

VOICES OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN: JOYCE'S DUBLINERS

Luiz Alberto de Miranda *

RESUMO

Diferentemente da maioria dos estudos sobre *Dubliners*, que enfatizam o tratamento dado por Joyce à temática da paralisia de Dublin e de seus habitantes, este ensaio considera como "trama" principal de *Dubliners* o jovem narrador em busca de uma tonalidade locucional própria.

In attempting to add some new insight to the current readings of *Dubliners*, I shall start by proposing that the text be regarded not only as *énoncé* – or the *dispositio* of specific thematic materials in a unified corpus of narrative discourse – but also, and mainly, as *énonciation*, or the multifaceted *elocutio* produced by a narrative voice which manifests itself, in the initial phase of its search for locutional identity, on two other levels: the historic-biographical and the narrational proper.

On the historic-biographical level, the text of *Dubliners* represents the moment in time when the performance of the narrative voice of James Joyce the artist cannot be dissociated from that of James Joyce himself, more young man than artist, who is given the opportunity of

showing his talents of prose writer to the literary world. As the series of "epicleti" (or "epicleses") on which he had been at work from 1904 to 1907 is finally accepted for publication in book form, Joyce's voice leaves the realm of general anonymity and ventures into that of artistic individuality, finalizing, on the aesthetic plane, the ethical gesture performed by Joyce in actual life.¹ Like the young writher who left Dublin, "that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city", for the cultural and intellectual stimulation of the continent, Joyce's voice crosses the boundaries of its original circumscription to expand the horizons of its locutional potential. On this level, however, the voice in *Dubliners* cannot be described as narrative proper, since it merely recounts the history of an individual life, giving utterance to the aesthetic echoes of a man's ethical choices.

On the narrational level, *Dubliners* can be defined as a text in which a particular narrative voice, testing the range of its potential and improving on its inherited capabilities, undergoes a progressive locutional maturation. Therefore, in the following pages, *Dubliners* will be regarded not so much as a collection of short stories, each illustrating the various facets of the paralysis of

* Professor Fundador de Literatura Comparada e Civilização Anglo-Americana do Instituto de Ciências Humanas e Letras da UFG.

Dublin and its inhabitants, as the manifestation of one single utterance which moves through different stages of growth and development as it surveys different types of paralysis.² Looked at from this point of view, *Dubliners* will certainly appear as a far more experimental text than it looks when examined from a thematic-structural perspective, for most of the literary innovations it displays are located in the texture of its narrative voice. And if one can detect, within the circumscription of *Dubliners*, a narrative voice engaged in a multifaceted locutional experiment, it is because since the very beginning of his career as a writer, Joyce understood literature as a gradual crystallization of an individual utterance, as a constant exercise in enunciation. It is to this view of narration that Stanislaus Joyce attests, in his "Recollections of James Joyce:" In Joyce's stories . . . [the] author's one duty is to narrate. . . . In Joyce a literary conscience had been substituted for a religious conscience. He turned from the work of God to the spoken word with undiminished intransigence and meticulousness.³

To describe the stages of maturation of the narrative voice in *Dubliners*, Joyce's concept of "epiphany", as presented in *Stephen Hero* (p. 211), along with the lengthy reelaboration in Aquinas' aesthetic theories, attributed to Stephen Dedalus both in *Stephen Hero* (pp. 76-98, 212-213) and in the *Portrait* (pp. 207-215), are of utmost necessity. The former because the

stories in *Dubliners* have been often regarded as "epiphanies" in their own right, although they were originally conceived by Joyce as "epicleti" (or "epicleses") – rituals through which the artist, like the priest who transforms the host into the body of Christ, turns into everlasting forms those fragments of drab reality, as if "converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own."⁴ The latter because it provides, with its three cardinal principles, the philosophical framework for Stephen's theory of the evolution of the artist's creative consciousness evidenced in the three major forms of literary art – the lyrical, the epic, and the dramatic.

The notion of "epiphany" is presented as a narrative digression in *Stephen Hero*, where the narrator defines it as "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself" (p. 211). The lengthy and rather unorthodox reelaboration of Aquinas' aesthetics, also meets us for the first time in *Stephen Hero*, as the theme of Stephen's conversation with Cranley (pp. 212-213), and recurs, substantially revised, in Chapter V of *A Portrait of the Artist of a Young Man*, where Stephen presents it to Lynch (pp. 213-214). More important, however, is Stephen's theory of aesthetic forms which follows his version of Aquinas' discussion on beauty.

*What I have said . . .
refers to beauty in the*

wider sense of the word. . .
 When we speak of
 beauty in the second sense
 of the term our judgement
 is influenced in the first
 place by the art itself and
 by the form of that art. The
 image, it is clear, must be
 set between the mind or
 senses of the artist himself
 and the mind and sense of
 others. If you bear this in
 memory you will see that
 art necessarily divides
 itself into three forms
 progressing from one to
 the next. These forms are:
 the lyrical form, the form
 wherein the artist presents
 his image in immediate
 relation to himself; the
 epical form, the form
 wherein he presents his
 image in mediate relation
 to himself and to others;
 the dramatic form, the
 form wherein he presents
 his image in immediate
 relation to others.
 (Portrait, pages 213-214).

The reader should bear in mind both these passages, for they will be as blueprints to the readings that follow.

