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Article

The Representation of Dublin in Story and Song

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The Rare Old Times …

… is the title of a well-known and much-loved song by the Dublin musician and composer Pete St John. (He also penned 'The Fields of Athenry', a song which qualifies as Ireland's alternative national anthem, so ubiquitous has it become on sporting and other public occasions.) It's a ballad narrated by a man named Sean Dempsey who is looking back from the present (the song was written in the late 1970s) on his life and experiences in the city. Despite the bitterness of some of his memories, and his anger at both the speed and the extent of the changes overtaking the city, the prevailing mood is one of nostalgia and sentimentality. Dublin is depicted as a generally benign place, full of character and characters. Children are 'raised on songs and stories' before taking up their own 'haunting … rhymes'. Street heroes wander amongst familiar, accessible landmarks such as the 'Metropole' and the 'Pillar'. In his youth Dempsey was a cooper (a barrel-maker), in work, and in love with a beautiful girl named Peggy Dignan from the same south inner-city area as himself.

All this changes, however; the organic community is, inevitably, lost. Dempsey loses his house to progress and his job to redundancy; the children are silenced, and the very fabric of the city is assaulted as the old buildings are ripped down, to be replaced by an array of soulless 'glass cages'. Worst of all, Peggy is wooed and whisked away to Birmingham by a student. All this leaves Sean bitter and alienated, slowly drinking himself to death and lamenting the 'rare old times' spent in an old town that is rapidly becoming a new city.

'The Rare Old Times' is interesting in a number of respects, but none more than its relatively positive estimation of a place that has garnered a lot of negative treatment over the years. The protagonist's disapprobation is reserved for the new Dublin, not for the traditional town, which he regards as a place of nurture, interest and opportunity. This differs in several key respects from the generally jaundiced view of the city that has emerged since the early twentieth century, a view which in cultural (if not economic or political) terms has its basis in the work of James Joyce. So powerful an imaginary construct is Joyce's Dublin that it has in fact influenced engagement with the city in a range of other media, including the one with which I am principally concerned in this essay: popular music. Before going on to consider that process, however, it's worthwhile considering the disciplinary economy of Irish Studies itself – specifically, the economy of historical (temporal) and geographical (spatial) discourses through which the field is ordered.

Ireland in Space and Time

There's an old joke which says that the Irishman can never see where he's going because he's too busy looking back over his shoulder to see where he's come from. An obsession with the past does indeed appear to be a national characteristic, for Ireland has traditionally been regarded as a country in which history provides the key to experience and to understanding. By and large this remains the case. In Ireland, it seems, the past is always much closer than one imagines.

If we look again at that old joke, however, we notice that it connotes a spatial as well as a temporal dimension: there's an implication of movement, presumably through space; there are implicit locations, there (in the past), here (in the present) and there again (in the future);

there are, of course, the geo-racial definitions (Ireland and Irishness) upon which the joke depends. Even as it articulates a national obsession with history, it seems, this innocuous little observation cannot help but reveal a deeply-embedded concern with and for space. And as it does so, it also reveals something fundamental about Irish cultural expression throughout history.

In fact, Irish culture has proved particularly amenable to the 'spatial turn' that overtook critical discourse in the humanities in the last decades of the twentieth century. The reason for this is that, despite appearances and claims to the contrary, Ireland has historically been a country in which matters of space have always been of extraordinary importance. Along a continuum running from large-scale global concerns (the relationships with the Great Britain and with Europe, for example) to the finest calibrations of psycho-subjective experience (the politics of touching, for example), Irish culture has, since the emergence of the very notion of national identity (and probably much longer), been a discourse in which spatial concerns have always mattered at least as much as temporal ones.

One of the proofs of this thesis is provided by the country's rich literary heritage. Irish writing from *Táin Bó Cuailnge* to *Brooklyn*, from Oliver Goldsmith to Marina Carr, reveals a deep fascination with spatial concerns (Kenny 1974). My book *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (2001) was the first sustained scholarly attempt to acknowledge this fact, and to develop an Irish response to the re-emergence of space as a radical critical category in the academy. In that book, I claimed

> that it is not so much the case that concern for history has been lost, but rather that under pressure from a combination of factors, issues of space have more or less organically re-emerged alongside the temporal considerations which so successfully dominated the Irish critical and cultural imagination for so long' (22).

