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Narrating *Dubliners*: A Formal Analysis

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Dissertação realizada no âmbito do Mestrado em Estudos Anglo-Americanos, orientada pelo
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e co-orientada pelo Professor Doutor Gualter Mendes Queiroz Cunha

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto

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Resumo

Apesar da abundância de leituras de cariz temático concernentes a *Dubliners*, de James Joyce, discussões centradas eminentemente nas suas propriedades estilístico-formais revelam-se escassas. Aproveitando a oportunidade analítica que esta lacuna proporciona, a minha dissertação, marcada por uma abordagem enfaticamente prática, oferece um estudo narratológico dos contos. Divorcia-se, todavia, de tendências correntes da narratologia, sobretudo no que toca às suas vertentes cognitivas e enunciativas, na medida em que desvaloriza o papel do leitor e valoriza o dos narradores, apresentando-os como entidades poderosas e inventivas que se regozijam com a exploração da maleabilidade da linguagem e da literatura e com a manipulação do leitor (ou, mais precisamente, de um leitor receptivo e querente). A minha dissecação deste processo desdobra-se em três pontos centrais. Em primeiro lugar, analiso a incorporação da componente verbal do discurso oral e mental das personagens na narração. Uma vez que a colectânea se rege pela convenção literária que confere ao pensamento uma dimensão marcadamente verbal, tornando-o comparável com a fala, discorro sobre ambos em conjunto, estudando o modo como os narradores se apropriam de – e se exprimem com – palavras que não as suas. Em segundo lugar, examino o manuseamento narratorial do restante material diegético, ou seja, o conteúdo diegético que não é verbal, prestando particular atenção à estrutura dos contos e procurando esclarecer a relação entre a diegese, a narração e a narrativa. Em terceiro lugar, confronto directamente a questão problemática dos temperamentos ou identidades dos narradores, inspeccionando as atitudes perceptíveis nas suas escolhas. Por conseguinte, a minha dissertação reclama, em última instância, a centralidade dos narradores em *Dubliners* e, por extensão, na ficção literária de Joyce em geral.

Palavras-chave: Narratologia; Narrador; Discurso das personagens; Estrutura; Estilo.

Abstract

While thematic readings of James Joyce's *Dubliners* abound, discussions that centre resolutely on its formal and stylistic properties have hardly proven plentiful. Seizing the analytical opportunity provided by this gap, my dissertation, largely practical in approach, offers a narratological assessment of the short stories. It is, however, divorced from current trends in cognitive and enunciative narratology, in the sense that it minimises the role of the reader and maximises that of the narrators, presenting them as powerful and playful entities that delight in exploring the malleability of language and literature and toying with the reader (or, to be more precise, a receptive reader willing to be toyed with). My dissection of this process is tripartite. Firstly, I analyse the incorporation of the verbal traits of the oral and mental discourse of the characters into the narration. Since the collection follows the literary convention that thought shares with speech a significant verbal dimension, I yoke them together, studying the ways in which the narrators take possession of – and express themselves with – the characters' mouths and minds. Secondly, I examine the narrators' handling of the remaining diegetic material, that is, the non-verbal diegetic data, paying particular attention to the structure of the stories and attempting to shed some light on the relationship between the diegesis, the narration and the narrative. Thirdly, I delve unswervingly into the vexed question of the temperaments or identities of the narrators, inspecting the attitudes perceptible in their choices. As a result, my dissertation ultimately reclaims the centrality of the narrators in *Dubliners* and, by extension, Joyce's literary fiction in general.

Keywords: Narratology; Narrator; Discourse of the characters; Structure; Style.

List of Abbreviations

For citations relative to the main edition of *Dubliners* used here – the Norton Critical Edition –, I merely provide page numbers parenthetically; regarding different editions of the collection, I follow standard citation rules. For citations concerning Joyce's novels and letters, the following abbreviations are used:

<i>FW</i>	<i>Finnegans Wake</i>
<i>P</i>	<i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>Selected Letters of James Joyce</i>
<i>U</i>	<i>Ulysses</i>

Full bibliographical information can be found in the list of works cited.

Formal critics all begin with a truth that ideological critics too often neglect: form is in itself interesting, even in the most abstract extreme. Shape, pattern, design carry their own interest—and hence meaning—for all human beings.

Wayne C. Booth

The important thing is not what we write, but how we write, and in my opinion the modern writer must be an adventurer above all, willing to take every risk, and be prepared to founder in his effort if need be.

James Joyce

It is seeing the real clay, that men in an agony worked with, that gives pleasure. To read a book which is real clay moulded by fingers that had to mould something, or they would clutch the throat of their maddened author. No flowing on of words, but tightly clutched tense fingers leaving marks in the clay. These are the only books that matter—and where are they to be found?

T. E. Hulme

Introduction

The publication of James Joyce's *Dubliners* in the year that marked the beginning of the Great War was a far cry from a momentous affair, and he would have to wait until 1916 to make an impression with *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and until 1922 to make a sensation with *Ulysses*. Despite its inauspicious beginnings, the earlier opus has since given rise to a staggering amount of critical essays and books. Nowadays, it is routinely described as one of the greatest short-story collections and habitually included in university curricula, to the point that it has become Joyce's "most widely read" (Bosinelli, 1998: ix) and "most widely taught work" (Mahaffey, 2012: 2). As a result, it has hardly been neglected: although there was a time when we could still lament its status as "one of the stepchildren in Joyce studies, receiving less attention than its important siblings, and a fragmented attention more often than not" (French, 1978: 443), that time ended decennia ago, sometime during the sixties or early seventies at the latest. Even if it has not quite surpassed its "siblings", its place in the literary canon has never been more firmly secure. Therefore, I have to justify myself for bringing into the world yet another unwanted inspection of the stories. I hope that my dissertation will make its case for itself, but a few general considerations regarding its place in Joycean criticism may now be sketched: whereas most of the voluminous work on the collection is produced under the aegis of cultural studies – Irish, postcolonial and gender studies proving particularly popular –, my analysis, narratological in nature, faces *Dubliners* as an artistic object rather than a cultural artefact. It focuses on "Joyce's romance with the word" (Yee, 1997: 19), on his narrators' romances with words, and investigates the form and style of the stories – or, to be more specific, the narrations and the narrators.

Yet, this may not seem sufficient to warrant an additional examination of *Dubliners*. After all, many are keen on exalting Joyce's "architectonic craftsmanship" (Rice, 1995: 407), as well as "his exceptional linguistic and stylistic subtlety and the unequalled flexibility of his language" (O'Neill, 2004: 64). Likewise, some scholars overtly underline the importance of form in the stories in the course of noting the supposed inextricability of matter and manner in his work. Samuel Beckett set the tone

as early as 1929, declaring that, in *Work in Progress*, which would become *Finnegans Wake* a decade later, “form is content, content is form” (*apud* Hammer, 2015: 155). In an interview conducted in 1965, John Huston, who adapted “The Dead” to the screen in 1987, claimed much the same about the Joycean *œuvre* in general, stating that “the originality of Joyce is in no way to be divorced from what he was saying” and that “[t]here’s no separation between style and subject matter, between style and intention, between style and [...] the idea” (Sarris, 1969: 264). Scholarly readings of the collection appear to have taken such pronouncements as their motto. Indeed, even critics mainly dedicated to cultural studies frequently echo these statements. Patrick A. McCarthy, for instance, asserts that “the style and structure of *Dubliners* are both the means by which Joyce presents his subject and an integral part of his subject” (1998: 2). In a similar vein, Eugene O’Brien stresses that the “relationship between form and theme, frame and text, is a vexed one in literary studies, and, given the widely architectonic nature of Joyce’s work, is relevant to any discussion of his work” (2004: 212).

Remarks of that ilk would have one believe that the formal dimension of the collection has nigh been exhausted. Unfortunately, they often turn out to be a mere ceremonial gesture that is *de rigueur* in critical writings on Joyce: reflections on form are normally relegated to passing references that emerge at intervals in unabashedly thematic investigations, which, even when insightful, are forcibly incomplete in relation to the particulars of his prose. However, they are not necessarily at fault: it is only normal that thematic interpretations privilege thematic approaches. The problem, therefore, lies mainly in the dearth of predominantly formal analyses, to which there occasionally seems to be a certain aversion on principle. In fact, some scholars staunchly believe in “the inadequacy of a purely literary discourse” (McCabe, 1989: ix) and even advise us not to let ourselves be beguiled by the alluring style of the stories: “the very foregrounding of style”, Paul Devine states, “deflects attention away from the incompleteness, the lack of definitiveness in *Dubliners*” (2004: 95). Nevertheless, I will refrain from being a polemist or writing an apology for formal studies: since they are generally – albeit regrettably not always – seen as a legitimate field, I am fortunately relieved from that onerous task. My aim, consequently, is merely to show that the

resistance to the notion that it is valuable and illuminating to dissect form on its own terms has created a gap in our readings of *Dubliners* – a gap that may trouble only a few, but one that is worth filling.

Still, there have been a few admirable discussions centred on the formal and narrational properties of the collection. If asked to single out for praise a couple of notable commentators, I would not hesitate to extol Terence Patrick Murphy and Derek Attridge. The former has written on a few of Joyce's stories with outstanding and laudable precision, even though some may consider his interests single-mindedly "technical" or excessively circumscribed (see Murphy, 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009). More palatable to the academe at large, the pages that the latter has devoted to "Eveline", albeit not numerous, are among the most cogent published on *Dubliners* in regards to the conveyance of the thoughts of the characters via free indirect discourse (see Attridge, 1999 and 2012). Despite these oases in the desert, not every appraisal of form of the collection is commendable. A particularly egregious example is Cleanth Brooks' breakdown of "The Boarding House", which he considers "a perfectly crafted short story" and "a little masterpiece of narrative" (1988: 405, 408). I second his encomium, but his exploration of the "sheer craft" (*ibidem*: 408) of the story strikes me, if I am allowed some cruelty, as little more than a glorified synopsis. Nevertheless, consummately formal examinations are rare, and the comments on the "surface" of the stories to be found in broader thematic studies are usually confined to incidental and inconsequential invocations of what Joyce, in a letter to Grant Richards, described as "a style of scrupulous meanness" (*SL*: 83), a phrase constantly reproduced but seldom explained and so freely interpreted that it has ceased to summon up more than a nebulous idea. Even analyses of Joycean "epiphanies" – which Robert Scholes eloquently chastised, highlighting that "Joyce never used the word Epiphany in connection with *Dubliners*" (1967: 152) – tend not to concentrate significantly on form.

Certain thematically oriented analyses, however, make interesting use of the conceptual tools provided by narratology. I highlight two book-length studies: Margot Norris' *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's Dubliners* and Gerald Doherty's *Dubliners' Dozen: The Games Narrators Play*. Despite offering intriguing and stimulating

interpretations of the stories, Norris does not pursue a strictly narratological reading: by her own admission, she indulges in a plurality of heuristic approaches, sometimes rather awkwardly combined. As she only dabbles in, but does not commit to, a narratological methodology, one frequently misses a greater rigour and consistence in her observations concerning the narrational properties of the collection. For instance, she occasionally commits what I hold as the cardinal narratological sin of referring indiscriminately to the discourse of the narrators and to that of the characters. Therefore, her readings are indeed *suspicious*. If hers is an unfortunately all too aptly titled book, Doherty's is not as aptly (sub)titled as I would like: on the whole, he does stress "those surreptitious maneuvers the narrators conceal for motives not immediately obvious" (2004: 120), but rather large stretches of his volume neglect to explicitly discuss the narrators. Nonetheless, both of these studies deserve to be recognised for emphasising the role and the power of the narrators, regarding them as more than impersonal and impartial reporters. Norris' observations on what she describes as "an interest or an agenda" (2003: 8) behind the choices made by the narrators are loosely germane to some of my considerations, and, more importantly, I share with Doherty, despite our different perspectives, the intent of exploring "the narrators' strategies for subjugating their characters" (2004: 120) – or, as I prefer to put it, for subjugating the reader.

T. E. Hulme, who belonged to Joyce's generation, wrote an aphorism that springs to mind: "All styles are only means of subduing the reader" (1955: 81). I would argue that *Dubliners*, owing to the stylistic and formal choices made by the narrators of the stories, is an example tailor-made for illustrating his assertion. Nonetheless, the idea that we are not in control – or that we relinquish control – is manifestly uncomfortable for many critics. Some would even generally oppose to the subjugation of the reader as a matter of principle. Holbrook Jackson gives voice to this position: "If it is the business of the reader not to be subdued, as I believe it is, then all aggressive styles are bad". On the one hand, such a dismissal of aggressive styles has an aesthetic motivation: "The best style is unobvious, and as free from attitudinising as from ornament, everything sacrificed to clarity". On the other hand, it also proceeds from ideological concerns: the reader should be "left free to form his own opinion of what is offered to him", Jackson

says, venturing that an aggressive style “seeks to persuade you against your will” (2001: 203). We may loosely connect the political implications of this notion with Robert Scholes’ invective against “our desire to abandon certain dimensions of existence, certain quotidian responsibilities, and place ourselves under the illusionary guidance of a maker of narratives, upon whom we rely because we respect his powers”. Scholes sees “something very undemocratic about all this, and uncritical as well” (1982: 64).

At this juncture, we may also invoke Roland Barthes, according to whom “the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” (1978: 4) or, if we prefer to put it differently, to make us “active co-creators of the text” (Dettmar, 1996: 49). The Barthesian distinction between “readerly” and “writerly” texts (1978: *passim*) is also relevant here, the former being considered promoters of the status quo and, therefore, undesirable. More importantly, this opposition is equally valid at the level of reading: “Any text”, Mary Bittner Wiseman reminds us, “can be read in a writerly way” (*apud* Dettmar, 1996: 18). Following this train of thought, it is only logical for Barthes to assert that “the work of the commentary, once it is separated from any ideology of totality, consists precisely in *manhandling* the text, *interrupting* it” (1978: 15). Interestingly Joyce himself, in a conversation with Arthur Power, goes to bat for the reader’s interpretive freedom, appearing to corroborate this view: “What do we know about what we put into anything? Though people may read more into *Ulysses* than I ever intended, who is to say that they are wrong: do any of us know what we are creating?” (Power, 1974: 89). Still, I would contend that such a line of attack unfairly – and unprofitably – neglects the “guidelines” set by literary works (whether they correspond to authorial intention or not). Attridge ventures that Joyce’s “texts themselves teach us how to read them” (Attridge, 1999: 24). This strikes me as true of all texts, in one way or another, because they set exegetic parameters for which we can search and to which we can choose to adhere. Thus, our prostration to the narrators is voluntary and arises from a desire to derive enjoyment from following their instructions. “Reading is”, if I may steal Fritz Senn’s formulation, “a matter of trust and adjustment” (1997b: 5), at least when considered in this light. It is not a passive experience; it is an active exercise that asks us

to resort ceaselessly to our literary knowledge so as to respond adequately to the conventions that a specific text follows and transgresses.

Downplaying the hermeneutical role of the reader, I find myself in agreement with Robert Martin Adams' monition apropos the interpretive liberties taken with *Ulysses*, which is applicable to *Dubliners*: "Evidently there is some limit beyond which the reader is not justified in imposing *his* private associative ingenuities on the novel" (1962: 26). The reader to whom I refer, then, is willing and prepared to be mindful of this "limit" and to capitulate consciously to the narrator; for the rebellious, defiant readers that refuse to yield, the limit is only their imagination, of course. Although I do not negate that we can play fast and loose with the stories whether they "allow" us to or not, I would claim that deliberately subversive readings of a given text imply an awareness of a sanctioned way of interpreting it. Even ambiguity and vagueness – traits that we tend to construe as a departure from fixed meaning and an invitation to create it ourselves – are part of the textual fabric. In such cases, the narrator guides us by telling us that we are on our own. For that reason, I put forth, to phrase it somewhat pretentiously, a constitutive or closed poetics that does not afford the reader a substantial creative role, despite ceding that, in a sense, a text only exists when read. One may expostulate that the putative centrality of the readership of a text in the construction of that text is proven by the fact that there can be as many interpretations as there are readers, resulting in views that might well be mutually exclusive. While the variety of readings neither can nor should be denied, what interests me here is less the responses of real readers than those of an implied or ideal(ised) reader – a narratee, if you will: "The narratee, as much as the narrator, is an abstract function rather than a person. Actual readers will have different responses" (Bal, 2009: 68). In other words, I endeavour to discern the responses that the narrators *try* to elicit in us, seeking to ascertain and assess the rules that the collection has set and choosing not to violate them. I do not read against the grain; I play by the book.

My proposing that we should genuflect before the narrator, therefore, is inconsonant with the general post-structuralist notion that a text asks us to rebel against it (or that, whether it asks us or not, we should rebel anyway). Yet, my approach is

congenial with pre-post-structuralism, if I may play with prefixes, and I have no objections against aggressive styles, against our surrender to the guidance of the narrators or against singing the praises of readerly texts and readerly ways of reading. Additionally, I would argue that it is close-minded, from an aesthetic perspective, to impose an inherent value on transparency or opacity, simplicity or complexity, suaveness or aggressiveness. Besides, one of the pleasures of reading the collection is to allow ourselves to be trifled with by the narrators, to be deceived and to be mocked for having been deceived. Being an oppressed reader can be a delectable experience. It can be, to use that dirtiest of words, entertaining. I will leave it for others to decide whether that makes us slaves to ideology. Indeed, the ideological dimension of literature is not my concern here: it is certain that *Dubliners*, as all literary works, performs an ideological role of one kind or another, but the aim of this dissertation is to probe its formal properties. Many will scoff at my steadfast separation of the artistic from the ideological – indeed, from the social, the political and even, to some extent, the cultural – and disparage it as a naïvely artificial division. However, we need not be afraid of the artificiality of this disunion, given that it is useful for the questions under consideration here, just as the division between form and content remains productive, no matter how antiquated it may sound to our twenty-first-century ears. Divisions are not a curse; they prevent us from wandering. We must be comfortable with drawing a line, even – or especially – a constricting line, and the more consciously we draw it the better.

Continuing to draw such lines, I see that my approach, in addition to being outmoded in relation to post-structuralist perspectives, also fails to keep up with the latest narratological developments. My “neglect” of the reader means that I am out of step with *cognitive* narratology: “In cognitive approaches”, as Monika Fludernik and Greta Olson explain, “the emphasis has moved from the categorization of aspects and functions of narratives in verbal and particularly literary prose texts to the tracing or uncovering of the mental processes by which narratives are evoked and detected”. As a result, a focus on “textual properties” gives way to “a focus on the mind”, which “inevitably involves an interdisciplinary dialogue between narratology and cognitive studies and cognitive psychology” (2011: 3). This is undoubtedly a fascinating field of

enquiry – but an inchoate one. Thus, I must concur with David Herman: “cognitive narratology at present constitutes more a set of loosely confederated heuristic schemas than a systematic framework for inquiry” (2009: 31). Since mine is a narrator-centric analysis, I also run counter to *enunciative* narratology, which gives a lower profile to the role of the narrators: “What happens to conceptions of the narrator if enunciative markers in a text are considered to be the proper indicators of narrativity?” (Fludernik, 2011: 1). I hazard an answer: we risk losing sight of some of the specifically artistic properties of literature. My interest in these properties, as well as my commitment to divorcing literature from the world to which it undeniably belongs, may (rather stereotypically) remind one of Russian formalism. It is true that this school influenced my study of literature *qua* literature, and I stand behind Roman Jakobson’s considerations on *literaturnost* or literariness: “the object of literary science is not literature but literariness, i.e. what makes a given work a literary work” (*apud* Womack, 2006: 112). Additionally, I have borrowed the concept of *ostranenie* or defamiliarisation, applying it in connection with the notion that, in a literary work, certain textual elements are foregrounded, while others recede into the background.

Nevertheless, I only pursue theoretical explications when there is a clear and direct gain. Consequently, a resolutely practical stance informs my dissertation, which I have divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, I scrutinise the incorporation of the verbal traits of the discourse of the characters into that of the narrators; in the second, I enlarge the scope to include the narrators’ handling of the remaining diegetic material, that is, the non-verbal diegetic content; in the third, for whose broader considerations the first two chapters lay the groundwork, I attempt to paint a more vivid portrait of the narrators, addressing the possibility of perceiving attitudes and even identities in their management of narrative and narration. “The configuration of the narrative voice”, as Norris notes, “varies from story to story”, suggesting that the narrators possess different temperaments, although “it is a problematic matter whether or not to personify or gender” them (2003: 7). I do not consider that the heterodiegetic narrators of the collection necessarily have a gender or are exactly “human”, but I use masculine pronouns to refer to them, owing to stylistic concerns: it would be quite unpleasant to

switch back and forth from “it” to “he” when descanting on hetero- and homodiegetic narrators, respectively. I should also note that, even though the entire collection is contemplated, “The Dead” is explored only briefly and to the extent that it allows me to illuminate the other stories, because it is the longest – Murphy even calls it “Joyce’s novella” (2007: 31) – and by far the most widely discussed. In this way, it is not allowed to take the lion’s share of the available space. The other stories also deserve their chance to shine.

Despite my focus on form and my disagreements with several appraisals of the narrational dimension of the stories, the overall conclusions reached here are, in the end, roughly compatible with some of the more general implications of a good share of the thematic studies conducted over the years, inasmuch as they stress the notion of “paralysis”. That this concept “has been the key-term in most thematic readings of *Dubliners*” (Doherty, 2004: 35) is unsurprising, since Joyce, addressing his plan for the collection, made two explicit references to it in his correspondence (SL: 22, 83). Besides, the term is part of “the time-honoured trinity of paralysis-simony-gnomon [that] declares itself on the first page of the first story and trails its clouds of glory through the literary criticism of the entire book, almost insistent on its constant reapplication” (Benstock, 1994: 3). Although the last two terms of that trifecta have encouraged scholars to launch appraisals that strike me as unduly lax, the persistent use of the first has had, to some extent, a beneficial outcome, but much remains unexplored: even if it is irrefutable that “[c]ountless critical studies of *Dubliners* have focused on the thematic and symbolic implications of ‘paralysis’ in Joyce’s stories” (Rice, 1995: 406), the fact remains that few have focused on its formal implications. I argue that several choices made by the narrators of the collection serve a pursuance of a sense of stagnation, of sluggishness. Yet, I also defend that, more broadly, these choices stem from their wish to experiment with structure and style – and to toy with us, to frustrate and to please us. The dexterous narrators of *Dubliners* are not only oppressive but also playful, rejoicing in the malleability of language and literature, which become, in their hands, clay that they continuously form, deform and reform. To trace this process is my ultimate goal. I wish to search for the fingerprints that they leave on the clay.

Chapter One – The Management of Figural Discourse

In *Dubliners*, as well as in narrative fiction in general, the narrators incorporate discursive elements that are not presented as the result of an independent narratorial exercise: their ultimate point of origin is ascribed to the characters. This alien language can be oral or mental discourse – or, to borrow Gérard Genette’s terminology, “uttered” or “inner speech” (1983: 171). This may prompt one to wonder whether thought can be considered speech. It is ordinarily granted that (a certain dimension of) thought is strongly verbal – and Lacan even proposes that “the unconscious [...] is structured like a language” (2005: 737) –, but the determination of its (non-)verbality in the “real” world is, for our purposes, ultimately not pertinent. We must remember our attentional object – a fictional work – and focus on literary modes, not on cognitive tenets. Therefore, the actual operations of the human mind need not be brought to bear on this matter. Our question should rather be whether the collection construes thought as verbal. R. B. Kershner provides the answer: “Joyce’s portrayal of consciousness is [...] language-dependent” (1989: 16, 20). Likewise, Karen Lawrence speaks of “Joyce’s strong interest in the *language* of the characters’ thoughts” (1981: 23; emphasis in the original). Although the conveyance of figural thought in the narration does not always hinge upon the seizure of the characters’ discourse, I am here interested less on the representation of consciousness *per se* than on the representation of the verbal component of thought. In that sense, the conveyance of oral and mental language entails similar narratorial procedures: there is, in either case, a process of linguistic appropriation, of overt or covert and literal or liberal quotation.

Therefore, it proves productive to consider that, despite “the dissatisfaction of some analysts with the mapping of categories deriving from speech representation onto the phenomena of represented consciousness” (McHale, 2009: 436), the same modes or techniques operate the presentation of both uttered and inner speech: direct, indirect and free indirect discourse. It is incontrovertible that “this classical approach captures only some of the phenomena relevant for research on narrative representations of

consciousness” (Hernan, 2007: 250), but it does capture the phenomena relevant for this particular research. Let us, then, define these concepts.¹ When direct discourse is used, speech or thought is quoted verbatim. This mode is normally quite evident in *Dubliners*, since the quoted discourse is usually accompanied by a paragraph break and a dash² or, less frequently, presented in italics (with or without a paragraph break). Moreover, there are *optional* identifying expressions or “attributive signs” (Bal, 2009: 162), which, in regular cases, consist of names or pronouns that identify the utterer or thinker and reporting verbs, such as *to say* or *to think*. In turn, indirect discourse entails no strict quotation; there is an adaptation, whose most conspicuous effect is the insertion of *mandatory* attributive signs. Furthermore, verb tenses and deictics are altered to reflect the changed *origo*. I may illustrate these considerations: “*He said that there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe*” (89; emphasis added). The first italicised segment corresponds to the attributive signs; the second to an altered verb, the narrator substituting the past tense for the original present tense; and the third to an altered deictic, the singular third-person pronoun replacing the first-person

¹ When it comes to thought, alternative terms are often employed, but a close scrutiny reveals that they are not separate modes (despite the fact that the use of direct discourse for thought and the use of free indirect discourse for speech are both relatively rare). For instance, “interior monologue” is, in essence, nothing more than direct discourse applied to (normally, but not necessarily, somewhat chaotic) thoughts and usually stripped of overt identifying markers, including typographical signs such as dashes, quotations marks or italics. Likewise, it may be argued that “[w]hat Hugh Kenner has called the ‘Uncle Charles Principle’ in Joyce’s writing is Joyce’s *style indirect libre*, his tendency to make diction and syntax, even in third person narration, bend to the thoughts of his characters” (Quigley, 2015: 113), although Kenner’s term has also been used to refer to a mode “in which specific thoughts are not implied” (Attridge, 1999: 29, n. 3). Dorrit Cohn offers different concepts: “psycho-narration”, which she defines as “the narrator’s discourse about a character’s consciousness”; “quoted monologue”, which is “a character’s mental discourse”; and “narrated monologue”, which corresponds to “a character’s mental discourse in the guise of the narrator’s discourse” (1983: 14). It must be noted that Cohn’s terminology, which I sporadically use, may partially obscure the specifically discursive nature of the process of appropriation (and transformation) at the root of the phenomena that she identifies. Quoted monologue basically corresponds to direct discourse used in connection with thought, and narrated monologue to indirect or free indirect discourse (or a combination of both). The most useful term coined by Cohn is “psycho-narration”, since it describes a procedure not reliant on the annexation of the verbal part of thought (but it can, in certain cases, be loosely connected with “narrated discourse”, which I briefly discuss below).

² It is not unprecedented, however, that editions following other typographical conventions opt for inverted commas (see, for instance, Joyce, 2001). Bronwen Thomas argues that “James Joyce’s preference for dashes rather than quotation marks means that the demarcation between characters’ voices, and between characters and the narrator, becomes less rigid” (2007: 81-2), linking it to “other stylistic developments, notably the stream-of-consciousness technique” (*ibidem*: 81). In my estimation, the use of dashes does not carry such an implication. If anything, it probably induces, in stories that employ direct discourse profusely, a more aggressive layout, occasioning pages continually “scratched” by these marks.

equivalent. Finally, free indirect discourse is comparable to indirect discourse, insofar as both involve changes in the verb tenses and the deictics³ of the original figural discourse.⁴ Yet, the former completely omits explicit attributive signs, as this excerpt from “Eveline” shows: “She would not be treated as her mother had been” (28).

Despite the simplicity – or, as some may say, simplism – of these concepts, the narrational modes that they describe are sometimes not entirely straightforward. The occasional difficulties in identifying free indirect discourse with full certainty will be considered in detail later, but we may now consider an awkward case of direct discourse in “An Encounter”: “The man smiled as before and said that when he was our age he had lots of sweethearts. Every boy, he said, *has* a little sweetheart” (18; emphasis added). Whereas the first sentence contains an utterance delivered in indirect discourse, the second might be in direct discourse, despite the absence of a dash or italics:⁵ it possesses attributive signs (“he said”), but the speech has suffered no alteration, as evinced by the preservation of the present-tense form of *to have*.⁶ Some instances of indirect discourse can also be rather ambiguous: “Types and degrees of paraphrase and summary vary widely” in this mode, as Brian McHale notes, ranging “from instances that appear quite faithful to the original utterance (though of course, no such ‘original’ exists), through instances that preserve only its content or gist to those that minimally

³ While alterations in person deixis are mandatory in cases of free indirect discourse, those in time and place deixis are optional. Moreover, the original verb tenses can be preserved when general or perennial truths (or what the characters hold as such) are at stake: “everyone knows everyone else’s business” (53). In terms of outward configuration, direct and free indirect discourse are here indistinguishable.

⁴ One may notice that, because I propose that indirect and free indirect discourse transform pre-existent figural utterances or thoughts, there is an “equivalence relation” between these modes and (the “original” discourse presented in) direct discourse. Brian McHale, however, contends that “the supposedly ‘derived’ utterances are not versions of anything, but themselves the originals in that they give as much as the reader will ever learn of ‘what was really said’” (*apud* Murphy, 2007: 28). Yet, I side with Terence Patrick Murphy on this matter: “the equivalence relation does exist; its reality, however, is evident less in McHale’s non-existent originals than in the facility with which particular readers utilise examples of monitored speech to devise directly quoted speech paraphrases of their own” (*ibidem*). We do not have access to the originals – and, in a sense, they do not exist –, but, when reading, we are asked to accept the literary convention that figural discourse has a previous existence.

⁵ Interestingly, some editions of *Dubliners* present the sentence more conventionally, introducing it with a paragraph break and a dash (see, for instance, Joyce, 2000: 16). This lends credence to the notion that direct discourse is here at play. Anyway, direct and indirect discourse are both justifiable classifications.

⁶ Moreover, the proper way to classify the transcription of a newspaper article (“A Painful Case”) or of a poem (“A Little Cloud”, for instance) is not entirely clear. I would hazard that they fall under the banner of direct discourse, since they are, at heart, word-for-word presentations of discourse produced by an intra-diegetic figure (even if that figure is not a full-fledged character or even mentioned at all).

acknowledge that a speech event took place” (2009, 435). Let us consider an example from “Eveline”: “he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again” (31). It is hard to tell whether there is an actual quotation of figural speech in this passage. Instead, this appears to be an instance of what Genette called “narratized discourse” (1983: 170). In other words, the excerpt quoted, treating speech as an action, has a narrative dimension, not specifically tied to the conveyance of the verbal facet of figural discourse. I focus, however, on instances of indirect discourse that clearly entail an appropriation of words, spoken or thought. These complications notwithstanding, the concepts listed are apt for an analysis of the incorporation of figural discourse.

