3 (August 2000), p. 335.

38 O'Brien, p. 343.

involved posting of a picture of Republican martyr Kevin Barry.<sup>39</sup> Instead, what Rynne's remark about the Republic of Ireland 'easily digest[ing] all such symbols of foreign domination'<sup>40</sup> indicates is the possibility that photographs of O'Connell Bridge and Street publicized Dublin as a place where one could engage civilly, even pleasurably, with 'the history of the state within memorable, non-complex (non-party-political) terms without reference to the intricacies of economic or social policy'.<sup>41</sup>

As Benjamin Porter explains, '[w]hen combined, heritage and tourism result in a particular type of travel aimed not at exploring the unknown or exotic, but at learning, celebrating, and displaying one's relationship with the past'.<sup>42</sup> Representations of O'Connell Bridge and Street mediated people's varying relationships with Ireland's past by permitting 'language, practice, and objects that are concrete and publicly accessible' to connote various 'subjective meanings' of history<sup>43</sup> as if part of the everyday flow of activity in the city. There, as the photographs indicate, memorials in a space named for an Irish patriot permitted viewers to 'learn, celebrate and display' their relationship with Ireland not in terms of political activism. Instead, as Lavers concludes, '[t]he casual visitor might walk or drive along O'Connell Street nowadays without noticing anything amiss. The damage has been repaired, the wounds healed'.<sup>44</sup> Crucially, the sublimation of what could have fostered contention about colonial and civic conflicts in Ireland's history, in combination with optimistic views of the nation's capital as a centre of transport and commerce, served Ireland's nascent tourism industry by alluding to its ability to balance modernity with heritage. By the same token, the photographs met the nation's economic need

39 S. O'Mealoid, producer and director, *Scannal: Nelson's Pillar*, RTE One (Air date January 2010).

40 O'Mealoid.

41 O'Brien, p. 341.

42 B. Porter, 'Heritage Tourism: Conflicting Identities in the Modern World', in B. Graham, P. Howard (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 268.

43 Porter.

44 Laver, p. 16.

to show foreign finance, trade, and industry that it could remember and even convey its past with equanimity even as it progressed in 'building a modern state with a bold enterprise and common sense'.<sup>45</sup>

However, what are we to make of photographs and commentary that avoid referencing the site's markers of Ireland's history? In *Ireland of the Welcomes*, Arnold Haskell described O'Connell Street as 'one of the "grand boulevards" of Dublin'.<sup>46</sup> His caption leveraged Dublin's street into an international lineage of cosmopolitan places. Like so many other photographers, in stationing viewers above the city to look down on O'Connell Street spreading north, Hinde, in his postcard (Figure 5), illustrated the scene John Sheridan described in 'Looking at Dublin':

One of the delights of Dublin is that you can see it – literally – at a glance, that with a little briefing you can look down at the whole spatter and spread of it. The close-ups come later, for Dublin is rich in so places and can beguile you for a day or a fortnight, but you must get your perspective right first and not miss the wood for the trees.<sup>47</sup>

From this vantage point the nation's capital proved especially pleasing. Spread across one or more pages in a magazine or stretched across a postcard, it was consumable, too. And, it leavened politics into modernity.

This stemmed from a 'cartographic impulse' that Edward Said explained as 'a third nature, not pristine and pre-historical ... but deriving from the deprivations of the present'.<sup>48</sup> 'Deprivations' include Ireland in its historical status as beholden and peripheral to Britain. As Said states, 'One of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land. And with that came a whole set of further assertions, recoveries, and identifications, all of them quite literally grounded

45 J. M. Mead, 'Erin Goes Boom but no Complacent', *The Washington Post*, 14 March 1954, p. B3.

46 A. L. Haskell, 'Dublin – A Hurried Impression', *Ireland of the Welcomes* 1, no. 6 (March–April 1953), p. 5.

47 J. Sheridan, 'Looking at Dublin', *Ireland of the Welcomes* 6, no. 6 (March–April 1958), p. 28.

48 Said, p. 226.

on this poetically projected base'.<sup>49</sup> During the mid-twentieth century, the 'cartographic impulse' characterized Ireland using its land to foster its economic independence. Photographs of O'Connell Bridge and Street served as the project's social imaginary by fostering a 'common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy'<sup>50</sup> for the Irish at home and between Ireland and the world it wanted to engage in advancing its interests.

## Belonging to Ireland through Place

The postcard and magazine images that Hillen combined to make *Irelantis* evoke incongruities in a nation shaped by its past yet registering breakneck change. In this respect, from the late twentieth century they picture some realities the Republic of Ireland experienced during the mid-twentieth century.

That Hillen features the O'Connell Bridge and Street in two scenes indicates its importance for this end of the century, when rapid social and cultural changes fuelled popular and academic reflection on the nation's identity along with its historical patrimony. Authors often treated these topics as points of departure for inquiring about the state of Irishness and contemporary Irish culture at home and abroad; several featured scenes from *Irelantis*. For example, *The Oracle of O'Connell Street Bridge, Irelantis* (Figure 3) appears on the cover of *Nouvelles D'Irlande*.<sup>51</sup>

49 Said, p. 51.

50 C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 23.

51 M. Cronin, *Nouvelles d'Irlande* (Québec City: L'Instant Même, 1997).

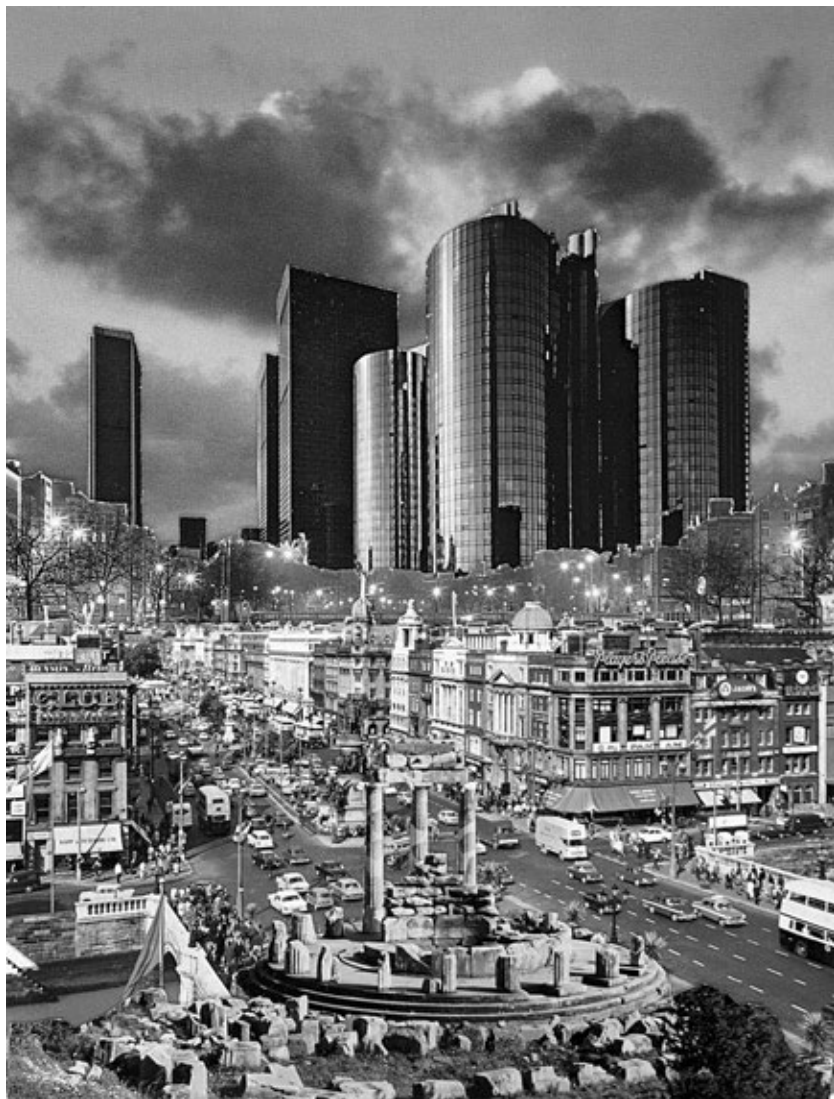


Figure 3 Sean Hillen, *The Oracle of O'Connell Street Bridge*, Irelandis, 1995.

In this context, *Irelantis* affirms O'Connell Bridge and Street Lower as part of the visual iconography of the nation's 'aggregation of myths, values and inheritances'.<sup>52</sup> Forty years earlier, photographs of the site conveyed urbanity, commerce and transport as constitutive of a modern Dublin, thus implicitly affiliating it with an international corpus of modern capital cities. What is more, they cast this part of Dublin not simply as its centre but also as the site from where the nation reached out to foreign business and tourists including to an 'Irish Diaspora [that] is accepted as part and parcel of the Irish nation'.<sup>53</sup> Within this context, photographs imaged the site as progress stippled with memorials to heroic events in national history, which downplayed the theme of loss so often associated with Ireland.<sup>54</sup>

In recognition of 'the needs of [Irish] societies in the present', meaning the late twentieth century, Ireland's symbolic 'Main Street' spreads across the core of *The Oracle of O'Connell Street Bridge, Irelantis* (Figure 3), providing key linkage between the Old World signified by the ancient Greek Delphic Oracle in the lower left foreground, and the new, indexed by the Bonaventure Hotel of Los Angeles rising, in the background, against the orange and purple sky as a majestic spectre of postmodernism. In this pivotal position, Ireland's 'Main Street' alludes to mid-century Irish governments' aspirations for their nation's involvement in a world consisting of potential tourists and trade as well as Irish citizens who formerly emigrated to Europe or the United States or chose to pursue transnational lives. Interestingly, Hillen's iteration of 'Main Street' lacks Nelson's Pillar. Either the postcard Hillen worked with post-dated the Pillar's destruction in 1966, or Hillen removed it from this scene in *Irelantis*. In either case, Hillen maintains the ubiquitous image of Dublin from the 1950s, minus an obvious sign of British imperial power.

52 McDowell, p. 37.

53 P. Cauvet, 'Irish Nationalist Discourses on Nation and Territory before and after the Good Friday Agreement.' *GeoJournal* 76 (2011), p. 86.

54 T. O'Grady, 'Memory, Photography, Ireland', *Irish Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (2006), p. 257.



*Boating on the Liffey* (Figure 4) likewise contends with an Ireland that is neither 'pristine' nor 'pre-historical'.<sup>55</sup> However, in contrast to *The Oracle of O'Connell Street Bridge, Irelantis*, it re-envisioned Dublin as seen from below the bridge, favouring the east side as a bucolic site made outrageous by a pair of rowers who seem unaware that towering above them are the gigantic raised, dripping flukes of a whale diving into river. Other features of the scene are confusing. In its hazy dawn – or is it twilight? – where do the blocks of buildings begin and end? What serves as the site's geographic boundaries? Along with a line indicating where Hillen joined postcards or magazine pictures, the imagery points to the invented quality of the image. Yet, its combination of a pastoral river passage and urban setting accurately indexes the mid-twentieth-century identity of Dublin as a 'three-way relationship between the countryside, modernisation and national identity'.<sup>56</sup>

### '[T]he [N]ation's Main Street' and Pastoralism

In his postcards Hinde depicted figures boating or fishing in the Irish countryside. In Hillen's collage (Figure 4), the man and woman boating on the river resemble them. Moreover, the quietude of this passage in Hillen's collage disassociates the couple from the commerce signified by the buildings above and behind them, or does it? Gibbons explains that 'rural ideology' may consist of 'idealizations of rural existence, the longing for community and primitive simplicity' not simply as 'a genuine expression of country life' but as 'the product of an urban sensibility' providing 'cultural fictions

55 Said, p. 226.

56 J. Burchardt, 'Editorial: Rurality, Modernity and National Identity between the Wars', *Rural History* 21, no. 2 (2010), p. 144.

imposed on the lives of those they purport to represent.<sup>57</sup> Correspondingly, Hillen's insertion of a bucolic river scene in the vicinity of Ireland's 'Main Street' was neither anomalous nor contradictory because during the mid-twentieth century, pastoralism interrelated with 'Main Street'.



Figure 4 Sean Hillen, *Boating on the Liffey*, Irelantis, 1996.

57 L. Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 208.

In 1949, Minister for Industry and Commerce Daniel Morrissey expressed a need to circulate representations of Ireland in 'those countries from which it is most likely that tourists can be attracted to this country'.<sup>58</sup> Members of Dáil Éireann estimated that tourists would hail from Britain and the United States. 'The tourists for whom we should cater are those whose ancestors left our shores in generations gone by and who are now coming back to the land of their forebears', Patrick Giles remarked.<sup>59</sup> A colleague clarified, 'They are people who perhaps emigrated from this country ten, 15 or 20 years ago and, through hard work, they succeeded in saving, over a long period of years, sufficient money to enable them to take a holiday in their native land for a short term ... these people supply the bulk of our tourist traffic'.<sup>60</sup> William Norton said American tourists consisted of two types, 'the natural-born American who decides that he is going to leave the American Continent and see what is happening in other parts of the world' and 'the Irish-American who made good ... he wants to come back and see his homeland ... [h]e feels an urge to see how things are in the old land'.<sup>61</sup>

Formed in 1949, the Cultural Relations Committee advised the Minister for Foreign Affairs on how 'to carry out or give financial support to Irish culture projects of a high artistic standard, with a view to the enhancement of Ireland's image and reputation abroad'.<sup>62</sup> Also, it planned

58 D. Morrissey, 'Committee on Finance', Dáil Éireann 115 (25 May 1949). <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0115/D.0115.194905250030.html>>.

59 P. Giles, Tourist Traffic Bill, Dáil Éireann 129 (28 February 1952; 1951 – Second Stage (Resumed)). <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0129/D.0129.195202280072.html>>.

60 T. O'Hara, Tourist Traffic Bill, Dáil Éireann 129 (6 March 1952; 1951 – Second Stage (Resumed)). <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0129/D.0129.195203060048.html>>.

