Reading Writers, Quaffing Quiddity and Rejoicing Joyceans: Unpicking the Packaging of an Irish Icon

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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago, Russell Belk (1986) remarked that consumer research has much to learn from works of literature and, in the intervening period, many academics have culled the literary canon (Brown 1999). Examples include Friedman’s (1991) examination of brand name dropping in a series of best selling novels; McCreery’s (1995) explication of early advertising treatments courtesy of a Dorothy Sayers whodunit; Hirschman’s (1990) use of Wolfe’s Bonfire of the Vanities to illustrate her thesis on secular immortality; and Patterson and Brown’s (1999) study of the shopping behaviours in High Fidelity and Bridget Jones’s Diary (see also Holbrook and Grayson 1986; Goodwin 1992).

Alongside these analyses of works of fiction, a second group of consumer researchers has investigated creative artists themselves, arguing that meaningful insights can be derived from the lives, not just the works, of literary icons. Aherne (2000), for instance, asserts that W.B. Yeats, the purposed epitome of art for art’s sake aestheticism, was actually a superlative marketing practitioner; Brown (1997) contends that Arthur Rimbaud was an acute consumer researcher, who preferred ‘the poetics of the marketplace to the marketplace of poetics’; Harris et al. (2000) maintains that Machiavelli remains a role model for putative high fliers; and, drawing upon a wider cultural palette, several scholars have argued that the marketing activities of fine artists, from Warhol and Manet to Dali and Hirst, are worthy of careful consideration (Brown and Patterson 2000; Fills 2000; Schroeder 1997, 2000).

Insightful though these lines of literary research undoubtedly are, and while there is considerable scope for additional work in both traditions (to say nothing of the artistic arena generally), there remains another, thus far untapped, academic opportunity. Namely, the commodification of creative artists by the marketing system and the manner in which such commodities are consumed. Great writers, for example, are routinely exploited for commercial purposes, whether it be guided tours of Dickens’s London or Hardy’s Wessex, all-beef Bronte burgers in Haworth’s hot food emporia, or mainstream movies like Shakespeare in Love, with its attendant tie-in merchandise, from T-shirts to screen savers. Yet, despite these egregious acts of ‘artsploitation’, to coin a phrase, this issue has attracted very little attention from consumer researchers hitherto (Netzel 2000 is a noteworthy exception).

The purpose of the present paper, therefore, is to examine the commodification of an Irish literary icon, James Joyce, and to demonstrate how the above research traditionsBworks, lives and representationsBcan be meaningfully combined. In keeping with the trajectory of thought in the literary studies subdiscipline, this paper commences with a consideration of consumption in Joyce’s literary corpus; continues with a discussion of James Joyce, marketing man; culminates in a ‘reading’ of the James Joyce theme pub in present-day Paris; and concludes with some quasi-Joycean reflections on the future for artsploitation research.

CONSUMPTION, MARKETING AND JAMES JOYCE

Belatedly, Joyce has become an emblem of Ireland’s worldwide popularity within the postmodern index of signs. Illustrations of this phenomenon abound, from the front of the Irish ten-pound note that features a picture of Joyce to the back where the opening words of Finnegans Wake are inscribed; from the songs (e.g. The Pogues, [The front sleeve of a Pogues= album actually features Joyce as one of the band members.] Kate Bush, Enya and Therapy have alluded to Joyce) to the films (e.g. Nora) that have featured either him or his work; from the merchandise (including tea-towels, T-shirts, biscuit tins, sepia prints, mugs and neckties) to the huge academic industry that endlessly scrutinizes his opus; from the worldwide annual celebrations of Bloomsday on the 16th of June to the Joycean theme pubs that span the globe (Brooker 2000). As one journalist asked regarding Joyce’s increased commodification ‘is Joyce a great writer or a global marketing opportunity’ ( )This contemporary artsploitation is all the more remarkable when considered against the backdrop of Joyce’s own marketing
inflicted life.

