

Three Castles Burning: A History of Dublin in Twelve Streets

Donal Fallon

New Island Books (Jan 31, 2023)

Softcover \$17.99 (336pp)

978-1-84840-872-2

Donal Fallon's guide to Dublin, *Three Castles Burning*, investigates the city in search of places where the past and present meet.

Based on the popular podcast of the same name, the book concerns itself with twelve Dublin streets and their sites, including churches, brothels, and public houses. On Henrietta Street, once fine Georgian architecture gave way to tenements and later restorations. Guinness brewery workers near Watling Street lead to ruminations on public housing and a swimming competition. Elsewhere, Fishamble Street, where Handel's *Messiah* debuted, finds its Viking past covered via archaeological digs.

Fallon shows that, for Dublin residents, the city's landmarks and byways ripple with extra meaning. Here, James Joyce is a hometown icon. And the book celebrates changes across the centuries, helping to make each chapter an inquisitive patchwork exploration of its focal street's historical and social layers. Victorian, Art Deco, and Brutalist architectural notes meet in mundane and wondrous ways, while otherwise unlauded urban planners and residents are memorialized with intriguing notes about how their marks endure. There are traces of the British Empire, memories of a street bombing, and explorations of abolition via Frederick Douglass's speaking tour, too.

Dublin's rich but troubled past is conveyed with admiration—and with the help of cultural references. Photographs of city minutiae (commemorative plaques, streets, and corners whose everyday brickwork evokes the city in flux) appear alongside lively paintings and portraits. There are literary quotes, economic histories, personal memories, civic details, and poetry, all filtered through Fallon's wanderer's gaze.

Seeking out the city's nuances, *Three Castles Burning* is a vibrant history of Dublin, told through historical surveys of twelve of its streets.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2023)

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