61 W. Norton, Tourist Traffic Bill, Dáil Éireann 129 (6 March 1952; 1951 – Second Stage (Resumed)) <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0129/D.0129.195203060048.html>>.

62 Department of Foreign Affairs, *Challenges and Opportunities Abroad, White Paper on Foreign Policy* (Dublin, Ireland: Stationery Office, 1996), p. 313.

a 'general survey of present-day Ireland' intended for 'the principal Irish centres in the US' along with photography exhibitions for circulation abroad.<sup>63</sup> In 1952, the Office of the Minister for Industry and Commerce began publishing *Ireland of the Welcomes* to demonstrate to 'readers overseas' that Ireland had 'all the ingredients of a thoroughly enjoyable holiday'<sup>64</sup> to 'the old land'.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, in *The Bell*, Anthony Cronin criticized the Cultural Relations Committee as 'an advertising agency for Irish Culture'<sup>66</sup> that 'seems in any case to have very little to do with anything that might be described as culture' and instead, emphasizes 'the running of photographic exhibitions' including in an American department store.<sup>67</sup> He accused the government of promoting a type of nationalism he considered repressive and retrogressive.<sup>68</sup> Given this framework, Cronin may have perceived photographs emphasizing rural Ireland as contributing to this provincialism. He ejected, 'The Tourist Board pretends to the rest of the world that if it comes there for the fishing it will find a never-never land of unspoilt simplicity and a people racy of the soil'.<sup>69</sup>

63 F. Aiken, 'Ceisteanna – Questions. Oral Answers. – Cultural Relations Committee.' Dáil Éireann 127 (21 November 1951). <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0127/D.0127.195111210038.html>>.

64 *Ireland of the Welcomes* 1, no. 1 (May–June 1952).

65 Norton, <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0129/D.0129.195203060048.html>>.

66 A. Cronin, 'The Cultural Relations Committee', *The Bell* 17, no. 8 (November 1951), p. 7.

67 Cronin, 'The Cultural Relations Committee', p. 6.

68 Cronin, 'The Cultural Relations Committee' p. 13.

69 Cronin, 'The Cultural Relations Committee', p. 15.



Figure 5 John Hinde, *Nelson's Pillar, O'Connell Street, and Bridge*, Dublin, Ireland, c. 1958.

Cronin's jabs notwithstanding, in Ireland, England and the United States, books, magazines and newspapers used several techniques to integrate 'the old land'<sup>70</sup> into the 'urban sensibility' of 'Main Street'.<sup>71</sup> One combined a photograph of a rural scene with text or a caption about the Irish economy, industrialization, manufacturing or the tourism industry. In *The Washington Post*, for example, a caption for a photograph showing a man walking down a long stretch of rural road read, 'Despite industrial growth, modern Éire still offers pastoral scenes such as this road in Tipperary'.<sup>72</sup> Another technique involved publishing mostly photographs of rural scenes, save for O'Connell Bridge and Street, as in Morath's *Portrait*

70 Norton, <<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0129/D.0129.195203060048.html>>.

71 Rynne, p. 15.

72 Mead, p. B3.

*of Ireland*, 1951. *Ireland in Colour*, 1957 and *The Emerald Isle*, 1952 both reproduced a photograph by Allan Cash depicting O'Connell Bridge low, from the east side, as a glassy still expanse bordered by blocks of buildings. In the former book, Rodgers said the river scene manifests modernity in its 'enormous contemporaneousness' that pulls together references to its past: 'Time and space are joined in one flesh round the ever-and-nevering nerve of the Liffey, and the feeling of piety and porter is never far from it.'<sup>73</sup> In contrast, in *The Emerald Isle*, Taylor removed Ireland from historical time.

Ireland is unique among European nations in having no history. We have a natural history, indeed, at which we ourselves sometimes throw a wondering glance, and which is a frequent delight to foreigners. And we have a supernatural history. Beyond that, for what is in most of Western Christendom, the main historical period, we have, instead of history without prefix, only an enormous contemporaneousness – an ageless era from Henry the Second of England to the Heroic Defence of the Post Office, during which Time is without structure, lacking those customary long-receding vistas, familiar temporal perspectives.<sup>74</sup>

A third technique conflated the bridge and street scene with pastoralism. 'Strolling down O'Connell Street', the title of Lavers' article, summoned a flâneur-inspired meandering that situates Ireland's 'Main Street' in the era of Baudelaire. Yet, Lavers also distinguished Dublin from other Western cities. For instance, whereas in Paris 'one might fancy that the city was the world, forgetting altogether the country that lies beyond', in Dublin, '[o]ne is almost conscious that underneath its pavements lies the immemorial black earth of which all Ireland is made, and one feels that in this leaf-mould are history and pre-history ...'<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, 'Dublin retains, in spite of its efficient bus service and up-to-date hotels, something incredibly, primitive and remote.'<sup>76</sup> Along these lines, in 'Looking at Dublin', Sheridan concluded,

73 W. R. Rodgers, *Ireland in Colour* (London, 1957), p. 44.

74 G. Taylor, *The Emerald Isle* (London: Evans Brothers, 1952), p. 13.

75 Laver, p. 16.

76 Laver.

And here we have the secret of Dublin – which is that it is not cut off from the rest of the country but a living, breathing part of it. It is Kerry and Monaghan, Mayo and Donegal, and nine out of every ten Dubliners are permanent immigrants who are only a generation or so away from the title-deeds of a farm.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, in *Introducing Ireland*, Finn observed,

No one could mistake Dublin for anything but a capital city; an aspect she shares with Edinburgh and which is sadly lacking in many a town of greater size. But while, when within it, one is conscious of being in a metropolitan and increasingly industrialised area, one is equally conscious that the countryside is only just over the back doorstep, and that in Ireland the country is still more important than the town.<sup>78</sup>

In iterating Dublin's modernity, the authors reassured their readers that city and nation shared an innate rural foundation if not also a nationalistic history. The issue of *Ireland of the Welcomes* that featured a colour photograph of O'Connell Bridge and Street on the cover allowed for the site's modernity, too; yet, the related article emphasized the past (Figure 2):

O'Connell Street, Dublin. Visitors to Dublin find a capital that is agreeably different. Whilst it has some of the hustle and bustle associated with all great modern cities, it is best remembered for the spaciousness and graciousness of its broad streets and elegant eighteenth century squares which breathe an atmosphere of quiet dignity. And it's so easy to explore ...<sup>79</sup>

In addition to the monuments, references to rural Ireland imbued the nation's site of modernity with heritage, 'a view from the present, either backward to a past or forward to a future.'<sup>80</sup>

77 Sheridan, p. 31.

78 R. W. Finn, *Introducing Ireland* (London: Museum Press, 1955), p. 161.

79 *Ireland of the Welcomes* 9. no. 1 (May–June 1960), p. 5.

80 B. J. Graham, G. J. Ashworth, & J. E. Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 2.

## Conclusion

*Irelantis* looks both ways, too. It does so by repurposing previously published photographs into scenes affording reflection on how the visual culture of Dublin engaged with narratives about national identity and the nation's status in the world. By the late twentieth century the themes filtered many Irish citizens' sense of self. Some even considered the collective Irish self in jeopardy, not least because '[s]ince 1991 there has been a profound shift in Ireland's migration profile: from 'emigrant nursery' to immigrant destination'.<sup>81</sup>

Something else compelled reflection on the trajectory of Ireland's identity from past to present and future. Based on the Good Friday Agreement, in order for reunification to occur the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, north and south, must agree on the issues and their resolution. This prompted Philippe Cauvet to wonder if the prerequisite to peace deterritorialized Ireland by reducing it from the inclusive Éire corresponding with the nation as an island, to two political entities that must be recognized as existing separately in order for discussion about any resolution to advance.<sup>82</sup>

What relevance does this have for the modernity that photographs of O'Connell Bridge and Street promoted during the mid-twentieth century? It puts into question whether and if so how, then and thereafter, the Republic of Ireland held fast to pastoralism and geography (i.e., Ireland the nation is the island and vice versa) as its historical if not also essential character. In turn, this raises questions about Ireland's modernity – whether, for example, it was or is a superficial gloss on an essential Ireland that is always 'pre-modern, the archaic and the maladapted; [associated] with all those things whose inevitable fate it was to be vanquished by modernity',<sup>83</sup> which,

81 M. Gilmartin and A. White, 'Revisiting contemporary Irish migration: new geographies of mobility and belonging', *Irish Geography* 41, no. 2 (July 2008), p. 144.

82 Cauvet, p. 78.

83 Cauvet, p. 3.



consequently, places Ireland at the 'periphery to the European mainstream, [as] a place that was out of the world, beyond the world, an alternative to the world' having tradition as opposed to progress.'<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand, the mid-century photographs, along with Hillen's *Boating on the Liffey, Irelantis*, 1996, trouble the notion that modernity 'connote[s] an epochal rupture with the "pre-modern" or the "non-modern"'.<sup>85</sup> They manage to engage with Ireland's ambitions for political and economic sovereignty as well as history and pastoralism, hinting at the agency of a nation that self-reflexively constructs its identity for the world. In *Boating on the Liffey, Irelantis* (Figure 4) the combination of passages from various postcards and magazines remind us about the role that agency plays in the artist selecting and integrating representations to best suit his interests and needs. Correspondingly, by reconstructing the 'old picture' of Ireland, Hillen, like the photographers of Dublin active during 1950s and 1960s, revived that picture and its discourses involving national identity in international contexts, to explore what Ireland meant as 'a view from the present, either backward to a past or forward to a future'.<sup>86</sup> As Terry Eagleton advises about history, 'The point, then, is to be neither incarcerated by the past (afflicted with memories) nor to disavow it in a frenetic hunt for self-invention, but to find a way of using it which will get you beyond it'<sup>87</sup> – to its next iteration.

84 Cauvet, p. 10.

85 Cauvet, p. 2.

86 Graham, et al, *A Geography of Heritage*, p. 2.

87 T. Eagleton, 'History, Remembrance and Oblivion', in L. Harte, Y. Whelan and P. Crotty (eds), *Ireland: Space, Text, Time* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2005), p. 13.



PART IV

History, Aestheticization, Globalization



## Dublin's (in)Authentic Vista

In 2010 the Irish state attempted to have Georgian Dublin declared an UNESCO World Heritage site as part of the 'Historic City of Dublin' proposal, which alongside its architecture emphasized the city's literary culture from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> This initiative identified Georgian architecture as an important part of the current branding of the city. In addition to literature and architecture, the initial submission included Dublin's enlightenment heritage as the highlights of the submission.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, other elements of the surviving built environment were excluded from this submission, such as the 'Dutch Billies', a type of building popularly associated with King William of Orange or 'King Billy'.

It has been suggested by Kelli Ann Costa that Georgian Dublin has been subject to the process of sacralization, through which examples of buildings have been found which represent the highest achievements of the Georgian period in architecture including the rediscovery of 'new' Georgian districts.<sup>3</sup> The style of these prime examples of Georgian architecture is emulated in contemporary architecture, increasing the symbolic heritage value of the original.<sup>4</sup> This essay interrogates this process, using the imitation and rediscovery stages as points of departure arguing that new and restored buildings are a pastiche of the original architectural design,

1 Unesco, *The Historic City of Dublin*, UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2010), <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5523/>>. Retrieved 27 September 2010.

2 B. Lucas, *Tentative List Submission Format: Ireland Submission* (Dublin 2010), <<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Heritage/BuiltHeritagePolicy/FileDownload,21489,en.pdf>>. Retrieved 27 September 2010.

3 K. A. Costa, *Coach Fellas: Heritage and Tourism in Ireland* (California: Left Coast Press, 2009), pp. 97–98.

4 Costa, pp. 97–99.

and should be classified as inauthentic buildings. As part of this analysis the responses of those who subjectively accept or reject the authenticity of these buildings will be analysed, using the online discussion forum 'archiseek' as a source, this has the additional advantage of showing different perspectives, and on one occasion includes a reply from an architect whose restoration work had been criticized.

## The Development and Destruction of a Colonial Streetscape

The 'Dutch Billy' or 'Huguenot' design was, prior to the construction of the classical streetscape, the dominant architectural style of Dublin.<sup>5</sup> However no original examples have survived completely intact.<sup>6</sup> 'Dutch Billy' houses appear in a number of eighteenth-century images of Dublin including, for example, Francis Wheatley's depiction of Irish Volunteers at College Green.<sup>7</sup> The gabled roofs were the most recognizable exterior feature of these buildings, this aspect being no longer visible in the surviving structures. A number of gabled roofs have subsequently been restored onto the structures though, as shall be outlined below, not to everyone's satisfaction.

'Dutch Billies' have a political connotation in that it is often assumed, as their alternative names suggests, that they were built by the Huguenots<sup>8</sup> and became the mainstream urban architectural style in celebration of the

5 R. Hylton, *Ireland's Huguenots and their Refuge, 1662–1745: An Unlikely Haven* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p. 64.

6 C. Casey, *Dublin: The City within the Grand and Royal Canals and the Circular Road with the Phoenix Park* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 36.

7 <[http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/The\\_Muster\\_of\\_the\\_Irish\\_Volunteers\\_in\\_College\\_Green\\_4\\_November\\_1779\\_After\\_Francis\\_Wheatley\\_1779](http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/The_Muster_of_the_Irish_Volunteers_in_College_Green_4_November_1779_After_Francis_Wheatley_1779)>.

8 M. Craig, *Dublin 1660–1860* (Dublin: A. Figgis, 1980), pp. 86–87.

victory of William of Orange at the Boyne in 1690.<sup>9</sup> Raymond Hylton challenges the first of these assumptions by pointing out that there is no evidence to suggest that French or Dutch architects had any involvement in the design of 'Dutch Billies' and English influence seems more likely.<sup>10</sup> While this seems to be a cautionary tale of the risks of reliance on folk etymology the fact remains that 'Dutch Billies' are popularly interpreted as having these links. They are not the only architectural feature of Dublin that are, or have been, taken as having a link to a Protestant, British identity, the same has been argued in the case of Georgian Dublin, the style of which succeeded the 'Dutch Billy' trend.