Enunciated by a narrator who is definitely “more conscious of the instant of emotion” than of himself as feeling emotion (p. 214), the stories “The Sisters”, “An Encounter”, and “Araby”, are excellent illustrations of lyrical utterances. The “lyricism” of these stories is closely related to the “childishness” that characterizes their

mode of enunciation. They attest to the presence of an artist who, disguised as a child-hero-narrator, chooses not to detach himself from emotionality, in order to “present his image only in immediate relation to himself.” In fact, these three stories are narrative pieces whose events, although disposed in an apparently logical, syntagmatic sequence, point to no meaning except that which can be derived from their immediate verbal configuration. Hermetically closed in themselves, they attest to a subjective view of reality and seek to institute their own code of signification by means of the “silence” into which they plunge the reader. Of these stories one could say what Julia Kristeva, basing her remarks on Hegel, says of the poetic activity:

*[U]n travail où toute
 définition fixe est absorbée
 dans l'inconscient et où
 toute substance
 (linguistique et subjective)
 est fluide et incandescente
 – de l'encre qui se
 consume; un travail où le
 sujet n'est pas “vide” sous
 l'apparence d'un sens
 multiple, mais un “surplus
 de sujet” excédent le sujet
 par le non-sens en
 contradiction avec lequel
 une formalité symbolique
 vient poser aussi bien le
 (ou les) sens que le sujet[.]*
 (Polylogue, pp. 38-39).

In “The Sisters,” it is the young narrator’s inability to disentangle the

web of his emotions, move beyond his perplexity and paraphrase the significance of his experience that makes the text turn in upon itself in a lyrical gesture. The climactic event towards which the episodic sequences converge and from which they would derive their significance is not verbalized. Thus, the story remains as "opaque" in its meaning as a poem that fails to provide the reader with the key to its metaphoric allusions. In fact, Miss Flynn's observation becomes both the climax and the end of the narrative, because the "epiphany" it seems to have triggered and towards which the act of narration seems to direct itself, supersedes the descriptive power of the words. What was supposed to be just the prelude to the verbalization of a major discovery ends up replacing both the discovery and its verbal rendition; and what was supposed to be just an introduction to the narrative, becomes the very corpus of the narrative. Only to the boy who experiences them do the events narrated seem to form a meaningful and coherent whole. He alone can see them as the best set of utterances he could possibly marshal to verbalize the impact of the "sudden spiritual manifestation" that rendered him speechless. Nevertheless, the "aphasia" he experienced at the moment of the "epiphany" still persists at the moment of his narrative performance. For the verbalization achieved defeats its own purpose. Reverting upon itself, the text muffles its own end, and by doing so, silences its finality. For the reader, the events

enunciated have no other meaning or purpose except the one conferred on them by the boy's narrative act which brought them into existence. *Énoncé* and *énonciation* are therefore blended and no meaning is to be found beyond the enunciative gestures of the narrative voice. It is as though dumbfounded by a fresh vision of reality, the young narrator had to devise a form and an idiom in which to translate it, lest he lose his individuality together with his power to name it. He makes no explicit reference to something already defined and understood, but simply places one event after another, allowing no hasty conclusions to be drawn from such a collocation. In his attempt to restore his individuality by reconstituting the "sudden spiritual manifestation" that assailed him, the young narrator can only retrace the steps he thinks will lead him to the climactic "epiphany" he experienced; but he ends by juxtaposing events whose individual configurations set forth no explicit meaning, and whose structural disposition reflects the very silence of which he wants to rid himself.

This effect could never have been obtained had Joyce not effected substantial revisions in the first version of the story, published in the *Irish Homestead* on August 13, 1904, bringing the narrative voice in the story as close as possible to that of a small boy.⁵ As the young narrator of "The Sisters" is unable to detach himself from the emotion in which he has been caught up, he cannot see himself except with the eyes of the

sentient self who experiences that emotion. By presenting his image “in immediate relation to himself” alone, he ends up producing a lyrical utterance – an utterance that, seeking to rearticulate an experience not so much to disclose its meaning as to recapture its revelation, suits perfectly Joyce’s own purpose, which is more to crystallize a vision than to manufacture a plot.

The uncertainty that characterizes the text’s *dispositio* is also apparent on the level of its *elocutio*. “The Sisters” starts with a sentence entirely composed of monosyllables, fully illustrative of the narrative voice’s effort to overcome speechlessness. Next, in the long first paragraph, the narrative voice is made to move back and forth in its tenses, as memory moves back and forth in time. Unable to start with a clear-cut view of the incident, it produces only a tentative line, as though together with memory, it were searching for the very core of a crucial experience.

Night after night I had passed the house. . . and studied the light square of the window. . . . If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind. . . . He had often said to me. . . and I had thought. . . Now I knew. . . .” (Dubliners, p. 9).

By spreading the moment of the “epiphany” along an extended

temporal continuum (“I had passed . . . and studied . . . ; He *had* often said to me. . . and I *had* thought. . . . Now I knew. . . .”), the narrative voice shows itself as “silenced” and “paralyzed” as at the instant of the emotion, oscillating between the moment when the narrative act takes place (*Now I knew*) and two other moments, located respectively in the recent (“Night after night I had passed. . . and studied. . . .”) and in the remote past (“He had often said. . . and I had thought”), which are seen as tied up to the “epiphany.” The narrative voice thus reenacts, on the level of *énonciation*, the “paralysis” which manifests itself on the level of the *énoncé* and constitutes the basic thematic component of the *énonçable* it chooses to actualize through its utterance. Therefore, “paralysis”, in *Dubliners*, should be seen not only as “the name of some maleficent and sinful being”, (p. 8), but also as that of an infectious and contagious disease, which contaminates the minds and even the voices of those who, having confronted it, choose to speak about it.