One of the case studies I conducted in that book was of the city of Dublin - or more accurately of a specific area within central Dublin: the artistic / tourist quarter known as Temple Bar located on the south side of the River Liffey (82-92). During the course of my research I observed a city literally attempting to remake itself as something both traditional and new: a place related to previous (positive) representations of Dublin, but which was at the same time removed from any residual negative connotations – a new place in an old space. This was a difficult line to walk, a difficult balance to maintain, and indeed remains so. Like any other city, 'Dublin' is a constantly evolving possibility, both a physical place and an imaginary construct (Lefebvre 1996); and the literary construction of the city plays a significant role in that ambivalent process.

Literary Dublin
Dublin has featured as a spatial presence of greater or lesser significance in Irish fiction since the emergence of the modern form of the novel during the eighteenth century (Hand 2011; Moynahan 1984). As so often when searching for an example drawn from Irish cultural history, however, one eventually, inevitably turns to *Ulysses*. In Joyce's novel, the ghosts of the past haunt all three principal characters, as well as the country and the city in which they live. The dead generations – represented by the likes of Paddy Dignam, Shakespeare, Parnell and Rudi Bloom - lay heavy on the shoulders of the living, and Dublin becomes the image of a society paralysed by its inability to shake off that weight. In this regard, *Ulysses* is emblematic of the Irish literary tradition precisely to the extent that it articulates an obsession with the ways in which the past continues to burden the present.

At the same time, Joyce's novel is clearly also a highly structured and superbly realised exercise in the geographical imagination. The author's boast to Frank Budgen (1989: 69) – that a destroyed Dublin could be rebuilt using his book – is well documented. Joyce may have conceived *Ulysses* as the epic of a single city – its space and places, its place-names, its streets and buildings; in pursuing this end, however, he managed to produce an exemplary modernist text – exemplary to the extent that it reveals the business of life in the early twentieth century to be as much a spatial as a temporal concern (Gibbons 1991). London, New York, St Petersburg, Paris, Berlin – they all have their chroniclers, as well as their claimants to be the cradle of modernism. It took a writer of Joyce's genius to convert the provincial little city of Dublin into the supreme arena for the delineation of the modern subject in all his / her fractured, brittle beauty.

Joyce's influence on Irish cultural practices has remained strong; indeed, with the advent of the 'spatial turn' in the humanities his work - to the extent that it is so clearly and so determinedly spatially engaged - has become even more important as a means of testing ideas relating to Ireland and Irish identity (MacAnna 1991; O'Toole 1985). In particular, Joyce's use of Dublin as both a 'real' and an imagined location has proved particularly compelling, especially given the way in which the city has evolved as a spatial presence within the post-revolutionary Irish imagination.

The idea of Dublin continued to be explored by each new generation, although always with the shadow of Joyce looming across the pages of their work. In the 1920s, Sean O'Casey and Liam O'Flaherty deconstructed the constituent ideologies of the new Free State, using Dublin as both backdrop and agent. Skirting the border between comedy and tragedy, O'Casey's theatrical trilogy (1998) appeared to suggest, amongst other things, that a truly 'revolutionary' movement had been hi-jacked by nationalist-republican rhetoric. During the same period, O'Flaherty's Dublin thrillers (including the award-winning *The Informer* of 1925) scrutinised the desperately flawed psychology of various victims of the revolution. Each writer, as remarked, adapted the 'real' Dublin for literary ends, adding as they did so to the city's imaginary accretions. At the same time, each also represented an important riposte to Joyce's domination of Dublin's potential as a location within the wider geographical imagination.