Yet, one more caveat should be made: “The quoted voice does not have the same compositional standing as the quoting voice” (Tjupa, 2009: 126). Even beyond this viewpoint, the latter dominates the former, at least in *Dubliners* (and in Joyce’s prose fiction as a whole). Still, some critics have argued that the stories promote their interweavement or confusion. Alternately, it has been proposed that the figural discourse is independent of, and even prevalent over, the narratorial discourse, an idea reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism: “The language used by characters in the novel, how they speak, is verbally and semantically autonomous” (1990: 315).⁷ In many regards, we may see a Bakhtinian dialogism in the stories, and it is likely that Bakhtin himself would have considered them dialogic. It might have been such a discursive plurality that prompted Eugene Jolas to state that Joyce’s works, including this collection, “represent a gigantic architecture of a subjective-objective cosmos” (1990: 138). I would caution, however, that to regard figural discourse as an autonomous voice, despite helpfully highlighting its foreign provenance, downplays the transformational role of the narrators, who do not endeavour to present it as self-governing. I may here invoke Gerald Doherty: “In *Dubliners*, to what extent do narrators permit characters to narrate their own stories, or report on their own actions? The answer is simple: wielding despotic and imperious power, narrators in general rob the characters of their capacity to

⁷ I see no intrinsic superiority in dialogism over monologism, as Bakhtin does. Consider his appraisal of Tolstoy: “A second autonomous voice (alongside the author’s voice) does not appear in Tolstoy’s world [...]. Tolstoy’s discourse and his monologically naive point of view permeate everywhere, into all corners of the world and the soul, subjugating everything to its unity” (1999: 56). For a suitable and succinct survey on dialogism, see Shepherd, 2009.

tell articulate stories” (2004: 119). The narrators, indeed, actively seek to turn the discourse of the characters into an inextricable part of their own.⁸

The voices of the narrators are present even in direct discourse, a technique that seemingly implies no narratorial intervention: the very designation of this mode suggests that the characters’ words leap *directly* onto the page, that there is an absence of monitoring or mediation. By opposition, the two other modes are, on occasion, tellingly referred to as “monitored speech”. However, direct discourse is also “monitored”, as it does not entail an immediate transcription of figural speech and thought: “The most ‘mimetic’ form is obviously that [...] where the narrator *pretends* literally to give the floor to his character” (Genette, 1983: 172; emphasis added), the italicised verb being the operative term here. We must see beyond this pretence. Although direct discourse does not actively “transform” uttered and inner speech, it is, in reality, also transformative, by virtue of its co(n)text, of its interaction with the remaining textual elements. To tackle the matter head-on, let us focus on the longest stretch of “purely” figural – or purportedly narrator-free – discourse⁹ in the collection:

—Farrington! What is the meaning of this? Why have I always to complain of you? May I ask you why you haven’t made a copy of that contract between Bodley and Kirwan? I told you it must be ready by four o’clock.

—But Mr Shelley said, sir, ...

—*Mr Shelley said, sir.* Kindly attend to what I say and not to what *Mr Shelley says, sir*. You have always some excuse or another for shirking work. Let me tell you that if the contract is not copied before this evening I’ll lay the matter before Mr Crosbie ... Do you hear me now?

—Yes, sir.

⁸ For that reason, the hypothesis that proposes that there is a “*reported narrator*, also called the *character-narrator*”, who “functions as the source for the modalities of all reported utterances, whether they be made in direct, indirect or free indirect speech” (Patron, 2011: 318), is not very productive.

⁹ This passage is the longest in the sense that there are 169 consecutive words uttered by the characters. If one considers instead the number of instances of direct discourse completely bereft of clear narratorial language (including attributive signs), it merely presents six successive individual instances of direct discourse, which, albeit quite generous by the standards of the collection, falls short of the eight instances to be found near the end of the story, in an exchange between Farrington and Tom, one of his sons (81). Yet, these eight instances only add up to 50 words, paling in comparison to the thrice as large amount previously mentioned. “The Dead” boasts the most consecutive unadorned instances of direct discourse, but they add up solely to nine and actually total one word fewer, comprising just 49 words. (I quote this exchange in this chapter. See note 14.) The version of “The Sisters” published in *The Irish Homestead*, however, bests all, offering 13 sequent instances, which come to 177 words.

—Do you hear me now? Ay and another little matter! I might as well be talking to the wall as talking to you. Understand once for all that you get a half an hour for your lunch and not an hour and a half. How many courses do you want, I'd like to know? ... Do you mind me, now?
—Yes, sir. (71)

This is the initial part of the first conversation between Farrington, the protagonist of “Counterparts”, and Mr Alleyne, his employer. What may strike one at first is the convenience afforded by direct discourse in the presentation of vast amounts of figural discourse, which might otherwise prove rather unwieldy. Attributive signs absent, no line of dialogue is explicitly assigned to its utterer. The narrator, then, appears to be completely missing in action or at least downgraded to a merely scribal role.

Considering the *outward* absence of the narrator, the dialogue is remarkably expressive on its own. It conveys the one-sidedness of the confrontation efficiently and effortlessly: if Farrington barely squeezes in nine words, averaging three terms per utterance, Mr Alleyne nearly monopolises the “conversation”, his logorrhoea numbering 156 words. Although he addresses no fewer than seven questions to his underling, Mr Alleyne is evidently not interested in what he has to say, at least if it be anything other than arrant agreement: if he “might as well be talking to the wall”, it is by design, insofar as he forces his worker into laconically deferent replies. Farrington does make one earnest attempt to answer his superior but is silenced and rebuffed forthwith: his own paltry words, now rendered in italics, are used against him, Mr Alleyne regurgitating and ridiculing his unfinished sentence. In addition to creating an instance of direct discourse within direct discourse – which could be the greatest testament to the unmatched effortlessness in the presentation of figural speech granted by this mode –, the reprisal of the sentence is connected with a formal (and thematic) concern that lies at the heart of “Counterparts” and the collection *in toto*: repetition. In effect, the passage quoted above is aswarm with reiterations. It is obvious that, for example, Mr Alleyne’s complaintive rhetorical questions are humorously humdrum: “Do you hear me now?”; “Do you mind me, now?” Moreover, the honorific “sir” marks the end of each of Farrington’s three replies, and his last two are completely identical, functioning almost as punctuation or breathing pauses for Mr Alleyne’s quasi-monologue, as predictably recurring notes in an comically contrapuntal composition.

Although all this is quite clear, the passage abjures any and every word that the characters have not uttered. One may be tempted to argue that the narrator, suppressing his own voice and bowing down to the characters – either by choice or by force –, does not play a creative or transformational role in the presentation of the dialogue. Yet, I would contend that he speaks with his articulate silence, taking full advantage of the bare contrast between Farrington’s short and sheepish whispers and Mr Alleyne’s wordy and withering shouts. Bereft of explicit narratorial remarks, the passage is part of a visual game, as the large blocks of text containing Mr Alleyne’s speech dwarf, grind and crush the thin strips containing Farrington’s. Some may still maintain that the narrator merely preserves characteristics already ingenerate in the figural speech. In a sense, that is correct, but it is precisely in that refusal to ostensibly intervene that his voice is to be found. His “absence” is not fortuitous; it is deliberate. This is particularly clear in the amusingly long ellipsis after Mr Alleyne’s repeated question: “Do you hear me now?” Farrington probably nods compliantly during the pause indicated by the ellipsis, and a more traditional narrator would have furnished that information in an unambiguous fashion. The text here begs for the overt intervention of the narrator, but he brazenly declines. He prefers to amuse himself and us by toying with literary conventions behind the curtain.

It is a desire to maintain and exploit the extant dictional, rhythmical, structural and visual properties of the characters’ speech that drives the narrator to completely conserve it. Otherwise inclined, he could easily alter the original dynamic of a dialogue. He would not even need to abandon direct discourse, as “Grace” reveals:

—It doesn’t pain you now? asked Mr M’Coy.

Mr M’Coy had been at one time a tenor of some reputation. His wife, who had been a soprano, still taught young children to play the piano at low terms. His line of life had not been the shortest distance between two points and for short periods he had been driven to live by his wits. He had been a clerk in the Midland Railway, a canvasser for advertisements for *The Irish Times* and for *The Freeman’s Journal*, a town traveller for a coal firm on commission, a private enquiry agent, a clerk in the office of the Sub-Sheriff and he had recently become secretary to the City Coroner. His new office made him professionally interested in Mr Kernan’s case.

—Pain? Not much, answered Mr Kernan. (136)

This extract demonstrates the narrator's readiness to unceremoniously interject his own independent observations between a question and an answer rendered in direct discourse, thereby disjoining them. By virtue of its irrelevancy, the interspersed segment is all the ruder: the information might have been placed in a less disruptive position without much ado or much difficulty. Unencumbered by the lengthy interruption, the dialogue would flow much more pleasantly, but the narrator, far from fawning, seeks specifically to mangle the original rhythm, aggressively leaving an interrogation dangling answerless. Without changing a single word from the figural discourse, he has transformed and absorbed it, making it an integral part of his own.

Thus, the industrious narrators of *Dubliners* find surreptitious ways of exploiting the pliability of a mode that supposedly implies their absence or non-interference. The power that they manage to exercise over "undefiled" figural discourse is even clearer in "A Little Cloud", whose narrator, when presenting the initial part of the first exchange between Little Chandler (or Tommy, if you prefer) and Ignatius Gallaher at Corless's, decides to totally erase the speech of the former, the weakest of the two interlocutors:

—Hallo, Tommy, old hero, here you are! What is it to be? What will you have? I'm taking whisky: better stuff than we get across the water. Soda? Lithia? No mineral? I'm the same. Spoils the flavour. ... Here, *garçon*, bring us two halves of malt whisky, like a good fellow. ... Well, and how have you been pulling along since I saw you last? Dear God, how old we're getting! Do you see any signs of aging in me—eh, what? A little grey and thin on the top—what?

Ignatius Gallaher took off his hat and displayed a large closely cropped head. (60-1)

The dashes and ellipses, as well as Gallaher's questions, indicate a pause in his speech, gaps that a more orthodox narrator would have filled with Little Chandler's and the waiter's speech. Other omissions are not even graphically marked: we assume, for instance, that Little Chandler returns Gallaher's greeting, but all traces of his salute have been removed. Since "Gallaher's goal is monologic performance" (Kershner, 1989: 97), one could suggest that he takes over the narration. The narrator, however, neither loses control nor takes sides. In fact, he roundly ridicules both characters. Making Gallaher's speech take on the typographical configuration of a monologue – although it is, at least technically, part of a dialogue with Little Chandler –, he lampoons one's braggadocio and the other's bashfulness. In addition, he creates a simultaneously derisive and

distressing tone and forges formal aberrations by breaking conventions. Revelling in the expressive power of an omission, he shows that silence sometimes speaks more sonorously than speech.

Little Chandler's utterances are suppressed again a few paragraphs later, but such omissions prove exceedingly rare in *Dubliners*. Only the homodiegetic narrator of "An Encounter" offers another potential occurrence when Father Butler urges Leo Dillon to recite "the four pages of Roman History": "This page or this page? This page? Now, Dillon, up! *Hardly had the day* Go on! What day? *Hardly had the day dawned* Have you studied it? What have you there in your pocket?" (12). It is conceivable that a stuttering Dillon hesitantly begins his declamation, but it is not reproduced. Close on the heels of this peculiar use of direct discourse, another follows:

—What is this rubbish? he said. *The Apache Chief!* Is this what you read instead of studying your Roman History? Let me not find any more of this wretched stuff in this college. The man who wrote it, I suppose, was some wretched scribbler that writes these things for a drink. I'm surprised at boys like you, educated, reading such stuff. I could understand it if you were national school boys. Now, Dillon, I advise you strongly, get at your work or

This rebuke during the sober hours of school paled much of the glory of the Wild West for me and the confused puffy face of Leo Dillon awakened one of my consciences. (12-3)

The dangling disjunctive conjunction that concludes this instance of direct discourse is not a threat left unfinished to be all the more effective – it does not mean *or else* –; it is rather the result of the narrator's truncation of the priest's harangue, suggesting that it, albeit already longish, goes on *ad nauseum*. Amusingly losing interest in it mid-speech and mid-sentence, he prefers to move on without delay and without ceremony to the presentation of his own cogitations.

One may contest that I have cherry-picked the gaudiest usances of direct discourse, and I must admit that the passages selected thus far tend to be exceptional, for one reason or another. Nevertheless, one of the fascinating aspects of the use of this commonplace technique in *Dubliners* as a whole is the tirelessly inventive applications that the narrators find for it. As a result, its employment varies wildly throughout the collection – not only in *intent* but also in sheer *frequency*. We need only glance at the statistics collected by Marlena G. Corcoran to realise the vast gulf between the single occurrence of the mode in "A Painful Case" and the 284 occurrences in "The Dead"

(1998: 167). The difference is striking and revealing, but this comparison becomes fairer once we take into account the length of the stories: after all, “The Dead” is, by quite some distance, the longest story in *Dubliners*. Corcoran only presents absolute values,¹⁰ but, if we divide the figures that she provides by the number of pages of each story, we can easily use her data to reach rough relative numbers and list the stories in ascending order of the rate of recurrence of direct discourse: “A Painful Case” has an average of 0.1 instances of this mode per page (a single occurrence in 10 pages);¹¹ “Clay” approximately 0.57 (four in seven); “The Boarding House” just over 0.6 (five in eight); “After The Race” an even one (six occurrences in as many pages); “An Encounter” roughly 1.67 (15 in nine); “Eveline” exactly 1.8 (nine in five); “Araby” circa 2.34 (14 in six); “A Mother” precisely three (39 in 13); “Counterparts” just under 3.6 (43 in 12); “Two Gallants” in the region of 4.5 (50 in 11); “The Sisters” nearly 4.9 (44 in nine); “A Little Cloud” around 5.14 (72 in 14); “The Dead” almost 6.5 (284 in 44); “Grace” exactly 9 (207 in 23); and, finally, “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” about 9.8 (167 in 17).¹²

This crude overview is sufficient to understand that each narrator applies direct discourse as it pleases him and that, although the three largest stories in the collection possess the highest absolute and relative rates of recurrence, “The Dead” and “Grace” are, in comparative terms, more frugal than “Ivy Day”. This story, albeit falling behind in absolute numbers, leads the pack in relative values. The distance only increases if one adds to the tally indicated by Corcoran three other uses of the mode: the transcription of the electoral card read (aloud or silently) by Mr O’Connor, of the poem composed and recited by Mr Hynes and of the shoeboy’s salute to this would-be poet (set off with

¹⁰ She does not need to consider relative values, as her aim is to expose the lopsided distribution of direct discourse according to the gender of the characters, highlighting that, in most of the stories, male characters are much more often quoted verbatim than female figures. Unfortunately, she does not go as far as one would like – she could have examined, for instance, the impact of those choices on our perception of the narrator as potentially biased or the implications of the use of direct discourse solely for female characters in “The Boarding House”.

¹¹ If we consider the transcription of the newspaper article read by Mr Duffy an instance of direct discourse – in any case, it is not “pure” narratorial discourse –, the story would still have an average of only 0.2 instances per page. Interestingly, the article itself contains two instances of embedded direct discourse, thereby equalling the two instances in the main narratorial discourse.

¹² The number of instances follows Corcoran’s count, and the number of pages is in accordance with the “Centennial Edition” published by Penguin, as the footnotes in the Norton Critical Edition would skewer the data. The last page of a given story is rounded to a full page.

italics rather than rendered after a paragraph break and a dash). This brings the total number of occurrences to 170, the average now being exactly 10 instances per page. If we want to be more precise still, we can consider the quantity or *proportion* of figural discourse presented in direct discourse relative to the remaining text – the pure(r) narratorial discourse, if you will. Counting every single instance of direct discourse in “Ivy Day”, we see that, of the total 5 219 words, as many as 3 076 – around 58.94 percent or three-fifths of the narration – correspond to figural utterances quoted verbatim. Only the remaining 2 143 words are not presented under the auspices of direct discourse.¹³ At the low end of the spectrum is “After the Race”, which is 2 234 words long but only allots 18 meagre words, barely over 0.8 percent of the full text, to oral figural discourse, whereas the narratorial discourse amounts to 2 217 words. “The Boarding House” follows closely, consigning to direct discourse merely 40 words out of 2 787, that is, 1.44 percent. Even if one includes dialogue evoked by the characters and italicised mental discourse, the needle barely moves past the two-percent mark.

Therefore, “Ivy Day” can serve as the example *par excellence* for those inclined to contest that figural speech retains an independent status in relation to the narratorial discourse: the former here overtakes the latter, at least as far as quantitative terms are concerned. Virtually all the (voluminous) dialogue is conveyed in direct discourse, causing the ostensible eclipsing of non-figural discourse, as if this mode represented for this recumbent narrator the path of least resistance, a way to allow him to take a back seat. Thus, the prose, despite the differences in the idiolects of the characters, is often stubbornly monochromatic and even monotonous:

Mr O'Connor tore a strip off the card and, lighting it, lit his cigarette. As he did so the flame lit up a leaf of dark glossy ivy in the lapel of his coat. The old man watched him attentively and then, taking up the piece of cardboard again, began to fan the fire slowly while his companion smoked.

—Ah, yes, he said, continuing, it's hard to know what way to bring up children. Now who'd think he'd turn out like that! I sent him to the Christian Brothers and I done what I could for him, and there he goes boosing about. I tried to make him someway decent.

¹³ I have counted contractions (“won’t”), hyphenated expressions (“how-do-you-do”), interjections (“sh”) and years presented in algorismic symbols (“1891”) as single words. Onomatopoeias, albeit rendered in italics, and attributive signs were considered part of the “clean” narratorial discourse.

He replaced the cardboard wearily.

—Only I’m an old man now I’d change his tune for him. I’d take the stick to his back and beat him while I could stand over him—as I done many a time before. The mother, you know, she cocks him up with this and that

—That’s what ruins children, said Mr O’Connor.

—To be sure it is, said the old man. And little thanks you get for it, only impudence. He takes the upper hand of me whenever he sees I’ve a sup taken. What’s the world coming to when sons speaks that way to their father?

—What age is he? said Mr O’Connor.

—Nineteen, said the old man.

—Why don’t you put him to something?

—Sure, amn’t I never done at the drunken bowsey ever since he left school? *I won’t keep you*, I says. *You must get a job for yourself*. But, sure, it’s worse whenever he gets a job; he drinks it all. (100-1)

As plain as it is, this exchange between old Jack and Mr O’Connor is representative of the treatment of dialogue in the story. Figural discourse is clearly dominant: only two paragraphs are completely devoid of the characters’ speech, one of which is merely five words long, and they do not violently break the flow of the conversation; in fact, they snugly fill lulls in the dialogue and provide descriptive and narrative observations. There are attributive signs, but they are fairly unexceptional: the blindest of reporting verbs, “said”, is used five times in exclusivity, and the noun phrases identifying the speakers, despite some superficial variety – the narrator resorts to a pronoun (“he”), a name (“Mr O’Connor”), a nickname (“old Jack”) and even an epithet (“old man”) –, are surely not a paragon of panache. If we find a silent eloquence in “Counterparts”, an uncouth interruption in “Grace” and a brusque truncation in “A Little Cloud”, here the narrator, as if denuded of verve and vigour, seems not to do much at all.

Yet, a subtle hint of his low-key tongue-in-cheek approach surfaces when he provides the single additional qualification to his ordinary attributive signs: “continuing”. This is a provocation, since he has not transcribed the initial part of the conversation that the two men, after a brief interruption, are now resuming. In fact, he has not even referred to it previously, and it is in this disguisedly sassy fashion that he makes the reader aware of the unnarrated tête-à-tête. The relative unimportance of the

dialogue is, paradoxically, also important. Because the narrator quotes every line of dialogue, it may not be immediately evident that he makes a point to include trivial talk:

—Any bottles?

—What bottles? said the old man.

—Won't you let us drink them first? said Mr Henchy.

—I was told to ask for the bottles.

—Come back tomorrow, said the old man.

—Here, boy! said Mr Henchy, will you run over to O'Farrell's and ask him to lend us a corkscrew—for Mr Henchy, say. Tell him we won't keep it a minute. Leave the basket there.

(109)

The reader, who is by now very accustomed to the constant use of direct discourse, may take this transcription for granted, as though the narrator were required to quote this conversation simply because he quotes all the others. Still, he is not an automaton programmed to approach each utterance in the same predetermined manner. Every time he is faced with speech, he has to make deliberate choices: he has to decide whether to present it and, if he does, whether to resort to direct discourse or to another mode.

As if to prove this, he indulges in a final act of quiet provocation, concluding his narration with the sole statement not rendered in direct discourse in the whole story (except for those embedded in the characters' dialogue):

—What do you think of that, Crofton? cried Mr Henchy. Isn't that fine? What?

Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing. (116)

Were there any doubts regarding the narrator's ability to treat dialogue differently, they are now completely dispelled. Following 170 instances of direct discourse, this belated single instance of indirect discourse has an estranging effect: by (ab)using the former to such an extent that we do not expect it to be replaced and by withholding the latter for so long that we cannot anticipate its introduction, he defamiliarises both. After his tireless literal transcription of every word uttered by the characters – even the eleven quatrains of Mr Hynes' pedestrian poem are fastidiously quoted in full –, his refusal to use direct discourse for the very last line that he conveys (which is, to twist the sardonic knife further, uttered by the least talkative of the canvassers) cannot help but be ironical, just as his supposed silence and his putative patience are. As Jennifer Levine correctly notes, “this is a way of putting a frame around Crofton's words” (2012: 284). Yet, we

must also discern the frame put around the words of the other characters: even when quoting the characters accurately, the narrator uses their speech for his own purposes, baring and bemocking its banality. When he finally raises the curtain, we realise that he deliberately burdens the prose with tedious attributive signs: they derive from his understated parodistic inclinations, not from an ungainly gesture towards deferential discretion. The last sentence, then, strikes me as self-congratulatory, as if he praises his own craft: nodding ever so slightly in the direction of the process of discursive (mis)appropriation, transformation and exploitation behind his use of figural speech, he reveals, with a wisp of a wink, that the “very fine piece of writing” is not the poet(aster)’s unconvincing stab at poetry; it is none other than his story.

This desire to surreptitiously criticise the characters and niftily maul literary decorum explains the transcription of repetitive commonplace conversations even in stories whose narrators are more eclectic in their approach to the conveyance of speech and thought and more selective in their use of direct discourse:

—O, I never said such a thing!

—O, but you did!

—O, but I didn’t!

—Didn’t she say that?

—She did. I heard her.

—O, there’s a ... fib! (25-6)

This crude exchange, which comes near the end of “Araby”, occurs between anonymous and unimportant characters, interrupting the protagonist’s plans. Zack Bowen states that “presumably the boy’s epiphany of the absurdity in going to the fair and in his aggrandizement of Mangan’s sister is brought home by the shallowness of the conversation in the confessional-gift stand at the fair” (1981-2: 107). Be that as it may, one should notice that the narrator, revitalising an old-hat mode, frustratingly breaks the flow of the main action at a pivotal moment to magnify the suspense. Therefore, this dialogue, however trite, is a significant structural, rhythmical and tonal component – and that it is hackneyed is the icing on the cake, the narrator transmuting its “ugly banality” (Kershner, 1989: 60) into a comic routine unintended by the characters. The same happens in “Two Gallants” with Lenehan’s repetitious prodding of Corley and in

“Grace” with the reply given thrice by Mr Kernan when questioned about his condition, which emerges as a diverting ostinato: “‘Sha, ’s nothing” (129, 130, 131).¹⁴

Sometimes, this stealthily damning use of direct discourse is achieved with a single utterance, as attested by Polly Mooney’s melodramatic cries in “The Boarding House”: “O Bob! Bob! What am I to do? what am I to do at all?” (54). This is extremely redundant from a semantic perspective: the exclamatives repeat each other with only the slightest of variations, as do the two interrogatives that follow.¹⁵ Her over-dramatisation established, the narrator, confident that he has made his point, renders her next utterance in indirect discourse: “She would put an end to herself, she said” (54). Judiciously employed in this story, direct discourse is mainly reserved for isolated utterances, and the reader has to wait until the end to encounter three consecutive lines of dialogue:

—Polly! Polly!

—Yes, mamma?

—Come down, dear. Mr Doran wants to speak to you. (56)

Despite their shortness, these lines could be described, by the standards of the story, as an embarrassment of riches. Elsewhere in the text, only once is more than one line

¹⁴ The most arresting example, however, can be seen in “The Dead”:

Seeing that all were ready to start she shepherded them to the door, where goodnight was said:

—Well, goodnight, Aunt Kate, and thanks for the pleasant evening.

—Goodnight, Gabriel. Goodnight, Gretta!

—Goodnight, Aunt Kate, and thanks ever so much. Goodnight, Aunt Julia.

—O, goodnight, Gretta, I didn’t see you.

—Goodnight, Mr D’Arcy. Goodnight, Miss O’Callaghan.

—Goodnight, Miss Morkan.

—Goodnight, again.

—Goodnight, all. Safe home.

—Goodnight. Goodnight. (184-5)

What is particularly interesting is that the first paragraph quoted could serve as a paraphrase of what comes next, which makes the full transcription redundant: instead of reducing the repetitions, the narrator cheekily “contributes a ‘good-night’ himself”, which “runs counter to the economy principle several critics have seen at work in *Dubliners*” (Van de Kamp, 2004: 151). As a result, this passage is clearly designed for comic purposes. It has also been suggested that “what the narrator is doing at this point is lulling the reader into a false sense of security. For what of consequence could possibly transpire after so many goodnights?” (Murphy, 2007: 33).

¹⁵ By resorting to indirect discourse or free indirect discourse, the narrator could have easily avoided such reiterations, but they are purposefully preserved to offer the reader a taste of Polly’s propensity for exaggeration. Furthermore, her over-emphatic tenor, which has a comic effect, adds stylistic diversity to the narration. There is also a more practical matter influencing the narrator’s deployment of direct discourse: Mr Doran later refers again to Polly’s interrogation, and it is probably easier for the reader to identify the original utterance if it is presented in direct discourse.

provided at a time, in the inaugural use of direct discourse, that is, in the transcription of three lines from “I’m a Naughty Girl”, a song performed by Polly: “*I’m a naughty girl. / You needn’t sham: / You know I am*” (51). The suggestiveness of the song offers a comment on the narrative, leading us to apply the lyrics to Polly herself.¹⁶ As she sings regularly on “Sunday nights” (50), we can safely assume that her repertoire goes beyond “I’m a Naughty Girl”. The narrator deems this specific song, unlike others, sufficiently relevant to merit quoting, betraying that he tacitly encourages certain readings of the text: figural discourse can tell us as much about a narrator as about a character.

The wish to mirror the constrictions felt by Mr Doran in the arrangement of the narratorial discourse may also explain the use of direct discourse in this story. The three lines of the song seem to establish a parallel with the last three lines of dialogue: first come the three lines that lure Mr Doran in; then, the three lines that close the trap and seal his fate. Direct discourse is here used for its potential as not only a conveyor of figural discourse but also – and especially – a typographical and structural device. Moreover, Mrs Mooney literally speaks for him in the last statement delivered in direct discourse, filling his silence with her own voice: “Come down, dear. Mr Doran wants to speak to you”. She instructs Polly to descend the stairs, so as to hear the coerced marriage proposal that Mr Doran is about to make – yet another instance of Mrs Mooney’s putting her words in his mouth. As the exchange between mother and daughter comes at the end of the story, they are the last characters to be heard. Furthermore, none of Mr Doran’s utterances is rendered in direct discourse, although some of Polly’s and Mrs Mooney’s are: the narrator ensures that Mr Doran is never “heard”, emphasising his powerlessness. As if being voiceless were not sufficient, he is made a vessel for the utterances, real or imagined, of other characters, which he (re)plays in his head: “he heard in his excited imagination old Mr Leonard calling out in his rasping voice *Send Mr Doran here, please*” (53). Besides Polly’s aforementioned grammatical faux pas, he also quotes her mentally in yet another occasion, her words replacing his own: “He echoed her phrase, applying it to himself: *What am I to do?*” (55). This is a peculiar use of direct discourse, as the narrator does not quote the

¹⁶ For a complete transcription of the lyrics and a (very) brief comment on the relevance of the song within the story, see Bowen, 1974: 16-7.

characters that have spoken, but rather quotes Mr Doran's own quotation of those characters, playing with his inability to make himself heard.

Indirect discourse is also used to humorous effect: "His instinct *urged* him to remain free, not to marry. Once you are married you are done for, it *said*" (54); "The instinct of the celibate *warned* him to hold back. But the sin was there; even his sense of honour *told* him that reparation must be made for such a sin" (55; emphasis added). Here, the attributive signs do not explicitly refer to a speaker, but rather to the unspeaking forces at war within Mr Doran, which, evidently, do not produce actual discourse. It is as if his words are taken from him yet again. This theft is quite a narratorial masterstroke, because it experiments with the compulsory nature of explicit attribution in indirect discourse, unlike its two brethren. The narrator also uses this mode in a manner that allows the preservation of many, if not most, discursive nuances, as attested by the aggressive threats hurled by Mrs Mooney's son, Jack, at a man who "had made a rather free allusion to Polly": "Jack kept shouting at him that if any fellow tried that sort of a game on with *his* sister he'd bloody well put his teeth down his throat, so he would" (56; emphasis in the original). It is obvious that the peculiarities of Jack Mooney's minacious utterance have been preserved, owing to the use of italics (to convey a speech inflection) and the choice of words, most of which are, one can assume, precisely those used by the character. Particularly conspicuous among these are, evidently, the colloquial expressions and vulgarisms, such as "bloody", the use of which produces a noticeable change in register. There are, however, less eye-catching expressions derived from Jack's discourse, and we need not look any further than this passage to identify one: the apparently transparent "so", employed in a way that confuses its adverbial and conjunctive functions. According to T. P. Dolan, it operates in such cases as a "clincher" (2004: 4), which is typical of Hiberno-English.¹⁷

Therefore, the narrator experiments not only with figural speech but also with the linguistic limits and rules of indirect discourse itself: so extensive is the preservation of figural quirks that the last clause of the sentence quoted above moves closer to free

¹⁷ Another quirk resulting from Hiberno-English is the preservation of an interrogative structure in questions in indirect discourse, the auxiliary verb preceding the subject of the subordinate clause. "Two Gallants" provides an example: "His friends asked him had he seen Corley" (47). The same applies to mental discourse, as "A Mother" demonstrates: "she wondered had she mistaken the hour" (119).

indirect discourse. It could even be said that it lies in a grey area between the two modes, since it bears the imprint of both. Let us analyse an analogous passage: “He comforted her feebly, telling her not to cry, that it would be all right, never fear” (54). Indirect discourse is initially adopted, as evinced by the overt assignment of speech to Mr Doran (thanks to the verb *to tell*), but the narrator moves closer to the superior syntactical limberness characteristic of free indirect discourse.¹⁸ Were the rules of indirect discourse followed strictly, “never fear” would be replaced by *never to fear*, following the pattern established earlier by “not to cry”. This approximation to free indirect discourse is completed five paragraphs later: “When he was dressed he went over to her to comfort her. It would be all right, never fear” (55). The passage is now broken into two sentences, the second making use of free indirect discourse. There is a noticeable change in diction, emphasised by the explicit break. The verb *to comfort* returns, but appears in the first sentence, which does not bear the mark of this mode, and the verb *to tell*, which functions more clearly as an attributive sign, is elided.

The narrator of “The Boarding House”, therefore, cherishes the flexibility afforded by free indirect discourse. Were he a more conventional narrator, I would say that he valued it mainly for the exclusion of any overt assignment of discourse to a character, allowing the creation of a more fluid discourse, instead of one continuously cluttered with attributive signs. Nevertheless, he uses it precisely to justify several untidy repetitions (and does not bother to justify others):

Breakfast was over in the boarding house and the table of the breakfast room was covered with *plates on which lay yellow streaks of eggs with morsels of bacon fat and bacon rind*. Mrs Mooney sat in the straw armchair and watched the servant, Mary, remove *the breakfast things*. (52; emphasis added).