Despite the name referring to the reigns of the four consecutive Georges (1714–1830), Pat Dargan argues that the architectural period should correctly refer to between 1700 and 1845 beginning during the latter years of the reign of King William of Orange and ending in the early years of Victoria's reign. He also suggests that the term when related to architecture can be used interchangeably with Classical and Renaissance, favouring the latter. These terms effectively illustrate the genealogy of the architecture showing how it developed from these two styles.<sup>11</sup> Equally important is the confines of the Georgian city, highlighted by David Dickson who points out that '[t]he architectural legacy of "Georgian Dublin" is with few exceptions, sited in what was in 1800 the eastern half of the city'.<sup>12</sup> The emphasis on the architectural legacy of Georgian Dublin excludes the Liberties, for example, which has been rebuilt since the Georgian era but significant parts of which such as Thomas Street predate many areas of Georgian Dublin.

While both public and larger private buildings exist as part of this architectural fashion, the focus here will be on the private terraced houses for single-family dwelling constructed according to a distinct architectural

9 N. McCullough, *Dublin: An Urban History* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2007), p. 187.

10 Hylton, pp. 59–64.

11 P. Dargan, *Exploring Georgian Dublin* (Dublin: Nonesuch, 2008), p. 11.

12 D. Dickson, *The Gorgeous Mask, Dublin 1700–1850* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, Trinity College Dublin, 1987) p. vii.

style. In construction builders tended to employ generic designs though with some variation in the brickwork. However embellishments on the facades, such as metal work or windows, gave each an individual identity. The most obvious examples of these through their usage in various promotions of Dublin are the doors. According to Dargan these vary 'considerably in their style and complexity' leading to 'an almost limitless variety of doorframes'.<sup>13</sup>

On 31 December 1959 the *Irish Times* pronounced 'the days of Dublin's Georgian heritage are numbered'.<sup>14</sup> The main argument at this time was one of modernization, though other more political viewpoints were expressed. Both Frank McDonald<sup>15</sup> and the Irish Georgian Society cite two tragedies that were used as justifications for redevelopment, the collapse of no. 20 Bolton Street which killed two occupants, and the collapse of two Georgian houses on Fenian Street.<sup>16</sup> This led to public protests and a government and private reaction of evacuating houses suspected of being unsafe. Local government's Dangerous Building Inspectorate found up to 2,000 buildings were unsafe, of which 1,200 would be demolished. Both the IGS and McDonald argue that the issue of public safety provided a convenient excuse for Dublin Corporation to proceed with redevelopment plans as answers to calls for action. In addition to modernization hints of a nationalist agenda were present, MacDonald claims that for many nationalists Georgian Dublin was a symbol of '800 years of oppression', quoting one unnamed TD as saying of the destruction of two Georgian buildings in Kildare Place, in 1957: 'I was glad to see them go. They stood for everything I hate'.<sup>17</sup> This attitude seems to have been in keeping with many people's views of Georgian Dublin at that time.

During this period, which McDonald has provocatively called the destruction of Dublin, the streetscape was changed by developers and in

13 Dargan, p. 47.

14 Quoted in R. O'Byrne, *The Irish Georgian Society: A Celebration* (Dublin: Irish Georgian Society, 2008), p. 46.

15 F. McDonald, *The Destruction of Dublin* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985).

16 O'Byrne, p. 47.

17 McDonald, p. 12.



addition to 'Dutch Billies', buildings of Georgian and Victorian design were demolished. The Battle of Hume Street started in 1966 when Dublin Corporation granted planning permission for large opposite blocks at the Hume Street-St Stephen's Green junction. The permission wasn't immediately acted upon and An Taisce and the IGS campaigned against this development. By the end of 1969 demolition began on No. 45 St Stephen's Green, which led to architectural students occupying the endangered buildings. The IGS claim this led to a stalemate, which resulted in a decision that the offices had to be in the 'Georgian idiom'.<sup>18</sup> Sam Stephenson, the main architect on the development, was opposed to this arguing that this decision would lead to the development of a pastiche Georgian style to which architects would be confined. McDonald believes this is exactly what happened as the building of imitation Georgian buildings were seen as a way around planning problems and a way to pacify protestors at the same time as not having to compensate the developers Green Properties for stopping the development.<sup>19</sup> This created a process where instead of the best examples of Georgian buildings being emulated, in order to avoid conflict developers would attempt to reconstruct period buildings regardless of their architectural merit.

## (Re)moving Houses – Reconstructing the Streetscape

As the precedent on which future developments were based, Hume Street presents an interesting case study in the reception of Georgian pastiche. After their architect Sam Stephenson died in 2006, there was some discussion on 'archiseek' regarding the merits or otherwise of his work there. One poster, GregF, described them as 'Georgian reproductions of lob

18 O'Byrne, p. 89.

19 McDonald, pp. 95–101.

sided blank gables ... awful.<sup>20</sup> On another thread about Stephenson, Phil, writing in 2004, claimed that while hating pastiche and the St Stephen's Green Shopping Centre he enjoyed the diversity of buildings around the Green, to which another pointed to the circumstances in which many of these buildings were erected. There had been a large number of accidents, such as a fire in the area, and this led to the rebuilding of parts of the Green including two of the Hume Street houses, which were among those he did not believe were of good quality.<sup>21</sup>

This uneasy settlement brings us to a situation which has lasted until quite recently and which still marks the streetscape of the inner city, where older buildings are demolished and replaced by replica buildings. During the early 1980s the developer, Patrick Gallagher had demolished a row of eighteenth-century houses in Lower Leeson Street, including one of the last surviving 'Dutch Billies'. The 'Dutch Billy' replica located at 18 Lower Leeson Street has two major differences with its original; surviving images show that the 'Dutch Billy' had had its gable incorporated into an expanded facade, whereas its replica has a 'restored' gable. The other significant difference is that it has been moved further down the street away from the St Stephen's Green junction, it was originally three doors from the end of the street.

Reaction to the reproduced 'Billy' has been mixed to say the least, one poster J.Seerski describes it as 'a fake repro' who later clarifies this as meaning they are not from the era they are associated with. James, another poster, who is an architect, claims to find the reproduced building offensive citing the battles to save the original buildings. Zap, on the other hand, while finding that aesthetically the building looks too good, appreciates how despite being a replica its quality is excellent, considering when it was built.<sup>22</sup>

As the Hume Street precedent shows Georgian buildings were also casualties of this process, and in Leeson Street the neighbouring buildings

20 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=59260&postcount=52>>.

21 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showthread.php?t=46&page=3>>.

22 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showthread.php?t=6813>>.

to 'Dutch Billy' were examples of this, however the discussion on the 'Dutch Billy' tends to obscure this. The comments on the Georgians in Leeson Street include one suggesting that they will be pretty long lasting which was met with the reply that when the fake Georgian society gets set up this will be the case.<sup>23</sup>

Like Leeson Street and Hume Street, Harcourt Street is one of the city routes that can be described as formerly Georgian. However the attempts to preserve it appear to have been relatively low key and the reproductions, despite an occasionally polished appearance, at least look the part. Of the streets covered here it is perhaps the mostly heavily affected by pastiche. In this case however some seem to believe that the pastiche works. An element in the lack of criticism may be that the new buildings and old buildings are believed by some to complement each other, even if some are glass.<sup>24</sup> The same building is described by Globalcitizen as 'a piece of vandalism';<sup>25</sup> they suggest that pastiche would have been preferable.<sup>26</sup> Some commentators have pointed to pastiche lamps rather than buildings as a problem in the area particularly as there are also originals present. This is especially true for some posters who argue that Harcourt Street relies on its historic charm.<sup>27</sup> GrahamH summed up the position on Harcourt Street: 'If a replica house helped to establish the nature of Harcourt Street from this crucial introductory point of what is the city's most picturesque and most complete in form of Georgian streets, helping to reinforce the streetscape then yes, I for one would advocate a replica.'<sup>28</sup>

Unlike other areas covered here, Molesworth Street has long been a mixed street, though its partially Georgian character was preserved by events at Hume Street. According to the IGS the Hume Street decision had effects for the development of Molesworth Street, where Setanta Investments had

23 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=4751&p=48911>>.

24 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7307>>.

25 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4641&start=825>>.

26 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4641&p=102241&hilit=harcourt+pastiche#p102250>>.

27 <<http://canada.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=3968>>.

28 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=3638&start=50>>.

to limit the height and external appearance.<sup>29</sup> Frank McDonald lays out the story of what happened later with Patrick Gallagher and Molesworth Street and the wider public apathy. A lot of the architecture on the street by that point was Victorian not Georgian architecture and this was not valued by conservationists to the same extent. In addition according to Frank McDonald the motives of these conservationists were considered suspect and it was assumed they must have a business interest. Gallagher also had a role in controlling public opinion with the street when he called a press conference and threatened to lay off his workers, prompting a counter protest. From the point of view of the Georgian conservationists the matter rested on the few Georgian buildings that were bought and destroyed in the development. Gallagher argued they had to come down as they were unsafe, but one of these structurally unsound buildings withstood a bulldozer for the better part of a day.<sup>30</sup> After the event, Deirdre Young, writing in the *Hibernia*, argued that Gallagher could not be deemed to have been at fault but rather the entire political and legal system.<sup>31</sup>

Regardless of or perhaps due to the politics of what happened at the time, there seems to have been less discussion on Molesworth Street than the other streets. Gunter on the 'Dutch Billy' thread suggests that what was replaced in the case of No. 34 was itself unconvincing as it had been altered in the Victorian era. That said, he described the newer building as a 'lame piece of pastiche'.<sup>32</sup> Aside from this the concern seems to focus on what was lost,<sup>33</sup> such as the school<sup>34</sup> or the modern buildings being built there,<sup>35</sup> occasionally comparing the two,<sup>36</sup> and on apparent planning vio-

29 O'Byrne, p. 89.

30 McDonald, pp. 222–227.

31 Quoted O'Byrne, p. 90.

32 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=6813&start=450>>.

33 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=6813&p=101949&highlight=molesworth#p101949>>.

34 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=7856&p=100820&highlight=molesworth#p100820>>.

35 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4869&p=92823&highlight=molesworth#p92823>>.

36 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=7117&p=86221&highlight=molesworth#p85881>>.

lations.<sup>37</sup> Others prefer to take an optimistic view and look at what has been retained, such as the Freemason's Hall<sup>38</sup> or original granite paving,<sup>39</sup> while others still look to it as being one of Dublin's classier streets<sup>40</sup> and celebrate its general sense of place.<sup>41</sup>

Some restorations have also had their authenticity questioned, a notable example being the restoration of a gabled house in Manor Street. No. 42 Manor Street had already attracted some scepticism from 'Dutch Billy' aficionados due to its hipped front and back flat parapet and its facade appearing to be a more recent repair. This same aficionado in a series of posts suggested that the building had been 'chopped up'<sup>42</sup> in an attempt at restoration. The restoration, which caused this poster so much concern, consisted of removing brickwork on both ends of the parapet and replacing the three top windows with lunettes. The poster going by the username Gunter revised his previous scepticism on the house being a 'Dutch Billy' and accepted that the building's roof structure had been modified. Questioning the handiwork Gunter suggested that the 'hatchet job' resulted in the house being a caricature based on a design that would not have been used in the eighteenth century. Gunter also argued that this is the type of building that should not be restored as that takes away from the narrative that they represent which to him was a double-gabled house that was rebranded owing to a change in fashion. A number of other posters agreed to varying extents with Gunter's points, that at a material and visual level the authenticity of the building had been undermined by an architect's attempt to reconstruct a gabled house.

37 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4795&p=93322&highlight=molesworth#p93322>>.

38 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=7117&p=86221&highlight=molesworth#p86221>>.

39 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4516&p=66622&highlight=molesworth#p66622>>.

40 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=7117&p=86221&highlight=molesworth#p85951>>.

41 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=7251&p=89208&highlight=molesworth#p89208>>.

42 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=6813&start=250>>.

On 30 April 2009 one of the architects involved responded to these criticisms agreeing that the sashes were terrible, but defended most of the other criticisms. The removed windows were twentieth-century inserts and eighteenth-century ones were restored, the lunettes were found in the original plasterwork, though they had to use a simple eighteenth-century method of joinery as the original had not survived. They had determined that the alterations to the parapet had taken place when the house was a police barracks in the nineteenth century and these had degraded over the years to the point that they were no longer secure. Initially they had proposed a double-gable design for their restoration but further investigation had determined that the roof had always been flat, and that once additions were taken out of the equation the parapet corresponded to two-thirds of the parapet. This led them to the conclusion that the front elevation had been gabled. Most of the original brickwork was retained but the pointing was given a rough look in order to replicate original period detail suggesting that this favoured authenticity over aesthetics.<sup>43</sup>

GrahamH was the first to respond, maintaining that the windows seemed anachronistic in their relationship to the gable as they belonged in the late eighteenth century rather than the 1740s, by which point gabled houses had gone out of fashion. He criticized the restoration of the gable itself as being too speculative, as no similar designs were known elsewhere and therefore the restoration could not be 'academically informed'. This concern with anachronism and academic validation is suggestive of a need for the authenticity of a structure to be confirmed prior to its acceptance. Despite this however he congratulated them on a job well done otherwise albeit one that looked coarse compared to what they had applied for in the planning permission, which would have been inconsistent with the houses date.<sup>44</sup>

It should of course be noted that not everyone started from the assumption that the design chosen was wrong; a poster named Hutton had made a parallel assertion after Gunter had dismissed the building as a 'Dutch

43 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=6813&start=275>>.

44 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=6813&start=275>>.