"SUNNY JIM": THE MARKETING MAN

'Sunny Jim' as his family affectionately called him as a child, after an advertising campaign of the time, [The character Sunny Jim was the hero of numerous jingles that advertised a breakfast cereal called FORCE.] was deeply ensconced in the world of marketing and advertising. Recently there has been an outpouring of articles and books by Joycean scholars on the relationship that Joyce and his work share with advertising, marketing and popular culture (see Herr 1986; Kershner 1996; Leonard 1998; Osteen 1995). It is known that Joyce had in his personal library a popular marketing book of the period, significantly entitled, The Art of Selling Goods It is also known that Joyce contemplated pursuing an advertising career [Osteen 1995], a role that he later assigned to one of his main protagonists of Ulysses, Leopold Bloom. Indeed, Osteen (1995: 111) notes that in many ways Joyce did actually pursue just such a career given the enthusiastic manner in which he marketed his books, 'preparing press clippings for inclusion in review copies or presenting Ulysses as a real steal to recalcitrant publishers.' It would be a nonsense to suggest that because Joyce made his work 'wilfully obscure' (Bishop 1988: 1) he had no interest in reaching an audience or in marketing his books because the fact is that he deliberately cultivated such wilful obscurity in order to sustain scholarly interest in his work. Joyce said that he wanted to write a book that would 'keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what it meant', and certainly to date he has been highly successful in this respect.

Dettmar (1996) presents a detailed study of the ways in which Joyce participated in the marketing of Ulysses. He identified six main facets of involvement. First, the year after its Paris publication Joyce helped Silvia Beach package copies for mailing and compile mailing lists. Second, he actively recruited sympathetic reviewers. Third, he attempted to control the very content of those reviews by setting certain phrases into circulation.Cessentially advertising bluffs of his own devising that he knew would be repeated in the subsequent reviews. Fourth, he encouraged reviewers to coin slogans to describe the distinctive writing style that he pioneered. Interestingly, he actually preferred the 'mythical method' rather than the term 'stream of consciousness' that gained more popular accord. Fifth, Joyce astutely recognised the publicity value of the New York obscenity trial that was to decide whether or not the initial ban on Ulysses should be lifted. As it turned out, the ban was lifted, after which Joyce gleefully had an advertisement for Ulysses designed incorporating Judge Woolsey's comments on the parts of the book that he thought obscene. Sixth, Joyce was the first artist to realise that not only did he have a reading public to win over but also an academic community. To this end, Joyce commissioned many critical projects, the most notable of which were Stuart Gilbert's task of setting out the Homeric parallels in Ulysses and the biography entrusted to Herman Gorman. Such marketing activities do not seem very far removed from the mass-merchandising that accompanies the launch of almost every Hollywood blockbuster. Finally, the fact that Joyce penned such a major novel in the first place. He had, after all, succeeded in writing perhaps the most salacious, most sensational, most revolutionary novel of all time, one which clearly met the needs of the market and continues to do so.

In Joyce's work too there is considerable evidence to suggest that he was deeply fascinated by the emerging commodity culture of the early twentieth century and the awakening of its foremost accomplices, marketing and advertising. A veritable academic industry is devoted to highlighting the extent to which this is so, albeit confined to the field of literary studies rather than our own. Wickes (1994) focuses on how Ulysses conveys the mediating power of turn-of-the-century advertising in Dublin as a means of accentuating Ireland's then pitable status as a colonial backwater of Britain. After all, English companies selling products like Lipton's tea and Pears soap were by far the main advertisers of the day. Notably, the only exportable product that Ireland itself had at the time was Guinness stout. Perhaps, Guinness's subsequent success, both in terms of the stout it sold and the Irish pubs that it helped to establish in foreign climes, was driven as much by a need to shake off the shackles of colonisation as they were by marketing know-how. Leonard's (1998) Lacanian exploration of Joyce's fiction holds that advertising, marketing acts as a compensatory or illusory mechanism to consumers who are striving to satisfy a sense of permanent lack. According to Leonard (1998: 2) Joyce's theory of the object, as expressed in Stephen Hero, based on the epithany tat could be glimpsed 'in the soul of the commonest object' closely parallels the theory of advertising which also seeks 'to make the commonest object appear 'to leap to us' and seem 'radiant''. Leonard proceeds to explain how Joyce's notion of integritis is in keeping with how a marketer might seek to differentiate the look of his product from that of a competing product; how his notion of consonantia and clantias are similar to basic marketing theory about the importance of generating brand awareness, loyalty and equity, and finally how Joyce's notion of quiditas is analogous to the marketing requisite of constructing a brand with a personality or a soul. What Joyce achieves is not only to independently reckon some of the essence of marketing through the formalisation of his own aesthetic theory but also to anticipate in nascent form the premise of the present paper, namely, that art and marketing are indistinguishable.