Thrice is “breakfast” used, twice in the pure and once in the uncontaminated narratorial discourse. Furthermore, the two italicised phrases refer to roughly the same items, but in the first the narrator cultivates his uncontaminated diction, whereas in the second he incorporates Mrs Mooney’s phraseology, revealing the oscillating distance separating

¹⁸ The elasticity of the sentence resembles the freedom of speech. In fact, “never fear” seems to have suffered no narratorial intervention other than the selection of that thought. It is interesting to note that the same clause appears in a passage presented in direct discourse in “Ivy Day”: “O, he’ll pay you. *Never fear*, he said” (102; emphasis added).

them. Thus, he adopts free indirect discourse to slickly establish a discursive contrast: in the transition from one sentence to the next, a precise presentation gives way to an imprecise impression. Discussing the use of this mode in *Dubliners*, Doherty suggests that “an autocratic narrator [...] reproduces the characters’ ideolects, less by way of emphatic identification than as parodic mimicry that marks *his* fastidious distance from them” (2004: 122-3). Feeding on the characters’ thoughts and shackling them to his own discourse, the narrator of “The Boarding House” is a prime example.

The narration of a character’s thought, however, does not always entail free indirect discourse or, for that matter, other means of discursive appropriation: “He drank, plundered the till, ran headlong into debt” (49). This sentence vaguely suggests Mrs Mooney’s exasperation at her husband’s behaviour, partly a result of the gradation regarding the ever-worsening and ever-widening implications of his actions. However, the economical elegance of the speech is the narrator’s. One may instantly note the omission of the subject from the last two clauses and the absence of a conjunction, turning the sentence into an asyndeton, which is unusual in Joyce’s stories (in the manuscript, “and” joins the last two clauses). A closer analysis also reveals an intricately constructed rhythm. The number of the words and syllables of the three coordinate clauses successively escalates so as to create, if I may put it mathematically, an arithmetic progression with common difference of one and two, respectively: the first clause has two words and two syllables; the second three and four; and the third four and six. As a result, the sentence is progressively heavier, as if Mrs Mooney herself is levelling charges at Mr Mooney, but not a single word appears to emanate from her consciousness: the narrator owes her no words, and this is as graceful a sentence as we can find in the story. Therefore, there is no use of free indirect discourse here; to assert otherwise would probably denote an unproductively relaxed definition of the technique, making us ignore the daedal discursive differentiations designed by the narrator.

The opening of Mr Doran’s section reveals the way in which the narrator crafts intricate formal arrangements with his selective and innovatory use of free indirect discourse, making the prose alternate between adulterated and unadulterated segments:

Mr Doran was very anxious indeed this Sunday morning. He had made two attempts to shave but his hand had been so unsteady that he had been obliged to desist. Three days’ reddish beard

fringed his jaws and every two or three minutes a mist gathered on his glasses so that he had to take them off and polish them with his pocket-handkerchief. The recollection of his confession of the night before was a cause of acute pain to him; the priest had drawn out every ridiculous detail of the affair and in the end had so magnified his sin that he was almost thankful at being afforded a loophole of reparation. The harm was done. What could he do now but marry her or run away? (53)

There is, in this passage, a shift from discourse uninflected by a character's way of thinking to discourse that is modulated. This shift is located in the transition from the fourth to the fifth (or from the penultimate to the antepenultimate) sentence transcribed, which, from a semantical standpoint, is fairly obvious, given that the last three sentences express Mr Doran's fatalism: the account of (fictional) facts gives way to markedly subjective assumptions. Yet, the narrator, ever hungry for stylistic variety, accentuates the shift with dictional changes. One need only consider the inconstant length of the sentences: whereas the first four are increasingly longer, the fifth is very short, breaking the pattern and underlining the adoption of free indirect discourse. To be more precise, the first sentence is nine words long, the second 21 words long, the third 33 words long (if one counts "pocket-handkerchief" as a single word) and the fourth 49 words long. By contrast, the fifth sentence is merely four words long, abruptly curtailing the development of the pattern.

Moreover, all of these four words are monosyllabic and of Anglo-Saxon origin, whereas the four previous sentences have a relatively generous amount of Latinate words, of which the narrator is fond: phrases such as "obliged to desist" possess a formality that is entirely his, not the character's. One may also add that, excepting "marry",¹⁹ the last sentence exclusively comprises words deriving from locutions existent in Old English and that only the aforementioned verb and "away" are disyllabic. This is not to say that there can be no Latinate or polysyllabic words in passages in which free indirect discourse is employed. My point is merely that the narrator establishes perceptible dictional differences between his unadulterated style and the style inflected by characters, allowing us to untangle them, to some extent. These modifications in the narratorial discourse allow the reader to infer that the narrator has

¹⁹ This verb ultimately comes from *maritare* (Latin), via *marier* (Old French) and *marien* (Middle English). (See, for instance, Harper, n.d.)

suddenly forced into his discourse linguistic modulations that exploit Mr Doran's mind. Owing to the relative "fidelity" of the last three sentences, they can very easily be converted into what one could presume to be the original verbal configuration of Mr Doran's thoughts. All that is required is to change the verb tense from past simple to present simple. Nevertheless, the same does not apply to the third sentence, in which the narratorial mediation is transformative to such a degree that it is basically impossible for the reader to arrive at the original *configuration* of Mr Doran's thought, although its *content* or import, in general terms, is preserved.²⁰ In this sentence, therefore, psychonarration, instead of free indirect discourse, is the name of the game. Yet, the reader ultimately gets a clear sense of what the character thinks and feels in either mode.

The rationale for the fluctuation between both is the narrator's exhibitionistic inclinations (which become more palpable in the last section). Weaving in and out of free indirect discourse, he devises a showcase for his bravura discursive control. Besides, this mode facilitates a flexible incorporation of figural speech, and he – unlike the narrator of "Ivy Day", who relishes the strictness of direct discourse – craves for a greater discursive plasticity, traceable even in grammatically orthodox sentences: "What could he do now but marry her or run away? He could not brazen it out: the affair would be sure to be talked of. His employer would be certain to hear of it. Dublin is such a small city—everyone knows everyone else's business" (53). The entire extract not only provides Mr Doran's perspective but also employs the verbal characteristics of his thought, although no explicit attribution is made. Thus, when he questions himself, the narration provides an interrogative. There is also a careless redundancy ("would be sure", "would be certain"). (The repetition of "everyone" is emphatic rather than merely redundant.) Likewise, various other modulations can be traced back to him: a rather informal expression ("brazen it out"), an intensifier that would require the addition of a

²⁰ Indeed, the return to the source is marked by a variable degree of difficulty: at times it is fairly easy to reconstruct what a character said or thought – for instance, we can confidently determine that Mr Doran said "never fear" –; oftener, however, it becomes a more imprecise and speculative exercise. The ease in reconstituting a character's original words is directly proportional to the distance separating the narrator's transformative discourse from the character's initial discourse or, to put it differently, inversely proportional to the degree to which the narratorial discourse bears signs of figural discourse.

subordinate clause in formal speech (“such”) and a generalisation that emanates from Mr Doran’s anxiety and frustration (“everyone knows everyone else’s business”).

Passages like these may at first sight seem to “exist in a borderland between narrator and character” (Hansen, 2012: 203), but a close study reveals that the final result is always the former’s. Still, the use of this mode is favourable, in the main, to a rather inconspicuous, if strongly ironical, appropriation of the voices of the characters by that of the narrator. Taking into account the *manner* in, and the *extent* to, which it is employed, it is not surprising to find this incorporation at its most subtle when the technique is used more sparingly, that is, when it is restricted to phrases or clauses inserted in larger sentences that still bear the formality of the narratorial discourse. In these more restricted cases, the discursive promiscuity is made clear by the preservation of grammaticality and formality, on the one hand, and the relative informality of certain portions of the narratorial discourse, on the other hand. Involving neither the ungrammaticality of “never fear” nor the comparatively prolonged assimilation of a character’s voice to be found in Mr Doran’s reflections on his options and the absence of privacy in Dublin, they are highly localised and more intricately interwoven instances of this mode, sometimes embedding no more than a word in the comparatively polished discourse crafted by the narrator and offering a morsel of the verbal dimension of a character’s thought.

The sentence introducing Jack Mooney may illustrate this point: “Jack Mooney, the Madam’s son, who was clerk to a commission agent in Fleet Street, had the reputation of being a hard case” (50). The initial noun phrase is followed by two consecutive noun phrases in apposition (one being a subordinate clause), which is rather infrequent and certainly not informal, but the sentence concludes with a colloquialism – “a hard case” –, which could be the very expression used by people commenting on this character. There appears to be an approximation to the diction of an unspecified group of people, which modulates the narration but causes no syntactical perturbation: only a change of register occurs. (This is a salient example of the litheness of narrator, given that there is an appropriation of the verbal idiosyncrasies of an indefinite collective entity rather than individualised characters.) Cunningly exploiting the characters’

thought, the narrator swiftly introduces enriching stylistic variations and creates a comical tone. For that reason, he affirms that Mrs Mooney's boarders are "very chummy with one another", instead of intimate or friendly, and that Jack Mooney tells "a good one", instead of a joke or jest, and is "handy with the mits", instead of adept at boxing or "an amateur boxer" (50), to use a phrase present in late proofs from 1910. This alteration, registered in the comprehensive footnotes of the Norton Critical Edition, reveals a Joyce attentive to such fine-grained matters and committed to experimenting with dictional alterations to indicate the absorption of figural discourse.

One particularity of the employment of free indirect discourse in "The Boarding House" – whose narration focuses alternately on three characters, namely Mrs Mooney, Mr Doran and Polly²¹ – stems from the narrator's extended incorporation into his discourse of the verbal specificities of the thought processes of the first two, which is impressive, considering the length of the story (as we have seen, only "Araby", "Eveline", "After the Race" and "Clay" manage to be shorter, but not by much). In the other stories, the narrators generally elect to appropriate in a sustained fashion the mental discourse of only one character. Although many of my observations on the use of this mode in "The Boarding House" are applicable to the remaining stories narrated by heterodiegetic narrators (except "Ivy Day", which eschews it altogether), this dual prolonged assimilation puts the achievements of the narrator of this story into perspective: he has not only to assert his own voice but also to modulate it in two different ways. He faces this considerable challenge with gusto and offers us a virtuoso demonstration of narratorial agility. Rewarding our attention to dictional subtleties, he establishes subtle differences between Mrs Mooney's and Mr Doran's section. Therefore, the narratorial discourse is less homogeneous than one may at first have assumed: Mrs Mooney has a very precise goal and never wavers, and the narrator creates a more focused and unidirectional speech for her section; in Mr Doran's section,

²¹ We could say that these three characters rotate as "focalisers", but "focalisation" has proven a rather difficult concept to employ in a standardised fashion, despite the best efforts of many a narratologist. Therefore, I only use "focaliser" as a handy term to refer to the character whose perception the narrator privileges at a given moment in his narration. For a discussion of several of the narratological dilemmas regarding focalisation, see Klauk, 2011, Niederhoff, 2009, and Hühn, 2009, as well as the comprehensive bibliography referenced in those sources.

on the contrary, the narratorial discourse is somewhat more irregular and reticent, since his emotional state is quite dissimilar to hers.

Mrs Mooney is the first character whose idiosyncrasies are incorporated. In fact, they are already present in the opening of the story: “Mrs Mooney was a butcher’s daughter. She was a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself: a determined woman” (49). Whereas the first sentence does not possess traits that allow the reader to consider that the narrator has taken possession of the verbal quirks of her thoughts, the following sentence does, since it offers the character’s self-evaluation. This is a bold narratorial move, given that, at this juncture, neither the narrator’s voice nor hers has been firmly established for the reader, who is naturally still unfamiliar with either of them.²² As a result, the description that the narrator offers may seem at first to be his opinion, before it becomes clear that it ironically expresses her view of herself: “She stood up and surveyed herself in the pier-glass. The decisive expression of her great florid face satisfied her” (53). Thus, the narrator finds in free indirect discourse a resource for stealthily sending the characters up: “Free indirect discourse allows him to *seem* to accept the self-image a character has created for himself, while pointing to the insufficiency of that image. The characteristic irony of the stories originates in this masquerade” (Lawrence, 1981: 23; emphasis in the original). Once more, the voices of the characters are turned into a vessel for that of the narrator.

At times, the inflections associated with a character can be even more subtle, as attests the choice of determiners: “She went to the priests and got a separation from him with care of *the* children” (49; emphasis added). Because this is the first mention of her offspring, preferring “the children” to *her children* – that is, using the definite article

²² Terence Patrick Murphy and Kelly S. Walsh address this issue:

the modulation from the narrative voice to the character viewpoint typically requires a few sentences or even a few paragraphs to accomplish. This is because it is first necessary for the reader to be able to register what Hough calls the “standard [that is] set or implied by the work itself,” before the distinctive accent of the character can be introduced. (2012: 73)

As a result, it should not be surprising that the other narrators usually take longer to assimilate figural discursive traits into their narration: in “Two Gallants”, for example, it takes the narrator eight pages (although the story is not even a dozen pages long) to let the voice of the protagonist, Lenehan, transpire in a sustained manner in the narratorial discourse proper; prior to that, Lenehan’s thoughts were offered in a discourse fairly untainted by the character’s peculiarities. In this sense, the opening of “The Boarding House” is only equaled by those of “A Little Cloud” and “Clay”. We may add “The Dead” to the list if, as Hugh Kenner, we consider that the adverb “literally”, used in the opening sentence of the story, “reflects not what the narrator would say (who is he?) but what Lily would say” (1978: 28).

rather than the feminine possessive determiner – implies a somewhat greater degree of familiarity and, therefore, “proximity”, ironic though it proves to be.²³ Similarly, in Mr Doran’s section, his family is referred to as “the family” (54), revealing that the narrator absorbs, at that moment, his thought. We may contemplate another example: “One night he went for his wife with *the* cleaver *and* she had to sleep in a neighbour’s house” (49; emphasis added). The use of the definite determiner implies a previous acquaintance of the item that it precedes, although it has not been mentioned before. It emerges, then, from a discursive assimilation.²⁴ One should also note the rather vague use of the copulative conjunction, instead of a more specific conjunction or adverb, which would explicitly address the causality between the two actions described and create a more intricate syntax, especially if a subordinate clause were used, since subordination is, in general, more complex and formal than coordination.

One may uncover other surreptitious irregularities in “The Boarding House”: “She had married her father’s foreman and opened a butcher’s shop near Spring Gardens. But as soon as his father-in-law was dead Mr Mooney began to go to the devil” (49). The colloquialism that ends the second sentence can be fairly easily pinned down as a character-echoing inflection, but there is a more elusive one at the beginning of the same sentence, specifically the disjunctive conjunction, which introduces a contrast between the two sentences, although the observant reader may notice that there is no explicit semantic opposition between them. There is here a hidden gap, a silence that thrusts us into an act of reconstruction, even if we are not conscious of it;

²³ Hans Walter Gabler notes that “the priest” is the phrase in “all previous editions” (that is, all the editions that precede the Norton Critical Edition), as opposed to the plural version that he proposes:

in terms of making interpretative sense of *Dubliners*, this one-letter restoration of what Joyce wrote in the manuscript amounts to no less than a re-focussing of Mrs Mooney’s character, as well as of the society in which she lives. By the evidence of Joyce’s plural form, she turns for support not just to her parish priest and confessor, but as it were to the whole priesthood corporately personifying the church that dominates her world. (2006: xxxviii)

While Gabler’s reading seems sound to me, one should note that, in terms of diction, the emendation does not produce a significant change: both the singular and the plural presuppose free indirect discourse. In the case of “priest”, the privileging of the definite article would indicate that this clergyman is not just *a* priest, but *the* priest of Mrs Mooney’s parish or church, with whom she is already acquainted. Otherwise, a feminine possessive determiner or an indefinite article would have been more customary, given that the priest has not been mentioned before.

²⁴ This is made all the clearer if we consult the manuscript version of this story: “he attacked his wife with a cleaver”. Joyce clearly changed the diction of the sentence by replacing *to attack* with the colloquial phrasal verb *to go for* and the definite determiner with the indefinite.

otherwise, the disjunction does not make sense. The reader has to rescue the missing link between the sentences: Mrs Mooney's (unfulfilled) expectations regarding her husband. Therefore, the disjunctive conjunction, whose omission would have solved the anomalousness, reflects her inner speech: there is a fissure in the discourse, because the details of Mrs Mooney's life history that she takes for granted remain implicit, as if the narrator himself had chosen to also take them for granted. This and other careless transitions are tied to the unevenness of a character's flow of thoughts. The coarseness of figural thought, then, feeds the narrator's simultaneously sloppy and sophisticated prose: Joyce can be "purposely clumsy" (McCann, 2014: x). What is lost in discursive regularity and correctness is gained in stylistic variation and in the concentration of a character's frustration into a few select words, proving that linguistic slovenliness can be linguistic exactitude.

Owing to such (im)precision, Mr Doran is at first not mentioned by name. Mrs Mooney only sees him as "one of the young men" (51); it is only when she has to evaluate his specific personality and behaviour that she sets him apart from the remaining boarders. The narrator could have easily intervened and provided the name straightaway, but he opts instead to make the reader aware of the particularities of a character's thoughts and to use free indirect discourse as a pretext for making the narration more peculiar. Another peculiar modulation connected with figural names involves differing forms of address: "[Mr Doran] was a serious young man, not rakish or loudvoiced like the others. If it had been Mr Sheridan or Mr Meade or Bantam Lyons her task would have been much harder" (53). Although Mrs Mooney is not particularly fond of any of the three boarders that she contrasts unflatteringly with Mr Doran, the first two are granted an honorific, whereas the third is not, suggesting, perhaps, that she has a stronger dislike for him. The narratorial assimilation of such (unexplained) quirks encourages the reader to construct an interpretation, even if no more than a guess, albeit an educated one, seems possible, given that none of the boarders is mentioned again. Going beyond "The Boarding House", however, one can find a "Mr Lyons" (note the

honorific) in “Ivy Day”.²⁵ These two Lyons are probably one and the same: Lyons is a young man in both stories, at least. Interestingly, Mr Lyons is constantly associated with drinking. His very first line of dialogue provides an example: “Where did the booze come from?” (111). This would clarify Mrs Mooney’s special depreciation of Lyons, since she had previously been married to an abusive inveterate alcoholic. Whether one accepts this explanation or not, it should be clear that the absence of the title is a result of a discursive modulation. Thus, one narrator, appropriating a character’s verbal quirks, unceremoniously robs Lyons of the honorific and another narrator restores it.

Other incorporations result in the unassigned presentation of figural assumptions and judgements, as in Mrs Mooney’s considerations about Mr Doran’s affair with Polly:

To begin with she had all the weight of social opinion on her side: she was an outraged mother. She had allowed him to live beneath her roof, assuming that he was a man of honour, and he had *simply* abused her hospitality. [...] He had *simply* taken advantage of Polly’s youth and inexperience: *that was evident*. (52; emphasis added).

Mrs Mooney here builds her case against Mr Doran and rehearses the arguments in her head. The narrator, therefore, does not tell us that Mrs Mooney is “outraged”: we are well aware of this, because he has clearly, if tacitly, established – through speech modulations – that the assertions do not reflect his views, but rather Mrs Mooney’s. Expressions as “simply” (used twice) or “that was evident” pinpoint what the characters take for granted – or, in this case, what Mrs Mooney wishes Mr Doran to take for granted. “Of course”, an expression used four times (twice apiece in Mrs Mooney’s section and Mr Doran’s), also conveys the assumptions of the characters, what they regard as natural or expectable: “Polly, of course, flirted with the young men” (51).²⁶ Were “of course” excised, the sentence could pass as an independent narratorial observation. Furthermore, some of the remarks derived from her mind implicitly contradict observations previously provided from an “unsullied” narratorial perspective. This is particularly evident in Mrs Mooney’s exaggerations about her daughter, whom she paints as a helpless victim at the merciless hands of an experienced and

²⁵ Bantam Lyons also appears in *Ulysses*. For a list of the characters that appear or are referred to in both *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*, see Joyce, 2014: 197-201.

²⁶ Similar uses of this expression can be found in “Eveline”, “After the Race”, “A Little Cloud”, “Counterparts”, “Clay”, “A Mother” and “The Dead”.

unscrupulous womaniser, although the narrator informs us that Polly is conscious of her actions and even of her mother's unspoken compliance. Allowing passages in free indirect discourse to contradict "detached" passages and neglecting to pass (overt) judgement on those incongruities, the narrator finds yet another way to make the incorporation of figural discourse a means to develop an ironical posture.

Discursive arrogations also arise in the form of modulations that affect the syntax and punctuation. For instance, when Mrs Mooney, looking at the clock, is surprised to realise that it is later than she thought it would be, the narrator is rather laconic: "Nearly the half-hour!" (53). He does not explicitly refer to Mrs Mooney's surprise, the clock or even the act of seeing, but, having told us before that she had at one point "glanced instinctively at the little gilt clock" (52), he now trusts us to understand that she has looked at it again. The discursive modulations, which alert the reader to the narratorial proximity to the character, enable him to concentrate information to this impressive degree – and to ostentate his considerable dexterity once more. The exclamation point conveys Mrs Mooney's astonishment, and the exclamative as a whole *appears* to come directly from her consciousness: one can assume that the narratorial "intervention" is minimal, not going beyond the selection and transcription of her thought, since the ungrammaticality is preserved. As a result, this sentence could easily be converted into direct discourse: one need only add quotation marks or, as Joyce would have preferred, a dash or italics, although suitable attributive signs could also be provided for good measure.

In a moment of rising excitement (for a character), the figural modulations on the narratorial discourse tend to be more easily identifiable, since graphic marks such as exclamation points readily give them away, but, as Mrs Mooney is a composed and assured character, her surprised reaction to the advanced hour is the only instance of an exclamative and of ungrammaticality in the section devoted to her. However, Mr Doran, whom she has painted into a corner, is "very anxious indeed". Therefore, three ungrammatical exclamatives²⁷ can be found in his section, two of which are consecutive: "All his long years of service gone for nothing! All his industry and

²⁷ I have here excluded Polly's exclamations that Mr Doran recalls, because they, although embedded in a larger passage that bears the mark of free indirect discourse, are rendered in direct discourse.

diligence thrown away!” (54). Shorter and devoid of verbs, the third exclamation – “And her thoughtfulness!” (55) – is more fragmentary still, indicating a complete assimilation of the verbal dimension of Mr Doran’s mental flux. In addition to the exclamatives, the use of ellipses to convey hesitancy is equally revelatory of the incorporation of Mr Doran’s thoughts into the narratorial discourse, suggesting indecision: “Perhaps they could be happy together.....” (55). This is one of three instances of the use of ellipses in this manner – and all appear in Mr Doran’s section. There are other quirks exclusive to this section. The following passage reveals three of them: “She *was* a little vulgar; sometimes she said *I seen* and *If I had’ve known*. But what would grammar matter if he really loved her?” (54; emphasis in the original). The first is the use of italics (in “*was*”) to convey an inflection in unspoken discourse; the second is Mr Doran’s aforementioned penchant for mentally quoting others using direct discourse, a trait not shared by Mrs Mooney nor Polly (but shared by some characters in other stories, such as Eveline and Maria); and the third is the use of an interrogative.²⁸

Despite the “concessions” to figural discourse in Mrs Mooney’s and Mr Doran’s section, the narrator never relinquishes control. This is made particularly clear in the last part of the story, Polly’s section, which begins after a section break, underscoring its separation from the remaining text. Although the narrator conveys her thoughts, he does not use them as a discursive source for the modulation of his diction. As a result, psycho-narration prevails: “She waited on patiently, almost cheerfully, without alarm, her memories gradually giving place to hopes and visions of the future” (56). The diction is clearly his, Polly’s quirks being absent.²⁹ Anca Dobrinescu, writing about *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, argues that “Joyce preserves psycho-narration as a means of access to the indeterminate, not yet crystallised states of mind of the character” (2014: 209). It is tempting to extend this remark to “The Boarding House”, but it seems to me that the use of psycho-narration is also – and perhaps principally – instigated by the narrator’s rejoicing in his own voice, displaying it in all its

²⁸ There is one interrogative in Mrs Mooney’s section, but it is framed almost as direct discourse: “The question was: What reparation would he make?” (52). Moreover, it does not convey indecision, unlike the exclamatives used in Mr Doran’s section.

²⁹ Interestingly, although free indirect discourse is not used to convey Polly’s thoughts and feelings, it is employed in “Eveline” to convey those of another nineteen-year-old girl, the homonymous protagonist.

unadulterated glory and bringing to a close a dazzling demonstration of linguistic skill: after having assimilated (and transformed) Mrs Mooney's voice and then Mr Doran's, perhaps the challenge remaining was to assimilate none. Once more, estrangement is at work: the narrator belatedly foregrounds psycho-narration to disrupt the established style of the story, just as the narrator of "Ivy Day" does with the last-second introduction of indirect discourse. Hence, what is conventional on its own is made unconventional on account of its context. Polly's section, then, demonstrates that the narrator is not the characters' slave. By focusing on their thoughts, he does not do them a favour; he exploits them.

In his own peculiar way, the narrator of "Ivy Day" does much the same, even though his approach seems, in most respects, irreconcilable with that of "The Boarding House": if one focuses on integral and undeviating quotations of oral discourse, the other pursues mainly partial and adulterant transcriptions of mental discourse. These are quasi-monomaniacal narrators, who, having placed their bets on a given approach, seem to go all in. Others, however, are not nearly as obsessed and show no clear preference for a particular way of conveying figural discourse: they are delightfully erratic, zigzagging from one technique to another. This often creates an outwardly more balanced narratorial discourse, but a close inspection still unearths captivatingly weird uses of each of the modes. In this respect, there is likely no better example than "A Mother", the most unpredictable story when it comes to the presentation of the speech and thought of the characters, given that its narrator is determined to defamiliarise and, therefore, refresh the three modes under consideration:

She [...] asked him was it true. Yes, it was true.

—But, of course, that doesn't alter the contract, she said. The contract was for four concerts.

Mr Holohan seemed to be in a hurry; he advised her to speak to Mr Fitzpatrick. (120)

In this brief passage, there is a question in indirect discourse, an answer in free indirect discourse and a riposte in direct discourse, before the narrator returns to indirect discourse. Creating a strangely buoyant prose, this sort of alternance is common in this story, as is the occasional reservation of direct discourse for protagonist, Mrs Kearney.

In fact, the narrator often presents the initial and the final part of a conversation mainly in indirect discourse and inserts in between a single instance of direct discourse

for the conveyance of one of Mrs Kearney's pronouncements, an approach quite unlike the numbing uniformity cultivated by the narrator of "Ivy Day". The sole instance of inner speech in direct discourse in this story³⁰ may be explained as the result of the pursuance of this pattern:

Mr Fitzpatrick [...] said that he would bring the matter before the Committee. Mrs Kearney's anger began to flutter in her cheek and she had all she could do to keep from asking:

—And who is the *cometty*, pray?

But she knew that it would not be ladylike to do that: so she was silent. (121)

Just as easily as he uses direct discourse, he may avoid it entirely, as attests the longest sustained use of free indirect discourse for uttered speech in the collection:

Mrs Kearney said that the Committee had treated her scandalously. She had spared neither trouble nor expense and this was how she was repaid. They thought they had only a girl to deal with and that, therefore, they could ride roughshod over her. But she would show them their mistake. They wouldn't have dared to have treated her like that if she had been a man. But she would see that her daughter got her rights: she wouldn't be fooled. If they didn't pay her to the last farthing she would make Dublin ring. Of course she was sorry for the sake of the *artistes*. But what else could she do? She appealed to the second tenor who said he thought she had not been well treated. (126-7)

The first and the last sentence reproduced are in indirect discourse, serving as brackets containing the 101 words rendered in free indirect discourse. Robbing Mrs Kearney's impassioned remonstrance of its original configuration, such a prolonged use of this mode results in a derisory deturpation of her diction.

This comically condescending treatment of figural discourse is not a quality exclusive to the employment of free indirect discourse. Indeed, indirect and even direct discourse are used to the same effect:

³⁰ Awarded a dash and a paragraph break, this is one of only a few instances in which thought receives the full royal treatment of direct discourse in the collection. Another can be found in "Counterparts":

As he walked on he preconsidered the terms in which he would narrate the incident to the boys: —So, I just looked at him—coolly, you know—and looked at her. Then I looked back at him again—taking my time, you know. *I don't think that that's a fair question to put to me*, says I.

Nosey Flynn was sitting up in his usual corner of Davy Byrne's and, when he heard the story, he stood Farrington a half-one, saying it was as smart a thing as ever he heard. (76-7)

As in "A Mother", this unusual treatment of thought can be related to structural concerns, given that the narrator uses figural discourse to establish sharp breaks between sections. In effect, a temporal and spatial dislocation follows immediately: before this instance of direct discourse, Farrington ambulates in the streets; immediately afterwards, he is already in a pub.

Mrs Kearney *asked* him when was her daughter going to be paid. Mr Holohan *said* that [1] Mr Fitzpatrick had charge of that. Mrs Kearney *said* that [2] she didn't know anything about Mr Fitzpatrick. [3] Her daughter had signed a *contract* for eight guineas and she would have to be paid. Mr Holohan *said* that it wasn't his *business*.

—Why isn't it your *business*? *asked* Mrs Kearney. Didn't you yourself bring her the *contract*? Anyway, if it's not your *business* it's my *business* and I mean to see to it.

— [1] You'd better speak to Mr Fitzpatrick, *said* Mr Holohan distantly.

— [2] I don't know anything about Mr Fitzpatrick, *repeated* Mrs Kearney. [3] I have my *contract*, and I intend to see that it is carried out. (125; emphasis added)

In this passage, only the fourth sentence is in free indirect discourse, but the narrator sustains the scathing stance of the story in the first three sentences and the fifth by employing indirect discourse, which allows him to play with the droning triteness of the repetitious attributive signs: “said” is used three times in the four sentences that bear the mark of this mode. This droll he-said-she-said structure seems more appropriate for the spreading of gossip than for a respectable (and respectful) first-hand account. The narrator eventually switches to direct discourse, but the mockery of the characters’ dialogue does not end there: he still has a few tricks up his sleeve. Indeed, most of the utterances rendered verbatim mirror previous utterances rendered in (free) indirect discourse (I have matched the reverberating utterances with corresponding numbers between square brackets).³¹ In an elaborate exhibition of artful adroitness, the narrator amuses himself by conveying the same basic utterances in two different modes, all the while making the prose drown in repetitions: “contract” emerges thrice, and “business” four times. When providing attributive signs, he invariably uses the names of the characters, instead of replacing them with suitable pronouns: “Mr Holohan” emerges thrice, and “Mrs Kearney” four times. Insistently impish, he even retains the stock reporting verbs used in the passages in indirect discourse (“said” and “asked”), and his sole deviation from them only serves to further assert the repetitive nature of the dialogue: “repeated”. All of this occurs in a passage than runs merely 132 words and that is fully centred on figural discourse.

³¹ Moreover, other segments parallel each other: “when was her daughter going to be paid”; “she would have to be paid”. Mrs Kearney’s pronouncements regarding her determination to see the contract upheld provide another good example: “I mean to see to it”; “I intend to see that it is carried out”. The most risible example, however, is the following: “it wasn’t his business”; “isn’t it your business”; “it’s not your business”; “it’s my business”.