The next important period in Dublin's career as a literary city occurred during the 1950s, and is dominated by three names: Flann O'Brien, Patrick Kavanagh, and Brendan Behan. Of this trio, only the latter was a true 'Dub': the other two were blow-ins from Tyrone and Monaghan (both in the ancient province of Ulster), although both eventually came to develop a deep familiarity with the city and its ways (Hassett 1984). It should be noted that Dublin is not so much an explicit presence within the work of these writers (although it's certainly invoked by all three in different ways at different times) as an implicit influence upon their various styles and visions. Most people would accept that such a phenomenon exists, although quite *how* a city manages to influence a literary style is less certain (Brown 1978; Pike 1981). For all three writers, in any event, the experience of Dublin appears to have been deeply ambivalent: each appeared to love the city in some fashion and to some degree, and yet in the writings of each there remains a suspicion that life in this particular city at this particular time in history has significantly curtailed their artistic scope.

After all, the thing about Joyce's depiction of Dublin (as either Behan, Kavanagh or O'Brien might have been keen to point out) was that it was written not in the city itself, but in various

locations scattered across the continent of Europe using an array of secondary devices and methodologies, of which the most obvious were memory, research, and reportage. Which is to say: despite the author's claims to accuracy and honesty, Joyce's Dublin is first and foremost a *literary city*, the imaginary construct of an exile, with everything that entails in the way of nostalgia and absence. No-one should doubt that the city depicted in *Ulysses* (and indeed in Joyce's other writings) represents a seminal articulation of international Modernist experience. The 'shout in the street' identified by Stephen Dedalus is an acknowledgement, as Marshall Berman wrote, of 'the untapped depths of the cities of the plain' (1983: 314). This achievement demanded some sleight of hand on Joyce's part, however – physical removal from the place itself: and this is an irony not lost on future generations of writers who have been obliged (from whatever combination of circumstances) to dwell in a city lacking any of the glamour of Joyce's invention (MacAnna 1991; O'Toole 1992).

The next important chapter in the history of Dublin's literary life was supplied by the various writers who fell under the short-lived and much-maligned umbrella of 'Northside Realism'. Joyce's Dublin began to be systematically destroyed by a combination of politicians, planners and builders during the 1960s; and with the emergence of a new set of spatial possibilities came the demand for a new literary response, one alive to the rhythms and the practices of modern city-dwelling. During the 1980s writers such as Dermot Bolger (1990, 1992) and Roddy Doyle (1992) became the chroniclers of 'invisible' Dublin – that dimension of city life which had always been marginal to official nationalist discourse, and which was now, in its modern manifestation, suffering more or less complete renunciation. Critics were divided as to whether Bolger's work in particular merely replaced one myth with another, equally unhelpful and unreal (Richards 1992). In any event, Northside Realism was a relatively short-lived phenomenon, although it remains an important moment in the ongoing resistance to Joycean hegemony over Dublin's literary existence.

In the years after 1994 Dublin was at the heart of the Celtic Tiger – the economic miracle which propelled Ireland to the centre of the international cultural arena. The city was now diverse and complex enough, it was mooted, to sustain a range of literary engagements, including genre fiction – detective fiction and 'chick lit', for example, as well as 'proper' literary fiction - although what a 'proper' literary engagement with Celtic Tiger Dublin would look like remained a matter for debate (Hand 2011; O'Brien 2012). One thing seems certain, however: in this New Jerusalem, Joyce's Dublin figures as an increasingly unlikely and ineffectual presence. This is not surprising: the 'shout in the street' had little relevance for those with their ears glued to mobile telephones or wearing over-head stereo headphones.

The latter image leads on to the second part of this essay, in which I wish to consider a tradition which has in some respects paralleled the literary engagement with Dublin: I refer to the great variety of popular musical texts which have attempted in some or other fashion to represent the city.

Dublin in Popular Music
Music is related to social space in a number of respects. The most obvious would be that in which specific places are invoked in the lyrics or the title of a song. This is a venerable popular musical tradition, although it's fair to say that it operates unevenly across different national and generic traditions. American popular music, for example, tends to fetishize place-names. In some senses, the musical invocation of New York, Chicago, Phoenix, San Francisco, and so on, is one of the most significant means (along with film) whereby such

places attain an extra-geographical existence within the cultural imagination of those who don't live there.