Joyce's work provides many other insights into the world of marketing; not the least inspired advertisements that Joyce had Bloom create in Ulysses, his awareness of 'the infinite possibilities hitherto unexploited of the modern art of advertisement' (Joyce 1992: 799). Decades before Williamson (1978), he figured that advertising was a co-productive process between advertisement and consumer, a negotiation of meaning that, whilst offering a focus for consumer desire, could never be predicted. Decades before Baudrillard (1988), he implicitly recognised that marketing and consumer discourse had the power to offer consumers a seductive type of pleasure that might be interpreted positively. Decades before fantasy was ever studied in consumer research (i.e. Rock 1988), Joyce demonstrates how an ad or physical object can initiate fantasy and act as a means towards completion of the self. Contemporary consumption-fixed 'blank' fiction/Ba body of literature that consumer researchers have recently studied (see Brown 1995; Patterson and Brown 1999) is based on much the same thoughts that theaza of Yeats' Celtic Revival, which cast itself as commercially untainted when in actual fact it was big business and perhaps the main architect culpable for the rise of commodity Ireland. Joyce was among the earliest authors, his fellow Irishman Oscar Wilde being another, to collapse the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture, happily writing about the relationship consumers shared with throwaway songs, ads, magazines, souveniers and other items of kithe. Little wonder that Joyce's work is sometimes described as prophetic, omniscient in scope, as encompassing all past and future knowledge (Derrida 1982). Perhaps this is why his books are among the very few that manage to survive the transition from modern to postmodern without diminishment (Kibard 1992).

