

Dublin does not appear

Before I begin, I would be grateful if you could give me the opportunity to make a supplementary introduction: may I take it as read here that when we refer to the “text” of architecture, we are making explicit reference to the Derridian “text”, that is, to the trace, mark, or *ur*-writing that he announces in *Of Grammatology*: that writing which takes its authority not in secondary manner from speech (by which Derrida means, meaningful speech), but instead derives its authority from itself, from its own movement, that movement of difference which differs and differs from itself. My demand is not that this be accepted *per se*, but rather that it be accepted as the milieu in which the following argument will develop. And not only for the reason that Derrida’s thought developed explicitly out of a consideration of such writers as Joyce (*Ulysses* and particularly *Finnegans Wake*), whose work he taught as a young English teacher.

To begin, then, properly: my given task is to ask why, in Joyce, the city of Dublin as a place, as a worked series of pieces of architecture, barely makes an appearance. And yet we feel, instinctively, that the book is *about* Dublin, keeping in mind the ambiguity of that phrase, that word “about”.

In *The Logic of Sense* (section 33) Gilles Deleuze defines novelists/artists as “clinicians of civilisation”. Great authors are more like doctors than their patients – in that, like great clinicians, they create a table or grouping of symptoms out of disparate symptoms. To quote:

There is always a great deal of art involved in the grouping of symptoms, in the organisation of a *table* where a particular symptom is dissociated from another... and forms the new figure of a disorder or illness. Clinicians who... renew a symptomatological table produce a work of art; conversely, artists are clinicians.... of civilisation. It seems, moreover, that an evaluation of symptoms might only be achieved through a *novel*

For Deleuze, this creation of disorders takes on a particular character. In truth, for him, this table or novel is not created from “disorder”, since that would be to define the “chaosmos” of differences by means of the notion of order; that is, it would be to define differences in terms of sameness – something he had spent the whole of his preceding book, *Difference and Repetition*, refuting. Thus the creation of a novel or table and its associated disorders can only occur within a field where originary difference has been proclaimed and acknowledged, and where every notion of *the same* or *the one* is derived from, or “said of” (as he puts it) that which always and from the start differs.

The exemplary novelist – Deleuze cites Joyce's *Ulysses*, Proust and Poe's *Purloined Letter* – disposes within this original difference two heterogeneous series of *signifier* and *signified* (section 6). These two series resonate through a single homogenous series of names where each term can be seen to relate to the preceding one and the next one, thus: $n_1 \rightarrow n_2 \rightarrow n_3 \rightarrow n_4 \rightarrow \dots$. The first name, or signifier, relates to the second name/signifier, relates to the third etc in the familiar continuous chain of signifiers. But it is the novelist's task to consider this homogenous chain instead from the point of view of "that which alternates in this succession" – ie the alternation of signified and signifier through the terms – and to allow these to resonate.

In the case of Joyce, for instance, there is a series surrounding "Bloom" which is given as the signifying set; and a corresponding signified series "Ulysses"; between which the author establishes a resonance and relation by the various means of an "archaeology of narrative modes, a system of correspondence between numbers, a prodigious employment of esoteric words, a method of question and answer and the establishment of currents of thought or multiple trains of thought".

In the case of Proust Deleuze says (in *Difference and Repetition*):

"Sunday morning
at Combray"

It is ... a question of two series, that of a former present (Combray as it was lived) and that of a present present. No doubt,..... there is a resemblance between the two series (that is, the madeleine, breakfast)... nevertheless the secret does not lie there. (p122)

And, earlier:

Combray reappears not as it was or as it could be, but in a splendor which was never lived... here, Combray reappears in the form of a past which was never present (p85)

In the case of Poe's *Purloined Letter*, Deleuze takes Lacan's famous analysis of the serial structure of the story:

First series: the King who does not see the compromising letter received by the Queen; the Queen who is relieved to have hidden it so cleverly by leaving it out in the open (on her desk with other letters); the minister who sees everything and takes possession of the letter (to blackmail the Queen). Second series: the police who, (searching minutely and repetitively) find nothing at the Minister's apartment; the minister who thought of leaving the letter in the open in order to better hide it; Dupin (the Sherlock Holms figure) who sees everything and takes back possession of the letter

Note that in this case, the letter circulates, inverted, through *both* of the series.

In all cases, it is for Deleuze the *differences* between the series and their terms which "become [through the auspices of the author] primary", not the resemblances.