Shortly after, Mrs Kearney usurps her rival's speech to caricature him: "You must speak to the secretary. It's not my business. I'm a great fellow fol-the-diddle-I-do" (127). This is precisely what the narrator of "A Mother" does – only much more subtly and intricately –, and the same applies to the narrators of remaining stories. Even if one grants that "[d]ialogical relationships *may* exist between narrator and characters, where the speech of the characters [...] has sufficient force and integrity to compete with the narration" (Kershner, 1989: 19; emphasis added), the commanding narrators that grace *Dubliners* are more interested in robbing figural language of its autonomy, in forcing it into larger joyously oppressive patterns, in giving it new and varied vestures, in exploiting it for their own gain and amusement – and ours. Ironical impersonators, they grapple with alien voices to fertilise their narrations, letting loose their proclivity for parody, crafting typographical oddities, revitalising timeworn techniques and subverting familiar conventions. They feed and feast on figural discourse to satiate their hunger for linguistic and narrational diversity. They are not parrots; they are chameleons that hide in plain sight. Said anew, figural discourse ceases to belong to its original owners and is given opportune and opportunistic uses that they could never have imagined, let alone intended. In this uneven duel of voices, the characters, as ill-matched opponents, are always on the losing side. There is a hierarchy that they cannot overturn, an overarching style and form that is not theirs and that they cannot elude, since the imperial narrators of the collection, discreet though they may be, do not rule with a velvet glove, but with an iron hand. Theirs is an arresting aesthetic of appropriation, adaptation and abrasion.

Chapter Two – The Selection and Presentation of Diegetic Content

Figural discourse is but part of the wide-ranging diegetic content³² manipulated by the narrators. This management of diegetic material can be divided into two stages: selection – because there are more diegetic elements than those that surface in the narration proper³³ – and presentation – because the material, once selected, can be narrated in different ways, depending on a wide array of choices regarding diction, structure, focalisation and the treatment of time and space, to mention only a few. One may notice that this understanding of narration rests on the potentially fallacious notion that the existence of diegetic elements precedes the act of narrating.³⁴ It is fairly unassuming, if perhaps not entirely uncontentious, to assert that, in the “real” world, narration and narrative (and diegesis) emerge simultaneously as soon as the empirical author puts pen to paper, but the matter, once considered from a narratological perspective, becomes more intricate. My aim, therefore, is not to start, let alone settle, a chicken-or-egg debate regarding narration and narrative; it is merely to provide a working hypothesis sufficiently sturdy for a formal analysis of *Dubliners*. Following this line of enquiry, it is profitable, in my opinion, to consider that, in the collection, the diegetic information is extant prior to the moment of narration (for a variable and not necessarily determinable amount of time) and to venture concurrently – but not

³² We may also call this diegetic content “happenings—including existents such as characters, places, circumstances, etc., within the storyworld” (Hühn, 2009: 1). As employed here, “diegesis” means the sum of happenings, both narrated (directly or obliquely) and “unnarrated”. It is, then, a broader concept than Genette’s “diégèse”, which he defines as “l’univers spatio-temporel du récit” (1972: 48, n. 1). In my use of the term, it denotes not only that universe but also everything that exists in it.

³³ When discussing René Audet, H. Porter Abbott refers to the “virtuality [...] of a story to come” (2009: 317). We can borrow the term and apply it to the unnarrated diegetic material, the content that was not selected by the narrator and that does not truly exist – but exists *virtually*. Aware of this virtual material, the reader assumes, for instance, that Mrs Mooney’s unmentioned mother *exists* in some way.

³⁴ Although the assumption that the diegetic material predates the narration is seldom openly expressed, it seems to be vaguely implied in examinations of narrativity, tellability and, to a lesser degree, eventfulness (for instance, see, respectively, Abbott, Baroni, and Hühn, all 2009). Yet, Derek Attridge, discussing *Dubliners*, broaches the matter explicitly: “Joyce uses the traditional techniques of realist narrative to create the illusion of an already existing world, and to release information about this world with a calculated miserliness that has readers eager for each morsel they are allotted” (2000: 41).

contradictorily – that the narrative as such does not exist before it is narrated. It is the narration that creates the (or *a*) narrative out of the unassembled diegetic elements, since the narrative is not equal to the sum total of these elements. On the contrary, it comes into being precisely through the selection and organisation of the diegetic data.³⁵

Another answer to this dilemma would be to regard the narrator as an entity that creates from scratch every single diegetic element, which has the obvious advantage of allowing every textual element to be ascribed to him. By contrast, the identification of the entity responsible for the formation of diegetic material loses its straightforwardness in case we regard the narrator as the composer of *just* the narrative and the narration, thereby stripping him of the role of creator of the diegesis itself. The diegesis, provided that we do not think of it as a figment of the narrator's imagination, exists independently of him, and we must account for its beingness somehow. On the face of it, this may seem a quibble that would only trouble those invested in rarefied theorising, but it has a distinct practical impact. Let us illustrate this discussion with a concrete example from the collection: if we hold that the narrator of "Eveline" is the *maker* of the diegesis *ex nihilo*, we can easily argue that he names the protagonist's wooer "Frank" to alert us to his possible lack of *frankness* – as Hugh Kenner says, "Frank may have been less than Frank" (1971: 38) –; if we do not regard the narrator as the creator, he can only, at best, exacerbate the already present, if latent, irony behind the name of the character, since it would be a diegetic datum whose existence lay beyond his control. In that case, a different figure has to be responsible for naming Frank, not to mention

³⁵ In the main, my model hews fairly close to that proposed by Wolf Schmid, who distinguishes between four narrational levels, namely *Geschehen*, *Geschichte*, *Erzählung* and *Präsentation der Erzählung*. Michael Scheffel provides a handy summary of Schmid's system:

According to this framework, *Geschehen* is the "implied raw material" for selections whose output constitutes the *Geschichte*, understood in the sense of Tomaševskij's *fabula* and Todorov's *histoire* (selected happenings in *ordo naturalis*). *Erzählung*, on the other hand, is "the result of the 'composition' that arranges the happenings in an *ordo artificialis*," and *Präsentation der Erzählung* means the representation of the *Geschichte* [*sic*] in a particular medium (the result, that is, of the *elocution* [...]). Schmid treats the *Präsentation der Erzählung* as a pheno-level, the only level accessible to empirical observation, whereas the three other levels are geno-levels that can be arrived at only by means of abstraction. (2009: 290)

Therefore, *Geschehen* roughly corresponds to the diegesis; *Geschichte* to what I call selection; *Erzählung* to the possibly (but not necessarily) reordered diegetic data selected erstwhile; and *Präsentation der Erzählung* to the discursive configuration of those selected and (re)ordered data. Whereas the *Erzählung* and the *Präsentation der Erzählung* are successive stages in Schmid's plan, I prefer to see the former as a feature of the latter. In other words, I treat the ordering of data as part of the overall presentation.

creating him in the first place, as well as every other diegetic element. Ultimately, this figure is the author,³⁶ who creates both the diegesis and a narrator to explore it.

We should also bear in mind that, providing the narrator created everything, it would not make sense to speak of omniscience or lack of it: if he created all, he would be expected to know all; if he did not create all, then the reader's doubts regarding his knowledge can be justifiable. The same applies to the concept of narratorial (un)reliability. Moreover, one still has to consider homodiegetic narrators, such as those that narrate the first three stories in the collection, namely "The Sisters", "An Encounter" and "Araby". They are – or at least present themselves as – part of the diegesis and narrate events that they witness and in which they participate. Were one to claim that all narrators conjured themselves and their narratives out of thin air, one could not deem these (supposedly) homodiegetic narrators (truly) homodiegetic: they could not be within the diegesis *sensu stricto*, since it would be no more than a product of their minds (if we may call them so). As a consequence, they would be heterodiegetic narrators in disguise. This somewhat convoluted and evasive approach creates more problems than it solves, which is not, as Occam's razor warns us, the best path for enquiry. Besides, ruling out the possibility of homodiegetic and non-omniscient narrators would unduly impoverish the range of narratorial configurations. In brief, our fairly reasonable assumption – provided that we see the narrators, homo- and heterodiegetic alike, as reliable – is that, within the fictional world of the stories, what is narrated is true(-ish), because we accept the convention that the events narrated have an existence independent of the narration, although, in a sense, they do not.

To justify my preference for an understanding of the diegesis as independent of the narrator, I may also adduce the use of past simple as the standard verb tense for the narration of events that happen in the *narrative present* – what has been baptised "now time" (Murphy, 2012: 77) and what Gérard Genette named simply "now" (1983: 38) or, to quote the original term, "maintenant" (1972: 81) – in this collection in particular and

³⁶ Some may invoke the "implied author", which can be defined as "an entity positioned between the real author and the fictive narrator in the communication structure of narrative works" or, alternatively, "a reader-generated construct" (Schmid, 2009: 161), but that does not solve our dilemma: it merely postpones the problem, since the implied author is also created (consciously or unconsciously) by the author or the reader, depending on our definition of this concept.

in many, if not most, narrative works.³⁷ Thanks to the popularity of this tense, we do not bat an eye when reading the following sentence, taken from the opening paragraph of “The Sisters”: “Now I knew they were true” (3). Were conventional grammatical usage in force, the temporal deictic – the adverb *now* – would require the employment of a verb in the present tense (to be more specific, present simple, given that *to know* is here a stative verb), but, if that tense were actually employed, the “immediacy” felt by the reader could have been lessened, ironically. As it stands, the sentence is unlikely to stick out, since we are very accustomed to the utilisation of past simple for the narration of actions set in the narrative present. The reason may be that the narrative present is, in fact, understood as the past and the present at once: it is the past insofar as it happens before it is narrated; it is the present insofar as it is the time frame in which “current” narrative events take place. One could posit that the widespread and time-honoured use of past simple as the default tense in relation to the narrative now encourages, deliberately or unwittingly, the assumption that the present takes place at least an instant prior to the moment of narration. Thus, actions presented as part of the *narrative past* – “lost time” (Murphy, 2012: 77) or “once” or “autrefois” (Genette, 1983: 38; 1972: 81) – are usually relayed with past perfect (or past perfect continuous, depending on the circumstances), so as to indicate that they happen before the events set in the now. That can be seen in the sentence that immediately precedes the one quoted above: “He had often said to me: *I am not long for this world*, and I had thought his words idle”.

For those displeased with my transition from grammatical categories to existential statuses, I would add a final motivation, which I deem the most important of all: deliberately or not, the author of any given narrative work has constructed the narrator in a certain manner, defining his relationship with the diegesis. Openly or tacitly, the narration provides clues regarding the role of the narrator – as a character, as

³⁷ With the obvious exception of figural discourse quoted verbatim, present simple in narrative fiction tends to be reserved for observations whose implications extend beyond the now. In works as distinct as Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), past tenses dominate, present simple being used for – aside from dialogue in direct discourse – data that the narrators present, ironically or not, as general or perennial truths (although a subjective viewpoint underlies them). There are, of course, novels that adopt present simple as the main tense for the narrative now, but their number pales in comparison to that of novels that employ past simple. (Interestingly, the version of “The Sisters” published in *The Irish Homestead* makes occasional use of the present tense for the reporting of that which is still true at the time of the narration. As a result, the narrator seems younger in that version.)

an extradiegetic observer or even as the maker or creator of the diegesis.³⁸ As a consequence, I am exempted from defining the relationship of *all* narrators with their diegeses. Instead, I need only focus on the narrators of *Dubliners*, despite the applicability of my considerations to other narrative works. Although the narrators of some other texts may be self-proclaimed makers, those of this collection, both hetero- and homodiegetic, are not. The explicitness of their presence and interference varies, but no textual detail suggests that they operate as the creators of the world in which the short stories take place. Thus, my proposal is that we be receptive to the configurational variety of the narrators that populate narrative fiction: not all of them fit the same mould – and literary analysis should not force them to fit. In brief, we should ascertain and accept the conventions followed in the collection.

Having set this epistemological matter aside, I may finally focus on the first stage of the narratorial management of diegetic content: selection. Arguably the least important of the two, it remains, nonetheless, an unavoidable step in the process of narration. Therefore, to discourse on it, however briefly, is indispensable. With that aim in mind, we can return to the two *huis clos* prominently scrutinised in the first chapter, “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” and “The Boarding House”, whose narrators have elected to focus upon moments when not much seems to happen. In the former, those are moments of idle talk; in the latter, mainly moments when the characters are passive, recollecting and observing, thinking and planning – instead of acting.³⁹ Furthermore, both stories seem to be defined by waiting: for a more clement weather and the payment

³⁸ There can even be a combination of different statuses, as argued by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg in *The Nature of Narrative*, apropos of Marcel, the autodiegetic narrator of Marcel Proust’s *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-27):

Since we are all makers, [Proust] suggests, creating our lives as we go, there is no incompatibility between the narrator as witness and the narrator as creator. Proust’s esthetic enables the narrative artist to regain some of the ground he had lost when he abandoned his position as inspired bard for the more empirically oriented positions of eye-witness and *histor*. Few novelists have been able to work out so subtle an esthetic, however, and fewer still to generate so great a fictional edifice to embody and justify it. (1968: 261)

“The *histor*”, as the two Roberts define it, “is the narrator as inquirer, constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been able to accumulate” (*ibidem*: 265), and, consequently, “not a recorder or recounter but an investigator” (*ibidem*: 242). They add that the “narrator as *histor* is a primary narrative ingredient of such novels as *Tom Jones*, *The Red and the Black*, *Vanity Fair*, *War and Peace*, and *Nostramo*” (*ibidem*: 266).

³⁹ The “sole role” of the main characters of “The Boarding House” is, it has been noted, “to contemplate past events or anticipate future ones” (Doherty, 2004: 58).

of wages – as well as, perhaps, the return of Charles Stewart Parnell⁴⁰ – in “Ivy Day”; for the seemingly inescapable coerced marriage proposal in “The Boarding House”. For that reason, what we may call “eventful moments” are eschewed. It is imperative to note that the avoidance of these moments does not necessarily arise “organically” from the narrative and is achieved through remarkably different means in these stories.

One could venture, however, that the narrator of “Ivy Day” in particular does not “select” events but chances upon these characters and follows them, as if he had discovered a narrative lode by hazard and trailed it to its natural end. In this scenario – implied by Claire A. Culleton (1998), whose arguments will be addressed in the third chapter –, selection would be an accidental process, the narrator being no more than a fairly powerless entity that, waiting patiently but vainly for an eventful occasion, dutifully and innocently presents a straightforward account of what the characters do and say in the Committee Room during what seems to be approximately one hour at Ivy Day (although it is difficult to be precise about such matters when no explicit temporal markers are provided). After all, other than talking, the actions of the characters are mostly restricted to walking in and out of the room, warming themselves by the fire and having a few drinks, allowing one to hypothesise that the languid qualities of the story are determined by the lethargic behaviour of the characters. It would be, then, the narrative that readily and intrinsically suggests torpor, and some events would be narrat(ivis)ed almost *despite* – rather than because of – the narrator, as though he, only becoming aware of the narrative progression as it unfolds before his eyes, had made a miscalculation, a poorly placed bet. Nevertheless, this conjecture does not hold water. Despite being the narrator whose presence is less conspicuously perceived in *Dubliners*, he is covertly calculating, cunningly selecting diegetic content to create a narrative that is purposely not propulsive without drawing attention to himself. It is true that he seems to do little more than transcribing dialogue, but the rare instances when he lets slip the true range of his powers are more than enough to prove that selection is a dynamic and continuous process. Had he accompanied (one or some or all of) the characters before or

⁴⁰ “The characters in ‘Ivy Day’ are”, as Michael Holmes and Alan Roughley argue, “stuck thirty years in the past, endlessly re-hashing the fall of Parnell” (2004: 38).

after the events narrated, the reader might have reacted quite dissimilarly: the new pieces of information could have painted a vastly different portrait.

It could be counter-argued that, even in that case, the narrative, instead of the narration, would be responsible for our changed perceptions: it would be the enlargement of the narrative that would generate a distinct response. Yet, the mere decision to select more (or fewer or simply altogether different) elements for narrativisation is a narrational decision. Determining the starting point and the end point of a narrative, no matter how “natural” or self-evident they may appear, is an active structural choice on the part of the narrator in guiding the reader. To illustrate this argument, one may concoct an exaggerated example based on the appearance of Bantam Lyons in “The Boarding House” and “Ivy Day”.⁴¹ Although he earns, as we have seen, no more than a mention in the former, he is made a full-fledged character in the latter (and these different statuses already allows us to adumbrate the role of selection). It is easy to imagine a peculiar narration that, using Lyons as connective tissue, combines these stories to form a single bizarre narrative: a hypothetical narrator could select the events offered in “Ivy Day” and, instead of stopping there, selects a few more, following Lyons from the Committee Room to the boarding house, where he could cross paths with Mrs Mooney, which could serve as a pretext for narrating the diegetic information that transpires in “The Boarding House”, as if one character were handing over the baton to another.⁴² This imaginary yoking of the stories, unusual though it may be, usefully highlights the impact of selection on the shaping of a narrative: there is no narrative path but the one carved by the narrator. Besides, the mere compresence of the various diegetic elements selected in any story invites us to tease out connections between them. It is such an exercise that motivates my description of “The Boarding House” and “Ivy Day” as stories in which uneventful moments play a crucial role.

⁴¹ Incidentally, the link that Lyons provides between the two stories reinforces the assumption that the diegetic content is pre-existing, given that it implies that both stories (and, by extension, all the others) are set in the same “world”. As a result, it may be used as a means to corroborate the notion that all the narrators in the collection have access to the same diegesis, although each cuts different slices from it. The similarities between the milieux depicted in the stories further strengthen this view.

⁴² The use of the physical contiguity of characters as the motivation for a switch in focalisers may remind us of the *modus operandi* of the narrator of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), a novel that, interestingly, emerged from the amalgamation of two short stories.

Just as selection, the second stage, the presentation of narrative content, plays an indisputably pivotal role. Therefore, even if the narrator of “Ivy Day” keeps the original selection of diegetic material reasonably intact, his presentation of diegetic content can – in and of itself – alter our reading of the story. The possible use of explicit narratorial judgements would be the most obvious way to (re)shape the reader’s response. We may, however, postpone the exploration of such comments until the subsequent chapter, as they are extradiegetic,⁴³ and consider now other possibilities. The narrator could jumble the chronology, but it may be more instructive to envision a reconfiguration of the presentation that does not rely on the alteration of the order of events: imagine that the narrator simply summarised the dialogue, relinquishing the use of direct discourse, and made a running gag out of the physical movement of the characters’ constant going to and fro, in and out of the Committee Room, turning the story into a farcical pantomime. He could, without altering the selection of diegetic elements, turn this tale of stasis into one of comically exaggerated motion, presenting the characters not as victims of lethargy but as people fazed by a frenzied pace that does not allow them a quiet moment to reflect. In that case, it would share some affinities with “After the Race”, whose brisk pace is anomalous: this story, despite having a clearly defined protagonist, follows a relatively large group of characters frequently on the move, resulting in a swift narrative progression, a quite substantial spatial variety and an unstinting number of personae to monitor. Although the ultimate point of this story (and the others), is stagnation, the narrator constructs it almost counterintuitively, creating an ironically propulsive rhythm.

It is even easier to imagine a presentment of the narrative elements of “The Boarding House” that stresses speed, since the narrator of this story has not been nearly as austere in his selection of narrative material as that of “Ivy Day”. In effect, he is relatively liberal in his offering of information about events that antecede the narrative present. As a result, the selection of narrative material does not truly seem to

⁴³ Nevertheless, I do consider narratorial comments as intradiegetic as long as the narrator is also a character, as in the first three stories. This view would not be embraced by all narratologists, but it seems logical to me that, if a narrator exists within the diegesis, his actions, including the production of discourse, will also take place within the diegesis, implicitly or explicitly. One can, however, wonder about extreme cases in which a narrator’s status is not clearly defined or fluctuates: that would complicate matters, but that does not occur in *Dubliners*.

intrinsically privilege stasis over motion (or, to put it differently, to readily suggest one over the other as we may feel it does in “Ivy Day”), which makes it especially interesting to observe the way the narrator creates a lethargic pace. Moreover, some of the decisions concerning the presentation even seem appropriate for the establishment of narrative momentum: he has arranged the material so as to present Mrs Mooney, Mr Doran and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Polly as the protagonists; he has made their opposing motives and objectives – either to bring about or to avoid a marriage proposal – easily perceptible for the reader; and, finally, he has used those objectives as an instrument for the shaping of the narrative, exploiting the conflict of interests of the characters for the establishment of dramatic stakes. By contrast, the narrator of “Ivy Day” has not bestowed upon any character the role of the protagonist; he has not made their broader goals – beyond their basic desire to drink, to receive their salaries and to complain copiously – perceptible in a straightforward manner nor used them to shape the reader’s expectations regarding the narrative; and he has not conventionally established any conflict as the propelling force of the narrative, neglecting to define the stakes plainly. Consequently, the story seems to lack focus and to drift aimlessly, the reader noticing a certain narrative dispersion and indefiniteness.⁴⁴

Thus, the narrator of “The Boarding House” has to work harder than that of “Ivy Day” on the presentation of diegetic data to ensure that the pace is sluggish. As he provides a fairly detailed backstory for the main characters, the challenge is to curtail the narrative momentum while narrating a relatively generous number of events in one of the shortest stories. Consider the opening paragraph:

Mrs Mooney was a butcher’s daughter. She was a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself: a determined woman. She had married her father’s foreman and opened a butcher’s shop near Spring Gardens. But as soon as his father-in-law was dead Mr Mooney began to go to the devil. He drank, plundered the till, ran headlong into debt. It was no use making him take the pledge: he was sure to break out again a few days after. By fighting his wife in the presence of customers and by buying bad meat he ruined his business. One night he went for his wife with the cleaver and she had to sleep in a neighbour’s house. (49)

⁴⁴ Vyacheslav Yevseyev, when proposing “a method for calculating narrativity levels in terms of the density of minimal narrative elements in a text” (2005: 109), briefly analysed “The Boarding House” for the sake of illustration. The results reveal that the narrative density of the story is rather unexceptional, either by excess or by default (*ibidem*: 117-8), but that of “Ivy Day” would likely be far below average.

After a general description of Mrs Mooney, for which, as we have seen, the use of past simple is completely conventional, the narrator, switching to past perfect, introduces in the third sentence an account of her life history: “She *had married* her father’s foreman”. He could just as easily have kept the tense originally employed: “She married her father’s foreman”. This simple alteration would have enlarged the lapse of time that constitutes the narrative now. Owing to the use of past perfect, that which is narrated about Mrs Mooney’s biography is clearly shown to belong to a moment that precedes the narrative present. In fact, all that is narrated in the first five paragraphs is placed in a temporal lapse that precedes the narrative now: despite the fluctuation between past simple and past perfect in these opening paragraphs, the narrator makes subtle but opportune returns to the latter to signal that he is narrating past events.

These paragraphs comprise what we may call a prologue, which brings the reader up to date. In the sixth paragraph, a new temporal marker – which Gerald Doherty calls “the first significant time marker” (2004: 71) – identifies the narrative present: “It was a bright Sunday morning of early summer, promising heat, but with a fresh breeze blowing” (51). This delayed temporal indication is followed by a spatial description (of the breakfast room in the boarding house). Therefore, the main (spatio)temporal coordinates of the narrative are only now explicitly provided, confirming that it is at this juncture that the main narrative strand is truly set. The narrative now remains extremely restricted: the story, as Doherty notes with his idiosyncratic terminology, “maximizes the gap between the real time of narration (about one hour, measured by St. George’s church bell) and narrated time which shuttles compulsively back and forward through unmeasured life histories (at least twenty years)” (2004: 71). As a consequence, the temporal slice that the narrator constructs as the present is surprisingly small, and the moments in which the characters are most active are not relayed as if they were happening in the narrative present; they are clearly contextualised as part of the narrative past. The duration of the narrative now of this story is comparable to that of “Ivy Day”, in which, however, the narrative appears to unfold in roughly real time (aside from the narrator’s infrequent accounts of past events, for which past perfect is used). For that reason, the handling of time in “The Boarding

House” is more complex, the narrator’s imposing feats of contortionism becoming an oppressive but virtuoso exercise that simultaneously unsettles and dazzles the reader.

Regarding the concentration of the narrative present, “A Painful Case” can serve as a foil to the “The Boarding House”, since it not only opens with comparable biographical data about the protagonist but also offers a much wider narrative present. In the three opening paragraphs, there is only one use of the past perfect: “He had been for many years cashier of a private bank in Baggot Street” (90).⁴⁵ For the rest of the reporting, which centres on a rapidly expanding present, past simple is employed. Let us focus on sentences containing explicit temporal references, the first of which emerges in the fourth paragraph: “One evening he found himself sitting beside two ladies in the Rotunda” (91). From then on, the temporal frame of the narrative present becomes incrementally larger, by a few hours, a few days, a few weeks or even a few years at a time: “He met her again a few weeks afterwards”; “Meeting her a third time by accident he found courage to make an appointment. She came. This was the first of many meetings; they met always in the evening” (92); “He went often to her little cottage outside Dublin; often they spent their evenings alone”; “He did not visit her for a week”; “they wandered up and down the roads of the Park for nearly three hours” (93); “A few days later he received a parcel containing his books and music”; “Four years passed” (94). If the narrative present of “The Boarding House” comprises about an hour, that of “A Painful Case” stretches for more than four years. It is clear that there is a more conventional treatment of narrative time in the latter, insofar as the narrator makes no attempt to exceedingly reduce the narrative present.

To present past events without enlarging the narrative present, the narrator of “The Boarding House” also narrates them indirectly, filtering them through the perspective of characters that recall them after they have happened. As a result, the relation of past events issues from their thoughts rather than from temporal dislocations of the narrator: there are accounts of memories, instead of “external” narratorial flashbacks (although there is one such flashback, as we will see). We remain resolutely

⁴⁵ This expectable use of past perfect, associated with the durative aspect, is required by the first adverbial in the sentence (“for many years”). The employment of past simple would imply that he no longer held the position mentioned in the passage.

in the present, that is, within the aforementioned estival matin hour. Thus, the events that we tend to perceive as the most important – those that drive the narrative and which the characters (and we) anticipate and fear – are not narrated directly, but in a roundabout way. Mrs Mooney’s conversation with Polly, Polly’s talk with Mr Doran and Mr Doran’s confession to his priest are at second remove and only reach us via the narrator’s account of the memories of the characters. The appropriation of their diction (discussed in the previous chapter) reinforces the notion that the narrator invites us to survey characters lost in thought, instead of making us travel in time. Despite his constriction of the narrative now, he, indulging in cruel irony, insists on redirecting the reader to the past, and, at the very end, even prospective contemplations are paradoxically presented as retrospective: “she remembered what she had been waiting for” (56). Consequently, he effectively creates a languorous atmosphere. No matter how numerous the events mentioned, the reader, always in a constricting, suffocatingly diminutive now, feels that there is no proper narrative progression. The embedded stories may span years, but the narrator only allows the present to span a single hour. A similar, if less striking, example can be found in “A Little Cloud”, which, regardless of its single-afternoon present, refers events that occurred a decade prior.

This extensive focus on the mental landscape of the characters – which, besides retrospections, includes reflections about the present and plans for the future – contributes not only to the temporal but also to the spatial concentration of the narrative. Unlike “Ivy Day”, a story that unmistakably has a single setting, “The Boarding House”, despite mainly restricting the locations to the confines of the titular building, seems, at first sight, to offer some spatial variety, meagre though it is. Yet, just as the presentation of past events does not result from the narrator’s temporal dislocations, the presentation of events set in places other than the boarding house does not result from his spatial dislocations. An example can be found in Mrs Mooney’s section:

It was a bright Sunday morning of early summer, promising heat, but with a fresh breeze blowing. All the windows of the boarding house were open and the lace curtains ballooned gently towards the street beneath the raised sashes. The belfry of George’s Church sent out constant peals and worshippers, singly or in groups, traversed the little circus before the church,

revealing their purpose by their self-contained demeanour no less than by the little volumes in their gloved hands. (51-2)

The passage comes across as one created by a detached narrator that roams free, having momentarily cast aside all interest in stalking Mrs Mooney and in presenting her thoughts and actions, perhaps in an attempt to capture some “local colour”. A closer look, however, reveals that her perspective is still loosely perceptible (although the caustic description of the parishioners is, admittedly, the narrator’s). The telling sign is the reference to the “the lace curtains [that] ballooned gently towards the street”, which she sees at that moment. One assumes that the narrator, acting as an editor, has likely excised and condensed many of her thoughts, but the overall sequence of her sensual apprehensions is followable: the billowing curtains lead her eyes to what lies beyond the open windows, before they return to the room and rest on the breakfast plates, while the toll of bells echo in her ears, evoking in her mind an image of the church.

A subsequent explicit reference to her sight in the same paragraph confirms this conjecture: “Mrs Mooney sat in the straw armchair and watched the servant Mary remove the breakfast things”. Furthermore, the reader learns in the next paragraph that the toll of the bells was on her mind: “she had become aware through her reverie that the bells of George’s Church had stopped ringing”. Even the initial reference to “Sunday” appears to have been derived from her thoughts, as she “made Mary collect the crusts and pieces of broken bread to help to make *Tuesday’s* bread-pudding” (52; emphasis added), implying that she thought – more or less consciously – about the current day to calculate the number of days left until Tuesday. Owing to this instance of psycho-narration, what might otherwise have felt as an excursion outside, providing a welcome respite from our incarceration in the building, is shown to be the result of the narrator’s rummaging the thoughts of the character. Rather than embarking on a physical journey, the reader stays (almost asphyxiatingly) close to the characters, feeling that there is no escape from their minds – and from the boarding house.

Additionally, the narrator resorts to the interweavement of disparate elements to bog down the progress of the narrative. The passage concerning George’s Church, which we have just considered, can illustrate this point, as it comes immediately after we are told that Mrs Mooney “had made up her mind” regarding the affair between her

daughter and Mr Doran. Our anticipation, therefore, has been raised, but what follows is, frustratingly, a vignette of a “Sunday morning” in the streets near George’s Church.

A subtler example can be unearthed in the second paragraph:

After that they lived apart. She went to the priests and got a separation from him with care of the children. She would give him neither money nor food nor houseroom; and so he was obliged to enlist himself as a sheriff’s man. He was a shabby stooped little drunkard with a white face and a white moustache and white eyebrows, pencilled above his little eyes, which were pink-veined and raw; and all day long he sat in the bailiff’s room, waiting to be put on a job. Mrs Mooney, who had taken what remained of her money out of the butcher business and set up a boarding house in Hardwicke Street, was a big imposing woman. Her house had a floating population made up of tourists from Liverpool and the Isle of Man and occasionally *artistes* from the musichalls. Its resident population was made up of clerks from the city. She governed her house cunningly and firmly, knew when to give credit, when to be stern and when to let things pass. All the resident young men spoke of her as *The Madam*. (49-50)

The narrator continues the relation of biographical details about Mrs Mooney’s past, which he had begun in the opening paragraph, but he also intersperses that data with information about the boarders and the boarding house itself. The third paragraph continues this trend, going so far as to comically include the rates practiced at the house: “Mrs Mooney’s young men paid fifteen shillings a week for board and lodgings (beer or stout at dinner excluded)” (50). Thus, the momentum that the swift telling of the character’s life might have otherwise created is countered.

One should also note the two descriptive segments. The first is the delayed physical description of Mr Mooney, which could easily have been integrated into the first paragraph. The other is the bizarre reintroduction of Mrs Mooney, which echoes the original presentation of the character: if we are told that she is “a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself” and “a determined woman” in the opening paragraph, we are now told that she is “a big imposing woman”. That introductory description, as we have seen, originates from Mrs Mooney’s self-perception, whereas the second seems to be more closely related to the impression others have of her, but they could have been melded together, avoiding the structural awkwardness of relaunching an account of the traits of the character. The result is a slowing down of the progression of the narrative. This new characterisation of Mrs Mooney is also

interesting because it appears in a complex sentence whose subordinate (non-restrictive or nonessential adjectival) clause continues the account of the character's past, informing us of her departure from the "butcher business". Consequently, the narrative segment is embedded in a larger descriptive one, suggesting that it is of lesser pith. This interplay between narrative and descriptive segments curbs the narrative momentum.