Now Joyce may have been a canny marketer, to the extent that insights into advertising and marketing issues are interwoven into his tome, but is there any evidence to suggest that his marketing ability extended beyond the literary sphere? Yes! Joyce was involved in a number of business ventures over the course of his life, some of which were more successful than others. It is a little known fact that Joyce managed to successfully acquire a concession from the Dublin Woollen Company to sell Irish Foxford Tweed to the Italians and Austrians. In an angry letter to a Dublin solicitor concerning a refusal to publish Dubliners he claims that this Tweed selling scheme had put 150,000 francs into the pockets 'of hungry Irish men and women since they drove me out of their hospitable borg' (Ellimann 1982: 314), though it is unclear how much he himself made from the enterprise. This success obviously whetted his appetite and ambition, for at one point he even considered importing skycrockets into Trieste. But nothing came of it. Another decidedly more down-to-earth but equally ambitious venture was triggered by a remark made by his daughter, Lucia, when she asked of daddy why Dublin had no cinemas. For Joyce it was an opportunity too good to miss. He set about acquiring the rights to show four Italian films, which aimed to open Dublin's first ever cinema, with a possible rollout to other Irish cities. They were so impressed with the film that they signed a contract entitling Joyce to ten per cent of the profits and also paid for Joyce's trip to Dublin so that he could get things off the ground prior to their arrival at a later date. Joyce went about his task with gusto, finding suitable premises for the cinema that was to be named the Volta, its idea getting electricity installed, acquiring benches and chairs, supervising the decoration and personally designing posters for the grand opening. Initially, the venture seemed promising, reviews were good and although attendance was low the consensus was that things would improve, and they probably would have but for the fact that Joyce returned to his family in Trieste and could no longer keep a watchful eye on the business. After only a few weeks the Italian who was left running the place cut his loss and left after selling the Volta to an English firm called the Provincial Theatre Company. They were
One overtly conscious and highly successful utilisation of Joyce the commodity is as every thirsty traveller knows, the many theme pubs dotted around the world which have Joyce as their overriding theme. Aside from the James Joyce in Paris there are many other Joycean pubs scattered around the world, in San Francisco, Prague, Durham, London and New York, as well as a strong chain of Finnegan's(sic) Wakes owned by the brewer, Whitbread, in the UK. There is also a James Joyce pub in Zurich, which boasts the original interior of the Jury's Hotel of Dame Street that features in Ulysses complete with its dTcor and nineteenth century furniture. The Union Bank of Switzerland bought the pub interior at an auction in the early seventies just before the original pub was demolished and subsequently had it dismantled, transported and reassembled in Zurich where it re-opened in 1976.] It is against strong competition from its contemporaries—Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, Synge and O'Casey—that Joyce has managed to become the favourite literary icon of pub producers. In England there is a 'Finnegan's Wake' pub chain and all over the world there are countless numbers of James Joyce themed pubs. This is partly due his contribution towards the construction of a Joycean cultural mythology, which has itself become a phenomenally popular pub theme (see Brown and Patterson 2000). The ideal marketability of the name James Joyce with its film star resonance coupled with his almost cartoon appearance—walking-cane, moustache, dickey-bow, spectacles (or eye-patch)—also contribute towards Joyce's commodity value.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most compelling reason for adopting Joyce as a pub theme lies in the fact that he both conforms to the stereotypical image of the drunken Paddy and displays a great passion for the milieu of pub life. Described by Yeats as the 'pillar of the taverns', Joyce, like his father, was often to be seen drinking in the pubs of Dublin and later too, after his voluntary exile, in the cafes and bars of Italy and Paris. Though, that he would eventually follow in his fathers’ staggering footsteps was never a foregone conclusion. As a youth he was pious to an extreme, scornful of heavy drinkers such that his friends would often mock his own meagre intake. Gogarty, in particular, would coagle andajo Joyce to drink even more copious quantities, in the hope that he could break his spirit, so to speak, and was delighted when Joyce eventually succumbed to its temptations. The death of Joyce's mother caused the biggest seachange in his attitude towards its consumption. Aside from its ability to quell the pain of bereavement, 'it allowed him to relax and observe the way others talked and behaved, it enabled him to discuss his anxieties and finally to sing or act the fool' (Lyons 1992: 111). Like most young men Joyce was proud of his drunken antics and would often boast about the occasion when the actresses at the Camden Hall had to step over his drink-sodden body shortly after the original Bloomsday. Total intoxication was the state of mind that he often sought to induce and in so striving it became a common sight, much to the chagrin of his brother Stanislaus and later Nora, to see a tottering Joyce being escorted home from the pub by some kindly soul who had to bear Joyce's ceaseless singing, 'Of the good stuff let's have some more. Because I've lost the key to my door' (O'Brien 1999: 50).

Remarkable as it may seem but the fact that Joyce was often 'plooted' did not stop him from astutely observing the pub life that he was part of and reproducing it in astonishing detail within his books, most notably in Ulysses which has done more for the marketing of Dublin pubs than all the efforts of the Irish Tourist Board. Joyce said himself, in a letter to his brother Stanislaus, that ‘...the publicans would be glad of the advertisement’ (Ellmann 1982: 332). Certainly, Joyce's opus has occasioned an outpouring of reverence for the humble Irish pub; an outpouring that expressed and continues to express itself in the publication of ever more books on the subject (see Blake 1985; Costello 1995; Kears 1996; Pepper 1998; Reynolds 1990); an outpouring that has not only affirmed the pub's position as an important part of Irish culture, but which has also codified Joyce's standing therein. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the James Joyce theme pub in Paris.

