

I'M A CYCLIST

You may not know it to look at me. You could pass me on the street and have had no idea. But it's not something I try to hide. Ask me and I'll tell you proudly, I'm a cyclist. Yes, that's right, a cyclist. Note the -ist. Like we're members of a school of philosophy or a political movement. We're not an -er. Walker, driver, biker. We're an -ist. Pacifist, communist, fascist.

After my second bike in a month was stolen and I lost the will for rational thought, I became a long-haul pedestrian for a while and it wasn't fun. An hour to get into town, an hour to get back, I couldn't hack it, I gave up after a month. I've travelled on the bus and their plain and simple policy of openly ripping you off just doesn't do it for me. I've never driven and I don't have any intention of learning how to since it is an utterly ridiculous mode of transport. Which leaves me on the bicycle and I'm happy enough to stick with it until charging down the road on the back of a wild pig comes back into fashion.

So who else is on the road?

The Cars

Let's face it we have a lot of problems with each other. Cars get in our way. They pollute our lungs. And they often treat us like second class road users. And we in turn weave in between them, jump out in front of them and treat the traffic lights like more of a suggestion than an order. The thing for car drivers to realise is that where they see a person on a bike we see a car. You don't look like a person you like a gigantic lump of metal rolling down the road and we're going to treat you as such.

Know this: when you roll down your window and shout at us as you drive past we can't hear a word of it. "Whhaehashaksjoohfeddik the road!" is what it usually sounds like. I've had a couple of shouts, a couple of beeps in my time, not too many. What I like to do to infuriate the drivers even more is to pretend I think they're beeping to say hi and just wave back at them. "Helloooo!"

Car drivers have also perpetuated this myth that it's really difficult to see cyclists if they don't have lights on their bike. Don't get me wrong I'm always lit up at night. But I've been in a car at night and you can see everything. This cm thick piece of glass doesn't have the properties which they all claim of making all but the supernova of our closest star, the sun, invisible. Maybe in the countryside. Maybe if it was raining.

But we have street lights in this city. They act as a sort of brightener if you will. This just seems like a massive conspiracy to cover themselves for when they run us down on their way home from a few drinks in the theatre bar. Check it out next time you're in a car at night. It's amazing.

A joy to behold is the car that stops *on* the pedestrian crossing. It realises too late that the lights have turned red and screeches to a halt right over the crossing completely blocking it. It's as if they think this is the point of the pedestrian crossing rather than to stop them so that people can cross the road, these things have been put there just to stop them.

The Bastard Cyclists

There are those in our number who have no care or respect for those around them. They cycle through pedestrian crossings and up onto pavements at the drop of a cycle hat. But please don't tar us all with the same brush. Some of us try to be respectful to the pedestrian. My own personal rule is to never go through a pedestrian crossing when it's red. This might seem excessive but even when there's no one around I'll wait my time. The reason being that it's a slippery slope.

1. Hey, I can go through slowly, there's no one around.
2. Ah sure, there's only one person crossing I can go around him without slowing down too much.
3. I am master of the bicycle, I can predict exactly what the traffic is going to do and compensate without even a thought, this is my matrix. I can cruise through this crowded crossing at top speed with no hands on the handlebars, headphones blaring and a couple of pints in me just to make things a bit more interesting.

Cyclists may feel in control but they should remember how intimidating they are to the young and the old. Come on guys, it's just not cool, yeah? Nice one.

Pedestrians

Our cousins the pedestrians. They have everything we have. The cheap, environmentally friendly, healthy option. Just at a slower pace. I reach out to the pedestrians in friendship. I hope you will forgive us for the ignorant among us. Remember this: they may look scary but a cyclist is actually very easy to knock off their bike. Next time a cyclist comes storming along the pavement stick out the old clothes line, you'll be pleasantly surprised with the results.

The Oriental Cyclists

Now, don't get me wrong. I love the Orientals. I love their MSG and their pretty movies and their crazy music. But the truth is they're very slow cyclists. Is that racist? It's a pretty sweeping statement to damn well over a billion people like that. But it's true. If I'm cycling behind someone and they're going really slowly and they don't look like they're just an old person (old coat, old bike, GAA helmet on their head) chances are they're Oriental. I'm all in favour of the immigration into this country. I think an injection of people who's DNA hasn't been stewing in the same small pot for the last couple of millennia is great but I just wish they'd hurry up a bit once they get here. I thought China was made out of bicycles but it seems like they still haven't figured out the gears yet.