Moreover, the narrator changes focalisers to avoid the narration of eventful moments and to maintain the focus on the passivity of the characters. When Mrs Mooney is about to call Mr Doran, the narrator makes him the focaliser. Likewise, when Mr Doran is about to be coerced by Mrs Mooney to marry her daughter, it is Polly's turn to become the focaliser. As a result, Mrs Mooney's interview with Mr Doran – which takes place in the present and is the central event in the narrative – is not narrated. Although the mischievous narrator, taking advantage of our knowledge of literary conventions, makes us expect that this interview is to be the climax of the story, it happens off-stage, since he unpredictably shifts the focus of the narration to Polly and her own recollections at the last moment. Therefore, "what should be a grand stagy showdown becomes a mere blank" (Doherty, 2004: 74). Not content, the narrator introduces another gap by concluding his narration before Mr Doran's marriage proposal to Polly takes place. This is a notable expression of narrational flexibility: the narrator presents some moments as the most important and makes us anticipate them before they occur, only to eschew direct narration, while still letting us get the gist of what happened.⁴⁶ More than simply selecting the perspective of different characters at different moments, he ingeniously structures the narrative, even altering the chronology of events, as there is an analepsis, so subtly established by the transition from Mrs Mooney's section to Mr Doran's that the reader might not spot it: one can only tell that there is a flashback because the events narrated at the end of the first section occur later than the events narrated at the beginning of the second. Given that Mrs Mooney is about

⁴⁶ Doherty avers that the "systematic blocking of 'now-moment' confrontations—the hub of conventional narrative—forces the reader to do more work than the narrator does in staging his stingy, tightfisted scenes" (2004: 58). Yet, the reader does not have to work hard to fill the gaps and is not confused about the unnarrated events: "we readers are in no perplexity. We know, while we wait with Polly[,] [...] exactly what is going on downstairs. And when we hear Mrs. Mooney's uplifted voice, 'Come down, dear. Mr Doran wants to speak to you,' we are quite sure what he will say, and quite sure why" (Kenner, 1978: 43). In a magisterial display of his art, the narrator has ensured that the gaps can easily be filled.

to send for Mr Doran at the end of her section, it should not take more than a couple of minutes for him to get the message. Therefore, there is a discreet temporal reset, making the reader feel that the progression of the narrative occurs at an abnormally slow tempo. Furthermore, this external flashback does not extend the narrative now, since the narration remains within the hour-long period established as the present.⁴⁷

Given my division of “The Boarding House” into three sections, each connected with one of the main characters, one can deduce that I hold focalisation to be this story’s defining structural factor. Still, a tripartite segmentation is not the only possibility. “There is”, as Fritz Senn argues, “a synoptic exposition, and then the story splits up into three distinct parts” (2006: 310). Senn, therefore, identifies four sections, which is perfectly justifiable. In fact, my proposal is not wholly incompatible with his: what I have previously described as a prologue seems roughly coextensive with his “synoptic exposition” – which he describes elsewhere as “almost conventional exposition” (1997a: 20) –, and I also identify three parts according to shifts in focalisation (although he does not use this term). The difference, then, lies in the status that I attribute to the first portion of the text: although he regards it as a separate section, I resist granting it autonomy, seeing it instead as a subdivision, a part embedded in a larger section, Mrs Mooney’s. In my estimate, neither of these partitions is incorrect or even intrinsically preferable, but they do result from differences in emphasis: if his focuses mainly on plot, on *narrative* structure, mine privileges the broader *narrational* structure of a text. In other words, I am generally less interested in charting the progression of actions and events and dividing it into different blocks than in studying the effect of the interplay of a myriad of narrational devices on our perception of the configuration of a text. Thus, my considering that the expository segment has been absorbed into Mrs Mooney’s section stems from the assumption that the structural impact of the unfolding of the plot can be superseded by focalisation and matters as minute as the choice of verb tense and the use of free indirect discourse: they prevent the prologue from springing forth as a

⁴⁷ Mieke Bal would call this flashback an “internal retroversion” (or an internal “analepsis” or “anachrony”), given that it “occurs within the time span of the primary fabula” (Bal, 2009: 89). (Had it occurred outside that time span, it would be an “external retroversion” and, had it started outside but ended within, a “mixed retroversion”. In “A Mother”, one can find a mixed analepsis, which I discuss in the following chapter, and there is another in “Grace”.)

fully separate part, but rather collapse it into Mrs Mooney's section. This explains the absence of any reference to Mr Doran in this initial portion of the story.

Just as "The Boarding House" is simultaneously a three- and a four-part story, so is "Counterparts": the protagonist is first referred to as "the man", then as "Farrington" and finally as "the man" again, suggesting three sections, but spatiotemporal dislocations (and the use of direct discourse to introduce them) suggest four. Irrespective of the sectional divisions that we perceive in the stories, they should arise from and illuminate, rather than obscure, important aspects of the narratorial management of the diegetic information. As this management varies from story to story, we must be flexible. Considering the structure of the stories in this broad way allows us to understand more fully their organizational heterogeneity and prevents us from taking a one-size-fits-all approach: whereas spatial dislocations could be used to distinguish between different episodes in "After the Race", "Ivy Day", having a single setting, must be gauged differently. Its structure is so seemingly constant that mapping it is a more uncertain and freer undertaking. Perhaps one could take a cue from the story's allegedly "dramatic" construction (which I address in the next chapter) and divide it into scenes according to the characters' entrances (and exits). Alternatively, one could focus on plot, an approach that has obviously not been excluded: in some cases, the mere sequencing of events may be the most important structural vector. Taking this approach, one has to decide which set of actions or stretch of the narrative is sufficiently cohesive to be considered a distinct section. One would have plenty of leeway, given the story's slippery shape – or shapelessness, as some might say.

There are, nevertheless, clearer examples of the advantages that a strong attention to plot can have. I would argue that it proves the ideal approach to a story such as "Araby", whose structure is determined by the objectives of the nameless autodiegetic narrator, or rather, the boy that will eventually become the narrator. His precisely defined main goal is to please Mangan's sister (and, one might add, to become romantically involved with her, but he does not seem to have consciously thought that far ahead). The narrator uses the goal of his younger self as a structural device, presenting, in addition to the main objective, three clearly identifiable secondary goals:

to (get money to) go to Araby; to buy her a gift there; and to give it to her.⁴⁸ The structure of the story pivots on these four steps – the three secondary goals and the primary purpose –, which serve as convenient signposts or milestones, allowing us to keep track of the progression of the narrative easily. After some difficulty (connected with his uncle's belatedness in giving him the money that he needed), the first secondary goal is achieved, fomenting the narrative momentum and stimulating the expectations of the reader, but the remaining steps are suddenly and surprisingly abandoned. It is not, however, the downbeat nature of the ending that renders it anticlimactic – in that case, all tragedies would be anticlimactic –; it is the deliberate violation of the expectations set by the narrator, since one would hardly anticipate that the initially resolute and perseverant boy would give up midway, regardless of the final outcome of his efforts. Had he achieved all the secondary goals and merely botched the primary one – or had the narrator refrained from using those goals as the driving force of the narrative and constructed a “proper” or more conventional *dénouement* –, this story would be structurally smoother.

Inasmuch as the protagonist's objectives (the goals that he hopes to reach by undertaking the quest) are the determinant structural force, “Araby” follows closely, if ironically, the general pattern of a quest narrative,⁴⁹ but the other two childhood stories follow it much more freely. It is certain that the “The Sisters” and, somewhat less strikingly, “An Encounter” are structurally unruly, but their disorderliness is unlike the methodical shaping and undermining of expectations found in “Araby”: the first two stories grant the reader no specific milestones to keep in mind, have an occasional propensity for digression and are characterised by the vague definition of narrative stakes, perhaps because they are, or were, vague for the characters themselves, who set out on a quest but lack a precise aim. The protagonist of “An Encounter” simply craves the thrill of an adventure and, despite rather intricate preparations, does not seem to

⁴⁸ The protagonist openly declares these secondary goals to Mangan's sister early on: “If I *go*, I said, I will [*buy* and] *bring* you something” (23; emphasis added). His principal goal, however, remains expectedly unspoken, owing to shyness and decorum.

⁴⁹ Alan Roughley mentions “the boy's phallic quest” (1999: 117), and Heyward Ehrlich speaks of “quest symbolism” (2006: 261). The reference to the chalice – “I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes” (22) – has been read as an allusion to the Holy Grail, the search for which famously serves as the basic plot for the most emblematic of quest narratives.

have a fully thought-out plan, despite playing truant to put it in action. In “The Sisters”, the goals of the central character are similarly hazy: he wishes to learn about death, to delve into the mysteries surrounding Father Flynn and, more cryptically, “to be nearer to [paralysis] and to look upon its deadly work” (3).⁵⁰ The goals of both characters contrast neatly with the crystal-clear objectives of the protagonist of “Araby”, which presuppose specific actions. Although the joke is largely the same in all three stories – the characters’, as well as our, prospects regarding the quests are subverted, exposing the inadequacy of the questers⁵¹ and our gullibility –, the vexing of our anticipatory conjectures in “The Sisters” and “An Encounter”, unlike “Araby”, relies on erraticism, on structural wobbliness. A flexible approach to the narrational configuration of the stories allows us to keep these divergences in mind.

In turn, “Eveline” offers yet another way of crafting a peculiar structure. A focus on temporal and spatial, as well as dictional and rhythmical, disjunctions encourages us to divide the story into two remarkably asymmetrical sections, the comparatively gargantuan first amounting to nearly four-fifths of the text. This unorthodox segmentation is also sanctioned by the section break that divides the story (although we should not base our divisions solely on such breaks). In the first section, Eveline is at home, sitting idly by a window and pondering about the adverse life she has endured in Dublin and the prospects for a better one in Argentina with her husband-to-be, Frank, with whom she intends to depart later in that evening. In the second part, set at the dock from which their ship will soon start out for South-American shores, a reticent Eveline suddenly refuses to leave with Frank. This perfunctory description of the two sections already hints at the dissimilarities between them: one is dominated by reflections, allowing the indirect narration of past events, the likes of which we have seen in “The Boarding House”; the other is primarily grounded on the present and stresses speed. Thanks to an ellipsis, the abrupt transition from one section to the other introduces a swift jump in time and place. The violence of the shift may explain the suggestion that

⁵⁰ To add to the confusion, “paralysis” here refers not only to a literal and figurative ailment or symptom but also to the word itself.

⁵¹ The irony of “An Encounter” is that, finally finding himself plunged into an adventure (or the closest equivalent available), the boy, overwhelmed, ceases to desire it. Likewise, the protagonist of “The Sisters” seems about to unfold a mystery but never quite does.

the second part stages Eveline's "imagined near future" (Williams, 2004: 160). At any rate, this sudden lurch forward, echoing her feelings, promotes disorientation and apprehension, as if time were moving overpoweringly fast.

Likewise, diction plays a vital role in this sectional disparity. In the first part, the narrator resorts to repetitions of key ideas and expressions, some already present in the opening paragraph: "She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired" (26). Two elements here introduced – her gaze and the dust – return in a sentence that acts as an echo: "She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from" (27). Afterwards, "as if to emphasise a saturated sense of stasis, what Joyce himself called a 'hemiplegia of the will'" (Balzano, 2004: 85), an even closer rephrasing of the opening emerges: "Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne" (30). Free indirect discourse is skilfully used to justify some of the repetitions: "Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home"; "She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise?"; "She was about to explore another life with Frank" (27, 28, 29). Her ruminations about her work provide another example: "Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business" (28). These thoughts are resumed a few paragraphs later: "She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work—a hard life" (29). Sometimes, the reiterated reflections are not paragraphs apart but appear in rapid succession: "Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her" (31). Eveline is stuck – and so is the reader, thanks to a narrator that exploits her passivity and the redundant circularity of her thoughts.

If certain details are reprised throughout the first section, emphasising stasis, creating a listless pace and contributing to the feeling that not much new information is

offered, the second part, introducing dictional and rhythmical modifications, indulges in manifestly fewer repetitions and favours, on average, shorter sentences, accompanied by a speedier narrative progression. Let us study the paragraph that opens this part:

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

(31)

One particularly stimulating aspect of this passage is its accentuation of the brusque shift between the sections by reworking central elements of the first part in the second. In the first, Eveline, from the comfortable vantage point of her window, watches the darkening late-afternoon sky in solitude, reassured by her complete awareness of her tranquil surroundings, her familiarity with what and whom she sees: “Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses” (26-7). In the second, this panoramic view gives way to a fugacious “glimpse of the black mass of the boat”; her unhurried reflections to rushed second-guessing; her seclusion to her entanglement with “the swaying crowd”; the man she effortlessly recognised to numerous unknown “soldiers”; the sound of his footsteps to the agonisingly “long mournful whistle” of the boat; her precise recollection of what people had told her to the vague perception that Frank says “something about the passage”; her hopes and plans for the future to a desperate prayer for divine guidance; and her composure to “distress” and “nausea”. In short, calm gives way to the storm. This structural and stylistic schizophrenia is one of the main appeals of “Eveline”.

“Two Gallants” is also fascinatingly peculiar – but in a thoroughly different manner. Thus, the analytical criteria have to be reset *de novo*, evincing afresh the structural diversity to be found in *Dubliners*. I would suggest that the narrator uses the

interaction of the main characters, Corley and Lenehan, to mould the general layout of the story, allowing us to divide it into three sections: in the first part, they walk and talk; in the second, Corley, set on a mysterious mission, departs with a “slavey”, while Lenehan roams the city, waiting for him; and, in the third and final section, they are finally reunited. This division is neither abnormal in itself nor unparalleled in the collection.⁵² What is truly strange is that, after the characters part ways, “[t]he narrator, curiously, stays with Lenehan” (Norris, 2003: 85), although Corley is the most active figure. However odd, the establishment of Lenehan as the main character and focaliser is completely attuned to the aesthetic generally favoured by the narrators of *Dubliners*. If one compares the use of Lenehan as the principal focaliser to, for instance, the use of three main focalisers in “The Boarding House”, one can see that both choices, despite their obvious differences, have roughly the same aim: to avoid the (direct) narration of the most eventful moments and to emphasise a sense of stagnation.

The teasing of the reader with the creation of deliberately frustrating silences starts in the opening paragraph, which tells us that Corley “was just bringing a long monologue to a close” and that “the narrative to which [Lenehan] listened made constant waves of expression break forth over his face from the corners of his nose and eyes and mouth” (39). Continuing his taunting, the narrator, after withholding the monologue itself, shows no qualms about quoting Lenehan’s paean to it:

—Well! ... That takes the biscuit!

His voice seemed winnowed of vigour; and to enforce his words he added with humour:

—That takes the solitary, unique, and, if I may so call it, *recherché* biscuit!

This narratorial silence prompted Margot Norris to state that “the narration tells us neither what was said [in the monologue] nor names its discursive nature and effect” (2003: 82). Yet, that is over-emphatic. While it is true that the specificities of Corley’s monologue are not disclosed, the narrator allows the reader to deduce its general meaning gradually. We can safely assume that he waxes crude about the slavey, given that Lenehan, after commending Corley’s speech, questions him about her: “And where did you pick her up, Corley? he asked” (39). Following Corley’s reply, which provides

⁵² “A Little Cloud” also has a tripartite structure built on figural interactions: in the first section, Little Chandler is on his way to meet Gallaher; in the second, both are reunited; and, in the third, Little Chandler is no longer with Gallaher.

some details about the slavey, Lenehan repeats his encomium: “Of all the good ones ever I heard, he said, that emphatically takes the biscuit” (40). It is, therefore, unavoidable that the monologue focused on the slavey. Nevertheless, this is certainly a tortuous way of letting the reader know.

I would liken this provocative beginning to that of “Ivy Day”, inasmuch as old Jack resumes a conversation whose initial part is not narrated, occurring just before the narrative starts. Despite remaining at a loss regarding its details, we quickly gather the general intent of the unincorporated dialogue (which is part of old Jack’s diatribe against his son) and can regard it as fairly unimportant – in that sense, it does not differ that much from the incorporated dialogue. Corley’s excluded monologue, however, creates a gap that is felt throughout “Two Gallants”, since the narrator intimates that the transcription of the omitted remarks would likely reveal the character’s mysterious errand and save us from much frustration. In addition, we are regularly reminded of how little we know, the narrator insisting on presenting dialogue we cannot fully understand:

—Well, ... tell me, Corley, I suppose you’ll be able to pull it off all right, eh?

Corley closed one eye expressively as an answer.

—Is she game for that? asked Lenehan dubiously. You can never know women. (41)

We are confronted with a discourse littered with pronouns whose antecedents are tantalisingly left veiled: because the monologue was excised, we do not know what “it” or “that” denotes. Before long, the narrator returns to his unalleviated teasing:

—But tell me, said Lenehan again, are you sure you can bring it off all right? You know it’s a ticklish job. They’re damn close on that point. Eh? ... What?

His bright small eyes searched his companion’s face for reassurance. Corley swung his head to and fro as if to toss aside an insistent insect, and his brows gathered.

—I’ll pull it off, he said. Leave it to me, can’t you? (42)

To Corley’s and the reader’s annoyance – and, of course, to the narrator’s delight –, Lenehan presses his companion once more when they go their separate ways: “Work it all right now, said Lenehan in farewell” (44). After his refusal to reproduce the monologue, the narrator’s punctilious transcription of all these repetitive and vague questions is manifestly ironical.

We may have thought that we would get some rest once Lenehan is alone (which naturally prevents him from continuing his fusillade of monotonous pleas for Corley’s

reassurance), but the narrator, still unsatisfied, mines the character's consciousness to keep drilling us, drawing our attention precisely to the events that he rebelliously neglects to narrate: "he [...] sat for some time thinking of Corley's adventure. In his imagination he beheld the pair of lovers walking along some dark road; he heard Corley's voice in deep energetic gallantries and saw again the leer of the young woman's mouth" (46). The following passage, in which psycho-narration and narrated monologue alternate, has the same aim:

He wondered had Corley managed it successfully. He wondered if he had asked her yet or if he would leave it to the last. He suffered all the pangs and thrills of his friend's situation as well as those of his own. But the memory of Corley's slowly revolving head calmed him somewhat: he was sure Corley would pull it off all right. (47)

When he sees Corley once more, we are again (and again) reminded of Lenehan's impatient curiosity about the outcome of his friend's exploits and, consequently, of our ignorance: "Suddenly he saw them coming towards him. He started with delight and, keeping close to his lamp-post, tried to read the result in their walk"; "He knew Corley would fail; he knew it was no go". When they talk, the roguish narrator returns to direct discourse, methodically recording Lenehan's lines to, as always, madden and enthrall us: "Well? he said. Did it come off?"; "Can't you tell us? he said. Did you try her?" (48).

We must wait for the very end – the last sentence, in fact – for the narrator to disclose, in the dimmest of ways and the broadest of strokes, what he previously withholds: "Corley halted at the first lamp and stared grimly before him. Then with a grave gesture he extended a hand towards the light and, smiling, opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple. A small gold coin shone in the palm" (48-9). The silence is partially dissolved: although it takes some interpretive effort to decode this oblique explanation, the reader realises that the characters' goal was to extract money from the slavey through morally dubious means. After all the narrational fanfare, this misty revelation is, by design, anticlimactically mundane and frustratingly frugal. Nevertheless, the core of this narrative gap is finally filled – even if only to be replaced by another: now the reader is left to wonder about Corley and Lenehan's plans for the coin. Since the narrator focuses on the characters' preparations for events that are not narrated, just as in "The Boarding House", the conclusion seems precocious. However,

the central narrative strand is ultimately clarified: Lenehan and Corley need money for their endeavours, whatever they are; Corley convinces a slavey whom he has seduced to give him a sovereign; and, once reunited, the two gallants set out to use it as intended. It is the elliptical narration that remains enigmatic, taunting us with the allure of its gaping holes: despite offering an intelligible and linear narrative, it thrives on the unsaid.

A comparable disjunction between narrative and narrational structure is achieved in “Clay”. There is, however, a notable difference: the plot of this story, unlike that of “Two Gallants”, is never murkily presented. The disjunction occurs not because we are incognisant of the goals and actions of the protagonist, Maria, but because they, albeit clearly outlined, are not as determinative of the shaping of the text as the expectations regarding character development established and subverted by the narrator. Maria’s intentions – to prepare for, and to enjoy, “her evening out” (82) with Joe, whom she had nursed, and his family – are overtly stated and inform the progression of the narrative but remain of secondary importance: although the narrator relates all the preparatory activities and most of the reunion itself, he guides our attention towards her concealed psychological turmoil, caused by her insistence on telling herself that she is happy with her life. Even when narrating ordinary events, he subtly describes Maria’s psyche:

The kitchen was spick and span: the cook said you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the sidetables were four very big barmbracks. These barmbracks seemed uncut; but if you went closer you would see that they had been cut into long thick even slices and were ready to be handed round at tea. Maria had cut them herself. (82)

Under the pretence of informing us about the orderliness of the kitchen and Maria’s adept preparation of food, the narrator uses free indirect discourse to reveal her constant need for the approval of others: evidently pluming herself on her efficiency but still feeling compelled to reinforce her amour-propre, she obsesses over the opinion of those who surround her, which is signalled by her habit, identical to Mr Doran’s, of mentally quoting others. In this case, she recalls the cook’s praise regarding the cleanliness of the boilers and even extends it, retrieving his use of the generic (or impersonal or indefinite) *you* in to pat herself on the back for her skilful slicing of the barmbracks.

The narrator tacitly suggests that her repressed desires regarding sex and marriage are the paramount reason for her unhappiness and, therefore, her need to lie to

herself and to be regarded favourably: “Lizzie Fleming said Maria was sure to get the ring and, though Fleming had said that for so many Hallow Eves, Maria had to laugh and say she didn’t want any ring or man either; and when she laughed her greygreen eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness” (84). Having pinpointed the source of her insecurity, he prepares the reader for the protagonist’s confrontation with her unacknowledged loneliness and longing by focusing on moments that make her vulnerable, that is, moments when she is on the verge of experiencing a brutal blow brought about by a burst of unforgiving self-awareness – or so we (are made to) think. The first potentially destabilising episodes occur when she is still in her workplace, but, once she leaves “to buy the things” for the evening and to go to Joe’s house, they increase in frequency and intensity and are often triggered by simple remarks, such as that of “the stylish young lady behind the counter”, who “asked her was it weddingcake she wanted to buy”. If such an innocent question is enough to make “Maria blush and smile at the young lady” (85), the reader wonders whether she can handle more demanding situations. Thus, the narrator makes us expect that her physical dislocation will coincide with an emotional and psychological displacement, a movement outside her comfort zone towards the distressing shattering of her shaky image of herself.

Indeed, having temporarily left her shell, she is exposed to circumstances that may easily lead her to doubt her life choices. On her way to Joe’s house, she chats amicably with “a colonel-looking gentleman” who “made room for her” (86) on a crowded tram. Surprisingly, she seems to handle his courtesies without shame or discomfort. Yet, we later realise that this chance encounter did affect her, making her inadvertently leave her cake on the tram, which she only notices once she has already arrived at her destination: “Maria, remembering how confused the gentleman with the greyish moustache had made her, coloured with shame and vexation and disappointment” (86). Thanks to the expectations that the narration deftly establishes, we anticipate that this incident will be the catalyst for a sincere assessment of the dissatisfaction that she had heretofore hidden even from herself. That turns out not to be the case, but our anticipation is once again intensified when she plays a game in which she has to select a “saucer” (87) while blindfolded: she picks up what is supposedly the

titular clay, which carries a simultaneously macabre and sexual suggestiveness, highlighting her options: one of these alternatives – death or sex (and life) – seems destined for her, and the former is more likely to prevail: “Her hidden fortune, the clay, prophetic of death, suggests all that the ultimate future holds for her” (Walzl, 1962: 91). However, just as the game is reset and the clay cast out, in order to avoid its unpleasant implications, so the protagonist discards her self-doubt, refusing to probe her life. Her hosts continue to shelter her, indefinitely postponing her self-assessment. The same happens when she sings “I Dreamt that I Dwelt”: in a Freudian slip, she sings the first stanza twice, thereby avoiding the second, which is explicitly about romantic yearnings,⁵³ “[b]ut no one tried to show her her mistake” (89).

Eventually, we grasp that this discreetly cheeky narrator has been playing us like a fiddle all along. The moment of anagnorisis that we await never comes, and Maria is never forced to take a good look at herself in the mirror. The impertinent ending – a final joke from the narrator – just rubs it in:

when she had ended her song Joe was very much moved. He said that there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was. (89)

This hardly seems an appropriate conclusion, since it does not directly relate to the main concern of the story and, therefore, does not follow through on the “promises” made by the narration. Instead, it could be said to amount to a non-sequitur. The strangeness of this evasive ending, mischievously mirroring Maria’s diversions and vexing our desire to find unity in a text, may lead us to ponder whether there is a hidden carnal connotation in the reference to the corkscrew. Although it may perhaps be read as a phallic symbol, ironically pointing to the active sexual life for which the protagonist half-consciously longs, what is particularly striking about the last sentence is its bathos. It is precisely the placement of banal details at the *dénouement* that produces a deflation or an anti-climax, a feature shared by the vast majority of the stories.

In stark contrast with “Clay” and those other stories, “A Painful Case” offers, alongside “The Dead”, the most structurally conventional ending in the collection.

⁵³ For the missing lyrics, see Margot Norris’s note in the main edition used here (89, n. 6).

Albeit fatalistic, it is a fitting culmination of the expectations raised by the narration. If the ending of “Clay” centres on a moment that does not tie the loose narrative ends, that of “A Painful Case” places at the forefront the foremost concern of the narrative: loneliness or, as Sonja Bašić phrases it, “the rejection of life and love” (1998: 20). One need only recall the last line, which is, despite (or because of) its devastating impact, completely pertinent: “He felt that he was alone” (99). Nonetheless, it can be argued that the ending is defamiliarised by the placement of “A Painful Case” immediately after “Clay”, with which it shares thematic affinities: both revolve around lonely unmarried adults (an aging bachelor in the former and a spinster in the latter). The dialogue between them serves as an enthralling way to create and crush expectations. After being misled by the narrator of “Clay”, we are less likely to expect a life-changing shift in self-perception to afflict the protagonist of “A Painful Case”, especially once we notice that Mr James Duffy is significantly more composed and self-assured than Maria. If she holds on to every word of approval from others (or what she deems so, in her liberal interpretation), he is self-absorbed to the point of egocentricity and insensitivity, even going so far as to think about himself in the third person. Therefore, it is shocking to see his trademark imperturbability disintegrate at the end, to see the varnish vanish: in “A Painful Case”, a moment of anagnorisis does come.

Considered independently and from a broad structural standpoint, this story is, then, rather straightforward (and none the worse for it). Yet, even the most conventional stories in the collection offer more localised narrational eccentricities, and “A Painful Case” is no exception. Consider, for instance, the delay in revealing Mrs Sinico’s death:

One evening as he was about to put a morsel of corned beef and cabbage into his mouth his hand stopped. His eyes fixed themselves on a paragraph in the evening paper which he had propped against the water-carafe. He replaced the morsel of food on his plate and read the paragraph attentively. Then he drank a glass of water, pushed his plate to one side, doubled the paper down before him between his elbows and read the paragraph over and over again. The cabbage began to deposit a cold white grease on his plate. The girl came over to him to ask was his dinner not properly cooked. He said it was very good and ate a few mouthfuls of it with difficulty. Then he paid his bill and went out. (94)

Instead of acquainting the reader with the contents of the newspaper article while the character reads it or, at least, once he has read it,⁵⁴ the narrator teasingly withholds the information, drawing out the suspense. The reader is made aware that Mr Duffy reads the article several times but is not told about its subject. The narrator's selective silence continues as he provides a somewhat long account of the protagonist's walk back home and his new reading of the text:

He walked along quickly through the November twilight, his stout hazel stick striking the ground regularly, the fringe of the buff *Mail* peeping out of a side-pocket of his tight reefer overcoat. On the lonely road which leads from the Parkgate to Chapelizod he slackened his pace. His stick struck the ground less emphatically and his breath, issuing irregularly, almost with a sighing sound, condensed in the wintry air. When he reached his house he went up at once to his bedroom and, taking the paper from his pocket, read the paragraph again by the failing light of the window. He read it not aloud but moving his lips as a priest does when he reads the prayer *In Secretis*. This was the paragraph (94-5)

It is only now that the narrator, quoting in full the fairly lengthy article (which is by itself another narrational peculiarity), reveals Mrs Sinico's demise to the reader. This postponement, although it serves the persecution of classical suspense, is a rather unusual display of narratorial legerdemain.

These small(er) eccentricities also include the odd openings that some of the narrators construct. We have already discussed the impish beginnings of two stories that show a rather constant inventiveness, "Ivy Day" and "Two Gallants", but even "A Little Cloud", which is structurally less adventurous, flaunts a comparable opening:

Eight years before he had seen his friend off at the North Wall and wished him godspeed. Gallaher had got on. You could tell that at once by his travelled air, his well-cut tweed suit and fearless accent. Few fellows had talents like his and fewer still could remain unspoiled by such success. Gallaher's heart was in the right place and he had deserved to win. It was something to have a friend like that. (57)

When Little Chandler meets Gallaher at a pub later that day, he soon becomes disappointed, prompting Norris to assert that "Chandler's prior estimations and encomia of Gallaher had been entirely proleptic" (2003: 109). "It is", Senn argues in like manner,

⁵⁴ The narrator could even have acquainted the reader with the contents of the article *before* the protagonist reads it, the suspense arising, in that case, not from our desire to find out what the article is about, but rather from our desire to find out whether – or when – the character would read it and how he would react. Nonetheless, he prefers to leave the reader in the dark for a while.

“obvious from their greeting in the prestigious bar that the two have not yet met before their appointment” (2004: 107).⁵⁵ Led astray by the subtly irregular opening, Norris and Senn fail to notice that information provided in the second paragraph corroborates that Little Chandler’s initial enthusiasm does emanate from an earlier encounter with his old acquaintance on that same day: “Little Chandler’s thoughts ever since lunchtime had been of his meeting with Gallaher, of Gallaher’s invitation and of the great city London where Gallaher lived” (57). Three items are here listed: the (past) meeting, the invitation that Gallaher made at that meeting for a new one (which is narrated later) and England’s capital city. It is crucial to discern that the second item is not a rephrasing of the first. Therefore, we may conjecture that, earlier on that day, during or just before “lunchtime”, Little Chandler encountered Gallaher, although he may not have known previously that his “friend” was back in town. They may have crossed paths somewhere, perhaps on the street, given that Gallaher – who later tells Little Chandler that he “met some of the old gang today” (61) – had some engagements. They likely exchanged a few cordial words, thus leaving Little Chandler a good impression of Gallaher, and quickly arranged a later meeting to catch up.

One may wonder why the narrator does not recount that earlier meeting or at least inform the reader about it in a clearer manner. Although we could propose that “the lives of the Dubliners were not subdued to the conventional form of the story, but were presented according to the pressures of the city and the form of an emotion” (Read, 1967: 9), the answer is, in my estimation, plainer and less strained: this narrator, like those of the remaining stories, enjoys playing with form and occasionally throwing us off. This *jouissance* also explains the broader narrational deviations on which the narrators of this collection luxuriate with reckless abandon: they relish the constrictions that they impose on themselves and on us, crafting an oppressive tone, transgressing conventions and nurturing formal heterogeneity. When a traditional narrator would tell,

⁵⁵ Yet, Senn, having to explain “how [...] Chandler know[s] that Gallaher had got on”, does not bet on a prolepsis, hazarding instead that “[s]omeone must have told Chandler about how Gallaher had ‘got on’”, although he recognises that “the initial sentence has all the ring of first-hand experience” (2004: 107). In another essay, he had alternately proposed that “[i]t seems as though the initial thoughts were mentally directed to someone who needed to be persuaded about Gallaher’s sterling qualities” and that “we may decide that Chandler’s thoughts at the beginning have been prepared for Annie”, his wife (1997a: 40, 41). Neither of these explanations strikes me as particularly persuasive.

these queer tellers do not; when he would not, they do. Alternatingly pithy and prolix, they languorously dwell on what they instruct us to regard as banalities and fleetingly go over – or even skip altogether – what they persuade us to see as the meat and potatoes of their tales. Indeed, “they decenter and deconstruct the structures of these stories in such a way that the stories could all more or less be described by the phrase from ‘A Painful Case’: ‘adventureless tale[s]’” (Roughley, 1999: 116). For that reason, we could say, as Bašić does, that “Joyce’s plots are never well made” (1998: 17). We find ourselves thrust, to steal Hugh Kenner’s wonderfully Joycean word, into “Joyceland” (1958: 144), into the delightful *mundus inversus* of Joyce’s sly narrators, in which, flashing their fascinating flexibility, they expertly excite, exploit and often exasperatingly expunge expectations.