**TAVERN OF THE PILLAR**

The James Joyce Pub, the second of eight Irish theme pubs launched to date by Brian Loughney, an Irish businessman, opened in Paris in 1995. [Paris is famed for its avant-garde past cradling movements such as Cubism and Surrealism and spawning artists such as Picasso, CTZanne, Braque, Man Ray and Duchamp. It is also a city of which James Joyce Pub of this study they are all named, >Kitty O'Shea's, who was the lover of a famous Irish parliamentarian, Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell was only Irish figure Joyce had any sympathy for, to the extent that he compared the course of their lives in >Gas from a Burner< (Ellmann 1982:)]. The property, originally used to sell French cheese, was retro-fitted in the style of a traditional Irish pub according to Loughney's exacting specifications. His aim was to provide punters with both a slice of Joycean culture and an 'authentic' experience of Irish pubs comparable to that on offer in Dublin.

With the exception of an enormous plastic pint of Guinness, that totally overshadows the recess of a first floor window, the exterior of the James Joyce Pub which sparks the questions, at least to the unininitated BIs this Joyce's pub?BI'd he ever come here?BI'd he actually in there?Ban avuncular publican behind the bar, pulling pints and making jolly with the customers, like the dead Bygmyister Finnegan in Finnegans Wake who somehow wakes and transmutes into Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, a Dublin publican.

The pub rests on a street corner, facilitating customer access via either a front or a side entrance, but its doors are much more far-reaching. They function as a direct portal to visitors travelling from and going to Joyce's Dublin. Nor are we speaking metaphorically for Loughney has secured a wonderful marketing coup, an agreement with Ryan Air, an Irish airline, whereby all visitors flying from Ireland with Ryan Air are deposited outside the pub via an express coach and returned via the same route. How appropriate that the pub should become a point of origin and departure, of beginning and ending, just like the circuitous structure of Joyce's Finnegans Wake. The fasca is predictably painted a dark emerald green and is completed by a gold trim surround; the name too is emblazoned in gold and is cast in a classical calligraphy. While the whole facade reeks of Oirishness with a capital 'O' there is no sign of Joyce save an unobtrusive little drawing printed on a double-sided wooden advertising placard. No explanation whatsoever is made of Joyce's identity or achievements. It seems to be implicitly assumed that punters will be drawn into the pub either through simple curiosity, the Ryan Air marketing stratagem or purely by the magic words, James Joyce Pub.

Inside, the first Joycean symbol encountered is an unusual abstract sketch of Joyce near the main entrance, his face little more than a cartoon caricature, painted sparingly in the colours of Ireland's flag, green, white and a splatter of gold. Objects have been incorporated into the painting, twisted metal, wire, rope and an askew frame all serve to contour the image. All of which contributes to this celebration of Joyce's peculiarity. The portrait is striking not only in composition but also in that it is a Joycean artefact that is not simply one of the hackneyed pictures that are readily available for visual consumption in the pages of Ellmann's prodigious biography and suchlike. Needless to say, there are plenty of the usual Joycean pictures scattered around the place, framed photocopies from Ellmann's book and so on, but their sheer multitude and careful arrangement endow them with a certain mystery and power.
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The onscreen images and had an inkling of their had planned to shoot into another in Finnegans Wake. He even discussed with the Russian director, Sergei Eisenstein, the possibility of filming Ulysses and also had planned to shoot the Anna Livia Plurabella episode of Finnegans Wake (Elliott 1982). Clearly he understood the power contained in those onscreen images and had an inkling of their potential to supplant written text as the medium of the future. People in the pub can be observed staring at the TV, the sound turned off, seemingly spellbound, staring at nothing in particular, totally transfixed. In truth, none of the Joycean artefacts could ever hope to effect a similar response. If prove were ever needed of the existence of Lyotard's ('1984) 'zero consciousness' then this is it.