Irish dance (non-vocal) music and ballad music also incorporate place-names as a recurring feature, in the titles of tunes, for example, or as the locations of narratives. In a relatively small island such as Ireland, it's not surprising that the biggest city should feature as an important element of the vernacular musical culture. We find evidence of this tradition in ballads such as 'Dicey Riley', 'Biddy Mulligan', 'Dublin Jack of All Trades' and 'Waxie's Dargle' - songs in which the personalities and the practices (as well, of course, as the places) associated with Dublin are invoked and engaged. 'Molly Malone' is probably the most famous ballad associated with Dublin, however; although not mentioned in the title, the city is invoked in the opening line ('In Dublin's fair city'), and retains a strong presence throughout the remainder of the lyric – so much so, in fact, that 'Molly Malone' now tends to function metonymically in relation to Dublin: if you wish to invoke *this* place for as wide an audience as possible, one of the easiest and most accessible ways to do so is by playing *this* song.

The ballad is one of the progenitors of the modern popular song tradition, and the invocation of the place-name is one of the conventions that was imported into the newer form. We find an example of this on a rare early release by Thin Lizzy which takes the form of a slow ballad called 'Dublin' (1971), written and sung by the band's charismatic leader Philip Lynott. The lyric tells the story of a first-person protagonist's departure from the city in the wake of a failed relationship. Despite the bitterness this causes, the memory of Dublin remains strong: individual places (Grafton Street and Derby Square) are name-checked, and the city itself is invoked at the end of each verse. Dublin is clearly a loved place, as well as the site of pain and unhappiness great enough to warrant departure. This ambivalence is borne out by the music itself, which is far removed from the kind of pyrotechnic stadium rock for which the band would become famous in the mid-1970s. 'Dublin' is a slow and under-stated ballad played predominantly on acoustic guitar. The track does in fact feature an electric guitar (played by Eric Bell), but not of the kind or the volume found on tracks such as 'The Boys Are Back In Town' or 'Emerald'; rather, it trips (or 'weeps') with great subtlety and sympathy around the melody.

Dublin in depicted in far less sympathetic terms in 'Rat Trap' (1977), the breakthrough hit for the Boomtown Rats. As the title suggest, the city (or at least a particular quarter of the north inner city) is literally a trap designed and maintained over an extended period of time in order to curtail the freedom – physical, certainly, but spiritual and intellectual also – of its denizens. The lyric (written by vocalist and front man Bob Geldof) describes the lives of two young Dubliners: a boy names Billy and his sister Judie, who eke out an existence on the margins of the city, unable to access the 'right side of town' across the river. Their world, rather, is one of boredom and 'high-rise blocks', a mean, dirty, dangerous world in which the culturally disenfranchised are always already caught in the traps that have been set long before they were born.

'Rat Trap' is in fact nothing less than the popular musical equivalent of a Northside Realist narrative. Billy and Judie are encouraged by the singer to open their minds to possibilities they cannot yet identify, to 'find a way out', and to 'kick down' the doors which entrap them. One might speculate that it was precisely their removal from Dublin which enabled Geldof and the Boomtown Rats to sing about the alienation of their generation with such bitterness. It was the backwards glance from the London metropolis that exposed Dublin's

pusillanimity; and if the spirit of Northside Realism was present, then so too was the ghost of that 'paralysis' which Joyce had chronicled with such minute intensity in *Dubliners* (1914). But what gave 'Rat Trap' added force was the energy of punk rock; although the product of British (and to a lesser extent American) cultural history, that energy was in fact ideally suited – and available – for use in what Geldof was later to describe as the 'banana' Republic of Ireland (1980).