Billy'.<sup>45</sup> The argument was not helped by initial planning permission for the restoration having been for a double-gabled roof,<sup>46</sup> which had been based on the architect's assumptions prior to onsite investigation.<sup>47</sup>

## The Inauthenticity of Old Dublin

While the language used here is primarily architectural, it is clear that these architects and laymen are discussing the authenticity of these buildings. In the 1970s Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist* connected the concept of authenticity, itself having previously been connected by phenomenologists to being, to the tourist experience. While phenomenologists regarded authenticity as a primordial search for an authentic sense of self, in MacCannell's work authenticity is regarded as a driving factor in tourism, and at its most basic level is the tourist experiencing the tourist product as 'real'. MacCannell himself, has had to correct suggestions that he assumes there is a naturally occurring realness that is experienced, instead this is constructed and interpreted for them through meanings and structures, provided by contexts, guides, maps, signage, etc.<sup>48</sup>

In response to MacCannell's work Erik Cohen has developed a typology of both authenticity and tourists' relationship with the toured object – including its authenticity. According to Cohen there are a number of potential situations for the tourist to experience, the first is that there is, in theory, an objective authentic experience or object, as in it is experienced as being really real, the second is MacCannell's staged authentic which is made to look real. A third type of authenticity is put forward but not perceived

45 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=79398&postcount=41>>.

46 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=92407&postcount=259>>.

47 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=94450&postcount=285>>.

48 D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (California: California University Press, 1999), pp. 98–99.

or accepted by onlookers as real, a fourth type dispenses with the notion of authenticity by not trying to seem authentic in the first place, any of these can become authentic through a process he calls emergent authenticity.<sup>49</sup> Cohen develops some of MacCannell's suggestions that there's a mediated factor to authenticity by arguing for a process of communicative staging – the tourist accepts an object, building or culture as authentic because the tour guide assures them that this is the case.<sup>50</sup> Cohen rejects the idea that tourism is a quest for authenticity, claiming instead that tourists can be broken down into several types, some of whom are interested in authenticity but others of whom are simply after a good time.<sup>51</sup> While both MacCannell and Cohen tend to emphasize structure in their treatment of authenticity, Ning Wang argues that in addition authenticity has agency in its subjective experience.<sup>52</sup>

Theodor Adorno's central argument in *The Jargon of Authenticity* is that not only is the assumption of an objective authenticity impossible but that the concept of authenticity itself is based on the assumption, that there is an inauthenticity which it can be defined against. He uses authenticity as discourse to critique how language serves the status quo, when this is expanded into other more recent discussions on authenticity, which treat it as a socially constructed value or experience; it raises the question whose interests are being served and what are the underlying structures.<sup>53</sup> Adorno also questions the usage of authenticity as a value, in the case of speech of sincerity,<sup>54</sup> if applied to themed locations looking at them as authentic or otherwise, could sideline the processes involved in their production such

49 E. Cohen, 'Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, no. 3 (1988), 371–386, pp. 376–379.

50 E. Cohen, 'Primitive and Remote: Hill Tribe Trekking in Thailand', *Annals of Tourism Research* 16, no. 1 (1989), 349–370, pp. 33–34.

51 Cohen, 'Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism', p. 377.

52 N. Wang 'Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience', *Annals of Tourism Research* 26, no. 2 (1999), p. 365.

53 T. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 124.

54 Adorno, pp. 90–91.



as, how they fit into a narrative that is being presented or why they are thought to be authentic or inauthentic in the first place.

This largely presupposes that the phenomenological definition of authenticity, along with its opposite inauthenticity, is true for the built environment as well as a tourist setting – leaving aside the obvious overlap. The posters on the thread ‘Pastiche the final solution’<sup>55</sup> stressed a number of definitions for the term pastiche that in general stressed that these buildings were imitations, that more recent architecture may have been knocked down for the pastiche, the quality of the pastiche (potentially imitating the wrong period), and how they may take away from surviving original buildings with them, though on this last point GrahamH considers surviving originals may actually justify sympathetic pastiche structures. StephenC describes some pastiche buildings north of the Liffey as ‘twee and cheap’. A poster using the name What? explicitly links pastiche buildings to authenticity: ‘these imitations [sic] are not only vulgar in themselves, they rape authentic Georgian buildings of their Charecter [sic] by being allowed to undermine their qualities.’

These responses demonstrate a certain amount of aesthetic sensibility involved in the construction of authenticity, whether it be the quality of the new-build pastiche or a restoration of an existing building. In some cases, as illustrated above, the buildings don’t look the part or jar with the existing streetscape or, as was illustrated by the ‘Dutch Billy’ in Manor Street, don’t conform to preconceived notions. In some cases this is an issue of quality, as with one poster who claimed that the Hume Street pastiches are poor quality. Interestingly, a number of posters claimed that they would be supportive of pastiche in cases where it added to or complemented the streetscape, such as GrahamH suggesting that a pastiche build could be appropriate for Harcourt Street. In this we see that the overall context of the place is an important factor in whether a building is accepted as authentic or not, acting as a sort of communicative staging.

Importantly there was a concern that using pastiche attempts to rewrite the history of a streetscape, What? links it to ‘the creation of a false history’

55 <<http://archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=3638>>.

exacerbated by the fact that as the building is worn down it will become harder to tell that it is fake. Edward Relph recognizes a similar phenomenon in museumization, seeing these as contrived spaces where an ideal, romanticized, and heavily bowdlerized version of history is presented, using either reconstruction or restoration. Usually these are based on visually accurate representations but can be either 'genuine relics or complete fakes and facades'.<sup>56</sup> His objection to museumization as a process appears to be that it completely decontextualizes the places to the extent that the original context is completely obliterated. Writing in the context of a related phenomenon, Relph observes that the removal of the qualities of 'time and tradition'<sup>57</sup> from a place completely obliterates any remaining vestiges of authenticity. GrahamH, despite his support for some pastiche, believes that where a 'theme park' building is shaping a place that someone values they may find that building offensive.<sup>58</sup>

This is important in regards to what the posters view as the honesty of a spatial narrative; most of those who have commented in this area seem to take a view that these streetscapes represent a palimpsest, essentially a series of overwritten texts. In the case of the Manor Street 'Dutch Billy', the restoration removed and altered the clear outlines of alteration done on the building to make it conform to later building design standards. The discourse surrounding many pastiche buildings is loaded with terms emphasizing their dishonesty, such as 'fake', 'theme park' and 'false history'. This assumption of falsity feeds into the reception the buildings get so that we find some posters questioning the honesty of placing them alongside period buildings or that over time through environmental wear and tear they may become indistinguishable from the original buildings, distorting the spatial narrative.

During the initial controversy surrounding Georgian Dublin it is clear that politics played an important role in the views people had of the buildings with many viewing them as colonial legacies. The politics of the time remain important today however as can be seen from above, the current

56 E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), p. 101.

57 Relph, p. 105.

58 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=3638&p=29716>>.

dominant discourse surrounds the destruction of Dublin at the hands of developers and abetted by the State. This is especially prevalent in what can be considered flashpoint areas such as Hume Street, Leeson Street and Molesworth Street. While some cite this as a distinct issue, others link it directly to how they perceive pastiche buildings. This may be exacerbated by the fact that the political expediency of building pastiche buildings is itself a legacy of the compromise solution from one of the most publicized 'battles' for Georgian Dublin.

While this political narrative connected to activism has largely displaced the earlier colonial narrative, the latter is also still present. For example, on the thread 'conflict + architecture' FIN claims '[o]ccupation is still occupation. [A]ny and probably all buildings built in that period are a remainder of that brutal force'.<sup>59</sup> There seems to be some measure of distaste towards such views, which may be used to chill a debate; for example, one poster, Ctesiphon, describes his 'sneaking suspicion' that another poster, PDLL, associates Georgian buildings with colonial rule and that this invalidates their right to be considered heritage.<sup>60</sup> This seems to suggest that the perception is that critics of the colonial nature of these buildings – and they are acknowledged as being colonial by their aficionados – seek to unpick the Irish from British aspects of the built environment. In this regard, to some only native-produced buildings are regarded as authentically Irish.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter several key factors in terms of the perceived authenticity of Georgian buildings and 'Dutch Billies' have been identified, including their current and former political connotations, their aesthetic quality and how they fit into the streetscape, as well as their giving a visualization of a space's historical narrative. Another theme emerges throughout

59 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=72967&postcount=15>>.

60 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=42420&postcount=47>>.

and this is the age and form of the building. Pastiche buildings are often disliked as they do not date to the time their style might indicate; those that are accepted are only accepted if they add to the streetscape's historic dimensions, in other words, if they fit the profile of the original buildings. The surviving buildings date to a period in history with colonial implications and retain their original appearances, which some connect to the narratives of the spaces, which they see as the stories of that space's history.

The introduction to this essay referenced Kelli Ann Costa's discussion of the sacralization of Georgian Dublin. This argument proposes that a process takes place whereby an architectural design is named, framed, enshrined and reproduced which increases the original's heritage value.<sup>61</sup> To an extent this process breaks down when we look at the issues of pastiche and restoration. The original has reached the stage in the process identified as being enshrined but hampers the social reproduction due to the fetishization of the original's form. We see this form become the standard where deviation, whether actual or, as in the case of the Manor Street 'Dutch Billy', perceived, is frowned upon. This seems to be recognized by some of their critics, such as FIN, who question whether the argument for their retention is based on their architectural quality or age.<sup>62</sup> Even their supporters recognize that there is some fetishizing taking place, though they feel that it is justified in terms of the quality of the buildings.<sup>63</sup> In terms of the emulation or reproduction of the buildings, this seems to have occurred due to planning norms formed as a result of the activism of preservationists.

The question as to whether age or connotations are the most important factors in the attitudes of the city's visitors and locals towards the Georgian buildings may be a rather moot point. Nor does this chapter claim that the sacralization process does not occur, that Georgian style buildings and indeed Georgian originals have increased in value, through this process is indisputable. What this chapter argues is that much of the streetscape of the Georgian core is being perceived as inauthentic.

61 Costa, pp. 97–99.

62 <<http://www.archiseek.com/content/showpost.php?p=72967&postcount=15>>.

63 <<http://www.archiseek.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=76398#p76398>>.



Figure 1 *Modern Georgian Buildings, Corner of Hume Street, Dublin.*  
Photograph by Christopher Lowe.



Figure 2 *Modern and Period Georgian Buildings, Harcourt Street, Dublin.*  
Photograph by Christopher Lowe.



Figure 3 *Restored Dutch Billy, Manor Street, Dublin.*  
Photograph by Christopher Lowe.

EAMONN SLATER

## Visualizing ‘History’ in a Dublin Suburb: The ‘forlorn little’ Dolmen of Ballybrack

### Introducing the Ballybrack Dolmen as a Photographic Moment



Figure 1 *Suburban art or ancient artefact?* Photograph courtesy of Ian Mitton.

What we have before us is not a dolmen, nor a south Dublin housing estate, but a photograph of them and more besides. The argument which unfolds here is concerned with how we use the photograph to ‘visualize’ reality,

and in this particular case of how we locate and record historical remnants that are present within a suburban milieu. Let us begin with the 'obvious' and our 'natural vision' in order to uncover how photographs are crucial moments in the process of visualization.

The photograph above displays a dolmen-type structure on a green area in the middle of a suburban housing estate. The physical artefact is framed by the presence of the row of semi-detached houses in the background, which not only locates it spatially in suburbia, but the 'framing' houses also suggest a time-period of Late Modernity.

The aesthetic forms of the surrounding estate houses tend to embed the artefact of the dolmen-like structure in its specific timeframe. The consequence of this apparent implosion of the timeframe is the tendency to push the dolmen-type object into being interpreted as an art form of modernity rather than an artefact of antiquity. And this 'artful' interpretation of the dolmen is reinforced by how the dolmen 'piece' is 'obviously' standing on a circle of sandy dirt. The circle effect itself within the grassed foreground supports the idea that its presence within the housing estate is a consequence of a conscious act to display. This apparent aesthetic form is further intensified by the contrast between the rough stone countenance of the dolmen and the straight-linear forms of the surrounding brick houses in the background, which tends to establish the dolmen-like object as a visual exotic contrasting itself against the backdrop of the bland 'wilderness of suburbia'.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, from the angle of the above photograph the visual evidence can only suggest that the dolmen object is functioning more as a work of suburban art rather than as a remnant of the Bronze Age or the Stone Age. There is no other obvious evidence to counter such an interpretation. Therefore history as manifested in physical artefacts can get 'caught up' in the bland cauldron of suburbanization. These authentic historical entities therefore have a constant risk that their historical aspect within suburbia

1 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1992), p. 214.

2 Lewis Mumford, 'The Wilderness of Suburbia', *New Republic*, vol. 28 (7 September 1921), pp. 44–45.



is likely to be obliterated by the dominating context of the modern 'semi-detached'. But the suburbanization of Ireland's ancient antiquities is only a recent occurrence with the emergence of the Celtic Tiger.

This chapter is about how Sociology can help to unravel a social practice which appears to be obvious to everyone – visualizing our immediate surrounds. Its very mundaneness suggests that there is no need to linger conceptually over such a trivial activity, however when we attempt to go beyond the surface appearance of visualizing we discover that it is a very complex process, which is made up of a number of internal processes. These abstract (hidden) processes, which are both physical and social in their determination, become metabolized in this overall process of visualization. In order to uncover its essential moments as a process I have chosen to examine in detail the empirical case of how historical monuments are 'presented' to be gazed upon in suburbia. The particular historical artefact I will be concentrating on is this 'dolmen' of Ballybrack, in south Dublin.