The Queue Skippers

One of the most infuriating things for the decent cyclist is when you're stopped at the lights and some idiot cycles up and around you bringing their bike to a stop right in front of you. First off this is the same idiot you passed on the road 5 minutes ago so you're evidently faster than them and will have to cycle round them again. Secondly they're now blocking the pedestrian crossing. And thirdly they probably haven't put their bike into gear before they stopped so you're going to have to watch them have a small hernia trying to push the pedals once the lights change. Get behind me satans.

Those Guys On the Tiny Bikes

Please, laugh at them openly, you're right they do look completely ridiculous.

The Man Who Has Obviously Stolen His Day-Glo Helmet from His Daughter

Similar.

Cycle Lanes

Every time I pass a car parked on the cycle lane I just want kick it's wing mirrors off as I pass. Now, I'm not talking about the cycle lanes that are just part of the road painted red here. That I can understand there being some confusion over. I'm pretty confused myself. What exactly are the rules for these things? Are cars not supposed to drive on

them? There's some roads where they've taken off so much of the road for the cycle lane it's impossible for a car not to drive on them. Or is the rule that cars aren't supposed to park on them? Last time I checked there's a cycle lane running through Ranelagh with parking spaces marked *over* it. Are they only between certain hours? When exactly? What are the rules with these things? I wish I knew so I could swear at the car drivers and be certain I was in the right.

But when the cycle lane is raised from the road on the footpath I don't think there's much ambiguity. Do these car drivers really think these were put there especially for them to park on? No. Kick the wing mirrors off. Give the roof a good thumping. Key the bastards.

Of course there's the pedestrians who think these cycle lanes are footpaths as well but I think breaking their wing mirrors is just a step too far.

The Drunken Reveller

If I'm cycling home from town late on a Friday or Saturday night, or pretty much any night let's face it, I will be guaranteed of at least one person trying to hail me as a taxi. If you're the drinking type then some day it will occur to you, as you stand outside Tram Co in your shirt, that it's the best joke of the decade to ask the passing cyclist for a lift. It isn't. I turned the joke back on those guys of course when I charged them 20 euods for a backer to Foxrock.

The Bike Thieves

Ah yes. Our old friends. That awful feeling when you come back to where you think you've left your bike and it doesn't seem to be there any more. You scan your memory to make sure this is where you parked it today and then come to the bitter conclusion that you've got a furious walk home ahead of you. I've had a fair number of bikes stolen in my time. You just feel so angry thinking about some little bastard out there with his grubby little claws all over your beloved bicycle. But not in the last five or six years. The trick is the old double lock technique. Two locks and the gurrriers just move on to the next bike. Just make sure your bike is less desirable and more secure than the bike next to you and you'll be fine. Then you get to cycle home every day knowing that you beat the little shits again.

Me

Watch out for me. I can be dangerous. I've travelled the same trip into town thousands of times at this stage. The slight but unrelenting slope of Rathgar Road has been my adversary for more battles than either of us can remember. I've done this trip so many times I could practically do it blindfolded. Well at least squinting quite a bit. It's got to the stage where my brain just decides not to store any information of my trip. I suddenly snap back to consciousness and realise that I can't remember any of the last five minutes of cycling. I think I've still been obeying the laws of the road and stopping at red lights. I think I have.

I've also been known to race with people. It's not an explicit race. I don't stand beside someone at the traffic lights revving up my gears. They're probably not even aware of it but that doesn't matter it's still a valid victory to be proud of. I did actually have an explicit race with a van once. We jostled for lead position a couple of times but there was no way they were going to beat me. I knew ahead of us was Harold's Cross and the Cross at rush hour is cyclists domain. I encourage you too to have a race with someone next time your on the roads. Not only will it entertain you but also those around you as you fly arse over tit under a lorry.

Another thing I do to alleviate the boredom is to watch the pretty ladies walking by. No, come on, don't call me a pervert, it's perfectly natural. Frankly if you don't stop to look at a pretty lady you're the weirdo. I have it down to a fine art. The lay-dar sounds and I immediately glance around to see exactly how much time I can take to check her out before I run into danger. One. Two. And back to the road. It's only once got me into trouble. While I was on a survey mission passing through Rathgar village the car in front of me suddenly stopped, I pulled the front breaks, I slid up the bike so that I was over the cross bar with my feet on the ground beside the front wheel, my back wheel came up in the air, fell to one side and bounced down the door of the idling car to my left. The driver was just gobsmacked, what on Earth was I doing? I was checking out the birds man. Fair play.

But despite all cycling is still the only way to go. It's cheap, fast, healthy, environmentally friendly, has a reliable timetable, there's no road tax or insurance, you can feel outraged instead of just guilty about what Boy George and the Oil Execs are perpetrating across the world, and within a couple of months of taking it up you too could have a great ass like mine.
