James Toomey  
Tanner Dean Scholar Research Application  

Abstract: The Social City of Dublin and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*  

This research will study the relationship between the peculiar social, physical and cultural characteristics of the city of Dublin and the city as presented in James Joyce’s modernist epic *Ulysses*. Much has been written about the indispensable role of Dublin in the novel, where it has been recognized as serving not just as a setting and social framework for the events of June 16, 1904, but as a generalizable paradigm for modernity at the beginning of a new century. Nevertheless, Dublin is an anomalous city in many regards. Features such as its ubiquitous Catholicism, the legacy of its British domination, and its ethnic and social homogeneity have shaped the city in unique ways and influenced its portrayal in *Ulysses*. This paper will analyze the ways in which specific features of Dublin are present in the novel, and the implications of these peculiarities for Joyce’s effort to write a universal epic. While the literature has traditionally focused on the universalizing role of Dublin in the novel, dealing with particularities only insofar as consistent with Joyce’s doctrine that “in particular is contained the universal,” this research will shift the focus to Dublin’s peculiarities. What is different about Dublin and to what extent is this reflected in *Ulysses*? What are the implications for these differences in reading the novel? Finally, with peculiarities of Dublin taken into account in broader context, what is the role of the city in *Ulysses*? Why is it there, and what does it do? The answers to these questions, not currently clarified in the literature, will shed greater light on the novel as a whole, help to better explain one of history’s most complex works of art, and through literature to clarify the role of the city in a human experience for which urbanism has only become more important since the publication of *Ulysses*.  

Biographical Sketch:  

My name is James and I’m a junior Government and English major, and I am interested primarily in international relations and modernist literature. At Cornell, I’ve worked for the University Police as a Police Auxiliary since freshman year, and am Marketing Director of the English Club and Vice-President of the Anthropology Club. I plan to attend law school after college. I grew up on Long Island.
James Toomey  
2/26/15  
Statement of Purpose: Tanner Dean Scholar Joyce Dublin Research  

I intend to research the relationship between the peculiar social, physical and cultural characteristics of the city of Dublin and the city as presented in the works of Irish author James Joyce using Tanner Dean Scholarship research money to fund research in Dublin itself. Though much has been written about Dublin as rendered by Joyce, particularly in his *magnum opus*, *Ulysses*, most studies have been concerned primarily with the universalizing aspects of the city, those elements that Joyce uses to make Dublin, in his own words, “the heart of all cities in the world.”  

Dublin, nevertheless, is somewhat of an anomalous city. Near universally Catholic, Europe’s only post-colonial capital, and remarkably homogenous ethnically and socially (particularly at the time during which *Ulysses* is set), the city of half a million residents is often described as being fundamentally different in social character than other cities its size. Indeed, Joyce’s commitment to presenting the city as it was in reality and not merely as a metaphor for all cities is reflected in his assertion that he “want[ed] to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.”  

This research will address the questions presented by juxtaposition of unique features of *Ulysses*’s urban setting with its purportedly universalizing scope. How ought the unique features of Dublin be read in a novel unabashedly intended for all people of all times? This research, and the honors thesis I will write from it, will not just help to clarify the interpretation of one of

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literature’s most difficult texts, but will in the analysis of a particular case help to understand the role of unique peculiarities of place in fiction more generally.

As an English major I have been studying literature at the college level for several years and have had a particular interest in Joyce since reading *Dubliners* with Professor Dan Schwarz last fall. One of my favorite authors to read, I would argue that Joyce is among a handful of truly great writers whose writing is not only engaging and powerful but whose aesthetic mission and beliefs in the purpose and construction of literature are the right ones. For Joyce, authors must “find] in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible;”⁴ literature must search for that which is “all in all in all of us.”⁵ Though articulated by William Faulkner, Joyce certainly held to the belief that “the human heart in conflict with itself…alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.”⁶ Thus I want to do this research not just because of a narrow interest in the project at hand, but a passionate interest in general in literature and that wonderful fiction of Joyce.

This research project will take place over five weeks in the city of Dublin. As the project is focused on Joyce and his writings in Dublin and puts a specific focus on characteristics of the city itself, travel to Ireland is necessary for thorough and responsible study. On the one hand, the resources, collections, and archival material on James Joyce in Dublin are unparalleled anywhere in the world. Many scholars writing on Joyce have found it supremely beneficial to use the resources of Dublin to do so, including Professor Schwarz, whose own trips to Ireland have influenced his writings. He recommends studying in Dublin to anyone who would seriously study Joyce. Beyond this, the particular focus of this project requires travel to Ireland. Since I

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⁵ Joyce, *Ulysses*, IX.1049-50.
will be specifically studying the city of Dublin itself, the use of Tanner Dean funding to travel to
the city will be indispensable. In an effort to understand the social environment of the city in
1904, I will be accessing archival material about Dublin available nowhere else.