## The 'Sprawling' Tsunami of Suburbanization and the Necessary Aestheticization of Everything in its Wake

During the Celtic Tiger, Ireland globalized. As part of this globalization, Ireland exported its 'Riverdances', its 'traditional' Irish pubs and images of fun-loving football supporters. Whether by design or accident, a 'feel-good' factor emerged about the Irish which has 'morphed' into a new global Irish identity. But back in Ireland there were also other changes occurring to our more mundane identities which were less obvious but more fundamental to the everyday lives of the ordinary people. We became 'suburbanites'! Nearly by stealth and certainly piecemeal, Ireland suburbanized. Fuelled by an astounding increase in car usage, our car dependency allowed us to travel greater distances especially between work and home. In the 1990s, the

commuter belt around Dublin expanded up to 80 kilometres and beyond.<sup>3</sup> Accessing 'An Lar' (city centre) from the newly emerging Greater Dublin became on certain routes a two-hour drive. And in this intensified mobility, our suburbs were also moving – moving outwards like a slow moving tsunami 'sprawling' over the green fields of the rural Ireland. In its wake, the 'natural' and productive ecosystems of the agricultural countryside were being substituted for the more 'refined' and manicured ecosystems of the suburban gardens.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, under this tsunami wave of suburbanization, the physical context of the rural countryside and all that stood in it were being swamped by a process of aestheticization. This latter process is determined by the residents attempting to live the idyllic. Nothing can escape the sweet charm of the aesthetic, not even the truly ancient antiquities. Some of these artefacts that stood in the way of this swell were obliterated. Those that were allowed to remain were not only recontextualized within the confines of suburbia but they were also crucially 'conserved'.

The 'Big' house, tower houses, churches, crosses, dolmens, etc. were restored and their respective 'rot' was stopped. This rot is caused by the natural processes of decay that 'naturally' give the appearance of being old and historical to the edifices that they engulfed. But in the process of conserving these edifices, their ancient and historical 'aura' was 'peeled away', transformed and even transcended by the process of conservation. Firstly, vegetation such as moulds, lichens, moss but especially ivy was removed then the stonework was repaired in which fallen stones or bricks were replaced back into their perceived 'original' positions and finally if mortar was part of the original build, it was re-pointed. The visual consequence of these physical processes of conservation is that the 'ruins' now appear pristine clean and their historical aura has disappeared from the visual plane. In short, they have been visually aestheticized. So although these historical artefacts are authentic objects from the past their newly constructed conservation veneer gives them the appearance of being brand new. To counteract this effacement of history it is necessary to attempt to restore the authentic

3 Mary Corcoran, Jane Gray and Michelle Peillion, *Suburban Affiliations* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 32.

4 Eamon Slater and Michelle Peillon, 'The Suburban Front Garden: A Socio-Spatial Analysis', *Nature and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2009), pp. 78–104.

historical aura of these suburban artefacts and it is the photograph that has become the necessary mechanism in which we 'visualize' history within suburbia. This chapter is about this effort to regain the historical aura of a suburban artefact from the apparent dominance of the aesthetic process by using the medium of the photograph.

### The Photograph as a One-Sided Appropriation of a Many-Sided Reality: The Physical Form Within the Visualization Process

For Wendell Holmes the birth of photography signalled an earth-shattering change in the physics of perception, inducing a metamorphosis in the way people see and understand the world.<sup>5</sup> It was according to Holmes a conquest of perception over matter, where the physical environment could be forced to yield its manifold appearances directly. The photograph's ability to capture and preserve the disembodied countenance of things was a crucial mechanism in how form could be separated from matter. As a consequence, Holmes suggested that a new reality emerged in which the 'image became more important than the object and would in fact make the object disposable'.<sup>6</sup> But the physical matter on which the necessary embodied countenance is embedded within, is only 'disposable' in the realm of photography, it continues to exist in the real world.

However, Holmes is right to emphasize how the technological process of photographic production created a new dimension in which the forms of reality can be detached from that reality. The medium of photographic reproduction enables images to exist independently of their mundane

5 Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph' (1859) in 'The Atlantic Monthly', reprinted in Beaumont Newhall (ed.), *Photography: Essays and Images* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980).

6 Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph'.

reality. In highlighting this distinction between the reality represented – ‘the disembodied countenance of things’ in the photograph and the real world – ‘the matter’, Holmes appears to be replicating a distinction that Marx also recognized. In the following quotation from 1842, Marx is suggesting how we attempt to make sense of the world – a world that is an ‘unorganised mass’ whose contents are in a constant state of flux and movement. To this ‘manifold diversity of the world’, we tend to make one-sided interpretations:

... for one-sidedness can extract the particular from the unorganised mass of the whole and give it shape ... By confining each of the contents of the world in a stable definiteness and as it were solidifying the fluid essence of the content, understanding brings out the manifold diversity of the world, for the world would not be many-sided without the many one-sidedness'.<sup>7</sup>

This ontological distinction being highlighted here by Marx is that between the ‘unorganised mass of the whole’ with its ‘fluid essence of the content’, in short – the real world, and the ‘one-sidedness’ of our ‘understanding’ of it, as we ‘confine’ the ‘contents’ of the world in our interpretation. The ‘stable definiteness’ of our everyday interpretative process is particularly pronounced in photography as Holmes has conceived it to be. Thus the photograph visually extracts the ‘disembodied countenance of things’ from the ‘fluid essence’ of the real world and thereby ‘solidifying’ a particular ‘one-sided’ image from an indefinite ‘diversity of the world’. Therefore, in this process of photographing not only are the countenances of reality disembodied and thereby isolated from their original ‘unorganised’ context, but they are also reinserted into a textual form, thus the form of the original countenances and their ‘captured’ contexts have been simultaneously transferred in the act of photographing.

The initial act in this process of transference is done by the photographer in choosing a particular aspect of that form to be captured on camera. Aspect is determined by direction, elevation and light, which is very much

7 Karl Marx, ‘Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood’ (1842), *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975).

decided by the photographer in situ. And in doing so the photograph captures a 'one-sided' image from 'the unorganised mass of the whole' reality. This physical act of isolating is the beginning of the process of visualization by which we continually 'focus in' on entities that we want to highlight. Thus it is the physical act of photographic reproduction that is the prerequisite condition in aiding us to visualize historical monuments.

The second and following-on process of the physical appropriation of the images is that of cropping where the reproduced surfaces are framed within a reconstituted context. The process of cropping itself can be seen as part of the production process within photography beyond the aperture 'moment', where the actual final 'producer' of the photograph may decide to isolate certain features of the original 'raw' photograph (the one caught in the initial moment of exposure) and thus eliminate others. As a consequence the 'cropper' of the photograph can physically refocus in on other moments of the reality appropriated and thus exclude others. Accordingly, this framing process is crucially about constructing a new physical context for the consumption of the selected image. In deciding the cropping dimensions for the captured images, the 'developer' is relocating not only the disembodied appearances of the objects/subjects of the real world but also imposing a new spatial relationship between a definite and determinate edge (mostly straight) of the photograph to the object(s) captured within the photograph itself. Herein lies the essential spatial form (determination) of the photograph. The frame of the reproduction simultaneously constructs a boundary to the scene captured in the photograph and in doing so conceals what lies outside the boundary and includes what lies within. In the 'die-straight' linearity of the framing process, there is an attempt to impose a new spatial re-ordering of a mundane reality where such a reconstituted order does not exist because it is essentially an 'unorganised mass of the whole'.<sup>8</sup> For example the following photograph of a single 'suburban' weed 'springing forth' from a grass lawn canopy is a good example of the cropping process, and its inherent process of re-spatialization.

8 Marx, 'Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood'.



Figure 2 *A suburban weed 'framed'!* Photograph courtesy of Martin Cregg.

In the essential rectilinear geometry of this photograph as constructed by the framing boundaries, the dock weed becomes established as the centre of this newly spatialized representation. And in this reproduction of reality the countenance of the objects of reality are put into new spatial arrangements with each other and with the newly imposed edges of the photographic frame. This is achieved by locating the weed's image where the abstract diagonals of the imposed rectangular frame meet. Accordingly, because of the ability of the framing process to construct a new form of synoptic perspective and thereby rearranging the spatial relationships between objects and entities photographically reproduced, an insignificant entity from the mundane world such as a weed becomes a focal point of attention. Therefore, on account of the constructed rectilinear geometry of the photograph, the visible (its physical edge) and the invisible (the abstract diagonals) become the spatial principles of representation in which the photographic medium (form) attempts to control the reproduced visual contents of the real world.

## The Necessary 'Popping an Imaginary Social Soul' into the Photograph

A few metres away from our 'suburban artefact' and just outside the imposed frame of our initial photograph stands a stone plaque, which contradicts the art form of our interpretation.

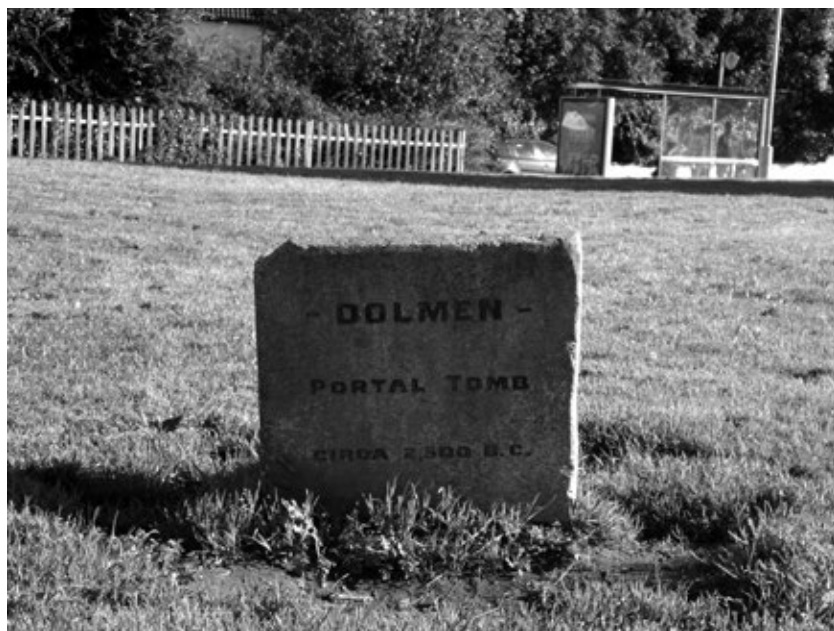


Figure 3 *A caption in the real world.* Photograph courtesy of Siobhan Slater.

Inscribed on this gravestone-like plaque is 'Dolmen – portal tomb – 2,500BC' and it accordingly proclaims an archaeological form to the artefact. This latest representation challenges not only the art form determination of the artefact but also exposes the one-sidedness of the opening photograph and how it was physically framed to exclude this 'in situ' narrative. This one-sidedness is manifested in 'tunnelling' the gaze of the

photograph observer towards the artefact but simultaneously away from the also present 'framing' caption within the real context of the housing-estate green. But crucially, there is change in the contextual form of interpretation, from an exclusively visual form, where interpretation is naturally open-ended ('many one-sidednesses') to a narrative form, in which the written caption on the stone plaque attempts to impose its interpretive form on real object 'presented'. Therefore, the presence of the stone plaque must be seen as an attempt to overcome not only the exclusive 'visualness' inherent in mundane reality, but also the potential many 'one-sided' interpretations that 'naturally' occur within the visual plane. Consequently, this particular written-in-stone caption becomes the dominant interpretative form – when it is 'brought into the picture', so to speak. Chris Corlett in his survey of South Dublin antiquities and specifically in his discussion of the Ballybrack dolmen demonstrates his awareness of how the visual form dominates the essential historical form in the suburban context: '[p]resently situated within a residential estate, it bears more resemblance to a modern sculpture than to an ancient memorial tomb.'

Artefactual or monumental history therefore is not inherently obvious on the surface appearance of suburban society; it needs to be interpreted through narration! But captions are rarely present within the real world – the Ballybrack stone plaque being an exception. Therefore, the real historical artefacts of suburbia have to be 'located' firstly by photographing them and then narrating upon within texts. These are the unfolding necessary moments of the visualization process. By visually reproducing the countenance of the historical artefacts from the 'unorganised mass of the whole' real world in photographing them, they become distinguishable from the suburban 'mass' in their photographic containment. It is at this point in the unfolding of essential structure of the visualization process that the framed and cropped images become available to be analysed. Composing the narrative either within the text or as caption is in fact an attempt to use the image data to support the trajectory of the analysis in

9 Christiaan Corlett, *Antiquities of Old Rathdown* (Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell Ltd., 1999), p. 102.



the narrative process. Certain visual contents will be highlighted, but not all, from the photographic form as they appear to exemplify the logic of the written analysis. But there is a danger inherent in this necessary act of appropriation. A photograph can not only illuminate a textual point, it can in certain cases challenge that narrative interpretation by allowing the reader/gazer the opportunity to re-assess the visually-reproduced imaginary and re-interpret the textual account. Therefore, the photograph will always 'say' more than the accompanying narrative does, because it reproduces the actual physical countenance of the entities photographed rather than just an abstract conceptualization of those captured images. The reason for this potential threat of an alternative interpretation of the photograph is that the logic of narrative analysis is linear while for the visually reproduced it is centrifugal.<sup>10</sup> With regard to our case study of the Ballybrack dolmen, the accompanying narrative within the following text, attempts to establish an archaeological authenticity to the object displayed:

The prehistoric megalithic portal tomb of Ballybrack Dolmen. It is the 'genuine article', based on archaeological evidence, despite being located on the edge of a housing estate with ensuing graffiti. Built of very hard wearing local granite, it shows little sign of weathering, even after thousands of years!<sup>11</sup>

This quotation appears to be aware of the tension between the tomb, being a 'genuine' megalithic artefact and 'despite' its presence within a suburban housing estate and its graffiti daubing. This apparent contradiction is a result of the actual physical artefact being simultaneously a moment in a number of diverse processes. These processes are manifesting themselves in the real world as part of the spatial configuration of suburbia and in using the surfaces of the dolmen as a text to reproduce graffiti. These real concrete processes are opposed by the narrative process which exclaims the genuineness of its historical origins 'based upon archaeological evidence'.

10 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).

