Australasian Association of Writing Programs

TEXT SPECIAL ISSUE
Number 67 August 2022

ISSN: 1327-9556 | textjournal.scholasticahq.com

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Dubliners: Mapping the sportscape in the creative literature of Dublin writers

Abstract:
The spatial turn in literary studies has resulted in a greater focus on the roles of space, place, and geography on the page. Intrinsic to discussion on literature is its relationship with space, place, and culture. It follows that the relationship between sporting culture and literature is one in which the representation of space and place are key players. This research interrogates the geography of sports sites in the creative literature of Dublin writers. It considers sporting spaces as those places in which people gather in pursuit of play or for the consumption of sport. It seeks to examine the ways in which sporting spaces are implicated in the politics of memory, and how they serve as literary embodiments of memorial consciousness. Looking at a selection of representations of sports sites, this paper seeks to examine the literary elision of cultural remembrance and sporting space. This work aims to map Dublin using the coordinates of its literary sportscape and to further deconstruct the sportscape in an attempt to understand the significance of its architecture for creative writers. It asks what the implications are for creative writers who pitch the coordinates of sports sites to the page. Much has been written on sport in Irish society and on the sociological aspects of Irish literature. There is, however, a lack of critical research into the relationship between Irish sport and creative writing. This paper, in its attempt to examine the dialogues between sports sites, memory, and Irish literature, is a new contribution to the field.

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Keywords:
Literary sportscape, literary cartography, sports sites, Dublin writers

Introduction

In *Invisible Cities* (1997), Italo Calvino writes that "The city is a novel" (p. 10), an interesting observation from which to begin a paper that aims to map the sporting story of a city through the coordinates of its imaginative literature. Just as Venice is created out of the chaos of Calvino's imaginings, so too is Dublin built from the vowels of its literature. Like all great cities, Dublin is the birthplace of many brilliant works of literature. Ireland's rich bardic tradition and oral storytelling culture has carried forward in her generations of fine storytellers given to the written word. Dublin, a city that has known many invasions from Vikings and Normans and more recently the British, is not without a varied and colourful history influenced by the people who have called it home. On Venice, Calvino states that "Populations and customs have changed several times; [but] the name, the site, and the objects hardest to break remain" (1997, p. 97). And though customs change and evolve, culture is a hard object to break. It is reified through repetition and kept alive in the memory of a collective.

Architect, Sigfried Giedion, posits that "architecture is a part of life and architecture is a part of art" (1967, p. 544). In the recreation of sporting Dublin on the page, art and architecture bring the place to life. Across Dublin's sporting and architectural landscapes are traces of the city's imperial legacy. So too, can the same be said of its literary imprint which bears traces of its former colonists, not least in the use of the English language, as opposed to native Gaelic. Interestingly, just as Dublin is constructed in the prose of literature, some of Dublin's physical landscape has been influenced by literature itself; Kenilworth Square and its surrounding area were named after places in Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels, is but one example. Writers experience place and culture and bear witness to them in a literary space. They reimagine the structure and essence of a place on the page, often creating accurate impressions of its social, cultural, and physical architecture. The writers whose work has been examined in this paper are Dublin natives. An assumption was made that these writers would have a considerable depth of familiarity with their homeplace, and thus might provide vivid contributions to the literary cartography of Dublin and the Dublin sportscape. It is this dialectic between place and creative writing that Seamus Heaney spoke of when he highlighted the importance of the relationship between a writer and his or her place:

> The usual assumption when we speak of writers and place is that the writer stands in some directly expressive or interpretive relationship to the milieu. He or she becomes a voice of the spirit of the region. The writing is infused with the atmosphere, physical and emotional of a certain landscape or seascape. (1989, p. 20)

Sporting culture is an arena in which modern Irish identity has been contested, created, and recreated. In *Sites of Sport: Space, Place, Experience*, editors John Bale and Patricia Vertinsky (2004) stress the importance of "the sight as much as the site" in understanding the significance of place in sport (p. 1). My research seeks to map the Dublin sportscape and gain insights into what that literary sporting cartography represents. My research takes an interdisciplinary approach to literature, sport, cultural theory, and geography. In order to do this, I made a number of considerations.

Firstly, literature and sport are assumed to be cultural artefacts that inform us about society and its values. Literature and sport are intrinsically linked with memory, history, and the nation. Memory is made from tradition and repetition: the dialogue between our past and our present selves rooted in spaces, actions, songs, and structures. It is captured in the pages of books, and on playing fields, in word and in play, in the lyric of Heaney and the chants of fans on Hill 16; it is in the architecture of Joyce's *Ulysses* and that of Croke Park. The interplay between fact and fiction generates valuable insights into the characteristics of the place we know as Dublin.

Secondly, in approaching the sociological significance of these "lieux de mèmoire", as Pierre Nora (1989) refers to them, this analysis takes into account the conscious and deliberate nature of "commemorative vigilance" (p. 12) on the part of groups who seek to cultivate archives of celebration and ritual within a tradition. Sports sites are at once material, symbolic, and functional. They borrow meaning from the past to lend significance to the present in terms of cultural memory which is defined by Jan Assman (1995) as "that which is transmitted through texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, or even landscapes" (p. 128). Indeed, all sports sites bear their own narrative in terms of the social and cultural characteristics of their origin. Central to this paper is the appraisal of this cultural capital in its relationship with creative Dublin literature. Drawing on work carried out by Maurice Halbwachs (1992), my research aims to analyse cultural remembrance as a key tenet in the literary treatment of sports sites and by extension, to consider the symbiosis of sport and literature as repositories of collective memory.