For the first three and a half weeks of my stay, I will be actively doing my research,
visiting key sites, libraries, archives and galleries, while I will reserve the final week and half for
organizing what I will have found and beginning to write. When I first arrive, I will spend a day
or two walking the "Ulysses walk," familiarizing myself with the various locations in the book
and better understanding their placement relative to each other. This will take me to places such
as the James Joyce Tower, the tower in which Stephen Dedalus and his friends are living at the
beginning of the novel, and in which Joyce actually lived for a period in his own life. The Tower
is now a museum, dedicated to Joyce and Ulysses, and should be a valuable asset to my
research.\(^7\) This walk has been helpful for scholars of Joyce in the past, as, for example, when
Professor Schwarz realized that a certain mental threat Leopold Bloom makes during the novel to
jump off of a bridge is more a joke than a genuinely suicidal thought because the actual bridge in
question is not high enough to kill someone.

I will focus my research on a few important sites in Dublin. The National Library of
Ireland will be particularly useful.\(^8\) With collections of Joyce’s letters, manuscripts, and
comprehensive Joyce scholarship, as well its being the setting for an important scene in Ulysses,
the National Library will be an invaluable resource, and I plan to spend several days there. In
addition to the Joyce material, the Library has collections on the history of Ireland and Dublin
which are not readily available elsewhere and will be invaluable to my effort to understand the
peculiar aspects of the city and how they shape an interpretation of the novel. Of particular note

\(^7\) [http://jamesjoycetower.com/](http://jamesjoycetower.com/)
are the library’s “Political Interest” and “Social, Economic and Labour History” manuscript collections.

The National Archives of Ireland, also located near the city center in Dublin, has archival maps, demographic information, and governmental reports on the city throughout its history, in addition to historical advertisements and other material. Their documents “have enormous research potential as they provide essential primary source material for people seeking to understand the political, economic and social forces which have shaped our nation.” Most of these records are not available online and will therefore be a focus of my time in Dublin. I will spend several days at the National Archives.

The James Joyce Centre is a museum in Dublin that has a number of resources useful for my research. In addition to the collections of early Joyce writing and some other interesting Joyce paraphernalia, the Centre sponsors and hosts events with experts which I will look into attending while in Dublin. Furthermore, the Centre is staffed with highly qualified Joyce scholars, and I will reach out to them regarding any other resources they may be aware of. I will contact members of the University College Dublin James Joyce Research Centre and will try to meet some professors while in Dublin, as they have presumably more experience with both Dublin and Joyce and would be able to answer questions I have about both. The National Gallery of Ireland is another site of interest given the importance of visual art in the novel, and labels indicating when the painting was acquired by the museum enable analysis of Joyce’s visual influences in Ulysses. Similarly, though not exclusively dedicated to James Joyce, the

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9 http://www.nationalarchives.ie/
10 http://www.nationalarchives.ie/about-us/introduction/
11 http://jamesjoyce.ie/
12 http://www.ucd.ie/joyce/researchcentre
13 http://www.nationalgallery.ie/
Dublin Writers Museum should be worth a visit and can help to put my research in the broader context of Dublin literature.\textsuperscript{14}

On the logistic end, I have acquired a room at University College Dublin (Joyce's \textit{alma mater}) for the proposed five week research period. The rent allocated in the budget is for the complete five weeks and includes all utilities. Located in Dublin and with easy access to all the sites I intend to visit, this should be an ideal arrangement. I will book flights, the other big ticket item on the budget, immediately upon approval. The remainder of the money requested will be necessary for food, transportation, and miscellaneous costs such as museum admission fees.

I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to complete this research project. I've been eager to take advantage of the Tanner Dean Scholar summer research opportunity since coming to Cornell, and I believe this project is the kind of meaningful, interesting research the program is designed to sponsor.

Thank you for considering my proposal, and I hope the Scholar's program will be as enthusiastic about this project as I am.

\textsuperscript{14} \url{http://www.visitdublin.com/dublin-a-to-z/details/dublin-writers-museum/31258/}
Partial Bibliography of Relevant Works