Chapter Three – The Voices of the Narrators

In the previous chapters, I have already broached the ironical, cruel, oppressive and playful stances adopted by the narrators, often pointing to what we may call their voices. Expanding upon the conclusions already reached, I will continue to draw their portraits, contending that they are powerful but not “objective” entities, that they implicitly comment on what they narrate and that their management of narrative and narration is directly influenced by their attitudes or temperaments. On the one hand, using these terms to discuss the homodiegetic narrators of the first three stories is rather unproblematic, since they are also characters – who, in *Dubliners*, are constructed and presented in a manner that encourages us to read them, despite their fictionality, as figures endowed with traits comparable to those of real human beings. On the other hand, the application of this approach to their heterodiegetic – and non-figural – counterparts is, perforce, a more delicate matter, but I would argue that even they, albeit not “human”, are humanisable, inasmuch as they let transpire characteristics that we can productively regard as human-like. Indeed, to allow that they are sarcastic is to concede that they can be compared, to some extent, to a person. Therefore, this way of attacking the question of the attributes of the narrators, if pursued correctly, is not necessarily disadvantageous. However, for it to be a worthwhile and analytically rigorous exercise, one cannot skip the groundwork: the narrators do not openly define themselves as if they were on a psychiatrist’s couch, and one must, in order to unveil their natures, assess their handling of figural discourse and of the remaining diegetic material.

This assessment is, alas, seldom performed. Therefore, there has been a pronounced lack of precision in the (rather unabundant) critical attempts to define the dispositions of the narrators of *Dubliners* along these lines. In effect, haphazard approaches, resulting from selective or incomplete readings and a disregarding or misunderstanding of the role of narrational conventions, have often muddled the issue of narratorial identity in this collection (and the fault can be found in disquisitions on many other fictional works). Sonja Bašić, for instance, asserts that, in “Grace”, “the

perspective seems to be that of an (ironic and Irish) God” (1998: 17). This remark roughly sketches a narratorial voice, but it is never appropriately substantiated or even expanded upon, as she points to no significant textual element that may justify her observation. Although broad comments of this sort are too common in Joycean criticism to make us pause – even if some of us may, with tongue in cheek, enquire about the difference between an Irish and, say, a Belgian deity, since it goes unexplained –, we should recognise that her considerations, despite their assertiveness, are so perfunctory that they prove of no use for a systematic description of narratorial temperaments.

Interestingly, Bašić’s reference to the divine suggests that the narrator wields considerable power, but she frequently stresses narratorial limitations, which is symptomatic of another recurring problem in interpretations of Joyce’s stories: an ingrained unwillingness to credit the narrators for the wide range of decisions reviewed in the preceding chapters. This resistance often triggers the general avoidance to discuss explicitly the role of the narrators in the stories and dictates the assignation of narrational powers to characters, illustrated by the supposition that “Duffy may be his own narrator” (Kershner, 1989: 97) or “the author of his own story” (Bixby, 2004: 120). Such observations entail that the “proper” narrator of “A Painful Case” has a reduced status in the narration. Yet, it is not always made clear whether the narrators willingly allow the characters to assume narratorial duties or whether they forcefully take charge on their own. Claire A. Culleton, however, openly proposes the latter view: “a character can take the narrative biscuit [...] and run with it, stealing the narrative from the implied narrator [...], not only inserting himself or herself into the narrative but hoarding it as well, until another character or narrator reclaims it” (1998: 111).⁵⁶ It is, then, the

⁵⁶ This may seem an idiosyncratic interpretation that has not found much favour in Joycean scholarship, but it is ultimately compatible with Bakhtinian notions of dialogism, and Culleton merely makes explicit a construal of the relationship between the narrator and the characters that has already surreptitiously taken hold. It is this construal that underlies R. B. Kershner’s contention that “Eveline is more in command of her narrative” than Polly (1989: 90), revealing a crippling misconception of the implications of narratorial choices regarding the conveyance of figural thought. In Polly’s section, free indirect discourse is not used, although the narrator does access her mind; in “Eveline”, by contrast, this mode figures prominently. I hope to have established in the first chapter that these choices are not dependent on the will or control of the characters and that they, if not properly understood, may be invoked to “corroborate” antipodean opinions: in effect, if the absence of free indirect discourse makes Kershner perceive Polly as weak, it makes Margot Norris, who usually does emphasise narratorial shortcomings, perceive her as potentially strong, stating that perhaps “Polly resists narrative interpretation” (2003: 106).

narrator's "lack of control at all levels that allows for mutinous intervention" (*ibidem*: 112). She asserts that "[n]owhere is this sort of [narrative] theft more evident than in Joyce's *Dubliners*" (*ibidem*: 111), but the main deficiency of her proposal is that what allows the characters to comfortably straddle the moat between the intra- and the extra-diegetic dimension remains largely indeterminate.⁵⁷ Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that this is possible, one is still driven to ask what compels the characters to keep mum about the control that they exert. As Culleton does not address this pressing question, her reading remains unconvincing.

The delineation of narratorial voices as all but obliterated is often connected with an appraisal of *Dubliners* as a collection shaped by "Joyce's realist aesthetic" (Pribek, 2004: 133), implying "a striving for objectivity" and "transparency, usually seen as a contrast to opaqueness" (Bašić, 1998: 15). Some scholars recognise such qualities in the collection: "Any perspective is provided by the detached artist-narrator, observing, shaping his narratives but not offering judgement" (Sanders, 2004: 538). Such a detachment is occasionally seen as the result of the narrator's effacement and, by extension, of his feebleness: "in his search for objectivity, the modern realist has divested himself more and more of narrative authority" (Bašić, 1998: 16). Nevertheless, the narratorial entities of conventional realist works are commonly regarded as omniscient, and Wheldon Thornton notes that many critics "are sure that Joyce disdained the traditional omniscient narrator and the accessory values that it seems to imply" (1994: 194, n. 3). Consequently, even those who regard Joyce's stories as realist usually qualify their remarks: for instance, Jean-Paul Riquelme asserts that there is "a relatively opaque realistic style" that "draws attention to its own language because the illusion of transparency is not maintained" (1999: 125-6), and Paul Devine argues that "realism in *Dubliners* is often deceptive in its apparent transparency" (2004: 95). As a result, explicit and implicit pronouncements on the powerlessness of narrators are more often tied to the consideration that the collection, in one way or another, transgresses realism: "The lack of narrative intervention and guidance creates not a positive sense of

⁵⁷ Culleton suggests that even "weak" characters – personae that lack the strength or finesse to take the biscuit – have the ability to sense the extradiegetic dimension, stating that Eveline can perhaps perceive "the narrator's indifference to her motivations" (1998, 117).

objectivity but a ‘negative’ sense of uncertainty unsettling the realist convention” (Bašić, 1998: 17).⁵⁸

Interestingly, the consideration that symbolist tendencies shape the stories may also have contributed to a disregarding of the narrators, inasmuch as the “symbolism” of the collection is understood as the result of semantic indeterminacies and, therefore, the absence of a traditional narratorial authority.⁵⁹ Tentative pronouncements such as Patrick A. McCarthy’s cautious affirmation that there are “suggestive details that at times seem to have a symbolic meaning” (1998: 3) exemplify the tendency in Joycean criticism to contend that the symbolist dimension of *Dubliners* arises less from specific symbols than from a tantalising suggestiveness, the prospect of polysemy. Even a scholar as invested in symbol-hunting as Florence L. Walzl has recognised that it can be a tricky pursuit: “In *Dubliners* it is difficult to draw a line between plot and symbol: they tend to fuse” (1961: 222). It is rather counterproductive, in my estimation, to equate this supposititious indefiniteness of meaning with symbolism, because, rather confusingly, it has also been singled out as a feature that makes *Dubliners* a subversion of symbolism. Peter Van de Kamp, for instance, identifies “a post-symbolist technique

⁵⁸ A comparable proposal is put forward by Cordell D. K. Yee: despite stressing that the stories are not wholly “antirealist”, he states that they subvert “classical realism” in that they are marked by “the disappearance of a dominant narrative voice that serves as a source of authority, that claims access to reality”. Yee connects this disappearance to the impact of the characters: “What operates in place of that dominant narrative discourse is what Hugh Kenner has called the ‘Uncle Charles Principle,’ a technique that dissolves the distinction between narrator and character” (1997: 20). Nevertheless, he, unlike Bašić, tends not to underscore narratorial weakness.

⁵⁹ I would argue that there is no antagonism between symbolist and realist tendencies in the collection. One may here refer to “Ireland at the Bar”, an article in which Joyce, after giving can be describes as a “realistic” account of the conviction to death of the putatively innocent Myles Joyce (no relation) in a murder trial conducted in English, a language not spoken by the defendant, presents the significance of this factual event in openly symbolic terms: “The figure of this dumbfounded old man, [...] deaf and dumb before his judge, is a *symbol* of the Irish nation at the bar of public opinion. Like him, she is unable to appeal to the modern conscience of England and other countries” (Joyce, 1998: 337; emphasis added). For whatever it is worth, one may note that the article is roughly contemporaneous with Joyce’s stories. It was originally published in September 1907, right around the time Joyce finished “The Dead”. The remaining stories were composed between 1904 and 1906. (For the dates of composition of the stories, see Joyce, 2000: 185.) This proves nothing about Joyce’s method of composition for *Dubliners*, but it does show that he was unlikely to be opposed to an integration of realism and symbolism. The symbols in the collection create no disruption of the realistic proclivities of the narration and certainly do not rely on the unknowability of “reality” or the impossibility of its representation. Therefore, if “After the Race”, for instance, is to be considered symbolic in a productive way, it is not owing to an elusive (lack of) meaning; it is because the narrator invites us to consider Jimmy Doyle’s relationship with his foreign friends as a representation of Ireland’s relationship with foreign countries (although we might as well substitute “synecdochic” for “symbolic” when discussing such a process).

of undetermining meanings that are determined and determining that which is indeterminate” (2004: 145).⁶⁰ Either way, what one should note, considering the matter under discussion, is that such readings easily encourage, advertently or not, the notion that the narrators are not in full control.

Thus, neither realism nor symbolism necessarily implies that the narrators are weak. Writing in 1915, Pound asserted that Joyce was neither a (neo-)symbolist nor a (neo-)realist: “we can be thankful for clear, hard surfaces, for an escape from the softness and mushiness of the neo-symbolist movement, and from the fruitier school of the neo-realists, and in no less a degree from the phantasists who are the most trivial and most wearying of the lot” (1967: 35). It is true that Pound’s conception of realism and symbolism does not evoke exactly the understanding of these terms activated by present-day critical discourse, but it proves useful to note that his praise of *Dubliners* (and eventually of *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*) positions Joyce as a prototypical modernist, given that he provides a response to what was perceived as the indefiniteness of symbolism and the sagginess and tiredness of realism. This suggests formal invention, to which realism in particular allegedly resists⁶¹ in order to pursue as plain a language as possible: “If it were possible to locate a single consistent characteristic of realism among its various rejections of traditional forms and ideals, it would be [an] antiliterary thrust” (Levine, 2000: 620). Therefore, we are encouraged to see in conspicuous manipulations of form a subversion of realism and an admission of the difficulty to ascertain meaning.

Unsurprisingly, these considerations have been connected with the extirpation of narratorial authority: “Joyce’s use of the effaced narrator [...] emphasizes the absence of declared meaning” (Murphy, 2004: 176). The implication is that a powerful – or at

⁶⁰ Interestingly, Van de Kamp also asserts that “[t]here’s a narrator lurking behind the narrators narrating characters’ narratives” (2004: 145). This superintendent figure, akin to “the Arranger” that Hugh Kenner (2004) finds in *Ulysses*, provides a way of eating your cake and having it too: you can stress the effacement of the narrators and still justify, however clumsily, the strong narratorial voices perceivable in the stories. I believe that this separation is muddy and contrived and that Van de Kamp’s proposal is not cogently argued: he, for instance, refers to Eveline as if she were the (subaltern) narrator of “her” story.

⁶¹ Nevertheless, it should be noted that “nineteenth-century writers were already self-conscious about the nature of their medium, and that there is a direct historical continuum between the realists who struggled to make narrative meaningful and modern critics who define themselves by virtue of their separation from realism and even from narrativity itself” (Levine, 2000: 614).

least more noticeable – narrator would not allow the more conspicuously literary properties of language to impair its potential for making sense of “reality”. One may also recall the frequent association of modernist experimentalism with perspectival fragmentation and, in consequence, the construal of the narrator as little more than a patchwork of figural voices, as if he had to be impotent or easily swayed to let figural discourse taint his own. Linguistic exuberance, then, is not cast as the result of a narrator’s playfulness and is said to interfere with the clarity of expression that he pursues in vain. Were one to accept this view, the modernist stimulation of the artistic dimension of the word would postulate the failure of the mimetic function of language and literature, and Joyce’s stories, promoting “the foregrounding of language’s own materiality” (Devine, 2004: 96), would avow the impossibility of representation and fully recoverable meaning. Yet, these assumptions result not only from a fundamental mistaking of the role of formal creativity in *Dubliners* but also from a conflation of modernism in philosophy, sometimes referred to as modernity, and modernism in literature. Even if we concur that, from an epistemic standpoint, “the modernist crisis involves an unbridgeable gap between our lived experience, and our attempts to ‘give an account’ of that experience” (Thornton, 1994: 27), we cannot conclude that the same forcibly applies to modernist literature as a whole: not all literary works that we describe as modernist give voice to the assumptions of modern(ist) thought.

In that regard, it can be argued that there is no trenchant chasm between realism and modernism: “Of all English modernist’s works”, Anca Dobrinescu usefully stresses, “Joyce’s is the indubitable evidence that if there is any difference at all between realism and modernism in literary terms, it does not reside so much in the sense realism and modernism make of the real, but in the new status assigned to literature” (2014: 204). Therefore, we can see modernism as realism bereft of the aforementioned antiliterary thrust, as pro-literary realism. If we prefer to phrase it differently, we can say that realism is already modernist: “modernism is not so modern as it seems, but is at least two hundred years old” (Levine, 2000: 614). According to Dobrinescu, there is a “focus on the potentialities of what gives the art of fiction its specificity in relation to other arts, i.e. language and technique”, but “Joyce did in no way attempt to destroy the

illusion of reality” (2014: 205, 206). She adds that the use of psycho-narration in *Ulysses*, which “has been alternately seen as a symbolist and a naturalist work”, does not subvert “the realist convention”, thereby proving “Joyce’s intending to preserve, through it, the illusion of the narrative being kept under control by a superior instance” (*ibidem*: 215, 227). I would argue that this is easily extendable to *Dubliners*.

Thus, debates regarding realism and subversive realism, symbolism and subversive symbolism, “post-symbolism” and modernism have proved conducive to the open or tacit justification of the reputed absence of domineering narratorial voices. Critics, consciously or not, are rather determined to strip the narrators of the powers that I have assigned to them in the previous chapters, often in an attempt to underline Joyce’s separation from the writing of his predecessors and some of his contemporaries:

Challenging the concept of the conventional ‘narrative voice,’ Joyce develops in *Dubliners* a new kind of narrator, one whose voice not only is compromised but co-opted by the thinking and telling minds of the characters whose stories he unfolds, a narrator whose knowledge is more limited than the characters whose actions he details. (Culleton, 1998: 111)

Considered in this light, the narrators of the stories are little more than facilitators of narratives, and those who deviate from this standard are seen as the bitter fruit of authorial naïveté or carelessness: Bašić, for instance, discountenances “After the Race” because it “bears some strong authorial statements, remnants of narrative strategies mainly discarded by Joyce even at this early stage” (1998: 18). Therefore, there is a perceptible prejudice against powerful narrators, perhaps ascribable to the remarkable influence of postmodernist thought and the valorisation of subtlety, ambiguity and inconclusiveness, which tend to make some decry the puissant narrator as no more than a sloppy vestige of a bygone era, as a relic best avoided. We can illustrate this bias with Keith Williams’ evaluation of “The Dead” as the story in which “Joyce [...] finally deconstructed the naturalistic limitations of *Dubliners*’ ‘scrupulous meanness’, pointing ahead to the richer indeterminacies of his Modernist experimentalism” (2004: 167). Hence, I believe that we may profit from George Levine’s salutary reminder: “criticism has a responsibility both to explication and to [literary] history” (2000: 613). To properly understand the narrators of the collection, we must curb our preconceptions and regard their authority as neither virtue nor vice.

However, one may ask whether it is possible to speak of narratorial authority in regard to the narrators of the three childhood stories, as they are homodiegetic. For Bernard Benstock, the answer is avowedly negative: “In allowing an immature narrator to record his own story [...], Joyce developed a narrative strategy that constantly calls attention to the limitations of a narrational presence in the act of storytelling” (1994: 13). Yet, I venture that, to a significant extent, a homodiegetic (and especially an autodiegetic) narrator, if narrating events from which he is sufficiently distant, may act in a manner not wholly incomparable with that of a heterodiegetic narrator (at least one that selects a single main focaliser), since he has access to the mind of one character, his own, and may have filled “gaps” in his knowledge by other means. Although it is not entirely clear how old the narrators are when they narrate the episodes from their childhood, it is generally agreed that, owing to their mastery of language, they are no longer boys: “all three stories are retrospective narrations, told by an ‘I’ [...] whose narrating skills and vocabulary clearly set him apart from the young boy who is his earlier self” (Riquelme, 1999: 125). As far as more tangible textual evidence goes, only in “An Encounter” is it unambiguous that a significant amount of time has elapsed between the events that the narrator narrates and the moment of narration itself. We know, for instance, what happens to Joe Dylan: “Everyone was incredulous when it was reported that he had a vocation for the priesthood. Nevertheless it was true” (12). In the narrative proper, the character is a boisterous boy, but he is a seminarian or perhaps already an ordained priest when the narration takes place. Another passage subtly reveals that enough time has passed for the narrator to have changed his phraseology: “He [...] wore what we used to call a jerry hat with a high crown” (17).

Regardless of their age, these narrators thoroughly control their narrations, although all that remains unsaid may make one doubt that. After all, the mysteries at the heart of “The Sisters” and “An Encounter” and, to a lesser extent, “Araby” remain maddeningly blurry, and one may feel that the narrators’ refusal to address the suppressed events results from their discomfort with the possibly taboo nature of the subject and their inability to come to terms with traumatic experiences. Still, one has to wonder what would lead them to choose as the central element of their narratives

precisely that which they want to avoid discussing explicitly or what would lead them to draw attention to that which they want to hide. Indeed, they do not just discreetly tiptoe around what they supposedly cannot narrate; they rather emphasise the very absence of important information – they make their refusal to narrate conspicuous. Because these narrators simultaneously dwell on and avoid the events that they construct as the most important ones, we can justifiably say that they share with the extradiegetic narrators a fondness for teasing the reader and subverting expectations. Their decision to create irksome silences is part of their game. In their youth, they faced experiences that they could not fully grasp; they now have the benefit of hindsight, but they decide to leave the reader in the dark.

Let us consider the case of “The Sisters”, in which the adult characters cryptically discuss Father Flynn, so as to make it difficult for the boy to understand them. In effect, suggestive ellipses abound in old Cotter’s utterances: “No, I wouldn’t say he was exactly but there was something queer there was something uncanny about him. I’ll tell you my opinion. ...” (3). As a result, the boy “puzzled [his] head to extract meaning from his unfinished sentences” (5), but, once he grows up, he makes unfinished statements of his own. As if conducting an act of cheeky revenge, he forces us to experience his past frustration by fastidiously preserving not only old Cotter’s pauses, insinuations and evasions but also his aunt’s and Eliza’s:

—And was that it? said my aunt. I heard something.

Eliza nodded.

—That affected his mind, she said. (11)

This narrator, like that of “Two Gallants”, appropriates dialogue without “properly” contextualising it, thereby mysteriously alluding to the most tantalising events. Thus, what “affected” Father Flynn only partially transpires in Eliza’s utterances: “there he was, sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession-box, wide-awake and laughing-like softly to himself”. In his typically rascally manner, the narrator closes the story not with his own words, but with Eliza’s, which only repeat what she has said before: “Wide-awake and laughing-like to himself. ... So then, of course, when they saw that, that made them think that there was something gone wrong with him.” (11). The narrator proves himself by mastering the adult game of slippery innuendo.

Refusing to even speculate about what caused Father Flynn's downfall, the narrator leaves us hanging: we are reduced to children, the talk of grown-ups mostly going over our heads. Besides, he adds a provocative ellipsis of his own to the narration: "I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange, in Persia, I thought. But I could not remember the end of the dream" (7). Therefore, he consciously mystifies the reader with his deliberate omissions. We can now understand the central misjudgements in Bašić's interpretation of the story:

This story can [...] be seen as the embodiment of the 'uncertainty principle,' indicating that experience is unfathomable (the boy is confused; he does not know what his feelings are particularly in respect to the shocking fact of death including the sense of liberation it brings) and, more important, that the powers of narrative (of language) itself are limited in their attempt to represent the experience of the world. (1998: 23)

One of the shortcomings of her reading is the direct equation of the confusion of the boy *qua* character with the stance of the (grown-up) boy *qua* narrator. This does tremendous violence to the story, which does not encourage the notion that "experience is unfathomable" but merely that *some* experiences are (partially) unfathomable to the boy. Regarding the limitations of language and narrative, one should note that our frustration does not derive from the *impossibility* of translating into words what happened to the priest; it derives from the opposite, that is, from the *possibility* of representation, from the narrator's sly refusal to represent that which he can represent, to narrate the narratable. "The real narrative tension is", as Gerald Doherty points out, "between the boy-focalizer who, solemnly sleuthlike, tries to uncover the 'facts' of the case, and the all-powerful adult-narrator's techniques of evasion—snares, jammings, suspended answers" (2004: 125). The central event is verbalisable but is not verbalised, and the narrator can at least discuss it but will not: "In unwitting collusion with those censoring authorities (ecclesiastical, political) he most abhors, he too autocratically dictates what may or may not be spoken about" (*ibidem*). His chosen métier is teasing and magnetising us.

Likewise, the narrator of "An Encounter" does not disclose what the "queer old josses" does. Although Mahony tells the boy to "[l]ook [at] what he's doing", he refuses: "I neither answered nor raised my eyes" (18). As Bašić states, "we are never

told what Mahony sees simply because the protagonist never looks” (1998: 18). Still, there is more to it than that: the narrator also refuses to speculate on it. It is obviously possible that, even at the time of the narration, he is ignorant of the nature of the josses’ actions, but he surely has his suspicions, which he vexingly refuses to share. Just as the josses speak “as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery”, so does the narrator, but ultimately no mystery is unfolded, even if he lets us know enough to suspect a “possible masturbation” (Roughley, 1999: 116). Therefore, one should note that his evasions are not accidental: “The boy-narrator’s faux naïveté (or is it the adult narrator’s ingenuity) [...] enables him to bring off *his* trick—presenting lurid sexual matters without overtly alluding to sex, at once protecting and undermining readerly ‘innocence’” (Doherty, 2004: 43). That explains the evasiveness of the ending: “I had to call the name again before Mahony saw me and hallooed in answer. How my heart beat as he came running across the field to me! He ran as if to bring me aid. And I was penitent for in my heart I had always despised him a little” (20). Bašić, however, proposes an alternative reading, stating that “the shock of the encounter with a disgusting adult (and the abysses of potential sexual and moral disgust opened by his behavior) had to be surrounded by a ring of silence and therefore replaced by any substitute that was at hand”. The ending then becomes an impromptu “screen for the obviously central event” (1998: 27). Yet, the narrator needs no screen: he could simply suppress the event outright. Instead, he makes it the focus of the narration and simultaneously keeps silent about it, revealing his eagerness to toy with the reader.

What is more revealing than the narrator’s refusal to give voice to his suspicions is his silence regarding the impact of this childhood experience on his life.⁶² Given the focus of the story on a purportedly important childhood experience, “we might expect a *Bildungsroman*” (Norris, 2003: 33) or a *Bildungskurzgeschichte*, to be more precise, and the same applies to “The Sisters” and “Araby”. We have seen that these stories disrupt the typical structure and even the traditional intent of quest narratives, and their laconicism regarding the growth of the protagonists is an equally significant subversion:

⁶² I may select as a foil the homodiegetic narrators of Edgar Allan Poe’s tales, such as “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) or “The Premature Burial” (1844), despite confronted with highly unusual – and even altogether fantastical – situations that they cannot fully understand, are still willing to discuss the impact that such distressing experiences have, the scars that they leave on them.

we do not know precisely what Father Flynn's death, the josser's mysterious activity and the abandonment of the romantic pursuit of Mangan's sister mean to the boys. Had the narrators acquainted us with the significance of their experiences,⁶³ they would make their psychological development perceptible – which is the general aim of a conventional *Bildungsroman* –, and the inscrutabilities of the stories would be less galling. Still, the narrators amuse themselves (and ultimately us) with their selective silences. A smaller omission in "Araby" may make this clearer: "The first name of Mangan's sister, so familiar and seductive to the boy", as Margot Norris notes, "is never voiced by the adult narrator" (2003: 49). He not only declines to divulge it but also emphasises that suppression: "her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood"; "Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises" (21, 22). The reader naturally wonders about the motivation for this exclusion. The answer seems quite straightforward to me: this omission, just as the others, is designed precisely to perplex and please us.

As a result, the homodiegetic narrators of the collection are as interested in crafting an inventive and subversive narration as their heterodiegetic peers. The narrational gaps that mark *Dubliners* arise from their attitudes or personalities rather than from their diminished powers and abilities. We may consider the case of "The Boarding House", whose narrator creates a completely legible presentation of a sequence of events but does not narrate all of them directly: he goes out of his way to construct those holes to display his narrational prowess. The challenge that he sets himself is to tell us without telling us. Even when the silences make certain events "illegible", the core motivation remains the same. Therefore, the holes do not represent a failure of communication or representation and should not be regarded as the outcome of narratorial limitations. Despite the ink that has been spilt over "the imperceptive narrator" (Bosinelli, 1998: x), I contend that the heterodiegetic narrators of *Dubliners*

⁶³ Only the narrator of "Araby" provides an account of the boy's changed self-perception: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (26). Nevertheless, the diction is so exaggerated, with its grandiloquent wording ("darkness", "creature", "vanity", "burned") and its solemnly alliterative and assonant effects ("driven and derided", "anguish and anger"), that it comes across as intentionally and ironically ill-fitting, especially after the trite dialogue that precedes it (which was transcribed in the first chapter).

can be described as omniscient – or, to put it in a more nuanced manner, unlimited in their ability to access diegetic material. To make us more comfortable with the apparently passé notion of omniscience, I would stress that it does not necessarily imply that the narrators know *everything*, but that they can know *anything*.⁶⁴ In other words, nothing is beyond their reach.

The refusal to regard the heterodiegetic narrators of the collection as omniscient (or at least much more knowledgeable than the characters) has led to awkward appraisals of what motivates certain narrational designs. For instance, Devine peculiarly contends that the selection of Lenehan as the focaliser of “Two Gallants” results from the geographical constrictions that affect the abilities of the narrator:

As soon as Corley and the slavey enter the tram for Donnybrook, [...] we lose sight of them and are left to wander the streets with Lenehan. The narrator is not omniscient; the extent to which he views affairs is limited to a discrete part of central Dublin. Within this area, however, his observations are acute (2004: 101)

In my estimation, this reading is hard to swallow, and Devine does little to make it more appetising, as he neglects to explain what leads him to regard this approach as preferable to a less contrived agnition of the ability of the narrator to act as he pleases. Devine seems to be under the assumption that the narrator, if he were omniscient, would invariably choose to follow Corley and the slavey rather than Lenehan, failing to recognise that he may voluntarily refuse to disclose information that he – concomitantly but not paradoxically – primes us to anticipate. As I have argued in the second chapter, that is precisely the *modus operandi* of the narrator of “Two Gallants”: his refusal to narrate Corley’s rendezvous with the slavey is tied to his investment in playing with form and in devilishly exciting our voyeuristic inclinations, only to frustrate and satirise them right away. Deliberately constructed by the cheeky narrator, this silence contributes to the ironical tone of the story.

⁶⁴ Scholes and Kellogg’s observations on narratorial omniscience may unveil some reasons for the discomfort with this concept: “Omniscience includes the related god-like attribute of omnipresence. God *knows* everything because He *is* everywhere – simultaneously. But a narrator in fiction is imbedded in a time-bound artifact. He does not know simultaneously but consecutively. He is not everywhere at once but now here, now there” (1968: 272-3). Yet, omniscience need not entail omnipresence, but merely the unrestrained ability to “travel” in time.

An additional problem with Devine's suggestion is the narrator's ability to read minds. Thus, even if we assume that, owing to motional restrictions, he is incapable of, albeit interested in, narrating the details of Corley and the slavey's intimate moments, he could still have accessed Corley's thoughts after he is reunited with Lenehan. However, Devine posits, perhaps by way of explanation, that "the predominance of grosser material circumstances" sometimes "obtrudes into the narrator's line of vision, becoming an obstacle that leaves us, as readers, at a loose end" (2004: 101). This strikes me as equivalent to stating that the suppression of Little Chandler's speech in "A Little Cloud" (which I explored in the first chapter) is motivated by the "noise" (65) at Corless's, which deafened the narrator, as though he were unable to catch the dialogue in these adversarial circumstances, despite his access to figural minds.⁶⁵ This confessedly ludicrous conjecture reveals that, if one is willing, every last formal eccentricity in the collection can be explained away with a shrugging reference to narratorial limitations and to the unknowability of reality. Yet, we must confront the textual evidence and recognise the agency of the narrators. Otherwise, we will not properly understand their relationship with, and attitudes towards, the diegetic data.

We may now contemplate a trickier story, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room". I have noted that the figural discourse, in percental terms, clearly overshadows the pure narratorial discourse. The narration is so heavily reliant on direct discourse – which Genette considered "dramatic in type" (1983: 172) – that the story invites comparisons to theatre. Margot Norris is among the critics who draw such comparisons: "In 'Ivy Day,' it is specifically naturalistic *drama* that seems to me invoked, for the story's very construction is *dramatic*" (2003: 176; emphasis in the original). Moreover, Fritz Senn notes that "[i]n 'Ivy Day' the presentation [of time] is mainly dramatic" (1997a: 20). Similarly, Warren Beck ventures that the story, which "has complete unity of time and space", is "less in the Joycean short story mode than that of the one-act play" (*apud* Norris, 2003: 176). Jennifer Levine – who, using terms virtually identical to Beck's, states that the story is "largely written like a one-act play" and makes mention of "the classical unities of place and time" (2012: 276, 277) – also emphasises "its

⁶⁵ Nevertheless, one must note that the elision certainly plays with the noise at the pub. Gallaher struggles to hear Little Chandler, and so do we.

theatricality”: “It’s all entrances and exits off a single stage set, [...] nothing offstage. [...] No flashbacks. No hidden corners. No interiority. Almost no description. Just talk” (*ibidem*: 276). In effect, the narrator seldom indulges in accounts of the thought processes of the characters. “Of the three stories [of public life]”, Jean-Paul Riquelme states, “‘Ivy Day’ eschews the presentation of consciousness most completely” (*apud* Norris, 2003: 176), but even that is an understatement: this is the story whose narration discloses figural thoughts the least in the whole collection. For all these reasons, no other lends itself as readily to a transposition from page to stage.