And finally, this work seeks to explore the field from a geographical perspective. Li-Fu Tuan's work (1990) on topophilia is of key interest in this respect, as are works that focus more specifically on the geographics of sports grounds. Central to the examination of sporting space in literature is Lefebvre's notion of the "production of space" whereby people collectively produce their social spaces in concrete and imaginary ways (Murphet, 2004, p. 131). Indeed, this idea of spatial production or spatial creativity holds true for both literature and sport, allowing for interesting analysis into the crossover between the two. It is that intersection between pitch and page, where side-lines blur into lines of text, and memory is rememorised, that a unique space is created. This invented space is a corollary to the geography of the sporting site and also to that of the written narrative whose landscape act as an archive of cultural text.

The scope of the literature spans from the late nineteenth century to contemporary works which gives a broad representation of the dialectic between sport and the literary tradition from the era of the sporting revolution to present day. In her introduction to Eavan Boland's wonderful collection, *A Poet's Dublin*, (2014, p. 11), Jody Allen Randolph alludes to the flux and shift of meaning in creative works: "an imagined place is never static but always in process, always slipping away from its last definition into its next adventure of being imagined". Boland's collection seeks to "sketch out a paradigm for how a city is imagined" (p. 11). This paper sets out a paradigm by which to appraise how sport is played out in the literary imagination and to look at how the geographics of place are represented in the literary landscape. Speaking about the relationship of the river Liffey to Dublin, Boland says that:

> A river is not a place: it is a marker of places. Without the river there would be no city. Every day, turning its narrow circle, endlessly absorbing and re-absorbing the shapes and reflections of the city, it mirrors what it created. With the river, the city every day

> has to throw itself again into those surfaces, those depths, those reflections which have served as the source of all its fictions. (p. 43)

The sports site can be viewed in similar terms in so far as it absorbs the sounds, scores, and sweat of games only to reflect them back by way of memory. Dublin's concrete stadia, its old wooden pavilions, hardwood basketball courts, and boathouses that dip into the Liffey waters are all bound with the fabric of imagination and memory. This research takes into consideration landscapes that are both fictional and metafictional, and constitute authored landscapes with variegated versions of the sportscape. Duffy (1987) alludes to the role of the artist as a "witness and interpreter of place, landscape, and identity" (pp. 64-65), and what follows is a journey through that artistic testimony that proposes a literary cartography of Dublin's sports sites.

Topophilia and sportscapes of remembrance

Sports sites are both architecturally and symbolically imbued with a sense of meaning and connection in what is characterised as "topophilia" by Tuan (1990). Tuan defines topophilia as "all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment" (p. 93). In a sporting sense, this connection with place manifests in the form reverence for sporting sites and that is reinforced over time. A fan's link with their home-ground is bolstered through repetition and the formation of memory. Nostalgia accrues and places often take on deep and sometimes spiritual meanings for sports fans. Bale (1994) argues that "sports landscapes are often accumulations… Just as each stadium has a builder … each landscape can be interpreted as having an 'author'" (p. 13). Sport can be interpreted as a place of authored landscapes in which players, fans, architects, and all those involved have a role in constructing the sportscape. This idea of collaboration in creating the space of sport links with Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the "Production of Space". Much like Bale's concept of "authorship" of the sportscape, Lefebvre outlines how humans collectively construct their social spaces in imagined and concrete ways. It is through this creation of space that group identity is sustained over time, as is the case with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), whereby a proliferation of culturally defensive narratives has led to the perpetuation of its nationalist ethos. Coded with rules that were effusively anti-British, the largest sporting organisation in the country was conceived in a spirit of hegemonic nationalism. Its headquarters, Croke Park, is located in Dublin city and is Ireland's most iconic sporting site. Although it belongs to the GAA membership in all counties in Ireland and beyond, Croke Park is very much a character in the story of Dublin.

Stephen Dedalus's closing remarks in *Portrait of an Artist* allude to the act of articulating collective consciousness: "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce, 1991, p. 260). Of course, for the first three decades of the GAA's history, it existed in a country that was under British rule. It was through codified sport, a concept that had been greatly advanced by the regulation of British sports at the end of the nineteenth century, that Irish cultural identity was being constructed. Perhaps when we consider the production and consumption of Irish literature and sport against this idea, it may be better understood as conforming to Foucault's idea of "heterotopia" wherein it is possible to "juxtapose in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (as cited in Soja, 1989, p. 17).

Sporting spaces evoke nostalgia: that elemental feature of popular culture that can preserve elements of the past while remodelling others so that they fit with preferred narratives. Taking Halbwachs' (1992) theory that memory depends on social environment, we can assert that sporting memories depend on the environment in which they are made. Literary representations of the sportscape are indicative of the cultural traditions to which they belong. In the case of the GAA, the symbolic naming of its clubs and playing grounds after patriots (and saints) is demonstrative of an organisation with staunchly Catholic, nationalist DNA.