Issues of space have infused the music of U2 since the start of their career; such an engagement, moreover, encompasses both the lyrical and the instrumental dimensions of their output. Which is to say: many of the band's lyrics engage with ideas of location, movement, environment, and so on; at the same time, U2' signature sound during the 1980s was one in which 'space' was encoded into the music in a number of literal and figurative ways. This was down in part to the way in which the band's guitarist (the Edge) used his instrument to create harmonic tension with the other 'voices', in particular, with the voice of the lead singer (Bono). Standard rock practice is to fill out the musical 'space' in a song with instrumental sound of some kind – rhythm guitar, keyboard pads, backing vocals, or some such. Because of U2's particular line-up (guitar, bass, drums, vocal), the Edge was forced at an early stage to develop a highly individual style in which he actually 'plays' less than other rock guitarists, but lets the fewer notes that he *does* play do more work in terms of their relation to the other voices (Smyth 2001: 166-76). This, allied to the Edge's frequent recourse to echo effects, created the sound' of songs such as 'Where The Streets Have No Name' and 'In God's Country' from *The Joshua Tree* (1987) which remains the signal achievement of the band's first phase.

The band's home city of Dublin has remained an important and recurring spatial location throughout U2's career, even when filtered through a musical imagination that has oscillated between American and European influences. One early engagement occurs in the song entitled 'Bad' from *The Unforgettable Fire* (1984). Musically speaking, this composition was a typical produce of mid-80s U2, in as much as it featured a subtle, jangly guitar figure (created with various echo effects), rock-steady bass, drums growing in complexity and volume over the course of the performance, all capped off by a vocal which moves from (close to) the bottom to (more or less) the top of Bono's range. What rock musicologists refer to as the 'texture' (Moore 1993: 105) of the song is thus relatively sparse and open, and this is created (as remarked above) by the space between the individual voices which comprise this particular soundscape.

This is all the more interesting because, in terms of its lyrics, 'Bad' represents a further chapter in the book of 'Damnable Dublin' – the city of poverty, violence, and entrapment so familiar to readers of Joyce, O'Casey, Behan and Bolger. There appears to be no direct reference to the city in the lyric itself; the inference arises from the band's frequent extra-textual pronouncements, including Bono's famous remarks when he introduced the song at *Live Aid* (13 July 1985) by saying: 'We're an Irish band, we come from Dublin City, Ireland. Like all cities it has its good, it has its bad. This is a song called "Bad"'. As with Joyce, Dublin is initially comparable with other cities; it achieves symbolic status beyond its mere geographic existence, however, in the work of native artists who are uniquely equipped (through experience of domicile and exile) to identify what was 'good' and 'bad' about the city, and to endow those qualities with an appeal beyond local geography. And it was this ability – to convert a unique place into a widely-available imaginative space – that underpinned U2's growing international appeal; in particular, it was *that* performance of

'Bad' that confirmed U2 as 'band of the 80's' – an accolade they has received a month earlier (in June 1985) from *Rolling Stone* magazine.

It's interesting to note that U2's next major musical statement after *The Unforgettable Fire* was an album concerned in the main with spaces that were both 'foreign' and 'outdoor'. The principal spatial trope deployed on *The Joshua Tree* is in fact the desert, a powerful concept that is explored to wide metaphorical effect on a number of songs on the album. Indeed, that work was a key statement of U2's growing obsession with American music and culture, something the band continued to indulge in the following years with the album *Rattle and Hum* (1988), which included identifiably 'American' songs such as 'Desire', 'Angel of Harlem' and 'When Love Comes To Town'.

Despite this, *The Joshua Tree* does contain residual elements of some kind of engagement with contemporary Dublin, albeit filtered through the Americana that constituted the band's principal sonic context at that time. Of these elements, the most remarked tends to be the album's fifth track, a slow ballad entitled 'Running To Stand Still'. This song is apparently set in the north Dublin area of Ballymun which was notable at the time for the 'seven towers' cited in the lyric. Ballymun was a failed housing project, notorious for its problems with unemployment, crime and substance abuse. The protagonist appears to be aware of the desperation of her plight, and willing at least to contemplate escape – to 'do something about where [she's] going'. As the title suggests, however, such willingness is not enough by itself; at the most it can only avoid further descent into the hell of addiction. The song is not forthcoming about where the resources – personal and / or social – are going to come from to effect a true and lasting escape from this milieu. Such, of course, is not the artist's job.