11 Scenes from <<http://www.docbrown.info/docspics/dublinscenes/dspage14b.htm>>.

These real grotesque processes are visually reproduced in a number of following photographs, but its essential historical process is not, because it cannot be. The historical process and its particular moment of manifestation here are only revealed through a textual narrative, where the actual archaeological evidence is not visually presented but only referred to. As a consequence, the abstract historical/archaeological soul has been popped into the reproduced countenance of the dolmen in this particular photograph within this narrative. But this is only one trajectory in which the imaginary social form is embedded in the dolmen artefact (its reproduced image) to produce its 'genuine' authenticity as a historical entity. There is also a potential opposing trajectory where the abstract social soul – the aura is 'transferred' from the dolmen to a number of surrounding built entities. Pearson has identified a pre-modern example of this type of interpellation:

Nearby stood a villa-style house of Victorian date, which, taking its name from this ancient monument was called Glen Druid. Having lain derelict in the early 1980s, all the granite gate piers were demolished.<sup>12</sup>

Tom Fourwinds has stated that this type of auratic interpellation continued into modernity:

Until the mid-twentieth century it (the dolmen) stood in a farmer's field, but it now stands in the centre of a communal green, at the front of the Cromlech Fields Housing Estate.<sup>13</sup>

12 Peter Pearson, *Between the Mountains and the Sea: Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2007), p. 120.

13 Tom Fourwinds, *Monu-mental about Prehistoric Dublin* (Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing Ltd., 2006).



Figure 4 *Believe it or not?* Photograph courtesy of Siobhan Slater.

Thus, ironically the real concrete artefact has given an historic value to its modern immediate built environs, but that constructed context has created an all-embracing exhibition value, that puts the historical 'authenticity' of the artefact in doubt. The transfer of the historic aura has occurred within the street sign, but the absurd location of the dolmen within the suburban estate puts the credibility of all – the signage and the dolmen to the test. But if this is challenging the overall project of visualizing the historical dimension of suburbia, the word 'fields' pushes it beyond belief, as the following testifies:

Ballybrack (dolmen) is situated on the beautifully named Cromlech Fields. Someone thought long and hard about that one! It isn't fields at all, but a council estate outside Dublin, but never mind.<sup>14</sup>

14 <[www.themodernantiquarian.com](http://www.themodernantiquarian.com)>.

The ‘popping of an imaginary soul’ of ‘Fields’ onto a built-up housing estate was done by a local government functionary, who penned the ‘beautifully named’ Cromlech Fields for this social-housing scheme. Therefore, it was the local state that not only built the housing estate but named it as well. And it is that state’s actions that created these contradictions, which have put the dolmen of Ballybrack into. However, the abuse does not just emanate from the state alone but also from civil society. Unknown members of society have been using the actual capstone of the dolmen as a site of representation itself – for graffiti!

Two views of this rather forlorn little dolmen miraculously surviving suburbia. Note the perfect cup-mark in the left-hand picture – where you can also see traces of the red paint which the capstone was once daubed.<sup>15</sup>

But this daubing of paint is not a ‘one-off’ event as a following-on comment suggests:

The red paint has disappeared from the capstone now, but some white paint has appeared on one of the portal stones.<sup>16</sup>

The paint daubing and its removal has to be seen as an ongoing conflict between the state and the ‘graffiti artists’, the latter attempting to impose a particular ‘artistic’ exhibit value on the dolmen while the state cleaners attempt to retain an unmediated exhibition value with regard to the appearance of the dolmen. But by actually using the artefact as the ‘text’, the graffiti artists attract not only moral condemnation for their endeavours but also allow one commentator the opportunity to even identify these purveyors of such a ‘fiendish’ act of desecration:

It has somehow escaped the road-building process and nearly managed to escape the rigours of modern life. There are, unfortunately traces of red spray paint to be

15 Tom Fourwinds, <<http://www.irishmegaliths.org.uk/zBallybrack.htm>>.

16 13 May 2006.

seen on the capstone, added no doubt, by some angst-ridden teenagers with nothing better to do – a sad reflection upon our times.<sup>17</sup>

But these 'angst-ridden teenagers' are only imagined to be culprits – they may not be. However, in proposing them as such, this perspective has produced a 'one-sided' interpretation of a 'many-sided' world – thus 'framing' the teenagers! But the onslaught on the aura of the Ballybrack dolmen is not just undermined by adolescent exuberance or whoever but also by the imagined activities of children using the artefact as a climbing frame or by local dogs using it as a toilet location.<sup>18</sup> Unlimited access to the artefact is therefore causing problems to maintaining the exhibition and historic values of the Ballybrack dolmen.

## Accessibility: Its Physical and Social Forms

Accessibility to the dolmen emerges as another level and the subsequent process that mediates our suburban artefact. What is unusual about the Ballybrack dolmen is that it is not on private property while the other six dolmens of South Dublin are.<sup>19</sup> This accessibility is determined by Ballybrack dolmen's location on an open common green, which can cause problems, as one commenter has suggested:

Open access monuments are shown little respect and are often mistreated, but they do still exist. There was broken glass and crisp packets strewn all over but the stones retained some beautiful markings and at least they hadn't been too badly damaged over the years.<sup>20</sup>

17 Tom Fourwinds, *Monu-Mental about Prehistoric Dublin*, Dublin, p. 81.

18 <[www.shadowandstone.com](http://www.shadowandstone.com)>.

19 *Did You Know: Forgotten Aspects of our Local Heritage* (Dublin: Heritage Office of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County, 2009).

20 <[www.themodernantiquarian.com](http://www.themodernantiquarian.com)>.

Therefore, although complete open accessibility can challenge and may even undermine the historic value form of the artefact as it allows mundane social activities to occur on or around the dolmen. However, on another level it does however allow ease of access for potential connoisseurs of suburban antiquities to visit:

Bizarrely located in the green area of a housing estate in the southern suburbs of Dublin ... What it lacks in ambience it makes up for in ease of access as the aforementioned bus stop makes this probably the easiest portal tomb for anyone to visit in the Dublin area.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the 'ease of access' is being determined not only by its suburban context and the types of transportation associated with that location – motorized, car and bus but also it is not located on private property. Private property in the context of protecting national monuments becomes a moment in a specific social process of accessibility, where a potential connoisseur needs to get permission from the property owner to gain access. Thus the property owner becomes the custodian of such monuments on account of legal form of trespass. As a consequence, the intending visitor has to engage in pre-planning activity by seeking permission to enter the property. This legal and social barrier is removed in the case of our Ballybrack dolmen.

Also unlike the non-urban/suburban location for antiquities, there is none of the usual physical barriers such as cross-country trekking and wall climbing, which is the usual rite of passage to rural monuments. As a contrast, access to our suburban dolmen is quick and easy as is the wont of suburban locations and potential connoisseurs are advised to 'catch it while you can' because 'it is always worth stopping off at'. And the reason suggested why people should 'catch it' is because it appears to possess simultaneously an authentic historic value with a bizarre contextual exhibition value, and their synthesis produces the Ballybrack dolmen as an exotic destination:

21 <[www.shadowandstone.com](http://www.shadowandstone.com)>.

Well, as I always say – This place is incredible. Scott ascribed an almost comedic value to its location. I think I have to agree somewhat. Still, it's such a contrast to what people expect that it is always worth stopping off at.<sup>22</sup>

The Ballybrack dolmen as represented in this quotation is as a 'playful' location, where one can one enjoy the authentic with the inauthentic and thereby the many one-sided interpretations inherent in such postmodern scenarios. But this ambiguity has to be overcome in order to visualize the threatened historical aspect of the dolmen.

## The Emergence of the Archaeological Cult Form and its Attempted Contemporary Dominance

However, the cult value that determines the contemporary artefact is not the original one, which the ancient builders of the tomb were guided by in their construction techniques. We are unable to resurrect the original historic value, but what we are able to do is to suggest that it certainly did not look like what we have in the Cromlech Fields. Somewhere in the depths of history the original cairn of earth and stones have been removed, which has revealed the present-day skeleton-like sculpture we now call a dolmen. Even as far back as the eighteenth century, the cairn mound of the Ballybrack dolmen was not only missing, but the remaining exposed skeleton stone structure was very much neglected as Gabriel Beranger testified in 1777:

[I]t is so much encumbered with all kinds of prickly brambles that there was no coming near the supporters to measure them. Even to see them, two of my friends were obliged with their sticks to keep the brambles down, until I copied their forms.<sup>23</sup>

22 Posted Wednesday 1 May 2002.

23 Corlett, p. 87.

So in fact what we have today is indeed more of an internal structural frame than a completed tomb – an abstract sculptural form! And with the missing physical pieces, there is no possibility of ever accessing the original aura of this now desecrated Ballybrack tomb. But a historic value form still encapsulates the remaining artefact, a one which emanates not from the past but from modernity – from the contemporary archaeological community. Chris Corlett, himself an archaeologist, proposes such an archaeological value form to our dolmen, under the title of ‘Sacred Sculpture’:

Today the dolmen at Ballybrack near Shankill appears more like a modern sculpture in a residential estate than a sacred tomb built over 5000 years ago. In the face of such threats it is all the more important that we celebrate our unique archaeological surroundings in order to preserve them for the speculations of future generations.<sup>24</sup>

The constructed ‘sacredness’ of this quotation is not associated with the idea of venerating the dead, nor respecting their eternal resting place, but in preserving the artefact ‘for the speculations of future generations’ of archaeologists! It is at this point that the abstract forms of historic value and exhibition value are synthesized and consequently mediate each other. Accordingly, the archaeological form of the artefact merges with its sculptural form as the preservation of the physical structure of the dolmen is a necessary condition for the future archaeologists to survey and speculate on through an examination of its potential exhibition value – that is to be not only deemed sacred in an archaeological sense but also that it can be crucially visualized in its archaeological form without its real concrete context of suburbia. In short, the essential problematic nature of Ballybrack dolmen is the need for archaeologists to visualize it with its ‘authentic’ soul preserved (its archaeological exhibition value form).



## Conclusion

In the end of our dialectical odyssey through the 'eclectic' fragments, which were subsequently uncovered about the Ballybrack dolmen, whether as a text or as a photographic image ended up as diverse moments of various processes, which combined to form the process of visualization. The visualization process is not just about maintaining the contemporary value of the dolmen – its physical existence in the real concrete world, but it is crucially about preserving its exhibition value as a potential photographable artefact, which archaeologists can use to speculate about, without any disturbing presence of graffiti and the 'semi-d'. These latter societal forms are themselves exhibition value forms and 'challenge' the exhibition value of the dolmen itself as determined by its archaeological form.

The pursuit of an unadulterated archaeological exhibition value has impacted back onto the photographic aspects adopted by photographers. This trend is manifested in photographs that attempt to highlight the 'authentic side' of the dolmen – those one-sided representations that do not display either the 'semi-d' backdrop or the graffiti daubing on the capstone. Of all of the innovative strategies adopted to avoid the 'unsightly', the most extraordinary is the one that used a night-time flash that only revealed the dolmen and simultaneously kept the suburban context hidden in the darkness of the night. Another aspect used was a worm-like view, which put the sky into the frame so to speak as the backdrop but simultaneously 'constructed' monumental-looking structures to our dolmen. The diversity and the bizarreness of these aspects, have an essential trajectory in that they all attempt to re-establish the lost aura of the real artefact by consciously engaging in a one-sided appropriation of reality rather than attempting to reproduce the real and the visible contradictions of the Ballybrack dolmen. Ironically, Benjamin's non-reproducible aura is now being reproduced in the form of exhibition value – the photograph. These images are idealistic appropriations that are physically reproduced through a so-called realistic medium, which supposedly 'cannot lie'. Thus the inherent one-sidedness of photography is as much a product of the aspect adopted as well as the

imaginative creation of the photographer. Therefore, idealism enfolds materialism in the 'art and science' of photography.

If we insert the word photograph for commodity in Marx's following quotation in which Marx is discussing the complexity of the commodity form in modernity, we can succinctly summarize the mystical character of the photograph:

*A photograph* appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Analysis shows that it is in reality a very peculiar thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.<sup>25</sup>

Thus if the physical photograph is a mere moment in the visualizing process, that process possesses more metaphysical complexity than a particular moment of the photograph, because that moment is not only temporal but also structural within the overall process of visualizing.

Therefore, with regard to the specific case study of this chapter, the Ballybrack dolmen, its appearance is being maintained and thus conserved in a way that is determined by how the state retains an archaeological framework of presentation. This essential archaeological form has attempted to not only preserve the monument by stopping the natural agents of decay, but also to visualize it within the suburban context, so that an archaeological connoisseur can gaze upon the past by looking at the present artefact, stripped of its historical veneer – frozen in time as if it is a photograph.

25 Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, Chapter 1 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975).

## Deep Mappings of Dublin: Spot the Blind Spot

The concept of the living city relates to urban spaces that consume and create forms of energy and release waste materials. My approach to the visual culture of Dublin is based on an investigation of the city and the public in connection with blind spots of urban space. Blind spots can be understood as visual waste products, such as graffiti and stencils, that appear insignificant at first sight but are nevertheless enmeshed in a context of social and political values and reflect notions of belonging and identity. The exploration of such visual fragments, which are present in public only for a fleeting time before being wiped out, painted over or otherwise removed, lead to the creation of a metaphorical urban directory, where blind spots are monumentalized and put onto an emotional city map.

Lines on maps create boundaries and determine the territory. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson regards the mechanically reproduced European-style map (alongside the census and the museum)<sup>1</sup> as a fundamental building block in the development of the idea of the nation-state. Western maps derived from a cartographic model that expressed ownership and control, and were used as instruments of classification in the attempt to administer the state more efficiently. Maps by their nature are influenced by the impressions of their creators and reflect a certain type of reality. In a colonial discourse they were seen as the representation of a body of knowledge, a pictorial demonstration of power.<sup>2</sup> As visual representations of an area, the symbolic contents of maps allow for an

1 Anderson states that the construction of colonial thinking was reflected in the inter-linking of the map, the census, and the museum as mechanisms of control and neat classification and that 'the comic classificatory and sub-classificatory census boxes entitled "Other" concealed all real-life anomalies'. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 184.