Sports sites are receptacles for tradition and creed, and the very act of entering such a site is a custom in itself that symbolises faith on the part of the fan or visitor. There is a willingness to go there and an openness to share the affinity of the place with a cohort of like-minded followers who, through tradition and history, forge a bond with the place. It is a site of memory and of memories to come.

The landscape of a city is in constant dialogue with its revolving sporting calendar. The seasons can be defined in a sporting sense marked by the regular beat of events throughout the year: the autumn rugby series, the September All-Ireland finals (more recently switched to August), the Christmas Leopardstown race festival, to name a few. Elizabeth Bowen (2001) describes the merriment of the decadent The Shelbourne hotel during the Dublin Horse Show and calls it a hotel whose year "revolved round sporting events" (p. 1395). Renowned architect Sigfried Giedion (1967) considers that an architect needs to have a "social imagination" (p. 543) and so too must the author in their construction of sports sites which accommodate much more than just sports events: the sport site is enmeshed in the politics of culture and home to an ever-evolving set of customs. In considering sport as a ground for civic expression, Oriard (1991) believes that

> football is an example of a civic ritual which is made more attractive than other civic rituals because it possesses a serialized character; that is, it has a strong element of succession about it with its seasons and its regular predictable fixtures (p. 56).

A civic carnival took grip of Dublin during the Italia 1990 World Cup. It was the first time the Republic of Ireland had qualified for the tournament. Dublin's streets were lined with tricolours and bunting under the grip of "Jack's Army" fever in a great outpouring of sporting patriotism. Roddy Doyle's *The Van* recreates the fever that gripped the city in the midst of Italia '90. For the first time in the country's history, football (soccer) became the central focus of life while the Republic of Ireland's team played their way to the quarter-finals. There was a new sporting narrative, as masses of the population became invested in the plight of the national team. Doyle captures the idea of this novel language of football with its new characters, "Lacatus", and its invasion of family life:

> The country had gone soccer mad. Oul' ones were explaining offside to each other; the young one at the check-out in the cash-and-carry told Jimmy Sr that Romania hadn't a hope cos Lacatus was suspended because he was on two yellow cards. It was great. There were flags hanging out of nearly every window in Barrytown. It was great for business as well. There were no proper dinners being made at all. Half the mammies in Barrytown were watching the afternoon matches, and after the extra-time and the

> penalty shoot-outs there was no time left to make the dinner before the next match. The whole place was living on chips. (Doyle, 1994b, p. 508)

We also see this portrayal of ritualistic sporting tradition in Paul Howard's *Ross O'Carroll Kelly* series. Ross alludes to the pinnacle game of the schools' rugby season, Senior Cup, that unleashes age-old inter-school rivalry in either Donnybrook or the Aviva.

> Donnybrook is, like, jammers. We run out, roysh, and the crowd are, like, SO up for this game… When the final whistle blows, roysh, all our fans invade the pitch. There's, like, four or five hundred from our school, then there's birds from, like, everywhere… (Howard, 2013, p. 115)

Social class

For the creative writer, sport is a well-used metaphor for class and Dublin writers have employed it to great effect in creating an impression of Dublin sporting culture. Joyce (1991), in his representation of a rugby game early on in *Portrait of An Artist*, goes into detail about the salubrious settings of Clongowes Wood school in County Kildare. Paul Howard, in his *Ross O'Carroll Kelly* series (2012, 2013), also writes about private schools steeped in history and wealth. In writing towards the tradition of rugby played in Dublin's elite fee-paying schools, Howard establishes a vivid sense of the vibrant school-boy rugby landscape and a Dublin that is drenched in class stratification. Ross represents a type of south-sider who was schooled at the prestigious, fictional Castlerock College and who sees the world through the prism of designer labels and a "them and us" (the haves and the have-nots) social binary. The school, "Rock", which is widely accepted as being a parody of Dublin's prestigious Blackrock College, is represented as a central focal point in the lives of the young men who are educated there, who played for its rugby team and who inevitably become Rock-men for life. It thus takes on religious symbolism: it is the Catholic school where they are educated, disciplined, and where the boys become men and ultimately bloom into fine fit athletes on a rugby field.

Sport is the creed for the players, their families, and for the rest of the school community who support the team. In a pre-match speech, the school principal, Father Feely, uses the metaphor of a player as an eagle to illustrate the idea that these young men are in the upper echelons of society:

> Strong and clever, the eagle rules the skies with a majesty that simply takes the breath away. And I draw an analogy between the eagle and the students here at Castlerock. Like the eagle, you are the very best of your species. The élite. You are better than everyone else in the whole world and the success of the school's rugby team – oh blesséd thing – is an expression of your superiority over people from other schools. (Howard, 2013, p. 36)

The more frugal aspects of sporting culture are explored in Dermot Bolger's *In High Germany* (2009) where Dalymount Park football ground is used as a touchpoint for the memory of young lads skipping in to a match without paying:

> They always stood in the same spot in Dalymount Park … Climbing the gates was easy for them. If your foot was small enough you could wedge it between the side of the gate and the wall. (pp. 8-9)

Similarly, an impression of poverty in sporting culture is created in Fiachra Sheridan's novel, *The Runners* (2009). Sheridan conjures the landscape of inner-city training facilities, some of which are neglected or lacking investment, an accurate portrayal of the inequity that exists in some socio-economically deprived areas of Dublin. In *The Runners*, a pool and an indoor gym represent a significant step up from its humbler, and seemingly less sanitary, counterpart in McDermott Street. The progression from one to the other symbolises a social achievement of sorts for the two young boys who could enjoy the somewhat cleaner surroundings of the School for the Blind pool:

> The School for the Blind had a swimming pool as well as an indoor gym. The dressing-rooms were four times as big as the ones in Sean MacDermott Street swimming pool. And they were clean. Sean Mac was verruca city. A killer verruca meant no football. (pp. 25-26)

Indeed, for children of economically deprived areas such as those in Sheridan's (2009) novel, the street takes on agency as a sports ground. Street games have always gone hand in hand with urban living in working class areas of Dublin. In *The Van* (1994b), Roddy Doyle's protagonist, Jimmy Snr, pushes a van up the street and compares the scenes on his road to those of the Tour de France.

> There really was a huge crowd out. It was a bit like Ghandi's funeral in the film, except noisier. It was more like the Tour de France, the neighbours at the side of the road clapping and whooping, the cynical bastards. (p. 456)

Novelists Paula McGrath and Fiachra Sheridan both portray the Dublin streetscape as a stage for expression and sporting performance. McGrath's (2017) protagonist in *A History of Running Away* runs along the coast road from Fairview to Clontarf training to become a boxer, and Dublin takes on a democratising dimension that empowers her to engage with the male-dominated territory of boxing. The boys in Sheridan's novel race each other around Croke Park, and again the streets become a democratising space: a levelling field in a city in which they are acutely aware of inequity and the economic hardship in which they live. Like Paddy Clarke and his pals in Roddy Doyle's novel, the two boys in the runners are given to fantastical dreaming of sports glory as a means of playing and simultaneously transcending their places of play:

> When they normally raced a lap of Croker, they would take it easy all the way around and then have a sprint finish down Clonliffe Road. If you went too fast at the start, you burned out before the end… He was formulating a race plan in his head. It was the final of the Olympic Games. He would be a national hero if he won… He set off down the Ballybough Road at a blistering pace… He decided to give it one last push down the hill past Croke Park. (Sheridan, 2009, pp. 106-107)

It is through a shared history of practice and tradition that sports sites attract textured meaning, and the sports streetscape is no different. There are numerous examples of this personification of the Dublin streetscape across literature, a tendency we see in which setting and place very often assume the role of character. In Roddy Doyle's *The Snapper* (1994a), home becomes the "velodrome" as Jimmy Snr sets up a cycling club that trains on the street around the housing estate. The foundation of the club is in protest with a player (his son) being dropped from the local football team and the image of the kids with their decrepit bikes and hurling helmets (as opposed to cycling helmets) is one of rebellion where the street becomes the battleground played out in sporting terms:

> He'd wait till they cycled past, then he'd do a few minutes shearing and he'd be waiting for them when they came around again.
>
> – Come on, Paddy Last, Jimmy Sr roared as Eric came up to them ... Come on
>
> His face was white. His legs weren't really long enough for the bike. He had to shift from side to side as he pedalled. The bollix must have been torn off him.
>
> But he was pedalling away like bejaysis.
>
> – The hurlin' helmets look deadly, he said. (Doyle, 1994a, pp. 320-321)

Dublin has an intimate understanding of poverty; at the turn of the last century, the city was home to mass deprivation. People lived in horrendous conditions in tenement houses around the city. Ireland was under British rule and was still recovering from the catastrophic effects of the famine that wreaked havoc on the country some fifty years beforehand. These factors combined to result in grave inequity across the capital city. On one hand, there were the aristocrats who occupied the grand houses of Georgian Dublin, and members of the British ruling elite who were attached to Dublin Castle. On the other, there was the everyday Dubliner. Unemployment was high. Living conditions were poor. This aspect of the inequity of Dublin's society is evoked in James Joyce's (1991) short story "After the Race" in which he heightens the sense of poverty that abounded in the city by juxtaposing the image of poor citizens spectating the scene of an expensive motor car race:

> The cars came scudding in towards Dublin, running evenly like pellets in the groove of the Naas Road. At the crest of the hill at Inchicore sightseers had gathered in clumps to watch cars careering homeward, and through this channel of poverty and inaction the Continent sped its wealth and industry. Now and again the clumps of people raised the cheer of the gratefully oppressed. (Joyce, 1991, p. 21)

Joyce's repetition of the term "clumps" with regard to describing people (p. 21) is indicative of the manner in which poverty dehumanises individuals. It reduces them to people reliant on the charity of others, removing their independence. They become mere "clumps" on the landscape of Dublin. When set against the spectacle of grandeur that the Inchicore street has become with the "wealth" speeding past, Joyce gives us an impression of affluence being an unattainable thing for these poor spectators. The motor race is a symbol of continental power and largesse. Interestingly, although the spectators are poor, Joyce describes them as "gratefully oppressed" (p. 21). It seems as though they are grateful for the distraction of the

race. And perhaps, that is a theme that can be drawn from the story: that sport can bring cheer to Dublin's streets and to those who need it.

These authors create a sense of the Dublin streets as a liminal field in which their aspiring athletes toil and dream of ascending to the arena of success. The streetscape is an imagined stadium for the aspiring athletes and is reimagined in literature to convey a sense of agency on the part of those who call it their own. It is democratising to the extent that it is accessible by all, yet it is only those from low-income areas who rely on the streets as their playground. Very much a feature of working-class life, Dublin streets continue to witness the practice of sport and the establishment of sporting rituals among its youth.