Or perhaps it is. The question of art's relation to social praxis is, to put it mildly, vexed. U2 have always flirted with socio-political agendas of various kinds, and while this has elevated them in the eyes of many, for others it has condemned the band to the irrelevance awaiting any artist who attempts to 'buy' influence through preaching and moralizing rather than through observation and insight. It's a difficult path to negotiate, and it's not made any easier by the fact that cultural criticism and cultural theory are, as much as any other human phenomenon, subject to the whims of fashion and taste. If 'Blowin' in the Wind' is one man's indictment of social injustice, it's another woman's brick in the wall of patriarchal discourse.

It's a risk that any artist who broaches a 'social' subject is obliged to negotiate; and it's just such a risk that Paul Brady ran with his song 'Steel Claw' from *True For You* (1983), his second rock album after converting from folk and traditional music at the beginning of the decade. 'Steel Claw' is a song that appears to be *about* urban deprivation; as such it could be a comment on contemporary Dublin and all the ills that blighted the city at that time – alienation, cynicism, criminality (political as well as social), anger, despair (Campbell and Smyth 2005: 85-88). It's a song in which the 'steel claw' of unearned, unmerited privilege gives rise to the indefeasible logic whereby 'rightness' and 'wrongness' are not immutable truths but merely a function of one's perspective; after all, as the lyric of 'Steel Claw' puts it, the question of what's right and wrong 'doesn't really matter when you're crawling in the gutter'.

It's fair to say that Brady does enough with his lyrics (here and in general) to avoid charges of sermonizing; as a rule his 'popular' songs retain a certain narrative element that one suspects he imported from a previous career as purveyor of traditional ballads. At the same time, it was precisely the universal elements within 'Steel Claw' – that is, its amenability of

application – that enabled an international artist such as Tina Turner (1984) to produce a successful version of the song. If the emotion of love is translatable between the scenarios in which it is textually engaged, then so too, it seems, are those experiences (such as the problems of urban living) which emerge in geographically disparate, yet existentially conjoined, spaces. The modern (and now postmodern) city is just such a space.

All the artists discussed thus far – Thin Lizzy, the Boomtown Rats, U2, Paul Brady – emerged and established themselves in Ireland before the advent of the Celtic Tiger. This fact has coloured their response to, and engagement with, the kind of country that emerged during and since the 1990s. After all, these artists had grown up and come to maturity in a very different country – an Ireland of the 'Troubles', of determined clerical power, of cultural conservatism, social polarisation, political venality and economic malaise. This was the country described in 'Bad' in terms of 'desperation, dislocation, separation, condemnation, isolation, desolation' – an island of police and priests, heroin and emigration, moving statues and attritional war. The experience of living in such a time and place afforded these artists an ironic perspective on the new Ireland that began to emerge after the 'Celtic Tiger' was officially identified in 1994.

On albums such as *Achtung Baby!* (1991) and *Zooropa* (1993) U2 anticipated the Celtic Tiger, and in some senses provided a language with which to approach and articulate the new moral and socio-economic dispensation. They were never *of* the Celtic Tiger, however, in a way that a band like the Script so clearly were. This Dublin three-piece were part of Ireland's end-of-the-century baby boomer generation, members of an elite 'Expectocracy' (McWilliams 2005; 52-67) which has been educated in, and inculcated with, a range of values and opinions vastly different from those of their parents. This is something, moreover, that is apparent in every aspect of the band's identity: lyrics, music, iconography and ethos.

Like U2 before them, on their eponymous debut album the Script tried to bridge the gap between local and general frames of reference. There are recognisable Irish allusions, such as the husband who 'hits the jar' in 'Together We Cry', and the 'Guinness' and 'Grafton Street' of 'Before the Worst'. At the same time, the album is comprised of songs detailing a range of generally downbeat perspectives (pain, regret, guilt, loss) that are not nation- or city-specific. The 'man who can't be moved' may be standing on a corner in Dublin; but he just as likely to be in Newcastle or Glasgow or Cardiff, or indeed in Boston, Sydney or Toronto. In this regard, the Script were merely working within in a long tradition of Irish popular music-makers who have tried to negotiate the conflicting forces operating within that very designation (Smyth 2005: 30-45).

