Dubliners Bookshelf
Readings with Joyce

A hallmark of great literature is its ability to engender a curiosity in the literary worlds of other books. James Joyce understood his debt to the wordsmiths who came before him. His Dublin of childhood through adulthood, from first light into nighttime, contains the traces of books from other ages and places. The characters that inhabit Joyce’s works read and discuss books. In an effort to find a place in this Hibernian metropolis, readers often want to join the conversations about these books. When the young protagonist of “Araby” discovers the musty, yellowed volumes left behind by the former tenant of his house, a priest who had died on the premise, Joyce’s readers, like the young hero, have only the copies of *The Abbot*, *The Devout Communicant*, and *The Memoirs of Vidocq* to discern the character and significance of this ghostly presence. Although Walter Scott’s novels are widely available, few student libraries—or university collections, for that matter—have the nineteenth and early twentieth-century editions of Pacificus Baker and Eugène François Vidocq similar to the ones Joyce read as a young man.

When the first story of *Dubliners* was published in 1904 in *The Irish Homestead*, the National Library of Ireland had only been open for fourteen years. Joyce was part of the first generation able to raid the shelves of this national institution. The physical spaces of libraries resonate in Joyce’s literary imagination. In the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode of *Ulysses*, the reading room of the National Library sets the scene for Stephen’s pedantic repartee and Bloom’s workday research. Joyce knew libraries and how to use them, and furthermore, he sent friends and colleagues into the stacks of public and private libraries to track down the bits and pieces that texture his works. Amidst the eighteenth-century grandeur of Archbishop Marsh’s Library, Joyce encountered painted gables on dark oak shelves containing leather-bound books of antiquity and modernity. In *Stephen Hero*, the young protagonist enters the library and consults the works of the Tre Corone, Franciscan philosophers, and W. B. Yeats. Marsh’s Library, Ireland’s first public library founded in 1701, provided the space and resources for Irishmen and women to satisfy their curiosities, pursue their intellectual projects, and find pleasure in reading. The *Dubliners Bookshelf* is an attempt to build upon the librarious institutions that have supported Joyce scholars and readers in the past.

The goal of the *Dubliners Bookshelf* is to collect and archive books and other printed materials relevant to the composition, interpretation, and reception history of *Dubliners*. A task such as this has many difficulties, some of which I will elaborate on shortly; consequently, the editorial team has attempted to form a scrupulous criteria for initial inclusion into the library. Rather than striving for definitiveness, we have tried to collect texts that appear explicitly in the writings of Joyce. These take two main forms: 1) Works mentioned in the text of *Dubliners*. For example, Little Chandler’s copy of Byron’s
Hours of Idleness in “A Little Cloud” or Mr. Duffy’s volumes of Nietzsche in “A Painful Case.” 2) Works that Joyce references in his letters, commonplace books, and essays during the time he was writing Dubliners. In one letter to Stanislaus dated 24 September 1905, for instance, Joyce notes the influence of Mikhail Lermontov’s A Hero of Our Time (1841) and Charles Francis Keary’s Twixt Dog and Wolf (1901) on his writing at the time. Collecting and displaying these works in a digital form give a sense of Joyce’s bibliographic environment.

The second step in amassing a digital bookshelf is the selection of copy texts from which digital surrogates can be made. In all cases, an effort has been made to identify and digitize editions that Joyce would have most likely encountered. In some instances, this is fairly straightforward, especially if only one edition of the book had been printed or bibliographic details given by Joyce allow us to positively identify the volume. The descriptive catalog of Joyce’s Trieste library gives a sense of the books Joyce had in his possession at the end of his life, giving us a starting point for thinking about what titles and types of books he might have encountered as a young man. In the absence of these more useful markers, we have tried to select editions which would have circulated in Dublin during the fin de siècle, choosing publishers and titles available in the bookstalls and libraries of Ireland.

After identifying titles and choosing appropriate copytexts, we must consider the individual witness that will be digitized and displayed within our application. Despite the relative fixity of print, the printed book often has slight variations, even within a single print run. Consequently, we have tried to choose individual witnesses that are ostensibly free from idiosyncratic defect and are representative of the larger edition and printing. The decision to represent the books in digital facsimile, as opposed to a clean transcription, allows the reader to interact with the visual forms of the written page as Joyce encountered them. Odd advertisements, illustrations, colophons often caught Joyce’s attention, and these paratextual elements are retained in the digitized book.

Today many of these books are rare and can only be found in a handful of institutions around the world. In bringing them together within a single digital space, accessible across the globe, we hope to participate, on a small scale, in the types of reading revolutions envisioned by the public library and more recent large-scale digitization and archiving projects. The project utilizes the most advanced technologies in book imaging and page-turning software that will allow users to read, browse, search, and annotate the first edition of Dubliners as well as the other texts in the library collection on their desktop, laptop, or tablet. The creation of an aesthetically pleasing and conveniently organized library of texts will assist scholars and students of Joyce in exploring and delighting in the intertextual worlds scripted by Joyce.

“The librarian, delighted by the prospect of a reader, showed Stephen niches and nooks inhabited by dusty brown volumes.”

--Stephen Hero

--Andrew A. Kuhn, Boston College
A SELECTION OF WORKS PROPOSED FOR DUBLINERS BOOKSHELF

• The Maynooth Catechism
• Walter Scott, The Abbot
• The Memoirs of Vidocq
• Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra and The Gay Science
• Bret Harte, Gabriel Conroy
• Mikhai Lermontov, A Hero of Our Time
• Charles Francis Keary, ‘Twixt dog and Wolf
• Gerhart Hauptmann, Michael Kramer
• Pacificus Baker, The Devout Communicant
• Lord Byron, Hours of Idleness
• William Wordsworth, Complete Works
• Michael William Balfe, The Bohemian Girl
• Issues of The Union Jack, Pluck, and the Halfpenny Marvel
• Published versions of stories in The Irish Homestead
• And many more

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Andrew A. Kuhn | kuhna@bc.edu
Joseph Nugent | nugentjf@bc.edu