Economic

According to Hobsbawn (2016), invented tradition relies on the invention of "emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statues and objects of the club" (p. 11). Joyce's writing is very conscious of the tiered nature of Dublin society. It is this club membership that Joyce alludes to in *Ulysses* (1991, p. 315) when he describes cricket being played in the environs of the prestigious Trinity College. Joyce describes a boisterous fellow, Captain Buller, being better suited to the more raucous location of Donnybrook Fair, a site of an annual festival renowned for its carnivalesque nature.

> College sports today I see. He sees the horseshoe poster over the gate of college park: cyclist doubled up like a cod in a pot ... Then the spokes: sports, sports, sports: and the hub big: college… Cricket weather. Sit around under sunshades. Over after over. Out. They can't play it here. Duck for six wickets. Still Captain Buller broke a window in the Kildare Street club with a slog to the square leg. Donnybrook fair more in their line. (Joyce, 1991, p. 315)

Trinity College Dublin is a university established in 1592. Right up to Joyce's time, the university was predominantly attended by protestants and those of Anglo-Irish heritage. At the time he wrote *Ulysses*, Trinity would have been considered as having an exclusive community, accessible only to people of means. Cricket was, and still is, a healthy aspect of Trinity College's sporting landscape, with the cricket fields located in a sunny corner of campus overlooked by the medical school building. Hobsbawn's theory that "symbolically charged symbols" underpin club membership (p. 11) is evident in Captain Buller's title; he is a member of the British establishment. Furthermore, the fact that he is playing a British sport in the environs of Trinity College represents a Joycean attempt to charge the scene with politically charged symbolism. In this cricket scene, he evokes an impression that Dublin's societal divisions run along lines that pitch the coloniser against the native.

The Ross O'Carroll-Kelly series (Howard, 2012, 2013) begins in pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland and gives a sense of the orgy of excess that fuelled the boom. The second book in the series deals with the decision of the GAA to overturn its ban on "foreign games" while Lansdowne Road was being redeveloped, thus paving the way for rugby and soccer to be played in Croke Park. Ross's father spearheads a group, Keep It South-Side (KISS), that is in disagreement with the

potential relocation to Croke Park. The position of the group with regard to the relocation demonstrates the class positioning of sport whereby the rugby set look down their noses at their GAA counterparts. Further, it underlines the perception of "high and low" connotations of Dublin's geography, with Croke Park on the northside being bad news for those who frequent the rugby grounds at Landsdowne Road on the leafy southside:

> This Abbotstown business, it's still some way down the line. The real, immediate danger at the moment comes from the GAA. If they vote to open up Croke Stadium, we could be in real danger. We'll be travelling out to north Dublin for our matches quicker than you can say, 'What do you mean, you don't sell Courvoisier around here?' (Howard, 2013, p. 75)

The fallout from one of Ireland's several economic crashes is a theme of Dermot Bolger's play *The Parting Glass* (2011) in which friends travel to an Ireland vs. France soccer match in Paris. Two of them have journeyed from adopted countries: a mark of the internationality forced on them due to their emigration from Ireland. Despite a schemozzle with security after the match, they are focused on catching their flights back to their respective countries: "Missed flights to Ireland or Holland are not the end of the world, but Canada is a long way away" (p. 40). Many of Dublin's great sports stars have played their professional careers overseas. The lure of English football (and the weakness of the Irish League of Ireland) has seen a steady flow of successful players over the years. Put in other words, England is where good Irish players go to play professional football. John Giles and Eamon Dunphy are two such examples of Dubliners who built successful careers for themselves in England. Former Manchester United player, Kevin Moran, played Gaelic football for the Dublin intercounty team before departing the shore to play top level football in England. Bolger's narrative goes some way to capturing a sense of this diasporic aspect that exists within a society that has known mass emigration over the years.

Bolger is one of Dublin's most socially astute writers. In *In High Germany* (2009), he makes reference to the early days of the nascent Irish state when his emigrant protagonist Eoin reflects on times past: "Things were looking up for Ireland by then. Sean Lemass was playing poker at night over Caffolas' chip-shop in O'Connell Street. Westland Row had been renamed Pearse Street Station" (p. 21). The Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, was enjoying leisurely games above an Italian chipper, in itself a nod to overseas investment in Irish business, and the fact that Lemass was a key driver behind the development of Irish industry during the early years of the state. In this scene, Bolger also alludes to the erasure of some placenames that were a legacy of the British era, a nod to an act of independence by Dubliners in "reclaiming" by renaming their streets.

Bolger (2011) gives an indication of the frugality of times for soccer supporters in *The Parting Glass* when Eoin reflects on what it was like to be a fan during the barren years that led up to the explosion of Irish football in 1990.

> I knew that we were remembering the same things. Winter evenings in the shed in Dalymount Park with people climbing up onto the roof for a better view of the game. Lansdowne Road in the years after… All the flats with cheap televisions where we

> would gather to scream our heads off at the TV set for away games we could not get to. (Bolger, 2011, p. 42)

This scene recounts years that were barren, economically as well as in a sporting sense, with fans climbing onto the roof of Dalymount Park to watch games and gathering around metred television sets in flats around the capital. It was before the heyday of the mass mediatisation of sport and the infiltration of money into sporting organisations.