But what really signals the Script as a popular musical articulation of the Celtic Tiger is the *sound* of the music – which is to say: a studio-honed, blue-eyed R&B, the signature element of which is Danny O'Donoghue's rich, supple voice and his highly stylised vocal delivery. Other Irish acts had broached this sound previously, most notably the Dubliner Samantha Mumba in her short-lived career of the early 2000s. It is the sound of a generation that grew up listening to Destiny's Child, Justin Timberland and Christina Aguilera; for whom the discourses of American hip-hop and rap were entirely normal and accessible aspects of the international musical soundscape; and for whom the elaborate vocal techniques evolved from earlier popular music traditions (most centrally, soul) represented the 'natural' context within which to develop a vocal interpretation.

In short, the *sound* of the Script is the *sound* of the Celtic Tiger – even when the band is singing about 'bad things'. The various 'failures' articulated by the various protagonists on the first album, for example, are belied by the ideology of expectation and attainment that underpins the music itself. The image of Dublin purveyed in the music of the Script is big and brash, exciting and dangerous – a fitting playground for those young and rich enough to dwell there. It's interesting to note, for example, that 'the man who can't be moved' is only playing the part of a homeless person, with his sleeping bag, his cardboard and his politely recalcitrant attitude towards the police. In fact, he's 'not broke' at all, only broken-hearted; there's a hole in his heart but not in his shoes. The girl jumps on an aeroplane to stay with friends in London; the guy speeds through the dark streets in his car looking for her; the music surges, perfect in its balance, its texture and its resonance. The generation which won tells a story about failure, and wins again.

If the Script represent the sound of the Celtic Tiger, then crews such as the Class A'z represent the sound of the city in its post-crash agonies. This loose affiliation of north-Dublin rappers specialises in 'songs' about the trials of trying to survive in a failed ideological state. 'Guns of Dublin' is a typical example: it's firmly located amongst the city's underclass, telling of the deprivations that lead to drugs-related crime, and of the prevalence of stylised violence as a response to such a situation. With this style of music, Dublin has taken another tectonic shift towards New York and Detroit: while the accents retain a local identity, the attitudes and the actions are all imported more or less wholesale from an out-of-date African-American rap culture that during the 1990s glamorised intra-community violence. The story related in 'Guns of Dublin' hardly matters: as in the United States, the authorities seem content for gangsters to keep killing other gangsters so long as they don't impinge too much on the lives of 'real' people – which is to say, those who have battened down the hatches in order to avoid the worst ravages of the crash, while all the time preparing to resume their position and to reconfirm the absolutely permanent nature of the established class system.

I began this survey of Dublin in popular music with a sentimental ballad about the loss of a city that never existed in fact; I finish with a rap that exaggerates (although not by so much) the extent of the city's gun culture. By appropriating and adapting the dubious glamour of African-American gang-rap, Class A'z and the other north-Dublin crews encapsulate the trauma of a country in deep recession, even as they continue to search for forms and languages through which to explore and express that trauma.

Conclusion
Dublin is a complex, multi-faceted city which has in turn generated a complex, multi-faceted literary culture traversing a wide array of genres and narratives. The literary construction of the city continues to evolve, and we await the first round of post-Tiger writing - whether in the form of fiction, poetry or drama – to see how that imaginative construction will be modified in respect of changes that have occurred in the economic and socio-political fabric of the city.

The popular arts – cinema and music – are likewise implicated in that imaginative process. Of these, the latter possesses its own rich genealogy: a bank of images and associations accumulated over an extended period of time, itself based on an older ballad tradition in which the city functioned as an imaginative spatial resource for a diverse array of discourses – class, gender, nation, community, profession, etc. Given the city-region's continuing centrality to the economic, cultural and political organisation of Ireland as a whole, it's likely

that Dublin's significance will only grow as the country endeavours to come to terms with the Tiger's extinction.

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