In order to see how these narrative series subsist also in a place or in an architecture, it is necessary to be clear under which ontology of "place" or "architecture" this can occur. For

instance, under an ontology of architecture or place which posits that the nature of these as primarily *material*, *formal* or *spatial*, the attempt to see how Deleuze's scheme is relevant will fail or result in nonsense. This is because Deleuze is working within a stoic disjunctive logic, which he introduces in section 2 of *Logic of Sense*. It is only via a reading which takes this logic into account that the narrative series could be said to be applicable to place and architecture.

The Stoic disjunctive logic operates two distinct fields.

On the one hand, there are bodies which have physical qualities, actions and passions – that is, these bodies includes not just inanimate objects but also *our* human bodies and those of animals; corresponding to these there are what he calls “states of affairs” – possibly making reference to the beginning of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* where it is stated that “a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) is a combination of objects”. Deleuze states that the *only* time which relates to states of affairs, bodies, etc is the time of the *present*, and that *only* bodies exist in space. Finally, and perhaps most difficult to grasp, he states that within this field there exist *not* causes and effects, *but* only causes. All bodies are causes, in relation to each other, but have no *effects* – as here defined.

(To refer back briefly to the other possible ontologies of place or architecture mentioned above, it should be clear that a *material*, *formal* or *spatial* ontology would be placing these entities within this realm of “states of affairs”.)

On the other hand, and disjunct from these “states of affairs”, is the field of which they are the cause. The second field consists of the *effects* of the multiple causes of the states of affairs. These effects are what the above-mentioned (and certainly not invalid) ways of characterising place and architecture would tend to avoid, or not take into account. They are, says Deleuze, of an entirely *other* nature to states of affairs. These effects are *not* things or facts; they are “incorporeal entities” - *events*. They do not exist (this is something we say of states of affairs); they are nonexisting entities; rather than existing, they *subsist*, and in this word I think we should hear one of the traditional philosophical definitions of it, namely: something which occurs as a *relation* rather than as a fact. As events, these effects are expressed by verbs; not, “the cut”, but rather “to be cut”. In relation to time, they are not present or of the present, rather they are the becoming which divides itself in past and future and which always eludes the present. (Deleuze's distant reference to the question of the game, in the use of the word “elude”, would begin to link his ontology with certain other ontologies of architecture such as that of Gadamer – at first glance distant from this - which attempt to think it outside the Cartesian dualism of subject and object.)

How do these disjunct fields relate “in practice”? Deleuze, in a beautiful rendering in section 15 of *Logic of Sense*, relates how the battle of war is the essential event:

...the battle is not an example of an event among others, but rather the Event in its essence.... because it is actualised in diverse manners at once, and because each participant may grasp it at a different level of actualisation within its variable present..... (And) it is above all because the battle *hovers over* its own field, neutral in relation to the victor and the vanquished, the coward and the brave; because of this, it is all the more terrible. Never present but always yet to come and already passed, the battle is graspable only by the will of anonymity which it itself inspires.

So this ontology would perhaps take the battle, the *agon* – and here again we see a possible link to the question of the *game* – as a primary reference in trying to think about the nature of place or architecture. And we could also link this back not originally to a philosophical thought of Deleuze, but again to literature and the exemplary novelist: for I am pretty sure that this beautiful thought of the battle hovering over the battlefield comes from Scott Fitzgerald's melancholy prose, where he speaks (of course) not of a battle, but of the manner in which the party (what else!) hovers over the ballroom. (Scott Fitzgerald is as important to Deleuze as Joyce, Poe, or Proust. Insofar as Deleuze takes some explicitly philosophical thoughts direct from him which he does not do with the others, perhaps more so.)

More explicitly, we could quote Deleuze quoting Emile Breheir's book on the stoics, where he speaks of the cut:

When the scalpel cuts through the flesh, the first body produces upon the second not a new property but a new attribute, that of being cut. The *attribute* does not designate any real *quality*..... it is, to the contrary, always expressed by the verb, which means that it is not a being but a way of being. This way of being finds itself somehow at the limit, at the surface of being, the nature of which it is not able to change; it is in fact neither active nor passive, for passivity would presuppose a corporeal nature which undergoes an action

To transpose this to, say, the city of Dublin, we could say that when we read the following in Joyce's text:

"A onelegged soldier crutched himself round MacConnell's corner, skirting Rabaiotti's icecream car, and jerked himself up Eccles street...." (224)

the crippled body (and we know that for Bloom the status of the cripple is a complex one) produces on that first body, the material body of the city - it's corners, its icecream vans - not a new property but rather the attribute of *being walked through*. This attribute of the city is *not* a

“real” quality, but rather *a way of being* at the surface of being. It is indeed neither active or passive, since this event can also be expressed *vice versa* – *walking through the city of Dublin*.