Political

Seán O'Casey (1942) presents an unflinching image of nationalism in *Pictures in the Hallway* when he describes Charles Stewart Parnell's funeral being "packed by young men wearing white-cuffed green jerseys" (p. 66) and waving "their hurleys on high" (p. 67). The chapter "Cat and Cage" recounts a scene in which the hurlers are discussing Parnell and his politics. There are arguments, and there is much anti-British sentiment, as one might expect, but interestingly there is antipathy toward the hurlers also. They are referred to as, "Boyos, with the hurleys" and "Gawks. Bog-trotters who have never seen anything higher than a haystack" (p. 70). The Cat and Cage pub (incidentally still a favourite watering hole for GAA fans on Croke Park match-days) becomes a ground for contesting varying ideas of nationalism. Archie and Tom see the hurlers as parochial, calling them "hayfoot, strawfoot, fusiliers" (p. 70). They doubt the true pedigree of their nationalistic virtue in relation to their support, or lack thereof, for Parnell:

> I'll go bail, said Mick, there were few hurlers' hands helpin' to pack him into his coffin… The whole bang lot o'them, said Tom, taking no notice of the hurler (Parnell), deserted their Leader in his time o' need. (O'Casey, 1942, p. 74)

The pub as an extension of the sports ground is a common feature of the sporting world, perhaps nowhere more so than in Ireland, a country renowned for its formidable drinking culture. It is the place of bets and banter and much debate about games, at once a place that is divisive and cohesive. O'Casey (1942) also gives us a sense of this in his play, *The Silver Tassie,* when Mrs. Heegan says "hours ago the football match must have been over, an' no word of him yet, an' all drinkin' if they won, an' all drinkin' if they lost" (p. 15).

Sport is a source of binary narratives and is ripe with examples of the tension that existed between sports that were perceived as being more native than their British counterparts. This bias is captured in Dermot Bolger's *In High Germany* (2009) in a scene in which the narrator recounts his former school teacher, O'Brien, "barked orders" at the boys in the school yard in Dublin as they played soccer with dreams of scoring cup-winning goals for Bohs in their heads, but were shouted at to "Pick it up!... Solo it!" (p. 19). The teacher, unhappy with their apparent lack of Gaelic footballing endeavour, screams in fury:

> – What arse end of the bog are you from at all, boy?
>
> – The street, sir, the city street.

> The notes in his teacher-training book did not include the likes of us – or city streets or soccer. Soccer was something evil and un-Irish.
>
> The teacher continues
>
> – A Brit sport. An English game played only by Englishmen. (Bolger, 2009, pp. 19-20)

Roddy Doyle (1994b) also creates a vivid scene in *The Van* in which the local pub, The Hikers, is packed with fans watching the 1990 World Cup match in which Ireland scores an equaliser against England. It gives colourful insight into the lovelessness in which the relationship with the closest neighbour is held in a sporting sense:

> – Sheedy gets it back and Sheedy shoots!
>
> The place went fuckin' mad!
>
> Ireland had got the equaliser… All sorts of glasses toppled off the tables but no one gave a fuck. Ireland had scored against England and there was nothing more important than that, not even your pint. (Doyle, 1994, p. 486)

Taking Lefebvre's idea of the "production of space" (1991) as a prism through which to the examine the Dublin sportscape in literature, it must be acknowledged that there is a tradition of seeing things through a "them and us'" binary; them being the British. This legacy mindset, which has been alluded to previously in this paper, perpetuates to some degree as sportspeople produce their social and sporting spaces. Spatial creativity is evident across real and imagined literary and sporting culture, from Roddy Doyle's portrayal of the scene of a joyous eruption in the wake of an Irish goal against England to the now redundant GAA rules which included a ban on members of the British security force playing its games.

Gendered landscapes

According to architect Yvonne Farrell, "Architecture is a silent language that speaks; you read it when you walk through any city, you physically respond to the unconscious rhythm or beauty" (as cited in Brady & O'Connell, 2020, p. 230). Owing to the gendered dimensions of sport and traditional male domination of the sporting space, a legacy aspect of contemporary sporting spaces is that they bear inherently male design aspects. It is unsurprising that there is a masculine rhythm to the Dublin sportscape. Indeed, the Dublin sporting calendar is dominated by key events that are male-only in terms of participation, such as the All-Ireland hurling and Gaelic football finals and the Rugby Six-Nations. Across all sports, female participation and investment in structures and the development of women's games is increasing, but progress takes time. Women's boxing was given Olympic status thanks in no small part to the endeavours and campaigning of Irish boxer Katie Taylor, who won gold in London in 2012 at the first Olympics for the sport. More recently, Dublin's Kellie Harrington took gold at the Tokyo Olympics, affirming the strength of women's boxing on the island. In August 2021, a deal was announced that provides for equal pay between the Republic of Ireland's women's soccer team and its male peers. Systems are improving.