The circumlocution that marks the initial utterance of the narrative voice in “The Sisters” does not seem to be very different from that which characterizes the discourse of the sex maniac the two friends meet in “An Encounter”. Caught up in (and betrayed by) its lyricism, the utterance of the young narrator in the “The Sisters” reveals the paralysis of someone who, unable to place the core of his individuality outside his emotional self, has his utterance

hampered by the language of the very emotion he wants to domesticate. The discourse of the sex maniac in "An Encounter", on the other hand, reflects the paralysis of someone who is simply indulging himself in an insistent linguistic reproduction of his perverse fantasy, as if trying to crystallize his individuality around the emotion he feels as its only source of security. The circularity and repetitiousness of his utterance reveals him impotent to move beyond the circumscription of his vicious obsession in the same way that the tense fluctuations of the young boy's enunciation in "The Sisters" reveal his inability to overcome the instant of the "epiphany" that overtook him. Likewise, affected by the speech of the sex maniac, the product of a mind "slowly circling round and round in the same orbit", as if "magnetised by some words of his own speech" (p. 26), the final lines of the narrator of "An Encounter" also show his utter inability to move beyond the circle of his own emotionality. The "paralysis" he experiences prevents him from verbalizing the "epiphany" proper, and makes his actual utterance into a mere outburst of emotion. All he can do is call out his friend's name "loudly across the field" (p. 28). Nevertheless, in his attempt to come to grips with his own feelings, the character is able to recognize in them a sadistic slant, not entirely alien in kind to that which characterizes the pervert's mind and discourse.

— *Murphy!*
My voice had an accent of

forced bravery in it and I was ashamed of my paltry stratagem. . . 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. (Dubliners, p. 28)

The point to mark is that in both cases, either as something that assails the characters at a moment of "epiphany" or as something that is inherent in their very existences as *Dubliners*, "paralysis" turns locution into impotence, making it revert upon itself and come across as mere circumlocution.

A combination of the lyrical "solipsism" of the narrative voice in "The Sisters" and of the "sadism" that marks the character and the discourse of both old man and young narrator in "An Encounter," is the sadomasochism of the enunciation of the character-narrator in "Araby". Here again one perceives, on the level of the enunciation, the tension of a narrative voice torn between conflicting emotions of frustration, blown out of proportion by the very "epiphany" they generate. In terms of their overall configuration, the events in this story do not differ very much from those in "The Sisters." They are but "digressions," utterances "beside the point," obstacles to overcome or utterances to discard before the narrative voice reaches the "heart of the matter" and verbalizes it. It is as if the narrative voice, in a spiral-like

movement, were trying to eliminate all the verbal layers surrounding the “epiphany” from which its enunciative drive stems. Yet the closing lines of the text show that it is precisely the character’s mode of enunciation that renders him utterly incapable of overstepping the borders of his selfdestructive emotionality and recapture the “epiphany” he experienced. By juxtaposing terms that are morphologically parallel but semantically antithetical, the narrative voice manages to incorporate into the texture of its own utterance the tension of the character’s internal debate. Yet, it does not promote a resolution to the conflicting emotions that constitute the character’s psychological strife. Rather, it works to reinforce them, transfixing them into an utterance wherein they are kept – and shown – in a state of pseudo-equilibrium and mutual neutralization. A quick glance at the structural matrix of the story’s last paragraph shows that the narrative voice, in its attempt to conciliate opposites, cannot but freeze the character’s seething tension in the self-disruptive symmetry of a selfobliterating statement. The “epiphanic” experience, for both character and reader, thus becomes a “paralytic” experience, and the story, like the two previous ones, challenges us into experiencing the “epiphany” of silence.

*Gazing into the darkness I
saw myself a creature
driven and derided by
vanity; my eyes burned*

*with anguish and anger.
(Dubliners, p. 35).*

This paragraph may be schematized as follows:

*Gazing up into the
darkness I saw myself. . .
a creature driven. . .
derided my eyes
burned. . .
anguish. . . anger*

These readings are intended to show that these stories are, above all else, locutional articulations, wherein the merging of signifieds into signifiers and the blending of *énoncé* and *énonciation* prevent the reader from looking for meanings located beyond the texture of their enunciation. Therefore, if we are to apprehend the meaning of these texts, we must let ourselves be guided by their narrative voice. As has already been stated, this voice can lead us only as far as the threshold of the “epiphany”, which coincides with the limits of its lyrical range. At that border, it has to interrupt its own narrational activity, and present us with nothing more than the silence of an inarticulated, and therefore, “mute” epiphany. Yet, as we are denied the ethical impact of the character’s revelation, we are presented with the aesthetic impact of the text as such. In other words, prevented from participating in the epiphany as experienced by the character-narrator, the reader is left to experience the actual epiphany of the

text as text. For at the same time that it plunges itself into silence, the narrative voice opens to the reader the space of textuality, turning a moment of locutional silence into the locus of a new mode of narrative articulation. The reader is thus led to participate in the text not as a passive observer, but as an active and complicit reader, involved, like the narrator, in his own reading/narration. As he is drawn into the space of the text's unuttered meaning, he experiences, on the level of his reading activity, the "paralysis" that lies at the core of both the narrative structure of the stories and the boy's narrational act. Therefore, only by following in the path of the texts' narrative voice will the reader be able to wrest out a signification from the silence to which it leads. He must surrender himself unconditionally to the locutional mechanism of these stories, which is no more nor less than the dynamics of their process of enunciation.