It is no surprise, then, that Bašić asserts “[t]he narrative authority is [...] lacking” (1998: 24). Likewise, Norris detects an absence of planning in the narrator’s approach: “The narration *almost inadvertently* gives us sufficient information” (2003: 179; emphasis added). This story, consequently, is perfectly suited to Culleton’s ideas regarding narratorial vulnerability. She contends that the narrator “sponges information off the dialogue, passing it off as his own”, noting his handling of names: “the narrator can only describe incoming characters and cannot identify them by name until one of the canvassers salutes them” (1998: 113). Culleton illustrates her remarks by referring to Father Keon’s introduction, which I will quote below, and to the initial description of Mr Crofton and Mr Lyons as “the fat man” and “the young man” (110, 111), respectively. We may, however, focus now on Mr Hynes’s entrance:

Someone opened the door of the room and called out:

—Hello! Is this a Freemasons’ meeting?

—Who’s that? said the old man.

—What are you doing in the dark? *asked a voice.*

—Is that you, Hynes? asked Mr O’Connor.

—Yes. What are you doing in the dark? *said Mr Hynes* (101; emphasis added)

This does not strike one as a passage composed by a strong narrator, let alone an omniscient entity. We may assume, therefore, that he, unaware that the character who has entered the Committee Room is Mr Hynes, has to wait for Mr O’Connor to provide the name before using it himself, as if forced to delegate some of the narratorial work. Were I to consider this passage in isolation, I would be more receptive to Culleton’s assessment (although she would still have to clarify the reasons that would compel a

narrator intent on obfuscating his ignorance to compromise himself by adding easily avoidable attributive signs or by refusing to use the passive voice when narrating actions whose agents he cannot name). Nevertheless, this is but a small portion of the complete text: other passages allow us to understand that the narrator's is a feigned ignorance, which he cultivates for the sake of creativity and jocularity. This explains the reasoning behind the very opening sentence of the story, which offers the only name that the narrator provides independently: "Old Jack raked the cinders together with a piece of cardboard and spread them judiciously over the whitening dome of coals" (99). It takes quite an arch narrator to open a story with the name of one character, only to steadfastly refuse to provide the name of all the other characters on his own.

Before we delve further into the question of narratorial agency and authority in "Ivy Day", we may briefly study other stories in which characters' names are employed in a playful manner. Eveline lends her name to the title of the homonymous story, but it does not immediately appear in the narration proper: saving her name for a moment of personal affirmation in the character's mental disposition, the narrator initially refers to her as "she". Her name, then, operates as a pronoun postcedent rather than antecedent. This cataphoric process is only completed a couple of pages later. In "Counterparts", Farrington's name is twice provided in dialogue transcribed in direct discourse before he is introduced. In effect, the second sentence identifies him straightaway: "Send Farrington here!" (70). Yet, the narrator refers to him by name only in the middle portion of the story, when the character, released from the vexations of his job, hops from bar to bar with his drinking companions. Outside of this intermediate section, the narrator calls him "the man". Therefore, it is entirely clear, in this case, that narratorial ignorance cannot be pled as an excuse. His alternance between the two forms of address is premeditated and results from his concern with providing his interpretation of the diegetic content that he narrates. "The Boarding House" offers another peculiar example: Mrs Mooney's husband is referred to as "Mr Mooney" (49), but, when he re-emerges a few paragraphs later, he becomes "a disreputable sheriff's man" (51), as if he had degenerated into a stranger after their divorce. This formulation, which appears in Mrs Mooney's section, prefigures an expression that reappears in Mr Doran's section in

a passage rendered in free indirect discourse: “her disreputable father” (54). The mirroring reveals that the narrator is well aware of that which he has not yet narrated. What may appear haphazard has been meticulously planned, arising from a desire to create a repetitious and bizarre prose. Thus, even the provision of the names of the characters becomes a toy in the playful hands of the narrators of the collection.

“Two Gallants” should also be considered, given that it follows, at the outset, the same pattern as “Ivy Day”, insofar as the characters upon whom the narrator “chances” are not immediately named: “*Two young men* came down the hill of Rutland Square. *One of them* was just bringing a long monologue to a close. *The other* [...] wore an amused listening face. *He* was squat and ruddy” (38-9; emphasis added). It is only a few paragraphs later that their names are disclosed:

No one knew how *he* achieved the stern task of living, but his name was vaguely associated with racing tissues.

—And where did you pick her up, *Corley*? he asked.

Corley ran his tongue swiftly along his upper lip.

—One night, *man*, he said, I was going along Dame Street and I spotted a fine tart under Waterhouse’s clock and said good-night, you know. [...] Then next Sunday, *man*, I met her by appointment. [...] It was fine, *man*. [...] And one night she brought me two bloody fine cigars—O, the real cheese, you know, that the old fellow used to smoke. ... I was afraid, *man*, she’d get in the family way. But she’s up to the dodge.

—Maybe she thinks you’ll marry her, said *Lenehan*. (39-40; emphasis added)

The narrator initially employs masculine pronouns to refer to Corley and only incorporates the character’s name into his own independent discourse after Lenehan mentions it. One may be compelled to write this narrator off as an entity limited in his abilities, but he soon reveals that he can impenetrate the minds of the characters. However, one need not look any farther than the extract provided above for clearer textual evidence that he knows their names and only withholds them because of his facetiousness. After all, Corley does not use Lenehan’s name, referring to him four times as “man” (and twice as “you”, if one counts the pronoun in the standard expression *you know* as a form of address). The narrator, loath to wait for Corley, offers the name of his own accord and with no assistance, breaking the pattern and indulging in his fondness for narrational peculiarities, as well as faintly clueing us to Lenehan’s

status as the protagonist. In fact, were we to depend on Corley for the name of his comrade, we would remain oblivious: he never utters Lenehan's name throughout the story, although Lenehan utters Corley's no fewer than seven times. Aware of this beforehand, the omniscient narrator comes to the rescue, but not before he amuses himself with our lack of knowledge: in the first sentence of the passage quoted, he jokily refers to Corley's "name" prior to its disclosure.

The abilities and attitudes of the narrator of "Ivy Day" are, however, more inconspicuous, and one might still remain adamant that his peculiar method for the provision of characters' names is an inevitable by-product of his failure to access information connected with the narrative past. Yet, he is cognisant of the past:

Mr O'Connor had been engaged by Tierney's agent to canvass one part of the ward but, as the weather was inclement and his boots let in the wet, he spent a great part of the day sitting by the fire in the Committee Room in Wicklow Street with Jack, the old caretaker. They had been sitting thus since the short day had grown dark. It was the sixth of October, dismal and cold out of doors. (100)

The narrator is familiar with events that precede the narrative present (and that took place outside of the Committee Room), although he only lets that transpire twice: in the extract just quoted and in the description of Mr Crofton. The question remaining, then, is whether he can access the characters' minds. He often appears bereft of that ability, rarely venturing into psychological descriptions and preferring to report solely on what one may call "observable reality". Consider his description of old Jack: "It was an old man's face, very bony and hairy. The moist blue eyes blinked at the fire and the moist mouth fell open at times, munching once or twice mechanically when it closed" (99). In his typically curt manner, he provides only a few physical details, despite intimating the character's psychological features, inasmuch as old Jack, in his heart-to-heart with Mr O'Connor, presents himself as a man whose vigour has been robbed by ageing.

The previously mentioned description of Father Keon, however, hints that the narrator may be privy to the thoughts of the characters: "A person resembling a poor clergyman or a poor actor appeared in the doorway" (106). The reader's uncertainty regarding the degree of knowledge of the narrator makes the intent of these remarks ambiguous. They may convey his first impression of the priest or he may know more

than he lets on, offering a veiled evaluation of the character, which would be in agreeance with the comments that Mr O'Connor offers when asked whether Father Keon is "a priest at all": "'Mmmyes, I believe so ... I think he's what you call a black sheep. We haven't many of them, thank God, but we have a few ... He's an unfortunate man of some kind'" (107). As a result, the narrator's seemingly innocent and uninformed remarks are strangely prescient: Father Keon turns out to be, in a sense, a priest *and* an actor. The adjective "poor", used twice, also becomes ambivalent: if at first we read it as a reference to the socio-economic status suggested by the character's appearance, we may now be inclined to take it as an elusive comment on the quality of his ministry or performance, since he is not very convincing in either. Were he not a "poor actor" (in the role of the priest), he would be able to deceive his audience and silence the criticism levelled at him; were he not a "poor priest", he would not try to deceive his audience to begin with. In any case, the narrator's comments are phrased in an understated manner, and we, at this juncture, remain unsure about his ability to penetrate the characters' minds. It is only later that he betrays his powers.

This uncertainty persists when the narrator refers to Father Keon's "discreet *indulgent* velvety voice" and notes that he "purs[ed] his lips as if he were addressing a child" (107; emphasis added). These remarks may convey the impression that the priest makes on the narrator – which would result from external observation –, but they may also be motivated by his firm awareness of Father Keon's likely condescension – which would derive from his peering into the priest's mind. For most of the story, remarks on figural psyches are usually made in such oblique ways – or, oftener, not made at all. Somewhat more assertive observations emerge in the occasional use of adverbs pertaining to the character's emotions and attitudes: "Mr O'Connor [...] had been staring *moodily* into the fire"; "Mr Henchy began to rub his hands *cheerfully*"; "The old man opened another bottle *grudgingly*" (105, 109, 110; emphasis added). Nevertheless, these adverbial qualifications might result from an inference derived from the observation of body language and facial expressions rather than mind-reading. The story is already past its midpoint when the narrator finally reveals unequivocally that he is able to access the consciousness of the characters:

Mr Crofton sat down on a box and looked fixedly at the other bottle on the hob. He was silent for two reasons. The first reason, sufficient in itself, was that he had nothing to say; the second reason was that he considered his companions beneath him. He had been a canvasser for Wilkins, the Conservative, but, when the Conservatives had withdrawn their man and, choosing the lesser of two evils, given their support to the Nationalist candidate, he had been engaged to work for Mr Tierney. (111)

The only other instance of the narrator's provision of an explicit comment on the mind of a character appears near the end of the story, when he states that Mr O'Connor took "out his cigarette papers and pouch the better to hide his emotion" (116). Yet, even this might have been explained away as an inference from the apprehension of external reality, were it not for the description of Mr Crofton, which is the only completely unambiguous evidence of the narrator's ability to read thoughts. The almost total absence of explicit psychological descriptions, then, is not due to narratorial limitations, but to a deliberate avoidance of accounts of the characters' inner lives.

Therefore, Culleton's portrayal of the narrator as a weakling is not appropriate. He is under the guise of the dispassionate, impartial and limited reporter, but his ironic and imperious voice can still be faintly heard, no matter how patiently he allows the characters to ramble on. Once we grasp this, his humorous touches become more palpable. For instance, he mocks his focus on external reality and his refusal to probe figural minds by occasionally depicting the fire as if it were another character: "the fire lost all its cheerful colour"; "Mr Henchy [...] spat so copiously that he nearly put out the fire, which uttered a hissing protest" (101, 105). The narrator also personifies corks: "In a few minutes an apologetic *Pok!* was heard as the cork flew out of Mr Lyons' bottle"; "*Pok!* The tardy cork flew out of Mr Crofton's bottle"; "*Pok!* The cork flew out of Mr Hynes' bottle, but Mr Hynes [...] did not seem to have heard the invitation" (111, 113, 116). With this comical employment of onomatopoeias, the narrator treats the sounds emitted by the volitant corks as he treats the dialogue, deriding in the process his indefatigable transcription of figural speech in direct discourse and playing with the reader, who does not expect this dry and dull prose to be, in reality, quietly lively, an oxymoronic description that the narration justifies.

The narrator of “Grace”, a story in some respects comparable with “Ivy Day”,⁶⁶ also flaunts a postiche obliviousness, presenting the opening situation – which revolves around the sorry spectacle of Mr Kernan’s fall down the stairs of a pub – as though he had happened on the scene: “Two gentlemen who were in the lavatory at the time tried to lift him up: but he was quite helpless” (128). “The narrator”, as Margot Norris argues, “affects not to know who the gentlemen are, who the unconscious man is, what happened—a situation that [...] turns out to be spurious, for the narrator knows and eventually tells us a great deal about Tom Kernan” (2003: 206). By beginning the narration in such a provocative manner, he makes us expect a mystery behind his fall – we wonder whether Mr Kernan lost his step or has been pushed –, but, in the typically frustrating manner of the narrators of the collection, he focuses on the “plot” devised by the fallen man’s friends to bring him to “the pale of the Church” (134) in the hopes of reforming him and moderating his drinking habits.

The strange careening of “Grace” has been noted by Bašić: “Thematically the story begins at one point and ends at another rather arbitrarily. In other words, A does not lead to B; B (vulgarized religion) just insinuates itself while A (Kernan’s drunkenness) becomes peripheral” (1998: 22). Although Bašić is right, the very opening of the story provides the interpretative key for the narrative as a whole: just as the gentlemen had tried to help Mr Kernan rise again in a literal sense, so do his friends in a figurative sense. The entire narrative is encapsulated in the first sentence, which functions as a masked narratorial judgement: the narrator subtly proclaims that Mr Kernan is “quite helpless” in regard to both his literal and his figurative fall and that his friends’ attempts to restore him to grace are futile. Telling us without delay that no redemption awaits Mr Kernan, the narrator scoffs at the proceedings before they are

⁶⁶ As “Ivy Day”, “Grace” makes ample use of direct discourse and, in the first few pages, privileges external reality, while psychological descriptions are made only in an indirect manner. Nonetheless, the narrator of “Grace” soon becomes more openly assertive, as when he gives an account of Mr Power’s reaction to being called “Jack” by Mr M’Coy:

Mr Power did not relish the use of his Christian name. He was not straight-laced but he could not forget that Mr M’Coy had recently made a crusade in search of valises and portmanteaus to enable Mrs M’Coy to fulfil imaginary engagements in the country. More than he resented the fact that he had been victimised he resented such low playing of the game. (138)

This is a rather long explanation of Mr Power’s feelings and thoughts, the likes of which can only once be found in the other story. (We may also note *en passant* that the delay of like passages creates an interesting structural quirk.)

narrated, but we can only notice this after reading the full story. As presented by the narrator, Mr Kernan becomes a man who has, or is, already fallen at the starting point of the narrative and stays fallen until the end. There is no significant progress, and the story serves as “an ironic reduction of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*” (Norris, 2004: 62). The tripartite structure may recall a transition from hell to purgatory and finally to paradise, but the narrator forces us to understand that all remains unchanged.

The presentation of implicit narratorial commentary is also connected with the ridiculing of figural speech. Although the narrator of this story is not as bull-headed in his use of direct discourse as that of “Ivy Day”, he is equally as sardonic and does not hesitate to lambast the characters by punctiliously transcribing their oral discourse, even – or especially – when it becomes repetitious and ludicrous: “The dialogue is nearly meaningless in its rambling discontinuity as Joyce wanted it to be” (Bašić, 1998: 21). The narrator bemocks with particular zest the characters’ erroneous and stultifying remarks on the history of religion: as David Norris points out, “the half-informed debate about the infallibility of the Pope is hilarious” (2004: 62). For that reason, I cannot agree with the other Norris, Margot: “During his narration of the amply flawed and foolish Papal discussion in Tom Kernan’s bedroom, the narrator either fails to detect the numerous small mistakes that are made, or refuses to betray them to us” (2003: 207). It is true that he does not set about rectifying the characters’ mind-numbing mistakes in matters of theology; however, he does betray their gaffes to us, silently scorning them. He is not interested in supplying a corrigendum, but it is in their blunders that he finds and founds part of the causticity of the story.

In effect, the narrator is particularly attentive to the characters’ misapprehension of their own faith. They profess a desire to “wash the pot” by attending a “retreat” (140), which is defined, in the Norton Critical Edition, as a “period of withdrawal from worldly concerns, sponsored by the Church, to concentrate on improving one’s spiritual condition” (140, n. 3). Yet, they see it in ludicrously profane terms: “It’s not exactly a sermon, you know. It’s just kind of a friendly talk, you know, in a common-sense way”; “The Jesuits cater for the upper classes” (140, 141). In the final section of the story, Father Purdon, describing the parable of the unjust servant in the Gospel of Luke as “a

text for business men and professional men” (150), condones this practice in his homily, rendered in a *mélange* of direct, indirect and free indirect discourse worthy of the wild and wavy stylistic patterning of “A Mother”. The ridicule reaches its height at the very end, which cuts the sermon short: “Well, I have looked into my accounts. I find this wrong and this wrong. But, with God’s grace, I will rectify this and this. I will set right my accounts” (151). The combination of Christian rhetoric, headlined by “God’s grace” with the temporal language of business⁶⁷ further cheapens a religious concept already savagely trivialised by the narrator, who, in addition to parading it frivolously in the title,⁶⁸ activates the mundane acceptions of the word: “By *grace* of these two articles of clothing, he said, a man could always pass muster”; “a jovial well-fed man [...] carried a silk hat *gracefully* balanced upon his other arm”; “He bore himself with a certain *grace*” (131, 133, 143; emphasis added). Therefore, the narrator, with his fascinating *sprezzatura*, apes the characters’ mixture of the secular and the sacred in advance and pokes fun at their hopes for reformation. The ending is his coup de grâce.

The narrator of “The Boarding House” also jests at the characters’ self-serving uses of religion with his wordplay: we may remember the already quoted description of the “worshippers”, which is too derisory to derive from Mrs Mooney (who, despite the hypocritical opportunism with which she uses religion, is a firm believer). Furthermore, the insistence on the term “reparation” (52, 53, 55), which emerges thrice in Mrs Mooney’s section and twice in Mr Doran’s accentuates the latter’s sense of crushing confinement and his inability to escape from a forced marriage to Polly. The concept is the linchpin of Mrs Mooney’s claims against Mr Doran, as she has religion or at least the clergy on her side. The narrator also disparages the characters in other ways. Consider his oxymoronic observations about Polly, who has the “wise innocence” of a “perverse madonna” (45, 44), or the comically unflattering simile in his account of Mrs Mooney’s unfussy approach to ethics: “She dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals

⁶⁷ I may also note that Father Purdon uses the term “world” five times (including once in a quotation from the Scriptures) and “worldlings” once. His oratory is certainly repetitive in a rather prosaic manner: in addition to “this wrong and wrong” and “this and this”, he refers to “my accounts” twice.

⁶⁸ As titles are considered paratextual or “metafictional devices” (Karrer, 1997: 51), some may wonder whether they are ascribable to the narrator. I would argue that this is the soundest approach, but Derek Attridge takes the opposite approach when discussing “Clay” (2000: 37-9).

with meat” (44). Similarly, his choices regarding structure reveal his investment in analysing and commenting on the diegesis. For instance, the concentration of the narrative in the boarding house and the positioning of Mr Doran’s introduction after those of all the other main characters suggest the character’s entrapment: “To reach Bob Doran the reader must first pass through every other significant character of the narrative, the members of the Mooney family that collectively team up to enclose him in bondage” (Benstock, 1994: 124). Likewise, Mr Doran’s section is sandwiched between Mrs Mooney’s and Polly’s: he is flanked on either side.

A comparable ensnarement occurs in “A Mother”, whose opening briefly focuses on Mr Holohan, who “had been walking up and down Dublin for nearly a month, with his hands and pockets full of dirty pieces of paper, arranging about the series of concerts”. Yet, our attention is soon diverted to the character who turns out to be the protagonist: “in the end it was Mrs Kearney who arranged everything” (116). After the opening paragraph, the narrator introduces a flashback (a mixed retroversion, to be more precise) and narrates Mrs Kearney’s backstory and the preparations for the concerts, making her degree of input clear. His motivation for not simply setting the preparations as the starting point of the narration is unveiled at the end, when Mrs Kearney exits the concert hall and we are left for brief moments with Mr Holohan. Thus, he is present at the beginning and at the end: as she is trapped in a world ruled by men, the structure mirrors the constrictions that she experiences. One may associate this to Margot Norris’s assertion that “the narrator prejudices us against Mrs. Kearney” (2003: 191), but I do not: as I stated in the first chapter, his handling of figural discourse ensures that no one escapes unscathed.⁶⁹ Although Norris argues that “he prejudices us

⁶⁹ Kimberly J. Devlin states that the narrator “seems to try hard to make the reader dislike Mrs. Kearney, by treating her with due patriarchal contempt” (2012: 296), but I would point out that he devotes plenty of attention to her dilemma, commenting on it by briefly focusing on Miss Healy, who, at one point, flirts with “the *Freeman* man”, a character “old enough to suspect one reason for her politeness” – presumably to get a favourable review – but who does not mind: “He was pleasantly conscious that the bosom which he saw *rise and fall* slowly beneath him *rose and fell* at that moment for him, that the laughter and fragrance and wilful glances were his tribute” (124; emphasis added). The repetition is a sign of the narrator’s comical treatment of the scene and of Miss Healy’s conformation to her socially sanctioned role, which he sets up as a foil to Mrs Kearney’s confrontational stance. The protagonist believed that, if she were assertive, she would make herself respected, but her “unladylike” behaviour is repeatedly criticised by the other characters. The narrator makes sure that we know that she fails because she does not follow Miss Healy’s lead and abide by societal norms.

in favor of Mr. Burke" (*ibidem*), that character's introduction reveals otherwise: "He was a suave, elderly man who balanced his imposing body, when at rest, upon a large silk umbrella. His magniloquent western name was the moral umbrella upon which he balanced the fine problem of his finances" (124). Just as the narrator of "The Boarding House" retrieves the word "cleaver" to satirise Mrs Mooney, this narrator does the same with "umbrella", disdainfully returning to it in the very last sentence: "You did the proper thing, Holohan, said Mr O'Madden Burke, poised upon his umbrella in approval" (128). As at the end of "Clay", the mundane is wittily given the spotlight. Therefore, the narrator does not ask us to look up to Mr Burke.

A misunderstanding of the dictional and formal choices of the narrators has led to other specious assumptions regarding narratorial attitudes towards characters. Florence L. Walzl, for instance, considers that "there are two Marias" in "Clay": "the Maria of the laundry and the Maria of the Halloween excursion" (1962: 87). She wonders about "Joyce's intent in this contrast which suggests saint and witch, life and death" (*ibidem*: 89), but Joyce (or the narrator) establishes no such contrast. Let us consider, however, Walzl's arguments for seeing the "first" Maria as a saint:

Within the confines of the laundry, several of Maria's qualities, her goodness, peaceableness, and loving motherliness, are greatly stressed. Both as a worker and a person her goodness is evident. She labors to make the scullery of the laundry a pleasant, happy place: the kitchen is "spic and span," the fire "nice and bright," the barmbracks perfectly cut, the plants well-kept. (*ibidem*: 87-9)

The passages that Walzl selects as textual evidence do not prove that the narrator (or Joyce) characterises Maria as saintly, because they are, as I have stressed in the previous chapter, rendered in free indirect discourse. Therefore, they reflect Maria's view of herself, which the narrator mercilessly debunks, baring her insecurities and her penchant for fixating on the commendatory words of others. Besides mentally quoting the cook, she quotes Joe, who "used often to say" that "[m]amma is mamma but Maria is my proper mother" (83). Yet, the following excerpt provides the most glaring example:

She was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace. One day the matron had said to her:
—Maria, you are a veritable peace-maker!

And the submatron and two of the Board ladies had heard the compliment. And Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria. Everyone was so fond of Maria. (82-3)

When the pendulum threatens to sway from delusion to disillusion, she soothes herself by thinking of moments as these to prevent her positive self-image from crumbling. These passages may strike one – and have stricken Walzl – as cases of narratorial flattery,⁷⁰ but they result from (self-)praise presented in free indirect discourse (which contextualises and colours the interposed instances of direct and indirect discourse) and should not be taken at face value. Indeed, the narrator guys the character's infantile diction, opening the antepenultimate and penultimate sentences of the passage quoted above with a copulative conjunction. Thus, he does not present the character as bipolar, and the alleged contrast between an angelic and a witchy Maria is but a side effect of a failure to identify the narrator's use of free indirect discourse, of the decreasing occurrence of the mode when he narrates her actions and thoughts outside the laundry and of his revelation of her failure to live up to her own conception of herself.⁷¹

Consequently, the narrators of *Dubliners* are no strangers to presenting characters in an uncomplimentary manner but are not prone to explicit judgements. In "After the Race", however, the narrator's ironical stance is easily perceptible. He satirises the impressionability of the Irish, which distracts them from their plights: "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" (32). Jimmy, the protagonist, is charged with the same counts and derided accordingly: "Rapid motion through space elates one; so does notoriety; so does the possession of money. These were three good reasons for Jimmy's excitement. He had been seen by many of his friends that day in the company of these Continentals" (34). Wealthy though he may be, Jimmy shares with his "gratefully oppressed" countrymen

⁷⁰ Walzl is not the only one to have stumbled upon these potentially puzzling passages: Derek Attridge (2000: 35-51), Margot Norris (2003: 140-157) and Gabrielle Carey (2012: 210-7) have all concocted odd explanations for the stylistic undulations of the story. Carey even flirts with notion that "the story's narrator is indeed Maria" (*ibidem*: 216).

⁷¹ Even her status as a reconciler is jeopardised later on: "Maria thought she would put in a good word for Alphy. But Joe cried that God might strike him stone dead if ever he spoke a word to his brother again and Maria said she was sorry she had mentioned the matter" (87).

the propensity for adulating displays of material progress of foreign nations, epitomised by the car. The characters' fascination with this vehicle spurs the narrator to give free reign to his satirical impulses: "gallantly the machinery of human nerves strove to answer the bounding courses of the swift blue animal" (35). The automobile is animised, and man mechanised. All this is quite obvious – or, as some would say and have said, *too* obvious. After all, this is a narrator that has no qualms about openly stating that "the city wore the mask of a capital" (36). Thus, "After the Race" has incurred disesteem.⁷² It has been considered "one of the least successful stories" (Kershner, 1989: 71), "one of the [...] least sophisticated" (Bašić, 1998: 18) and "perhaps the weakest in the collection" (Norris, 2003: 68), which is unsurprising, as ambiguity and subtlety tend to be privileged over clarity and conspicuity in our time. Neither set of qualities strikes me as intrinsically preferable, and I find that the story possesses a fascinatingly aggressive bluntness.

Even if we put these matters of taste aside, there is still plenty to discuss regarding the narratorial voice. Margot Norris argues that "the narrator can legitimately be construed as a discursive apprentice to a plot to defraud and humiliate Jimmy Doyle without betraying the conspirators or incriminating himself" (2003: 78), but there are some inconsistencies in her arguments, as she also refers to the "narrator's betrayal of Rivière's disingenuousness" (*ibidem*: 73). Likewise, she argues that the narrator "does not know Ségouin very well", only to assert later that "[s]urely the narrator who 'knows' so much about Jimmy and his family and their values also 'knows' something about the Continentals and their friends and their values" (*ibidem*: 71, 78). Norris' contradictions hint at the dictional fickleness of the narration. Despite the patency of the narrator's independent judgements, some of which I have quoted above, he also makes generous use of free indirect discourse, which takes the prose from the polished

⁷² Michael Patrick Gillespie and David Weir are the most vocal critics of "After the Race", decrying it, in the span of a single page, as "a flawed story" that is "not a very interesting work", that "clearly move[s] away from Joyce's creative strengths" and that "tries to do too much", despite being "too slight" (110). They complain that it relies on "types and even stereotypes" that "crowd out any subtler representations" (113) and that its "political allegory [...] is almost *too obvious*" (115; emphasis added). They go so far as to recommend, with their tongues not quite in their cheeks, that the story "should be dropped from the volume" or, if that proves impossible, "simply ignor[ed]" (124). To be fair, I must note that Joyce himself voiced his dissatisfaction with "After the Race" in two separate letters to Stanislaus Joyce (SL: 97, 127).

phraseology of the description of Jimmy's father as "commercially satisfied" to the demotic diction of that character's reference to "pots of money" (34). The clash of these two styles sometimes produces a zany medley:

This knowledge had previously kept his bills within the limits of reasonable recklessness and, if he had been so conscious of the labour latent in money when there had been question merely of some freak of the higher intelligence, how much more so now when he was about to stake the greater part of his substance! It was a serious thing for him. (34)

The humorously overwrought and ornate style of the first sentence – embroidered with an extravagantly contorted syntax, a pair of amusing alliterations ("reasonable recklessness" and "labour latent"), a predilection for pompous wording ("stake the greater part of his substance") and, to cap it all, a droll exclamation point – contrasts with the plain diction of the much shorter second sentence. Syntactically, a compound sentence in which coordination and subordination intricately interact gives way to a simple sentence; stylistically, a precise, even precious, phrasing gives way to the jarring banality of "thing". As a result, the narrator creates an abrupt and absurd deflation.

Nevertheless, this passage presents some analytical difficulties. On the one hand, the diction of the first sentence is the narrator's, but the exclamative is, as I have pointed out in the first chapter, a trait ordinarily associated with free indirect discourse, establishing a stylistic miscegenation. On the other hand, the aforesaid mode seems to be used in the second sentence, but it is difficult to be sure, as it retains the mordant tone previously established. Note in particular the corrosively condescending tone of prepositional phrase that concludes the sentence – "for him" –, which could either be an actual adaptation of *for me* or involve no "original" figural discourse whatsoever. It is certain that sarcasm is a common characteristic of the use of free indirect discourse in *Dubliners*, but what is under consideration here is not whether the phrase is sardonic – it is so, irrespective of the involvement of figural discourse or the lack of it –; the dilemma is whether the narrator is truly employing this mode or merely resorting to its trappings to pass comments that are fully and independently his own as comments modulated by figural discourse. We have seen that the narrators of the collection occasionally impede a conclusive verdict regarding the employment of free indirect discourse, but the narrator of "After the Race" takes this unknowability to new heights by playing a

refined game of deception. Indeed, he intimates that he may be surreptitiously taking advantage of the superficial configuration of free indirect discourse to camouflage discursive segments that appear to be character-inflected but that ultimately do not involve an appropriation of figural speech. If in the other stories some passages that transform figural discourse may initially come across as purely narratorial to the unsuspecting reader, the opposite occurs in this story.

One may think that over-caution dictates my hesitation, but other passages reveal our occasional inability to ascertain whether free indirect discourse is employed and, if so, whose thought it conveys: “Jimmy made a speech, a long speech [...]. There was a great clapping of hands when he sat down. *It must have been a good speech*” (37; emphasis added). The italicised sentence has the semblance of a typical instance of the aforementioned mode, until we realise that it does not appear to present a thought ascribable to any of the characters, making us wonder whether the narrator independently crafted it to suggest that Jimmy’s speech, just as Mr Hynes’ poem, is shoddy (a notion already implied in the unusual recasting of “speech” as “long speech”, which, incidentally, makes the first sentence a flippant instance of narratised discourse) and to disguise that criticism as an innocently recorded figural thought. Still, we feel that the safest bet is that he seizes Jimmy’s thought to modulate the narration, since the other apparent uses of the mode come across as less problematic. Thus, we are disposed to consider the occasional exclamatives – “What merriment!”; “What jovial fellows! What good company they were!”; “Cards! Cards!” (37) – as a transformation of the inner speech of the protagonist. It is only when we reach the last exclamative (seemingly) rendered in free indirect discourse that it becomes clearer that we cannot be certain: “What excitement! Jimmy was excited *too*; he would lose, of course” (38; emphasis added). Although we may assume that the first sentence derives from an elated Jimmy, the second sentence shows that he is not initially contemplated. Intriguingly, we may well be facing an ersatz free indirect discourse of sorts, in which the narrator plays not with actual figural discourse but with the outward features of such discourse. This retroactively casts doubt on the provenance of the previous exclamatives (and some of the other passages putatively rendered in free indirect discourse). They

may convey the collective exhilaration of the other members of the group or they may be purely narratorial: either way, the narrator uses them misleadingly and mysteriously.