What does this mean for the literary sporting cartography? With some recent exceptions, the creative literature reflects the masculine environment that surrounds the Dublin sportscape. Inevitably, the motor race in Joyce's story and the football tournament in Roddy Doyle's *The Van* (1994b) are sporting events played by male participants. The "clumps" of people gathered to observe the grand spectacle of the race and the crowd of elated revellers in The Hikers watching Ireland play England include males and females. Female fandom is not neglected across the literature, an accurate reflection of the sportscape in which female representation at events is significant, but the players on the pages are male. Paul Howard's elite fee-paying rugby school is like all the others across the county: boys only. Female characters in his Ross O'Carroll-Kelly books support the rugby players at matches, as college friends, wives, and girlfriends. A true reflection, perhaps, of the rugby landscape where, for the most part, males are the protagonists and females play the supporting roles.

Paula McGrath's novel, *A History of Running Away* (2017), challenges the status quo with its portrayal of the lone female boxer who has to dress up as a man to gain access to train in the boxing club. Patricia Vertinsky (2004) regards places of sport as being sustained by power relations and defined by boundaries, both social and spatial (p. 50). McGrath's male-only boxing club was founded on the rules that men boxed, women did not. The same can be said for many of the city's important sites, be they administrative, legislative or of a sporting nature. Rules of exclusion are a hangover from history and can be seen in all aspects of a city's landscape. Much as with social networks, sports clubs foster cultures of belonging and exclusion. Vertinsky (2004) considers that "in the gymnasium, bodies and places are woven together through intimate webs of social and spatial rules that were made by and embodied sporting subjects" (p. 50). McGrath's female boxer trains along the Coast Road, her lone running a symbol of her agency and strength. She is training outside the gym and along the coastline of Dublin so that she can be fit enough to participate in the city centre boxing club. She is outside, trying to get in, a metaphor that echoes the story of Katie Taylor's endeavours to compete alongside male peers at the highest level in the sport.

Synaesthesia, topography, and myth

Edward Said (2000) considered that "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning" (p. 185). Much of the maintenance of memory comes in the form of aspects of synaesthesia, and creative writers use this to great effect in evoking collective memory on the page. Steeped in nostalgia, Kevin Curran's short story "In Football Season" (2018) opens with two sentences that play on the senses and evoke an image of what it would be like to play on a costal Balbriggan football pitch:

> See a freshly cut pitch, the perpendicular clumps of yellowing spew-off lining the cropped surface in smooth hay fever handfuls waiting to be bunched and balled and forced down back and stuffed up jumpers on this May evening. Feel the delicate heat of a growing summer diminish in the soft sea breeze, lowing in fitfully – but insistently – over the tracks from the cliffs and the stony beach below; home of a thousand lost footballs from over-zealous clearances. (p. 52)

It is difficult to detach our memories of sports sites from their sonic counterpoints: the roar of the fans on the Hill, the silence of a packed Aviva Stadium as a kicker steps over the ball. In respecting this connection, Curran (2018) gives a sonic reference of the train going by the pitch, "the horn of the Enterprise sounds from the viaduct. Empty faces peer fleetingly through windows as they dash across the scene, the metallic tut–a–tut–a–tut briefly deafening while it races to Belfast" (p. 54), thus creating a geographic sense of the sporting moment in which that familiar train passes by a match in progress. Further, it seems that rituals attached to sports sites serve as materials with which to recreate the sportscape in literature. The fragrance of Deep Heat is synonymous with dressing rooms or boxing gyms in Curran's story and Paula McGrath's novel *A History of Running Away*. McGrath's (2017) protagonist enters the gym to discover "a waft of Deep Heat and sweaty socks" (p. 1263), while Curran's protagonist reflects on the smell of Deep Heat permeating the changing room.

> Smell [of] the Deep Heat, dangerous and stinging in the hands of sixteen-year-olds who don't know any better, being lathered foolishly between their palms and then rubbed with a youthful exuberance onto hairy legs. It intoxicates and fumigates, an intensifying of the atmosphere of camaraderie in the dull metal changing rooms. (2018, p. 52)

For the boys in Fiachra Sheridan's *The Runners* (2009), there is no such luxury as anti-inflammatory ointment: their boxing club has just the "distinct smell of sweat and leather" (p. 4). However, their youthful world is created with the customary drinks after sports. They sit "on top of Ballybough Bridge facing Croke Park, with their trophies and [Coke] cans beside them" (p. 62) after winning a boxing tournament. The match in Curran's story ends with "empty Coke bottles forgotten on the side line, the stray Tayto packets that come to rest on the grass and then stir with the rising wind" (p. 56). Local cuisine favourites are used by Roddy Doyle also, to create the festival sense of World Cup Italia 1990. Central to Doyle's use of food as symbolic of place is his use of Dublin wit:

> By the time Ireland played Egypt, the Sunday after, they'd added sausages to the menu and Jimmy Sr was putting lard on the hotplate….
>
> – Sausages look like pricks, righ?
>
> – Okay; fair enough.
>
> – An' Eamon Dunphy's a prick as well, said the young fella.
>
> By Thursday of the second week, the night of the Holland game, the word sausage had disappeared out of Barrytown. People were asking for a Dunphy an' chips, please, or an Eamon, a spice burger an' a small single. Some of them didn't even bother eating them; they just bought them for a laugh. Young fellas stood in front of the big screen in the Hikers and waved Jimmy and Bimbo's sausages in batter instead of big inflated bananas. (1994, p. 506)