2 Anderson, pp. 181–185.

understanding of place, they mirror choices, social and political decisions. Maps express a point of view, they indicate property lines, postal districts and enterprise zones, as Denis Wood states in *The Power of Maps*, they are always biased in the sense that they project the interests of their creators.<sup>3</sup>

## Matters of the Heart: A Feeling of Intimacy

There is an emotional reality that could not exist in the absence of maps. Traditional cartographic models of city maps aspire to help the user to get from one place to another in a geographical context. A cartography that reflects a cultural and emotional discourse of space forms a complete contrast to maps that reflect nationalist imaginings of power deriving from occupied territory. My suggested process of mapping, based on a subjective investigation of visual culture, the public and the city, addresses blind spots in Dublin. The blind spots can be used as points of departure for critical reflections on the city, allowing for implicit associations of desire and belonging with the public sphere. Urban space is investigated as the public stage setting for performative visual patterns that express conflicting emotions. A blind spot map of Dublin is a labyrinth that holds fragmented messages. One may come across a blind spot called *Waster* and *I'm at home, come home*. Confusing branches lead to *Eire Sucks* and *Blank Walls*. One may walk the path of *Occupy & Resist* and *Shame*, or may be catching a glimpse of the *Heart*, which is awkwardly situated. It is not in the place where it may traditionally be expected to be. It is not in the centre.

A cultural analysis of waste products helps to access ambivalent, often non-cathartic feelings that are part of the visual biography of the city based on notions of desire and belonging. Giuliana Bruno defines 'haptic' as being able 'to come into contact with', and she regards the process of mapping as defining 'our ways of being in touch with the environment'.<sup>4</sup>

3 Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1992), p. 24.

4 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion* (New York: Verso, 2002), p. 6.

We are emotionally involved when we are in touch with something. Emotions move us, metaphorically and in literary terms, from one place to another, and every journey consists of encounters and actions like departing, meeting, staying. There is a way of mapping space that does not need to fulfil the desire to conquer but rather helps to gain insight into an inner landscape reflected in outer urban space. This can be achieved via an interpretation of marks of negation. A form of emotional mapping that deals with the city as an allegory or in its metaphorical sense is an investigation of human behaviour, where elements of surprise, irritation, desire and fear are fleshed out and inscribed on a cultural map. It is a map that functions like a visual memory cloth and concerns issues like the personal, the underground and forms of belonging. The visual blind spots or waste products that will be introduced are part of my personal orientation through the city of Dublin. The mapping process is based on depictions of the city from the perspective of a foreign woman in the form of a written discourse that encircles the visual, where theoretical readings of the city in terms of emotion are structured around the written messages inscribed in public space.



Figure 1 *John Street West*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

## Marks of Negation: Feelings of Resistance



Figure 2 *Adelaide Road*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

Marks of negation are forms of protest and resistance against 'the Father', or the voice of authority and order. 'The Father' dictates what principles the city ought to operate upon, concerning its political, economic and artistic functions. The Freudian aspect of how 'we come to love and desire the law itself', and how these emotional manifestations contribute to the problematic nature of authoritarianism, is explained by Eagleton, who states that 'the law is out of hand, and if its decrees become insupportable then it leaves its victims with no choice but to fall ill of neurosis or rebel. Both courses of action have their ambiguous pains and pleasures'.<sup>5</sup> Resistance reveals itself and speaks to us through acts of vandalism, because it throws up the question of what culture is and what its marks of negation reveal – in doorways, on walls and on lamp posts.

Common attributes of political destruction and vandalism concern inscriptions in the public space of the city that are constantly being wiped out, removed, and experienced as a nuisance. According to psychoanalyst and anthropologist Géza Róheim, the compulsion to make war and to commit acts of public violence has to do with a desire to harm 'the Father'.<sup>6</sup> In *Fragments of the European City*, Barber states that a city that is not listening to the voice of the father, will find itself entangled in isolation and punishment. The refusal of the voice of the father is also interlinked with the invention of a new set of voices that define the contemporary, 'unstoppable in its broken rhythms and cacophonies'.<sup>7</sup> Barber's statement supports the argument that the blind spots are visual-cultural signifiers of the present moment, and that they can be described as marks of negation of the political system that dominates urban space.

5 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 274.

6 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: University Press, 2004), p. 143.

7 Steven Barber, *Fragments of the European City* (London: Reaktion, 1995), pp. 9–10.

## Instability and Bad Faith: Feelings of Shame



Figure 3 *Fleet Street*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

Who suggests that the Shamrock, symbol of national pride, has suddenly transformed into a symbol of shame? Sartre's phenomenological analysis of shame in *Being and Nothingness* exposes our relationship with the Other. When one experiences shame, the objectification of one's ego denies one's existence as a subject. As a counter-reaction, we may objectify the Other with our gaze and deny them the respect we wanted for ourselves to be regarded as a subject. In this regard, the gaze is an instrument of power; it exposes vulnerability, and it objectifies, in order to possess. What arises is a conflict with the other person, a conflict that expresses itself as sadism, masochism and the forging of a connection between disgust and



desire.<sup>8</sup> According to Young, the act to shame the Other is based on the dominant and privileged group representing itself as a human subject and negating the values of the Other:

These oppositions legitimate the dehumanized use of the despised group as sweat labor or domestic servants, while the dominant group reserves itself the leisure, the refined surroundings, and high culture that mark civilization.<sup>9</sup>

Young's observation is reminiscent of the spatial constructs of power and domination and the controlled mechanisms of leisure and urban layouts, which are challenged with various forms of manipulation. According to Leach's principles of camouflage, the use of space in artistic and architectural practice is often manipulated because the performative process of *becoming*, which relates to the interactions between human beings and their habitat, is at work:

Doing philosophy, doing science, doing art allow a subject with a biography to engage in becoming-imperceptible in a specific context. The creations that emerge from such becomings – the concepts of philosophy or the affects and percepts of art – can then be used to survey forms of life and introduce new possibilities.<sup>10</sup>

In interpreting the inscriptions in public space, a visual-cultural examination of spatial becoming takes place. This interpretive model creates an opportunity to make use of visual signifiers that generally cause 'ugly feelings' because of their noncathartic aesthetic. Opposed to the affirmative notions of Lorraine's concepts of 'doing' philosophy, art, and so forth, the blind spots may initially 'do' nothing per se. However, if they emerge from their unassuming role in the public realm, in the sense that they are manipulated, the blind spots make a contribution 'to survey forms of life'

8 Ronald Hayman, *Writing Against: A Biography of Sartre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), pp. 186–188.

9 Young cited in Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 12.

10 Lorraine cited in Neil Leach, *Camouflage* (Massachusetts: Institute of Technology, 2006), p. 99.

in the city that is of emotional contents. If the blind spots are regarded in a monumental dimension that suggests their importance of a certain period in history (which is the contemporary moment), they are maintained for the public sphere (which relates to an imagined community in public spaces) and can be applied to an emotional understanding of urban spaces.

### Waste of Time: Feelings of Irritation



Figure 4 *Canal Street / Portobello*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

The blind spots or waste products in the public spatial realm have a negative connotation because of their banality and apparent insignificance in their dynamic aesthetic function. However, if we call the physicality

of the process to create a blind spot to mind, in the sense that ‘someone’ walked the main street, laneway or back-alley, approached the wall, lamp-post, pavement or statue and wrote, scratched, glued, stuck an encoded message into the public sphere, it can be argued that these performative patterns of blind spots serve as a monument to ‘the unknown authors’, who decided to take part in the design of public space with their visual, emotional finger-print. This form of empirical research of blind spots in the city may be compared to a parallel run to a river journey (as exemplified in Barison’s and Ross’s film essay *The Ister*,<sup>11</sup> the film makers travel along the Danube and discuss Heidegger’s philosophy in connection with poetry and various themes that touch on notions of home and belonging). The difference is that the visio-cultural ‘river’ throughout the city does not consist of water but of emblems of emotion. The stream structure of the river and its function as a point of reference in the city are here metaphorically applied to the fragmented narrative of visio-cultural fragments – the blind spots and waste products – that are interpreted as landmarks of affectivity in the urban landscape.

In *The Heart of the City*, Ronan Sheehan describes the ‘old’ Dublin as a city full of ‘contradictions, oppositions, contraries, tensions’, a city that has been shaped by slum housing, high infant mortality rates, the trade union movement, a suppressed native language, internationally acclaimed writers, most of them living in exile, and by being part of the greatest Catholic

- 11 *The Ister* (2004) is a film by David Barison and Daniel Ross, a cinematic essay based on Martin Heidegger’s 1942 lectures, which can be described as philosophical interpretations of Friedrich Hölderlin’s poem ‘The Ister’ in relationship to space, art, technology and politics. The river journey undertaken by the two film makers evokes a stream of consciousness based on existentialist thought. *The Ister* includes interviews with contemporary French philosophers Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Bernard Stiegler, whose own work has been significantly influenced by Heidegger’s thought, and with Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, the German film-maker of *Hitler: A Film from Germany* (1978), which carries the message that Hitler is within all of us, controversially representing the Nazi regime lavishly staged as a mythological spectacle.

stronghold in western Europe.<sup>12</sup> Dublin's most recent urban developments, products of the Celtic Tiger economy, which celebrated a spectacular form of building, are the Docklands, the IFSC (Irish Financial Services Centre) and Smithfield; areas marked by high-rise buildings and a relatively new influx of non-Irish population, as well as a continuously rising unemployment rate. According to Slattery, it is not enough to look at the effects of financial capital and globalization to explain the changes in Dublin, but it is necessary to examine the transformation of consciousness as to what *Irishness* means, how it is socially constructed around the entertainment industry and feelings of nostalgia and anxiety.<sup>13</sup>

The city spills over with inscriptions that define the contemporary moment and it is by no means certain what these inscriptions signify. Like a human being, the city's uncertainty ties in with its vulnerability. All sorts of emotions are stored in the urban body, and the blind spots or visual waste products are perceived as an excellent source to access the particularly ambivalent feelings. Visual material that revolves as much around notions of longing as around belonging is connected with the physical act of walking the street and stresses the multiplicity of interpretive narratives the cityscape offers. This form of approach modifies the possibly prevalent perception of the public urban sphere as regulated and gentrified space, controlled and governed by the state. The paradigm of an affective cartography and the fluidity of a cultural discourse help to approach themes of public controversy and open up a discussion of sexual instabilities as well as the disintegrating security that the idea of a national identity formerly provided.

12 Ronan Sheehan and Brendan Walsh, *The Heart of the City* (Dingle: Brandon, 1988), p. 8.

13 David Slattery, 'Fear and Loathing in Lost Ages: Journeys through Postmodern Dublin' in Colin Coulter and Steve Coleman (eds), *The End of Irish History? Critical Reflections on the Celtic Tiger* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 139–154.

## Stains on the Memory: Feelings of Disintegration



Figure 5 *Poolbeg Street*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

Barber calls the unofficial images of the cityscape like graffiti, bullet-holes and neon ‘marks of negation’,<sup>14</sup> as they relate to a chaotic messy identity, something that we do not necessarily want to be. These elements often oppose the idea of city aesthetics, not being attractive to the eye. Monuments like the Spire represent public art in the ‘new’ Ireland but ‘an invisible landscape conditions the visible one’.<sup>15</sup> If one looks at the Spire (O’Connell Street), one perceives a needle-shaped monument of steel,

<sup>14</sup> Barber, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (trans. William Weaver), (Florida: Harvest/HBJ, 1974), p. 20.

which symbolizes the idea of the 'new Ireland', or what the government would like the 'new Ireland' to be perceived as. If one looks at a graffiti slogan saying *don't trust your political leaders* (spotted on Rathmines Road in October 2006, now a disappeared image), it is certainly not what the government likes to be perceived as. In fact, *don't trust your political leaders* was perceived as vandalism and was sprayed over by government-paid workers; but, it also symbolizes the 'new Ireland'.

The unprecedented flow of money into Irish society meant that everything could be consumed excessively and fast, in an almost Bataillan sense.<sup>16</sup> The Spire as a national monument to 'the golden years' of the Celtic Tiger era was ideologically present before its actual physical appearance in Dublin's cityscape, and was created in the tradition of a spectacular form of presentation, which is seductive and life-affirming. Tuan describes the discourse of the spectacular as a struggle with the fact that everything dies: 'We struggle with the help of technology, which enables us to prolong life, and also to make life so entertaining and fast-paced and so packed with bright art objects, including architecture, that we can forget our mortality'.<sup>17</sup>

The modern city has been shaped by technical progress, the accumulation of capital and the explosion of an entertainment industry that commodifies art and culture, and is interlinked with the celebration of 'spectacular moments in time'. The society of spectacle thrives on the simulation of culture, which is expressed in pseudo-events and the construction of a hyper-reality. Likewise the global relationship to space is artificially produced and themed. The resulting post-modernist alienation is central to the understanding of the breakdown of values that accompany the construction of the 'global village'. As opposed to the desire for an extraordinary

16 Bataille refers to the feverish pursuits of pleasure as 'joy before death' and describes it as 'an apotheosis of that which is perishable, apotheosis of flesh and alcohol as well as of the trances of mysticism'. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939* (trans. Allan Stoeckl), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 237.

17 Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Time, Space and Architecture: Some Philosophical Musings' in Xing Ruan and Paul Hogben (eds), *Topophilia and Topophobia: Reflections on Twentieth Century Human Habitat* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 27–28.

and special entertainment event culture in the city, a spatial discourse that includes the everyday and unspectacular is at the other end of this scale in discussing the implications of dwelling.