The same attitude must be adopted in relation to the second cycle of stories, which includes "Eveline", "After the Race", "Two Gallants" and "The Boarding House". Of these, I will deal only with "Eveline" and "The Boarding House" in some detail. For the theme of paralysis, as manifested in the lives of Dublin's adolescents, is more vividly reflected in the process of enunciation of these two stories than in the other two of this cycle.

In "Eveline" and "The Boarding House", the narrative voice shows itself in the "adolescent" or "transitional" stage of its mode of

enunciation, divided between "objectivity" and "subjectivity", omniscience and impotence. In "The Sisters", as has been already demonstrated, the "epiphany" experienced by the character-narrator takes on the features of the very "paralysis" he confronts, and the reader is presented with a "moment of speech" followed by absolute silence. In "An Encounter", the character-narrator's final utterance is just an attempt to circumvent the experience he has lived through, and consequently cannot match its impact or disclose its meaning. In "Araby", the character-narrator's tentative verbalization of the "epiphany" he experienced at the bazaar defeats its own purpose, for its violence undermines the spiritual raputre it is supposed to disclose, transforming the whole process – the epiphany and its verbalization – into "a memorable phase of the mind" which, in this case, is no more than a psychological catastrophe.

The paralysis that takes hold of Eveline is also locutional. She is unable to escape from a life of servitude to her father because she cannot allow herself to be defined except in terms of the demands he addresses to her. Insofar as these demands provide the only verbalization of her life experiences, she cannot find any discourse in which to voice her own aspirations. The aphasia that seizes her at the quay, rendering her paralyzed, speechless and "passive like a helpless animal" (page 41) is no more than a sudden manifestation, in the

form of a “mute epiphany”, of the linguistic impotence that characterizes her submissiveness as a daughter. To show how Eveline is impressed by and within the universe of discourse of her narrow domesticity, the narrative voice follows, throughout the story, the character’s “mental mechanisms”:

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? (Dubliners, page 37).

In the passage above, for example, the narrative voice establishes a perfect correlation between its utterance and the character’s subvocal ruminations. In registering Eveline’s view of herself and her condition, the narrative voice is careful enough not to disclose to the reader anything that Eveline’s limited awareness would not allow her to perceive. In other words, the narrative voice keeps itself at the level of the character’s thoughts, so that the subject of the *énoncé* and the

subject of the *énonciation* share the same degree of perspicacity. This is not the case, however, in the opening line of the story, transcribed below.

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. (Dubliners, p. 36)

In this particular passage, the Flaubertian free indirect style does not allow the narrative voice to keep its perceptions blended with those of the character. By interjecting here and there its lexical choices and poetic skills, (“odour,” “the evening *invades* the avenue”) it makes itself heard somewhat above the character’s head, exhibiting linguistic aptitudes and perceptive abilities beyond Eveline’s competence. However, nowhere in the story is Eveline made to actually *voice* her thoughts. To lead her to do so would be the same as to force her beyond her capacities, for her submissiveness to her father also dries her language, depriving her of a voice of her own. No technique other than the free indirect style would better reflect the indirectness of her view of herself. The same could be said in connection with Mr. Doran, of “The Boarding House.” Helplessly imprisoned by (and within) the house, the values and the discourse of his girlfriend’s mother, “a big imposing woman,” who “dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals with

meat" (p. 62, 63), Mr. Doran becomes totally incapable of uttering a single word for himself. This is why an actual interview at the end of the story, to bring his (supposedly) secret affair with Polly to a happy end, is not only unnecessary, as Harry Levin puts it (p. 30), but also impossible, since Mrs. Mooney, Polly's mother, having already "made up her mind" (p. 63) in regard to that matter, has also made up Mr. Doran's and the reader's as well. Had the interview actually happened, Mr. Doran would have nothing to say on his own behalf. In terms of *énoncé*, the stories "Eveline" and "The Boarding House" present the *abulia* of Dulin's youth, which, derived from the disappointments and frustrations of childhood, will render the adult Dubliner utterly incapable of handling the commitments and confronting the responsibilities of mature life. In terms of *énonciation* these stories serve as a bridge between the solipsistic "silence" characteristic of the lyrical mode of enunciation of the childhood stories and the undetermined, pluricentered articulation of the "epic" mode of enunciation in the stories of maturity, old age and public life. In other words, in "Eveline" and "The Boarding House", the narrative voice is neither the "lyrical," personal voice of a child narrator, seemingly incapable of verbalizing its epiphanic experience, nor the "epic" or impersonal voice of the stories of maturity, old age and public life, which is obviously unwilling to speak such things. In adopting a modified

version of the Flaubertian free indirect style, the narrative voice in these two stories places itself on the threshold of silence and articulation, and takes on the features of both the "lyrical" and the "epic" modes of enunciation. In fact, the free indirect style endows the narrative voice with a peculiarly ambiguous tonality, which allows it to simultaneously maintain and neutralize its individuality. On the one hand it prevents the narrative voice from "emoting" at its own convenience, since it is not as emotionally-charged as a first person narration; on the other, it allows the narrative voice to manifest itself vicariously, by leading it to adhere to a particular character and to absorb the features of that character's subjectivity. The technique of the free indirect style also serves a second, twofold purpose in the context of *Dubliners*: First, it captures, in the interstices of its own formal structure, the twilight zone of the adolescent mind, caught between childish submissiveness and adult assertiveness. Second, it shows the narrative voice in a transitional moment of its process of maturation – the moment of the "rite of passage" which will allow it to grow out of the narrative mode of childhood into that of maturity, that is, to move from lyrical solipsism into epic objectivity. The placing of the story "The Boarding House" at the end of this cycle is particularly significant. On the level of its *énoncé*, this story shows Mrs. Doran being forced into commitment and responsibility by a particular form of discourse; on the