Just as interesting as the use of actual elements of the Dublin sportscape is the use of invented places. O'Casey's use of The Cat and Cage, and Doyle's invention of Barrytown, are equally compelling. Bale (1993) considers that "sports, with their finite spaces, may be interpreted as symbolic representations of the broader landscape with its horizon" (p. 123). Certainly, the

landscape of Croke Park offers fertile imaginative ground for Bobby in Fiachra Sheridan's *The Runners*: "Bobby's house was closer than any other to Croke Park, Ireland's biggest sports stadium and a place beloved of GAA fans throughout the country. He would stare out his bedroom window at the Cusack Stand, dreaming of the day eighty thousand people would come to see him playing football for Dublin" (2009, p. 1). Sport is played out in the mind just as much as on the field as athletes envision scoring that winning goal or that hole-in-one or riding that winner home in the Grand National. It is both mental and physical. The imagined space created by Kevin Curran (2018) achieves a very concrete effect in realising a Dublin playing field on which a young player can recreate his memories.

> Watch Robbie look up at the empty frame of the goal he scored into only forty minutes ago and see him jog to the peno spot and recreate, maybe for his own store of heroic memories, the run up and the strike. See him stand a few foot from the peno spot. Lonely almost. Be quiet. Don't say anything. Leave him to his thoughts as he relooks to where the corner flag was and where his da normally stands. (p. 56)

Creative writers are architects of what Lefebvre considers "l'espace vévu", which is "actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time (Soja, 1989, p. 18). Dublin writers draw on reserves of collective memory to recreate a city sportscape on the page, and in doing so, construct a cartography that is both lived and imagined; it is born of fact and fiction.

One of Ireland's most popular myths, Cú Chulainn, relies on a Gaelic sport for its central metaphor. Setanta plays the ancient game of hurling and pócs a sliotar that kills a hound threatening to attack him, thus earning the title of Cú Chulainn (The Hound of Culann) in the process. In terms of cultural iconography, the mythic is represented in contemporary works such as those of Roddy Doyle. In *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha,* we find an echo of the Cú Chulainn story when Paddy claims to have "killed a rat with a hurley" (Doyle, 1994, p. 72). Doyle's character is not from a hurling tradition; rather, he plays soccer "in games of three at the end of the corpo estate" (p. 118) or "five-a-side games … into the jumper goals" (p. 119). His characters have an obsession with their Manchester United heroes George Best and Bobby Charlton. As Paddy says, "All of us wanted to be George Best"; even in his dreams he thinks of George Best (p. 259).

Doyle's treatment of the boys playing soccer on the waste ground of the estate is demonstrative of sport for working class kids in Dublin in the eighties and nineties, when many of the newly established council and corporation estates around the capital lacked facilities for recreation. Set against this backdrop of infrastructural impoverishment, the aspect of sporting superstars took on an added significance as they represented heroes who had, through sport, generated for themselves affluence and success. Bale (1994) argues that aspects of the mythical can be employed consciously in the creation of a sportscape:

> the sport landscape can therefore be interpreted as one which is sometimes *projected*, subsequently *perceived*, and *interpreted*… But it is also possible that such landscape icons are mythical landscapes, projecting a particular image, sometimes with an explicit purpose in mind (p. 13).

Sport is rich in myth and metaphor. To understand the representations of myth and metaphor used by creative writers in engineering literary representations of the Dublin sportscape, each should be contextualised within the social, political, economic, and cultural ecology within which each exists. Joyce's portrayal of cricket playing in Trinity College is imbued with meaning when set against the political complexion of the day. In Howard's *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly* series, the sense of discontent at rugby being relocated to Croke Park's north inner-city location is significant when one understands the undercurrent of snobbery that exists within rugby culture in Dublin. Said's theory (2000) of collective memory being an "active field of activity" (p. 185) is demonstrated in the literary endeavour of those authors who seek to recreate the sportscape on their pages. The writers I have examined have called on aspects of myth or metaphor to make their contribution to the literary cartography of the Dublin sportscape in an act of creativity that can be interpreted as a form of contribution to collective memory.

Conclusion

This paper sought to explore the implications for creative writers who pitch the coordinates of sports sites to a page. In refracting a version of the city through the prism of collective sporting memory, Dublin writers have reinvented a map that is concrete and abstract. This is congruent with Nora's idea of memory "reinventing" itself. Christina Simko's (2016) definition of memory refers to agency as a cultural text: "It is the tissue that binds collectivities – from families to religious nations – together. It is not merely a way of preserving bygone history, but a source of both power and meaning in the present" (p. 458). The creative writers I have looked at have used the co-ordinates of Dublin's sporting landscape: its ribbons of concrete, sweaty gym rooms, Deep Heat, Tayto, Coke and bar stool analysis and endless geometrics of goalposts and crossbars to enrich their literature with a sense of what it means to be of the place in the present. Across the literary map, we see remnants of a relationship with Britain and an ongoing dialogue with evolving views on that relationship. We have seen how sports sites are represented as literary embodiments of memorial consciousness and how they map for the reader a Dublin sportscape that transcends geography and navigates the essence of Dublin. If we are to accept Calvino's notion of the city as a novel, it is fair to say that the architecture of that novel in its creative imaginings presents an interesting and accurate map of Dublin.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Sport Literature Association (SLA) Conference held virtually in June 2021. The author is grateful to the SLA committee and its organisers for allowing her the opportunity to talk about the various issues that now make up this article.

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