When Heidegger stated that philosophical thought is concerned with providing a *Weltanschauung* or world-view, he also referred to spatial narratives. There is a discourse of the mundane that focuses on the personal and the everyday, which can be described as a spark that ignites our *Weltanschauung*, the way we view the world. Thomas Kinsella, himself born in Dublin in 1928, recalls his relatives always in connection with the space of the city, how the wives of his uncles 'managed small shops in their houses: one in Basin Lane, off James's Street, near the Canal, not far from the Brewery; the other in Bow Lane, on the other side of James's Street, close to the end wall of Swift's hospital, and at the start of the road leading toward Kilmainham, out of Dublin'.<sup>18</sup> A topography of public places is interwoven with Kinsella's personal topography. Poetic discourse is used to describe how space influenced his world view visually and emotionally. One particular room behind the shop, where the family would gather to play cards at weekends, is referred to as follows: 'Some of my first awarenesses are placed in the dark of that room, taking in the textures of life in their random detail'.<sup>19</sup>

Kinsella's womb-like descriptions of his first spatial memories evoke a sense of familiarity and safety. Spatial relations are grounded in security because they allow a being's stability to a certain degree and hold memories like a container. As for an exploration of our intimacy with a space, localization is more important than the specification of dates. Spaces that have connotations of home and belonging can make us feel secure, grounded in where we are and what we know, as opposed to the experience of space as a confusing maze, which ties in with feelings of being disoriented, maybe lost. To experience the city as a labyrinth or maze may be frightening and at the same time an overwhelming experience. The confusion that arises when one no longer knows where to place oneself can, in its severest form, lead to

18 Thomas Kinsella, *A Dublin Documentary* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2006), p. 8.

19 Kinsella, p. 8.

schizophrenic states. Sufferers feel literally eaten up by space. These spatial phobias can be described as conditions assimilated with 'dark space' – 'a space that is lived under the conditions of depersonalization and assumed absorption'.<sup>20</sup>

Landmarks and meeting places are junctures in the labyrinthine space of a city, where some places are sacred, others profane. Often a monument is used as a signifier for processes of idolization and worship of a person, a god, an event. Spatial implications are reflected in monuments and landmarks, as they give information about belonging and territory, about longing and desire. Monuments, with their constant change of meaning, mood and character, need to be regarded as fluid points of reference. Rather than being particular endpoints in terms of geographical distance, they need to be seen as points of departure for critical reflections on the city. Mumford talks in his historical epic of the development of western cities, *The City in History*, about permanent human settlements around cemeteries and shrines. There was an apparent need for meeting places in city-like developments, which were fixed landmarks like significant stones and trees and sacred places such as holy wells and shrines.<sup>21</sup>

The modern day shrine is often centred around famous icons. There are staged public message shrines like the column in front of the Oscar Wilde statue on Georgian Dublin's Merrion Square, or site-specific ones, like the garden wall of Bono's house in the South of Dublin, sporting messages like *Russia needs you* and *U2 R GOD*.<sup>22</sup> These declarations sound rather trivial if one looks at them as banal expressions of admiring fans of a rock star, as opposed to the spiritual meanings of an ancient ceremonial site. In archetypal terms, however, the trip to the rock star/hero's house is nevertheless a pilgrimage, albeit the modern day shrine can appear to be very mundane, as in the case of Bono's garden wall. Just like disappeared

20 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 174.

21 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 17.

22 The written messages are often similar. The visitors express their love and gratitude to U2/Bono and leave their own names in combination with a song title of the concerned band.



official monuments, un-official blind spots are remembered, often for years after their removal. In an informal conversation about the aesthetic quality and the contents of the inscriptions of Bono's garden wall and the alley way next to it, it emerged that a stencil stating *Citizen Kane is growing fat* disappeared from the asphalt of Vico Road in Killiney, County Dublin in the 1990s. Vico Road is a crossroad leading to Bono's house and the stencil is still remembered on an individual scale by a Dublin native years after its disappearance for its sheer craftsmanship in beautifully-produced letters as well as for its ironic and funny message. The memory of this blind spot is relevant in this context because the critical remark as to Bono's iconic status was not printed in a newspaper but appeared as a visio-spatial critique of his public identity on the way to his private doorstep. The intriguing element of the *Citizen Kane is growing fat* account is that the blind spot appeared 'on the road, in front of the house', rather than being another inscription on the garden-wall shrine. It evokes the spatiality of the threshold where the boundaries of public and private are in odd entanglement to the point of transgression, and where a subjective spatial memory fragment of visual contents was constructed by literally walking on or driving over the blind spot.<sup>23</sup>

When *We are ruled by psychopaths* (2009) was written on a house wall on Appian Way in Ranelagh, it could be noticed for several weeks. Situated in an upmarket property location, the short life span of this waste product was predictable. *Eat – sleep – commute – work – commute – eat – sleep* (2007) was in psycho-geographic Debord fashion scribbled on the garden walls of Canal Road crossing with Charlemont Street (used by many people to walk into work) and lasted for about a year before the wall was painted over. A message appeared on a wall in High Street in 2006, of a mother called Rose looking for her missing son, stating *I'm at home, come*

23 Rilke uses the threshold in front of the house in his *Malte* novel as a space where the narrative unfolds. The dualism of private house and public surroundings stresses the dualism of inside and outside, of private and public persona, creating what Dembski calls a subjective emotional reality [subjektive seelische Wirklichkeit]. Tanja Dembski, *Paradigmen der Romantheorie zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts. Lukacs, Bachtin und Rilke* (Wuerzburg: Koenigshausen & Neumann, 2000), pp. 193–194.

*home*. The debate around the contents of truthfulness of public messages touches on the Nietzschean critique of truth as a form of multiplicities rather than a moral category that is black and white. As a monument to those who disappear, Rose's blind spot reads like a fragment of despair.

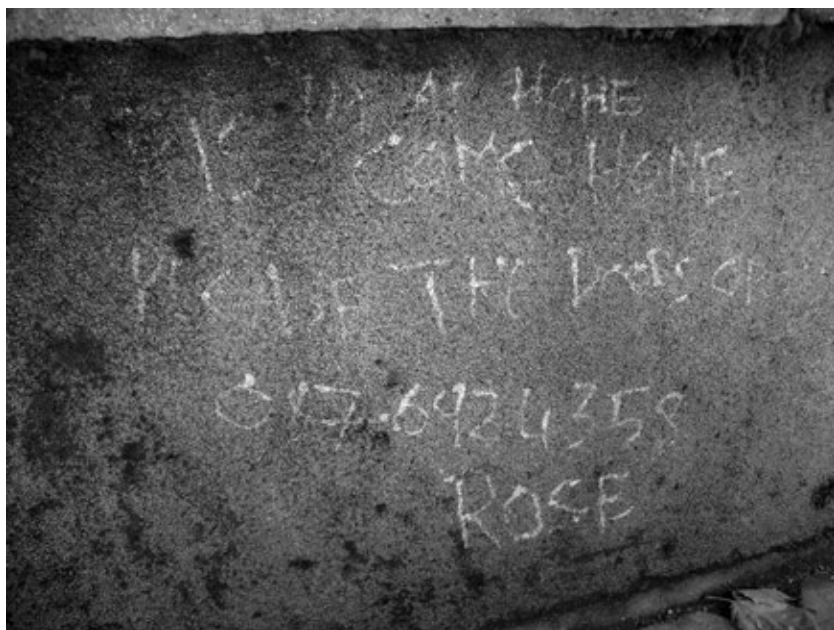


Figure 6 *High Street / Cornmarket*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

When reading inscriptions on walls, a certain map of fragmented messages comes into existence. Blank areas on traditional cartographic maps indicate ruins and wasteland.<sup>24</sup> If there are no inscriptions in the cultural urban landscape, regardless of their aesthetic quality, the city in its physicality resembles a blank slate or *tabula rasa*. It comes close to sanitized generic

24 In *Industrial Ruins*, Edensor terms these voids or blank areas *terra nullius*. Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (New York: Berg, 2005), p. 4.

utopia. As Lefebvre passionately stated, '[t]he most important thing is to multiply the readings of the city'.<sup>25</sup> It is of importance to interpret visual material that falls into the category of so-called waste products and blind spots because they shed light on 'the standards of the beautiful life in an ugly society',<sup>26</sup> referring to the abundance and at the same time lack of choice that modern society has to face. 'Only what does not fit in can be true', thus Robert Hullot-Kentor<sup>27</sup> introduces Adorno's objectives in social and cultural analysis.<sup>28</sup>

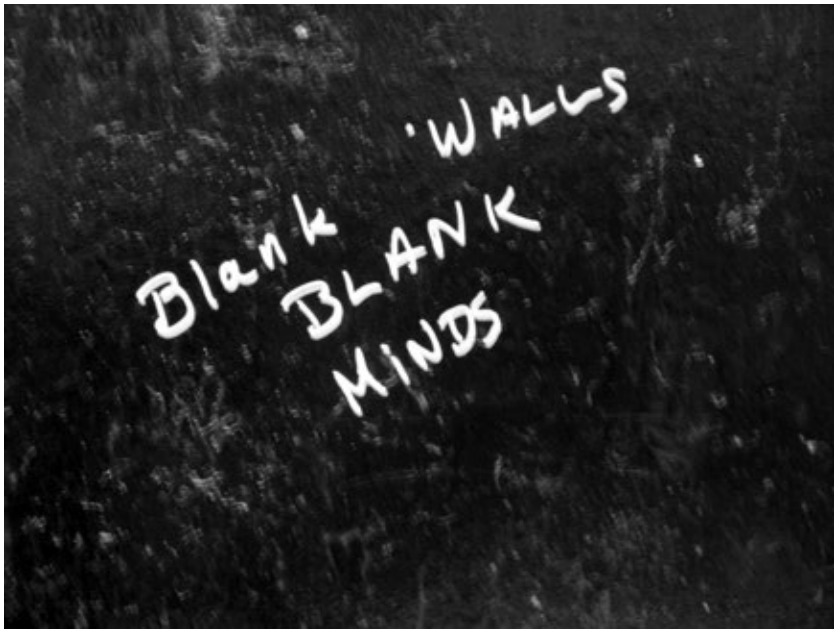


Figure 7 *Dame Lane*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

- 25 Henri Lefebvre, *The Social Production of Space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith), (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 159.
- 26 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor), (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 48.
- 27 Hullot-Kentor translated *Aesthetic Theory* from German into English.
- 28 Adorno, p. xx.

*Blank Walls Blank Minds* functions as a critique of the sanitized city. 'Sight-seeing' becomes 'site-seeing', where blind spots reflect 'a shifting landscape of privacy and publicity',<sup>29</sup> as they relate to private thoughts that find public expression. I propose treating these blind spots as monuments because monuments and landmarks reflect social and cultural regimes of value in space and are fluid in their production of meaning. The destruction or removal of monuments is tightly interlinked with memorial practice, our individual orientation in a phantom landscape called the past and how much we identify with historical narratives. In using blind spots and visual waste products as monuments of the present, the examination of identity and belonging in a spatial context takes on a new meaning.

The Celtic tiger years transformed an urban space that was regarded as rather depressing in the 1980s because of long-term unemployment, and lack of development and coherent planning, into a sexy boom town destination, or so the tourist boards wanted people to believe (before the recession commenced). The credit crunch of 2007, and the collapse of the construction boom in 2008, led to half-finished buildings, abandoned properties and ghostly estates at the edges of the city. The experience of the city is culturally determined, and that currently means that one enters the world of postmodern simulacra in order to take part in events that simulate a certain form of reality, as in the example of the theme-park (Disneyland is arguably the best-known). Human behaviour is not structured around the experience of reality but thrives on pseudo-events like the world-wide St Patrick's Parade, or physical settings like the Epicurean Foodhall (a global cuisine foodhall in Dublin). Reflections about multiculturalism in Dublin relate to the display of 'Ethnic Villages' in the Great World Exhibitions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where 'special zones dedicated to simulating different cultures and nations' had villagers from various locations in the western empires practising their customs and rituals on display.<sup>30</sup> Sennett points out that the everyday life in a city is 'something

29 Bruno, p. 8.

30 Bella Dicks, *Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visibility* (London: Open University Press, 2004), p. 95.

invisible to the walking tourist.<sup>31</sup> The tourist may catch a glimpse of what it means to be ‘at home’ in Dublin, but the question arguably is, ‘Do they want to?’



Figure 8 *Peter Place*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.

In considering blind spots in the city as monuments of the moment, a metaphorical journey into the difficult world of fleeting images takes place, and it is demonstrated why it is important to catch them nevertheless, and how they can contribute to the construction of cultural thought. As a discipline exploring the multiple meanings of images, visual culture lends itself to different forms of discourse that apply to spatiality – the creation of spectacles and the discourse of the everyday. The monument as a site

31 Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 324.

of cultural memory asks to be addressed and reconsidered on an ongoing basis, with cultural practices of everyday life as markers of identity that are reflected in visual phenomena like blind spots. In allowing the blind spots to be de- and reconstructed as fragments of the everyday, a visual reflection takes place that establishes public intimacy and touches upon questions like 'What is a city?', and 'Who are we in this place?'

The focus on emotional responses to space, how one interacts with the public sphere in 'private' and 'intimate' ways, shifts the investigation of the city as a web of streets defined by their architectural setting into a search for possible alternative interpretations of what it might mean to navigate through a city visually and emotionally. Such hybrid forms of transit constitute an unresolved subject matter, relating to thresholds of cultural identities based on ambivalent emotions. It was my aim to touch upon these in-between zones and show how visually-stored mundane expressions throughout the city reflect cultural processes and social changes.

If we grasp a fleeting image that reminds us of our inner identity, we will perceive the banal images visible on the outside of the city as highly interesting, social signifiers, rather than vile acts of vandalism. Bruno writes that spaces are *sites for biography*:

[Spaces] are constantly reinvented by stories of the flesh; as apparatuses *à vivre* they house the erotic materiality of tactile interactions – the very terrain of intersubjectivity. Their geometry is the connection between public sites and private spaces: doors that create a passage between interior and exterior, windows that open this passage for exploration.<sup>32</sup>

We can scan the streets 'as if they were written pages',<sup>33</sup> but it is our gaze that defines the discourse of the city. As a philosopher in Calvino's city of Hypatia states, 'Signs form a language, but not the one you think you know'.<sup>34</sup> Only when we perceive something slowly, over time, can intimacy happen. If we subvert meanings, snapshots of banal images may be used

32 Bruno, p. 66.

33 Calvino, p. 14.

34 Calvino, p. 48.

as critique of the fast-living, fast-moving urban environment and its visually domineering heroic monuments, shop-windows and advertisement boards. Bakhtin's linguistic concept of the word as a territory works well with what one may consider waste products of visual culture. A blind spot is a visual territory.



Figure 9 *Marlborough Place*. Photograph courtesy of Silvia Loeffler.





## Notes on Contributors

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