level of the *énonciation*, it forces the reader out of his traditional role – that of passive consumer of texts – into that of active participant in the act of narration. In contrast to Mr. Doran, however, who has to confront a universe of discourse where there is no need or place for his utterances, the reader is presented with a narrative voice that refuses to provide him with a narrative world of precise significaitons, where there would be an exact correspondence between the act of signification and what is signified; and that, instead, opens in the textual space narrative fissures for his voice to penetrate. The point to mark is that “The Boarding House” not only captures Mr. Doran and the narrative voice at a crucial moment of their respective progressions, from childhood to maturity and from subjectivity to objectivity: it also leads the reader to experience a “rite of passage” all of his own. In fact, from “The Boarding House” onwards, the reader will no longer be allowed to remain totally apart from the narrative activity. In the subsequent stories, which feature the narrative voice at the “epic” stage of its development, he will have to fill in the narrative fissures as often as – or even more often than – in the previous stories, because they will become more and more consistent. In other words, the reader will be forced out of his position as outside observer into the circumscription of the text itself and the responsibility of narration.

The stories “A Little Cloud”, “Counterparts,” “Clay” and “A

Painful Case” – which deal with maturity and old age – as well as “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” “A Mother” and “Grace – which focus on Dublin’s public life – belong to the “epic” stage of the narrative voice in *Dubliners*. Their “center of emotional gravity” has been dislocated from the narrator to a point “equidistant” from both himself and the others, (*Portrait*, p. 214). In terms of *énonciation*, these stories are “no longer purely personal.” In a way, the narrator has “refined himself out of existence,” (p. 215) not by “[presenting] his image in immediate relation to others” (p. 215), but by refusing to indulge in an explanatory discursiveness which, set above the ordinariness of the world on which his attention is focused and apart from the discourses produced within its circumscription, would provide the reader with a firm foothold on the text.

In fact, in a story like “Clay”, for example, the reader is never presented with the indisputable clairvoyance of an impartial, detached, higher consciousness.

The matron had given her leave to go out as soon as the women's tea was over and Maria looked forward to her evening out. The kitchen was spick and span, the cook said you could see yourself in the bid copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the side tables were four 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 handled round at tea.
Maria had cut them
herself. (Dubliners, p. 99)*

Any conclusion the reader may reach about Maria, her relatives or the context as a whole, will bear the features of a paradox like the one expressed by the sentence "Maria was a very small person *but* she had a very long nose and a very long chin" (p. 99). Most of the situations in "Clay" are presented from Maria's viewpoint and, in the manner of the paragraph transcribed above, expressed in her own language, as if the narrative voice had adopted the diction of someone who belonged to her circle. This technique serves only to increase the ambiguities of the text and to thwart any attempt to extricate from it a set of conclusive statements.

In stories like "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", "A Mother" and "Grace," the narrative voice works against the narrative perspective. It adopts the rhythmical structures and lexical choices characteristic of a speech entirely different from all the others in the text, without falling back onto the traditional "transdiscursive enunciation", the narrative mode that goes together with the omniscient perspective, to provide the reader with a safe vantage point from which to gauge the validity of events and speeches or to establish his own perception of them. To use the words

of Joyce as Stephen Dedalus once again, the narrative voice in these stories "passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the action like a vital sea" (p. 215).

In "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," for example, each character is defined by a specific speech pattern which provides clues to his personality, as well as to his political prejudices or preferences. Yet, the narrative voice that introduces them and establishes the links between the several episodes of the story cannot be attributed to any of the characters – whose "voices" soon become quite familiar to the reader – let alone to an impersonal or impartial narrator. It sounds as "public" a voice as the voice in an ancient epic. Yet, as it is as cautious to reveal its true identity, as the people whom it surrounds, it does not go beyond skin-deep descriptions, thus telling us little or nothing about the characters it introduces, the events it oversees or the conversations it overhears:

*Then a bustling little man
with a snuffling nose and
very cold ears pushed in
the door. He walked over
quickly to the fire, rubbing
his hands as if he intended
to produce a spark from
them. (Dubliners, p. 122).*

Or:

*A person resembling a
poor clergyman or a poor
actor appeared in the*

doorway. His black clothes were tightly buttoned on his short body and it was impossible to say whether he wore a clergyman's collar or layman's because the collar of his shabby frock-coat, the uncovered buttons of which reflected the candlelight, was turned up about his neck. He wore a round hat of hard black felt. His face, shining with raindrops, had the appearance of damp yellow cheese save where two rosy spots indicated the cheekbones. (Dubliners, p. 125)

Another important feature of this rather peculiar “epic” mode of enunciation is that it denies the reader the opportunity to follow a character-narrator’s endeavor to reexperience an “epiphany” of its own, or the thought-processes of a character moving towards the same kind of spiritual revelation. In the stories of the “epic” stage, the narrative voice discards the traditional epic “transdiscursiveness” to dissolve itself into the narrative structure or discourse proper, thus transferring to the reader, more than in the previous stories, the responsibility of the text’s “epiphany,” which he has to produce by means of his own reading activity.

The end of “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” provides a good illustration of the point in case. Presented with a story whose episodic

structure seems rather arbitrary and loose, the reader sees his expectations of a pointed conclusion deflated when the narrative voice closes the story with a reference to the remark Mr. Crofton makes on the poem on the death of Parnell which had just been recited. As the perceptive reader will most likely disagree with Mr. Crofton, he will feel compelled to provide both a more critical comment to the poem under consideration and an alternative ending to the story. The same process seems to be at work in “Grace,” where the reader is left with the task of “interpreting properly” not only the “difficult” passage Father Purdon chooses for his sermon at the men’s retreat – one of the most difficult texts in all the Scriptures . . . a text for business men and professional men” (pp. 173, 174) – but also the priest’s misinterpretation of it, which obfuscates rather than clarifies the passage. An epiphany produced under these circumstances is purely formal or aesthetic rather than ethical or religious. It consists of the reader’s acknowledgement of the revelation of the text as text, as a verbal artifact whose identity unfolds itself as the reader re-writes (or re-narrates) it. The major accomplishment of the narrative voice of *Dubliners* in the “epic” stage of its development resides precisely in its refusal to adopt the traditional epic-didactic transdiscursiveness, in order to share the text’s authorship with the reader himself, who becomes their one and only “reliable” narrator. This narrative attitude has its roots in “Two Gallants” and “After the Race”,

the stories of the “transitional” or “adolescent” cycle in which late adolescents appear inserted in the social world where the stories of mature and public life will take place.

The climax of the multifaceted experiment of the narrative voice in *Dubliners* is in “The Dead,” or, more specifically, in the “dramatic” mode of enunciation that characterizes the process of narrative rendition of that story – a form, as Joyce himself puts it, “governed by a principle which bids [the artist] express his fable in terms of his characters.”⁶

Richard Ellman affirms that to write ‘The Dead’ Joyce had to change his attitude towards Ireland and towards the world.⁷ The episodic structure of the story, in its progression towards Gabriel Conroy’s final acceptance of himself and his condition as a human being, attests to this change. It indicates a way out of paralysis as sterile, hopeless isolation, towards paralysis as a state of quiet acceptance of the mystical interdependence between “all the living and the dead.” If the epiphanies that overtake the characters in the previous stories do not seem to carry them beyond the borders of their individual lives, it is because their limited perceptiveness does not allow them to capture more than the immediate configuration (or significance) of their experiences. Gabriel’s intelligence and imaginativeness, on the other hand, allow him to expand the implications of his own epiphany, so as to envision in its core, as his provincial ego dissolves, the “vanity of all human

wishes”, as well as the universal fate involving and evening “all the living and the dead.” Thus, of all the awakenings to self-awareness that occur in *Dubliners*, Gabriel’s is by far the most comprehensive and positive, and can be regarded as the climax not only of the particular story in which it belongs, but of *Dubliners* as well.

Yet, it was not only his attitude towards Ireland and the world that Joyce had to change to write “The Dead”. He had to change his narrative voice as well, to make it fit his new vision. As has already been stated, the locutional potential of the young narrator in the stories of childhood is impaired by the emotion that seizes him at the moment of his epiphanic perception; as a result, the narrative voice cannot take the reader past the edge of the “epiphany”, which it fails to verbalize. In the stories of adolescence, especially “Eveline” and “The Boarding House”, wherein the character’s limited awareness finds expressional in the narrative voice’s free indirect style, the epiphanic experience is displaced from the incident or revelation proper to the engineering of its exposure.⁸ In both instances, however, in order to sense the full impact of the stories, the reader must turn his attention to the dynamics of the texts’ enunciation, make his reading pace overlap with the pace of the narrative voice, and regarding the text as an epiphanic composition, transform the ethic-religious epiphany he expected to share, into an aesthetic one, all of his own. As the book progresses, the “I” narrator of the stories of the

lyrical cycle (“The Sisters,” “An Encounter,” “Araby”), as well as the subject behind the free indirect style of the “transitional” stories (“Eveline,” “The Boarding House”) gradually disappears and the external world comes to the foreground of the diegetic space, through the act of observation of a shrewd, ironic narrative voice. The more “public” the stories, the more “impersonal” the act of narration, and, consequently, the more severe the rift between the narrator stands farthest from the scene he describes and does not identify himself with any single consciousness, as he had done in most of his earlier stories. Therefore, in the stories of the epic cycle, the reader is invited to reformulate his reading procedures, regulate his expectations, and recognize that there is no vision other than the fluttering one he captures in the subtle grains of the texts’ plurivocal utterance – a vision whose definitive formulation depends largely on the way he interjects his own voice into these texts. In his refusal to indulge in the didactic transdiscursiveness which would make the “epic” stories direct, straightforward and transparent, Joyce creates a method of narrative rendition which never guides the reader along a chain of pre-established, predictable meanings, but rather invites him to discover the texts’ thematic propositions in the very design of their plurivocal utterances. Thus, if the subject of the *énonciation* makes itself flamboyantly present in the first three stories through the use of the first person narration, from “Eveline”

to “Grace” it performs a centrifugal movement in relation to the subject of its *énoncé* and progressively sets itself apart from both the characters and the world it seeks to portray.

With “The Dead”, however, a totally new dimension is added to the narrational tone of *Dubliners*. On the thematic level, it promotes the reconciliation of the character with himself, and on the structural level, both a reconciliation of the narrator with his material and a temporary resolution to the internal tensions of an incipient narrative voice, still oscillating between lyrical and epic postures.⁹ Therefore, “The Dead” may be regarded as the thematic epilogue, the structural synopsis and the narrational “resolution” of *Dubliners*. As such, it encapsulates the three processes of maturation or self-realization that text enacts: the historic-biographical, the thematic-structural and the narrational proper.

The first of these processes of maturation has its origins outside the text. It consists of Joyce’s radical change in his attitude towards Dublin, Ireland and the world, from intense emotional aversion to subdued, rational understanding. The letters Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus during and after his dealings with Grant Richards, show his increasing uneasiness about the nature of *Dubliners*, as well as his willingness to “let the critics have their way.” In writing “The Dead”, Joyce presented his apology to his native land, by reproducing both its “ingenuous insularity and its hospitality”, and

showed his newly acquired sympathy for his countrymen, by leading the story's protagonist to a better understanding of himself and the world.¹⁰

The second process is that which occurs within the thematic-structural circumscription of the story itself, that is, Gabriel Conroy's gradual awakening to self-awareness. Gabriel's experience at his aunts' annual dinner-party, recapitulates and encapsulates the various phases of the process of psychological maturation the other stories in *Dubliners* illustrate, and epitomizes the development of the human self in the process of growing out of the blind emotionality of childhood into the resigned clairvoyance of adulthood.¹¹ The situations Gabriel is presented with at his aunts' lead him to successive realizations, causing gradual but significant changes in his sensibility. So much so that, at the end of the story, his newly acquired self-awareness enables him to gain an objective and unimpassioned insight into his wife's revelation, and turn it into as epiphanic vision of mystical proportions (cf. p. 223).

The third process of maturation takes place on the narrational or locutional level of the story. It consists of the narrative voice's attempt to resolve the debate between lyrical solipsism and epic impassibility, a resolution which finally comes about in the Joycean "dramatic" mode of articulation. From "The Sisters" to "Grace" the subject of the *énonciation* in *Dubliners* performs a centrifugal

movement in relation to the subject of the *énoncé* and the textual fabric itself, moving from a lyrical narrative posture to an epic one. "The Dead" is the moment in *Dubliners* when the subject of the *énonciation* effects a centripetal movement in relation to the subject of the *énoncé*, just by weaving itself into the textual fabric, so as to become a major regulating element in the thematic-structural configuration of the story. In other words, Joyce's reconciliation with Ireland and the world echoes in Gabriel's elimination of the rift between himself and his fellow men through his acceptance of the mutual spiritual interdependence of "all the living and the dead", and both are actualized in the dissolution of the barrier between the subject of the *énonciation* and its *énoncé*, the narrative voice and the narrated material. As a matter of fact, one of the major aesthetic qualities of "The Dead" lies in Joyce's ability to arrive at a positive and mature articulation of the "moral history of his country," without compromising the fundamental objectivity of his narrative voice.

The progression of the narrative voice in "The Dead" comprises several steps or stages, each bearing its own individual slant. Before Gabriel's arrival at the party, the narrative voice seeks to reflect the social world of "the Misses Morkan" and to capture some of the "spirit of the occasion" as experienced by Lily, the servant girl (pp. 175, lines 1-14) and by the hostesses themselves (pp. 175, lines 15-21). Next, as if seeking to combine the way the Misses

Morkan might explain themselves with the view a long time friend might have of themselves and their habits, the narrative voice becomes rather indeterminate (p. 176, lines 1-24). After Gabriel's entry the narrative voice takes on a more sophisticated slant and adheres to him, adjusting itself to his changing perceptions. His condescending attitude towards Lily, as well as his bookish romanticism, find adequate expression in the subvocal utterances that cross his mind at the beginning of their interchange (cf. p. 177). When his poor sensitivity fails to provide him with adequate verbal correlates for his vision of Gretta at the top of the stairs, the narrative voice also indulges in a facile, contrived display of verbal impotence (cf. p. 210). But at the end of the story, having followed and recorded the crucial moments of Gabriel's experiences in self discovery, the narrative voice develops the incantatory rhythm of poetic language, in a rather Yeatsian fashion, in order to capture all the nuances of the character's prolonged moment of introspection.

His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead (Dubliners, p. 233, lines 30-33).

This brief survey is intended to show that Joyce keeps his narrative

voice consistently bent towards Gabriel without letting it overlap with that of the character. Thus, he is able to arouse the reader's sympathies for Gabriel without encouraging him to a blind, uncritical identification with the character. Moreover, as he pulls the reader more and more to his character's side, Joyce plunges him more and more into the locutional dynamics of the text. In fact, the narrative voice in "The Dead", unlike that in the earlier stories, takes the reader into the core of the character's experience, allowing him to sense, in the vision that marks the climax of Gabriel's spiritual awakening, the "epiphany" of a full aesthetic enjoyment of its development.

It is also worth noting that the narrative voice in "The Dead" does not take on specific lyrical, semi-lyrical or epic features as it follows Gabriel in his transition from childish resistance to adult resignation. Yet, it does keep pace with the character's internal growth. And in doing so, the act of enunciation also undergoes a process of maturation, and becomes the subject of "The Dead" together with Gabriel Conroy's gradual awakening to self-realization and Joyce's reconsideration of his attitude towards his country and its people. More than simply making "the distance of the narrator from the world he is observing the subject of the story,"¹² "The Dead" represents, on the level of its *énonciation*, an exercise in self-discovery for the narrator himself. It is the moment in *Dubliners* wherein the narrative voice, transcending both

the lyrical emotionality of the early stories and the epical impassibility of the later ones, resolves its narrational dilemma in the Joycean dramatic mode of narrative rendition – where “the vitality which has flowed and eddied round each person fills each person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper and intangible aesthetic life”, and “the personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence . . .” (*Portrait*, p. 215).

This process entails more than a mere abandonment of the identifiable subjectivity of the “I” narration or of the seeming objectivity of an epic posture. In adopting the “dramatic” mode of narrative rendition, the narrative voice in “The Dead” initiates itself into the Joycean version of the Flaubertian free indirect style, and weaving itself into the thematic-structural fabric of the text, absorbs the text’s fiction into the dynamics of its process of enunciation. It does not “de-fictionalize” the diegetic space by displaying its narrationality or making a fiction out of its own act of narration. Rather, it fictionalizes itself, by turning its enunciation into a highly performative activity, a component rather than a container or mediator of the fictional material.

Furthermore, whereas its “dramatic” indeterminacy affords a paradigm for the narrational resolution of each of Joyce’s subsequent enunciative experiments, the general dynamics of its performance – which encapsulates that of *Dubliners* as a

whole – establishes the syntagmatic matrix of their overall configuration, as well as that of Joyce’s prose read as an extended continuum. In fact, Molly Bloom’s monologue in *Ulysses* (pp. 738-783), Anna Livia’s in *Finnegan’s Wake* (pp. 619-628) and even Stephen Dedalus’ diary entries in the *Portrait* (pp. 248-253), examined as experiments in enunciation, appear as moments of narrative integration and locutional cohesiveness, precisely because the multiple signification afforded by the tonal richness of their textures, turn them into “grand finales,” or verbal epiphanies wherein meaning and voice, and by extension, fiction and narration, become one and the same reality. As Joyce’s experiments continue from text to text, to read *Ulysses* as a continuation of the *Portrait* and even of *Dubliners* and *Finnegans Wake* as the final outcome of the enunciative method practiced and developed in all the previous texts, is a gesture closer to Joyce’s than one might expect.

NOTES

- (01) – James, Joyce, Letters I, Stuart Gilbert, ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), p. 55; Peter K. Garret, “Introduction”, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners* (Englewood Cliffs; Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 11; Sidney Bolt, *A Preface to James Joyce* (London; Longmans, 1980), p. 30.
- (02) – Hugh Kenner. “Dubliners”, in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners*, Peter Garret ed., p. 38.
- (03) – Stanislaw Joyce, “Recollections of James Joyce”, in *Joyce’s the Dead*, William T. Moynihan, ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1965), p. 58; Harry Levin, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (New York: New Directions, 1960), pp. 28-29.

- (04) – James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Penguin, 1980), p. 221 Henceforth, Portrait. *Letters I*, p. 55; Santanslaus Joyce My Brothers Keeper (New York: Mcgraw Hiil, 1958), p. 103-104; Richard Ellman; *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 169; Levin, p. 28-29; Garrett, p. 11 ff. especially p. 14.
- (05) – Marvin Magalaner, *Time of Apprenticeship: The Fiction of the Young James Joyce* (London: Abelard Schuman, 1959). In this book Magalaner presents an extended analytical appreciation of Joyce's revisions of "The Sisters" along with a facsimile of the first version of the story. The reader should refer to Magalaner's book for a more detailed discussion of this issue.
- (06) – James Joyce, *Critical Writings*, e. Mason and R. Ellman, eds. (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 100.
- (07) – Ellman, *James Joyce* (1959) p. 239, 252.
- (08) – For a detailed discussion of the Joycean concept of epiphany in connection with the early stories in *Dubliners*, see A. Goldman, *The Joyce Paradox: Form and Freedom in his Fiction* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966) p. 1-21.
- (09) – Joyce, *Letters II*, p. 98, 99, 116.
- (10) – Joyce, *Letters I*, p. 70; *Letters II*, p. 99, 116, 217, 230.
- (11) – For a detailed analysis of Gabriel's gradual "awakening", see Kenneth Burke, "stages in 'The Dead'", in Joyce's 'The Dead', p. 95-99.
- (12) – Homer Obed Brown, *James Joyce's Early Fiction: The Biography of a Form*. (London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), p. 101.
- ELLMAN, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- , ed. *the Letters of James Joyce*, volumes II and III. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.
- GARRET, Peter K., ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968.
- GILBERT, Stuart. *The Letters of James Joyce*, volume I New York: The Viking Press, 1957.
- GOLDMAN, Arnold. *The Joyce Paradox: Form and Freedom in his Fiction*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966.
- KENNER Hugh. *Joyce's Voices*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- JOYCE, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980.
- . *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Ed by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman. New York: The Viking Press, 1959.
- . *Dubliners*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980.
- . *Stephen Hero*. New York: New Directions, 1944.
- . *Ulysses*. New York: Vintage, 1961.
- LEVIN, Harry. *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*. New York: New Directions, 1960.
- MAGALANER, Marvin. *Time of Apprenticeship: The Fiction of the Young James Joyce*. London: Abelard Schuman, 1959.
- MAGALANER, M. and KAIN, R. *James Joyce: The man, the work, the Reputation*. New York: NY University Press, 1956.
- MOYNIHAM, William T., ed. *Joyce's 'The Dead'*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965.
- RIQUELME, John Paul. *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

ABSTRACT

In contrast to most studies of *Dubliners* which emphasize Joyce's treatment of the paralysis theme in the lives of Dublin's people this essay regards as the 'main plot' of that Short-story collection the young narrator's search for an individual locutional identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BOLT, Sidney. *A Preface to James Joyce*. London: Longmans, 1981.
- BROWN, Homer Obed. *James Joyce's Early Fiction*. London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972.