There is another peculiar narrational duality. On the one hand, the narrator ironically adopts Jimmy and his father's appreciation of wealthy individuals: "Villona was entertaining also—a brilliant pianist—but, unfortunately, very poor" (34). On the other hand, he does not let Jimmy escape, treating him by the same standard he applies to the less-than-wealthy Villona: "They were Charles Ségouin, the owner of the car; André Rivière, a young electrician of Canadian birth; a huge Hungarian named Villona and a neatly groomed young man named Doyle" (33). The two most affluent personae are introduced with their forenames and surnames, but the reader is only granted the last names of the two least affluent.⁷³ From this moment on, the narrator refers to Jimmy by his first name, but resorts to family names for his companions. (Interestingly, Villona's Christian name is never given, and the protagonist's first and last name are not presented together: "Jimmy" simply substitutes "Doyle", and the reader is expected to understand that both names refer to the same character.) If the suppression of "Mr" in relation to Bantam Lyons in "The Boarding House" indicates a figural inflection, the nomenclative anomalies of "After the Race" are produced independently by the shapeshifting narrator, implying no process of quotation. He deliberately degrades and diminishes Jimmy with his inequitable treatment, just as Little Chandler is enfeebled in "A Little Cloud" by the narratorial adoption of the character's nickname.

Furthermore, the narrator replicates the dizzying speed that does not allow Jimmy to think twice and act responsibly: "They took the train at Westland Row and in a few seconds, as it seemed to Jimmy, they were walking out of Kingstown Station". Sheer motion blurs all, and even ordinary conversations become fugitive words lost in the wash: "A torrent of talk followed. Farley was an American. No one knew very well what the talk was about" (36). (We may recall that the protagonist's "long speech" is handled in the same way.) Apparently suggesting Jimmy's perspective, the narrator also gives an account of events after they have receded into the narrative past: "The piano

⁷³ The narrator subtly stresses their disadvantageous position by going out of his way to inform us of their seating arrangements when they travel together by car: "The car ran on merrily with its cargo of hilarious youth. The two cousins sat on the front seat; Jimmy and his Hungarian friend sat behind" (34).

had stopped; Villona must have gone up on deck. It was a terrible game” (38). Additionally, the last two excerpts quoted reveal another intriguing trait of the narrator’s occasionally paratactic style: the staccato rhythm, which results from a rough piling up of diegetic data in short sentences and clauses unsmoothed by connectors. All these choices contribute to the sense that time rushes forward freakishly fast. This unstoppable movement ahead is most severe at the very end. Having squandered a large amount at a card game, Jimmy, still somewhat excited but already exhausted, foresees that he will, once morning comes, regret this profligate and irresponsible night:

He knew that he would regret in the morning but at present he was glad of the rest, glad of the dark stupor that would cover up his folly. He leaned his elbows on the table and rested his head between his hands, counting the beats of his temples. The cabin door opened and he saw the Hungarian standing in a shaft of grey light:

—Daybreak, gentlemen! (38)

In a vertiginous acceleration, “the cruel morning light” promptly arrives to “reveal the penniless and hungover Jimmy” (Kershner, 2004: 171), leaving the character with no chance to keep his remorse at bay any longer. Jimmy postpones reflection and disappointment, but the narrator does not let him escape. Had he concluded the narration just two or three sentences before, the ending would not be as forbidding and abrupt as it is, but such kindness is anathema to his caustic irony.

We may profitably contrast this precipitous ending to the exceptionally delicate closing of “The Dead”, for which the narrator mercifully selects a moment of (precarious) harmony: Gabriel’s dream. When daybreak comes, sleep will give way to vigil and tranquilising reveries to troubling realities, but he, unlike the narrator of “After the Race”, does not allow the narrative to extend beyond the absolving comforts of the night. Moreover, he appears to allow himself to share the dream of the character, in which the boundaries of time and space and the self are abolished and all of Ireland is encompassed at once. Putting Gabriel’s fantasy to good use, the narrator moves us from the particular to the collective, from the personal to the national – and universal. It has been argued that the story reveals Joyce’s “increasing fondness for self-parody” (Wright, 2006: 256), but one of the protuberant qualities of the ending is the narrator’s

sympathy, which replaces the mordancy of the rest of the narration.⁷⁴ Going against the norm established by the other stories, which present the characters at their most ineffectual, he prefers to see in Gabriel's vision a victory, construing it as the culmination of a process of growth that may not have taken place (yet), since not enough time has elapsed.⁷⁵ Dictional variations are particularly telling: the narrator seems to lull Gabriel to sleep, gracing the narration with a suave style that displays a consummate command of the phonic properties of language. The voluptuous final paragraph deftly knits assonances and alliterations – “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow” –, recurrent words – “snow” emerges thrice and “falling” seven times – and two elegant chiasmi – “falling softly” and “falling faintly” become “softly falling” and “faintly falling”, respectively. Finally, an arresting all-inclusive antithesis – “the living and the dead” (194) – resonantly closes his cradlesong.

The ending of “The Dead” (that is, the last paragraph or, if one wants to widen the scope, the last half a dozen paragraphs) has all the pomp and circumstance of a proper finale, the sort of close to which the collection has not accustomed the reader: “the final apocalyptic vision of ‘all the living and the dead’ is strikingly unlike the

⁷⁴ It may be argued that the ending is equally as caustic as the rest of the story. Vincent P. Pecora (1986) was the most intransigent advocate of this reading, although he has mellowed somewhat in recent years (see Norris and Pecora, 2012). The qualification of Gabriel's tears as “generous” (194), which retrieves a word used by Gretta to describe him (189), is occasionally understood as proof of the supposedly sardonic undertone of the conclusion of the story. Yet, I would argue that what happens here is more complex. Indeed, in the last pages of the story, the narrator is unusually obsessed with Gabriel's mood swings. Notice, for instance, the methodical manner in which he charts the protagonist's sexual hunger for Gretta: at first, Gabriel is “trembling with desire to seize her” (187); his desire frustrated, he is “trembling now with annoyance”; regaining hope, he is again “trembling with delight” (189). When that hope proves unfounded, the narrator tells us that Gabriel “was in such a fever of rage and desire”. It is at this point that Gretta calls him “a very generous person” (189). The result is, of course, incongruous. As the narrative unfolds, Gabriel shows little to no signs of being worthy of his wife's praise, but the narrator waits patiently for the moment when he will deserve those commendatory words, dutifully monitoring variations in his disposition. At one point, Gabriel asks Gretta a question “ironically” (190). He soon asks another – and the narrator stresses that it is “*still* ironically” (191; emphasis added), the italicised adverb revealing his negative judgement of the character's attitude. Not long afterwards, we are told that “Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony” and that the “irony of his mood soured into sarcasm” (191). Still, his harsh feelings eventually subside and he becomes more sympathetic: “a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul” (193). It is only once this change occurs that the narrator finally returns to Gretta's extolment, making sure to connect it explicitly with Gabriel's love for her: “Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love” (194). If Gretta commends her husband prematurely, the narrator does so at the right time.

⁷⁵ According to Susan Barzagan, Gabriel “matures during the course of an evening, but finally fails to achieve an authentic transformation or ‘becoming’” (2004: 52), but one can safely contend that, at the very least, “Gabriel learns that there have been stories concurrent to his own” (Conley, 2003: 105).

abrupt, minimalist conclusions of the earlier stories” (McCarthy, 1998: 4).⁷⁶ The narrator of this story resists the anticlimactic closings that abound in *Dubliners*: only the ending of “A Painful Case” seems to me to be fairly traditional as well. Like the dénouement of “The Dead”, it has a gravitas that greatly contrasts with the mockery that precedes it. Yet, one cannot find here the smooth repetitions and the gentle rhythmical work of the last story. Instead, the narrator offers us a dour and sour procession of portentous words: in the last three paragraphs, “gloomy” and “bleak” surface once, the “night” is described as “cold” twice, and “darkness” emerges thrice (98, 99). There are also looser repetitions. At one point, the narrator informs us that Mr Duffy “looked along the river towards Dublin”, only to assert a few moments later, in a reverberatory fashion, that he “turned his eyes to the grey gleaming river, winding along towards Dublin”, as though we needed a reminder of the geography of the setting. Even more strikingly, he tells us that the protagonist “had been outcast from life’s feast” and, soon after, that “he was outcast from life’s feast”, only changing the verb tense for emphasis. Moreover, the phonic reiterations are deprived of the elegance that they have in “The Dead”: “the prostrate creatures down by the wall were watching him and wished him gone. No-one wanted him” (98). The closing sentences are a forbidding block of repetitions: “He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent” (99).

This ending may be algid and harsh, but it is not brusque and implies narratorial compassion, which is exceedingly rare. Whereas the narrators of the other stories are content to shrug off the characters nonchalantly at the end, Mr Duffy is given an elaborate, if aggressively sombre, farewell. The only other story in which there might be signs of such narratorial sympathy is “Eveline”, which is “rather closely attuned to the girl’s perspective and vocabulary” (Bašić, 1998: 18) and “follows [Henry] James’s rule about the unified point of view” (Kenner, 1971: 38). Indeed, the narrator accesses Eveline’s mind sedulously, and hers is the only name to serve as the title of a story,

⁷⁶ Daniel M. Shea observes that “Gabriel’s epiphany and inner transformation is [sic] a major move forward from the paralysis of the previous *Dubliners* stories” (2014: 47). Patrick A. McCarthy adds that, without this story, “*Dubliners* would have been a more insistently ironic portrayal of Dublin’s ‘paralysis’, focusing on the characters’ inability to escape or improve their stagnant lives” (1998: 4).

further suggesting the character's centrality. Yet, a sympathetic narratorial stance is clearer near the end: "All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her". The narrator steals from Eveline's thought the metaphorical tempestuous sea, an image ignited by her dread of the imminent transatlantic voyage. The narrator is willing not only to embellish this marine trope but also to expand on it later in a stretch of prose bereft of figural modulations: "Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish" (31). Although the narratorial reprise of the cleaver in "The Boarding House" has a comical effect, the same does not happen in "Eveline".

Still, "The Dead" remains the only story whose ending is both sympathetic and rather optimistic, and its smooth repetitions replace and resolve the often inelegant and asphyxiating reiterations unleashed in the other stories, such as "The Boarding House":

Things were as she had suspected: she had been *frank* in her questions and Polly had been *frank* in her answers. Both had been somewhat *awkward*, of course. She had been made *awkward* by her not wishing to receive the news in too cavalier a fashion or to seem to have connived and Polly had been made *awkward* not merely because allusions of that kind always made her *awkward* but also because she did not wish it to be thought that in her wise innocence she had divined the intention behind her mother's tolerance. (52; emphasis added)

In a few lines, "frank" is used twice and "awkward" four times.⁷⁷ "Adjectival repetitions", as Jolanta W. Wawrzycka notes, "are certainly common to Joyce, his trademark almost" (1998: 75), and a glance at the passages quoted throughout this dissertation is sufficient to disinter some of them. Sticking to "The Boarding House", I may refer to the physical description of Mr Mooney, which I have transcribed in the previous chapter and which proudly parades "white" three times in a single sentence. Nonetheless, Joyce does not indulge only in adjectival repetitions, as we have seen.⁷⁸ Sometimes, whole sentences mirror each other: "She was sure she would win"; "She felt sure she would win" (52, 53). I will quote one more example and be done with it: "Mrs Mooney had first sent *her daughter* to be a typist in a corn-factor's *office* but, as a disreputable sheriff's man used to come every other day to the *office*, asking to be

⁷⁷ Notice the use of the verb phrase "had been" four times. (There is a fifth "had been", but it is part of a larger verb phrase: "had been made". Nevertheless, one may count it as yet another repetition.)

⁷⁸ One may also refer the recurring motifs of the stories, that is, the *topoi* that pervade the collection, which also function by means of repetition. They are mostly individual and social malaises: alcoholism, domestic violence, family dysfunctionality, religious repression, political hypocrisy, among others.

allowed to say a word to *his daughter*, she had taken *her daughter* home again and set her to do housework” (51; emphasis added). Whereas the repetitions of “frank” and “awkward”, as punctuational parts of parallelisms, can still be said to be relatively tidy, the gauche duplications of “office” and “daughter” are typical instances of the clumsy reprises to be found in the collection. Yet, there is more to be said about the reoccurrence of “daughter” in particular: the sentence quoted above informs us that each of Polly’s parents alternately lays claim to her, and this dispute for possession is subtly replicated by the changing grammatical gender of the possessive determiner preceding “daughter”. This shows that even an “inept” repetition of an ordinary word can be a neat turn of phrase. For that reason, the “paralysed language” (Parrinder, 2005: 61) of the collection is, at the same time, a lusciously lissome language, in which coexist the stagnant and the splurgy, the frozen and the fluid: if it is paralysed, it is also pliant.

Such is the expressional prowess of the simultaneously oppressive and lively narrators of *Dubliners*. Far from frail or fragmentary figures incapable of handling their own tales, they wield immense power, whether they are homo- or heterodiegetic. They neither buckle nor bow before the characters. On the contrary, their vibrant narrations show at every turn signs of their fastidious domination. All that they present upsprings from them – even that which a character has originally uttered or thought –, and behind their “silences” lies not weakness but wilfulness. Much more than mere transcribers, Joyce’s jesters ceaselessly and wantonly experiment with language and use it to make sense of the(ir) world, implicitly putting forward explanations, establishing parallels, drawing the reader’s attention to certain details. They do not arrange material impartially but create meaning actively and independently. In the process, their personalities come to light: inclined to irony and cruelty, suppression and repression, playfulness and sprightliness, they are hushed but headstrong commentators, as well as prodigiously imaginative storytellers that foster a frequently flabbergasting formal farrago of flatness and flamboyance. At once meticulous and mercurial, they are intent on subduing and delighting us and remain invisible and inaudible only if we are not attentive. With every word, they make their presence felt. With every word, they mark their territory. With every word, their voices resound.

Conclusion

It is customary, upon arriving at the end, to point to new beginnings. Given that I have focused intently on form, perhaps the most immediately evident new avenue for debate would be the consideration of the possible thematic implications of the results reached. “Sooner or later every formal critic must”, Wayne C. Booth maintains, “struggle with the problem of how to deal with the scandal of what is often called ‘content’” (1999: xiv). Be that as it may, I obviously have addressed that scandal to some extent: as the cliché goes, we cannot fully separate style and substance, form and content. Yet, some would have appreciated a more conventional marriage of formal and thematic readings. Although I confess to not being eager to perform that task, others have been, as attest, for instance, discussions of formal aspects from a post-colonial perspective. Spurgeon Thompson states that what he regards as the ambiguous language of *Dubliners* is an act of resistance to “colonialism’s clear-cut systems of reliable meaning production” (2004: 189). Contrariwise, Gerald Doherty argues that the games performed by the narrators entail that “the stories, as it were, redoubl[e] the unmitigated punishment already meted out by the colonizers” (2004: 12). These diametrically opposed illations reveal that, despite all appearances to the contrary, there is not necessarily a direct or clear-cut connection between certain formal choices and “meaning”. If pressed, I would rather side with Doherty, but I have more sympathy for Ezra Pound’s recognition that, in artistic terms, the stories are ultimately universal and “could be retold of any town” (1974: 401), despite their attention to the minutiae of life in the Irish capital, which closely match, according to scholars such as Joseph Brady (2004), the actual socioeconomic conditions regnant in early-twentieth-century Dublin.

However, those still craving for a coupling of formal and topical interpretations of the stories could attempt to purchase greater security for their thematically motivated explications of Joyce’s aesthetic by relating his narrational choices to his worldview. For instance, one could argue that the more incensed narrator of “After the Race” is a by-product of the writer’s “youthful interest in socialism”, considering that “between 1904 and 1907 there is tangible evidence that Joyce considered himself a socialist”

(Dobbins, 2010: 63). Alternatively (or even cumulatively), one could invoke his “nationalist resistance to international commerce” (Owens, 2013: xix). Either way, the political convictions that Joyce espoused at the time could clarify the quasi-pamphletary register of certain portions of the narration of that story. Likewise, some stances regarding religious and secular institutions could be connected with “Joyce’s repudiation of Catholic Ireland” (Deane, 1999: 31) and his “tendency toward anarchism, his distrust of political authority” (Yee, 1997: 126). Furthermore, Joyce’s life could be brought to bear on the unusual signs of narratorial compassion that I find in certain stretches of “Eveline”, “A Painful Case” and “The Dead”. Indeed, we could argue that the narrator’s sympathy in the conclusion of “Eveline” derives from the fact that, “[w]hen Joyce himself was writing this story in the late summer [of] 1904, emigration with Nora [his wife-to-be] was in [sic] his mind” (Pierce, 2008: 98). In turn, we could connect the compassionate ending of “A Painful Case” to Joyce’s modelling of the protagonist on Stanislaus, his brother, since “many of the details that James [...] used for the character of James Duffy [...] come from Stanislaus’s diary entries” (Fargnoli, 1996: 125). Finally, we could link the merciful end of “The Dead” to the supposed kinship between Gabriel Conroy and the author, which has been noted by Richard Ellmann, Joyce’s most famous biographer: “There are several specific points at which Joyce attributes his own experiences to Gabriel” (1982: 246).

Although it is certainly stimulating to ponder about the extent to which Joyce’s set of values and beliefs coloured the narrators that he created, this speculative venture is ultimately more insightful regarding his compositional process (which is, admittedly, interesting in itself) than the finished work and, in my estimation, relies somewhat excessively on an equation of narratorial and authorial stances. At any rate, the question of narratorial personality is fascinating in its own right, whether it reflects the *Weltanschauung* of a writer or not. Thus, one may, in an extrapolatory exercise, use my line of enquiry to support various thematic readings, but I do not wish to imply that formal analyses must or should be complemented with them. On the contrary, I hold that the study of form is self-sufficient, insofar as it is suited to the exploration of a wide range of matters related to the configuration of a text, and readily encourage an

investigation of Joyce's other narrative works along these lines: the methodology that I have used for dissecting *Dubliners* could easily illuminate similarities between his stories and his novels. For example, we may recall that, in "A Little Cloud", the narrator lets us perceive the suppression of a character's speech in the transcription of another's. The same happens in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "Yes. Well now, that's all right. O, we had a good walk, hadn't we, John? Yes ... I wonder if there's any likelihood of dinner this evening. Yes. ... O, well now, we got a good breath of ozone round the Head today. Ay, bedad" (*P*: 23). Similar examples can be found in *Ulysses*: "Yes ... *Evening Telegraph* here, Mr Bloom phoned from the inner office. Is the boss ... ? Yes, *Telegraph* ... To where? ... Aha! Which auction rooms? ... Aha! I see ... Right. I'll catch him" (*U*: 163). Different though they are, the narrators of these works are united by their wish to tease us with what they do not disclose and amuse us with uncommon presentations of dialogue. The recognition of these little parallels augments our joy in reading Joyce.

Besides reprising the bizzareries of *Dubliners*, the novels elaborate upon them. To make this clear, we need only consider, as above, the use of direct discourse. Indeed, outré experiments with figural speech in the novels can be construed as exaggerations of the collection's prior playful presentations of dialogue: if the narrator of "Counterparts" toys with the varying length of figural utterances, that of *Finnegans Wake* takes this exercise to a vertiginous extreme: right after providing four consecutive and identical one-word utterances – "Hoke!" (*FW*: 552) –, he offers a speech that runs for over 400 words. The sheer visual contrast is impressive. There is a method to his madness – and vice-versa. Yet, the "restored" version of the novel edited by Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon removes the dash that precedes this drawn-out utterance. Thus, it ceases to be figural discourse, erasing the striking imbalance, rightly or wrongly and for better or worse (see Joyce, 2012: 430). If anything, this shows that dashes do matter. Nowhere is that more evident than in a passage from *A Portrait* in which a priest "repeated the act of contrition, phrase by phrase" (*P*: 113-4) and "[t]he boys answered him phrase by phrase" as well, giving the exchange of goodnights in "The Dead" a run for its money:

—O my God! —

—O my God! —

—*I am heartily sorry*—

—*I am heartily sorry*— (P: 114)

Joyce uses dashes both to introduce speech and to indicate a pause, thereby besieging every line of dialogue. Moreover, if before the narrator suppresses a character's speech, he now refuses to, although – or because – it is repetitious. Every single “phrase” is reiterated until the end of the prayer, resulting in a transcription that is over half a page long, which I have refrained from quoting in full. He could not only jettison the repetitions but also easily elide the entire prayer, as the reader may not unreasonably be expected to know it, but he delights us, as the narrators of *Dubliners*, precisely by exasperating us with his facetious patience. Allow me to indulge in quoting another wonderfully eccentric deviation from standard typographical practices:

— Well, I can't help thinking of our friend Christopher manufacturing ...

He broke into a fit of laughter and coughing and added: —... manufacturing that champagne for those fellows. (P: 23)

Seizing the potential of direct discourse for narrational eccentricities and, consequently, for humour, Joyce's narrators become lively and unpredictable masters of ceremonies.

These comparative results are revealing even in this scattershot fashion, but a more organised approach can be essayed briefly. For the sake of illustration, I may briefly address some possible continuities between Joyce's use of direct discourse in his two final novels and “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”. If this story flirts with drama, *Ulysses* consummates the relationship in “Circe”, in which the narration takes on the configuration of a play so thoroughly that stage directions are comically included. One may also refer the dialogue exchanges between Mutt and Jute, Butt and Taff and Muta and Juva (who are, despite their different appellations, probably the same pair of characters, if it makes sense to speak of character in this novel) near the beginning, close to the middle and towards the end of *Finnegans Wake*, respectively. In addition, the narrators of these novels play with the uneasy status of verbal renditions of non-figural sounds. While the narrator of the aforementioned story “quotes” the pop produced by flying bottle corks with the same irreverent insouciance towards repetitions that marks his conveyance of figural discourse, that of *Ulysses* develops this by playing with the cuckoos emitted by a mantelpiece clock:

Cuckoo

Cuckoo

Cuckoo (*U*: 499)

Furthermore, the strangeness of the integral transcriptions of texts written by characters, namely the electoral card and Mr Hynes' poem, is exacerbated in both novels, which bizarrely provide musical sheets. The narrator of *Ulysses* also presents "the budget for 16 June 1904" (*U*: 836), preserving all its typographical specificities. Despite my tentative consideration of the transcriptions of songs, poems and other texts written by characters as peculiar instances of direct discourse in *Dubliners*, this conceptual tool is clearly not fully suitable for describing these examples from Joyce's novelistic work. It would be more profitable to consider that the writer here works as a (quasi-)collagist. As a result, the novels complete – and help us unveil – the latent tendency towards collage faintly perceptible in the collection.

Such comparisons allow us to understanding the formal and stylistic progression of Joyce's work, to discern his artistic evolution. My contention is not that his later works are better for taking his experiments further or that *Dubliners* is only valuable to the extent that it prefigures his novelistic achievements: indeed, I hope that I have shown that the collection is fascinating as a standalone piece. Nevertheless, the stories do have the additional interest of serving as a means of comparison. Although I would chance that "Ivy Day" demonstrates as enviable and complete a command of language as "Circe", it is worthwhile to consider the latter as a development of, but not necessarily an improvement on, the former. I should add the caveat that we must abstain from overstressing the similarities between Joyce's short stories and his novels. A cursory glance at them is enough to reveal that they are remarkably different. We should cherish these disparities. However, we can still recognise that they share affinities in certain circumscribed matters. There are persistent echoes, more or less distorted. Whereas some of the narrators of *Dubliners* are from time to time tardy in naming characters, the narrator of *Finnegans Wake* may never get around to identifying them at all. More importantly, we may note that it was in the short stories that Joyce first delved into the wild variations in narratorial voices that trouble the readership of his novels.

On this point in particular, some of the implications of my reading of *Dubliners* are extendable to Joyce's later work, insofar as the entrenched ideas regarding the impotence of the narrators and the (extradiegetic) potency of the characters that I have attempted to counter also affect and afflict the critical perception of the novels:

The chameleonic quality of the narrative voice in Joyce's novels has been commented on by many critics and has driven some to strange stratagems—including the idea that *Portrait* was written by Stephen, or that *Ulysses* writes itself. That is, critics faced with the undeniable presence of some voice, some perspective, other than that of a first person narrator, and yet not finding a tangible persona as in Mann or James, do not know what to make of this presence (Thornton, 1994: 194, n. 3)

Like the polycephalous Hydra, the same old confections of narrators and characters here rear their ugly heads again. It would be impractical to address the matter at length here, but I can tersely tackle the most prevalent commonplace vis-à-vis the pseudo-narratorial role that Joycean criticism insists on bestowing upon characters, that is, the seemingly ineradicable idea that Molly Bloom is the narrator of the last section of *Ulysses* or even that there is no narrator at all: "'Penelope' lacks mediated narrative and consists entirely of Molly Bloom's interior monologue" (Yee, 1997: 70). Nonetheless, the mere presence of italics is sufficient to discern the presence of a narratorial entity other than the character: "the *City Arms* hotel" (*U*: 871). Unless we are willing to grant that Molly's thought flows in italics – and, for that matter, in discrete paragraphs – we should admit that there is a narrator and that this narrator is not Molly.

I am compelled to ask who (or what), then, is this narrator that goes to the trouble of breaking the character's thought into paragraphs but does not capitalise the words opening them, that goes to the trouble of closing the section with a period – the narrator of *Finnegans Wake* does not bother to do as much – but avoids commas, that goes to the trouble of providing italics but neglects apostrophes: "theyre all so different Boylan talking about the shape of my foot" (*U*: 880). The answer is that this narrator is one of Joyce's queer tellers, one of those that make themselves heard even when they are silent. It may seem that I am clutching at straws and that these trifling typographical matters are not attributable to the narrator. Nevertheless, we must not forget that "Penelope" is but a portion of a larger text – and, in my view, the notion that the

narration of the novel is the collective work of multiple narrators is not entirely persuasive. However, even if we put that matter aside, we must recognise that there is a narrator that sets a start and an end to the narration. This is particularly conspicuous because the first and the last word are the same: “Yes” (*U*: 871, 933). It is a narrator, therefore, that (re)configures Molly’s flow of thoughts as an affirmative gesture: her thoughts do not start and stop when the narration starts and stops, and the symmetrical arrangement that they are given is the work of a narrator that speaks through Molly’s mouth, that uses her thoughts to set a tone, to make a veiled comment and to play with form. He could have easily selected moments when the word *no* comes to her mind and used them to open and close the episode, which would then acquire other implications.

The search for points of contact between Joyce’s works also allows us to understand more clearly some developments in literary history. I may fleetingly note the sustained use of direct discourse for figural thought. Let us study the following extract from “A Little Cloud”: “He turned to the right towards Capel Street. Ignatius Gallaher on the London Press!” (59). After my lengthy dissection of free indirect discourse, it should be easy to identify this mode in the second sentence quoted. Yet, we may realise that none of the inherent traits of this sentence prevents us from asserting that the mode at play is *direct* discourse, since there is no visible narratorial alteration of Little Chandler’s thought. Were the sentence to be found in certain sections of *Ulysses*, it would probably be regarded as an instance of interior monologue or, to use Dorrit Cohn’s favoured term, quoted monologue. We may, then, compare this passage with the following excerpt from that novel, selected by virtue of the fortuitous coincidence of the verb *to turn*: “Turning, he scanned the shore south, his feet sinking again slowly in new sockets. The cold domed room of the tower waits” (*U*: 55). This extract is quite similar to the first: they serve as the openings to their respective paragraphs, and the first sentence of each comprises “unalloyed” narratorial discourse, whereas the second is tainted by figural thought. Still, the passage from *Ulysses*, unlike that from “A Little Cloud”, resorts to direct discourse. These varying classifications stem from the different contexts in which these passages appear. My point here is not merely that the two modes can be superficially similar: it is that this similarity suggests that writers arrived

at the use of direct speech (without identifying typographical markers) for thought not by a “simple” process of handling thought in the same manner as speech. Indeed, free indirect discourse served as a way back to direct discourse: with the former, writers such as Joyce tipped their toe in the presentation of the verbal irregularities of thought, before taking the plunge with the latter.

This notion deserves some clarification, since the use of direct discourse for thought was, of course, nothing new. One need not look any farther than such a celebrated classic as Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866), in which inner speech is presented between inverted commas. Still, in this and other narrative works predating modernist experimentations, the thoughts transcribed were grammatically regular and were accompanied by typographical markers and attributive signs. Introducing, however meekly and incipiently, irregularities into presentations of inner speech by virtue of the occasional lack of verbs, *free indirect* discourse seems to have opened the floodgates for the use of *direct* discourse in the rendering of erratic figural thoughts, which would explain the absence of the aforesaid markers and signs in *Ulysses*. For some, this would lend credence to the notion that interior monologue is intrinsically different from direct discourse. Yet, I would argue that direct discourse applied to thought (and speech, for that matter) comes in all shapes and sizes: with both typographical markers and attributive signs, as in Dostoyevsky’s aforementioned novel; with the latter but not the former, as in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) or the opening sentence of Saul Bellow’s *Herzog* (1964); and with neither, as in José Saramago’s narrative fiction. There are, then, two basic types of direct discourse: direct discourse explicitly demarcated by attributive signs or typographical markers or both; and unmarked direct discourse, as can be seen in *Ulysses*. It is more productive to consider these two types as branches of the same tree than to treat them as separate modes, but the change in the nature of mental discourse created by bold writers – as opposed to a fundamental change in the method of transcription itself – may mislead us into thinking that a different mode is involved. The side-by-side comparison between *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* makes it easier for us to perceive the tortuous, oblique, unintuitive evolution of literary conventions like these.

Despite the new paths proposed, one may as well keep studying the strange surfaces of the collection with the tools to which I have resorted: much remains undiscovered, and some of the stories have only been addressed fleetingly. Even the one most exhaustively examined, “The Boarding House”, can easily be mined further, scoured for still secreted pearls. Although it is high time that we get this dissertation off our hands, let us consider one last passage from that story, the *jeu d’esprit* that closes Mrs Mooney’s section: “The decisive expression of her great florid face satisfied her and she thought of some mothers she knew who could not get their daughters off their hands” (53). The narrator here appropriates and reconfigures Mrs Mooney’s discourse, turning it against her in a neat structural play: as he introduces a switch in focaliser and a spatiotemporal dislocation immediately after the sentence transcribed, he lampoons the character’s lack of finesse by unceremoniously getting her off his own hands in an ironical replication of her actions. Therefore, this passage, brief though it is, touches on all three textual spheres explored in this dissertation: the management of figural discourse; the selection and presentation of diegetic content; and the voices of the narrators. This three-fold method demystifies the unequal relationship between narratorial and figural discourses, elucidates the configurations given to diegetic data and exposes the narrators’ abilities and attitudes, their powers and personalities, allowing us to uncloak them. As a result, we come to realise that they offer us immense riches at every turn, even when they are at their most slippery. It is hardly startling, then, that *Dubliners* continues to be mesmeric, and I risk nothing by predicting that it will remain so for a long while. Adventurers willing to take every risk in their manoeuvring of shape, pattern, design, Joyce’s innovative raconteurs will keep witching us with their whims and whimsies. It is an unbridled pleasure to dust the fingerprints of such nimble-fingered narrators. The clay is in good hands.

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