And to simplify things still further by reference to Descartes, we could quote Deleuze’s first published work entitled *Mathesis, Science and Philosophy*, where he states:

...the knowing mind, as distinct as it might be in itself from the extension with which it appears to have strictly nothing in common, nonetheless deploys the order of things in thinking the order of its representations. At the very moment where unity is affirmed, this unity breaks apart and destroys itself

But in being broken apart, Descartes now remarks, unity finds its true sense in re-forming upon another plane, where it finds its true meaning. In so far as the theoretical disunion of thought and extension is affirmed, so too is the fact of their practical union, as a definition of life. Unity does not come about at the level of an abstract God transcending humanity, but in the very name of concrete life... the unity... is the unity of life itself, which delineates a third order, irreducible to the other two

Now it would be gross to ignore the development of Deleuze’s thought over two decades from this 1946 text to that of *Logic of Sense* in 1968, but nonetheless it may be helpful to bear in mind that he points to the essentially *analytical* force of the Cartesian subject/object dualism which should in no way be allowed to determine the ontology of an “irreducible” life. Life can be reduced – and for good reason - to the subject/object dualism, but the reverse cannot and does not follow. You *cannot* reduce the subject object dualism to life, you cannot use the dualism to speak of life. Perhaps the ontology we are speaking of can be summarised in the claim that place and architecture, thought in this way, is being thought about in terms of Deleuze’s “irreducible life”.

It is therefore this irreducible life to which one would make reference in an explanation as to the apparent disappearance of the city “itself”, its supposed material, visual, architecture or landscape qualities. Joyce’s task is to explicate this irreducible life, this dual aspect of *Dublin being walking through/walking through Dublin*, and in so doing, in remaining faithful to a situation prior to any split between the subject and object, the objective qualities of the city and its architecture perforce remain in the background. And yet the effect of this lack of foregrounding is perversely that the city is all the more present, all the more celebrated. For can we point to a novel more clearly marked by a place; can we find a novel more obviously (and obsessively) celebrated by means of reference to a city?

In this sense – the sense that it tends away from an explicit description of place - *Ulysses* is the exemplary novel rather than an exceptional one, in contrast we might say to Robbe Grillet

whose peculiarity lies partly in the incessant stare of his work, the obsessive gaze at the fabric of the spaces in which the events slowly unfold. This marks, too, the medium of film: *Last Year at Marienbad*.

We could explicate this non-appearance of the city in terms of, say, Gadamer's notion of the play of architecture (in his *Truth and Method*), whereby the ontology of the city is read via the notion not of aesthetics, but of the play back and forth between the inhabitant or participant in the city, and the city, its spaces and buildings, "itself". For Gadamer, taking his hint from a Heidegger-inspired authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), the exemplary moment in the city is not the act of looking at it, of theorising it, of photographing it or of – god forbid – being a tourist in relation to it. The exemplary moment is that of the *festival* (and we could recall that in the past, as now, architects were intimately involved with festival construction) or, perhaps, *liturgy*; that is, those moments where the so-called material substrate of the city, its buildings and interiors, remains entirely out of focus, unthematized, for those who interplay with those spaces which give the festival its possibility. On this reading, *Ulysses* would be festive: the raising to festival of the everyday life of the city, a movement whose genius is to remain at once celebratory and, at the same time, respectful of the mundanity of that which is being celebrates. There is no resentment here; there is nothing of that which Deleuze characterises as true nihilism in his early book *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where he argues that Nietzsche's notion of nihilism relates to those who deprecate our current, intramundane existence in the name of a transcendent and ultimately more valid reality. Joyce revalues all values by abjuring all such nihilism. Thus is his work a text, in the Derridian sense I spoke of at the outset.

And this textual quality means, in Deleuze's terms, that the inhabitant and the city each become simulacra of the other: they each turn back upon that which they appear to reference and therefore give us the situation for the first time. That is, the architect/clinician/novelist operates to create and ramify new differences within a field which claims essential difference – difference *as essence* - not identity, as that from which all flows. The architect/novelist is the one who stays true to Nietzsche's eternal return of the same and to Deleuze's thought of the "Dionysian sense-producing machine"; she is the one who does not merely dismiss the phrase "a machine for living in"; and in so doing, respects the following from *Difference and Repetition*:

[The novel] opens on to the difference of Being by taking its own difference as object, by posing the question of its own difference

We should perhaps expect no less, in turn, from the city.