



The real people of Joyce's Ulysses: a biographical guide

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BOOK REVIEW

The real people of Joyce's *Ulysses*: a biographical guide, by Vivien Igoe, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2016, 380 pp., €30 (hardback), ISBN 9781910820063

In *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses*, Vivien Igoe provides an encyclopaedia of the real people who populate the Dublin streets of Joyce's novel either under their own names or behind fictional characters. The book builds upon the work of Shari and Bernard Benstock's *Who's He When He's At Home* as well as Gifford and Seidman's *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*. Its layout is closer to that of Gifford and Seidman's magisterial work. Unlike their work, however, the entries in Igoe's book are listed alphabetically. In addition, at the end of each biographical entry, Igoe references every instance of that character being mentioned in *Ulysses*. As such, the layout of Igoe's book works very well.

Igoe rationalises her selection choices as follows. She includes "only people that are named and identified in the text" (7). Where people did not seem to her to be of "major importance," they were not included (7). Similarly, if people are already sufficiently well-known, they are not included. Finally, where people "are alluded to through their work," they are not included (7). Thus, you will not find a biographical entry for G. Clifton Bingham or J. L. Molloy – who composed the words and music, respectively, for *Love's Old Sweet Song* – in *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses*.

The information Igoe does present is very well-researched and thorough. Not only are the real people behind characters such as John Eglinton and Corny Kelleher revealed, but the real people who influence composite characters are also related. Thus, we have a biographical entry for Henry Blackwood Price, who is namechecked in the "Nestor" episode, alongside entries for John Power and Tom Devin, who both form part of the composite character Jack Power in *Ulysses*. Nor does Igoe's book focus only on characters who appear in the novel. *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses* also provides biographical information for a range of people merely mentioned in passing. A mention in the "Sirens" episode, for example, is enough to ensure the English tenor, Joe Maas his own entry. Indeed, such is Igoe's level of detail that even each of the cyclists mentioned in the "Wandering Rocks" episode have an entry.

Igoe's book, however, is more than just an encyclopaedia. By recording the various addresses people lived at, as well as citizens' various social circles, *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses* also presents a picture of the social stratifications of Joyce's Dublin. An individual's social mobility can be glimpsed by tracing the areas of the city in which they lived throughout their life. Similarly, Igoe builds a picture of the various social circles in which individuals moved. She notes, for example, that "John Boyd, Matthew Kane and John Stanislaus Joyce were a familiar threesome at various funerals in Dublin" (35). In this regard, *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses* contains rich material for future researchers.

As well as presenting a multi-faceted picture of Joyce's Dublin, this book reinforces a multi-faceted picture of the author of *Ulysses*. Joyce is not only allowed to be a dramatist, poet and novelist, nor is *Ulysses* allowed to be only a novel. As Declan Kiberd notes in his foreword, in *Ulysses* Joyce plays at journalism, presenting "a text which does what traditional newspapers did before their collapse into sensationalism" (xvi). Igoe too comments that she "reinforces the perception of Joyce as a historian" (5). Igoe's book reveals the extent to which Joyce was a journalist, historian

and chronicler in addition to being a dramatist, poet and novelist, meaning that *Ulysses* too is not just a novel, but a newspaper and a chronicle.

In addition to chronicling the lives of real individuals, Igoe's book also includes three useful appendices. The first provides notes on various areas of Dublin life. This appendix has six sections. The first deals with entertainment in Joyce's Dublin, before sections on the clergy, the legal profession, the medical profession and the press. Finally, Igoe includes a section on sport in 1904 Dublin. The second appendix provides biographical information for all the horses listed in Joyce's text, while the final appendix provides information on where each of the individuals listed in the book are buried, complete with maps of the relevant cemeteries. In addition, Igoe provides co-ordinates beside each individual that correspond to the map of the cemetery in which they are buried. Following the appendices, Igoe provides the reader with a list of endnotes, which are then elaborated on in the bibliography. Arranged alphabetically by entry, this list details the sources Igoe used to compile the biographical entry for each individual. This aspect of the book will undoubtedly be of use to future Joyce scholars.

There are a number of guides to Joyce's *Ulysses*, as well as two books that are essential reference books for anybody exploring *Ulysses*. One such essential reference work is Gifford and Seidman's aforementioned *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, while the other is Thornton Weldon's *Allusions in Ulysses: An Annotated List*. One can now add *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses* to that list. Vivien Igoe has written a book that should be considered an essential reference work for anybody exploring *Ulysses* or Joyce's Dublin. It should be on every Joycean's bookshelf.

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