On the wall immediately beside the television screen there is a huge mural of Joyce. Close examination reveals that interspersed throughout the sepia-toned artwork there resides what is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of visual references to Joyce ever gathered in one place. Bernard Kiernan's pub. The Abbey Theatre. Nora young and old. His children, Lucia and Charles. Every photo, portrait and sculpture of Joyce in existence; his death mask, the Dublin statue, a youthful casual confident Joyce, Joyce in middle age. Then, pictures of the Parisian cafes he frequented, snippets of his hand-writing; his parents, his brothers and sisters; the other buildings that he made famous, either in fiction or reality. Interestingly, there are pictures of the James pub itself, and even pictures of pictures that are in the James Joyce pub, such as the abstract painting described earlier, which all serve to historicize the pub itself and make it part and parcel of the contemporary making of Joyce. From a distance all the elements of the collage, this concentrated distillation of what we know of the visual Joyce, unite to form an image of Joyce presiding over the spectacle before him, smartly dressed shirt and tie, spectacles, overcoat and hat. He has a knowing, self-assured look about him, that seems to say, 'The artist like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails' (Joyce 1993: 483).

In its entirety, the contents of the suitably dark interior, the photographs, paintings, drawings, letters, first-editions and other memorabilia conspire to create a shrine to Joyce and the brand of Irishness that he was so helpful in propagating. A visitor might be inspired to think, as Joyce once did, on arriving at a Dublin hotel, after an absence of some time, 'The place is very Irish. I have lived so long abroad and in so many countries that I can feel at once the voice of Ireland in anything' (Elliott 1982: 306).

CONCLUSION

The Joyce Industry is big business. All of its commercial manifestation is trade in Irish souvenirs and museum merchandise, the Bloomday Mardi Gras and, of course, the James Joyce pubs together define a popular vision of Joyce. It is an engendering of a historical figure that purists, admittedly, might complain expropriates, exaggerates and execrates the image of James Joyce, Ireland's greatest ever artist (Lodge 1997). Yet such criticism presupposes that there is actually an objective verifiable representation of Joyce in the first place. There is not. In the context of Joycean studies, for instance, there is such a never-ending parade of critical texts written about him that one would think that the returns would by now be diminishing, that we should have reached a situation wherein all the important subjects would be covered and complete understanding of the man and his work would be in our grasp Bhat we would have quaffed on his Quiddity for long enough. However, this is not the case, in fact, if anything, the output of Joycean criticism is on the increase (Attridge 2000). This is because our reading of the past will always be coloured by a contemporary perspective. It is because the act of interpreting texts is individual and idiosyncratic. It is because the more that is written, the more there is to take issue with, to challenge and to counterpoint (Samuel 1994). History, therefore, is an ever-flowing narrative Ba riverun, past Adam and Eve, from swerve of shore to bend of bay. Bakin to Joyce's own favourite metaphor, the universal river of history.

What is more, as this paper has sought to suggest, Sunny Jim himself will hardly be turning in his grave at the representations being made of him. For taken as a whole our celebration of him is almost entirely uncritical. His genius remains irrefutable albeit somewhat smothered in drink. We suspet, indeed, that he would agree that he has never had it so good. Once in his twilight years, just when the number of texts on him was beginning to rocket, he made a sly observation, 'The truth probably is that I am a quite commonplace person undeserving of so much imaginative painting' (Elliott 1982: 509). What at first seems like a self-effacing moment of modesty is, of course, nothing of the sort. Like the artful marketing maestro he is he probably included the word 'probably' so as not to foreclose our imaginations, but to let them run riot.

It was just such an imaginative leap that inspired theme pub entrepreneur, Loughney, to create the James Joyce pub. Indeed, it can legitimate or be argued that the eponymous pub is a perfect, if unwitting, metaphor for the life of Joyce, since as his lifelong aim of re-writing Ireland is analogous to what theme pub imagineers, like Loughney, do with the text of their built environments. In the course of his career, Joyce encountered incredible opposition, narrow-minded critics, obstinate publishers and puritan printers, all of whom sought to repress and resist the vision of Joyce's imagination. Loughney, likewise, has had to endure opprobrious attacks of a similar ferocity, from critics resistant to the idea of the Irish theme pub. For instance, Glancey (1997: 6) considers them to be 'hideous constructions, banal beyond all redemption'; and Hayes (1997: 33) contends that they are 'kitsch bastardized versions of the real thing'.

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Many gifted children learn to read early, with better comprehension of the nuances of language. As much as half of the gifted and talented population has learned to read before entering school. They can work independently at an earlier age and can concentrate for longer periods. They like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive.