

**THESIS TITLE**

‘Towards the Undecidable’: A Reading of the texts of James Joyce, Sean O’Casey and Paul  
Howard through the Deconstructive Lens of Jacques Derrida



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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or any other person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis provides a comparative and contrastive perspective on the works of James Joyce, Sean O’Casey and Paul Howard, with particular thematic focus on their portrayals of Dublin. Joyce provided a vision of Dublin in the early 1900s, as a modern metropolis which was, for him, a center of paralysis. O’Casey put on stage the tenement life of the mid-1900s while Howard depicted contemporary upper-middle class Dublin society. The three writers used very specific forms of language, with Joyce capturing the middle class dialect, O’Casey depicting the ordinary working classes tenement life and Howard portraying the twentieth first century upper-middle class spoken idiom. I will examine specific contextual aspects of the works of this Dublin trio in terms of their shared but different articulation of a Dubliner. In addition to this the thesis is theoretically-driven by Derrida’s concept of hierarchical oppositions, and by how the history of Western discourse has been based upon that of binary logic, which can be dismantled through a close reading practice which deconstructs these binaries by looking for irruptive elements of the text which can then produce what Derrida sees as ‘undecidables’.

Hence the argument of this thesis is to analysis three major binaries, namely high/popular literature, speech/writing, and maleness/femaleness through the texts of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard in order to display how binary logic can be dismantled to the point of undecidability in each case. I argue that each of these writers exerts a destabilizing effect upon the notion that binaries are arranged into a violent hierarchy and will demonstrate that, when dismantled, the binary elements are interdependent as opposed to mutually oppositional. Hence I am referring to an order that is lacking structure by introducing Derrida’s notion of ‘undecidability’. I aim to

prove that there is not a bond of purity attached to either half of the hierarchical opposition, and that their inherent asymmetrical value-systems are not givens, but rather constructs, which can, in turn, be deconstructed and I will analyse how each of these writers liberate such notions of undecidability in their work.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Introduction .....	1
Chapter One Theoretical Perspective .....	15
1.1 Introduction.....	15
1.2 Deconstructive Strategy.....	19
1.3 Applied Deconstruction – Dublin South/North?.....	43
1.4 Conclusion .....	55
Chapter Two: High and Popular Literature .....	56
2.1 Individualistically Created Canon .....	56
2.2 Literature as Pharmakon .....	70
2.3 The Responsibility of the Reader .....	81
2.4 Breaking the Margins: Close Reading.....	87
2.5 United by the Scolding of the Public Eye.....	100
Chapter Three: Speech and Writing.....	111
3.1 Phonocentrism: a privileging of speech.....	111
3.2 Readings of Philosophical Works .....	114
3.3 Applied dismantling of the opposition speech/writing .....	122
3.4 Joyce speech/writing .....	127
3.5 O’Casey speech/writing.....	138
3.6 Howard – speech/writing .....	148
Chapter Four: Maleness and Femaleness .....	162

4.1 The Theory Underpinning male/female duality .....	162
4.2 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – Joyce .....	166
4.3 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – O’Casey .....	199
4.4 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – Howard.....	216
Conclusion .....	216
Bibliography .....	245
Primary Sources .....	245
Works by James Joyce .....	245
Works by Sean O’Casey.....	245
Works by Paul Howard .....	245
Works by Jacques Derrida .....	246
Secondary Sources .....	248

## General Introduction

James Joyce is described by Jackson Cope as the ‘father of modern literature’ (Cope, 1981: 1), and justifiably so, as he reshaped the form of the short story through his publication of *Dubliners*, and has recreated the form of the novel in *Stephen Hero*, the abandoned forerunner to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and the trans-generic work that is *Finnegans Wake*. In these works, Joyce provided a critical analysis of the family, of the state and of the city of Dublin: the city that for Joyce was the source of ‘hemiplegia or paralysis’ (Cope, 1981: 2). Joyce envisaged himself as a ‘socialist artist’, and he is known to have attended the meetings of the Irish Socialists in Dublin up until 1904 (Wawrzycka and Corcoran, 1997: 84). His thematic focus on the city of Dublin was unusual in a literary landscape where much of the work being done focused on rural Ireland, and was attempting to find some sense of prior Irish identity in that landscape. Joyce ‘stripped away not only the façade behind which people in Dublin lived their little lives, but he did this by stripping away all unneeded detail’, and his writings ‘abound in sharp social observation’ (Costello, 1980: 108). In contrast to ‘the peasants of the Irish Revival, beloved by Yeats and Pearse’ who ‘belonged to a dying nineteenth-century World’, Joyce’s *Dubliners* ‘belong, in their dreams and ideas, to the world of the twentieth century’ (Costello, 1980: 113), and these dreams were those of lower middle class people who had to work for a living. In essence, Joyce’s Dublin was a modernist city.

A similar thematic focus on the portrayal of this city made the dramatist Sean O’Casey ‘as much if not more of an Irish shake-scene at the end of the century as he was when he wandered in off the street in the beginning’ (Heaney, 1997: x). This remark by Heaney locates O’Casey as a presiding figure in the ‘history of the Abbey Theatre’, and Heaney sees his use of



dialogue, written with an ‘unscholastic extravagance’ (Heaney, 1997: x) as a pervasive trope in Irish drama. The use of the neologism ‘shake-scene’ by Heaney is interesting here as he seems to see O’Casey’s work as both shaking the dramatic scenery of theatrical convention, but also, at a deeper level, to be shaking the scene and scenery of the representation of Dublin people, and their attitude to the 1916 rising which, literally, shook the scenes and scenery of Dublin. O’Casey dramatically represented the people, language, humour and suffering of Dublin tenement life in the early 1900s. He was the ‘youngest of thirteen children, eight died in childhood, of a respectable, lower-middle-class Dublin protestant family’ (Maxwell, 1984: 97). The family’s fortunes declined when his father, Michael O’Casey ‘died in 1883, but never to the point of the family’s having to live in the appalling tenements where O’Casey’s first three plays are set’ (Maxwell, 1984: 96) – *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). Within these plays, one is exposed to O’Casey’s skill, in which ‘the strokes are deft, the touch is light, and the tone is perfect’ (Lowery, 1981b: 245). O’Casey amalgamates politics and the home, the public sphere and the private sphere, by having each of the plays set against the political troubles of the previous decade. Thus ‘O’Casey writes of the inner-city poor caught up in the celebrated historical conflicts’ (Owens and Radner, 1990: 229). *The Plough and the Stars* is set in the Easter Rising; *The Shadow of a Gunman* is set against the backdrop of the Anglo-Irish war which led to the settlement in 1921, while *Juno and the Paycock* is embedded within the Civil War. It is this portrayal of a particular place, Dublin; during specific historical periods, the revolutionary period of 1916-1933; and of a particular social class, the urban poor of Dublin, that has gained him an important position within the history of Irish drama.

Over one hundred years later, it would be the upper middle-class denizens of Dublin who would come under the fictional microscope, and find their own literary expression in the work of Paul Howard's, and his eponymous South-Dublin character, Ross O'Carroll-Kelly. Just as Joyce's stories started as page fillers in the *Irish Homestead* magazine, so Howard's Celtic Tiger commentary, underpinned by cutting-edge satire, progressed from a column in the *Sunday Tribune* to a twelve-book series. *The Miseducation Years* deals with Ross's last two years at the fictional Castlerock College and the all-important Leinster Senior Cup victory in rugby. *The Teenage Dirtbag Years* sees Ross attend college at UCD. *The Orange Mocha-Chip Frappuccino Years* presents Ross leaving home and working for his friend J.P.'s father as an estate agent. *PS, I Scored the Bridesmaids* describes his marriage to Sorcha (his recurring love interest), while *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nightdress* deals with Ross's discovery that he has a son called Ronan, living on the North side of the city. *Should Have Got off at Sydney Parade* tells of the birth of his second child Honor, and Ross's business investment in a night club called Lillie's Bordello. *This Champagne Mojito is the Last Thing I Own* sees Ross's father imprisoned for tax evasion, and Ross's realisation that 'boom-time' Ireland is now over. *Mr S and the Secrets of Andorra's Box* deals with Ross travelling to Andorra in order to manage a rugby team and with the discovery that he has a half-sister named Erika. *Rhino What You Did Last Summer* sees Ross travelling to America in order to win Sorcha back, while *The Oh my God Delusion* deals with Ross and the 'recession' in Ireland.

As well as these novels, there are two other books in the series: *We Need to Talk about Ross* composed of mock interviews in which characters from the series discuss Ross, and a guide to understanding the Dublin 4 idiosyncratic idioms in *How to Get by on, like, €10,000 a Day*: a mock travel-guide to South Dublin. Howard has also produced two plays and a CD, which are

beyond the scope of this thesis; for the purpose of brevity, I aim to limit the discussion of Howard to his fictional series. I would suggest that it is within these books that Howard satirically enunciates the snobbery and elitism that defined a generation in Ireland, and Howard's main protagonist, Ross, imitates the wealthy, self-obsessed, South Dublin figure that has come to represent all that was wrong with the Celtic tiger in Ireland.

Howard was the first Irish novelist during the last decade to have 'bothered to notice what modern Ireland is actually like' (Power, 2008: 11), and like his illustrious literary forebears, he possesses a 'flawless ear for the verbal self-betrayals of our prosperous middle-class'. Up until this, we have been subject to novels about 'priests, novels about the Famine, novels in which farmers walk the fields' but Howard depicts characters who have coffee in 'Starbucks', and live in the postmodern, globalised, urban culture that is very much the reality of twenty first century Ireland (Power, 2008: 11). Power's claim is somewhat sweeping but contains elements of truth. The individual angst of rural characters, or the life-crises of upper middle-class protagonists, is all a far cry from the materialistic and commodity-fetishized Dublin as depicted by Howard. Howard describes a Dublin where shops possess a 'sound system, the pink PVC sofa's, the giant plasma screen televisions playing catwalk footage from all the major fashion shows' (Howard, 2010: 97). Ross's obsession with labels is reflected within his own dress sense, for he treats his Ralph Lauren jacket and Dubs as a uniform. Descriptions of the labels he wears become a narrative trope, and he is in the habit of metonymising items of clothing through their brand names; for example: 'I throw on the old Apple Crumble, step into my chinos and my Cole Haans, then fix my hair in the mirror' (Howard, 2010: 1). Certainly Ross has emerged as a 'gormless, charmless and yet strangely loveable character', 'one of the great socio-comic characters of recent times' ([www.irishindependent.com](http://www.irishindependent.com)).

The placing of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard together was a deliberate one; I could have chosen numerous other writers that focus their works on the representation of Dublin city. However, the selection of this trio lay in the similarity and value of their writing, and out of this stemmed more concrete reasons for examining Joyce, O'Casey and Howard. Their writings are immersed within a specific social reality. Joyce dealt with the middle classes of the early 1900s; O'Casey depicted the working-class tenement life of the 1920s while Howard provided a portrayal of the upper-middle classes within contemporary Dublin. To transpose the Joycean title, they are all 'Dubliners', and they write about Dubliners of different temporal periods and different social classes. The divergent social class contexts which their writing sought to encapsulate provided a window from which to view the Dubliner through out the ages. Therefore the 'slice of life' is a category that binds all three writers, for they have provided a snapshot of the idiosyncrasies within the streets and landmarks of Dublin city. They are united by their shared but different articulation of these city people. There is a piece of the city reaching out to everyone in the texts of Joyce, O'Casey, and Howard. All three are united by the fact that they have provided a chance for the Irish people to 'take one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass' (Hart, 1969: 9) and as Joyce insists, Dublin was chosen because it best depicted the Irish people. Subsequent to this, the three writers sought to capture the distinct spoken dialect which marked the social class context out of which their writing emerged, something, I believe, which sets them apart from numerous other writers that focused on Dublin. Joyce, O'Casey and Howard set about capturing the actual speech of the Dublin people, as Attridge later points out when referring to Joyce, but it also stands true for O'Casey and Howard: they depict 'the kind of talk that happens when men hang out together at street corners or in public bars' (Attridge, 1990: 137).

However this thesis, as well as offering comparative and contrastive perspectives on the texts of these three writers, will also apply a deconstructive analysis to the different cultural and artistic contexts in which they have operated. One of the benefits of a deconstructive analysis, and what makes this theoretical framework particularly useful, is that it applies to both texts and their contexts. The French theorist Jacques Derrida has made some pertinent comments regarding the interaction and interpenetration of text and context which I feel are relevant to this study. His much-quoted remark from *Of Grammatology* that '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*' ('there is nothing outside the text') (Derrida, 1976: 158), has often been taken to mean that theory has no real purchase on the lived life of material reality, but nothing could be further from the truth. I think that what Derrida is actually saying is that the interpretive strategies that we bring to texts are also those that need to be brought to the structures and sign-systems of reality. Twelve years later, in *Limited Inc*, Derrida would offer another such aphorism: '*il n'y a pas de hors contexte*' (there is nothing outside of context) (Derrida, 1988: 136). This tag has become one of the most contested items in the discussion of deconstruction. Derrida, basically, is stressing the constructedness of almost all sociocultural and linguistic structures, and adducing the need for interpretation and contextual placement if critical activities are to have any sense of purchase on reality. This perspective is underlined by Jacques Lacan, who feels that each individual and the meaning of their lives and works are context-specific – 'his [sic] history is unified by the law, by his symbolic universe, which is not the same for everyone' (Lacan, 1991: 197). In other words, it is through the relationship of text and context that meaning is to be found. Texts are written within a certain context and they are both constituted by, and affect some measure of change in, those contexts. One of the core functions of literature and theory is the interrogation of the givens of text and context.

In this study, I propose to examine specific contextual aspects of the works of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard, in terms of their shared, but different, articulation of Dubliners through different times and diverse social-class contexts. The thesis will also interrogate the literary contexts and categorisations within which these disparate writers have been placed. Given that deconstructive theory problematizes the relationship between text and context, this thesis will interrogate the textual-contextual nexus, which locates Joyce and O'Casey as high literature, but which relegates the work of Howard into the category of popular literature. I hope to demonstrate the undecidability of these literary constraints through reading all three writers against the grain. This thesis is driven by the particularism of Derrida's concept of hierarchical oppositions, and by how the history of Western discourse has been based upon that of binary logic, which can be dismantled by introducing what Derrida coins as 'undecidables'. Hence the argument of this thesis is to analysis three major binaries, namely high/popular literature, speech/writing and maleness/femaleness through the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard in order to display how binary logic can be dismantled to the point of undecidability in each case. I will argue that each of these writers exerts a destabilizing effect upon the notion of truth embodied in these binary oppositions. I aim to prove that there is not a bond of purity attached to either half of the hierarchical opposition, and that their inherent asymmetrical value-systems are not givens, but rather constructs, which can, in turn, be deconstructed. In doing this, I aim to demonstrate that when deconstruction is applied to a text, the dominant reading is put into question. Thus by breaking down binaries through the works of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard, I aim eliciting new interpretations and breaking down explanations of texts which have been held by scholars and critic in general.

I will argue that when deconstructed, each of these binary oppositions can be shown to possess a sense of fluidity, and that in these texts a blurring of boundaries can be detected, as aspects of each side of the binary oppositions bleed into one another. Hence, I will trace the binaries beyond the framework of a simple inversion, and instead will demonstrate that they are underpinned by a double logic of ‘neither/nor’ and ‘both this and that’ (Derrida, 1988: 232). As Derrida notes, one ‘never accedes to a text without some relation to its contextual opening and that a context is not made up of only what is so trivially called a text, that is, the words of a book or the more or less biodegradable paper document in a library’ (Derrida, 1989: 841). I hope to show how each of their work has significant points to make in terms of these three binary oppositions, and by the conclusion of the thesis, I hope to have shown how fluid these three categories have become in the writing of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard. My chapter structure will develop my argument sequentially.

Chapter One will outline Derrida’s deconstructive strategy which forms the theoretical bedrock of this thesis. Derrida insists that deconstruction is not a theory *per se*, and Martin McQuillan asserts, that ‘there is no set rules, no criteria, no procedure, no programme, no sequence of steps, no theory to be followed in deconstruction’ (McQuillan, 2000: 4). However, one can extrapolate a general strategy in Derrida’s work. He notes that Western philosophy orders language within a binary logic, for instance, speech/writing or inside/outside, and in this binary logic, one term is always given priority over the other. Derrida calls this ‘logocentrism’, and he proceeds to dismantle the opposition by overturning it, so, for example, the cultural value inherent in the term ‘high literature’ is deconstructed by questioning whether any of the qualities that are valued as significant are also to be found in popular literature, thus producing a contradictory movement. The same would be true when questioning the primacy of speech over

writing, or when interrogating the inherent societal value placed on maleness in patriarchal society with the concomitant devaluation of the female gender position.

This reversal of prevailing hierarchical binary oppositions is a necessary step in a deconstructive reading. As Derrida himself notes: ‘to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment’ (Derrida, 1981b: 41). But this reversal is only the first step in the deconstructive project. Making the point that an opposition of metaphysical concepts is never just the face-to-face opposition of two terms, but rather a hierarchy and an order of subordination, Derrida goes on to say:

Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of non-discursive forces. Each concept, moreover, belongs to a systematic chain, and itself constitutes a system of predicates. There is no metaphysical concept in and of itself. There is a work – metaphysical or not – on conceptual systems. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated. (Derrida, 1982: 329)

In other words, the whole context which has inscribed the locus of value onto the privileged terms ‘high literature’, ‘speech’ and ‘maleness’, needs to be put into question, as well as the actual binary oppositions themselves. Having deconstructed these hierarchical oppositions by putting into question their constituent value systems, the final task is a displacement of that conceptual order, and ‘the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated’ (Derrida, 1982: 329).



To explore how such a reading might occur, Derrida uses the example of writing and speech, outlining how writing, as a ‘classical concept’, carries with it ‘predicates which have been subordinated, excluded, or held in reserve by forces and according to necessities to be analyzed’ (Derrida, 1982: 329). These are the excluded elements of each binary opposition which have been undervalued or not valued by the prevailing system. It is by taking these and unpacking the occluded elements of value within them, that they can become ‘grafted onto a “new” concept of writing’ which is the emancipatory aim of the exercise (Derrida: 1982, 329). Deconstruction, then, follows the reversal of the binary by an addition of some of these occluded elements in an operation which maintains ‘the structure of the graft, the transition and indispensable adherence to an effective *intervention* in the constituted historic field’ (Derrida: 1982, 330). In this chapter, I will also examine a segment of the work of the feminist theorist Hélène Cixous as a means of reinforcing Derrida’s concept of deconstructing binary oppositions, and particularly in terms of her own focus on the binary of maleness/femaleness. I will not be adopting an overtly feminist approach in this study, but will be using the work of Cixous as a deconstructive lever with which to rupture the binary gender structure of maleness and femaleness.

Chapter Two will deal with the binary opposition of high and popular literature, and will explore the constituents and values that underscore this opposition. This is only one way of categorizing the literary field, I could have chosen the terms, ‘high and low’, ‘major and minor’ or ‘classical and modern’. However, I choose the terms ‘high and popular’ because the word ‘popular’ does not signify a debased form of literature, thus reinforcing the argument of the thesis introducing Derrida’s notion of ‘undecidability’ an order that is lacking structure. This chapter aims to examine how the concept of literature has been arbitrarily divided into a

hierarchical dualism, where certain books have come to signify high literature and are held in greater esteem amongst academics compared with the category of popular literature which is seen to have less cultural capital. Essentially, the literary field has been separated into that of high and popular literature, and I will interrogate this binary opposition, and suggest through deconstructive readings of my chosen texts, that this binary is less oppositional than it might seem. Through a process of deconstructive critique, I hope to demonstrate that the texts of these three Dubliners have more in common than is generally supposed, and by extension, I will call into question the seemingly objective categories of high and popular literature. This chapter will rely heavily on *Of Grammatology*, wherein Derrida deconstructs binary oppositions in his discussion of Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau, as this is an analogous reading of different contextual paradigms.

Derrida argues that both Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau base their argument upon the nature/culture binary opposition, and he goes on to identify the contradictory aspects of incest, thus undermining the nature/culture opposition, and instead showing that these two categories are mutually dependent. Rousseau also displays logocentric assumptions by claiming that writing is a ‘dangerous supplement’ (Derrida, 1976: 149), and here, in a typically deconstructive gesture, Derrida fixes upon the word ‘supplement’ (another undecidable) in order to overturn Rousseau’s view on masturbation and music as a nature/culture binary. Rousseau adjoins nature with origin; however Derrida insists that supplementary logic is at work within all discourse and that: ‘everything in language is substitute’ (Derrida, 1976: 235), therefore nature is supplemented and the origin is inaccessible.

The supplement according to Derrida is, ‘a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence’ (Derrida, 1976: 144). I have also included the essay

‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Science’, as part of the theoretical matrix of this chapter, as it deals with the notion of the centre, and with the concept of a centered structure, an essential component with binaries. This chapter also looks at Derrida’s neologism of ‘*différance*’, which is a play on the French term ‘*différence*’, meaning both ‘to defer’ and ‘to differ’. This blurring of meaning creates another undecidable, which refers to the deferral of meaning that is always taking place within language, as well as to the differential nature of that meaning. This essay deconstructs the opposition speech/writing, a topic which forms the essence of with my third chapter, as the two terms, ‘*différance*’ and ‘*différence*’ are indistinguishable in speech, and it is only through writing that one can determine the meaning of the word, thus undermining Western philosophy’s privileging of speech over writing.

Chapter Three looks at what is possibly Derrida’s most significant undecidable – the ‘*pharmakon*’, from ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’ which appeared in *Dissemination*. In this essay, Derrida traces Plato’s privileging of speech over the written word within *Phaedrus*, which outlines Thoth’s offer of the gift of writing to King Thamus. Thoth refers to the gift as a ‘*pharmakon*’, and the King refuses the gift on the grounds that it would aid forgetfulness. Derrida views this as another hierarchical opposition, underlining Western philosophy’s privileging of the spoken word. The key term ‘logocentrism’, stems from the Greek word ‘logos’ meaning ‘the word of God’, that appeared in the opening lines of Saint John’s Gospel: [i]n the beginning was the Word and the Word was God’ (John, 1:1). I have used the binary opposition of speech/writing and demonstrated that the same paradoxical logic can be applied to the writings of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard. My analysis of speech and writing in their work illustrates that one can never truly distinguish between the two terms. Essentially, I will argue that their respective texts go beyond the classic binary opposition and set out a new structure.

Chapter Four looks at possibly the oldest dichotomy that has shaped Western philosophical thinking, namely that of gender, and the categories of maleness and femaleness. This dualism forms the platform which is the ongoing subject of feminist critique. While I have drawn from some of this feminist critique in my own exploration of gender binaries, I rather will not advert to feminist theory when this is appropriate to the exploration of the deconstruction of the binaries with which this thesis is centrally concerned; what might be termed a deconstructive feminism. This chapter refers to the second essay within *Dissemination*, that of ‘The Double Session’, where Derrida discusses Mallarmé. Here, Derrida applies Mallarmé’s concept of the ‘hymen’ as an example of another undecidable, as it symbolises both virginity and consummation. Accordingly, this undecidable operates according to the same ambiguity as the *pharmakon*. I have used these undecidables as a structural model to illustrate that the opposition between maleness and femaleness is unstable, throughout the texts of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard. Indeed I have not alone inverted this opposition, but dismantled it to the point of undecidability, and gestured towards the new structures that are set out in these literary works.

Throughout these three chapters, I will also refer to ‘*Khōra*’, an essay by Derrida in *On the Name*, which refers to the logic of contradictions that is at the core of language. ‘*Khōra*’ was a word that appeared within Plato’s text *Timaeus*, and it is Plato’s means of adjoining the sensible with the intelligible. Derrida makes a distinction between the thought of Plato – which sees a clear division between the world intelligible paradigms which are unchanging, and the visible, sensible world in which we live – and the mode of expression of that thought through language, and in a typical deconstructive reading, he looks beyond the binary to a generative or transforming term which will break down the binary and he finds this in the term *khōra*:

The difficulty declared by *Timaeus* is shown in a different way: at times the *khōra* appears to be neither this nor that, at times both this and that, but this alternation between the logic of exclusion and that of participation – we shall return to this at length – stems perhaps only from a provisional appearance and from the constraints of rhetoric, even from some incapacity for naming. (Derrida, 1993: 89)

*Khōra*, then, is neither an intelligible form nor a sensible thing, but, rather, that in which sensible things are inscribed. It is both similar to the forms, as it is always already there, but also partakes in the world of the sensible: ‘it does not have the eternity of the intelligible paradigms but a certain a-chronistic a-temporality’ (Caputo, 1997a: 84). Derrida uses it to signify a new structure that is beyond the polarities of binary opposition, as the *khōra* names neither the sensible nor the intelligible, but at the same time signifies both the sensible and intelligible, and an oscillation between the two. This is the type of *khōral* double-reading that will be practised in this thesis, as I will demonstrate the undecidable oscillations that undermine the binary oppositions of high/popular literature, speech/writing and maleness/femaleness, when viewed through the works of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard.

# Chapter One Theoretical Perspective

## 1.1 Introduction

Derrida's thinking about the 'discipline and law that regulate writing' (Derrida, 1982: 3), is best expressed in some of his undecidable terms, such as *khōra* or *pharmakon*. These are the aporetic Derridean tropes which form the conceptual basis of the critique of this thesis, as they deconstruct the binary logic on display a 'neither this nor that or that it is both this and that' (Wolfreys, 1988: 231). Derrida depicts this in his essay *Khōra*, where he draws on the Platonic text *Timaeus*. For Derrida, the problem of defining the subject *khōra* troubles Plato's text as he states:

we must not call the mother and receptacle of visible and sensible things either earth or air or fire or water, nor ye any of their compounds or components; but we shall not be wrong if we describe it as invisible and formless, all-embracing, possessed in a most puzzling way of intelligibility, yet very hard to grasp. (Plato, 1965: 70)

This illustrates the difficulty in identifying the *khōra*, as Plato lodges the figure between that of the sensible, the realm of feelings and emotions, and the intelligible, the realm which depicts rationality and intellect. Derrida notes that firstly, *Khōra* reaches us as the name, and he goes on to argue that 'when a name comes, it immediately says more than the name: the other of the name and quite simply the other, whose irruption the name announces' (Derrida: 1993, 89). The term is used in order to defy the logic 'of binarity, of the yes or no', and as such it is neither 'sensible' nor 'intelligible', but belongs to a 'third genus' (*triton genos*, 48a, 52a):

The difficulty declared by *Timaeus* is shown in a different way: at times the *khōra* appears to be neither this nor that, at times both this and that, but this alternation between the logic of exclusion

and that of participation—we shall return to this at length—stems perhaps only from a provisional appearance and from the constraints of rhetoric, even from some incapacity for naming. (Derrida: 1993, 89)

In this passage, the scope of Derrida's ambition, and the difficulty of explaining what he is doing, become clear. Western epistemology is constructed on the binary structure of the yes/no, and the true/false. Derrida, in finding a rupture in this structure, needs to find new terms to signify this rupture, as the existing terms are implicated in the exclusionary logic of the binary opposition. This is his reason for using terms like *khōra*, the *pharmakon*, *différance* and numerous others, as he is trying to achieve a vocabulary which will allow him to signify his double gesture and double reading of texts in order to uncover this new form of knowledge. It will be useful to examine the derivation of *khōra* at this juncture, as it is a term which is of seminal importance to my analysis.

As part of his explanation of the term, in the original edition of the text, published by Editions Galilée, the book included an unbound four-page insert (the *Prière d'insérer*). Here Derrida explained that *khōra* was 'neither sensible nor intelligible, neither metaphor nor literal designation, *neither this nor that, both this and that*, participating and not participating in the two terms of a couple' (Derrida: 1993, xv). In terms of this both/and logic, *khōra* stands as a metonym of the type of deconstructive reading that attempts to liberate culture from the strictures of binary logic and instead, by grafting parts of one element of the binary onto the other, to create a new structure which will redefine the whole notion of the couple as interdependent. For Derrida, terms like this one are difficult to explain in normal binary terms, and he is often seen to use seemingly paradoxical metaphors in order to make his point: 'no more than this depth without depth promises the night of a day' (Derrida: 1993, xvi). In this sense, *khōra* is political

as it ‘announces without promising, a thought, or rather, a putting to test of the political’ (Derrida: 1993, xvi).

This distinction fixes the *khōra* as ‘neither intelligible being nor sensible becoming, but a little like both, the subject matter of neither a true *logos* nor a good *mythos*’ (Caputo, 1997a: 84). What Derrida proposes is that the *khōra* is ‘neither an intelligible form nor one more sensible thing’ (Caputo, 1997a: 84), rather it is that which belongs to a third genus, for the *khōra* ‘names neither this nor that, or that *khōra* says this and that’ (Derrida, 1993: 89). Derrida submits that:

the oscillation of which we have just spoken is not an oscillation among others, an oscillation between two poles. It oscillates between two types of oscillation: the double exclusion (*neither/nor*) and the participation (*both this and that*). (Derrida, 1993: 91)

The distinction between the sensible and intelligible is in effect a binary opposition, which the idea of the *khōra* problematizes by obeying a double logic. For this ‘double logic is the order of both “this and that” and, simultaneously, “neither this nor that”’ (Derrida, 1993: 89). The *khōra* exhibits how oppositions, when dismantled, bleed into one another, creating a new field or structure through the grafting of each element onto the other. The very idea of the *khōra* troubles all binaries, ‘whether one is discussing proper sense/metaphorical sense, or whether the binarism is that of *mythos/logos*, upon which division the seriousness of philosophical discourse rests’ (Wolfreys, 1988: 39). As Derrida puts it, ‘the thought of the *khōra* would trouble the very order of polarity in general, whether dialectical or not’ (Derrida, 1993: 92). I aim to use the idea of the *khōra* as an exemplary text, and will apply a similar schema to the oppositions of high/popular literature, speech/writing and maleness/females. It is my hope that this deconstructive reading of these binaries will illustrate that binary oppositions, when dismantled, move into a realm of undecidability, thus developing a new concept which is more fluid and more emancipatory.



Another rupturing of oppositional forces is to be found in the use of the term *pharmakon*, and again Derrida founded his argument within the Platonic text of *Phaedrus*, where Western metaphysics privileges speech over writing. Derrida takes this binary and dismantles the text by focusing on a single word, the '*pharmakon*', which means 'remedy' as well as 'poison'. The word is irreducible to an either/or logic, and again is similar to the *khōra*, as it signifies both remedy and poison. It displays an 'alternation between the logic of exclusion and that of participation' (Derrida, 1993: 89). Like the *khōra*, the *pharmakon* announces ambiguity, 'by bearing in it the other of meaning which effectively destabilises, its location, translation and definition' (Wolfreys, 1988: 40).

It is Derrida's theoretical reading of such points that will be used to unearth and elicit a new perspective with regard to the three writers: Joyce, O'Casey and Howard. It was McQuillan who describes how 'Derrida does deconstruction, Paul de Man does deconstruction, J. Hillis Miller does deconstruction Diane Elam does deconstruction, Gayatri Spivak does deconstruction', and I also intend to 'do' deconstruction as well, in my readings of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard (McQuillan, 2000: 5). Theory provides 'more than a method or way of reading: theories carry world-views and theory lays down a challenge to existing or normative views of culture, human nature and existence' (Rice and Waugh, 2001: 1). Thus, the greatest impact of Derrida's work 'lies in its ability to combine writing, theory, and living'. I feel there is a 'need of bringing theory to life' (Cixous, 1991: xxii), and there is no better way of demonstrating that theory is not just "the talk on the cereal box" or "a walk on a slippery rock". Instead, it is 'a way of living, speaking, and seeing the world' (Cixous, 1991: xxii), and what better way of exemplifying this than to apply it to texts written across different timelines, as

Joyce wrote in the early 1900s, soon followed by O'Casey in the 1920s and then by the twenty first century work of Paul Howard.

## ***1.2 Deconstructive Strategy***

The theory of deconstruction also allows individuals to see the way that experiences are 'determined by ideologies of which we are unaware because they are built into our language' (Tyson, 1999: 241). Therefore, it reveals the 'hidden works of ideology in our daily experience of ourselves and our world' (Tyson, 1999: 241). Derrida, then, deals with metanarratives and illustrates how they affect everyday living. Theory is a sophisticated and layered critique as it combines 'politics by measuring it through an ideal of home, of family' (Maxwell, 1984: 102); it opens and challenges the conventional or the transcendental signified; it interrogates the assumptions of the given meaning that are vested in the word, therefore attaining 'another way of thinking about the act of reading' (McQuillan, 2000: 4). One of the achievements of literary theory in recent years has been to elicit and channel interpretive power in the service of a sceptical engagement with disciplines that 'depend upon a notion of absolute knowledge and fully grounded truth' (Attridge, 1988:6). Therefore, deconstruction is thought of as a 'radical break from past ways of thought, loosely associating this break with the philosophy of Nietzsche and Heidegger and the psychoanalysis of Freud' (Barry, 2002: 66).<sup>1</sup> However Derrida's writing

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<sup>1</sup> Derrida acknowledges the influence of his philosophical forefathers such as Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger, especially within his essay *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science*. Derrida quotes, 'Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, for example, worked within the inherited concepts of metaphysics. Since these

style is opaque and deemed by many as incomprehensible, thus making it difficult for his theory to be applied to a text. A reason for this is that Derrida is writing through the medium of a metalanguage, language used to describe language. Therefore a criticism of Derrida is that his deconstructive strategy is in itself caught within what Derrida calls the ‘double-bind’ of language. It can be undermined by its own truth-claims, and thus his argument is subject to its own deconstruction.

For this reason Derrida insists, deconstruction is not a ‘method’ which can be flatly applied to something with a view to deconstructing it. He makes this point explicitly in his ‘Letter to a Japanese Friend’, which appears in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 2*. In this letter in which he sets out to explain more about his method to his interlocutor, Professor Toshihiko Izutsu, a renowned Islamologist, he makes a specific point on the relationship between deconstruction and method:

I would say the same about *method*. Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Especially if the technical and procedural significations of the word are stressed. It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological “metaphor” that seems necessarily attached to the very word “deconstruction” has been able to seduce or lead astray. Hence the debate that has developed in these circles: Can deconstruction become a methodology for reading and for interpretation? Can it thus let itself be reappropriated and domesticated by academic institutions? (Derrida: 2007, 4)

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concepts are not elements or atoms, and since they are taken from a syntax and a system, every particular borrowing brings along with it the whole of metaphysics’ (Derrida, 1987: 357).

Heaving spelled out what deconstruction is not, he goes on to explain what he sees as the epistemological operative method of deconstruction. It is something which ‘takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity. It deconstructs itself. It can be deconstructed. (*Ça se déconstruit*)’ (Derrida: 2007, 4). Here, his point is that deconstruction is always already within texts, and it just needs to be operationalized through a process of careful reading. Because this reading practice is outside the norms of binary logic, any process of explanation of the operations of deconstruction will necessarily be both opaque and oblique, a point he recognises when he notes that by ‘trying to make a word clearer so as to assist its translation, I am only thereby increasing the difficulties: “the impossible task of the translator” (Benjamin). This too is what is meant by “deconstruction”’ (Derrida: 2007, 5).

The difficulty of articulating what he means becomes clear in the next section, where Derrida is explicit in demonstrating just why it is so difficult to explain what he means, as this is in itself a deconstruction of the modalities of meaning with which we have been constituted epistemologically:

To be very schematic, I would say that the difficulty of *defining* and therefore also of *translating* the word “deconstruction” stems from the fact that all the predicates, all the defining concepts, all the lexical significations, and even the syntactic articulations, which seem at one moment to lend themselves to this definition or to that translation, are also deconstructed or deconstructible, directly or otherwise, and so on. And that goes for the *word*, the very unity of the *word* deconstruction, as for every *word*. *Of Grammatology* questioned the unity “word” and all the privileges with which it was credited, especially in its *nominal* form. It is therefore only a discourse or rather a writing that can make up for the incapacity of the word to be equal to a “thought.” All sentences of the type “deconstruction is X” or “deconstruction is not X” a priori miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false. As you know, one of the principal

things at stake in what is called in the texts “deconstruction” is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: *S is P*. (Derrida: 2007, 5)

For Derrida, the equation that states complete equivalence between two items, or concepts, or between a thought and word, is just not possible, as there is always a surplus meaning that must be attenuated for such equivalences to take place, and it is precisely this surplus meaning, this play of meaning, that is at stake in the deconstructive project. The word ‘delimiting’ in the quotation is the key to any understanding of deconstruction, as it seeks to shake of the limits in order to liberate the potentialities of meaning across the relationship of text and context and their numerous oscillations and interactions. So statements like ‘Joyce is high culture whereas Howard is popular literature’, or ‘speech is closer to the individual than writing’ or ‘certain characteristics or traits are intrinsically male while others are female’, are very much what are being placed under critique by deconstruction, and a different order of connection and equivalence must be created.

To achieve this, a new set of signifiers must be produced in order to try to explain the process, and Derrida sees deconstruction, not as a privileged signifier, but rather as a word whose meaning derives from its relational context, which is in keeping with the deconstructive notion of differential and deferred meaning in language. Deconstruction, as a term, has value:

within a certain context, where it replaces and lets itself be determined by so many other words such as “writing [*écriture*],” “trace,” “differance,” “supplement,” “hymen,” “*pharmakon*,” “margin,” “cut [*entame*],” “*parergon*,” and so on. By definition, the list can never be closed, and I have cited only nouns, which is inadequate and done only for reasons of economy. In fact, I should have cited the sentences and the interlinking of sentences that in their turn determine these nouns in some of my texts. (Derrida: 2007, 5-6)

One could well add the term *khōra* to that list as it is another such word which stresses the operation that is deconstruction.

Thus Derrida sees deconstruction as consisting of ‘deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjoining, putting out of joint the authority of the “is”’ (Lucy, 2004: 12). Therefore deconstruction does not ‘exist separately from the text but only ever arises in a moment of reading’ (McQuillan, 2000: 6). Consequently, my reading of the three writers is also a deconstruction of them. Subsequently this method of reading seems to possess a certain formlessness as it sets out to demonstrate the impossibility of a system, because deconstruction is ‘far from a theory, a school, a method, even a discourse, still less a technique that can be appropriated – at bottom *what happens or comes to pass*’ (Lucy, 2004: 14). Because each individual’s map of the world is different, one must open oneself ‘up to the possibility of another way of thinking’ (McQuillan, 2000: 4), and by so doing an innovative and original reading can emerge from the texts of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard. Consequently, deconstruction insists on being an ‘endless act of reading’ (McQuillan, 2000: 7), therefore ‘deconstruction is a happening thing’ (Lucy, 2004: 14), which decentres existing structures, ideas and common-sense values. The term ‘decentres’ is not used innocently here, as it leads my inquiry onto another important landmark in the map of deconstruction which is being sketched out in this chapter.

Prior to deconstruction, there was a norm or centre in all Western thinking which held true for institutions, texts, traditions, beliefs and society. This thinking presupposed a centre, or origin at the core of every structure and this centre was seen as the ontological ground of such structures. A fundamental feature of Derrida’s critique claims that centres are also constructs which are camouflaged as points of origin, and this suggests that they are ‘able to define the unity of its project or its object’ (Derrida, 1976: 4), and thus define meaning. There is a

perceived union between the signifier and the signified. This denotes how the centre balances and defines the structures, when in fact there is ‘only a supplement ... there has never been an origin’ (Artaud, 1947: 292). However for individuals, the notion of having structures lacking ‘any centre represents the unthinkable’ (Derrida, 1978: 352). Thus by presupposing centres, structures depict a sense of coherence and allow individuals to ‘think without contradiction’ (Derrida, 1982: 24). Therefore the concept of a centre is ‘as old as the word *epistēmē* - Western science and Western philosophy’ (Derrida, 1987a: 351). This desire for a centre is called ‘logocentrism’ by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*, and he defines it as ‘the belief that the first and last things are the Logos, the Word, the Divine Mind, the infinite understanding of God, an infinitely creative subjectivity, and, closer to our time, the self-presence of full self-consciousness’ (Derrida: 1976, lxviii). It is this ‘logocentrism’ that directs philosophy towards ‘an order of meaning – thought, truth, reason, logic’ (Culler, 1983: 92) and which ‘encloses the meaning’ and ‘limits the play of trace’ (Derrida, 1982: 23). This notion of the centre as a given, and as outside the play of meaning in language, is one with which Derrida takes issue, and one with which this thesis is centrally concerned.

Derrida has discussed the concept of centrality in ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences’ (Derrida, 1978: 278-293). He makes the point that the centre in terms of any structure functions by limiting the ‘play’ of the structure (Derrida, 1978: 278). He goes on to define typical conceptions of centrality based on the Cartesian view of the transcendental subject as positioned anterior to language:

Thus, it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which, while governing the structure, escapes structurality ... the center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere* ... The concept of centered structure is in

fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play. (Derrida, 1978: 279)

This critique of centrality can be related to aspects of literature and the production of meaning. In humanistic ideology, the writer produces anterior meaning in language; he (and it usually is 'he' in this ideological formulation), is the 'center' who exists outside the structure of the text, and beyond the limits of the linguistic play; he is the 'fundamental ground' from whom meaning originates. Derrida implicitly makes this point in his list of substitutions of centrality that he sees as defining Western metaphysics: 'essence', 'subject', 'transcendentality, consciousness, God, man' (Derrida, 1978: 280). In other words, the notion of the centre is as much a part of the structure as any other part; not only is the centre not outside the structure but it is defined by the structure.

In religious terms, for example, the concept of God can be seen as outside the structures of religion, as it is a concept on which the whole religious structure is predicated. However, different religions throughout the world all have different concepts of God, and one could well ask if the concept of God, as a centre of religious structures, is as much created by these structures as they are predicated on the concept. The relationship between text and context, a relationship that is of primary importance to the deconstructive project, determines that the centre is part of the structure:

Henceforth, it became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a center in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence - but a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. (Derrida, 1978: 280)



Having clarified this position, Derrida was now able to stress the need for the interpretation of the centre as part of the reading of any structure:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse ... that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. (Derrida, 1978: 280)

As we are working in language, it is important to realise that the existence of the concept of centrality must be realised in and through language.

In this sense, it resembles the *khōra* and the *pharmakon*, which, whatever the intention of their use in language, deconstruct that intention by defying the binary either/or logic through their own, more ambiguous logic of both/and. This means that this concept, like all others, is not prior to language but rather predicated through language, and hence is subject to the structurality of language. As Derrida notes, this means that the idea of the centre is not in any way unique as every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic:

can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturatable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that ... without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called “normal” functioning. What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way? (Derrida, 1982: 320-321)

It becomes clear then, that notion of the centre is subject to the *différance* that is a motive force of all language, and does not exist outside of this differential structure:

one can always lift a written syntagma from the interlocking chain in which it is caught or given without making it lose every possibility of functioning, if not every possibility of “communicating,” precisely. Eventually, one may recognize other such possibilities in it by inscribing or *grafting* it into other chains. No context can enclose it. Nor can any code. (Derrida, 1982: 317)

This is a significant point in terms of any questioning of the values of a binary opposition. In terms of gender, the centre of meaning was always taken as the male position. Patriarchy defined femaleness in terms of being all that maleness was not, and hence there was a strong hierarchical bias in this binary opposition. For Derrida this is true of all binarisms, and we will see evidence of this in our discussion of high and popular literature, where Joyce and O’Casey are automatically valorised at the expense of Howard, who is seen as a popular writer of no great artistic or aesthetic significance. The same is true of speech and writing, where speech is automatically seen as being closer to subjective expression, while writing is seen as being at more of a remove from the self. My own reading of these three binary oppositions in the work of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard will attempt to overturn and deconstruct these hierarchical positions of value.

Writing in *Positions*, Derrida explains how problematic it is to attempt to overturn the violent hierarchy that pertains in the logic of binary oppositions. He stresses the need to avoid merely:

neutralizing the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply residing within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it. Therefore we must proceed using a double gesture, according to a unity that is both systematic and in and of itself divided, a double writing, that is, a writing that is in and of itself multiple .... On the other hand, we must traverse a phase of overturning. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has

the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively. (Derrida, 1981a: 41-42)

Derrida's most significant achievement, in my view, is to demonstrate that the centres through which individuals create the world are Western philosophy's greatest illusion. He has demonstrated that centres are constructs which deny their own constructedness in order to deceive individuals that this 'moment of the present, the absolute 'this' time, or the now', is a creation 'which excludes from itself all multiplicity' (Derrida, 1982: 13). Derrida contends that 'it is necessary to begin thinking that there are no centres', as these centres of origin have 'no natural site' (Derrida, 1987a: 353); they are a human invention which delude individuals into believing that language is stable. However, Derrida disagrees with this, and he draws on a point made by Nietzsche that truth is merely a 'mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms ... truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions ... coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal' (Derrida, 1976: xxii).

Derrida insists that one can 'substitute centre for centre' (Derrida, 1978: 353), as there are an 'infinite number of vantage points from which to view' language (Tyson, 1999: 321). This 'law of central presence' (Derrida, 1978: 353), puts into question the belief that structures have a 'fixed locus', through demonstrating centres as functions of substitutions. Subsequently, when one centre is uncovered another one is reawakened, thus as Derrida insists 'the name "origin" no longer suits it' (Derrida, 1982: 11), therefore suggesting that the 'totality has its centre

elsewhere' (Derrida, 1978: 352). Thus individuals are sure of nothing and what is the known constantly 'remains forgotten' (Derrida, 1982: 23). Derrida's study of 'writing since Plato' constitutes that the origin of philosophy does not present a 'unity of *logos* and *phonē*' (Derrida, 1976: 29). He has dismantled the face of language and the philosophy of logocentrism, by insisting that:

The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundament ground, a ply constituted in the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play. (Derrida, 1978: 352)

The privileging of speech over writing is called 'phonocentrism', and it is a feature of logocentrism. Western Metaphysics treats writing as a contaminated form of speech: 'writing serves only as a supplement to speech' in this tradition (Derrida, 1976: 144). Derrida also claims that 'language is necessary in order for speech to be intelligible' and 'speech always comes first' (Derrida, 1982: 12). He adds that 'writing is nothing but a mediated representation of thought' (Derrida, 1976: 144), thus reinforcing the importance of speech. The relationship between the two is that 'speech represents thought by conventional signs, and writing represents the same with regard to speech' (Derrida, 1976: 144). Subsequently, speech seems nearer to the source of original thought, as one attributes a presence that is taken to be lacking in writing. As Culler suggests, phonocentrism is that which 'treats writing as a representation of speech and puts speech in a direct and natural relationship with meaning' (Culler, 1983: 92). Derrida argues that 'the relationship between speech and writing' has already been determined (Derrida, 1976: 4), with speech being privileged over writing. As he puts it the 'system of "hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak"' through the phonic substance—which *presents itself* as the nonexterior' (Derrida, 1976, 7), is at the core of our sense of ourselves as individual speaking subjects.

Plato, in his writing, ‘idealized speech as the living emanation of the word, as if it erased the gap between signifier and signified’ (Leitch, 2001: 1818). This is almost a reification of the ‘logos’, as it suggests that speech is closer to truth, and therefore that it is privileged over writing. Ever since Plato, Derrida argues that ‘philosophy has prided itself on its construction of a true world based on ultimate clarity of expression and thought’ (Mikics, 2007: 171). Derrida however, feels that this unification between signifier and signified is merely a constructed one, which can be deconstructed and therefore individuals cannot take meaning as fixed. Whether as speech or writing, both share writerly features – both are a signifying process which lack presence; for Derrida, no statement either written or oral is reliable, as there is always a gap between intention and enactment through language.

Deconstruction suggests that language is ‘merely the understandable desire for stable and coherent origins’ (McQuillan, 2000: 11). In reality, the way individuals interpret the world ‘is not the way things really are but it is the fiction we tell ourselves in order to live’ (McQuillan, 2000: 11). It is an artificial creation in order to deceive individuals into believing that the world is the way they perceive it to be. The belief is maintained by Structuralists like Saussure and his theory on language which is antithetical to that of Derrida. Saussure insists that a sign (the word) ‘is a combination of a form (the signifier) and a meaning (the signified)’. For Saussure, language is a ‘system of signs’ (Culler, 2000: 57), and ‘the concept is fixed as the signified and has priority over its arbitrary and conventional mode of expression as a signifier’ (McQuillan, 2000: 18). However, Derrida insists that ‘the difference between signified and signifier is nothing’ (Derrida, 1976: 13), but an infinite chain of signifiers always in play; he contends that the signifier has ‘no natural attachment to the signified within reality’ (Derrida, 1976: 46). Therefore this conceptual framework is not a stable system, but a ‘metaphorical illustration’ (McQuillan,

2000: 20), which is ‘dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable, constantly disseminating possible meanings’ (Tyson, 1999: 251). It is through language that individuals produce an understanding of the evolving human race. Derrida insists that ‘language is our ground of being, or the foundation from which our experience and knowledge of the world is generated’ (Tyson, 1999: 248). However these concepts remain unstable, as there are an infinite number of possible meanings with each written or spoken utterance. Yet language is the only instrument through which individuals can achieve expression and so one chooses to discount the arbitrariness and undecidability. This conventional system is a lived reality as ‘users of language can be trained into accepting these circumstances through its habitual use’ (McQuillan, 2000: 10).

‘Deconstruction examines the way in which Western thought is structured’ (McQuillan, 2000: 8), and the focus is very much on the modality of that structure which is language, and on the opposition in language between speech and writing. In *Of Grammatology*, he advocates the principle that the whole of Western thought since Plato and Aristotle is structured in terms of binary oppositions. Indeed, it is the longing for a centre which provides ‘an authorizing pressure, that spawns hierarchized oppositions’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxix). As we have seen, the first term is known as the ‘masculine characteristic [which is] traditionally privileged over the female characteristic which accompanies it’, namely the second term (McQuillan, 2000: 9). Socrates did not write, but was described in writing in the works of Plato, and together they examined the binary opposition between speech and writing. They insisted that writing had been considered secondary to speech.

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates relates the myth of Thoth to explain why speech is better and more authentic than writing. The god Thoth is patron of geometry, mathematics, astronomy and writing, and he makes the offer of writing as a gift to the Egyptian King Thamus, who does not

accept this gift because he thinks it is dangerous. His fear is based on the fact that writing acts as a substitute for the authentic presence of the spoken word, and he goes on to compare speech and writing to good and evil memory. Writing is dangerous, he claims, because written words will negate the need for real powers of memory, where the words are stored in the consciousness of the individual. Thus the evil kind of memory encouraged by the external marks of writing, serves as a mere reminder and substitution of true, essential knowledge, while 'good' memory, associated with speech and the internal capacity to remember, is the recognition of ideal forms and spiritual truths. The internal ownership of ideas through thought and consciousness and voice will be destabilised by this external form of grammatology. Derrida states:

Such will be, in its logical outlines, the objection the king raises to writing: under pretext of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful; far from increasing knowledge, it diminishes it. (Derrida, 1981b: 100)

The key differences are expressed in binary oppositions with speech being live, internal and true; whereas writing is dead, external and false:

Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of *opposition* as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition. (Derrida, 1981b: 103)

The irony that all of this is expressed in writing is deconstructive aporia to which Derrida draws attention. An aporia, according to Christopher Norris, is a blind spot or 'moment of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what it manifestly means to say and what it is nonetheless constrained to mean' (Norris, 1987: 19). The notion of the primacy of speech over writing is a similarly aporetic structure. The

Western philosophical tradition relies upon writing as a means of substituting or supplementing speech, and speech itself is impossible without relying on, or referring to, the rules and logic that structure writing. Derrida argues that:

If supplementarity is a necessarily indefinite process, writing is the supplement par excellence since it marks the point where the supplement proposes itself as supplement of supplement, sign of sign, taking the place of a speech already significant: it displaces the proper place of the sentence, the unique time of the sentence pronounced *hic et nunc* by an irreplaceable subject, and in return enervates the voice. (Derrida, 1976: 281)

His deconstruction of the myth of Thoth goes beyond dismantling binary oppositions; the paradoxical meanings Derrida identifies in the *pharmakon* and the supplement provide him with a basis for subverting the history and nature of language, and its claims to the articulation of immutable laws and truths. The supplement 'is that which escapes the system and at the same time installs itself within the system to demonstrate the impossibility of the system' (McQuillan, 2000: 20), and this is the relationship that Derrida posits between writing and speech. He does not merely invert the priority from speech-writing to writing-speech; instead he dismantles all the binary distinctions that organize Plato's text, to the point where opposition itself 'gives way to a process where opposites merge in a constant undecidable exchange of attributes' (Norris, 1987: 35). This process, which is 'the movement and the play' that links the binary oppositions, that 'reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.)' is the 'production of difference'



(Derrida, 1981b: 127).<sup>2</sup> *Différance*, Derrida claims, is located ‘between speech and writing’ (Derrida, 1982: 4), and this is where my own khōral reading of the texts of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard will also be situated. In all three, speech and writing oscillate in a relationship that is both aporetic and undecidable, and I hope to demonstrate this in the next three chapters.

The final chapter will focus on a specific binary opposition, that of maleness and femaleness, and it is to a colleague of Derrida’s who has written specifically about this construct that the discussion now turns. Derrida’s intellectual rapport with H  l  ne Cixous is well-known; he has called her ‘the greatest writer in what I call my language, the French language if you like. And I am weighing my words as I say that’ (Cixous, 1998: i). I plan to utilize some aspects of her thinking about language as a hierarchized opposition, which embodies a feminine and masculine dimension. Cixous has been a ‘major proponent of a writing of the feminine or a feminine writing’, which she termed *  criture feminine* which attempts to break away from ‘cultural stereotypes, essentialising concepts and their attributes such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, active/passive’ (Colney, 1991: 12). Cixous focused on ‘sexual differences in

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<sup>2</sup> An example of this which is referred to in more detail within the body of the thesis, is how the entire reading of Captain Jack Boyle within *Juno and the Paycock* can be dismantled by demonstrating how the word ‘chassis’ is answerable to the concept of a deconstructive aporia. The dominant reading is that Boyle lacks the ability to say ‘chaos’ correctly, therefore signifying him as an uneducated and lacking the capacity to articulate language. However, Derrida stresses the importance of the text printed and that is ‘chassis’, therefore, I have taken this to refer to a structure and thus deconstructed the dominant reading of Boyle, by claiming that he is knowledgeable and scholarly as he sees the world as a constructed structure.

language' and attacked 'universalism and describes and celebrates the experiences and identities of many different women' (Humm, 1992: 193). Her writing is not solely theoretical, as she 'writes at the interstices of fiction, criticism, psychoanalysis, and philosophy without enclosing herself in any of them' (Colney, 1991: 12). Her style is fluent, allusive, associative and poetic and Derrida has categorized her work as that of 'a great writer', who is 'a poet-thinker, very much a poet and a very thinking poet' (Cixous, 1998: i).

Cixous's theory of *écriture* (writing), where she investigates the concept of language and believes that it 'has always worked by opposition' (Cixous, 1975: 359), segues with Derrida's ideas that the hierarchy between speech and writing needed to be critiqued. Before their interventions into the field, speech had represented 'immediacy, presence, truth, logos (i.e., the "Word"), God and Oneness' and writing had stood for 'deferral, difference, absence, lack, lawlessness, multiplicity, and heterogeneity' (Leitch, 2001: 2036). However, Cixous maintains that this privileging of terms is merely a 'movement by which each opposition is set up to produce meaning' (Cixous, 1975: 360), and this has become the commonly-accepted reality. Derrida affirms that, 'speech itself had never actually manifested truth directly; instead, like writing it was structured through the difference' between the signifier and the signified (Derrida, 1974: 23). Thus embedded within this difference between signifier and signified lies what Derrida coined as a *lag*, a 'discrepancy between a sign and what it meant' (Leitch, 2001: 2037). The signifier and signified, according to Derrida, do not represent unity, and Cixous reinterprets Derrida's view by insisting that we 'just apply the same metaphor, we follow it, it transports us, in all its forms, wherever a discourse is organized' (Cixous, 1975: 359). Therefore, one can question whether speech affirm what it is thought to signify (truth, logos and the word), or does writing indicate a lack (lawlessness, multiplicity, and heterogeneity). The point can be made that

‘no actual language could achieve the simultaneity of signifier and signified’ (Leitch, 2001: 2037), due to its arbitrary and differential nature.

So like Derrida, Cixous ‘saw the world as verbal, as text structured through hierarchical logocentric oppositions’, which ‘were founded on gender’ (Todd, 1988: 55), and it was this gender-based opposition of male and female on which Cixous based her theory. An early and influential claim for the relevance of binary opposition for feminism is “Sorties”, an essay published in 1975 by Cixous (Bertens, 2001: 164). The essay begins with a powerful and thought provoking question of ‘Where is SHE?’ (Cixous, 1975: 359), and Cixous goes on to present a list of binary oppositions, as she believes that ‘thought has always worked by opposition’ (Cixous, 1975: 359). All of the oppositions, ‘the concepts, the codes, the values’ are ‘a two term system, related to the couple man/woman’ (Bertens, 2001: 164). For Cixous, everything is related to, not alone male/female opposition, but also to a ‘dual, hierarchized opposition’ (Cixous, 1975: 359). The privileged position is connected with masculinity and is signified by those terms which are first on Cixous’s list. This leaves the second terms to represent the feminine or inferior half of the binary, for instance;

Activity/passivity,  
Sun/Moon,  
Culture/Nature,  
Day/Night. (Cixous, 1975: 359)

However, Cixous dismantles the dominant way of placing the oppositions horizontally, as she not alone views the male half of the binary to be the superior element, but also feels that the horizontal representation does not really capture the inherent bias that exists against the second

term of the binary opposition. She remedies this by reinscribing the binary opposition vertically and visually:

Male

\_\_\_\_\_

Female (Cixous, 1975: 359)

The aim of her work is to liberate the female portion of this binary from its subordinate position, and her notion of *écriture féminine* attempts to bring this about by deconstructing the intrinsically patriarchal linguistic and cultural sphere with a writing that is overtly female in its epistemological structure. In this sense, the term is analogous to those terms of Derridean undecidability already discussed, as she is looking for a new vocabulary to define a new way of knowing. She has said: 'I think, and everybody knows, that there are other possibilities of language, that are precisely *languages*' (Cixous 1991, 146), and she is quite explicit about what she means by this:

This is how I would define a feminine textual body: as a female libidinal economy, a regime, energies, a system of spending not necessarily carved out by culture. A feminine textual body is recognized by the fact that it is always endless, without ending: there is no closure .... There's *tactility* in the feminine text, there's touch, and this touch passes through the ear. Writing in the feminine is passing on what is cut out by the Symbolic, the voice of the mother, passing on what is most archaic. (Cixous, 1981: 53-54)

She looks, like Derrida, towards the future as opposed to the past, and in this sense, she is attempting to liberate new languages and new gender structures from the texts of the past and present, and by so doing, hopes to create an emancipatory gender discourse. As she writes in 'The Laugh of the Medusa':

The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative. (Cixous, 1980: 245)

For Cixous, *écriture féminine* is part of ‘the work of un-forgetting, of un-silencing, of unearthing, of un-blinding oneself, and of un-deafening oneself’ (Sellers 1997: 83), and she sees literature as very much the locus of this project. Writing in *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, a book which examines her intellectual relationship with Derrida, she sets up an almost poetic dialogue with him in order to demonstrate this *écriture féminine* through the topic of literature as a means of creating her sense of an open, unearthing language:

- Let’s come back to literature. The one that interests us. The one that writes to the undecidable.
- You write to the undecidable
- The undecidable reads me.
- How do you write the undecidable?
- With a capital: the Undecidable.
- Writing that is ‘literary,’ in other words, undecidabilized has a status of improbability. (Cixous, 2007: 10)

Given the stratified nature of the male/female structure that she has outlined, improbability and undecidability are necessary if there is to be any progression in deconstructing the binary oppositions of maleness and femaleness. Her visual representation of the power-hierarchy reinforces Derrida’s points about the need to liberate the less-favoured term through deconstruction, as well as cleverly highlighting the fact that she believes that such ‘hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man’ (Cixous, 1975: 360), and this innovative way of placing the oppositions emphasizes that there is a ‘never-ending privileging of the masculine’ (Bertens, 2001: 165).

Cixous strongly articulates that as ‘soon as there is a will to say something. A will: desire, authority, you examine that, and you are led right back to the father’ (Cixous, 1975: 360). Even within the family, male children are of vital importance because it is believed that they are the ones who carries on the family name, this is why it is the ‘father who is coupled with the son’ and not the mother (Cixous, 1975: 360). Consequently one cannot fail to notice that ‘there’s no place at all for women in the operation’ of paternity (Cixous, 1975: 360). As Cixous argues ‘either the woman is passive; or she doesn’t exist’, and it all ‘refers back to the man, to his torment, his desire to be at the origin’, ‘back to the father’ (Cixous, 1975: 361) and it is this that ensures there is a ‘solidarity of logocentrism and phallogentrism’ (Cixous, 1975: 361), an order based on the importance of the phallus as the signifying power within society.

As a reaction to psychoanalysis, which Cixous regarded ‘as representing a masculine view of the world’ (Todd, 1988: 55), she proposed the use of *écriture féminine*, which will escape the limitations imposed by the ‘phallogentric system’ (Bertens, 2001: 166). Therefore, although Cixous is very close to Derrida with regard her thinking on binary oppositions, her writing has emerged though a reaction to the celebrated psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and the notion of phallogentrism. For Lacan, language, what he terms the symbolic order, is ‘is constitutive for the subject’ (Lacan. 2006: 7). He sees language as the defining factor in all forms of subjectivity: ‘if man comes to think about the symbolic order, it is because he is first caught in it in his being’ (Lacan, 2006: 40). For him, subjectivity is predicated on entry into the symbolic order, the same order which Cixous sees as radically biased in favour of the male element of the binary opposition; it is as if we are ‘born a second time, in leaving behind the state which is rightly known as the *infans* state, for it is without speech—namely, the symbolic order constituted by language’ (Lacan, 2006: 371).

According to Lacan ‘an infant moves during its earliest psychosocial development from an Imaginary order, which is a mother-centered, non-subjugated, pre-symbolic, pre-oedipal space of bodily drives and rhythms’ (Leitch, 2001: 16). During this phase, the child is unable to speak and is ‘subject to impressions and fantasies, to all sorts of drives, and has no sense of limitations and boundaries’ (Bertens, 2001: 160). Lacan describes how during the Imaginary phase, the child is at the ‘*infans* stage, still in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence’ (Lacan, 2006: 75). Subsequently, it is through ‘the *Mirror Stage* that a child enters into the Symbolic order of ‘separation between self and m(other), of law and patriarchal social codes, and of loss and associated desire’ (Leitch, 2001: 16). Lacan insists that this is where the child acquires language and gains an acceptance of the social and cultural system, and that it is here that there is an establishment of a ‘relation between the organism and its reality – or, as they say between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*’ (Lacan, 2006: 78), the inner world and the outer world. Thus Lacan calls this acquiring of language and acceptance of social and cultural laws the ‘*nom du père*’, as it is in ‘the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law’ (Lacan, 2006: 230). Punning on the religious connotations of the term ‘name-of-the-father’, Lacan sees patriarchal power as embodied within the law, culture and societal structures, agreeing with Cixous in terms of the power of ‘the Name-of-the-Father in the promotion of the law’ (Lacan, 2006: 432).

However, a distinction can be made between Freud and Lacan, as Lacan sees male domination as a cultural construct and not a biological given, thus differing from Freud. Indeed the phallus, for Lacan, does not represent the physical organ but acts as a signifier of maleness thus illustrating the false assumption that the male signifies dominance and the superior half of

the binary, what ‘is simultaneously transmitted in the symbolic order is the phallus’ (Lacan, 2006: 471). So for him, it is societal structures that have naturalised this supremacy of the male. He makes the point that: ‘the phallus is the privileged signifier of this mark in which the role [part] of Logos is wedded to the advent of desire’ (Lacan, 2006: 581), so that in the symbolic order, the phallus is the privileged signifier, it is logocentric, to use Derrida’s term. He is describing the symbolic order of his own culture as rigidly patriarchal, and in this sense his writing is analogous to Cixous’s visual representation of the male/female binary.

Cixous, however, while recognising this asymmetry and imbalance, attempts to ‘give voice, figure and flesh to alternative versions of sexuality starting from the feminine, not the phallic perspective’ (Leitch, 2001: 1283). Her answer to this is *écriture féminine*, ‘a radical, disruptive mode of “female” writing that is opposed to patriarchal discourse with its rigid grammar boundaries, and categories; tapping into the Imaginary, it gives voice to the unconscious, the body, the non-subjective, and polymorphous’ (Leitch, 2001: 16). Cixous is challenging the inherited worldview, and through her writing, she ruptures this phallogentric language, as she aims to enable women ‘to speak outside the phallogentric order of society’ (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 185). Cixous articulates just how complex this *écriture féminine* is when she pronounces that:

it is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and it is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, encoded – which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. (Cixous, 1981: 253)

This *écriture féminine* is opposed to the western perspective where feminists believe society to be male-centered ‘and that women are made feel subordinate in every area of life: the



family, the state, in law and in religion' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 167). This female writing is marked by fluidity, by no beginning or end and by a rhythm which dismantles 'the order and logic of standard writing' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 168). It is Cixous's *écriture féminine* which contested a writing that has 'been run by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously' (Cixous, 1976a: 2042). This subversive writing turns away from the gender-specific formulations to which individuals are accustomed, and instead points to a mode of writing that involves the new idea of a women's language. Although Cixous insists it can be produced by both females and males, nevertheless she 'finds it rare for men to write in this mode since they have much investment in the "phallogocentric" order encoding their supremacy' (Todd, 1988: 57). Cixous claims that writers like Joyce achieved this *écriture féminine*, and I will examine this in relation to the strong female characters which Joyce and O'Casey have presented in their work, wherein they challenged the prevailing patriarchal culture. Howard too, I will argue, presents women who have elevated themselves from this male dominance, for example Ross's mother Fionnuala O'Carroll-Kelly, who has written her own fiction and taken a place in her public sphere. It is important to note, at this juncture, that Cixous did not see herself as a 'feminist in the American sense', a sense which she saw as simply 'an expression of the bourgeois desire for women's equality in power within the present unchanged patriarchal and late capitalist system' (Todd, 1988: 56). Cixous specifically 'works on and in language' combining this with the female body (Leitch, 2001: 2038).

In this way, her work, allied to that of Derrida, provides for an ongoing critique of the logic of Western logocentrism. They suggest that the construction of 'false borders between concepts', and the assumption of 'rigorous purity of terms', is just a delusion which has been

invented in order to structure and organise the world of language (McQuillan, 2000: 15). For example the binary inside/outside and the fiction of purity that surrounds each term is broken down as both words contain the term 'side'. Subsequently the binary male/female is also joined by the word 'male'. Thus each half of the opposition is not an isolated concept but a necessary part of the structure as a whole: the signifiers of language itself deconstruct any attempts at separation here. Derrida insists that deconstruction seeks to dismantle the logic of these binaries by showing the 'ways in which the terms within a binary opposition are not independent of one another but rely on each other through mutual contamination' (McQuillan, 2000: 15).

### ***1.3 Applied Deconstruction – Dublin South/North?***

Having set out the theoretical matrix of the thesis in broad terms in the last section, in this section, I would like to offer a preview of how a deconstructive reading of these texts will operate. The question mark in the section title is reflexive over the full phrase as it is clear that 'applying' deconstruction is not something that comes with a handbook. Each example is singular and will be treated as such. This section will focus on the social and economic binary opposition between north side and south side Dublin, and will offer an excursus of how this is expressed, and deconstructed, in some of the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard.

The opposition representing northside and southside Dublin, which features heavily in chapter two, will be used as an example of a deconstructive reading. This binary opposition reflects the perceived socio-economic status of different spatial areas of Dublin. It is reflected in the writings of O'Casey, whose trilogy is set in the Dublin tenements, especially the area of Mountjoy square which has been transformed into Hilljoy square in *The Shadow of a Gunman*. Subsequently, Howard's octology examines the culturally affluent areas of the elites within south Dublin, while Joyce depicts how fragile these oppositions are by having Stephen slide from one

half of the binary, elitist upper class, to that of the sunken and impoverished lower-class, a decline that is symbolised by the constant moving of houses and the changes of school. Although O'Casey is writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, while Howard is writing at the end of the twenty first century, both writers can be used to depict the socio-economic division of Dublin which has become significant within contemporary Ireland – they demonstrate a binary opposition which has been artificially created. Indeed Ross O'Carroll-Kelly, when commenting on Dublin's northside, announces that an, "estate" is 'a hilarious name for that council-built shantytown' and he describes Tina's house which dwells within the north of Dublin as, 'the kind of gaff where you wipe your feet on the way out' (Howard, 2007: 139). The binary between Dublin 4 and Dublin 13 (the postal codes of two specific areas which will be synecdoches for these class-based divisions), is what deconstruction seeks to dismantle through what Derrida formulated as the 'double gesture' (Derrida, 1982: 329). This is initially comprised of an inversion of the hierarchical relationship, in this case a socio-economic superiority of Dublin 4 over Dublin 13, as postal codes become metonymies for socio-cultural signifiers. In the iconography of Cixous, this would appear as:

Dublin 4

—————

Dublin 13

My reading will attempt to 'undecidabilize' this hierarchy by showing how it is overturned at given moments in each text through what Derrida termed as the 'event I called a rupture' (Derrida, 1978: 353). Therefore Dublin 4 is no longer the dominant half of the binary as regards socio-economic status, and both north side and southside are merely parts of Dublin. The second half of the double gesture involves an inversion of the binary so that Dublin 13 is privileged over

Dublin 4. Derrida sees this inversion as an important stage in ‘the irruptive emergence of a new “concept” (Derrida, 1981a: 42).

This occurs in a number of places in Howard’s fiction. It is Ross who mainly represents the elitist self-obsessed wealthy part of the binary opposition. Ross spends ‘two hundred squids for electricity, a grand for my mobile bill, three and a half Ks for my car insurance’; ‘Plus there’s four K’s on my credit card that Visa seem anxious about getting cleared’ (Howard, 2007: 82). Ross also exclaims: ‘I’m hardly out of the scratcher before *Home and Away* starts’ (Howard, 2007: 175). Normally, such conspicuous consumption is associated with middle and upper-middle-class productivity, but staying in bed and watching daytime television would be a stereotypical pattern of someone unemployed, so even here, Ross is breaking down the binaries. Just as Derrida required a series of substitutions to designate his own new concept, so Howard makes use of a phonetic idiolect to demonstrate the accent and speech-pattern of the denizens of Dublin 4, a fact that will be examined in more detail in chapter three. It is an irruption in the normal grammatical and grammatological structure of English, and it symbolises the new concept of which Derrida speaks. The opposition between Dublin 4 and Dublin 13 breaks down when one considers if Ross did not have money his behaviour would be similar to that of someone unemployed, and also the opposition can be further dismantled when the reader is presented with Ronan, Ross’s son, who is from the northside. Ross reinforces the hierarchy of value by describing where Ronan lives, on the northside of Dublin:

I wouldn’t exactly make a habit of hanging out on the northside. We’ve all seen the horrific images on television, though, and I have to say, roysh, it’s actually a lot worse in real life. We’re talking burned-out cars, boarded-up shops, children on the street eating bread and jam. (Howard, 2007: 159)

Ronan's character is the irruptive point in the text where the opposition between northside and southside breaks down. In Derridean terms, he functions as a *brisure* [*hinge*]. Derrida used this term to designate 'difference and articulation' and goes on to cite a dictionary definition which refers to: 'hinged articulation of two parts of wood- or metal-work. The hinge, the *brisure* [folding-joint] of a shutter' (Derrida, 1976: 65-66). This is another of his undecidable terms and it signifies another example of how the difference between the two terms of a binary opposition is really a form of *différance*, where meaning is deferred and differed across the two terms in order to create a 'new concept':

The hinge [*brisure*] marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and a signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence. That is why there is no full speech, however much one might wish to restore it by means or without benefit of psychoanalysis (Derrida, 1976: 69)

Subsequently in *This Champagne Mojito is the Last Thing I Own*, the reader is exposed to Ross's father Charles O'Carroll-Kelly, who has been imprisoned for tax evasion. Ross describes Mountjoy as 'like the Ilac Centre, but with focking bors on the windows. We're talking Adidas everything and Lizzy Duke Bling and it hums of, I don't know, defeat – defeat and desperation and Lynx' (Howard, 2007: 5). Despite most of the inmates being from the northside of Dublin, nevertheless Charles, as *brisure*, establishes a rugby team which is traditionally a southside sport. Similarly, Charles describes how he had made friends within the prison:

Keester Bunny, they call him. I wanted to have a word with him, see could he get me *The Irish Times* in. I mean, the *Indo* would probably be easier, given that you can get it in tabloid now, but I'm desperate to know how a certain G. Thornley Esquire thinks we'll acquit ourselves against New Zealand and Australia. (Howard, 2007: 93).

Ross's reaction to this is 'how the fuck are you still alive' (Howard, 2007: 93). In addition to this, Ross describes the experience of visiting him as, 'I know I'm going to have to watch this, roysh, but for probably the first time in my life I find myself actually feeling sorry for him. The dickhead' (Howard, 2007: 9). Deconstruction insists on heterogeneity – a relationship with the other, which disrupts the perceived totality vested within the dominant half of the binary. The binary oppositions of affluent and poor, as well as those of father and son, are blurred here in the way Charles forms bonds with people for whom he had previously little regard.

Another rupture within this logocentric assumption can be identified later in the same book where Ross faces divorce proceedings from his wife Sorcha, and finds that he has to get a job. Hennessy, his father's solicitor, states, 'I'm sorry for this sounds old fashioned, but have you considered working' (Howard, 2007: 220); Ross's reply is one of disbelief, 'fuck, things really are that bad' (Howard, 2007: 220). In addition to this, within Howard's *The Oh My God Delusion*, Ross finds himself living at 'the grange', next to people from the northside, 'I think they call them the New Westies' (a criminal gang who import drugs), he describes them as 'shams outside in the hallway, maybe mid-twenties, you know the kind, we're talking cheap sweaters and we're talking runners that cost the price of a week's holidays somewhere' (Howard, 2010: 142). Ross describes the cultural difference, by insisting that the 'awful noise' is:

Christy Moore Live at the Point. I've got poor people living next door....' 'It's called "Nancy Spin"', 'thirty times a fucking day. And that's all because I traded down, to make sure your daughter and granddaughter didn't end up living in a fucking bus shelter...' (Howard, 2010: 152/153).

In each of these examples, Ross himself becomes a *brisure*, as his southside position within the binary opposition becomes fused with aspects of the northside: his father is in prison, he is

unemployed and has no money, and his neighbours are drug-dealers. This illustrates that the metaphysics of presence is shattered by what Derrida names as an 'event', a 'rupture' and 'redoubling' of oppositional paradigms. This type of deconstructive reading looks for 'contradictions, blind-spots, or moments of hitherto unlooked-for rhetorical complications' (Norris, 2002: 135). Derrida considers it is always the texts themselves that undermine the dominant interpretation, and 'thereby demonstrate its non-complicity with an otherwise ubiquitous Western "logocentrism" or "metaphysics of presence"' (Norris, 2002: 135).

In O'Casey's play *Juno and the Paycock*, it is Charles Bentham who can be used to depict an aspirant middle-class culture. 'He's given up his job as a teacher, an' is goin' to become a solicitor in Dublin – he's been studyin' law' (O'Casey, 1988: 90). It is Jack Boyle who states that Bentham is 'too ignified for me – to hear him talk you'd think he knew as much as Boney's Oraculum' (O'Casey, 1988: 90). The attitude of Boyle towards Bentham can be used to represent the division between Dublin 13 and Dublin 4, for Bentham is considered as a knowledgeable scholarly man, as he comes bearing the news of the death of Jack Boyle's cousin and of how this man has left money to Mr Boyle. Bentham insists:

[A] week before he died he sent for me to write his will for him. He told me that there were two only that he wished to leave his property to: his second cousin, Michael Finnegan of Santry, and John Boyle, his cousin of Dublin. (O'Casey, 1988: 80)

Bentham stands for all that is superior and literate within the Boyle world: he is 'studyin' law' (O'Casey, 1988: 90). However, these traditional moral values can be dismantled through the knowledge that Bentham made out the will incorrectly, resulting in the Boyle family not getting money after all. It is described by Boyle how:

I'm tellin' you the scholar, Bentham, made a banjax o' the Will; instead o' sayin', "th' rest o' me property to be divided between me first cousin, Jack Boyle, an; me second cousin, Mick Finnegan, o' Santhry," he writ down only, "me first an' second cousins," an' the world an' his wife are after th' property now. (O'Casey, 1988: 132)

This can be identified as a point of weakness within the text, a fissure within this logocentric thinking of Dublin 4/Dublin 13. This instance can be viewed as undermining the scholarly reading of Bentham, for as Boyle angrily, but correctly remarks: 'the thick made out the Will wrong' (O'Casey, 1988: 132).

In addition to this, it is Mary Boyle who attempts to escape the poverty-stricken circumstances which compel her to share a two-roomed tenancy with her family. Indeed, Jack Boyle describes how Mary is 'always readin' lately – nothin' but thrash, too. There's one I was lookin' at dh' other day: three stories, *The Doll's House*, *Ghost*, an' *The Wild Duck* – buks only fit for chiselurs' (O'Casey, 1988: 70). This drive for knowledge illustrates Mary's efforts in attempting to escape her poverty-infected life, and to embody characteristics associated with the more educated world of south Dublin. She understands that through education, she may be able to move from the tenement house to something better. This undermines the either/or logic of oppositional components and also suggests that to see all of the characters as class-stereotypes is an attenuated reading of the play. The seemingly 'natural' divisions between north and south are also broken down in *The Shadow of a Gunman*, where, through Donal Davoren's character, the dualism unravels. Donal living at Dublin 13 is an educated man who composes poetry:

'Or when sweet Summer's ardent arms outspread,  
Entwined with flowers,  
Enfold us, like two lovers newlywed,  
Thro' ravish'd hours –  
Then sorrow, woe and pain lose all their powers,



For each is dead, and life is only ours'. (O'Casey, 1923: 4)

Similarly Stephen, in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, demonstrated just how fluid these border lines are as he begins his journey as part of upper class society, as he is receiving the finest education at Clongowes Wood College, which was an attempt by Irish Jesuits to copy the great Catholic schools of England. Boys were sent there by parents who could afford the significant boarding-school fees. Simon Dedalus, Stephen's father, insists that Stephen should 'mix with gentlemen' and goes on to add that: 'when I was a young fellow I tell you I enjoyed myself. I mixed with fine decent fellows' (Joyce, 1992: 44). Stephen describes their uniform stating that 'the little silk badge with the red rose on it looked very rich' (Joyce, 1992: 9). However Stephen's participation in this elitist group is ended when Simon Dedalus experiences financial difficulty and the family cannot afford to send Stephen back to Clongowes Wood College. Stephen claims that 'in a vague way he understood that his father was in trouble and that this was the reason why he himself had not been sent back to Clongowes' (Joyce, 1992: 67). This demonstrates that class boundaries are largely socially-imposed bonds as, although Stephen is transferred to Belvedere College, which was a version of Clongowes and established for parents who could not afford boarding-school fees, he still achieves success by attending university and gains a profound understanding of himself as an individual. He is aware of how 'changes in what he had deemed unchangeable were so many slight shocks to his boyish conception of the world, the ambition which he felt astir at times in the darkness of his soul sought no outlet' (Joyce, 1992: 67). Stephen can be used to represent the Dublin 4 ethos at the beginning of the book, but by its conclusion, he is very much on the other side of the binary. The same is true of his dress as, by the end of the book he is discriminating between his newer and older second-hand clothes, a clear index of socio-economic poverty and a far cry from the

school uniforms outlined earlier. This demonstrates that boundaries are a construction of society and thus are not concrete entities; they are merely ‘signification which imitates ideas in the mind’ (Ryan, 1999: 81).

In examining aspects of these texts, the deconstructive reader becomes like an inspector who is gravely concerned with a little crack they observe in the text, as this crack becomes a fissure which then becomes a rupture. For instance, the implications of Donal’s aesthetic creativity, of Mary’s self-education, of Ross’s having a son Ronan from the northside and of Stephen’s rapid social descent, are all cracks in the text where the opposition begins to unravel. Thus deconstruction ‘is a way of giving things a new twist’ (Caputo, 1997a: 42). The word deconstruction is ‘meant to undermine the either/or logic of the opposition’ (Johnson, 1988: 12). Concepts are fluid and flexible and language is built ‘on a self-contained system of interrelationships’ (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 145). Therefore, the oppositions are ‘never isolated or single or pure; there is always a trace of the other term in them’ (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 145). Deconstruction seeks to undo the oppositions established by structuralism. Therefore, it both ‘opposes and redefines; it both reverses an opposition and reworks the terms of that opposition’ so as what seemed concrete no becomes questionable (Johnson, 1988:13).

Within the three subsequent chapters, I intend rework the terms of specific oppositions, beyond a simple inversion, as outlined above. It is through the notion of *différance* that Derrida introduces the undecidable, which confirms a contradiction at the core of Western metaphysical thinking. In a manner similar to that of the *khōra*, this thesis troubles the over order of polarity, moving beyond a reversal, and into a realm of unstable ‘substratum or substance’ (Derrida, 1981a: 235). The written provenance of Derrida’s term *différance* is interesting in that it is a ‘graphic difference (a instead of e)’, which marks the distinction between ‘two apparently vocal

notions, between two vowels, remains purely graphic: it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard' (Derrida, 1982: 3). Therefore Derrida undercuts the position of early Metaphysical thinkers who deemed speech to be more effective than writing, Derrida demonstrated when speaking the word 'you cannot tell the difference between the "e" and the "a" - *différence* and *différance* sound the same in French' (Powell, 1997: 120). The word demonstrates that writing is not an addition to speech, for it is only through writing that one can spot the differentiation between the two words, the disparity between *différance* and the French word *différence* 'does not correspond to any distinction in their spoken form' (Jefferson and Robey, 1987: 114), 'it cannot be apprehended in speech' (Derrida, 1982: 3). Consequently this is not a 'kind of gross spelling mistake', 'a lapse in spelling' (Derrida, 1982: 3); it is a play upon the distinction between sound and writing.

Thus Derrida is dismantling the belief in the privileging of speech that was traditionally enjoyed by Western culture. It is through:

this discreet graphic intervention, which neither primarily nor simply aims to shock the reader or the grammarian, came to be formulated in the course of a written investigation of a question about writing. (Derrida, 1982: 3)

He is suggesting that 'we must be permitted to refer to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility' (Derrida, 1982: 5). Hence 'we must let ourselves refer to an order that resists the opposition, one of the founding oppositions of philosophy, between the sensible and the intelligible' (Derrida, 1982: 5). The order which Derrida is referring to is that of the 'movement of *différance*' (Derrida, 1982: 5). When deconstructing the binary oppositions of high and popular literature, speech and writing, maleness and femaleness, I am questioning the order of difference and am attempting to 'think through the complexities of this thing called *différance*'

(McQuillan, 2000: 19). Thus it is *différance* which structures language due to the arbitrary fabrication of concepts. Indeed *différance* is the system of play contained within the chain of signification and it is the name given to the ‘active moving discord of different forces and of differences of forces’ (Derrida, 1983: 18). This conceptual process has two different areas of significance – ‘to differ as discernibility, distinction, separation, diastem, *spacing*; and to defer as detour, relay, reserve, temporization’ (Derrida, 1983: 18). Thus *différance* ‘is to compensate – economically – this loss of meaning’ (Derrida, 1982: 8). This term demonstrates that meaning involves multiple possibilities; it is a structure with a ‘differentiating origin of differences’ (McQuillan, 2000: 18) and it works by ‘differing and deferring’, indeed this makes differences possible (Lucy, 2004: 27). Derrida continues that ‘*différance* produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing it makes impossible’ (Derrida, 1976: 143). This demonstrates the ‘active-movement’ which the term *différance* represents (Derrida, 1976: 143): one meaning gives birth to another.

Derrida’s three books in 1967, *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomenon*, undermined the stable orders of meaning, identity and truth which Western thought had previously established. Deconstruction challenged previous thinking that meaning, identity and truth delineated stability. Derrida is more concerned with ‘the contingencies of identity, the undecidability of meaning, and the indeterminacy of the world’ (Ryan, 1999: 67). Analysing the operations of language allowed Derrida to demonstrate the ‘signifying potential of language’, its ability to generate ‘multiple meaning effects in a proliferation of possible references’ (Ryan, 1999: 71).

Deconstruction has an interest in the endless ‘act of reading’, hence ‘there is no limit to the task of deconstruction’ (McQuillan, 2000: 7). It is a process of reading which is ‘sensitive to

what is irreducible in every text' and 'when we read we must be open to the otherness in and of the text' (McQuillan, 2000: 5). Therefore, one must become like an inspector 'who is gravely concerned with a little crack he observes in an airplane's fuselage' – observing where the text breaks down (Caputo, 1997a: 79). It is this openness to the other of a text that presents itself as the most difficult challenge within deconstruction. However 'to treat deconstruction as an open invitation to new and more adventurous forms of interpretative criticism is clearly to mistake whatever is most distinctive and demanding in Derrida's texts' (Norris, 1987: 20). Thus one cannot just say what comes to mind when reading a text; it must make sense and be justifiable within the text, although 'there is no set of rules, no criteria, no procedure, no programme, no sequence of steps, no theory to be followed in deconstruction' (McQuillan, 2000: 4). In fact every reading is a misreading, and the 'first consequence of calling discourse itself into question is the proposition that all criticism amounts to misreading, and this one reading is as legitimate as another' (Johnson, 1988: 11). Therefore, to return to our initial observations in the introduction, it is a mode of textual analysis and Derrida insists that the phrase '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*' (there is nothing outside the text) (Derrida, 1976: 158), does not mean one does not consider 'social, historical, political or biographical issues which affect the text' (McQuillan, 2000: 38). Instead, it denotes that 'when we read, all of these things are already inscribed within the text and we can access them through the text' (McQuillan, 2000: 38). Thus everywhere is textual and there is nowhere text-free so there is nothing but context '*il n'y a pas de hors contexte*' (there is nothing outside of context) (Derrida, 1988: 136). Consequently every text must be interpreted and located both within and against a context, as each case is singular, though there may be similarities between cases. Indeed as Derrida announces 'no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation' (Royle, 2003: 66).

### **1.4 Conclusion**

The theory of deconstruction has reinvigorated traditional scholarship. Deconstruction is concerned with the ‘most intricate parts of a text’, and with applying a close reading to those parts; ‘deconstruction is not only a moment of reading but it deconstructs the moment of reading’ and this sets no limit to what is ‘proper to read and disturbing all known classifications of reading’ (McQuillan, 2000: 41). A ‘deconstructive reader exposes the grammatological structure of the text that its “origin” and its “end” are given over to language in general’ (Derrida, 1976: xlix). By ‘locating the moment in the text which harbours the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of a text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction’ (Derrida, 1976: xlix), deconstructive readings liberate new meanings and rupture the hierarchy of the binary oppositions that construct our social reality. I feel the closest Derrida has come to defining deconstruction is ‘that which is – far from a theory, a school, a method, even a discourse, still less a technique that can be appropriated – at bottom *what happens or comes to pass*’ (Derrida, 1995: 17). It is what occurs when one delves into a text, and what occurs is a ‘deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjoining, putting out of joint the authority of the “is”’ (Derrida, 1995: 125). This requires putting the universal language system, laws and life under examination by becoming a ‘textualist critic, a linguistic philosopher or a linguistic thinker’ (Royle, 2003: 61), when probing the works of Joyce, Howard and O’Casey.

## Chapter Two: High and Popular Literature

### *2.1 Individualistically Created Canon*

Originally the term 'canon' applied to a 'list of books in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament which were accepted by church authorities as genuine and having divine authority' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 146). The writings which were not accepted into the canon were called 'apocrypha', and 'the Protestant and Catholic churches differ as to which writings are apocrypha' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 146). Harold Bloom stated that 'originally the canon meant the choice of books in our teaching institutions' (Bloom, 1995: 405). Applying this catalogue to literature, Jonathan Culler defines the literary canon as 'the works regularly studied in schools and universities and deemed to form our literary heritage' (Culler, 2000: 47). Thus, the term literary canon has come to 'refer to those authors who, by tradition or by consensus, have been regarded as major or great; they are the classics' (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 146). For instance, one can cite Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, Eliot, Joyce and O'Casey as exemplars of high literature. O'Casey's contribution to the literary canon is generally seen as his trilogy, *Shadow of a Gunman*, *The Plough and the Stars* and *Juno and the Paycock*. Joyce's *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Finnegan's Wake*, have been described as 'standing for literature itself' (Attridge, 2000: 34). However, Joyce and O'Casey, at the time of publishing their works, were less well-received, and it is only in the process of time that they have become part of high literature. These writers and their texts hold tremendous value in academic discourse and are seen to be the texts of an 'educated, white, male, heterosexual European social order' (Peck and Coyle, 2002; 147).

Bloom has examined Western literature and has compiled a list of essential writers and books – his version of the Canon. He assembled a list of aesthetic excellence where he foregrounds Shakespeare as, ‘the secular canon, or even the secular scripture; forerunners and legatees alike are defined by him alone for canonical purposes’ (Bloom, 1995: 409). Shakespeare, according to Bloom, possesses numerous idiosyncratic strengths; his depiction of ‘history and class struggle’ has ‘generated his centrality in the Western Canon’ (Bloom, 1995: 409), thus ensuring his place as ‘the most original writer we will ever know’ (Bloom, 1995: 409). Bloom also attacks the traditional canon by arguing that ‘the Biblical three-score years and ten no longer suffice to read more than a selection of the great writers in what can be called the Western tradition’ (Bloom, 1995: 405). Bloom vocalises the notion that individuals should practice self-empowerment and address what great pieces of literature mean to them on an individual basis. He argues that ‘who reads must choose, since there is literally not enough time to read everything, even if one does nothing but read’ (Bloom, 1995: 405). Bloom relates the term ‘canon’ to individuals and to what they consider to be impressive, as for him, one must ‘forget the canon as a list of books for required study’ (Bloom, 1995: 406) and instead see it as an opportunity to create an individualistic literary canon. The canon ought to be ‘seen as identical with the literary Art of Memory, not with the religious sense of canon’ (Bloom, 1995: 406). For Bloom: ‘memory is always an art, even when it works involuntarily’ (Bloom, 1995: 407). I would agree with him that each individual reader can assemble a selection of books which they consider to be of literary value and thus devise their own literary canon. Of course, this means that each person must now provide their own definition of literature and of the literary. This is an ongoing problem in academic discourse, and I would look to the work of Jonathan Culler in terms of providing a possible resolution.



It was Culler who best defined literature by making an analogy between literature and a garden. He initially presents the question ‘what makes us (or some other society) treat something as literature?’ (Culler, 2000: 22). In answering this question, he juxtaposes the depiction of a weed (‘weeds are simply plants that gardeners don’t want to have growing in their garden’) (Culler, 2000: 22) to a non-weed, which we call a flower, and to which we ascribe value. However, difficulty presents itself when a gardener is weeding a new garden, or a garden in a different country, or a garden that is from another social class, where familiarity has not provided the comparisons and the ready knowledge of what constitutes value and what does not. In this case, how can one tell the differences between that of a weed and non-weed, and by analogy, between or literature and something not considered of literary value, without such a matrix of familiar values? Culler announces that ‘perhaps literature is like a weed’. This highlights the difficulty of attempting to disregard written material as non-literature (Culler, 2000: 22). It is one’s personal choice that is operative in selecting between weeds or non-weeds, and between literature and non-literature. Subsequently some literature might be ‘judged undesirable by different groups in different places’ (Culler, 2000: 22). This difficulty presents itself to literary scholars and is one that is yet to be fully answered. There is no doubt that the act of choosing whether a piece of work may or may not be deemed literature is mediated and shaped through educational, economic, aesthetic, ideological and institutional structures, so that the individual is often replicating already-made choices. This demonstrates that literature has been bound by norms and boundaries which have been created by society, thus displaying that readers are not free to read, as what is and not considered literature has been previously acknowledged by culture. Individuals are already seeing literature through an ideologically weeded garden.

Culturally then, texts do not hold equal value: 'some texts are taken to be richer, more powerful, more exemplary, more contestatory, more central, for one reason or another' (Culler, 2000: 18). In taking Culler's analogy further, a weed could be used to depict popular literature and flowers or plants can be seen to represent high literature. Both weed and plant/flower exist within their own right, in the same way that popular and high literatures inhabit places of different importance within the field of writing. Both weeds and plants have the same chemical and biological composition, and the same point can be made with respect to high and popular literatures – they are both built on language.

However social and academic structures have created a binary opposition which, like that between flowers and weeds, eschews the similarity of content and instead creates a hierarchy in which literary works embody cultural and symbolic capital whereas the texts of popular culture are seen as deficient in both. To study Joyce and O'Casey is academically relevant, whereas to study Howard seemingly is not. The question needs to be asked as to why high literature is held in greater esteem amongst academics when both categories – high and popular – have identical foundations. The Russian critic Roman Jakobson insists that literature 'transforms and intensifies ordinary language' (Eagleton, 1986: 2). The division between high and popular literature can be further broken down through the knowledge that both equate to the same basic structural forms: written material, such as novels, poems and plays.

All of this confirms that the literary field is divided into high and popular literature, thus establishing an orthodox binary opposition. Derrida reinforces this notion that Western thought is structured in terms of a hierarchical opposition, by insisting that:

In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside, etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one

of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible oppositions. (Derrida, 1981b: 103)

Hence it is high literature that is seen to dominate popular literature, for the prevailing belief is that high literature stands ‘as the very possibility of systematicity or seriality in general’ (Derrida, 1981b: 103). Within this conceptual system, any observation of the literary field presents a clear-cut opposition, with high literature dominating popular literature: *Ulysses* is better, more valuable, more worthy of study, than *Rhino What You Did Last Summer*. It is up to each individual reader to see beyond the ideological reasoning and to recognise literature that transcends the label of popular literature. Thus Derrida complicates such simple oppositions in his discussion of *Phaedrus* which hinges on a single word – ‘pharmakon’ – which signifies ‘both cure and poison’ (Derrida, 1981b: xxv). My reading of this binary opposition will take on a similar ‘both/and’ logic, as I am not trying to simply overturn the binary high over popular literature. My reading does not stop at what Derrida calls the reversal of binaries; there is never ‘a straightforward reversal of priorities, a turning of tables’ (Norris, 2002: 140), so I do not wish to jettison the study of high literature. Instead, I aim to demonstrate that oppositions, when deconstructed, bleed into each other, and to show that aspects of the cultural capital that are found in high literature are also to be found in popular literature if our reading practice is open to locating them. Deconstruction wrenches apart the neatness of metaphysical binary oppositions. For example, instead of ‘A is opposed to B, we have B is both added to A and replaces A. A and B are no longer opposed. Nor are they equivalent’ (Derrida, 1981b: xiii). Therefore the binary of high/popular literature can be dismantled through the work of key deconstructive tropes, such as ‘undecidability’, ‘*pharmakon*’, ‘*aporia*’ or ‘*hymen*’, which locate points in texts where

philosophy encounters a ‘deep-laid problem in its own pre-history or unthought axiomatic’ (Norris, 2002: 140).

Essentially I am referring to an order that remains frameless, lacking any structures. This reflect Derrida’s thinking within his essay on *Khōra*, where he shows how the history of Western thought has relied on stable dualisms, and demonstrates that such seemingly stable structures in fact rely on a ‘double logic’, an ‘order of both this and that and simultaneously neither this nor that’ (Wolfreys, 1988: 39). This marks the point where there is a process of blurring between oppositions, for an opposition ‘is inverted only to be later re-inverted or de-inverted’, thus demonstrating that when their hierarchy is dismantled, the polarities are ‘interminably dual and ambiguous’ (Irwin, 2010: 66). This is achieved through those tropes of undecidability just mentioned, through which it is ‘necessary to analyse, to set to work, *within* the text of the history of philosophy, as well as *within* the so-called literary text’ (Derrida, 1981a: 42) to locate the:

unities of simulacrum, “false” verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialects. (Derrida, 1981a: 43)

This chapter will follow this process of analysis in the search for undecidable moments in the work of O’Casey, Joyce and Howard.

Within the Irish academy, Paul Howard is viewed by critics as a tenuous presence in the greater literary field. His books are classed as popular literature. My analysis will examine his texts, but will also survey this prevailing critical context. Essentially, I am providing an analysis of the ‘grand narrative’ (Lyotard, 1984: 15) that is literature, and of how this field has been socially ordered into that of high and popular literature. This inquiry is ‘antifoundationalist’, as it

represents a ‘critique or dispute’ of the ‘foundations – the often unacknowledged assumptions and precepts – on which disciplines and institutions have constructed their authority’ (Geyh and Levy, 1998: xx). Such a critique can lead to a liberating of reader who is freed of socially-driven ideological expectations which are hidden under the restrictive concepts high and popular literature. I wish to emancipate Howard’s work from the limitations of viewing him as an easy, leisurely read, without any real cultural value in the experience. Therefore through the analysis of this contextual binary structure, I will argue that this opposition is not as distinct and separated as culture insists, but that there exists a blurring of boundaries between the two entities. Indeed ‘all facts, structures, and laws are assembled descriptions, formulations, constructions – interpretations. There are not facts as such, only assemblages. There is always only interpretations’ (Leitch, 2001: 58).

Howard’s works are ‘a way of talking seriously about character and social standing’ (Power, 2008: 11). Kevin Power of the *Irish Independent* stresses that ‘Irish fiction hasn’t kept up with Irish reality’. ‘So we get literary novels about paedophile priests, novels about the Famine, novels in which farmers walk the fields – but who pops into Starbucks and orders a *grande chai latte* with soy?’ (Power, 2008: 11). Power further argues that Howard is the first Irish novelist during the last decade to ‘have bothered to notice what modern Ireland is actually like’ (Power, 2008: 11). Certainly Howard ‘has a flawless ear for the verbal self-betrays of our prosperous middle class’, something captured in the line from *Mr S and the Secrets of Andorra’s Box*, ‘it’s all, like, African, if that doesn’t sound too racist?’ (Howard, 2008: 118). Reading a line like that ‘you hear a whole culture speaking’ (Power, 2008: 11). These comic novels are powered by the twin engines of language and class ‘and the way in which one expresses or betrays the other’ (Power, 2008: 11). However, these twin engines have been the driving force behind the

rise of the novel and the great realist novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries across the European and Anglophone literary world: Dickens, Hardy, James, Flaubert, Tolstoy, all of these authors were driven by these propulsive forces. If Howard is read in this context, instead of that of popular culture, different levels of meaning will be liberated from his work, as he will be seen to inhabit the thematic content of high literature, as opposed to the marginal position of popular literature. While Howard's work may be seen as marginal at the moment: 'what is marginal today might not be tomorrow – the margin of anything being entirely relative to where you stand' (McQuillan, 2000: 30).

Pierre Bourdieu offers a detailed examination of high and popular culture, by formulating a 'method of sociological and anthropological' analysis (Loesberg, 1993: 1033). However Bourdieu, like Bloom and Culler, all choose not to comment on the construction, style, verbal and linguistic aspects of the texts, thus illustrating that the concept literature is constructed according to extra-literary criteria and not just the actual content of the books. Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* and *Language and Symbolic Power*, 'explicitly contest[s] formal theories of culture, of language, of aesthetics, of literature, with an analysis that argues the main force of these discourses as creating and maintaining hierarchies of power and domination' (Loesberg, 1993: 1033). Bourdieu believes that 'the social world presents itself as a highly structured reality' (Bourdieu, 1989: 19) and these hierarchical structures are perceived to be natural. However the binary of high and popular culture is nothing but a construct, as those who occupy the higher classes are creating an 'intellectualist illusion which leads one to consider the theoretical class, constructed by the sociologist, as a real class, an effectively mobilized group' (Bourdieu, 1984: 195). Thus 'playing golf makes you look like a traditional member of the old bourgeoisie' (Bourdieu, 1989: 18). Culler also comments on the

conventional nature of these signs by stating that the relationship ‘between the signifier and signified, may be thought of as indices that have been conventionalized by a society’. A Rolls-Royce can be considered ‘an index of wealth in that one must be wealthy to purchase one, but it has been made a conventional sign of wealth by social usage’ (Culler, 1975: 17). However these symbols, and their meaning, are mythical and this social topography allows those who reside in the upper spectrums to ‘profit in all the games in which cultural capital is effective thereby helping to determine’ their position in the social space (Bourdieu, 1984: 196). Luce Irigaray, in her text *Approaching the Other as Other*, offers an insightful perspective on the relationship between binary oppositions, focusing predominantly on that of masculine and feminine. Irigaray insists that man has constructed themselves as superior through ‘paternalist generosity’ (Irigaray, 2004: 20), and she further argues that ‘we have been educated to make our own all that was pleasing to us, all that we admitted into our proximity, into our intimacy, all that surrounds us’ (Irigaray, 2004: 20). This predicates that high culture, or for Irigaray the dominant half of the male/female binary, have constructed themselves so that they enjoy the benefits of ‘symbolic capital, commonly called prestige, reputation, renown’ and possessing the status of being the privileged half of a hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984: 197).

Effectively, what has been formulated by the creation of a high culture is a ‘class-for-itself’, which holds ‘power over the field’ of high and popular culture (Bourdieu, 1984: 196). This symbolic power has become embedded within society as an innate perception. These artificially-created divisions are reinforced by humanly-contrived social conventions. For as Bourdieu observes ‘those who drink champagne’, have ‘antique furniture’, ‘ride horses’, go to see ‘light comedies at the theatre’ (Bourdieu, 1989: 19-20) and read works of high literature, are enacting cultural practices that cement their sense of being members of a higher socio-

economic class. However just as “*arbre*” means “tree” not by natural resemblance or causal connection but by virtue of a law’ (Culler, 1975: 16), it is through a cultural ‘law’, and not necessarily through any intrinsic differences in style or content, that Joyce and O’Casey signify high literature and Howard popular literature.

Bourdieu notes the arbitrariness of these structures high and popular literature, by describing them as a ‘social genesis’ which represents an ‘individual enterprise’ (Bourdieu, 1989: 18) in order to allow the upper classes to be professed as superior and privileged. The concept of classification can be understood as a development within the tradition of Western aesthetic thought which set about disqualifying ‘the working classes from full political entitlement and capacity’ in order to maintain a fiction of purity around that of high culture (Bennett, 2007: 202).

The invention of high literature, and the texts it encapsulates, establishes an elitist hierarchy in the world of books, and indeed brings the world of culture into the world of class antagonism and differentiation. One of the crucial determining factors in the delineation of social class is the area of ‘taste’ in all its meanings: ‘from choices in art through choices in dress, furniture, and the like, to taste in food, both as a unified subject matter and as a method for producing and reproducing power differences among social classes’ (Loesberg, 1993: 1033). These are inequalities manipulated socially by the upper and middle classes in order to distinguish themselves as culturally as well as economically superior through having a defined high culture, which sets them apart from the world of popular culture. Therefore high culture can be thought of as the dominant half of the binary high and popular culture, a relationship which subsumes that of high literature and popular literature.



Culler argues that these defined categories of high and popular literature are merely contrived borders by stating that the term ‘literary excellence’ has ‘never determined what is studied’ (Culler, 2000: 48). Therefore the terms ‘high’ and ‘popular’ are merely arbitrary inventions. So when Howard has been categorised as ‘a low form’ of literature (Hurd, 2007: 761) and O’Casey and Joyce have been placed in the category of ‘literary’ texts to be studied by the paramount classes, we must be aware that these distinctions are a ‘heritage’ which has been ‘handed down’ by ‘previous generations’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 6). As Bourdieu points out, high and popular literatures are distinctions which create a sense of cohesion in the social literary field, and these borders are indeed artificially created and thus invisible.

As a consequence of this division, Attridge has suggested that individual readers divide themselves into categories of high or popular readers. He interprets society as dividing individual readers into a ‘more learned or high cultural’ grouping and those that read ‘second-rate material’ (Attridge, 2000: 30). He uses the writings of James Joyce as an example, contending that the name “‘James Joyce” stands for a kind of writing that is arcane, obscure, and of interest only to students of English literature’ (Attridge, 2000: 30). Joyce’s works can be understood as impenetrable and that it elicits ‘manipulation of words that is best left well alone’ (Attridge, 2000: 30), and it represents the pillar of high art, which may only be read by that of ‘a minority audience’ (Attridge, 2000: 30). It is ‘only those with special skills and the free time for patient scholarship can appreciate it’ (Attridge, 2000: 31). This example demonstrates a postmodern belief that ‘there is no longer any hope for a single conceptual system or discourse through which individuals may aspire to understand the totality of the world. Indeed one can no longer speak about “totality” at all (Geyh and Levy, 1998: xx).

Lyotard argues that any sense of a unified structure of either literature *per se*, or of either of the sub-sets of high or popular literature, is specious: ‘unity is imaginary, an effect of the interpretative process itself’ (Lyotard, 1984: 39). Individuals can no longer speak of “totality”, as books fit into either high or popular literature, so Lyotard insists upon a world of multiplicity and plurality. In this postmodern paradigm, the idea of an individual choosing, defining and defending, an individual sense of the value of specific books and authors is very much to be desired. Postmodern theorists believe that ‘no one account of things can prove in any absolute or universal way its superiority to any other account of things’ (Natoli, 1997: 99), and while this, too, is an ideological position, at least it acknowledges its own cultural situatedness which is an important distinction to make.

If this view is taken into account, high culture can be mingled with ‘popular culture, and there is no principle of hierarchy governing them’ (Attridge, 2000: 32). For Attridge, Joyce dismantles the notion of two types of readers: those that are drawn to high literature and those that prefer popular literature. He argues that there is no plausible reason why Joyce should be viewed as ‘the gold of high art by a supremely sophisticated author catering only for a minority audience’ (Attridge, 2000: 30). This view is merely taken by those ‘who assume that the more learned’ can interpret Joyce’s ‘richness of texture and reference’ (Attridge, 2000: 32). Attridge calls this exclusiveness ‘utopian thinking’ (Attridge, 2000: 32), which has become naturalised due to the conventions of a genre, and of the socio-cultural ideologies that lie behind that genre. This breaks down when it is considered that each individual reader is just ‘as capable as any other – in principle – of careful and responsive attention to the words, and the understanding and enjoyment that follows, though always differently, from such attention’ (Attridge, 2000: 33).

Therefore an initial de-centring of the opposition high/popular literature comes in the form of readers not classifying themselves, in an 'either/or' logic, as elites readers 'of education, or of intelligence' (Attridge, 2000: 33), or as mass readers who generally prefer popular literature. Attridge believes that every reader must be encouraged to embrace all of Joyce's work, thus exhausting every possible meaning of the texts, and offering a more rounded interpretation of the field of literature. In order to empower readers to break free from these conventions, Attridge calls for teachers 'to dispel the idea that you have to be a specialist to understand and enjoy' high literature (Attridge, 2000: 34). Derrida, too, argues for the freedom of readers to embrace any written text; he states there should be an 'unlimited right of writing and reading, the right to defy laws of prohibition' (Caputo, 1997a: 58). This is 'a democratic open-endedness that makes those who have appointed themselves the Guardians of Truth nervous' (Caputo, 1997a: 58). Similarly Attridge calls upon individuals to 'above all, enjoy it', referring to the experience of reading whether it is of high or popular literature (Attridge, 2000: 34).

I think it is clear that the distinction between high and popular literature is socially and culturally driven, and as such, it has a semiotic dimension. If one were to package Howard's fiction in hard back, and classify it as a work of literary value on bookshelves or in academic booklists, this would bring 'into play a new set of expectations', and even this small alternation could influence how people read and approach his work, because although 'the words remain the same ... their effects for readers are substantially altered' (Culler, 1975: 161). This demonstrates how the boundaries between high and popular literature are not fixed, and that there is a blurring of margins, a 'sort of overrun [*débordement*] that spoils all boundaries and divisions and forces us to extend the accredited concept, the dominant notion of a text' (Derrida, 1979: 83).

An example of this can be taken from Culler, where he captures the heading from a French newspaper:

*Hier sur la Nationale Septemher*  
*Une automobile*  
*Roulant à cent à l'heure s'est jetée*  
*Sur un platane.*  
*Ses quatre occupants ont été.*

(Yesterday on the A7  
An automobile travelling at sixty mile per hour crashed  
Into a plane tree.  
Its four occupants were killed.) (Culler, 1975: 161)

What Culler has done is taken 'a piece of banal journalistic prose and set it down on a page as a lyric poem, surrounded by intimidating margins of silence' (Culler, 1975: 161). The different cultural context means that the reader brings a completely different set of expectations to the text, which results in a transformation of the meanings generated. For example, the word 'yesterday' may now carry an alternative meaning 'referring now to the set of possible yesterdays, it suggests a common, almost random event' (Culler, 1975: 161). Subsequently, the 'neutral reporting style', and the lack of detail surrounding the passengers' deaths, may also be examined in a different light and thought to be a mark of 'restraint and resignation', which 'may even note an element of suspense' (Culler, 1975: 161). Culler here is demonstrating what occurs is when one reads the text as a poem as opposed to reading it as a newspaper headline.

Correspondingly, if a group of readers were informed that Howard's books were high literature, it is likely that reviews would demonstrate a greater appreciation for his contemporary Dublin 4 satire. Similarly, if Joyce or O'Casey was approached as popular literature, a reader's

complacent attitude to the text would mean some of the brilliant use of language would be lost. The differences between high and popular literature can only be explained by the ‘conventions which govern its possible modes of significations’ (Culler, 1975: 162). However this breaks down when one considers that these interpretative operations are in no way solely language-driven, rather are they categories which readers and critics apply because society has naturalised them. I would argue for an interpretive openness to every text in order to liberate the multifarious meanings that inhere in all texts.

## **2.2 Literature as *Pharmakon***

The premise that underlines the notion of Derrida’s *pharmakon* will be discussed in greater detail within the chapter on ‘Speech and Writing’. This section, however, aims to merely establish that the term ‘literature’ does not purport in itself to being either high or popular, and in this sense, it is analogous to Derrida’s multi-faceted reading of the *pharmakon*. As previously discussed, the term was originally presented by Plato, who is considered ‘a monumental figure in the history of Western philosophy’ (Leitch, 2001: 33), and later by Rousseau, and thus it is not actually Derrida’s *pharmakon*. Derrida explains the *pharmakon* as a ‘Greek word that includes among its meanings poison, medicine, magic potion’ (Derrida, 1981b: 70). He used this term in his study of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and in his retelling of the fable of writing, where it is a central aspect of his deconstruction of the opposition between speech and writing. He defines the term as a ‘double-edged word’ (Derrida, 1976: xlix), which possesses ‘no meaning and cannot be channelled into a definition’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxi), so it is ‘neither the cure nor the poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing’ (Derrida, 1981a: 43). The term *pharmakon* is, I would argue, one that will apply to the aspects of literature that deconstruct the binary of high and popular literature.

Derrida's interpretation of the concept of the *pharmakon* underlines how society makes an effort 'to fit everything into a binary opposition' (Leitch, 2001: 1819), and by so doing, attenuates different potentialities of meaning. The actual words '*pharmakon*' and 'literature' represent the position of medium or middle. The term 'literature' does not attempt to represent either high or popular writing, 'instead it enters the dialectic from both sides at once' (Kamuf, 1991: 78). Therefore there is a correlation between the concept of the *pharmakon* and that of 'literature'. The *pharmakon* stands for both the meaning of remedy and cure, just as literature can be used to depict high and popular texts at the same time. Both terms establish undecidability: as just as the *pharmakon* can be interpreted as the cure of illness or its cause, so too does literature suggest texts being high or popular. If one takes the words 'literature' and '*pharmakon*' independently of subsequent explanations, there is no way of knowing which half of the binary to which either one is referring until the terms are put into context. Thus when defining the term literature, one must name one side or the other of an existing binary (high and popular literature). Leitch has made the point that literature could only be understood by associating it with 'key terms such as representation, expression, knowledge, poetic or rhetorical language, genre, text or discourse' (Leitch, 2001: 4). This demonstrates that meaning can only be extrapolated through comparisons with other signifiers within the chain of signification.

Thus the word '*pharmakon*', just like the term 'literature', 'depends on a distinguishability' that does not exist within either word (Leitch, 2001: 1819). According to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his work on semiotics – 'the structure of the sign we might call semiotics' (Derrida, 1976: lv) – language is a 'system of differences' (Culler, 1997: 57), so that high literature exists because it is not popular literature and *vice versa*. However each division of literature is 'marked by the opposition', thus high literature needs popular literature in

order for it to be represented within society (Benjamin, 2000: 220). The form of a book can metonymically locate the book in one of the two contexts: it is the norm for popular literature to be published in paperback editions with a lower price, whereas high literature has traditionally been published in hardback, or cloth editions, and has been more costly to purchase. However, recent marketing conditions have meant that works of high literature are now also released in paperback, and both types of literature are now increasingly being read as electronic texts which have no material reality outside of the kindle or computer hard drive.

It was Brushwood who insists that there is a 'grade A, grade B' which he also termed 'fragmentation and wholeness' (Brushwood, 2009: 23) with regard to novels. He maintains that 'there is no question that such a gradation exists in the opinion and practice of literary specialists' (Brushwood, 2009: 23). Grade A literature is perceived as 'the upper-division', and he asserts that, 'one might think of them as the more sophisticated, more fragmented, less reader friendly, than the others' (Brushwood, 2009: 23). For example, Howard's fiction's would be considered as easier to read than Joyce's *Ulysses*, or even than O'Casey's trilogy, which is thought to be a complex series of texts. Brushwood suggests that grade B literature, or texts which possess a thematic wholeness, 'are easier to follow, can be read more rapidly' (Brushwood, 2009: 23). These are texts which demonstrate a 'reader friendliness of wholeness' with regard to the plot (Brushwood, 2009: 24). Therefore grade B readers are 'amply supplied with narratives that make lighter demands on their creative impulses' (Brushwood, 2009: 23). Therefore Brushwood describes a distinction within the literary world of texts which is based upon the relationship between the author/reader and text/society.

Roland Barthes also divides literature into 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts. These mark the distinction between 'traditional literary works such as the classical novel and those twentieth

century works like the new novel' (Barthes, 1974: 5). This can be interpreted as indicating the difference between high and popular literature. For instance, according to Barthes, the writerly text 'is a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed' (Barthes, 1974: 5), thus the reader can always re-engage with the conditions of the text in order to articulate a new interpretation. The language is perceived as open-ended and so the reader takes on an analytical role, which deconstructs any singular or dominant interpretation of the text. Therefore, the reader is located as the essence of the production of meaning. The writerly text involves the reader, to some extent, creating large aspects of the text: reading is writerly because it is creative each time. These kinds of readers try to uncover the 'secret beneath the surface of a textual manifestation' (Wood, 1992: 24). Readers are encouraged to view the book in its wholeness and not to assume an acceptance of things but provide a 're-animation of the textual space' (Wood, 1992: 3). According to Barthes, the goal of writerly texts is to 'make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text' (Barthes, 1974: 5). This is compared to a 'readerly text', where there is a confidence that the dominant reading of a text is the ultimate interpretation. It is believed that the words themselves operate within a 'single system' (Barthes, 1974: 5), and that there is only a transcendental signified – the assumption of the given meaning vested within the word. Hence words are taken within their literal form and a 'plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages' (Barthes, 1974: 5), are all reduced when it comes to the interpretation of 'readerly texts'. Thus the text is perceived as only having a single meaning. Therefore for 'readerly texts' the reader is not the location of meaning, but functions only as 'the receiver of a fixed, pre-determined, reading' (Barthes, 1974:5). Consequently, 'readerly texts' portray a meaning that is thought to have a definite source, and words are thought to assimilate a concrete signified.



For example, in *Dubliners*, Joyce presents plots in which each ‘reader must finish the story for himself in his own mind’ (Jones, 1970: 12). So, if individuals were not conscious that this technique used by Joyce requires an extensive input on behalf of the reader, then the ‘characters tend to aimlessness, to getting nowhere, to going round in circles and ending up where they began’ (Martin, 1990: 5). *Dubliners* can be interpreted as a ‘writerly’ text, as the reader is shaping the literary denotation and connotations of the text. The stories are left with ambiguous endings, for example ‘The Sisters’ describes a boy’s relationship with a priest named Father Flynn. It can be interpreted that the boy is ‘somehow threatened by the demands made upon him by Father Flynn when living and by the priest’s death, as the boy dreams that Father Flynn attempted to confess to him’ (Benstock, 1977: 84). The boy, who is the narrator of the story, asserts, ‘I felt annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death’ (Joyce, 1967: 5). Subsequently Joyce does not conclude his story with any real explanation, but leaves it open for the reader to interpret the nature of the relationship between the boy and priest. Joyce believed he could ‘never completely tell the story of modern man and so he was trying in these sketches merely to suggest’ (Jones, 1970: 12), he felt it was up to the reader to extrapolate conclusiveness. Thus, the reader has to unravel what Joyce may or may not be suggesting they are unearthing ‘the hidden meaning of complicated modern man’, which is explored in each of the fifteen stories (Jones, 1970: 12).

The division of literature into popular and high categories is society’s way of creating distinct borders within the world of literature. Brushwood’s terminology endorses this view. The word “grade” is normally used in the context of setting boundaries. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines this word as ‘a group of people or things of the same category’ (Collins, 2003: 706). The term is thought to demonstrate a clearly-defined beginning and end: grade A

holds more value than grade B within academic thinking, no matter what the context. I would suggest that this demonstrates that literature 'is caught up in a process that it does not control', as by being arranged into a ranking system, books are trapped into a generalized notion of fitting into either high or popular literature (Royle, 2003: 66), so there is no internal criterion used to justify this distinction. Instead there is a framing structure which acts as a locus of control. Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, states that 'facts exist within models agreed by the community' (Kuhn, 2001: 3). What Kuhn sought to demonstrate is that 'all knowledge is produced within communities which implicitly provide the boundaries' (Kuhn, 2001: 2). Derrida would agree, suggesting in *The Truth in Painting*, that 'there is no total of meanings' and that context is a very important factor in the production of meaning 'always a box in the box, some supplementary cartridge, a parergon' and 'always a box outside the box' (Derrida, 1987b: 231). In the case of this discussion, the boxes are those of the frameworks of high and popular literature, frameworks which determine many aspects of the meaning of the texts in question. Attridge defines the box of high literature as 'arcane, obscure, and of interest to students of English literature, indeed for some it may stand for literature itself', with everything else being regarded as 'second rate material' (Attridge, 2000: 30). Those academics who firmly believe in the divisions of literature are expressing a belief in the surety in this structure. Indeed 'a box is only a box thanks to this duplicity, thanks to dimensions that are and are not part of it' (Royle, 2003: 15). A deconstructive approach to this structure will serve to call aspects of this into question.

A deconstruction of the binary oppositions initially involves the process of what Derrida calls 'inversion', however, as previously insisted, this thesis does not merely stop at the 'inversion' stage of deconstruction. Derrida sees this inversion as an important stage in 'the

irruptive emergence of a new “concept” (Derrida, 1981a: 42), but the new concept itself must also be traced and developed. Through the ‘movement of *différance*’ (Derrida, 1982: 5), some of the categories of high literature can be seen to be part of popular literature as well, so that there is a *khōral* blurring of the categories, and a new field is created. If there are some undecidables to be found in Howard’s work, these can be the double-edged words that allow his work to question the categories of high and popular literature.

In high literature, there is a significant scholarly apparatus attached to the study of texts. In the case of Joyce or O’Casey, for example, there are hundreds of monographs and articles dealing with all aspects of their work, from explorations of language and theme, to biographical studies, to dictionaries of their terms and concordances of their language and phrasing. Howard’s fiction portrays the Dublin 4 idiolect phonetically, so that there are deviations from orthodox spelling, orthography, and grammatology. In order to help readers, Howard produced a ‘thesauross’ to provide a sense of clarity for those outside the social network of Dublin 4. For example, Howard insists that a ‘skobie tunic’ signifies a ‘Celtic shirt’ (Howard, 2007: 134). The punning use of a type of text which has associations with high literature is interesting, and the same can be said of Howard’s ‘Official Biography of Ross O’Carroll-Kelly’ entitled *We Need to talk About Ross*, wherein there are a series of dated and numbered typescripts of conversations held between Paul Howard and a number of characters in the books, all combining to discuss the nature of Ross as a ‘person’. Once again, this use of a biography is interesting, as generally it is the authors of high literature who have official biographies written about them. By using two of the tools of a higher cultural structure, Howard is breaking down some of the barriers between the two.

Howard inhabits a liminal space between high and popular literatures, as in one of his most recent books, *Mr S and the Secrets of Andorra's Box*, Ross undergoes psychoanalysis and it is through this process that the reader gains a more detailed insight into the relationship between Ross and his parents. Ross describes his mother as 'a fucking wrasse. Move on' (Howard, 2008: 210), and subsequently he calls his father, 'penis', 'dickhead and knob features' (Howard, 2008: 211). The psychiatrist notes that this could represent a 'fixation with the male phallus, the rival phallus' (Howard, 2008: 211). This is not the type of quote one expects to find in one of Brushwood's grade B novels. However, it demonstrates that significant human conflicts and issues are to be found in these books. Given the psychoanalytic context, one cannot help link Freud's Oedipus complex with Ross's attitude towards his father. The key word here is 'rival', leading to the question as to whether Ross feels in competition with his father for his mother's love. According to Freud, 'the (male) child must separate from the mother and identify with the father on his way to entering the Symbolic order' and the 'Oedipal complex is displayed by those males whose failure to negotiate the oedipal stage of development leaves them deeply attached to their mother and often feeling rivalry with their fathers' (Leitch, 2001: 17). Although Ross does not on the surface seem deeply attached to his mother, as he continually describes her in very negative terms, he identifies his mother as a 'pollock and wrasse' (Howard, 2008: 211), it is Conchita, the psychoanalyst, who announces that 'these are fish' and 'many believe - especially in dream interpretation - that fish is a symbol of sexual repression' (Howard, 2009: 211). It can be interpreted, on an unconscious level, that Ross has a deep attachment to his Mother, however it has been repressed and sublimated into something more socially acceptable, condemning his 'old dear's' actions when 'she posed for a yummy-mummy calendar - so called - in her fucking raw. She writes these books full of basically filth' (Howard, 2008: 210). Ross also learns that

Erika is his half-sister. Ross exclaims, the moment he finds out that Erika is his half-sister, that ‘shock doesn’t even begin to cover it. This seen is, like, too focked up for words’ (Howard, 2008: 337). This is also because he has had sex with Erika, and the whole incest taboo has been one of high culture’s predicates from Greek tragedy, through the work of Freud, Levi-Strauss and indeed Derrida. To find ramifications of this in the work of Howard would certainly seem to make Howard’s books both *khōral* and *pharmakons* as they tread the border between high and popular literature, and indeed are tending to destroy that border. One of the functions of literature and high culture is to probe all that makes us human and surely these are the very issues that lie at the heart of these examples from Howard.

Therefore, the construct of literature is merely a ‘desire for unity and order’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxiii) by individuals who rely on invented structures to provide an understanding of society. Hence ‘borders are strangely problematic’ (Royle, 2003: 15), and it is this ‘strangeness that Derrida explores’ (Royle, 2003: 15). Derrida insists the line that divides literature is ‘compromised, impure, and internally divided’ (Royle, 2003: 15). It is merely through ‘habitualisation and sedimentation of this thought’ that this separation of literature is ‘presented as natural’ (McQuillan, 2000: 9). The division high and popular literature is ‘not the way things really are but the way they have been represented by Western thought’ (McQuillan, 2000: 9). Therefore the first term of the binary ‘high literature’ is a masculine characteristic ‘traditionally privileged over the feminine characteristic which accompanies it’, namely popular literature (McQuillan, 2000: 9). However this privileging of one term over another is merely power seeping ‘into the pores of society’: those who read high literature are regarded more highly than those who read popular literature. This power operates within ‘social institutions as the school,

the hospital, the prison, and the work place' (Ryan, 1999: 71). Therefore, through centuries of discourse 'citizens learn to absorb and perform' these beliefs as if natural (Ryan, 1999: 71).

These structures bring a sense of unity to the world of literature and they illustrate the 'logocentric longing *par excellence*' of distinguishing one half of the binary from the other (Derrida, 1976: 167). Individuals view the signifier and the signified as 'woven within the sign' (Derrida, 1976: 204), and when one encounters language through this centred structure, one dismisses the notion that the sign is marked by ambiguities. Instead, it is 'a question of unburdening ourselves of a mute anxiety, and of doing so at the point at which this anxiety is not only ours, the reader's but also seems to conform, beneath the language operations' (Derrida, 1978: 5). Therefore meaning is perceived as fixed. This gives language the effect that there are not 'layers of meaning', and that words represent 'static configurations' (Derrida, 1978: 194).

However Derrida maintains that the sign has to be 'put under erasure', as one half of the sign is 'always not there and the other half always not that' (Derrida, 1976: xvii). This questions the wholeness of the two terms, high and popular literature, as 'not even in an ideal universe of an empirically reduced number of possibilities would the projected "end" of knowledge ever coincide with its "means". Such a coincidence – "engineering" – is an impossible dream of plenitude' (Derrida, 1976: xix). Thus to take a closer look at the two central defining structures, high literature is 'arcane, obscure, and of interest only to students of English literature' (Attridge, 2000: 30) and popular literature is 'easier to follow and can be read more rapidly' (Brushwood, 2009: 23). Derrida's belief is that the sign is not the subject of an unchanging and fixed signified, and this can be interpreted from the above sentences if one were to deduce the word 'is' as a questioning of the sign high and popular literature. The verb 'to be' is often used in the sense of declaring a sense of equality between concepts. It can have this logocentric quality when used in

formulations such as ‘Joyce’s work is high literature’ or ‘Howard’s book is an example of popular literature’. However, the word ‘is’ can also be used to represent an enquiry, this is seen through the commonly used question of ‘is it’? Derrida suggests how the word ‘is’ demonstrates a measure of ambiguity when it comes to defining terms. Indeed when setting about defining the term *différance*, he put an erasure on the word ‘is’. He states that:

Now if *différance* is (and I also cross out the “is”) what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such. It is never offered to the present. (Derrida, 1982: 6)

Therefore the word ‘is’ both halts ‘the movement of signification’ (Derrida, 1976: 49) of the sign, and also gives rise to the possibility of multiple meanings when put in the context of a question. So, one can ask the question is high literature ‘arcane, obscure, and of interest only to students of English literature’? (Attridge, 2000: 30). By questioning the sign, one can illustrate Derrida’s point that ‘we can never, in any instance of speech or writing, have a demonstrably fixed and decidable present meaning’ (Abrams, 2009: 71). Reading the word ‘is’ to demonstrate an uncertainty or an undecidable, reinforces Derrida’s belief that there is nothing but differences, so ‘there is no fixed limit to the field of metaphor’ (McQuillan, 2000: 19). Therefore what the entire history of Western metaphysics practices is ‘an active indifference to difference’ (McQuillan, 2000: 18) – one chooses to ignore that the word ‘is’ can create an uncertainty of the conceptual meaning of the sign, rather readers live in the illusion that the sign has a ‘stable reality’ (McQuillan, 2000: 20). These structures have been invented by individuals for the purpose of exercising a form of control, of prohibiting the play of meaning, and the sign high literature can only be understood through an oppositional sign, namely as opposed to popular literature. Indeed ‘the concept of the sign, in each of its aspects, has been determined by this opposition throughout the totality of history’ (Derrida, 1978: 355).

### **2.3 The Responsibility of the Reader**

For Derrida, ‘we need to interpret interpretations more than interpret things’ (Derrida, 1976: 353). In the context of this discussion, it becomes clear that the difference between high and popular literature is clearly based on a doctrine of tradition. The division within literature is based upon ‘historicity itself’ which is the ‘condition of the tradition of meaning’ (Derrida, 1978: 50). Having got to this stage, the next step in a deconstructive reading involves interrogating this structure. Derrida insists on the notion of the ‘supplement’ as a way of destabilising this structure; he suggests that the concept is similar to that of the *pharmakon* as both terms are ‘neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither an accident nor an essence’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxii): essentially they are an undecidable. Thus, by applying the reading practices that are traditionally used in the context of high literature to the work of popular literature, new areas of meaning and significance can be liberated. This can be achieved by paying careful attention to how the author uses language. In this way, the reader is doing nothing more than placing themselves within the operations of the text ‘and being part of that operation (the text’s own self – deconstruction)’ (McQuillan, 2000: 27), and by so doing, new meanings and hidden insights may be unravelled. Thus, through close reading and approaching popular literature as a text capable of sophistication, Howard’s texts can be seen to portray a quality of language and a consciousness of meaning, which is similar to that of any high literary texts. This subverts the notion that all popular literature is trivially spun together with a beginning, middle and end.

I am suggesting that the clearly-defined borders between high and popular literature which society has constructed are not fixed or static, and that their purpose is merely to provide organisation and assure a cohesive structured paradigm to the discourse of literature. The



‘traditional dispute as to the function of literature depends on opposing two positions’ – high and popular literature (Ellis, 1974: 236). However one can argue that they ‘do not and cannot validly contrast with each other’ (Ellis, 1974: 236), as Derrida describes the other as ‘always already there irreducibly’ (Miller, 2001: 259), and therefore one must have ‘an openness to the other’ (Miller, 2001: 261). I am arguing that when studying high literature, popular literature must also be examined as they are each elements of the binary opposition, and one must also examine the value-system that sets up this binary opposition in the first place. This is the task of deconstruction to ‘dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in the text, not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxv). Therefore there is a theoretical justification for placing Joyce, O’Casey and Howard as equal objects of study within the literary field. In order to achieve this, one must discount the level of class-based and ideological hermeneutics which places Joyce’s and O’Casey’s work as intrinsically superior that of Howard. All are works of art should be subjected to critique and judgement. Subsequently individuals should practice the notion of autonomy, thus empowering each person to conclude which pieces of literature should be considered as differentiated in terms of value according to defined extrinsic and intrinsic criteria and which should be agreed within the field of literature. While in this case, the focus is on the texts of three Dubliners, this is part of a wider debate on the sociological factors that constitute so much of the academic discourse in and around the area of literature.

It was Mary Ellen Lamb who stated that the term ‘popular culture’ can be defined in three ways; firstly it is ‘an engagement in oppositional politics with mainstream groups’; secondly it can be seen as ‘a simple majority of the population below the level of gentry’ and thirdly, as a participant ‘in the traditional festive practices of an increasingly beleaguered “marrie England”’

(Lamb, 2006: 1). Interestingly, all of these definitions display popular culture as being subordinate to high culture. Subsequently the term ‘popular’ is the ‘culture of an oppressed population engaged in perpetual struggle with a dominant culture or “power bloc”’ (Lamb, 2006: 1). Thus popular culture is constantly being ‘formed always in reaction to, and never as part of, the forces of domination’ (Lamb, 2006: 1). One must interpret these distinctions between the two as merely a representation of the social world, and not the way things naturally are. Lamb further describes how high culture has developed specific techniques ‘to define itself against and through lower status groups’ (Lamb, 2006: 3), thus ensuring the safeguarding of the social platform which consists of high literature at the top with popular literature on the lower position. Bourdieu suggests a theoretical reorientation showing how both sides can adopt a common philosophical grounding which no longer limits their perception; he sees his high and popular are linked by the all-important foundation – language. Bourdieu reinforces Lamb’s perspective that ‘culture and language have some connection to the manifestation of social power’ (Loesberg, 1993: 1034). Bourdieu is interrogating a system of high and popular hierarchization, as he insists through his analysis of ethnomethodology that often ‘classes on paper’ are liable to be seen as ‘real groups’ (Bourdieu, 1989: 19), when in fact they are purely a constructed creation, which attempts to demonstrate that the social world ‘does not present itself as pure chaos’ (Bourdieu, 1989: 19). Bourdieu’s goal is setting up a system which is more democratic and transparent, indeed a system which strives for ‘systematic unity that is to be found across all aspects of an individual’s or group tastes’ (Bourdieu, 2007: 203). Bourdieu’s alternative view strives for a homology between social groupings, which binds ‘the relation between the life of art and the art of life’ (Bourdieu, 1997: 225). It was Raymond Williams who placed the terms ‘popular’ and ‘literature’ together in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. He stated that

‘popular’ means ‘belonging to the people’ and ‘well-liked by many people’ (Williams, 1983: 4). Thus the term ‘literature’ has included ‘the writings that constitute polite learning’, ‘creative or imaginative writing’, and ‘writing with aesthetic interest that can be classed as art’ (Williams, 1983: 4). The terms ‘popular’ and ‘literature’ are signs which, when consulted by critic and the dictionary, seem to have a definite value

Therefore it is merely these ‘conceptual orders’ (McQuillan, 2000: 10), which place high literature over popular literature, and it is my contention that this hierarchy, and its ideological valences, needs to be challenged. If popular literature is read with the same intellectual and theoretical rigour as high literature, then there is definite cultural capital to be gleaned from it, as exemplified in Howard’s work. For example, in *The Miseducation Years*, the first line asks ‘what’s my name?’ (Howard, 2004: 9). Contained within those three words are multiple issues of the nature of – identity and it raises the all-important question who am I? There are also intertextual references to the opening of *Moby Dick* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Subsequently Howard refuses to quench the reader’s anticipation for an answer by stating ‘I don’t even bother answering him’ (Howard, 2004: 9). One can interpret this as suggesting that in post Celtic-Tiger Ireland, questions of identity are no longer as important as they once were. Issues of politics, republicanism, the position of Northern Ireland, so long at the core of Irish writing, have been replaced by more global and materialistic concerns, and this is something which Howard’s books make very clear. The reaction to the visit of Queen Elizabeth would not surprise readers of Howard, as he focuses on the contemporary fascination with the culture of celebrity, and that was the context for the reaction to the royal visit, as opposed to a post-colonial resentment which was widely feared. Thus Howard, like the great writers of the Irish canon, Joyce, Yeats and O’Casey, can be read as interrogating notions of identity which is a seminal trope in Irish

literature and theory. That he is seldom read in this light is the responsibility of the reader and of the structures within which his work is located. Like Culler's pseudo-poem, the level of meaning derived from a text is often proportional to the level of intellectual investment in that text by a reader. Individuals must put an end to this astigmatism and question the 'always-already-there' (Derrida, 1976: 66).

The question remains as to how these contrived hierarchies have become embedded within society so that individuals have a firm belief in these divisions and deem them to be the way the world is truly structured. When high and popular literature are mentioned as categories 'it is already clear in what sense these conceptual pairs are operative' within the social order (Benjamin, 1998: 225). What is being defined here is the 'classically determined structure of the sign' (Derrida, 1982: 9) and when individuals signify, they go 'through the detour of the sign' (Derrida, 1982: 9). This is an attempt by society to limit play, as there seems to be a clear definition to the sign high and popular literature. As Bourdieu insists: to 'change the world, one has to change the ways of world making, that is the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced' (Bourdieu, 1989: 23). Reading is a way to change how we see the world, and readers have a responsibility to examine a diverse range of texts, and to bring a complex reading practice to bear on texts, be they high literature or popular literature. Such complexity is important, as 'the simple', wrote Gaston Bachelard, 'is never but the simplified' and he demonstrates that science has never progressed except by questioning simple ideas (Bachelard, 1985: 63). Therefore one can never disregard a book's quality because it is deemed popular; it is the responsibility of the reader to apply close readings to all literary works. This demonstrates the distorting of the previously 'balanced binary oppositions of classical philosophy' (Derrida, 1976: lxxiii), and as Derrida insists, the task of

deconstruction is to ‘dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work’, not in order to ‘reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxv). This reinscription will involve the rupturing of culturally-defined borders, and it is my view that, far from being strictly set out, borders and boundaries are ‘unstable and turbulent’ (Derrida, 2005: 35), and it is this instability that is being foregrounded in this study. Barthes advocates that ‘the book itself is only a tissue of signs’ and the ‘birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author’ (Barthes, 1968: 188). I also believe the birth of the reader is at the cost of the death of these over-restrictive binary categorisations of books.

Readers must shake these preconceptions of high and popular literature and approach all books as critical readers who can unpick ‘the elements of metaphor and other figurative devices at work in the texts’ (Norris, 2002: 18). For Miller, like Derrida, reading is a double gesture, a double performative:

Reading requires a positive effort. One must give all one’s faculties to re-creating the imaginary world as fully and as vividly as possible within oneself. For those who are no longer children, or childlike, a different kind of effort is necessary too. This is the attempt, an attempt that may well not succeed, to suspend ingrained habits of ‘critical’ or suspicious reading. (Miller 2002: 120)

To achieve this, he calls for ‘a certain speed in reading’ (Miller, 2002: 120). He notes that playing a Mozart piano sonata or Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* too slowly destroys the musicality of the pieces: ‘a certain tempo is required’ and he makes the same point about one part of the double gesture that is reading: ‘the same thing is true for reading considered as the generation of a virtual reality. One must read rapidly, *allegro*, in a dance of the eyes across the page’ (Miller, 2002: 121). However, there is another element to this double gesture:

Good reading, however, also demands slow reading, not just the dancing *allegro*. A good reader is someone on whom nothing in the text is lost .... This means just the opposite of a willing suspension of disbelief that no longer even remembers the disbelief that was so willingly suspended. It means the reading *lento* that Nietzsche advocated....Slow reading, critical reading means being suspicious at every turn, interrogating every detail of the work, trying to figure out by just what means the magic is wrought (Miller, 2002: 122)

This close reading is defined by Miller as involving a pause ‘over every key word or phrase, looking circumspectly before and after’ each word and is ‘anxious not to let the text put anything over on him or her’ (Miller, 2002: 122). I believe that in order to decide whether a text is of literary value or not, the approach has to be the same, that is a combination of a ‘slow reading, critical reading’, ‘rhetorical reading’ or an ‘*allegro* reading’ and a ‘*lento* reading’ (Miller, 2002: 128). Miller insists that becoming an ‘*allegro*’ along with a ‘*lento*’ reader ‘produces something very different’ within the text, which dismantles the initial dominant reading (Miller, 2001: 122). This type of reading ‘means being suspicious at every turn, interrogating every detail of the work, trying to figure out by just what means the magic is wrought’ (Miller, 2001: 122). Responsible readers should be suspicious of these previously manufactured beliefs, and of letting society decipher the quality of a book. This ‘rhetorical reading’ (Miller, 2001: 122), means paying close attention to the linguistic devices’, observing how figurative language is used’ and spotting that ‘all important irony’ (Miller, 2001: 122).

#### **2.4 Breaking the Margins: Close Reading**

I believe that although society establishes literary value, the literary canon must not remain unchanged and definite because categories in the ‘natural world always include a degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness’ (Bourdieu, 1985: 201). Therefore empowering the individual reader to make the decision on the quality of a book means that they are not just ‘agents to accept

the social world as it is, to take it for granted' (Bourdieu, 1985: 2010). Derrida advocates the importance of the individual reader, by stating that 'democracy was worth defending, and that individual persons, rather than structures and ideologies, need respect' (Powell, 2006: 121). This type of reading responsibility trusts the individual reader, as his or her judgement comes into play when deciphering the literary value of a text. Bourdieu insists that even the most 'constant combinations of properties' are founded on 'interchangeable features', which are 'subject to variations in time so that their meaning, insofar as it depends on the future, is itself in suspense, in waiting, dangling' and therefore indeterminate (Bourdieu, 1985: 201). One must not interpret the categorisation of high or popular literature as a homogenized whole, but rather as the product of heterogeneity which demonstrates the postmodern view that there should be a move towards the individual, who has the freedom to interpret and think within the existence 'of a large population' (Bourdieu, 1985: 217). Thus Andrew Benjamin in *Derrida, Architecture and Philosophy*, states that when Derrida discusses literature, he insists that 'there is no privileging of the literary' (Benjamin, 1988: 224) and that those who believe there is such an investment are investing a belief in logocentrism, a 'desire for self-enclosed totality' (Benjamin, 1988: 224).

Consequently, in keeping with Derrida's insistence that 'there is no privileging in the literary' (Benjamin, 2000: 224), I feel it is just as important to approach Howard as one would approach Joyce or O'Casey, when estimating his literary worth. An example of this would be when Howard tackles the 'significance of Dubes, Avoca Handweavers or Cavistons' (*The Irish Times*, 2008: 9), as metonymic signifiers of a particular form of Irish identity. The 'significance of Dubes, Avoca Handweavers or Cavistons', can be read as a contemporary cultural statement about 'boom-time Ireland' (*The Irish Times*, 2008: 9), and thus provides vital knowledge about Irish society in the twenty first century. Ross O'Carroll-Kelly, Howard's main protagonist, is a

product of privileged South Dublin. He is a representation of ‘the country’s wealthiest families in a haze of sporting hysteria’ (*The Irish Times*, 2008: 9). Ross is a prototype of this community; he has been brought up in affluence, and is devastated when his father loses everything after being convicted of tax-fraud: ‘the money, the cars, the boat, the golf-club membership, the apartments in Villamoura, the box at Leopardstown’ (Howard, 2007: 219). Ross exclaims ‘fock, things really are bad’ (Howard, 2007: 220). This exposes an attitude of ‘privileged echelons of South Dublin’ (Power, 2008: 7), where work was something done by the lower classes or by immigrants. Subsequently, when it is revealed that there is ‘a hundred grand missing’ from Ross and Sorcha’s current account, it is Ross who says ‘I, er...well, I bought a couple of apartments. In Bulgaria’ (Howard, 2007: 219). This aspect of the Celtic-Tiger property fetishism, where foreign property was almost a social necessity, is disarmingly captured in this scene, as Ross had not told Sorcha about this purpose. In terms of a synecdoche of affluence, this is a telling example. If there is a looking-glass held up to the face of the Celtic-Tiger, I would argue that it is to be found in these books by Howard, where the affluence of South Dublin is sardonically captured. The commodity fetishism that was the norm in some sections of Celtic Tiger Ireland is represented here, albeit in comic fashion.

The same can be said of the Dublin of a century earlier, where, from a reading of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, one can discover ‘all urban Ireland and Dublin society’ (Cixous, 1976b: i). Joyce took on the mask of middle class Dublin, and exposed a civilisation of entrapment; he looked at ‘the family, the economic and social problems’ which were concrete elements in all of his works (Cixous, 1976b: i). In *Dubliners*, Joyce presented what he called a true depiction of Dublin, using ‘real names of real places, demanded that his characters speak the real language of those they resembled among Dublin’s



citizens, insisted that honesty not censorship, realism not romanticism prevail' (Johnson, 1922: viii). In this collection, he describes daily events of lower-middle class characters to whom not much seems to happen. Joyce believed he had 'taken the first step towards spiritual liberation on my country' (Johnson, 1922: viii); he also thought that Dublin marked the center of paralysis for the Irish people, and this powerlessness meant that they were unable to move out of their social environment and take any decisive action to improve their situation, for as Little Chandler in 'A Little Cloud' insists: 'it was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life' (Joyce, 2000: 64). Thus all fifteen stories describe a culture that was trapped within social convention and daily situations.

O'Casey portrayed 'ordinary Dubliners' through his realistic depiction of Dublin slum life in his tragicomedies which 'O'Casey labelled "tragedies"' (Benstock, 1970: 12). O'Casey was described as a 'budding playwright', and 'listened avidly to his fellow slumdweller and took notes of their speech' (Benstock, 1970: 33). His characters were real and powerful, and one thinks of the bravery of Juno in *Juno and the Paycock*, during the final act, when the 'discovery of Mary's pregnancy, and the end of the financial dream, leaves her, not a broken woman' but rather a resolute one, 'determined to start life again with her daughter' (Benstock, 1970: 55). Religion, labour and love are skilfully woven into all three Dublin plays, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*. All three are united by the fact that they are all products of their own inner Ireland (Cixous, 1976: i). The remainder of this section will expand on how Joyce, O'Casey and Howard drew from their social and cultural environment to create the texts which portray a depiction of Dublin through the years.

It can be argued that Joyce, O'Casey and Howard had a similar schema when it came to writing. Howard is presenting a contemporary generation with a similar opportunity to that

offered by Joyce to his own generation, namely that they should ‘take one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass’ (Hart, 1969: 9). Joyce’s and O’Casey’s image in that mirror was not that of Yeats, Lady Gregory or that of the Abbey Theatre. For Joyce, and to a lesser extent O’Casey, the Celtic twilight as a revival was ‘from its inception, an anachronism. It was a bogus attempt to revive the old Gaelic culture which lay beyond the pale of the modern consciousness’ (Attridge, 1990: 40). Equally, Joyce and O’Casey’s own texts did not resemble those of ‘the comic dramatists, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Wilde and Shaw, all of whom performed the role of court jester to the English’ (Attridge, 1990: 40). Instead, Joyce’s, and later O’Casey’s, revelation was that of the ‘civilization of Catholic Dublin, related to but distinct from that of Catholic Ireland’ (Attridge, 1990: 40). Thus Joyce, O’Casey and laterally Howard’s contemporary perspective, ‘presented Dublin to the world’ (Attridge, 1990: 40), each from a different class perspective as Joyce examined Dublin’s middle class, O’Casey’s sought to envisage the ordinary working class and Howard offered a contemporaneous depiction of Dublin’s upper classes.

Joyce can be interpreted as presenting an intrinsic examination of the ordinary middle class people of Dublin at the turn of the century. ‘Joyce’s stories are keyed to the tempo of routine middle-class life’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 59), and it was the people of Dublin who provided such powerful inspiration, suggesting that ‘there was no reason to seek material elsewhere’ when it came to writing *Dubliners* (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 59). Joyce’s *oeuvre* sought to portray a naturalistic depiction of Dublin, and ‘the most astute critics remarked Joyce’s ‘truthfulness’, at least his fidelity to representing things as they are’ (Joyce, 2000: viii). Joyce forged an image of real people as these tales ‘catch glimpses of moments in the lives of ordinary Dubliners’ (Joyce, 2000: xii). Joyce addressed core human issues, all depicted through the lens

of ‘wonderful writing, the power of genius is in every line’ (Joyce, 2000: ix). Joyce through his meticulous style, dealt with issue such as:

poverty, drunkenness, bullying, child beating, sexual exhibitionism, suicide, cynical exploitations (sexual, financial, political) of children by adults, of women by men, of employees by bosses, of those with little power by those with much. (Joyce, 2000: xii)

One might ask why Joyce focused solely on the people of Dublin when illustrating his ‘slice of life’ (Joyce, 2000: xii). We know, Joyce declared, that his aim was to provide a ‘chapter of the moral history of my country’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 54) and Dublin best portrayed the Irish people and their ‘struggle of the individual against the world and against his inner self’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 61). Joyce believed that ‘Dublin had been chosen because it marked the centre of paralysis’, and the city was the cause of tension between ‘life-as-it-is and life-as-it-should-be’, for individuals who find themselves trapped by the circumstances of their lives (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 54). *Dubliners* depicted the ‘annals of frustration’: ‘a boy is disappointed, a priest suffers disgrace, and the elopement of ‘Eveline’ fails to materialize’ (Levin, 1988: 29). The stories’ main characters: Eveline, Gabriel, Little Chandler, the boy in “An Encounter”, and Polly Mooney’s husband, Bob Doran, nearly all plan to escape the mundane city life ‘but nothing happens, or at least nothing happens as they planned’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 61). Therefore Joyce’s reflection of the Irish people was of a gallery of frustrated potential escapees, who are depicted in one way or another to have felt trapped by the circumstances of their lives.

One of the central strategies within the stories is what Joyce calls an epiphany: ‘a spiritual manifestation’ (Levin, 1988: 27). This stems from the Greek word *epiphanein* which translates as ‘to hold up on show’ (Hayes, 2004: 211). Epiphanies are moments of heightened

awareness and can be defined as a new consciousness or realization of life, described through the gaze of the artist. For example, in 'A Little Cloud', it is Little Chandler who experiences a moment of such profound awareness, after his meeting with an old friend Gallagher leads him to question the life he has been living. Gallagher is juxtaposed with Little Chandler, as he 'had lived, he had seen the world. Little Chandler looked at his friend enviously' (Joyce, 2000: 58). The epiphany comes in the moment when Little Chandler acknowledges his melancholy world, which has been engulfed with unfulfilled wishes, desires and envy of his wife's love for their son: 'Little Chandler felt his cheeks suffused with shame and he stood back out of the lamplight. He listened while the paroxysm of the child's sobbing grew less and less; and tears of remorse started to his eyes' (Joyce, 2000: 65). For Little Chandler, the moment of true self-awareness came when he acknowledges that his life has been filled with unfulfilled dreams and unattainable goals; he realises that 'you could do nothing in Dublin' (Joyce, 2000: 55). These epiphanies are what Joyce sees as central to writing. He suggests to his readers that:

there are such moments in store for us, Joyce believed, if we but discern them. Sometimes, amid the most encumbered circumstances, it suddenly happens that the veil is lifted, the burthen of the mystery laid bare, and the ultimate secret of things made manifest. (Levin, 1988: 27)

This aesthetic principle occurs throughout *Dubliners* as the main characters encounter a 'deeper insight into life (or art) that something simple, usually overlooked (everyday objects, gestures or remarks), can provide' (Hayes, 2004: 209). Joyce uses this stylistic technique in order to present an honest depiction of city life, where each individual experiences moments of profound realisation. Joyce hoped that individuals would look inward thus recognising their own paralysis and therefore stimulating a movement: 'a first step towards freedom, towards civilisation' (Joyce, 2000: xii). The progression from one story to another in *Dubliners*

demonstrates the drama of ordinary life with a truthfulness which owes a lot to the detail of the description. In the opening line of 'The Sisters', Joyce is describing the failing health of the priest and the story begins with: 'there was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke' (Joyce, 2000: 3). Thus the reader is under no illusion as to the condition of the priest. The core of human life in this city is described through the writing style of 'scrupulous meanness' (Joyce, 2000: xxiii), and Joyce insisted that his collection of stories 'was about a city that still had not been presented or represented, to the world' (Attridge, 1990: 40).

Joyce, along with Howard and O'Casey, delineates a realistic depiction of 'Irish life, in the streets and landmarks, the sounds and the smells, the pubs and stews' of Dublin city (Levin, 1942: 15). There is a piece of the city reaching out to everyone in the form of Howard's, Joyce's and O'Casey's characters. Howard presents an analysis of a wealthy 'South Dublin airhead' (Howard, 2004 i), and even here, he is transgressing boundaries, as the term 'airhead' is normally a gender-specific pejorative term for a woman of little intelligence. By using this term to describe Ross, Howard is blurring gender boundaries. In *We Need to Talk about Ross*, Howard reveals how individuals spent their money carelessly through 'what will be remembered as the Celtic Tiger'. This book has already been referred to as the 'official biography' of Ross, and so it assumes the expectations associated with a serious biographical account of his life by the people who know him. Such books are popular in contemporary culture, as biographies of all sorts of celebrities are in print. Because of the mock-biography genre, there would be a greater expectation of truth in this book, and this is why it is used to describe the end of the Celtic-Tiger through the fictive voices of Ross's extended family and friends. Hence, there is the anecdote of a 'man who pulled on a pair of jeans he hadn't worn more than a year and discovered six

hundred euro, neatly folded, in the front pocket' (Howard, 2009: i). To this Howard exclaims 'imagine not missing six hundred euro' (Howard, 2009: i).

Another woman 'who doesn't wish to be named, paid four hundred euro for a Barbara Cosgrove Blanche lamp in mustard', however it clashed 'angrily with the colour scheme in her front living room. So she put the lamp, not in a discreet corner where it wouldn't be seen, or even in the hidden dark attic – she put it in a skip, then went back to Brown Thomas and bought another one' (Howard, 2009: i). Despite the plethora of reports from different agencies on the causes of the Irish financial collapse, it is through micro-narratives like these that what one might call the Lacanian real of the mind-set of Ireland, and especially south Dublin, during this period. Commodity fetishism was the main ideology at work, and Howard captures this with all the style through which Joyce captures the paralysis of an earlier generation. Howard created Dublin from his personal perspective as he describes the lavish lifestyle lead by many during what has become known as the 'good times' (Howard, 2009: i). Subsequently Ross demonstrates this elitist attitude when he states that 'I don't agree with showing soccer on TV in pubs – it tends to attract the peasantry. I don't agree with soccer, full stop' (Howard, 2008: 23). However there is a realisation in the statement that 'we didn't invent money, money invented us' (Power, 2008: 36), and the epiphany lies in the fact that this 'happy little world, with all its desires and certainties, all its serene ambition can't possibly last forever' (Power, 2008: 35). Thus Howard exposes just how fragile this class truly is by having Ross resort to getting a job – collecting sanitary bins for 'Pearse Street Sanitary Service', when his Father becomes bankrupt and has his assets seized. Thus as Ross describes how he could get 'focking arrested for the way' his uniform 'clashes with my Dubes' (Howard, 2007: 243). This demonstrates that the notion of class and distinctions are merely an ideology and borders and boundaries possess fluidity. Howard is mirroring the current

economic climate where driving down ‘some random Californian freeway in a big fock-off BMW 650 convertible, top down, sunnies on’ (Howard, 2009: 71), is a thing of the past.

Thus in a manner similar to Joyce, Howard is holding up a mirror to the contemporary Dublin 4 ethos. Howard when invited to speak to the Blackrock College senior cup team said, ‘you know these books are taking the piss out of your kids’ (*Irish Times*, 2008: 9). Subsequently by holding up a mirror to Dublin’s privileged class, Howard’s contemporary literary world was born. Similarly, Joyce’s *Dubliners* explores the ‘emotional and linguistic clichés of Dublin’s’ middle classes (Chace, 1974: 3), whereas Howard examine the upper middle class of present day Dublin, while O’Casey provides an exploration of Dublin’s working class of the 1920s.

Through the characters and plots of the individual plays, O’Casey also voiced his sense of failure on behalf of the ‘trade union movement to go beyond simple economic reforms’ (Lowery, 1981a: 64). For example, *Juno and the Paycock* opens with Mary exclaiming that she is out on strike in support of a fellow employee, namely Jennie Claffey, who had been unfairly dismissed. Mary states that ‘the hour has past now when we’ll ask the employers’ permission to wear what we like’ (O’Casey, 1988: 51). However Mary’s mother, Juno sheds a light of reality on Mary’s actions by saying:

when I go into oul’ Murphy’s tomorrow, an’ he gets to know that, instead o’ payin’ all, I’m goin’ to borry more, what’ll he say when I tell him a principle’s a principle? What’ll we do if he refuses to give us any more tick. (O’Casey, 1988: 51)

O’Casey depicted the life of the Dublin’s poor and their slum surroundings, but he also painted a picture of how there was a ‘community spirit of Dubliners in coping with their harsh environment’ (Lowery, 1981a: 41). He joined the Gaelic League, as he was initially attracted ‘by the emphasis on cultural nationalism’ (Lowery, 1981a: 50). However O’Casey soon became

disillusioned with the League's beliefs and left the organisation. This helped shape his thinking and his depiction of a 'hidden Dublin, not immediately visible to the visitor: the sordid slum conditions of Dublin's black streets and ghetto areas, where almost one-third of its population lived' (Lowery, 1981a: 36). It was these individuals who were far removed from the 'prosperity of the distinct suburbs of Rathmines and Ballsbridge' (Lowery, 1981a: 36), who provided the material for O'Casey's three Dublin plays. Thus in a manner parallel to that of Joyce and Howard, O'Casey also mirrored the complex lives of 'the Dublin poor, the Dublin plays also reflect and interpret the violence of Irish political life between 1915 and 1923' (Murray, 1949: x). For example *The Plough and the Stars* set in 1915-1916, is a play which 'explores working-class Dublin against the unpopular Easter Rising' (Murray, 1949: x). Furthermore, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, set in 1920, is depicted against the background of the War of Independence, and 'the civil war that broke out in 1922 over the terms of the Treaty forms the background to *Juno and the Paycock* (1924)' (Murray, 1949: xii).

Dublin has been the source of inspiration for Joyce, O'Casey and Howard. Indeed, the city was a 'strange mix of the oral and the literate cultures, which prided itself on its reputation of wit, good conversation, malicious gossip, oratory, drama and journalism' (Attridge, 1990: 43), and this was the context of the shaping of Howard's, Joyce's and O'Casey's literary consciousness. The three writers all held up a mirror to Dublin's society, which echoed a 'reality no-one had presented before' (Attridge, 1990: 41). This thesis uses the work of Derrida to explore the comparisons and contrasts in the presentations of Dublin that are to be found in these three writers. *Of Grammatology* sets out the study of 'grammatology' which seeks to examine Western philosophical traditions and investigates the way in which 'Western thought is structured' (McQuillan, 2000: 8). Derrida, by providing a critique of the structures which shape



society, 'puts into question everything – meaning, language, interpretation, authorial intention, even the idea of the book as a fixed or finite repository of meaning with a beginning and an end' (Bradley, 2008: 4). For Derrida these structures are arbitrary and conventional in nature as they have been invented by individuals for individuals. Subsequently 'it is a fiction we tell ourselves in order to live' (McQuillan, 2000: 11). Individuals have invested words with meaning so one 'seeks to establish an essential foundation for reality' (Derrida, 1988: 6).

This is similar to Joyce, O'Casey and Howard's projects: they have supplemented onto the word 'Dubliner' a contrived identity and meaning through analysis of the different structures of social class, specifically working class, middle class and upper middle class, at a specific point in time. Joyce's interpretation of what it is to be a 'Dubliner' differs from that of O'Casey and Howard. Therefore taking the letters that make up the signifier 'Dublin' to depict a sign, we can see that what Joyce, O'Casey and Howard have done is to set out a range of polysemic signifieds which are related to this signifier. As we noted earlier, deconstruction puts the constative notion of the 'is' in question, so that the signifier/signified connection is put into question. In this case, the answer to 'X is a Dubliner' will be significantly different for all three writers. Importantly the different time periods – Joyce around 1914, O'Casey in the 1920s and Howard's current portrayal of being a 'Dubliner' in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries – reinforces Derrida's notion that, 'language works through a process of infinite supplementation where the job of completing or fulfilling meaning is always devolved onto the next sign along in space and time: a fully present meaning is thus perpetually out of reach' (Bradley, 2008: 71). Thus the sign 'Dubliner' is essentially a product of a 'deferred presence' (Derrida, 1988: 8) as it is not static. Therefore 'we never arrive at a simple or unmediated meaning: nothing is unmediated' (Bradley,

2008: 71), as all three writers have attached a different stable reality to the notion of being a Dublin person. All three are texts dealing with their contemporary contexts.

Not alone did Joyce, O'Casey and Howard supplement onto the word 'Dubliner' a specific meaning, but they also captured an identity of a particular period. Joyce, O'Casey and Howard were writing about the spirit of a particular place at a particular time. It is believed that 'Joyce rarely invented stories' (Hart, 1969: 40); they were all postulated from life's experience. For instance, there are 'grounds for considering that 'Araby' is based on an actual event in Joyce's childhood' (Hart, 1969: 40). The bazaar which the boy attends has its foundation on a reproduction of the programme of an actual bazaar which read: 'Araby in Dublin Official Catalogue Grand Oriental Fête May 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> 1894 in aid of Jervis St. Hospital Admission One Shilling' (Hart, 1969: 40). This Fête was 'undoubtedly the basis of Joyce's story' (Hart, 1969: 40). Joyce would have been 'twelve at the time and was then or shortly after living at 17 Richmond Street North, the house described in the story' (Hart, 1969: 40). There are other details which indicate that Joyce based this story on life experiences, as 'the Christian Brothers School still stands at the corner of the street, which has altered little from Joyce's time'. 'Some of the houses have been turned into flats but they are still there'. Indeed even the Richmond Cottages close by, which housed the families whose children Joyce referred to as 'the rough tribes from the cottages' (Hart, 1969: 41) are still evident today.

Similarly, O'Casey's real context was that of the lower class of Dublin from whom he copied their 'rich and dramatic idiom out of the common language he had heard spoken in the slums of Dublin' (Krause, 1967: 36). O'Casey was not a trained and sophisticated writer; he was part of this world which he created and put to the stage of the Abbey theatre. It was O'Casey's work, *Juno and the Paycock*, which 'drew such a large crowd that it had to be extended for a

second week, the first time in Abbey history that a play had run longer than a week' (Krause, 1967: 37). The final night of *Shadow of a Gunman* 'was a complete sell out and the "house full" sign was hung out – the first time this had happened in the history of the Abbey' (Krause, 1967: 37). Howard's Ross O'Carroll-Kelly has become 'one of the great socio-comic characters of recent times' (Power, 2008: 17). Howard plunges into the world of Dublin 4; Ross exemplifies a generation where the boys understand 'sporting prowess and sexual achievement exist for no other reason than to entertain' (Power, 2008: 1), and the girls are equally superficial as some are 'without a single thought in their heads, while their hobbies include flicking their hair' (Power, 2008: 1). Howard condenses a map of their world. These three writers, Joyce, O'Casey and Howard, who began on the margins of their literary culture, demonstrated their skill and genius through the presentation of Irish Dublin life and establishing their mark as major writers whose subject was that of Dublin.

### ***2.5 United by the Scolding of the Public Eye***

Just as Howard's literature is thought to uphold the position of marginal within the conventional literary psyche, so too did Joyce, and later O'Casey, find themselves located outside the realm of their canonical literary world at the beginning of their literary lives. When it came to publishing and gaining acceptance in the dominant literary institution of Joyce's world, difficulties arose concerning the publication and acceptance of *Dubliners*, which 'began in May 1906' (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 53). For Joyce, the printing and publishing of *Dubliners* was a long and painful process. He battled 'with morally sensitive printers, his disagreement with timid publishers, and his seemingly endless struggle against shadowy Irish nationalist and Irish religious forces', who Joyce believed, 'sought to keep him silent' (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 53). However the stories

that were transformed into *Dubliners* first appeared in an agricultural paper, *The Irish Homestead*. It was George Russell, who had written to Joyce:

in an almost rude letter, he asks: "look at the story in this paper.... Could you write anything simple, rural .... So as not to shock the readers, ....It is easily earned money if you can write fluently and don't mind playing to the common understanding and liking for one in a way. (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 53)

Subsequently, 'The Sisters', by Stephan Daedalus, appeared on August 13<sup>th</sup> 1904, and was followed by 'Eveline' in September 1904, and 'After the Races' in December 1904. Joyce then emigrated from Ireland and settled in Zurich, where he began work on a 'fourth story, 'Christmas Eve', which he recast as 'Hollow Eve' (what would become 'Clay' in *Dubliners*), and sent it to the *Irish Homestead*, where it was refused' (Joyce, 2000: xli). Russell's directive of writing simple rural stories seemed straightforward, but as Magalaner and Kain observed, it was 'just what Joyce could not do, then or later' (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 54). Joyce has become known for his 'production of an encyclopaedic and infallibly disciplined mind' (Chance, 1974: 2), which resulted in each story 'etching with extraordinary clarity' and 'carefully interacting symbolic meanings' the form and scope of its narrative arc and of its characters, which were presented through the medium of Joyce's 'sharp realistic sketches' (Abrams, 2000: 2232).

By mid-October 1905, Joyce had completed *Dubliners*, and wrote to Grant Richards who he hoped would publish the book. It was here that his publishing difficulties began:

Richard's attempts to get Joyce to alter his stories: the printer having also objected to passages in 'Counterparts' and Richards himself demanding substitutions for the word 'bloody' in 'Grace'. (Joyce, 2000: xliii)

Thus Joyce unwillingly ‘agreed to delete the word ‘bloody’ wherever it occurred, except for one passage in “The Boarding House”’ (Joyce, 2000: xliii). However ‘Richards finally refused altogether to publish the book’ (Joyce, 2000: xliii), and returned the manuscript to Joyce. Joyce then moved to Rome, where he rewrote some of the stories and added a new one, named “The Dead”. Joyce believed that in this collection he was presenting to numerous publishers ‘realistic sketches of people in Dublin of all ages and all phases of life each with a sketch a sort of slice of life that makes a comment on the “moral history” of mankind without moralizing’ (Jones, 1970: 11). After protracted negotiations with many printers and publisher like ‘Heinemann, John Long (twice), Elkin Mathews (twice), Hutchinson’s Alston Rivers, Sisleys, Greening and Co’ (Joyce, 2000: xliii), to list but a few, Joyce approached Grant Richards again and he, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1914, agreed publication. ‘B. W. Heusch published *Dubliners* in the United States, first in 1916 using imported sheets’ (Joyce, 2000: xlv). This marked a point of closure for *Dubliners* ‘difficult passage into print’ (Costello, 1980: 107), the long struggle Joyce encountered with publishers and printers was over until he was faced with the even more difficult task of publishing *Ulysses*. From the numerous changes and revisions to *Dubliners*, Robert Scholes and Hans Walter Gabler, both textual scholars, ‘have reconstructed from the evidence of surviving documents the full history of the production of the first edition’ (Joyce, 2000: xlv). In 1993, Gabler produced a ‘full critical edition, from the ground up, establishing each episode discretely’, this entailed using manuscripts and proofs of *Dubliners* and has proven to be a valid source when providing an analysis of the ‘shifts and changes of course Joyce took in composing his chapter in the moral history of Ireland’ (Joyce, 2000: xlvi).

*Dubliners* has been called a sensitive portrayal of humanity ‘which faces the little horrors of daily life. The stories are little dramas of gradual degradation which the author suggests is

inevitable, but without despising his characters' (Costello, 1980: 107). In terms of its reception, *Dubliners* has now become high literature, taught in English departments across the world. However this was not always the case, as initially, the stories were written 'from the commercial need to fill the pages' of *The Irish Homestead* (Costello, 1980: 107), and early reviews perceived the work to be 'depressing, with no uplifting message, too withdrawn and cold; and, though all too accurate, lacking in feeling and compassion' (Martin, 1990: 12). This commercial beginning for Joyce is similar to that of Howard, as both men wrote initially for the purpose of financial gain. However, Joyce's true genius stemmed from the stripping away 'the façade behind which people in Dublin lived their little lives' (Costello, 1980: 108), and exposing the conflict between politics, art, religion and private life. Thus what began as mere page fillers would be seen to have a stylistic 'hypnotic magic', and the 'widening implications of the story suggest the presence of genius. Here is a writer who must be heeded' (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 3). He was offering a vision of Irishness and of Dublin that was far removed from the mythological writing of the Gaelic and Celtic revivals, and he was suggesting an urban, modernist identity for Dublin that was at odds with the rural idyll that seemed to fuel so many of the nationalist and cultural nationalist ideologies. In this sense, he was problematizing a border and a structure of Irishness through his work.

In contrast, O'Casey reflects the poverty-stricken individuals of Dublin in his trilogy. His characters' ironic attitude towards the idealism of Nationalism and heroism meant that the political and cultural nationalistic diehards were outraged. Their protesting resulted in the curtain being lowered, and 'the police were called in to restore order', in the Abbey Theatre during the production of *The Plough and the Stars*' (Krause, 1976: 26). It was 'a group of diehard nationalists interrupted the performance with a wild demonstration against his ironic treatment of

the Easter Rising' (Krause, 1976: 26). O'Casey's 'constant refusal to idealize the violence' (Krause, 1976: 26), and his placing of socialism ahead of nationalism, earned him the description of being a 'proud Protestant and poor' (Krause, 1976). He vocalised the feeling of a group, which included mothers, wives and those who valued human life over the idealism of nationalism. This was voiced poignantly through the words of Nora, in *The Plough and the Stars*: 'an there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed – if they say it, they're lyin', against God, Nature, an' against themselves' (O'Casey, 1949: 13). Throughout the trilogy, he 'mockingly questioned the revolutionary rhetoric of the patriots which inevitably led to the slaughter of innocent people' (Krause, 1976: 22). The reflection of the Irish people O'Casey forged was not the most popular, and it disturbed the 'holiness of war' (Krause, 1976: 26). However, it also allowed society of the 1920s to have a good look at the notion of nationalism on the stage of the Abbey theatre. By so doing, he was challenging the givens of post-revolutionary Ireland and was pluralising notions of Irishness in general and of Dublinness in particular. Like Joyce, he was offering a mirror to his culture and reflecting images that were far removed from the dominant reading.

Similarly, Paul Howard's 'private-school educated, rugby-playing young men' (*Irish Times*, 2008: 2), who graduated from the elite schools of South Dublin, had its beginnings as a column in the *Sunday Tribune*, and later moved onto the *Irish Times*, where the column is still running and can be read every Saturday. There is a parallel here with the early stories of *Dubliners* appearing in *The Irish Homestead*: both writers published in organs that would not be seen as the norm for high literature. Without a doubt, 'over the last decade, nobody has served to expose the gross absurdities of modern Irish life as Paul Howard's beautifully grotesque creation, Ross O'Carroll-Kelly' (*Irish Independent*, 2009: 17). I feel that what Howard has done, like

Joyce and O'Casey, is to present a contemporary image of Dublin. Interestingly, Howard also had extreme difficulty in finding a publisher for his first book, *The Miseducation Years*. He explains that 'it had already been running as a column in the *Tribune* for a couple of years and I couldn't get a publisher' (Howard, 2007: 5). Howard went ahead and published the books himself, and he describes how:

5000 books arrive, and I don't know if you've ever seen what 5000 books look like but it's five pallets; big wooden pallets piled high. So these arrive at the door of the *Tribune*, and I'm thinking – what am I going to do with them? (Howard, 2007: 5)

Howard subsequently drove around to 'bookshops and warehouses like Eason's warehouse and the Argosy warehouse with these books weighing down the back axle of this Nissan Micra, saying – will you take some books?' (Howard, 2007: 5). Given the earlier theoretical points about the centre and the margins, it is fair to say that Howard was definitely on the margin of his literary world. Publishers had thought him unimportant and refused to publish his material because they deemed it not fitting into 'any genre – it's not chick-lit, it's not exactly lad –lit, it's not a sports book; nobody could see who would buy it' (Howard, 2007: 5). This illustrates the core of Derrida's argument that culture imposes a 'form on textual material, and that such a practice puts limits on human creativity' (Eliot and Owens, 1998: 134). This is a twenty-first century example of how society instils a firm belief in the notion of structurality which has been defined by borders and boundaries. Howard's texts are trans-generic, as they are written in the form of a diary by Ross as pseudo-author, and the tagline is 'as told to Paul Howard'. So there is a double frame at work here, as the narrative is mediated by Ross through his interlocutor Howard, to the reader, so there is a confessional mode of writing at work which is replete with



irony, as the first-person fallible narrator is often blithely unaware of the consequences of his own actions. But even after eight books, it is difficult to specify their exact genre.

Derrida believes there is a ‘fundamental doubt and uncertainty’ surrounding terms like ‘genre’, which are understood to have definable borders (Culler, 1983: 267). The fact that Howard has successfully become part of the literary world which initially excluded him demonstrates that ‘the boundary shifts’ (Wood, 1992: 126), and that socio-cultural structures are always capable of being dismantled. In fact Howard’s *Should Have Got Off at Sydney Parade* was the ‘biggest selling book in Ireland’ (Howard, 2007: 5) in 2006, and this book also received the 2007 Irish book award for popular fiction, Howard has become firmly fixed within the frame of contemporary literature, although he began his writing career on the margins of any category within literature.

His pictures of Dublin are also challenging in that they stress the crass materialism of parts of Irish society, and the ease with which some Irish people embraced globalised capitalist culture. The characters are involved in the Irish property boom, the *Star Wars* franchise as well as the world perfume industry, and they epitomise the materialistic aspects of the Celtic Tiger in a way that is not done by any other writers, with the exception of some crime novels. Howard is unafraid to write about contemporary problems like steroid abuse, anorexia, crime, drug-taking, and the binary opposition between a very affluent Dublin and a very working class Dublin. His looking-glass reflects the Dublin of his time in a way that is unique, and like O’Casey, readers and audiences have flocked to read the books and attend his readings as he is speaking to them about their own lives and their own world.

Joyce, O’Casey and Howard are open to the possibilities of language. They may be susceptible to attenuated, dominant readings, but they are always already open to more irruptive

ones. A singular example of this is to be found in what are possibly the most famous lines from *Juno and the Paycock*, where Boyle exclaims at the end of the play, 'I'm telling you...Joxer...th' whole worl's...in a terr...ible state o'...chassis!' (O'Casey, 1988: 144). The word 'chassis' has been interpreted by critics like Kosok and Simmons as 'a malapropism in that he has got chaos wrong' (Simmons, 1983: 75). This demonstrates how the word and subsequently interpretation of the text is being attenuated by equating 'chassis' to mean 'chaos'. As a suspicious reader, Derrida has claimed that 'we need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things' (Derrida, 1978: 351). An *allegro* or *lento* reading of 'chassis' would not allow the word on the page to be ignored. The meaning of 'chassis' is given as a 'steel frame, wheels, engine and mechanical parts of a motor vehicle to which the body is attached', or as 'the frame on which a canon carriage moves backwards and forwards' (Collins, 2003: 288). In essence, it is a support-frame to a structure. Therefore the meaning changes, and Boyle can be interpreted as acknowledging that the word is in a 'terr...ible state o' depending on pre-given structures which have no place for people like Boyle and Joxer, a reading which radically alters the meaning of the final act, and of Boyle's character. A responsible and suspicious reading can liberate this aspect of meaning from the text.

The exploration of the word 'chassis' demonstrates the 'mastery of meaning' (Powell, 2006: 57) and how questioning the transcendental signified illustrates according to Derrida a world 'where the centre was not the centre' (Derrida, 1978: 352). This reveals how 'destroying such an original, central basis', for instance not reading the word 'chassis' as a mispronunciation of the word chaos, points to a unity 'which has been dislocated' (Derrida, 1978: 45) onto the world of language and meaning. The dominant reading of 'chassis', sees Boyle as lacking an education which leads him to mispronouncing the word 'chaos', while the *allegro/lento* reading

insist that Boyle is referring to the structure on which a vehicle is built, seeing this as a metaphor for how society is similarly made up of structures, for example law, religion, education and economics. Each gives rise to a very different reading of the play; one reading sees Boyle as a layabout, the other sees him as a philosopher. By approaching O'Casey from an academic perspective, such re-readings of his work can create new meanings and open new dimensions to that work. Bringing such a suspicious reading to Howard will also liberate new meanings, though this can be seen as a complex process, given the readerly expectations that are usually brought to texts of popular culture

The 'complexity arises from having to think in new and different ways about limits, about margins, frames, boundaries and borderlines' (Royle, 2003: 65). This demonstrates that individuals therefore need to re-think the notion that Howard holds less of a literary value than Joyce and O'Casey: all three communicate through the medium of language and through their readers' interpretation of them. Therefore, these false frames that surround high and popular literature can be dismantled if the approach of the reader is the same for all texts. For instance, there is a necessity to see literature without 'limit, in any case without present or perceptible limit, without any limit that *is*' (Royle, 2003: 65). This breaks down the dominant notion that popular literature is 'easier to follow, can be read more rapidly' (Brushwood, 1992: 23). If the reader approaches what is considered popular literature with the same attention to language that society believes high literature is deserving of, then Howard's, Ross O'Carroll-Kelly is 'rich and living' and it is possible for a writer who is considered lower literature to be 'rich and copious in his words' (Levin, 1960: 11). Howard's books are far more than the formation of a set of Dublin 4 characters; they both embody and critique a cosmopolitan city in the twenty first century, and more importantly they describe the Lacanian real of that city. The fact that Ross asked for 'four

packets of Meanies and a can of Coke', and then tried to pay by cheque, says not only a lot about Ross's character but also the culture at that time – Celtic Tiger Ireland (Howard, 2007: 195).

I would suggest, then that there is increasing relevance in the statement that 'there is nothing outside the text' or the alternative formulation that 'there is nothing outside context' and context can be interpreted as 'speech, life, the world, the real, history' (Royle, 2003: 65). Everything is contained within the text, and each text needs to be interpreted with respect to its context. It was the reader's engagement with the greats like Joyce and O'Casey which brought to light the mastery of their language. Thus Irish art has progressed from the 'old milk-woman representing Ireland' who 'mistakes Gaelic for French' (Levin, 1960: 14) to 'matters of the universe' (Chace, 1974: 3), where Joyce, O'Casey, and later Howard, had a 'way of ringing an opening sentence like a coin on a counter; we responded to the ring; our sensors lock in' (Kenner, 1978: 14). Consequently, approaching Howard's books with the same intensity as one would approach high literary works entails a change in the 'relations between reader and text, a change which has profound revolutionary implications' (MacCabe, 1978: 1). Howard is an expert with contemporary linguistic codes of Dublin, for example, the rhyming slang that substitutes 'Tony Blair' for 'hair', 'Tony Smeeth' for 'teeth', or a 'Skobie tunic' for a 'Celtic shirt' (Howard, 2008). The text reveals that there is 'an active metamorphosis, a constant displacement in language' (MacCabe, 1978: 2) at work, and it defamiliarises the reading processes at work. This type of writing forces the reader to concentrate more fully on the text and on the meaning of the text. In the case of Howard's rhyming slang, the signified is hidden behind a double-layer of signification and, as such, is less clear than would be the norm for a novel. Thus, like the stream of consciousness in Molly's monologue in *Ulysses*, our normal

reading practices are rendered useless and we need to approach the text with a more concentrated attention.

The text holds the answer to whether it is of good literary value or not. Royle suggests that Derrida's work is driven by the desire 'for momentous revolutionary change, even for unimaginable revolution' (Royle, 2003: 32), and when applied to acts of literature, new and innovative interpretations of the text can emerge. The thinking behind the terms *pharmakon* and *khōra* demonstrates the 'sense of authority being defined' (Derrida, 1976: lxxii), as both illustrate linguistic free play. Howard's linguistic abilities should not be undermined because societies have constructed a division within literature. By foregrounding the sound of the words on the page, he is ultimately deconstructing the grammatological agreement between the letters that make up the signifier, and as such, is an agent of linguistic and literary defamiliarisation. His work foregrounds the phonetic qualities of language to an extent that is not normal for the genre of the novel, and it is to precisely the binary opposition of speech and writing in language that our discussion now turns.

## Chapter Three: Speech and Writing

### ***3.1 Phonocentrism: a privileging of speech***

The debate about speech versus writing is one that has marked Western philosophy since the writings of Plato (ca. 427– ca. 347 B.C.E). There has been much written about the ‘role of the element of sound in the production of meaning, language speech’ (Derrida, 1976: lxviii). Barthes considers the significance of the spoken word with regard to the meaning and interpretation of the text. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes insists that ‘the author cannot choose to write what will be read’, as it is the ‘very rhythm of what is read and what is not read that creates the pleasure of the great narrative’ (Barthes, 1975: 11). This ‘violent hierarchy’ (Derrida, 1976: 28), of speech over writing – what has been termed phonocentrism – has initiated an extensive debate, as philosophers grapple to decipher if speech or writing is closer to an originating thought. There is a sense of immediacy attached to the spoken word which is believed to be lost when writing. Western culture, for generations, believed that with the spoken word ‘we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said’, thus there is a ‘self-present meaning’ attached to speech (Johnson, 1981: viii). Therefore, historically there is a privileging of phonological foundations; the science of speech is superior to that of the written word. Theorists of writing ‘from Aristotle and Plato through Rousseau to Saussure and Jakobson always give priority to the spoken word, not simply in the temporal sense but also by viewing writing as a mere transcription of speech’ (Howells, 1999: 45).

Consequently the Western philosophical tradition holds speech (logocentrism), ‘from the Greek word *Logos* (meaning speech, logic reason, the Word of God),’ as supreme, it is given a

higher value because there is 'no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech and listener, since the speaker hears himself speak at the same moment the listener does' (Johnson, 1981: viii). Speech, therefore, is a system that is comprehended instantly by its speaker and listener. Writing is believed to demonstrate a distance from immediate thought, for instance 'the writer puts his thoughts on paper, distancing it from himself, transforming it into something that can be read in numerous different ways' (Johnson, 1981: ix). It is this possibility of dilution of meaning that was seen as the danger of writing for these philosophical thinkers, as the written word opened up meaning and interpretation, as writing was thought to 'circulate endlessly from reader to reader, the best of whom can never be sure that they have understood the author's original intention' (Norris, 1989: 110). Western logocentric thinking suggested that the written word seemed to 'disseminate meaning to a point where the authority of origin is pushed out of sight by the play' of a somewhat endless interpretative freedom (Norris, 1989: 110), and that speech seemed to prevent this. Writing could be seen as a deconstruction of the authority and singularity of the author as sole controller of his or her text.

Rousseau felt that writing intruded upon the 'idyllic communal peace and grace of the one-to one intimacy of natural speaking societies' (Powell, 1997: 50). However, I would argue that Rousseau's dream of an idyllic, primitive, speaking community is the politics of logocentrism, and that his tendency to privilege the spoken word is merely a yearning for the 'full presence of speech' and a concomitant 'distrusting of writing' (Powell, 1997: 50), which reinforcing the binarism of speech/writing. Speech, for these early metaphysical thinkers, holds supremacy as it represents 'immediacy, unity, identity, truth and presence', whereas writing depicts 'difference, dissimulation and deferment' (Johnston, 1988: 18). As Norris says: 'spoken language is thought to possess a unique, authenticity, a truthfulness deriving from the intimate

relation between word and idea', and it is the ambiguity of the French word '*s'entendre-parler*' which means 'both to hear and to understand oneself speak' that best 'conveys the logic of this potent belief' (Norris, 1989: 110). These early philosophical thinkers insisted that spoken words are symbols of mental experiences, while written words are the symbols of the already existing spoken words. Subsequently putting one's thoughts onto paper risked 'having one's ideas perverted, wrenched out of context and exposed to all manner of mischievous reinterpretation' (Norris, 1992: 110) and it is this belief that has governed Western philosophical thinking.

In this chapter, I aim to rehearse Derrida's thinking that the relationship 'between "living" speech and inscription', the written word (Derrida, 1976: 24), is clouded and fluid. He calls this dichotomy of speech and writing a 'metaphysics of presence' (Derrida, 1976: 22), as it is born out of the need to have a centralised universe. He questions the supremacy given to speech, and illustrates how this onto-theological assumption can be undone to the point of undecidability. Achieving this demands that we rethink, reverse and displace the values of this opposition, to the extent where one-half of the binary partakes of the other: 'we must let ourselves refer to an order that resists the opposition' (Derrida, 1982: 5). Therefore, it is through *différance* that Derrida breaks down the hierarchical opposition of speech over writing. What he does is to put both terms under erasure, or in French '*sous rature*' (Derrida, 1976: 60). This means placing a line through each term so that the word is still visible but it is also cancelled, demonstrating that the terms speech and writing are unsatisfactory to portray a more general play of difference: ~~speech/writing~~. Putting something under erasure allowed Derrida to use these terms and simultaneously reveal their inadequate nature. He also coins the term '*archi-écriture*' (Derrida, 1976: lxix), to show that speaking and writing are merely the spoken and written forms of the play of difference. Indeed arche-writing must not be mistaken for writing in the traditional



sense, a mark on a page. What he means is that both speech and writing are inadequate to describe the 'more general play of difference common to both' (Powell, 1997: 46). Thus, the privileging of speech over writing is merely phonocentrism/logocentrism's desire for the concept of centrism, and it is this 'longing for a center, an authorizing pressure that spawns hierarchized oppositions' (Derrida, 1976: lxix). Furthermore, *différance* 'invites us to undo the need for a balanced equation to see if each term in an opposition is not after all an accomplice of the other' (Derrida, 1976: lix). Derrida, then, not alone dismantles this opposition but also reinscribes it by showing that 'writing not only supplements but also takes the place of speech, because speech is already written' (Widdowson, 1993: 146). Therefore this chapter aims to explore the doubling relation between speech and writing, and I will offer a brief rehearsal of some of the thinkers used by Derrida as points of reference for his own work on this binary opposition.

I would argue that the terms have more in common than what divides them. Subsequently the last half of this chapter applies the theory of Derrida's critique of speech and writing to the writings of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard, as all three authors captured a distinct dialect of the Dublin people. Joyce mirrored the middle classes language of the early 1900s; O'Casey exposed the ordinary speech of the 1920s; and Howard's contemporary ear captured the upper middle class language of present day Ireland and all displayed these spoken idioms in the written word, therefore deconstructing the perceived binarism of speech versus writing.

### ***3.2 Readings of Philosophical Works***

As previously stated, the history of the metaphysical opposition of speech verse writing leads back to Socrates who thought writing was a 'parasite, a debased, fallen mode of utterance' (Norris, 2002: 110), and therefore refused to write anything down but 'entrusted his wisdom to a circle of initiates willing to listen and inwardly commemorate his wisdom' (Norris, 2002: 110).

However our knowledge of his writing comes from the texts of his student, Plato. His *Phaedrus* marked ‘a notorious attack on writing’ (Leitch, 2001: 35). Plato chose to write in a dialogue form so in *Phaedrus*, Socrates is the ‘vocal character and Plato’s mouthpiece’ (Leitch, 2001: 34). Plato expresses a dislike of writing and a fear that it will destroy the authority of philosophic Truth. This Truth depends upon ‘pure thought which risks contamination when writing’ (Selden, 1985: 86). Throughout this piece, Plato stresses that writing is ‘dangerous seductive and ambivalent’ (Silverman, 1989: 19). This can be described as the place where the oppositional logic of speech over writing inaugurated as a transcendental signified within Western metaphysical thinking.

Derrida identifies a paradox at the core of Plato’s thinking when he expresses mock surprise that Plato, ‘while subordinating or condemning writing and play should, have written so much’, and makes the point that by so doing, Plato is ‘indicting writing in writing, lodging against it that complaint (*graphê*) whose reverberations even today have not ceased to resound’ (Derrida, 1981b: 158). This exhibits a contradiction within the history of *philosophia* or the *epistēmē*: in order to speak about the ‘exclusion and the devaluation of writing’, Western philosophical thinkers had to situate their argument through the mode of writing (Derrida, 1981b: 149). This demonstrates that binary logic does not adhere to the notion of purity; there is a sense of openness attached to the opposition. This dichotomy has ‘no hidden unity’, and as Derrida insists that oppositions possess a sense of fluidity, and are just a ‘phenomenon of the imagination’ (Derrida, 1978: 362).

In ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’ in *Phaedrus*, ‘a Platonic dialogue in which the function and value of writing are explicitly discussed’ (Johnson, 1981: xxiv). As already adumbrated, Plato has Socrates relate a story to Phaedrus of the invention of writing by the Egyptian God Theuth

(Thoth to the Greeks), who offers the benefits of the written word to King Thamus. Theuth believed that the invention of writing would ‘assist the people of Egypt to become wiser and to improve their memory’ (Silverman, 1989: 19). It is recounted that:

Theuth said: ‘O King here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and for wisdom.’ (Plato, 370 B.C.E: 81)

However, King Thamus reject Theuth’s claim, stating that ‘it will introduce forgetfulness into the souls of those who learn it; they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing’ (Plato, 370 B.C.E: 81). Thus ‘writing will not produce wisdom but only its semblance’ and furthermore, Thamus rejected writing because he thought it would ‘teach people to rely on alien, external marks and to forget the true interior knowledge that is written in the soul’, that of the spoken word (Silverman, 1989: 19). This demonstrates that writing was associated with enhancing forgetfulness, while speech was viewed as representing knowledge and truth. As Thamus insists, writing merely enables students ‘to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing’ (Plato, 370 B.C.E: 82). Plato conceals his attack on writing within a myth, which pronounces writing to be lifeless signs, as opposed to the authentic living presence of spoken language.

Writing, then, occupies a deviant position with respect to that of the spoken word which is viewed as representing original thinking. Socrates announces ‘that no discourse worth serious attention has ever been written in verse or prose’ and that speech is what is ‘just, noble and good’ (Plato, 370 B.C.E: 84). This all reinforces the suppression of writing as he views speech as closing the gap between signifier. As Johnson explains:

Socrates' condemnation of writing and his panegyric to direct speech as the proper vehicle for dialectics and Truth have for centuries been taken almost exclusively at face value. (Johnson, 1981: xxiv)

Derrida subverted Plato's privileging of speech over writing in 'Plato's Pharmacy' by showing that 'this reversal is already at play in Plato's text' (Silverman, 1989: 22). Derrida focuses on 'the translation of a single word: the word *pharmakon*', which in Greek means 'poison, medicine, magic potion' (Derrida, 1976: lxxi), and it is 'a word used to describe writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*' (Derrida, 197: lxxi). The working of the *pharmakon* can be seen when Thamus states to Theuth's that he has not 'discovered a potion for remembering' (Plato, 370 B.C.E: 82), and it is this word 'potion' which dismantles Plato's thinking on speech and writing. A 'potion' can be defined as a beneficial or harmful drug; it acts both as a remedy and as a poison, thus introducing the concept of ambivalence.

The binary oppositions that structure meaning in Plato's *Phaedrus* always necessarily privilege one term over another, and Derrida sets out to subvert this bias in Plato's text through a detailed investigation of its problematic aspects. This is achieved through an analysis of Thoth's notion of the 'pharmakon'. Thoth claims that his invention is a *pharmakon* for memory and wisdom and offers his gift as a cure, but King Thamus returns it as a poison. Derrida observes the problematic aspect of the translation of *pharmakon*, as it signifies two opposite meanings – it translates as both cure and poison, and thus has both positive and negative connotations. He takes the translation of this word and uses it to overturn an entire philosophical tradition:

Hence, for example, the word *pharmakon*. In this way we hope to display in the most striking manner the regular, ordered polysemy that has [...] permitted the rendering of the same word by "remedy", "recipe", "poison", "drug", "philter", etc. It will also be seen to what extent the malleable unity of this concept, or rather its rules and the strange logic that links it with its

signifier, has been dispersed, masked, obliterated, and rendered almost unreadable [...] by the redoubtable, irreducible difficulty of translation. With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than the problem of the very passage into philosophy. (Derrida, 1981b: 71-2)

If the paradoxical meaning of the word *pharmakon* is the concept which orders the binary oppositions in the text, then, these binaries can be rendered unstable through their articulation. If the poison inhabits the cure, then each term in each opposition is inhabited by its opposite term, and this results in an undecidability of meaning. The ‘difficulty of translation’ throws Plato’s philosophy into question, and if Plato is arguably one of the chief inaugurators of Western philosophical reasoning then what Derrida is in actuality questioning is ‘the problem of the very passage into philosophy’, as this passage must take place through language, and as Derrida’s readings show, language is far from binary in its logic, unless all ambiguities and play in the linguistic system are severely attenuated.

Similarly, Rousseau ‘condemns writing as a destruction of presence and as disease of speech’, asserting that he ‘must be absent in order to write’ (Royle, 2003: 52). Derrida, when providing a critique of Rousseau’s argument, argues that:

languages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplement to speech. Speech represents thought by conventional signs, and writing represents the same with regard to speech. (Derrida, 1972: 144)

It is in terms of this notion of a supplement that Derrida dismantles Rousseau’s thinking and he demonstrates that speech is also a supplement of the origin, wherein ‘multiplicity and variety is contained within a plane of meaning’ (Barnett, 1999: 287), thus the ‘trace of *différance* is inherent to all self-contained and self-present entities’ (Barnett, 1999: 288). Speech is a representation of ‘the thing in itself’ (Silverman, 1989: 21), and I will refer to this concept of

supplementation later in the chapter. Plato, Rousseau and later Saussure, share the similar view that 'writing is an external contaminant of speech, an artificial clothing, or worse, a *travestissement*, a distortion or travesty, which masks meaning' (Howells, 1999: 47). But even these seemingly clear and precise boundaries are not as differentiated as might at first seem to be the case.

A contradiction lies in the fact that all three philosophers/theorists had to voice their argument through the medium of writing; therefore there is a general failure to enact or perform the supremacy of speech. In this case, the medium deconstructs the message. This dismantles what was initially a Socratic, and more importantly a Platonic, preference for speech, and can be interpreted as challenging the hierarchical system because Plato, Rousseau and Saussure are using the written word to insist upon the domination of speech over writing; therefore it appears that writing has taken over from speech thus subverting this orthodox opposition. For their argument to stand the test of time, Plato, Rousseau and Saussure had to enunciate their thought through the written word. This is the obvious irony which is embedded in their writings, as the only way to 'denounce the wayward, subversive effects of writing', was through writing. As Attridge observes:

the Philosophical tradition's repeated preference for speech over writing as a mode of language's unmediated relation to meaning, truth, and subjectivity is shown in several varied readings to rely upon a submerged acknowledgment that it is the properties of writing which make speech possible. (Attridge, 1992: 9)

Ferdinand de Saussure shares these apprehensions with regard to writing; he privileged spoken language and called writing 'secondary, pathological, even monstrous with respect to the speech it recorded' (Leitch, 2001: 959). Saussure maintains the traditional definition of writing,

which saw ‘spoken words as the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words’ (Derrida, 1976: 30), thus language is primarily phonetic, that is to say, spoken. Derrida describes Saussure’s view that writing represented ‘an imperfect tool and a dangerous, almost maleficent technique’ (Derrida, 1976: 34). Saussure, in *Course in General Linguistics*, states that ‘language is a well-defined object in the heterogeneous mass of speech acts’ (Saussure, 1983: 14). He restricts the science of signs to the phonetic and audible word only, and he maintains that ‘speech is a self-contained system, with no need of writing, which is entirely external to it’ (Howells, 1999: 47). Saussure’s preference for speech discounts writing entirely, claiming that language has an oral tradition that is independent of writing, therefore language and writing are two distinct systems of representation with the second existing only for the purpose of representing the first. For as Saussure states, it is enough to consider the two elements involved in the functioning of language: ‘ideas and sounds’ (Saussure, 1983: 111). He makes the assertion that speech holds a predominant position with respect to writing, through the claim that ‘speech directly expresses a meaning or intention that its speaker had in mind’ (Jefferson and Robey, 1987: 113), as speech consists of sounds made by a speaker and these sounds tend to leave no trace (unless recorded), and therefore do not appear to contaminate the originating thought as does writing. Therefore, when one hears speech, one attributes to it the idea of representing a truth, a presence, and Saussure notes that ‘it is no absurdity to say that it is linguistic structure which gives language what unity it has’ (Saussure, 1983: 11). This is what is imagined to be lacking in writing, as the written word ‘tends to become a substitute in our mind for the spoken word’ (Saussure, 1983: 48). Writing, then, is ‘nothing but the “figuration” of the language’, and so, according to Saussure, one has the ‘right to exclude it from the interiority of the system’ (Derrida, 1976: 33) which through the lens of a phonocentric model privileges the

voice. The concept of writing, for Saussure, delineates an ‘external evidence of once-live speech’ (Wolfreys, 2009: 58). Speech ‘always implies a form of self-presence’:

The logos can be infinite and self-present, it can be produced as auto-affection, only through the voice: an order of the signifier by which the subject takes from itself into itself, does not borrow outside of itself the signifier that it emits and that affects it at the same time. Such is at least the experience—or consciousness—of the voice: of hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak [*s’entendre-parler*]. (Derrida: 1976, 98)

Given that it lacks this terms of this interiority and self-presence, Saussure goes so far as to ‘treat writing as a second language’ (Saussure, 1983: 27).

In conjunction with this, Saussure’s work was based on the belief that ‘language is a system of signs that express ideas’ (Saussure, 1983: 16), and the key to his theory is the notion that signs are conventional and do not partake a natural resemblance: ‘the bond between the signifier and signified is arbitrary’ (Saussure, 1983: 67), or ‘the link between signal and signification is arbitrary’ (Saussure, 1983: 67). Hence Saussure gives the example that there is ‘no internal connexion’, ‘between the idea “sister” and the French sequence of the sounds – *s-ǒ-r* which acts as its signal’ (Saussure, 1983: 67), therefore ‘the sign is arbitrary’ (Saussure, 1983: 67). Saussure also defines what he means by the word ‘arbitrary’, commenting that ‘it must not be taken to imply that a signal depends on the free choice of the speaker’, as ‘the individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in a linguistic community’ (Saussure, 1983: 68). He further insists that:

the term implies simply that the signal is unmotivated: that is to say arbitrary in relation to its signification, with which it has no natural connexion in reality. (Saussure, 1983: 69)



In Derrida's *khōral* reading of Saussure, it is on this very arbitrariness that Saussure's own argument is deconstructed. If the relationship of signification is arbitrary, then it would seem that a certain type of phonetic sign could not be deemed more natural than another, for instance the written sign. It is on this notion of a natural attachment, a natural bond, between speech and thought, on which Saussure's argument hinges. Derrida's deconstructive reading makes the point that this is contradictory to Saussure's fundamental principle regarding the arbitrariness of the sign. Thus the spoken word which typifies a sign is not free of the arbitrary signifier/signified relationship.

For Derrida, it is the arbitrariness and the plurality of writing that makes language signify, and his notion of arche-writing attempts to enunciate how these principles of difference are core to the working of all language. It is *différance* that is the key to deconstruction; even in these classical philosophical texts, there is a moment that articulates Derrida's 'deconstructive procedure: to spot the point where a text covers up its grammatological structure' (Derrida, 1976: lxxiii), this is the moment when the text portrays itself as fractured, because they 'texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices of whatever size and sort you need – do not have definable meanings' (Caputo, 1997a: 31).

### ***3.3 Applied dismantling of the opposition speech/writing***

The arbitrariness of language is clear in *Juno and the Paycock* when Charles Bentham, who has been studying law and aims to be a qualified 'solicitor in Dublin' (O'Casey, 1988: 90), tells how Jack's relative, Mr Ellison of Santry, has left his property to his 'second cousin Michael Finnegan of Santry, and John Boyle, his cousin of Dublin' (O'Casey, 1988: 90). Boyle exclaims 'me, is it me, me' (O'Casey, 1988: 10). However as revealed by Boyle, Bentham said in the 'th' Will, only first cousin' an' second cousin', instead of mentionin' our names, an' now any one

that thinks he's a first cousin or second cousin t'oul' n Ellison can claim the money' (O'Casey, 1988: 132). Therefore the word 'cousin' (O'Casey, 1988: 132), can be taken as an example of a word that has lost all its dominant meaning, it is an example of how language remains meaningless and refutes Saussure's claim that spoken signs possess a natural attachment with the signified. For 'now any one that thinks he's a first cousin or second cousin' can claim the money, therefore everyone is claiming to be a cousin (O'Casey, 1988: 132).

Ironically, this is a word which signifies a blood-relationship, and so, one would imagine, would embody the connectedness that Saussure posits between the spoken word and thought. Boyle describes, 'the world an' his wife are ather th' property now' (O'Casey, 1988: 132), leaving them with nothing, for as Boyle insists, there is not even money left to 'buy a stockin' for your lovely daughter's baby' (O'Casey, 1988: 132). A sign is defined by Saussure as 'the combination in which a signal is associated with a signification' (Saussure, 1983: 67), so taking the word 'cousin' as a sign whether it is written or spoken, is still subject to an arbitrary signifier/signified relationship. For instance the word cousin (signifier) and the image or concept attached (signified) is not a 'stable order of meaning' (Ryan, 1999: 67), as Mr Ellison needed to adjoin the sign (cousin) within a specific signified, 'second cousin Michael Finnegan of Santry, and John Boyle, his cousin of Dublin' (O'Casey, 1988: 90), in order for the sign to have a specific meaning, thus giving the impression that 'the characteristics of the unit merge with the unit itself' (Saussure, 1983: 119). This demonstrates that the spoken word and its meaning was not already a unit; it demonstrates that sense and sound, concept and voice or, as Saussure would have it, signifier and signified, does not constitute a natural resemblance, as the word 'cousin', when spoken by Mr Ellison, does not automatically signify Michael Finnegan and John Boyle, even though this was the intention.

Hence there is ‘no natural relationship between the voice and sense in general, between the order of phonic signifier and the contents of the signified’ (Derrida, 1976: 44), as the choice of ‘signifier is entirely left to the speaker’ (Derrida, 1976: 46). Boyle realizes this when he exclaims ‘the world an’ his wife are afther th’ property now’ (O’Casey, 1988: 132). No one can direct the word ‘cousin’ to correlate to a specific person or specific singular truth; whether it is written or spoken, it needs to be arbitrarily attached with a specific meaning, thus demonstrating Derrida’s point that signs which are spoken or written ‘have no natural attachment to the signified’ (Derrida, 1976: 46) – all signs are arbitrary. Individuals have impressed a meaning onto the word and they see an opportunity to gain money by claiming to be cousins: ‘language only makes sense if the reader imposes a fixed meaning on to the words’ (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 215).

Speech and writing share ‘many characteristics associated with only writing’, they are both signs which means they are ‘always the supplement of the thing itself’ (Derrida, 1976: 145), and are marked by a ‘trace’ or ‘iterability’, ‘a term which is designed to include the notion of alterity within that of repetition’ (Howells, 1999: 65). Therefore the word ‘cousin’ works by a supplementary logic, as each reader of the Will has supplemented a signified on the sign and the trace is the process by which the meaning of the sign is produced. The supplement works, according to Derrida, by deforming the sign, both distorting and reasserting the ‘unity of the signifier and the signified’ (Derrida, 1976: 245). Thus the ‘supplement supplements ... it fills, it is as if one fills a void’ (Derrida, 1976: 145), subsequently producing a radical transformation to the original intended concept. From an initial signification of Jack Boyle and Mick Finnegan being the rightful heirs, the term ‘cousin’ has now become an all-inclusive vehicle for other people to obtain money. Boyle verifies this by exclaiming how, ‘they’re springin’ up in their

hundreds, an' comin' from America an' Australia' (O'Casey, 1988: 132). The individuals within the play have displayed a supplementary logic by adding to a void, and by providing the word 'cousin' with a given interpretation. This demonstrates that meaning is always deferred to the point of an endless supplementary by the play of *différance*. Therefore both the spoken and written sign is subject to the economy of *différance*, which it 'provokes and resists any binary or dialectical determination' (Derrida, 1998: 239).

Another example of this is the spoken language of Dublin 4, as illustrated by Howard, which demonstrates Derrida's thinking that the spoken sign is no more natural than that of the written word. The South Dublin dialect is marked by convention, because South Dubliners have taken words and rhymed them with other words in order to create a distinct new signifiatory structure, and accordingly reinforce the notion of a Dublin 4 identity. For example, when one says 'brown bread' in a different context from which it is normally used, those from the same geographical area will understand it means 'dead' (Howard, 2008: 326). It is an upper middle-class development of Cockney rhyming slang, which is a circular structure in that it defines a particular social class and residential community, a very specific imagined community, to use Benedict Anderson's term. Not alone do the upper middle classes of South Dublin have a specific geographical area: 'nestled between the grim Bogland of Wicklow and the filthy squalor of North and West Dublin is a land of untold beauty and wealth' (Howard, 2008: 11); they also have a distinct idiolect which has created a dialect-specific relation between signifier and signified. There are numerous examples in the books. The term a 'cream cracker' which normally means a 'dry thick crispy baked bread' (Collins, 2003: 312), assumes a totally different signification in this idiolect: it now refers to 'a person of low social status: knacker. Creamer' (Howard, 2008: 331). Similarly, when referring to 'Tony Blair', Ross is not referring to the

former prime Minister of Great Britain but to his 'hair' (Howard, 2008: 370), while 'Brendan Grace' does not mean the Irish comedian, but 'face' (Howard, 2007: 157).

Those outside this imagined community might have difficulty in understanding these meanings but this is exactly the point: here language is used as an exclusionary structure which reinforces the identity of the Dublin 4 grouping and ensures that all outside of this are other. This demonstrates that 'phoneme signifier-signified' is 'no relation of "natural" representation' (Derrida, 1976: 45) and that the spoken word possesses a 'conventional relationship' similar to that of the written word (Derrida, 1976: 45). Howard in *South Dublin – How to get by on, like €10,000 a day*, had to include a 'ThesauRoss', 'a dictionary of words and terms commonly used in South Dublin', as Howard insists 'it will give you a better understanding of what the fock everyone is banging on about' (Howard, 2008: 9). While there is a sardonic parody of academic and high cultural practices at work here in this neologistic term, nevertheless the 'ThessauRoss' serves a purpose of codifying, or at least beginning to codify, this class and location-specific form of speech, which is expressed in writing.

High and popular literature possess similar characteristics, to those of speech and writing, as writing 'implies inscription, the possibility of repetition, and a range of conventional differentiating features' and 'all these elements run counter to the myth of pure presence, and all are found in speech' (Howell, 1991: 49). Derrida called the features shared by writing and speech as '*archi-écriture*' (Derrida, 1976: lxx). As previously states the term 'arche-writing', is an attempt to go beyond the simple oppositions of speech/writing; it refers to a kind of writing that came before both speech and writing. Thus just as speech and writing share similar distinguishing traits, so too do high and popular literature, as they are both build upon the structure of language, which sets out to capture a moment in history or time. Speech, upholding

the privileged half of the binary, is also known as ‘voice-centredness’, however Derrida dismantles this opposition by providing ‘an attack on the privileging of voice and speech, a privileging that occurs – and has occurred throughout the whole history of metaphysics’ (Royle, 2003: 37).

Joyce, O’Casey and Howard can be interpreted as resisting the ‘logocentric ethos of speech-as-presence’ (Norris, 1992: 113); their writing is the product of a conjoined venture of speech and writing, which challenges and disquiets logocentric authority. They display Derrida’s notion that ‘there is writing in speech’, as they all capture a specific spoken idiom (Derrida, 1976: lxx), through the medium of writing. Joyce depicts the middle classes, the ‘petit bourgeoisie of Dublin’ in the early 1900s. O’Casey captures the working class speech of the 1920s, for as Krause and Lowery (1980) insist: ‘no Irish writer in any literary sphere has created an idiom anything like that of O’Casey’ (Krause and Lowery, 1980: 14); while Howard embodies the dialect of contemporary Dublin 4. I would argue that Indeed Howard, O’Casey and Joyce are united by the idea that they all captured the ‘talk of Dublin’ (Krause and Lowery, 1980: 62).

### **3.4 Joyce speech/writing**

Speaking at a colloquium in Villanova University, Derrida explained his initial encounter with Joyce:

I spent a year at Harvard, and what I did there was to read Joyce in the Widener Library, which provided my encounter with *Ulysses*. Since then, Joyce has represented for me the most gigantic attempt to gather in a single work, that is, in the singularity of a work which is irreplaceable, in a singular event – I am referring here to *Ulysses* and to *Finnegan’s Wake* – the presumed totality, not only of one culture but of a number of cultures, a number of languages, literatures, and religions. This impossible task of precisely gathering in a totality, in a potential totality, the potentially

infinite memory of humanity is, at the same time and in an exemplary way, both new in its modern form and very classical in its philosophical form. (Derrida, 1997: 25)

Derrida has had a long association with the works of Joyce. He explicitly discusses his links with Joyce in his essay 'Two Words for Joyce', in which he claims, 'every time I write, and even in the most academic pieces of work, Joyce's ghost is always coming on board' (Derrida, 1985: 149), while in 'Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce', he refers to 'the book of all books, *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*' (Derrida, 1992: 293).

In this 'book of all books', the city of Dublin is a central character, and in the words of Delaney if that city were to one day disappear from the earth it could be reconstructed out of Joyce's book (Delaney, 1981:1). In addition to this, *Ulysses* can also be seen to depict a collapse of the opposition between speech and writing, as Joyce portrays the spoken language of Dublin, and locates this enunciation within the written word. Derrida's own typical habit of reading is to seize on some apparently peripheral fragment in the work – and work it tenaciously through 'to the point where it threatens to dismantle the opposition' (Eagleton, 1992: 133). The last chapter of *Ulysses*, that of 'Penelope', is one 'little crack' (Caputo, 1997a: 77), which signals that there lies an undecidable at the heart of the binary opposition of speech and writing. Molly Bloom's soliloquy is spread out over forty three pages; the first sentence contains two and a half thousand words and the entire chapter is no more than eight sentences (Delaney, 1981: 176). This demonstrates that traditional sentence structure has been altered in order to mimic the spoken language of Molly, thus establishing that 'such oppositions can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning' (Eagleton, 1983: 132), Joyce disputes this well-drawn border, and places it in flux, as reading

this chapter destabilizes the hierarchy leaving it in a state of undecidability, where one is left questioning whether it is speech or writing which is being presented to the reader.

By providing ‘an image of contemporary life, *Ulysses* is one of the most significant and beautiful of modern works’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 177). As Delaney suggests ‘*Ulysses* is one of the pleasures of life. It is a vast, entertaining funny, absorbing, exciting, complex, immensely enjoyable novel’ (Delaney, 1981: 9); nevertheless it is Joyce’s genius with language that makes the novel, which is over ‘three hundred thousand words’, ‘a literary obstacle’ (Delaney, 1981: 9) and for this reason *Ulysses* has been called ‘a great epic of hell’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 117). Consequently this novel has been lodged ‘outside the reach of the people about whom it was written’ (Delaney, 1981: 9). Hence *Ulysses* ‘has become the most important and the most famous work of James Joyce’ (Jones, 1970: 39) and there has been more ‘written about *Ulysses* than about any other single novel of our century’ (Staley, 1966: viii).

*Ulysses* is regarded as an intricate piece of literature, and the reading of it often requires a ‘moving backward through the pages (to check a detail, note an echo, revise an interpretation) as much as forward’ (Attridge, 1990: 141). Joyce, as we have seen, also had an unfortunate and turbulent relationship with publishers and printers, for his career was marked by a ‘censorship, piracy, and controversy as dramatic as the adventures of the Homeric hero’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 183). *Ulysses* was also banned in some countries throughout the 1900s, which meant that many readers bought copies of *Ulysses* abroad and smuggled them through customs (Levin, 1960: 14). This echoes the argument outlined in the first chapter that what is marginal today might not be tomorrow: ‘the margin of anything being entirely relative to where you stand’ (McQuillan, 2000: 30), thus ‘today it would be hard to find a college where Joyce is not on some



syllabus or other' (Levin, 1960: 15). Levin puts forward the argument that 'by ceasing to be contemporary, Joyce had become a classic' (Levin, 1960),

As Jones insists, *Ulysses* is 'probably more talked about than read because too many barriers of misconception have built up around it' (Jones, 1970: 39), for instance the *allegro* reader 'thinks Ulysses is all dirty' (Jones, 1970: 44). The *Sporting Times* opined that the book appears to have been written by a 'perverted lunatic who had made a speciality of the literature of the latrine... [It's] enough to make Hottentot sick' (Johnson, 1922: xi). Another topic concerns the 'matter of Homeric parallels' (Jones, 1970: 44) as it is generally believed that *Ulysses* is an extravagant contemporary rewriting of Homer (Johnson, 1922: xvi), though mediated through the lens of Latin and Roman translations: 'it is the Roman version of Odysseus' (Attridge, 1990: 132). T. S. Eliot stated that *Ulysses*' 'use of *The Odyssey* as both subtext and pretext made the modern world possible for art' (Attridge, 1990: 131). Joyce gave each 'episode by a Homeric title', but he omitted these and substituted them with numbers for the 1922 published edition of *Ulysses* (Attridge, 1990: 133). It was Attridge who argued that Joyce was toning down his work by deleting chapter-headings with direct references to the *Odyssey*, in order to make it a more accessible work for the common reader. Declan Kiberd's book, *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Living* takes this aspect of the work as its theme, and explains the way in which the book reifies the ordinary stuff of life in everyday Dublin. Both perspectives are correct and clearly the book is both quotidian and mythic, a point recognised by Derrida who notes the 'autobiographic-encyclopedic circumnavigation of *Ulysses*' (Derrida, 1992: 262).

Although Joyce had an 'infinitely adaptable creative mind' which thrived on noticing the ways in which 'one thing (a Dublin conversation say) both was and was not like another a battle

between a Greek warrior trying to get home and the immediate opponent who stood in his way' (Johnson, 1922: xvi). It is these 'not-quite-samenesses' which Joyce develops in his connecting *Ulysses* to *The Odyssey*. As a result, Homeric parallels can be made when reading *Ulysses*, but one does not need the *Odyssey* 'to tell us that Stephen is a young man troubled by the fact that he is a son, and has a father, nor that Bloom is haunted by memories of the son who never really was – his second child, Rudy, having died only days after birth' (Attridge, 1990: 132).

Joyce intended his work to be universal, and to have international appeal, so not alone did he describe the streets and people and spoken language of Dublin, he provided a 'complete gazetteer of the human condition, a map of the body and the mind' (Delaney, 1981: 12), as each chapter has its own particular 'setting, hour, bodily organ, art, colour, symbol technique' (Delaney, 1981: 12). Joyce's intention was 'to allow each adventure, that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelates in the somatic scheme of the whole to condition and even to create its own technique' (Johnson, 1922: xvi). For example, the first episode which was called *Telemachus*, is dominated by not by Stephen, but by 'the wit and physical exuberance of Buck Mulligan' (Maddox, 1978: 21). Whereas Stephen has 'undergone the trauma of rejecting the Church; Mulligan is a carefree blasphemer' (Maddox, 1987: 24). Joyce sets this chapter in 'the tower' at the hour of '8 a.m.', the colour is that of 'white, gold' and lastly the symbol is an 'heir' (Gilbert and Ellmann, 1957: 734). Subsequently the final chapter is set in Bloom's bedroom, the hour is '2 a.m.', the organ is the 'flesh', Joyce chooses no colour for this episode and the symbol is that of the 'earth' (Gilbert and Ellmann, 1957: 735). By adding this additional layer of interpretation, Joyce creates the perception that 'each adventure is so to speak one person' (Johnson, 1922: xxxii), 'whose intricacy matches that of vital organism and whose parts all coexist in a single, ideal, moment of time' (Attridge, 1990: 141).

As a result, Joyce presents a ‘detailed account of ordinary life on an ordinary Dublin day’, the day that Leopold Bloom, Joyce’s main character, leaves ‘his home at eight o’clock on a Thursday morning in June 1904, to buy breakfast and returns finally, and sleeps at approximately two o’clock the following morning’ (Delaney, 1981: 12). Joyce’s appeal lay in the fact that he did not present ‘remarkable people’; his characters would never ‘make the newspaper columns except by announcement of a birth, marriage or death. But they are credible in their ordinariness, comic and tragic in their predicament and monumentally luminous, illuminating in their humanity’ (Delaney, 1981: 10). *Ulysses* has been marked by the fact that nothing much happens; it articulates the mundane ordinary events which make up every day urban living. For Stephen Dedalus and Bloom, walk across the Dublin bridge ‘through actual Dublin streets with actual Dublin shops, museums, libraries, pubs, cemeteries, schools, churches, breweries, tearooms, Turkish baths, bookshops, all accurately and precisely placed by Joyce’ (Johnson, 1922: xxv). An example of the trivial events which Joyce describes is in the fourth episode – *Calypso* – where Bloom goes to the butcher shop for a kidney returns and cooks breakfast, talks with his wife, eats and then reads the newspaper. Joyce writes, ‘kidneys were in his mind as he moved about the kitchen softly, righting her breakfast things’, ‘another slice of bread and butter: three, four: right. She didn’t like her plate full. Right. He turned from the tray, lifted the kettle off the hob and set it sideways on the fire’ (Joyce, 2000: 53).

This not alone expresses the inconsequential and seemingly insignificant events which Joyce amalgamates into the plot of *Ulysses*, but it also shows how the speech and writing opposition is broken down. The random insertions of the word ‘right’ illustrate how Joyce copied the spoken language and phatic speech rhythms of Dublin people, thus crossing the border of speech and writing. Indeed *Ulysses* describes a ‘quintessentially urban world’, where

most of the 'action takes place in a public space, and most of the action is talk –the kind of talk that happens when men hang out together at street corners or in public bars' (Attridge, 1990: 137). For instance, it is described how Bloom 'walked soberly, past Windmill lane, Leask's the linseed crusher's, the postal telegraph office', upon which he meets M'Coy, and they discuss the death of Paddy Dignam and other small matters, for as M'Coy insists 'well, glad to see you looking fit, he said. Meet you knocking around. Yes, Mr Bloom said' (Joyce, 2000: 73). Not alone does Joyce provide his readers with a Dublin map, but also with a map of the Dublin voice, 'whose cadences are threaded into *Ulysses*' elastic English' (Attridge, 1990: 137). Joyce captures the words spoken by Dublin people, for instance taking an extract from the first episode – *Telemachus*:

Buck Mulligan's voice sang from within the tower. It came nearer up the staircase, calling again. Stephen, still trembling at his soul's cry, heard warm running sunlight and in the air behind him friendly words. Dedalus, come down, like a good mosey. Breakfast is ready .... I'm coming, Stephen said, turning. Do for Jesus' sake, Buck Mulligan said'. (Joyce, 2000: 10)

Thus one can see the stylistic technique used is one of internal monologue, Joyce is recording the speech patterns in a stream-of-consciousness style. The insertion of the word 'Jesus' depicts that Joyce is portraying speech patterns as this would not be typical of conventional writing. What he is doing is recording the speech conventions of Dublin in a writing which is phonetically and grammatically deviant from the norms of writing. The one-word sentence 'Right' is grammatically incorrect, but is mimetic of that phatic tendency in spoken discourse to insert anchoring words such as 'right' or 'like'. Interestingly, a further phonetic deviation of this word is found throughout Howard's work as Ross relies on the semi-interrogative and semi-declarative term 'roysh' in his own monologues and conversations.

Joyce provided a record of speech with all its 'inconsequence and confusion, its mixture of memory of the past and attention to the present, of things thought, things imagined, things felt and things experienced' (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 179). As Bloom and Mr Hornblower share a simple conversation about the weather, Bloom says, 'How do you do, Mr Hornblower? How do you do, sir? Heavenly weather really. If life was always like that. Cricket weather' (Joyce, 2000: 83). It is the ordinariness of everyday living which Joyce describes, in sentences which are not strictly sentences, but which mirror the pauses and rhythm of spoken language. He presents an intricate network of correspondences which depicts spoken conversation that is embedded within that of writing – thus demonstrating a combined discourse of speech and writing.

Of course speech and writing both strive to assert control over language, but whereas writing can attenuate the emotions and the unconscious aspects of language in order to carve out the seemingly rational, speech will always deconstruct that tendency. Derrida's reading of *Ulysses* stresses the moments of chance that have shaped his own encounter with the book as well as events in the book. Also for him, language is always shaped by the other, the interlocutor, the reader and this is expressed in the 'yes' that concludes *Ulysses*. In Derrida's view, 'this odd word, yes, which names nothing, describes nothing, whose grammatical and semantic status is most enigmatic [...] must be taken for an answer' (Derrida, 1992: 265). 'Yes' is always a response to the other in language, it is normally in the form of an answer to a question or to a demand from the other, and 'it occurs after the other, to answer a request or a question, at least implicit, of the other, even if this is the other in me, the representation in me of another speech' (Derrida, 1992: 265). Its importance for Derrida is signified by the fact that the title and first sentence of this essay stress the undecidability that he sees at the core of this book

of books. The French word for ‘hearsay’ is ‘*l’ouï-dire*’, while ‘hear say yes’ translates as ‘*l’oui-dire*’. Derrida goes on to explain:

The play on ‘hearsay yes’, *l’oui-dire* and *l’ouï-dire*, can be fully effective only in French, which exploits the obscure, babelian homonymy of *oui* with just a dotted ‘i’, and *ouï* with a diaeresis. The untranslatable homonymy can be heard (be hearsay, that is) rather than read *with the eyes* – the last word, *eyes*, let us note in passing, giving itself to a reading of the grapheme *yes* rather than as hearing of it. *Yes* in *Ulysses* can only be a mark at once written and spoken, vocalized as a grapheme and written as a phoneme, *yes*, *in a word, gramophonized*. (Derrida, 1992: 267)

The difference between the two forms of *oui* can only be read, not heard, as Derrida points out, in the ‘yes’ contained in the word ‘eyes’. This suggests that the spoken word must carry the trace of the written word, in order that meaning may be fully detected. ‘*Yes* in *Ulysses*’ is both a grapheme and a phoneme and this combination allows Derrida to use the example of the gramophone as a means for analysing the communication of meaning in *Ulysses*.

Molly Bloom’s soliloquy which is not alone one of the most ‘movingly beautiful things in modern fiction’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 179); it also demonstrates this dismantling of the opposition between speech and writing. To repeat an earlier point, the first sentence of *Penelope* contains ‘two and a half thousand words’, and the entire chapter is ‘no more than eight sentences’ which is spread out over forty three pages (Delaney, 1981: 176). This removal of punctuation and the lack of sentence structure demonstrate Joyce’s attempt at replicating the speech patterns of Molly Bloom. Set in Bloom’s bedroom at 2.45 a.m., the reader is given access to Molly’s seemingly formless thoughts, she is ‘earthly fertility’ and has the last say in ‘unpunctuated reverie that easily merges into dreams or dreamless sleep’ (Jones, 1970: 93). The only voice that remains is that of Molly, and Joyce mirrors the characteristics of speech patterns through the lack of punctuation. There is a sense of flowing without pause, as one line drifts into

the next and there is no formal insertion of breaks which is typical of the way in which individuals both speak and think. In a way, it is an attempt to grasp in writing the Derridean notion of 'hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak [*s'entendre-parler*]' (Derrida: 1976, 98).

The limited use of standardized punctuation like dashes, commas or even punctuation marks, means that Molly's soliloquy resembles the way in which thought is communicated to the self. Molly voices how she wants 'Bloom back, she wants him to stay in his place so she can continue her affair with Boylan; she dislikes Boylan for his crudeness' (Maddax, 1978: 208). Lying in the dark, 'she ranges over the full scope of her sexual imagination, recalling her lurid afternoon activities with Boylan; every man she has known is mentioned either directly or obliquely' (Delaney, 1981: 178). She 'rambles across her life, her world in Number Seven, Eccles Street, her husband, her lovers, her prospects' (Delaney, 1981: 176). Joyce communicates this with a sense of formlessness, each line seeps into the next in the course of the 'eight unpunctuated sentences'. This attribute is typical to that of spoken language, for as Molly speaks about the 'day spent out in Howth gazing down on the island of Ireland's Eye' (Delaney, 1981: 179) or the time Poldy called her a 'flower of the mountain', and how 'I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall' (Joyce, 2000: 732), her words weave from one line to the next and trail from page to page. In addition to this, Joyce also eliminates apostrophes within words like 'I'll' which is printed as 'Ill', 'I'd' which becomes 'Id', 'I'm' is rendered as 'Im' and lastly, 'they're' is written as 'theyre' (Joyce, 2000: 690). This is an attempt to write down speech as speech occurs; there is no way of signalling apostrophes through spoken language so Joyce, because he is replicating the oral communication of Molly, leaves them out in the soliloquy. It is precisely the same structural

point as is being made by Derrida in the way that ‘*différence*’ and ‘*différance*’ are not differentiated orally, but only in writing.

Of course, just as Plato had to render his fear of writing through the written word, so Joyce is also expressing his notion of speech in the written text that is *Ulysses*. However, he refuses to be bound by the structural conventions of writing; instead, he forces writing to defamiliarise its own conventions and rules through his omission of punctuation marks and the other norms of grammar and syntax. Indeed, if one is to try to maintain some kind of hermeneutic reading of the soliloquy, it is really necessary to read it aloud, in other words, to speak it. So Joyce is creating an undecidable here, in that the soliloquy is writing but a writing that has to be spoken in order to be fully part of a system of signification. It is writing, but a writing that is shot through with the marks of speech. Therefore what the reader is presented with is an amalgamation of both speech and writing a sort of ‘labyrinthine movement’, a ‘performative and at time a vertiginous mobility’ most importantly an ‘irreducible element’ (Wolfreys, 2009: 12), for it is not writing in the traditional sense, due to the lack of punctuation, nor is it pure speech. Consequently an analogy can be made between Joyce’s writing and that of Derrida’s notion of the undecidability. In *Khôra*, Derrida draws a distinction between the ‘philosophy of Plato and the text, a distinction which parallels the distinction between dominant-reproductive and transgressive-productive readings’ (Caputo, 1997a: 82). This term demonstrated two worlds that of ‘the upper world of the intelligible paradigms’ (Caputo, 1997a: 71), that which is concerned with rationality and intellect and the ‘sensible likeness of the forms in the changing, visible world of becoming’ (Caputo, 1997a: 84), which is associated with feeling and emotion. However Derrida argues the term is ‘neither sensible nor intelligible’ it belongs to a ‘third genus’ (Wolfreys, 2009: 74), this is similar to Joyce’s work which is neither



writing nor is it speech. It could be seen as an expression of Derrida's term arche-writing as it seems to go beyond the logic of speech or writing as distinct entities. Just as *Khōra* belongs 'neither to the intelligible nor to the sensible world' it is a 'little like both' (Caputo, 1997a: 84), similarly Joyce presents a sort of speech/writing, an 'aporetic, enigmatic, tongue-tying third thing' that draws one's attention (Caputo, 1997a: 84). Both *Khōra* and Molly Bloom's soliloquy overturn classical oppositions, they both introduce an irruptive force into the binary of speech and writing, and both create undecidables which allow the seemingly different elements to bleed into each other, and begin to alter the notion of the discursive field in which they are situated.

This demonstrates Derrida's notion that an undecidable lies at the heart of interpretation as 'on the one hand' Molly's soliloquy is written, while 'on the other hand', it is spoken (Wolfreys, 2009: 29); this is what formulates the law of undecidable. Molly's soliloquy is an aporia, a pathless path which is neither speech nor writing, but which is also both speech and writing. It is a type of writing which deconstructs the binary, and as such, it is related to another Dubliner who chooses to foreground the spoken word in writing.

### **3.5 O'Casey speech/writing**

*The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars* are the three 'Dublin' plays which defined O'Casey as 'one of the best dramatists writing in the English language'. Undeniably, 'he mastered his art, polished his techniques, took his chances, and survived his mistakes' (Benstock, 1970: 25). O'Casey's lack of formal education and his 'weak eyesight made his programme of self-education a burden' (Maxwell, 1984: 96), however this did not take from O'Casey's literary ability to denote a 'dizzying blend' of 'fanciful language, puns and word play, malapropisms and neologisms', all of which were captured from the everyday life of the Dublin working classes. O'Casey encapsulated a 'realistic slum idiom' (Ayling, 1970: 9),

he put on the stage of the Abbey theatre a life modulated by the ‘inner-city poor caught up in celebrated historical conflicts and from his plays emerge heroes other than those remembered in ballad and official history: the stout-hearted defenders of domestic virtue’ (Owens and Radner, 1990: 229). An example of one such hero who, as O’Casey notes, ‘will never have her name in the papers’ (Owens and Radner, 1990: 229), is Minnie Powell. One cannot forget her heroic actions, in *The Shadow of a Gunman*, when a raid on the tenement house leads to panic by IRA men Donal Davoren and Seamus Shields, as they had in their possession a bag of bombs, ‘bombs, bombs, bombs; my God! In the bag on the table there we’re done, we’re done!’ (O’Casey, 1923: 53). It is Minnie who takes possession of these, ‘I’ll take them to my room; maybe they won’t search it; if they do aself, they won’t harm a girl’ (O’Casey, 1923: 53), and this action leads to her subsequent arrest and death, ‘they say she’s dead – shot through the buzzom!’ (O’Casey, 1923: 61). The death of Minnie ‘is the most moving event of the play, yet such emotion are not so much caused by her death as by the fact that she dies in a tragic error’ (Kosok, 1985: 18). It was an actual raid on a tenement dwelling, which O’Casey experienced in 1920, that formed the raw material of this scene. Therefore O’Casey found ‘links not in literature but in life itself and in folk tradition from which he himself had emerged’ (Owens and Radner, 1990: 229). O’Casey was the youngest of thirteen children, eight died in childhood, and he was of a respectable, lower-middle-class Dublin Protestant family. However his father, Michael Casey died in 1883 and this meant that the family fortunes declined, allowing O’Casey to experience first-hand what tenement life was like. The parallel with the social decline of the Joyce family is clear. O’Casey ‘was himself part of the world he created’ (Krause, 1967: 36). He identified with the urban poor by representing ‘the shabby but genteel buildings in which he lived’ (Benstock, 1985: 53).

However O'Casey emerged from these humble origins and his name has become synonymous with that of Irish drama; his plays possess an 'original vitality and invention', thus making them distinctly his own (Benstock, 1970: 24). As Krause and Lowery point out 'none of the Abbey directors, writers, or players of that time or since have shown any comparable ability in the creation of the characters and environment of the Dublin slums' (Krause and Lowery (1980). O'Casey illustrated, for the most part, ebullient working class individuals who managed the harshness of everyday living with an optimistic fatalism. For example Juno, in *Juno and the Paycock*, describes her anguish in trying to get her husband Boyle to find a job, when as she states, 'your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin' about all the day like a paycock' (O'Casey, 1988: 59). Boyle is an 'arrogant blatherer who is allergic to work, boasts of imagined heroic deeds and acts purposefully only when his way leads to the pub' (Kosok, 1985: 48). Juno proclaims:

Ah, then, me boyo, you'd do far more work with a knife an' fork than ever you'll do with a shovel! If there was e'er a genuine job goin' you'd be dh' other way about – not able to lift your arms with the pains in your legs! Your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin' about all the day like a paycock! (O'Casey, 1956: 59)

This shows that O'Casey wrote of the 'lives and struggles of ordinary men and women at a particular time of social upheaval' (Ayling, 1970: 20). In addition to this Nora, in *The Plough and the Stars*, expresses her suffering over losing her baby, but also her fear of losing her husband to the Irish Citizen Army, when she says, 'I feel as if my life was thryin' to force its way out of my body .... I can hardly breathe .... I'm frightened, I'm frightened, I'm frightened! For God's sake, don't leave me, Bessie. Hold my hand, put your arm around me! (O'Casey, 1926: 232). This illustrates O'Casey's gift for 'discerning archetypal characters and situations, of

distilling from everyday elements a quintessence of life far superior to the products of any documentary form of realism' (Kosok, 1985: 25). O'Casey's brilliance captured the language and outlook of the Dublin working classes, and demonstrated a 'compassionate concern for the resultant human suffering' his writings are immersed within that of everyday life (Ayling, 1970: 21).

This is O'Casey's Dublin and one which he presented to the world through the power of his pen. 'O'Casey's works are recognised as material for stage production' (Kosok, 1985: xi), and generically the text is written in order to be spoken and acted. As such, the texts of the plays are primarily dialogue, and there is a desire to provide a speech that is mimetic of everyday language in order to captivate the audience and hold their attention. In essence the starting point in the production of any play lies with the author's written material, which is then learned by the actors and spoken in performance. There is no doubt that a play's existence is primarily performative on the stage, and yet in academic discourse, it is normally the written text (as in this study) that is the focus of attention. For it is through the written script that one can derive the 'play's structure, its plot, its setting'; it is only through the words on the page that one can decipher a 'recognisable theme' or that one can come to an understanding of the work as a whole, of 'relevant historical, political or topographical details' are conveyed through writing (Kosok, 1985: xi). This exemplifies Derrida's point that the "script" is subject 'to the spoken word' (Derrida, 1976: xxxix), in essence it is a writing that is meant to be spoken. Subsequently as Derrida suggests, 'writing is a mark that remains' (Howells, 1990: 65), therefore the only way that O'Casey could articulate how he wanted his play to be produced was to place his directions in writing. For as Ayling insists there was 'no playing about with' O'Casey's plays 'it is all there and it is as clear as daylight what he wanted done with it' (Ayling, 1970: 91). The stage-

directions and the text of the play are considered vital elements in the theatrical production, for it is as if the speech of the actor takes its cue from the written word of O'Casey. This displays a 'strain of the boundaries' between speech and writing (Derrida, 1976: 135) as both are required in the construction of the play.

A further dismantling of the opposition between speech and writing can be demonstrated through an examination of the text within *Juno and the Paycock*, which illustrates a blurring of boundaries between speech and writing. As a way of locating the spoken language of the ordinary working classes during the 1920s within that of the written word, he presents within his dramas a massive store of 'ballads, speeches and fables' (Ayling, 1970: 21), which were traditionally meant to be spoken or sung, but are described here through the medium of writing. This allows O'Casey to represent working class speech patterns with all its 'allusive richness, its brilliant blend of tragedy and comedy and its social conscience' (Owens and Radner, 1990: 227). This use of heterotopic material earned O'Casey the name of a 'slum realist', and a he has been seen as a writer who has 'a brilliant talent for realising topical Dublin events and memorable tenement characters and with a remarkable ear for working class speech and mannerisms' (Krause and Lowery, 1980: 21). For instance, it is Mary and Mrs Boyle (Juno) who open the play *Juno and the Paycock*, as they discuss the news of Mrs Tancred's son who was shot dead by the 'Die-hards' – an extreme Republican group who were opposed to the 1921 Free State Treaty (O'Casey, 1988: 49). Mary says:

The full details are in it this mornin'; seven wounds he had – one enterin' the neck, with an exit wound beneath the beneath the left shoulder-blade; another in the left breast penetratin' the heart, an'... (O'Casey, 1988: 49)

Here we see a similar distortion of the syntax and grammar of normative writing through the attempt to represent the real speech of the Dublin working class, with spelling now focused on a mimesis of the accent and pronunciation-norms of working class people. The examples in this quotation, the truncating of the verb through the elision of the final 'g' in 'mornin' and in 'penethratin', need to be spoken aloud if the full effect of the accent is to be caught. A lot of O'Casey's dialogue defamiliarises normative orthography in this way, as O'Casey depicts a blend of both speech and writing where the traditional spelling of words has been altered in order to copy the spoken idiom of the ordinary classes. As Benstock observes: 'it is the spit and spice of Dublin gab that reverberates through the dramatic language of Sean O'Casey' (Benstock, 1980: 63), and this is true especially in the case of Boyle, one of O'Casey's finest characters, who represents 'a lumpen proletariat with no vestige of the work ethic to compel him to take a job, even when one is miraculously available' (Benstock, 1985: 53). When Boyle comments on the church, he insists that, 'the clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country' and that people had to:

work work work ... from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues! Job! Well, let him give his job to wan of his hymn-singin', prayer – spoutin', craw-thumpin' Confraternity men! (O'Casey, 1988: 73)

This demonstrates how the letter 'g' has been eliminated from the end of words, as 'morning' becomes 'mornin'; 'hopping' is 'hoppin' and 'spouting' is transformed into 'spoutin', as a way of authentically rendering working class dialect in a writing that is aimed to be spoken. Subsequently there is an addition of the letter 'h' onto words like 'better' in order to imitate Dublin speech. As Mrs Boyle insists, 'you'd betther be goin, now Joxer' (O'Casey, 1988: 33). O'Casey recaptured the real speech that he overheard in the Dublin tenements. The text of his

plays is not writing in the formal and syntagmatically-accepted sense of the term, as conventional normative orthography has been transformed to replicate the spoken language of working class Dublin. For example, Boyle insists ‘I ofen looked up at the sky an’ assed myself the question – what is the stars, what is the stars?’ (O’Casey, 1988: 74). Grammatically, of course, it should read ‘what are the stars’, but the use of the singular brings a connotation of ontological questioning to Boyle’s question as he is concerned about the nature of being, which for all of us, is a singular experience a concern. I will also argue that it gestures towards a *lento* reading of Boyle as something of a philosopher in the play.

O’Casey’s plays, like the texts of Howard’s fiction, demonstrate a blurring of oppositions as the three plays are a ‘gramophone record of the Dublin accent and the Dublin tenement and the Dublin poor’ (Ayling, 1970: 53). For example, when Boyle exclaims his disgust upon finding out about Mary’s pregnancy, he states, ‘an’ when I’m seen they’ll whisper, “that’s th’ father of Mary Boyle that had th’ kid be th’ swank she used to go with; d’ye know, d’ye know?” To be sure they’ll know – more about it than I will meself! (O’Casey, 1988: 131). This illustrates a conjoined structure of both speech and writing as the long-established way of spelling words (the word ‘myself’ for example), has been altered by O’Casey’s pen, in order to reproduce the spoken language of the Dublin. However, the sentence uttered by Boyle is still located within the broad syntagmatic norms of writing and is dominated by writerly features like punctuation – apostrophes, commas and dashes. It is Joxer who describes the funeral of Mrs Tancred’s son as a ‘darlin’ funeral, a daarin’ funeral’ (O’Casey, 1988: 112), thus the word ‘darling’ has been transformed into ‘darlin’ and then to ‘daarin’ to represent the tenement dialect. Similarly, when Jack Clitheroe in *The Plough and the Stars* discovers that ‘th’ Staff appointed you Commandant, and th’ General agreed with their selection’ (O’Casey, 1988: 157), as Nora has burned the letter

and not informed Jack of the news that he has been appointed Commandant, the richness of the Dublin speech is highlighted when Nora cries, ‘your vanity’ll be th’ ruin of you an’ me yet ... ’ (O’Casey, 1988: 158), and Jack says ‘fiercely’, ‘any letter that comes to me for th’ future, take care that I get it....D’ye hear – take care that I get it’ (O’Casey, 1988: 158). Speech patterns have been inscribed into the provision of thematic information here, as the plays attempt to show how a class of people, not normally represented in high literature, express themselves and their lives. O’Casey’s plays portray that ‘writing and speech can therefore no longer be simply opposites’ (Derrida, 1972: xiii). The texts of the plays is a writing that is not analogous to either speech or writing *per se*; it is not totally governed by one mode of communication or the other, it is an ‘enigmatic structure, which fits into neither’, speech or writing (Caputo, 1997a: 85). Indeed, the unusual defamiliarisation of the normal spelling elicits an almost unconscious ‘saying’ of the words as we read them, in order to try to see exactly what the author is trying to achieve with this deconstructive spelling.

To return to the notion of the ‘supplement’ in ‘French, the word *supplément* has two meanings: it means both “an addition” and “a substitute” (Derrida, 1972: xiii). Derrida’s starting point with regard to the ‘supplement’ was ‘Rousseau’s discussion of writing’, where he insisted that writing may be thought to ‘add to something that is already present’ and it also may be interpreted as ‘replacing something that is not present’ (Derrida, 1972: xiii). O’Casey’s plays which depict a sort of ‘written-down speech’ (Lucy, 2004: 134), can be used to demonstrate a working example of the ‘supplement’, the part of the supplement which indicates ‘an addition’ or ‘to supply the missing words’ (Royle, 2003: 51). The edition of *Juno and the Paycock*, edited by Sean Moffatt, has footnotes inserted within the body of the play which explain the spoken idiom of the tenement dwellers, and they make clear the references to historical events of which the



reader may not be aware. For example when Mrs Boyle is introducing Johnny to Mr Bentham, she tells how, ‘me son, Mr Bentham; he’s after going through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm was blew off in the fight in O’Connell Street’ (O’Casey, 1988: 79). The footnotes define a ‘Boy Scout’ as ‘a junior member of the Irish Republican Army’ (Moffatt, 1988: 79), and so they can be thought of as adding an additional layer of meaning to O’Casey’s use of colloquial tenement language. Subsequently, in Act One, when Mrs Boyle hears her husband Jack coming in from the pub and he is ‘singing in a deep, sonorous, self-honouring voice’ (O’Casey, 1988: 54), it is Juno who says, ‘sweet spirit hear his prayer! An, then, I’ll take me solemn affeydavey, it’s not for a job he’s praying’ (O’Casey, 1988: 55). Moffatt has supplemented O’Casey original word ‘affeydavey’ with a footnote which explains that what Mrs Boyle meant to say was ‘affidavit: a statement written while under oath’ (Moffatt, 1988: 55). This illustrates an example of the ‘supplement’, as Moffatt’s footnotes, fulfil ‘a plenitude enriching another plenitude’ (Royle, 2003: 49), this supplement is ‘a spare part [*une pièce*], of the original make [*d’ origine*]’ (Derrida, 1976: 313). When Boyle is expressing his fears about upholding a job, he insists, ‘won’t it be a climbin’ job? How d’ye expect me to be able to go up a ladder with these legs?’ (O’Casey, 1988: 62), and Juno proclaims that he should ‘get wan o’ the labourers to carry you down in a hob’ (O’Casey, 1988: 62). Moffatt supplements onto the word ‘hob’ the definition of, ‘wooden box or trough on the end of a long stick, used by labourers to carry bricks’ (Moffatt, 1988: 62). Moffatt is adding an explanation onto the words of the play; these footnotes are a surplus, a ‘supplementarity’ ‘that produce the sense of the very thing they defer’ (Derrida, 1976: 157). Indeed the verb *suppléer* in French is ‘to add what is missing, to supply a necessary surplus’ (Royle, 2003: 50), and readers of O’Casey who might not grasp what Mrs Boyle is referring to when she says to Johnny, ‘an’

what is it you're thinkin' of, allunna? (O'Casey, 1988: 91), it is Moffatt who explains that 'allunna' is meant to be 'a leanbh, meaning my child' (Moffatt, 1988: 91). What Moffatt has done is supplied an additional layer of meaning to O'Casey's text. This demonstrates that the original written word of O'Casey has been supplemented with a further explanation. A supplement is at once 'what is added on to something in order further to enrich it and what is added on as a mere extra' (Royle, 2003: 48). Thus when Mrs Madigan uses the word 'roystherin' it is the footnotes that explain that she is referring to the notion of being 'lively' (Moffatt, 1988: 1010) or when it is revealed that the Boyle family are not going to receive money from the will, it is Nugent the tailor who reclaims the suit he made for Boyle and persists that Boyle will not 'climb up my back as easily as he thinks' (O'Casey, 1988: 121). For it is only by referring to the footnotes that one can clarify that to 'climb up my back' means 'take advantage of me' (Moffatt, 1988: 121). Therefore Moffatt's footnotes reveal that he has added to something that is already present – O'Casey's text, the footnotes can be thought of supplying a necessary surplus, it 'adds itself on, it is a supplement' (Royle, 2003: 50).

Interestingly in the terms of my own argument about O'Casey as an agent of deconstruction of the opposition between speech and writing, these footnotes will really only be of value to someone who is reading the text of the play, as opposed to attending a performance of the play. These footnotes indicate that the text of the play, while a writing which is teleologically aimed at creating an accurate enunciation of the Dublin working-class dialect in a performative space, is also a text which will be read and studied as pure writing, and so will be in need of explication. There is a sense of a blurring of the codes of high and popular literature at work here as well, as the assumption is that readers will not be working-class Dubliners who might be aware of these phonetic conventions. It is assumed that the readers will be middle-class

readers who will need supplementary guidance through this text – a further blurring of boundaries.

### **3.6 Howard – speech/writing**

Paul Howard, through the medium of writing, brings to light a sardonic depiction of the wealthy, self-obsessed classes who prided themselves as living in South Dublin – ‘a land of untold beauty and wealth, which boasts more yacht clubs per head of population than Monte Carlo, where girls talk like Californians, where rugby is the number one religion and where it’s possible to buy a Cappuccino – at Champs-Elyse’s prices’ (Howard, 2008: 284). Consequently, Dublin 4 is a place where ‘males address one another by their surnames, where a sense of community is non-existent – and where the sun never stops shining....’ (Howard, 2008: 11). Ross mirrors a cultural trend which values appearance and financial assets; in *Rhino What You Did Last Summer*, Ross underwent a surgical procedure, rhinoplasty, or as he puts it: a ‘nose job’ (Howard, 2009: 223), to make his nose smaller, and subsequently ends up getting ‘the focking lot – the lipo, the abdominal resculpt, the pectoral implants, the new calves and the rhinoplast’ (Howard, 2009: 223). Ross describes the pain he endured: ‘and we’re talking total agony’, however he realizes that he will be as ‘pretty as a focking girl’ (Howard, 2009: 223). Howard’s writing mirrors major social themes of this era through his device of capturing the speech pattern of Ross and his social peers. It is his language which holds the key to unlocking the cultural context, and allowing the reader to gain access to the cultural and linguistic mores of Dublin 4 of and of the people who live there: they are ‘plastic people with plastic features’ ([www.rossocarrollkelly.ie](http://www.rossocarrollkelly.ie)).

Derrida’s statement that there is nothing outside the text is derived from a discussion of Rousseau’s autobiography, where he insists that individuals ‘relation to “reality” already functions like a text’ (Derrida, 1981b: xiv), and given the similarity of genre, it is no surprise that

the interpretation of reality is also a factor Howard's writing, as it is Ross O'Carroll-Kelly's the main protagonist "reality" which functions as the text, all of the books, with the exception of *We Need to Talk About Ross*, are told from the perspective of Ross as fallible first-person narrator. Therefore, just as Rousseau's account of his 'life is not only itself a text, but it is a text that speaks only about the textuality of life' (Derrida, 1981b: xiv), so too is Ross's spoken account of his life a text, as 'life does not *become* a text through' writing: 'it always already *was* one', and this can be confirmed from the examples above, and from the blurring of boundaries between speech and writing. As nothing 'can be said to be *not* a text' (Derrida, 1981b: xiv), this breaks with the traditional view that a text implies something written, and reinforces Derrida's belief that in 'a sense, oral language already belongs to a generalized writing' (Norris, 1992: 29). Ross, as a textual construct who writes in a form of speech, is a classic example of this obscuring of boundaries. For example, Ross declares:

the meal, believe it or not, ends up being surprisingly all right, even if it is just the house special yellow curry from The King and Thai on the Quinsboro Road. And it's actually really nice to be just, I don't know, sitting around like this, the old crew back together again – me talking about how there's no fucking way in the world I'm giving up this medal. (Howard, 2010: 284)

Therefore according to Rousseau, Ross's account of his life was already a text and Howard confirms this by stating within the front cover of each book that the book is authored by 'Ross O'Carroll-Kelly (as told to Paul Howard)'. This denotes that Ross's account of his life is a text and Howard has merely 'written or printed' Ross's 'marks on a page' (Norris, 2002: 122), which describe the textuality of Dublin's prosperous classes. It is as if Howard is the Plato to Ross's Socrates, albeit in a very different context.

What Howard does is provide the reader with the recorded speech patterns of this affluent class. The overt mode of production has been a series of recordings of Ross in conversation with Paul Howard, so the text is a record of essentially what has come about by the recording of Ross's stream of consciousness. The format is set out as a written text derived from an oral communication; therefore what is presented to the reader is an interlacing of speech/writing. What is being expressed is a vernacular which extends beyond polarities and beyond the strict and problematic opposition of speech/writing, thus leaving the reader in a sense of indeterminacy, and in a space of undecidability. This puts into question the value of 'arkhē', which is the founding principle of Western metaphysical thinking, for it breaches the well-defined border (Derrida, 1982: 7), which deems speech to offer pure presence thus privileging it, over writing. For example, when Ross describes how he, 'end[s] up nearly having a fucking hort attack, roysh, when she puts her hand into the bag and storts pulling out all these, like, French maid outfits. I spin around and look at Ronan, who actually shakes his head, roysh, gives me this disappointed look, then goes on through to duty free, roysh, leaving me there on my fucking Tobler' (Howard, 2007: 152), words like, 'Tobler', 'roysh' and 'fucking' mean that one cannot "separate" speech from writing, or even think of speech without considering writing. This is a writing which is attempting to capture a specific locational and social class-based idiolect through a form of writing which deviates from normal rules.

In the case of the term 'Tobler', there is a further sense of defamiliarisation of language, as the reader needs to know that this refers to the chocolate bar 'Toblerone', and is rhyming slang for being left alone. There is a degree of hermeneutic ingenuity required of the reader here, and at times, Ross's terms, like Molly's soliloquy, or O'Casey's own linguistic distortions, need to be spoken aloud before one can grasp the connections. The deviant orthography and the

uncertain status of whether the text is writing or a form of speech, or whether it needs to be spoken aloud to fully grasp its polysemic meanings, is similar to distinguishing ‘the medicine from the poison, the good from the evil, the true from the false, the inside from the outside’ (Derrida, 1976: 169), all these are ‘hinge mechanisms’ (Powell, 1997: 119), which underpin and make every ‘system possible and, simultaneously impossible’ (McQuillan, 2000: 19). Howard’s text is ambiguous in that it is suspended between speech and writing: it is a Derridean *brisure* or folding-joint’ (Derrida, 1976: 65-66) which, through this ‘double gesture, a double science, a double writing’ practices an ‘*overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system’ (Derrida, 1982: 329). At times, the text will appear to be neither speech nor writing, at times it will seem to be both speech and writing: this ‘alternation between the logic of exclusion and that of participation....stems perhaps only from a provisional appearance and from the constraints of rhetoric, even from some incapacity for naming’ (Wolfreys, 2009: 74).

There is also the need to take into account the mode of production. We have already noted that the book is supposed to derive from Ross telling his experiences to Howard but of course this is not the case. Ross is Howard’s creation and this is a sophisticated narrative framing device. These books are very culturally self-aware, and their titles exhibit a postmodern intertextuality. There are strings of intertextual references throughout the books, including the titles, with references to *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, *Teenage Dirtbag*, *Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years*, *PS, I Love You* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *This Bloody Mary (Is the Last Thing I Own)* and *The God Delusion*. A forthcoming book is entitled *Nama Mia*, referring to the recession-driven Irish national Asset Management Agency, and the Abba musical ‘Mama Mia’. So while Ross makes it clear that he does not read for pleasure, the author is intertextually referencing other works to show the sophisticated author behind the

academically unsophisticated narrator, for example the incessant labeling of clothes in the books alludes to Brett Easton Ellis's sartorially elegant psychopath Patrick Bateman, in *American Psycho*. There is a play of meanings ongoing between speech and writing, and ignorance and knowledge, as well as an authorial irony in terms of referential titles. I would see this ongoing play of meaning as embodying Derrida's concept of *différance*, where he insists one can never derive a meaning, 'it is always already suspended – playing between differing and deferring – and these suspensions creates a kind of interval or blank in space and time that underlines all cases of differing – of distinction' (Powell, 1997: 121). This play of speech and writing can be illustrated when Tina, the mother of Ronan's first child, Ronan, and a denizen of northside Dublin, insists, 'I wootunt see dat as bean a good ting', she tries to go. 'De foorst ting deed do if dee kem in would be to cut poobalic seervices'. 'In utter words, it's the poo-er being made to pay again for de greed of de rich' (Howard, 2010: 81). The defamiliarisation of language is such that the reader is forced to reread the selections and to pronounce phonetically the words like 'wootunt' and foorst', to actually understand the accent and dialect that is being signified. This example demonstrates the 'mean point between the two terms of a binary' (McQuillan, 2000: 14), for it does not display a privileging of writing over speech or vice a versa, it is locked within the 'impossible logic of the double-bind, yes and no, on the one hand/on the other hand, neither – not' (McQuillan, 2000: 29).

For instance Howard captures through the written word, the phonetic representation of the intonation peculiar to Dublin 4 and other affluent areas of south Dublin. This pattern of speech is known as 'Dortspeak', 'a reference to the pronunciation of the word "DART" (an acronym for Dublin Area Rapid Transit system, a type of tram), which becomes "DORT" if one is from Dublin's prosperous southside. This identity is one of perpetual commodity fetishism; it

is a world where the main topic of conversation is ‘the giraffe-print Escada halter that Jada Pinkette Smith wore to the New York Fashion Fête’, or a world where women subscribe to a ‘Celebrate alert service’ so that they can ‘get, like, all the news and gossip, straight to your phone, as it happens’ (Howard, 2009: 13). This type of deviation from grammatological norms has been termed eye-dialect, wherein the spelling is altered so that the eye is immediately drawn to the defamiliarised orthography. Howard does not privilege speech in the customary sense; it is not ‘purely phonetic’, as Howard still fixes his language with punctuation, unlike the stream of consciousness in *Ulysses*. However, he does destabilize the graphematic conventions by writing phonetically, as one often has to pronounce the words aloud to fully grasp the accent in which they are being said. He also uses rhyming slang which presupposes a degree of cultural knowledge in order to understand the signified of the rhyme. So in his texts, the writing is only fully a meaning-event, when it is spoken, a process which is deconstructive of the speech/writing binary and subsequently leaves the text in a state of undecidability, thus unfolding sameness within the concept of difference.

Howard’s use of language is underpinned by the logic of the *pharmakon*, it is ‘both poison and cure and neither poison and cure’ (Powell, 1997: 85); so Howard’s fictions are both speech and writing and neither speech nor writing. Ross comments on his own language by observing that ‘south Dublin is regarded as one of the most difficult languages in the world to master’ (Howard, 2008: 70). This is a very conscious process of making the text seem strange, and Howard is precise about how it is brought about:

The harsh-sounding ‘ar’ sound is softened to become ‘or’. Thus, harsh becomes horsh. Arts is Orts. The bar is the bor. The car is the cor. The *Star* is a newspaper read by poor people. (Howard, 2008: 71)



What we have here is a form of phonetic writing, or eye dialect, which deconstructs our normal silent reading practice as it is only by actually saying ‘cor’ aloud that we are able to grasp the vowel shift which signifies the more affluent form of Dublin 4 dialect. Howard makes further changes to how words have been habitually and conventionally represented by transforming the ‘harsh ‘t’ sound in the middle and at the end of almost all words into a sibilant ‘sh’, e.g. ‘trout’ becomes ‘troush’, ‘right’ is ‘roysh’ and ‘marketing’ is ‘morkeshing’ (Howard, 2008: 71). Ross-speech is a ‘form of creolized English, a hybrid of the language used by the British aristocracy and that spoken by the characters from popular American television programmes, such as *Friends*’ (Howard, 2008: 70). For instance, when Chloe is undergoing her hip replacement, the opening words to Sorcha’s sentence are ‘Oh my God’, ‘what is keeping that surgeon? It’s, like, how difficult could it be?’ (Howard, 2010: 43). This mimics the discourse of the American shows, such as *Californication*. Lastly the ‘ow’ sound has been changed to sound like ‘ay’, so therefore the likes of ‘loud becomes layd’, or ‘roundabout becomes rayndabaysh’ (Howard, 2008: 71). These need to be said aloud if the idiolect is to be grasped fully, and any sense is to be made of the words; and the deliberate graphematic defamiliarisation of this last example makes the point forcibly in that within the word, it is these idiosyncratic idioms which demonstrate a breakdown between speech and writing, as the established mode of writing in the English language has been distorted so that it cannot entirely depict writing in the conventional sense. Indeed by altering this written grammar, Howard captures the spoken language of Ross, therefore demonstrating a sort of undecidable speech/writing.

Sentence structure is also altered in order to mirror conversational south Dublin speech, ‘linguistic crutches, such as “like” and “roysh”, are ubiquitous’ (Howard, 2008: 71). For instance, a typical sentence would be, ‘I was, like, sitting at the bor? And this, like total honey

came in, wearing, like, pretty much nothing? And she was, like, totally checking me out and shit? (Howard, 2008: 72). Similarly, the terms ‘oh my God’ and ‘hello’ are added to the majority of sentences as phatic points of reference. Sorcha ‘goes, *Oh my God* eight times’ in just the one phrase (Howard, 1997: 76), and this is followed by, ‘that’s like HELLO?’ (Howard, 2007: 78). This demonstrates how ‘texts are no more ‘spoken’ than they are ‘written’, no more against speech than for writing’ (Silverman, 1989: 22). Such verbal tics and phatic utterances are common in spoken language and in corpus linguistics are termed hedges and qualifiers. However, to have these included in writing is almost to mimic stage directions in the script of a play, where the writing is really a guide to how the words are to be spoken, thus collapsing the ordered hierarchy between speech and writing, as well as between the dramatic and narrative genres. It can be seen that Howard’s text takes its place in the ‘between’ spaces of speech/writing; the opposition has been supplanted by the notion of an undecidability; one can never draw a dividing line between speech and writing. The works of Howard remains a combined venture between the utterances of Ross and Howard’s writerly pen.

Howard captures the spoken vernacular of the rich of south Dublin who can afford to quench their thirst every Friday night ‘with the most expensive cocktail in Ireland’, it is appropriately called a “Minted” and is ‘basically a Vanilla-chocolate Martini, roysh, that’s made from vanilla-infused Vodka, 200-year-old cognac and actual flakes of, like, 23-carat gold. It’s served in a glass of designer crystal, with chocolate truffles on the side’ (Howard, 2008: 91) and only costs €500. Financial worth is one of the key distinctions between the southside and northside of Dublin, and Howard, having given us the linguistic expression of the Dublin 4 set, also provides a linguistic enunciation of their poor relations. And, it is mainly through the character of Ronan, Ross’s illegitimate son, that Howard captures the discourse of northside

Dublin. Chloe ('with an e'), Sorcha's friend, identifies this class difference by stating that 'skobies love Argos so much because the little pens remind them of being in a bookies' (Howard, 2008: 11). Ross insists that he would not 'make a habit of hanging out in the northside', and gives his reasons for this as he tells us that 'we have all seen the horrific images on television, though I would have to say, roysh, its much worse in real life' (Howard, 2007: 159). During Ross's first visit to Ronan's home, he describes it as 'the kind of gaff where you wipe your feet on the way out' (Howard, 2007: 139) and where the letterbox is a substitute for the doorbell (Howard, 2008: 135). Subsequently Christian, Ross's Star Wars-obsessed friend, explains that if he did have to go to Tallaght, he would love to do it in an 'All Terrian Scout Transport, you're talking 8.6m high with a seriously heavy duty canon. It would be like, "okay, just try to take the hubcaps off this baby". 'Actually, out there, the fockers probably would try and tip it' (Howard, 2007: 315). Similarly, Ross reinforces the division between that of north and south Dublin by saying that:

tea, to me, is a drink. Where Ronan comes from, tea is an actual meal. See these people have the main meal of the day at, like, lunchtime. Then, when the rest of the world is having its dinner, they're having a slice of ham, a quarter of a tomato and a couple of slices of beetroot, That's tea to them. (Howard, 2008: 134)

Ross refers to people of the northside as 'skobies' - someone of low social standing' and they generally wear 'skobie tunics' - 'Celtic shirts' (Howard, 2008: 36). Ronan is from the northside and he embodies this working class culture. For instance when attending a dinner party hosted by Clifford who is considered part of the aristocracy in *This Champagne Mojito is the Last Thing I Own*, Ronan's language is distinctly different from the others around him. He says, 'Howiya. What do I call you - Me Lord' (Howard, 2007: 34). In depicting the idiolect of Dublin 13,

Howard again deviates from the norms of grammar and syntax, and adds the word “but” to the end of sentences in order to depict the phatic elements of northside Dublin speech. For example, Ronan exclaims ‘now you’re talking Clifford’, ‘some gaff this, but’ (Howard, 2007: 48). This demonstrates an emergence of ‘writing inside of speech’ (Derrida, 1976: lxxvii). This use of ‘but’ is a verbal tic that parallels the more middle-class use of ‘roysh’, and it further underlines the linguistic attribution of value and class in spoken language that is at the core of Howard’s contemporary satire.

Common expressions include, “Ah Jaysus!”, and “wat’s de Story, bud?” This is taken to mean “How are you, my friend?” (www.statemaster.com). When Tina and her Father, along with Sorcha and Ross, attend a rugby match in support of Ronan, the words printed on the page is the result of a merging of both speech and writing. For instance Tina offers her ‘congrat-ulay-shiddens’ (Howard, 2006: 36), to Sorcha on hearing of her pregnancy. Tina also goes, ‘you’ll be wantin’ a pram, will ye’, ‘I’ve Ronan’s pram saved. I’ll give it ye’ (Howard, 2006: 37). Another example is when Oisinn captures a ‘creamer’ (Howard, 2006: 32) (a person of low social standing called Marty), who broke into their nightclub office in *Should Have Got Off at Sydney Parade*. Oisinn finds him ‘upstairs to find him rifling through the drawers, no doubt looking for money to spend on heroin’ (Howard, 2006: 32). Oisinn, Christian and Fionn decide to ‘keep him’, as Fionn insists he needs him for his research project – ‘a real live Dublin skanger to use as a guinea pig’ (Howard, 2006: 33). He is going to measure his ‘emotional and intellectual responses to various stimuli’ (Howard, 2006: 33). It is only when Ross exclaims:

He’s your typical creamer: Ben Sherman shit, untucked with tracksuit bottoms, Barry McGuigan moustache, mousey colored hair, side-ported, ink spot on his left cheek, a serious looking scar running from his right ear to the corner of his mouth, more sovs than his fingers and about as much meat on him as a Hare Krishna’s breakfast. (Howard, 2006: 32)

This demonstrates some of cultural differences between individuals of the north and south. Similarly Oisinn comments how Marty's preference with regard food would be anything 'deep-fried', as he sends Fionn down to 'Lido on Pearse street and get everything on the menu.....in batter. Oh and some TK lemonade as well' (Howard, 2006: 34). Meanwhile Oisinn, Christian and Ross inspect his 'various bits of ortwork' – these are the tattoos, on Marty's body which says, 'Mum...IRA....Aslan' (Howard, 2006: 34). In addition, Ross reinforces the belief that there is a very clear social binary opposition between that of north and south Dublin by insisting that:

How the *fock* do these people get across the Liffey without being spotted? Surely they should have some kind of border checkpoint on O'Connell Bridge. (Howard, 2006: 32)

However these cultural differences are firmly fixed within the confines of spoken language, as when Howard replicates Marty's speech, it is his 'sounds, the accents, and all sorts of modulations that are the main source of energy' (Derrida, 1976: 280) within the book. For example, Marty says when talking to Ross about his baby, 'I've two myself', 'well, two wit de boord I'm with now. Shannon and Robbie. Shannon's tree, reet, and Robbie's one' (Howard, 2006: 81). Also Marty observes, when talking about Sorcha's morning sickness, that 'de sickness goes away, reet, as de placenta takes over de production of de hormones' (Howard, 2006: 82). What has occurred is the 'th' sound becomes a 'd' sound, thus formal writing has been altered in order to demonstrate the spoken language of the working classes, who Ross coined "howiyas", 'based on the Dublin accent rendering of "how are you?"' ([www.statemaster.com](http://www.statemaster.com)). In addition to this, it is Tina's father who says, 'don't know how yiz live on dis side of de bleedin' ci'ee' (Howard, 2006: 252), for this establishes that 'living voice' is capable of becoming printed

material and that speaking can be considered just ‘as much to be a form of writing’ (Eagleton, 1983: 130).

In terms of undecidables however, the different types of language are superseded by a bonding between the two sides of the city. From a position where Marty is seen as almost sub-human, and as someone who can be ‘kept’ for research purposes with no consequences, a change in the relationships take place following the different conversations between Marty and his captors. Though they speak different languages, yet there is understanding at work here and Marty, a little like Boyle, has about him an element of a philosopher and sage. Marty becomes very much a surrogate father figure to Ross and his friends, advising Ross on how to cope with pregnancy, as he is far more in touch with his feelings than Ross; helping Fionn with his research and with his love life and generally becoming someone with whom they all bond. Howard, as is his wont, sets up the oppositions only in order to complicate them. The only person to whom Ross can talk about pregnancy is Marty.

Another example pertaining to the fusion of speech and writing can be found in Howard’s *The Oh My God Delusion*, where Ross moves into an apartment block, ‘Tickknocks’, and meets his new neighbours who turn out to be criminals from the northside, ‘dangerous characters’ (Howard, 2010: 372), who Ross describes in typically pejorative terms: ‘you know the kind, we’re talking cheap sweatshirts and we’re talking runners that cost the price of a week’s holiday somewhere’ (Howard, 2010: 142). The humour dwells in the fact that Ross assumed that ‘they’re trying to break into the vacant apartment next door, probably for the copper piping’ (Howard, 2010: 142). However once the neighbours introduce themselves, ‘I’m Tetty, though what he obviously means is Terry’, and this is ‘Laddy’, ‘in other words Larry’ (Howard, 2010: 142), Ross expresses his disbelief – ‘and to think the old dear said this recession

wasn't going to affect me. Now it's suddenly living next door' (Howard, 2010: 143). Terry and Larry's language further stresses that the terms of speech and writing are not independent of one another but 'rely on each other through mutual contamination' (McQuillan, 2000: 15). Essentially, there is an ambivalence within dualisms, and Howard portrays a speech and writing at once, a 'phonetic writing' (Derrida, 1976: 139). This breaks down the binary opposition and mixes them up within the same text, for instance:

the two of them look at each other and it's like they've got this secret means of, I don't know, communication. 'He'd be veddy hoort to hear dat' Terry goes, 'wootent he, Laddy?' Larry nods. 'Veddy hoort – fact, Tetty, I tink we should let dis fella hee-er tell him to he's bleaten face.' I'm there, 'Goy, like I said this only needs to be as big a deal as we make it.' (Howard, 2010: 167)

Once again there is a fusing between that of speech and writing here, as words like 'very' become 'veddy', and 'think' is altered to represent speech and turns into 'tink' (Howard, 2010: 167); this reveals 'phonemes in general, vowels – *phōnēenta* – and consonants, are designed by the letters that inscribe them' (Derrida, 1972: 139). Writing has been sited within that of the spoken idiom, and speech has been sited within that of the written word, for as Derrida insists people are 'masters of writing as they are speech' (Derrida, 1976: 170). This demonstrates that the binary speech/writing is answerable to the same deconstructive logic which Derrida applied to the concept of the *pharmakon*. For lines like 'it does be veddy heerd sometimes to wontherstand him and I'm shewer it does be heerd to wontherstand us' (Howard, 2010: 194) reveal a contamination of speech/writing, and of the different social idiolects at play. The text cannot be pinned to the concept of speech or writing, for instance, Tanya, Terry and Larry's sister exclaims, 'why doatunt ye? Say it to his face, Ma – snopy foocken bastoord' (Howard, 2010: 213). Just as Derrida insists opposition 'neither belong to the insider nor to the outside'

(Derrida, 1976: 25), the same applies to the portrayal of Ross's story, it cannot be locked within speech nor writing.



## Chapter Four: Maleness and Femaleness

### *4.1 The Theory Underpinning male/female duality*

My mode of inquiry into the binary opposition of maleness/femaleness, adverts to some of Virginia Woolf's thinking. She was the 'founding mother of the contemporary debate' in the Anglophone world, and so 'acutely did she foreshadow future developments that feminists from a variety of critical positions – Marxists, psychoanalytical, post-structuralist – turn to her as their starting point' (Eagleton, 1991: 1). Subsequently, her thinking with regard to the notion of socially gendered selves, especially her notions of the 'looking-glass' and 'writerly androgyny', can be seen to influence Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* – which can be broadly termed "women's writing" or "female writing". Another feminist text to which I will allude is Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir spoke of women as 'other',<sup>3</sup> noting that when a woman 'tries to define herself, she starts by saying, "I am a woman": no man would do so', and this displays the basic 'asymmetry between the terms "masculine" and "feminine": man define the human, not women' (de Beauvoir, 1949: xxxi). Lastly, I will make a direct reference to

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<sup>3</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also makes reference to women as 'other' in her 1985 article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In this she describes the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman, who indicates a failed attempt at self-representation. Spivak defines her as a 'subaltern' someone who is oppressed, they remain unheard; essentially define 'the other' of society. Spivak's Post-Colonial perspective is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Naomi Woolf and her theory of the 'beauty myth'. Feminism as a movement articulates a critique of Western metaphysics which has its foundations in the notion of phallogocentrism – the idea of 'male firstness' (Derrida, 1982: 445). Throughout history, women have been conceived as 'other', as somehow deviant, to the concept of maleness which has served as the transcendental signifier of Western society. My aim in this brief rehearsal of feminist attitudes to gender stereotypes, is to provide an adequation between feminism and deconstruction, and to show how the dissolving of boundaries is a core activity of both critical paradigms. As set out in my introduction, I will not be adopting a feminist perspective *per se*, but rather will be focusing on the connection between deconstruction and feminism. Where patriarchal values which according to Luce Irigaray, views:

women as commodities, as the medium of exchange, in a male economy: women are marked phallically by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men, including the competition for the possession of mother earth. (Irigaray, 1989: 31-32)

Subsequently, I aim to deconstruct our culture's habitual privileging of the male over female, of the rational over the emotional, of the serious over the frivolous, or of the reflective over the spontaneous, in order to reinforce Derrida's thinking that oppositions can be undone to the point of undecidability. Until this is achieved, and the binary opposition has been dismantled, one remains locked within an 'either/or', 'both/and' logic. The undecidable can be read as a way of explaining the structural contradiction that dwells at the core of language, and which causes the impossibility of articulating certainty; it is something which has a destabilizing effect on the notion of truth as claimed by philosophical and metaphysical thinkers. When deconstructed, oppositions 'lean on and support each other (*s'étaient*)', 'they are indissociable' (Derrida, 1982:

471). Accordingly, deconstructive critique suggests that the ‘distinction between paired opposites is not absolute, since each term in the pairing can only be understood and defined in terms of the other’ (Barry, 2002: 138). Consequently, by dismantling the oppositions of maleness/femaleness, I am drawing on the sense of ‘confusion between two, *between* the two’, there is no longer difference but identity’ (Derrida, 1969: 182). This space of interdependence and the mutual contamination of opposites, alludes to Derrida’s notion of the ‘hymen’ or hymenal space – ‘an either/or between an either/or’ (Powell, 1997: 93). Derrida insists it is the space between, ‘desire and fulfilment, perpetration and remembrance: here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, under the false appearance of a present’ (Derrida, 1981b: 182). Derrida demonstrates this, when he insists that deconstruction is between philosophy and literature, where one consumes the other: it is an undecidable.

It is in ‘The Double Session’, the second essay in *Dissemination*, that he examines Mallarmé, and the space between dichotomies, which deems binary logic unstable. For Mallarmé, the concept of the ‘hymen’ is another undecidable, similar to that of the *pharmakon*. The hymen ‘is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor the unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside’ (Derrida, 1981a: 43). In his discussion of Mallarmé, Derrida focuses on the concept of the ‘hymen’ as it appears in the *Mimique*. He quotes Mallarmé’s description of the mime: “[t]he scene illustrates but the idea, not any actual action, in a hymen [...] tainted with vice yet sacred, between desire and fulfilment, perpetration and remembrance: here anticipating, there recalling, in the future in the past, *under the false appearance of a present*” (Derrida, 1981b: 175). This is essentially a comment on the possibility of a space between oppositions that is occupied by ‘a hymen’, which can disrupt the illusion of presence in the text. The hymen, for Derrida, operates

according to the same logic as the supplement and the *pharmakon*, and its undecidable status allows it to disrupt oppositions in a text. The hymen denotes both virginity and consummation and therefore, Derrida contends:

merges with what it seems to be derived from: the hymen as protective screen, the jewel box of virginity, the vaginal partition, the fine, invisible veil which, in front of the *hystera*, stands between the inside and the outside of a woman, and consequently between desire and fulfilment. It is neither desire nor pleasure but in between the two. (Derrida, 1981b: 112-113)

The position of the hymen is neither inside nor outside but also either inside or outside – it is an undecidable – and thus the space it occupies is the liminal space in which Derrida situates his deconstructive strategy. Contextually, given that one of the core differentiating criteria between the genders is that of sexual purity, with the white wedding dress signifying virginity, and with so many areas of the public sphere being barred to women because of issues to do with childbirth, menstruation and child-care, the use of the hymen as an agent of deconstruction is especially apt. And it is on the deconstructive strategies of Derrida, Joyce, O’Casey and Howard in connection with gender that this chapter will focus. I do not have the space, nor does it come within the scope of this discussion, to have a more general debate on the issue. The *pharmakon* signifies both poison and cure, and the *hymen* insists upon virginity and consummation, and inner and outer aspects of the body. I would argue that the same paradoxical logic can be applied to the opposition of male and female by dismantling it, and therefore rendering this particular binary opposition unstable. Therefore maleness/femaleness is the opposition which this chapter will explore in the writing of Joyce, O’Casey and Howard.

## **4.2 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – Joyce**

Joyce may seem an unusual subject for feminist analysis, as it was quoted by Spinks that Joyce once exclaimed that ‘I hate women who know anything’ (Spinks, 1990: 237). However, Joyce was one of the initial writers to expose the power relationship suppressed within the binary opposition of man/woman, in which the masculine term is the privileged of the pair. By unmasking this binary opposition, Lawrence, insists that ‘Joyce is a precursor of deconstruction; indeed, Jacques Derrida himself announces his debt to Joyce, especially *Finnegans Wake*, in Plato’s pharmacy’ (Lawrence, 1990: 242). It was Marilyn French who declared that women of the 1900s were the ‘caretakers of Irish society’, as they ‘give birth to men and close their eyes after death; they wash the new-born and the corpse; they feed the family and do the washing up’ (French, 1988: 267). They were not alone the pillars of society but, as French insisted, they were the silent pillars. In French’s opinion, women ‘existed before men and shall exist after them, like some eternal silent presence’ (French, 1988: 267). For the purpose of this chapter I am going to limit the discussion of Joyce and women to his early work, *Dubliners*, with some references to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Stephen Hero*.

Warren Beck claims, there is “not enough at issue” to warrant much attention’ (Kearney, 1988: 274) with regard to feminism and *Dubliners*. Conversely, I would argue that ‘Joyce has probed, not only the paralysis of Dublin’ (Kearney, 1988: 274), but that he also provides an interesting account of gender divisions. Stories like ‘Eveline’, or ‘Two Gallants’, depict women who are immersed within this patriarchal system which views the male as hegemonically dominant. These stories portray women who illustrate what can be coined as ‘old stereotypes’ (Lawrence, 1990: 245); they are associated with the private sphere, that of household and domestic chores; they are placed within the opposition of angel/devil, but essentially they are

situated as the other to man, for they are reduced to the 'second and lesser sex' (Tolan, 2007: 320). Virginia Woolf was one of the first female thinkers to identify these stereotypes and divided gender roles in a modernist society. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf explained that:

She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moan about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter. (Woolf, 1929: 1012)

This demonstrates that the female has been traditionally confined to the domestic sphere (she is associated with the kitchen and the family); while men are connected with the public sphere (they are part of the public domain). Thus men and women are subject to socially-constructed gendered selves. One interpretation which can be drawn from Joyce is the reflection of a world where the power dwells within the domain of maleness, and where women are entrapped and submerged within patriarchal law. One view is that stories like 'Eveline' place women as subordinate to men; in her case she is subordinate to her father and Frank. Other examples which present women as dominated by men, and suffering within the existing social order, are 'Clay', 'Counterparts', and 'Two Gallants': 'they display the general Dublin "paralysis" of their male counterparts, but, like the child in 'Counterparts', these women suffer by being the oppressed of the oppressed' (Lawrence, 1990: 245). Joyce believed that what he wrote was the truth, and his short stories allowed the Dublin people to gaze into his 'nicely polished looking-glass', which reflected a city suffering from 'hemiplegia of will' or a paralysis of its people, thus offering them a sense of 'spiritual liberation' (Joyce, 2000: xi).

'In *Dubliners* Joyce depicted the general entrapment of the "submerged population" of Dublin' (Staley, 1966: 36), and this included the entrapment of women within the patriarchal

order. Therefore it can be argued that although Joyce portrays women as inferior to male authority, throughout many of his short stories he was merely reflecting a society which was male-centred; he 'exposed the sordidness of domestic life in Dublin' (Staley, 1966: 36), in which 'phantom males and absent women speak each other's silences' (Norris, 1966: 1). As Joyce states, 'I am no friend of tyranny, as you know, but if many husbands are brutal the atmosphere in which they live is brutal and few wives and homes can satisfy the desire for happiness' (Joyce, 1992: 2). In enunciating the power-relations between man and women, Joyce depicted 'character types caught up in situations of sexual conflict', as *Dubliners* sees 'men and women inexorably trapped in sexual warfare' (Ehrlich, 1997:87). Joyce describes this gender struggle perfectly when he states that the wife in 'Counterparts' is a 'sharp-faced woman who bullied her husband when he was sober and was bullied by him when he was drunk' (Joyce, 2000: 72). This vignette is symbolic of the social and psychological condition of daily life in Dublin, and what is being described throughout all the short stories is the lived everyday experiences of a multitude of women with all its messy detail as described in Joyce's 'clear hard prose' (Staley, 1966: 28).

The 'lot of woman is grim in Joyce's grim city' (French, 1988: 271); woman are perceived as 'immoral and dangerous seductresses, the woman as eternally dissatisfied shrew, the women as cute but essentially helpless, the woman as unworldly, self-sacrificing angel, and so on' (Bertens, 2001: 97). These are the stereotypes which feminists challenged as they view them as damaging to the identity of the female subject. Feminists looked at the image that writers created for women, and at how the notion of being female was restricted to the confines of sexuality: 'they are either virgins or whores'. 'Either women characters are seductresses who lead to the downfall of the male protagonist or they are innocent of all matters sexual and material and they have to be protected from the wickedness of the world of men' (Green and

LeBihan, 1996: 233). The standard reading of *Dubliners* sees women as marginal, as only four out of the fifteen stories have central female characters, and in ‘the majority of the stories, the point of view is male’ (Grace, 1988: 273), thus women appear on the margins of society, where they are portrayed as ‘prostitutes, as wives who wait at home for their drunken husbands, or as old maiden aunts and sisters’ (Grace, 1988: 273). For example Mrs Mooney in ‘The Boarding House’, describes how soon after her father-in-law died, her husband, with whom she owned a butcher’s shop, began to drink ‘plundered the till, ran headlong into debt’, he also fought with his wife in the presence of customers, and ‘one night he went for his wife with the cleaver and she had to sleep in a neighbour’s house’ (Joyce, 2000: 46). Similarly, the story of ‘The Dead’ sees Gretta Conroy ‘married to a man who looks down on her and is capable of treating her with contempt, and whose desire for her is based in a desire for mastery whose entire stance in the world is fixed in superior isolation’ (French, 1988: 271). It is notable that when Gretta is reminiscing about previous love interests and is ‘remembering with affection a boy who loved her and is now dead’ (Staley, 1966: 40), it is Gabriel’s mood which changes and a ‘dull anger began to gather again at the back of his mind and the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins’ (Joyce, 2000: 172). Joyce depicts Gabriel’s self-importance by describing how:

Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table, and having looked to the edge of the carver, plunged his fork firmly into the goose. He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table. (Joyce, 2000: 155)

The narrative perspective is his; just as we are given his perspective on being at the head of the table, so it is his unease at finding out about Michael Furey that is the focal point of the story, and not how Gretta must have repressed her sense of loss and anguish at the untimely death of her young suitor.



Another example of where the female is subjected to male domination, is in ‘Two Gallants’, where the story explores the ‘shabby social and economic circumstances of Dublin life’ (Hart, 1969: 69), where women, because of their certain social standing, are expected to display ‘servility’ (Joyce, 2000: 43), and men like Lenehan and Corley believe they belong to ‘another social class, one who could have “girls off the South Circular”’. Indeed, Corley plays upon this social advantage in his exploitation of women’ (Hart, 1969: 68). Corley describes how:

I spotted a fine tart under Waterhouse’s clock and said good-night, you know. So we went for a walk round by the canal and she told me she was a slavey in a house in Baggot Street. I put my arm around her and squeezed her a bit that night. Then the next Sunday, man, I met her by appointment. We went out to Donnybrook and I brought her into a field there. She told me she used to go with a dairyman.... It was fine, man. Cigarettes every night she’d bring me and paying the tram out and back. (Joyce, 2000: 37)

This passage reinforces the view that women are exploited by men. For it is men, ‘villainous of soul and repugnant of aspect’, that ‘trade on the affections of young servant-girls’ (Deming, 1927: 64). Here, the girl has been reduced to an object and confined within a sexual terminology; she is ‘the servant girl who gives him her love and also gives him money’ (Jones, 1970: 20), thus reinforcing her subordinate status. It can be argued that Joyce was not merely concerned with romantic adventures or dramatic incidents; he is also concerned with portraying the crudeness of human behaviour, which sees Corley as an ‘egotistical reprobate [who] makes good his boast of power over a servant girl’ (Jones, 1970: 15). For instance, Corley states, ‘she’s all right ... I know the way to get around her man ... she’s a bit gone on me’ (Joyce, 2000: 38).

However apart from the dominant theme, which is the ‘exploitation of the young slavey’ (Hart, 1969: 64), it is noteworthy that Joyce refrains from giving the girl a name; therefore she is lacking an identity, a proper noun, which sets her apart from other individuals, and which locates

the individual within the symbolic order. She is without a name; therefore she is inferior, almost unworthy of an identity, and thus occupies a subordinate position within society. She is exposed as not alone a less significant person, for it is as if she is not entitled to a distinct sense of self, compared to that of the male characters, Lenehan and Corley.

This can be compared to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which presents a *Bildungsroman* in which the main protagonist Stephen is ‘forging the uncreated conscience of his race’, by experiencing the ‘powerful forces of nationalism and religion’. The novel concludes with Stephen gradually beginning ‘to cast off the shackles of Church and State, while remaining for ever a Catholic Irishman’ (Hodgart, 1978: 58/59). Stephen realises that he must ‘go into exile, and exile will mean the solitude of damned; but in “silence, exile and cunning”, he will create himself as an artist’ (Hodgart, 1978: 63). Before referring to this novel, I am going to first comment on its prequel that of *Stephen Hero*, as this was the foundation on which *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was established. In the context of this discussion, more significant than the plot, is Joyce’s delineation of women within both books. In *Stephen Hero*, as an initial example, it is Stephen who presents an image of the main female character: Emma Clery. She is described by Stephen as independent figure who is disruptive of the patriarchal order, by being ‘coquetted with knowledge’, and by asking Stephen ‘could he not persuade the President of his College to admit women to the college’ (Joyce, 1944: 66). Stephen also explains how she ‘allowed him to see her home several times but she did not seem to have reserved herself for him’ (Joyce, 1944: 66). Emma is constantly seen from a male perspective in this book. For instance, Stephen and the Priest, Father Moran, had agreed that ‘one must not believe all the complimentary things the ladies say of us’; ‘the ladies are a little given to – what shall I say –

fibbing, I am afraid' (Joyce, 1944: 65). This can be interpreted as men reinforcing their importance by inventing an ideological climate of compliance:

Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. The religions invented by men reflect this wish for domination. In the legends of Eve and Pandora men have taken up arms against women. They have made use of philosophy and theology, as the quotations from Aristotle and St Thomas have shown. Since ancient times satirists and moralists have delighted in showing up the weaknesses of women. (De Beauvoir, 1949: 15)

This is representative of a self/other or center/margin structure, where the existence of an 'other' is essential in defining what is the norm of the self; in this book, as a metonym of its societal context, this norm is the notion of maleness. Thus my interpretation is that Emma has been designated as an 'other' by the male gaze and voice. This is reflected by de Beauvoir, where she insists, 'women have been reduced to objects for men: "women" has been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to their own subjectivity and responsibility for their own actions' (Moi, 2002: 90). Society is a patriarchal one which presents women as the subordinate to men, for as de Beauvoir insists, woman is:

the other – she is passivity confronting activity, diversity that destroys unity, matter as oppressed to form, disorder against order. Woman is thus dedicated to Evil. (de Beauvoir, 1949: 112)

De Beauvoir insists that, 'to pose Women is to pose the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject a fellow human being' (de Beauvoir, 1949: 95). For it is Emma who has been depicted in an unfavourable light, she is described, through Stephen's eyes, as having 'loud forced manners', which 'shocked him at first until his mind had thoroughly mastered the stupidity of hers' (Joyce, 1944: 66). Similarly, much to Stephen's dismay, Emma, 'criticised the Miss Daniels very sharply, assuming, much to Stephen's

discomfort, an identical temper in him' (Joyce, 1944: 66). Emma is the 'other' of Stephen's world, and is viewed as the temptress that leads men astray, highlighting the opposition of virginity/harlotry. For example, Stephen tells of his annoyance, that Emma, 'often delayed a long time chatting with a low-sized young priest, a Father Moran, who had a neat head of curly black hair and expressive black eyes' (Joyce, 1944: 65). Similarly, Stephen, watching the young priest and 'Emma together usually worked himself into a state of unsettled rage' (Joyce, 1944: 66), for Emma is deemed unprincipled and an immoral woman. In essence, women's disadvantages are attributed to stereotyped customary expectations, designed and 'held by men' (Connell, 1987: 33). One is reminded of the previously cited comment by Irigaray, where she noted that one of the roles of women in patriarchal society is to be competed for by men, and Stephen's jealousy re is indicative of this trend.

Certainly, the 'power of men and subordination of women' (Connell, 1987: 35) is reinforced when Emma is described mostly in terms of her appearance, and in terms of her body image. This can be seen as reducing her to an object of male desire, for example when Stephen exclaims how 'he had caught an impression of her when she was at her finest moment' (Joyce, 1944: 67), 'her body seemed so compact of pleasure' and her eyes held 'an expression of tender significance when the conversation was at the lowest level of banality' (Joyce, 1944: 67). Similar to the narrative method of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the identity and portrayal of Emma is filtered through Stephen's eyes, reinforcing male control. For instance, it is described how 'Emma stood to his gaze in such a poise of bold careless pride of flesh that Stephen longed to precipitate the two into each other's arms and shock the room, even though he knew the pain this impersonal generosity would cause himself' (Joyce, 1944: 66). The key words here are 'stood to his gaze' (Joyce, 1944: 66), for it is as if the character of Emma can only be represented

through a male aesthetic lens, therefore diminishing her independent female role, as Stephens's eyes control the perception of Emma Clery.

Joyce maintains this patriarchal perception from *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Although Emma Clery becomes E. C. or just Emma in the latter book, the notion of her womanhood remains constructed by a male gaze. In Part V, Stephen 'seeks to find an image for E. C., between temptress and muse'; he 'tries first one, then another image, crossing out as he goes along, debating how to figure her in language', hoping to 'capture her elusive power', which again demonstrates women as being cast into a role auxiliary to men (Attridge, 1990: 247). Stephen has the power of representing Emma; the characteristics that define E. C. as a person are constructed through Stephen's perspective, for E. C. cannot step beyond the mastery of the male visual lens, she remains locked within a male picture of women from *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen describes how, 'the image of Emma appeared before him', and 'he imagined that he stood near Emma in a wide land and, humbly and in tears bent and kissed the elbow of her sleeve' (Joyce, 1992: 124/125). It is Stephen who comments on Emma, stating that, 'she had thrown a shawl about her and, as they went together towards the tram, sprays of her fresh warm breath flew gaily above her cowled head and her shoes tapped blithely on the glassy road', and that 'he saw her urge her vanities, her fine dress and sash and long black stockings, and knew that he had yielded to them a thousand times' (Joyce, 1992: 72). Thus E. C. is depicted as:

the temptress who flirts with the priest, the tease who leads Stephen on, lyrically linked to both virgin and whore. Scarcely ever a character who speaks and acts in *Portrait*, E. C. has become a representation of woman primarily existing in and for Stephen's subjectivity. (Stanford, 1993: 41)

However, more significant than the power Stephen is seen as possessing over Emma is the notion that Emma Clery is ‘transformed from a character with a body and name, to an object’ (Attridge, 1990: 246). In *Stephen Hero*, Emma is granted not only her full name but also her title. In this text, Stephen describes how, ‘every Friday evening he met Miss Clery, or, as he had now returned to the Christian name, Emma’ (Joyce, 1944: 65). Throughout the dialogue he often refers to her as ‘Miss’, for instance, ‘Miss Clery had told him great things of his voice’ (Joyce, 1944: 65). However when Joyce is re-writing this manuscript as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the female character is transformed from a name, Emma Clery, to just her initials, E. C. This is clear when Stephen attempts to write a letter to Emma, ‘on the first line of the page appeared the title of the verses he was trying to write: To E-----C-----’ (Joyce, 1992: 73). Thus one interpretation that can be drawn from the condensation of Emma Clery into E. C. is that of Emma losing the power to present herself, a de-humanization, of her as a person; she is similar to the women within ‘Two Gallants’, as both are without the distinctive title, the name, that signals personhood; now, she is ‘signifying not a voice or presence’ she is nameless only to be signified by two letters of the alphabet (Attridge, 1990: 246). This can be decoded as Joyce attenuating the value of women, thus transforming Emma from name to initials, thus stripping Emma of an identity.

However even the alphabet remains gendered, as Stephen, ties the letters E. C. with the label ‘bird girl’ (Attridge, 1900: 246). The image of his muse as a ‘bird-girl’, demonstrates the dehumanization of the girl, who is only of value as a creative conduit for Stephen’s male aesthetic impulse. In these works, the role of women in culture is enacted and embodied as being subservient to men. In the Lacanian sense, the name of the father is that which takes over the individuality of women in the patriarchal symbolic order, and in Joyce’s texts, even the first

name of women is attenuated in these stories, so that we have E. C. and the bird-girl as images of women as disembodied by male patriarchal language.

This can be compared to the girls in “Two Gallants” where her only enunciation is through the male gaze of Lenehan and Corley, which reinforces both the suppression of the women and the power of men within a patriarchal culture, as it is the male that is given the opportunity to ‘both gaze and judge the women presented before him’ (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 311). As Lenehan ‘approached Hume Street corner he found the air heavily scented and his eyes made a swift anxious scrutiny of the young women’s appearance’ (Joyce, 2000: 41). The key words here are ‘his eyes’ (Joyce, 2000: 41), for the female subject is constructed through the lens of a masculine point of view; the woman is denied an opportunity to construct a personal sense of self, and it is her ‘appearance’ before the male gaze that is noted. The woman is only definable by masculine eyes, and thus her character is solely constructed by the two males, Lenehan and Corley. As Lenehan states:

She had her Sunday finery on. Her blue serge skirt was held at the waist by a belt of black leather. The great silver buckle of her belt seemed to depress the center of her body, catching the light stuff of her white blouse like a clip. She wore a short black jacket with mother-of-pearl buttons and a ragged black boa. (Joyce, 2000: 41)

This can be read as ‘male control over women’s bodies’ (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 312), or as the male controlling the image and representation of women. The woman does not even possess the self-governance of constructing a sense of her own identity, this has been taken from her by being viewed through the eyes and actions of her male counterparts. It is described how ‘Lenehan’s eyes noted approvingly her stout short muscular body’ (Joyce, 2000: 41), and this reinforces the idea that women have been ‘socialised to be looked at rather than to look’.

Lenehan also describes how ‘frank rude health glowed in her face, on her fat red cheeks and in her unabashed blue eyes. Her features were blunt. She had broad nostrils, a straggling mouth which lay open in a contented leer and two projecting front teeth’ (Joyce, 2000: 41). Thus the reader’s only perception of the woman is ‘as a reflection’; the males have ‘control of her image, her reflection’ (Meaney, 1993: 32). It is as if a woman’s image has been censored through the male point of view, thus deeming the male as the governing principle within the public sphere of the Dublin streets. The woman lacks the power to construct her own impression, she has become ‘the object of the gaze’ (Meaney, 1993: 32).

The woman within ‘Two Gallants’ is only ever referred to as ‘she’, or as pronoun in the objective case, ‘her’. For example, Corley states, ‘there she is’ (Joyce, 2000: 40), or he also insists that, ‘she’s on the turf now I saw her driving down Earl Street one night with two fellows with her on a car’ (Joyce, 2000: 39), likewise he reveals how, he always lets ‘her wait a bit’ (Joyce, 1922: 39). Since the woman is confined to the label ‘she’, this pronoun locates her within that of a gender-identity, as opposed to an individual identity. The woman can only ever convey the notion of being feminine, ‘this identity is frequently described as being more empathetic and co-operative, more connected to others, and more accepting of multiple viewpoints, unlike male identity, which is monolithic, authoritarian, and founded in a rationalist belief in one truth’ (Tolan, 2006: 323). This expresses a debased sense of selfhood, as the woman is primarily and solely linked with a gendered role, which establishes the woman as constituting universal principles such as domesticity, as well as associations with the body: ‘the female instinct in the body’ (Tolan, 2006: 324), and this is the woman’s primary signifying principle. Her individual entity is secondary to the fact that she is a female.



The term 'she' means 'female who is neither speaker nor hearer' (Collins, 2003: 368), so therefore the woman is silent, dutiful and passive, as she is denied her most basic right, that of self-expression and an individual identity. De Beauvoir felt that the social order had been structured to reinforce the masculine gender as the principle half of the binary. *The Second Sex* insists that women have been oppressed socially, economically and politically, and that their voice has been excluded from all aspects of life. This is a silencing of women within patriarchal society, and de Beauvoir reflects this by stating that 'society deprives them of all means for expressing themselves, all geniuses who are born women are lost to the public welfare' (De Beauvoir, 1949: 269). The woman in 'Two Gallants' does not speak, she is denied a voice, as the entire story is told from the view point of Lenehan and Corley and the woman's voice is excluded from the public domain. As Eagleton argues: 'one location of patriarchal power is language and the public platform where language is used most prestigiously, areas of linguistic status in our culture – the pulpit, the bench, the board, and the dispatch box – are associated with men' (Eagleton, 1996: 16). Therefore as the woman's voice is excluded from this public space, this can be read as reinforcing the patriarchal order of men dominating women, and this also situates gender stereotypes within that of the private/public dichotomy.

The term "public" here, suggests the opposite of "private", 'that which pertains to the people as a whole, to community or nationwide concerns, to the common good, to public opinion, to things open to sight, and to the things that may be used or shared by all members of the community' (Landes, 1988: 3). Thus, the public sphere has come to be not alone portrayed in an affirmative light, but it is also the space that is conventionally male-centred. 'Traditionally, private spaces have been associated with the home and designated as feminine, whereas public spaces (or spaces outside the home) have been determined as masculine' (Dowler, Carubia and

Szczygeil, 2005: 4). Feminists consider that these metaphysical categories are set up by 'patriarchy in order to keep women in their place' (Moi, 2002: 13), as the 'domestic landscape, for example, can be seen to reinforce identities as well as the subordination of women or the mobility of men' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 4). This draws on the concept of socio-cultural geographical spaces which deem that public spaces are dominated by patriarchal values, while private or domestic spaces are those within the home and are the provenance of women. Therefore the exclusion of the women's voice in 'Two Gallants' from the public sphere is significant because it shows that a women's view was not necessary within what is commonly considered a masculine public space. Without a voice it is as if the women's existence is not acknowledged. Joyce's choosing not to give the woman a voice within the public domain that of the streets of Dublin is indicative of the traditional feminist belief that women were prohibited from the community, the common public spaces, that they were confined to the home, the private domestic space. Woolf reinforces this perspective through the closing lines of *A Room of One's Own*, when she states that 'anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation, I thought, opening the door. But what bearing has all this upon the subject of my paper. Women and Fiction? I asked, going indoors' (Woolf, 1929: 92). The key here is the word 'indoors' (Woolf, 1929: 92), and this can be read as Woolf reaffirming the socially-constructed spaces which deem women to be confined to the domestic sphere. As Landes, insists, there existed a 'highly gendered bourgeois male discourse that depended on women's domesticity and the silencing of "public" women' (Landes, 1988: 2). And the woman within 'Two Gallants' has been silenced; she is left without any self-expression, in the public. This underlines the idea of social segmentation and hierarchical power relations which views women being confined to domesticity and males correlation that of the public dimension.

Another example of which reinforces this public/private division is within the story of 'A Little Cloud', where the men are affiliated with the public sphere; Little Chandler is described as leaving his work place:

When his hour had struck he stood up and took leave of his desk and of his fellow clerks punctiliously. He emerged from under the feudal arch of the King's Inn, a neat modest figure, and walked swiftly down Henrietta Street. (Joyce, 2000: 54)

Little Chandler is additionally depicted within the public bar of 'Corless's' where he met his friend Ignatius Gallaher, for 'the light and noise of the bar held him at the doorway for a few moments'. 'The bar seemed to him to be full of people and he felt people were observing him curiously' (Joyce, 2000: 56). In comparison, Little Chandler's wife, Annie, is only ever described within the confines of the domestic sphere, she is the one in the home who looks after the child. When Chandler shouts into the child's face 'stop' (Joyce, 2000: 64), it is Annie who comforts the child, as she states 'my little man, my little mannie! Was 'ou frightened, love? ....' (Joyce, 2000: 64). This can be viewed as reinforcing the ideological position that women were confined and naturalised to the domestic landscape: a 'proper woman' is one that is linked to household duties and the child nurturing (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 10). And of course within the logic of binary oppositions, for there to be a proper woman, there must also be an improper woman.

The majority of the action within 'Two Gallants' takes place within the confines of the public sphere, the streets of Dublin. Corley's initial encounter with the women is 'under Waterhouse's clock' (Joyce, 2000: 37), so she has travelled outside the home to the very public landscape of the street. The woman is not displayed within the traditional domestic arena, the private sphere of the home, as she features within what has been traditionally noted as a 'men

only' sphere (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 9). Although her presence on the street does not overturn the gendered oppositions of private/public sphere, nevertheless it is bounded within the traditional stereotype which considered a woman who entered this male realm unaccompanied by a man to be a woman of the street. As Landes insists 'a public woman is a prostitute, a commoner, a common woman' (Landes, 1988: 3), indeed she is viewed as inferior and devalued within society compared to a public man. This reflects the bordered world of the early feminists where 'a women who travelled outside of the home needed a man to accompany her' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 9), and if she was unaccompanied by a man, she was presented as a women who displayed her body and engaged 'in playful, undisciplined motions that would be prohibited in any other environment' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 9). It is when Corley states that 'I met her by appointment' (Joyce, 2000: 37), that one can infer she is a lady of the street, and this is also reflected within the language Corley uses to describe the women, as he exclaims she is a 'fine decent tart' and how 'she was ... a bit of all right' (Joyce, 2000: 39). It is this derogatory language which the males of 'Two Gallants' use with regard to the female, that firmly fixes her position as a public women.

This is compared to the role of the public men, Lenehan and Corley, whose exploitation of the young women is almost socially accepted, as a public man is defined as 'one who acts in and for the universal good' (Landers, 1998: 3). It is described how Corley 'extended a hand towards the light and, smiling, opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple' (Joyce, 2000: 45). The significant word here is that of 'disciple' (Joyce, 2000: 45), because Joyce's naming the men as disciples sets them within an affirmative light, and reinforces the definition of a public man. If one takes the Gospel explanation of 'disciple', it means 'one of the twelve in the inner circle of Christ's followers' (Collins, 2003: 321). Thus they were the men who spread God's word which

was regarded as divine, and the argument can be made that Joyce, by calling the men disciples, is declaring them as noble and moral men, a perspective which clouds the actuality of their actions, Corley ‘tries to wheedle a coin from his servant companion and is successful’ (Magalaner and Kain, 1920: 59). This further illustrates not alone the inequality between how male and female are depicted, but also that the ‘patriarchal feeling’ was to ‘keep women subject to men’ (Moi, 2002: 26).

In the case of Eveline, within the story of the same name, she understands and accepts the demands of her society that her sole purpose was to ‘work hard, both in the house and at business’ (Joyce, 2000: 26) Subsequently, Eveline’s life seems to be shaped by men, and as the plot unravels, Eveline’s dilemma is whether to elope with Frank, or not, is revealed. ‘Eveline’ depicts a woman who loses her freedom and autonomy for the sake of social expectations, she remembered her promise to her mother to keep the home together and to make sure 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’ (Joyce, 2000: 26). As French states, Eveline suffers ‘from the disease that afflicts all the more sensitive figures in this book, willed blindness, an insistence on not-seeing’. She is ‘trapped in a totally oppressive life’ (French, 1988: 270), and the prevalent oppressor is her father. Eveline is immersed within a patriarchal world; she is torn between the threat of her father’s violence, ‘but lately he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother’s sake’ (Joyce 1922: 26) and the ‘very kind, manly, open-hearted’ man Frank was (Joyce, 2000: 27), but one can question how frank is Frank as he wants Eveline to elope with him on the night boat without first marrying her (Ehrlich, 1997: 97). Hodgart suggests that there is no reason to take Frank’s talk about prospects and marriage as genuine, for an unsuspecting reader ‘might think the boat at the quay is the one that is to take her

(Eveline) to South America; not so, for Atlantic liners sail from Liverpool or other British ports, not from Dublin' (Kenner, 1978: 46). Therefore one can offer a reading which sees Frank wanting to persuade Eveline to go to Liverpool or London, 'where he will seduce her and probably abandon her, as many a smooth-talking rogue has done to many a simple Irish girl' (Hodgart, 1978: 46). Indeed Eveline suffered the 'most from the existing social order' (Ehrlich, 1997: 96), she almost loses her sense of meaning and purpose, as Eveline's response to Frank's departure 'is much more that a decision to sacrifice and honour her vow; it is the aversion reaction of one who is habituated to abuse' (Ehrlich, 1997: 98) by a society which is marked by the supremacy of the father. Eveline although she was 'over nineteen', 'she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence' (Joyce, 2000: 26), and as the story is brought to a conclusion, Eveline is described like a 'helpless animal' and 'her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition' (Joyce, 2000: 29). This story can be used to highlight feminist concerns. Firstly, Eveline firmly associated herself with the realm of domestic chores, even though Joyce describes how Eveline does in fact work outside the home – in 'the Stores'. However, the upkeep of the home is also part of her duties. She tells how:

She looked around 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. (Joyce, 2000: 25)

Eveline's duty was to provide Sunday dinner, but it was her father who controlled the finances as he felt that 'she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets' (Joyce, 2000: 26). However 'in the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner' (Joyce, 2000: 26). The huge irony here is that the money is being earned by Eveline who has given it to her father and is, in turn, being given back some of this money to buy the Sunday

dinner. Eveline is the embodiment of a culture which insists that girls are taught 'cooking, sewing, housekeeping, along with care of her person, charm and modesty' (de Beauvoir, 1949: 309), and it can be argued that Eveline was treated 'like a live doll and is refused liberty' (de Beauvoir, 1949: 308) by her father and the environment in which she is immersed. She grapples with the notion of escape, but in the end 'will abandon the hope of change' (Hart, 1969: 48). Eveline states, 'it was impossible; her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish' (Joyce, 2000: 29). 'Eveline will not, in fact, be able to escape' because 'Dublin has so paralysed Eveline's emotions that she is unable to love, can think of herself and her situation only by means of a series of tawdry clichés' (Hart, 1969: 51). Eveline was 'educated to serve and obey', and displays a 'debasement of mind unduplicated by any male character in *Dubliners*' (Ehrlich, 1997: 98). Joyce depicts a woman who could not dishonour her mother's wishes and rise against her father's oppressiveness; she was unable to escape her social conditioning, as she announces, 'her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her' (Joyce, 2000: 27).

Eveline's understanding of the concept of marriage conveys the thinking of de Beauvoir, who articulates that 'marriage is her only means of support and the sole justification of her existence' and 'for girls marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage' (De Beauvoir, 1949: 447). Eveline embodies this stereotype, and she reflects the mode of thinking that marriage was the only option for women; it was a means of escaping one's life. Eveline typifies the condition of her society which sees marriage as be the only career for young women. De Beauvoir declares that if one were to ask an adolescent girl what her plans are for the future she would reply, 'I want to get married', however 'no young man considers marriage as his fundamental project' (de

Beauvoir, 1949: 451). For de Beauvoir, ‘marriage is an oppressive and exploitive economic arrangement, which reinforces sexual inequality, and binds women to domesticity’ (Tolan, 2006: 321). However, for Eveline, marriage was the traditional and socially-expected path; she tells how ‘she would be married – she Eveline’. ‘People would treat her with respect then’. ‘She would be treated as her mother had been’ (Joyce, 2000: 26). Again we note the irony, as her mother had been driven insane by the demands of marriage, ending her life with an inchoate cry to the world which had driven her mad. It is important to note that Eveline’s ‘exciting image of freedom, of stepping out’ into the world could only be achieved through marriage, and this denoted a life where ‘she takes his name; she belongs to his religion, his class, his circle; she joins his family, she becomes his half’ (de Beauvoir, 1949: 449). Eveline was even willing to trade her job at the stores for another job, marriage, which meant to ‘maintain and provide for everyday life in an orderly way’ (de Beauvoir, 1949: 450). However, the lot of men is dissimilar to that of women, as Frank is described in terms of his job, and he does not view marriage as an obligatory ingredient to life. Eveline expresses that Frank is a sailor, who had ‘tales of distant countries’. ‘He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going to Canada’. ‘He had told her names of ships he had been on and the names of the different services’ (Joyce, 2000: 27). This epitomizes de Beauvoir’s point that ‘a man is socially an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does’ (de Beauvoir, 1949: 446).

This androcentric ideology is further reinforced by the language portrayed within ‘Eveline’. In the first line, ‘she sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue’ (Joyce, 2000: 25). Here, the word ‘invade’ highlights the notion that Eveline’s life is not her own, it is dominated by the evening invading the avenue, symbolic of the masculine interests



which have invaded Eveline's life. Thus the word 'invade' signals the notion of oppression; Eveline is embodied within a patriarchal system. She describes how she 'always gave up her entire wages – seven shillings' (Joyce, 2000: 26), and this reflects Woolf's point that women need financial independence in order to break the confines of male oppression: 'women need £500 a year an amount somewhere between subsistence and comfort' (Leitch, 2001: 1019). However, Eveline is confined to the oppressiveness of her father's domination, 'the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably' (Joyce, 2000: 26). Because her father controlled the financial matters of the house, this meant that Eveline was denied independence on a most basic level, she was economically restricted. Subsequently Eveline also describes how 'she would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores' (Joyce, 2000: 26), which again describes her actions and identity in terms of cultural stereotypes, as 'the masculine in our culture has become widely identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative; the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional' (Abrams, 2009: 111). In essence, the female represents the lesser marginal or subordinate half of the binary, for the 'female side is always seen as the negative, powerless' (Moi, 2002: 102). Eveline wanted to dissociate herself with these ideas of being feminine – showing emotion. For as Tolan insists: 'all aspects of society and culture functioned according to a sexual politics that encouraged women to internalize their own inferiority until they became psychologically rooted' (Tolan, 2006: 326). Therefore one interpretation which can be drawn from the statement, 'she would not cry many tears' (Joyce, 2000: 26) is that Eveline would not be sad to leave this job. However it can also be argued that Eveline was going to remain strong, because she realised that crying signified weakness, and in order for her decision to leave the stores and elope with Frank to seem more

plausible, and to be taken seriously within society, she had to take on a traditionally masculine characteristic of not showing emotion. This echoes de Beauvoir's belief it is society which has produced what it means to be both masculine and feminine, thus 'one is not born but rather becomes a woman' (de Beauvoir: 1949: 267). Eveline was now associating herself with the masculine practice of remaining strong and detaching herself from emotional matters, thus she could be viewed by society as a rational individual and capable of making life-changing decisions – such as marrying Frank.

The language in the closing paragraph of 'Eveline' reinforces the domineering stance of men towards women, for Eveline knew that Frank 'held her hand and she knew he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again' (Joyce, 2000: 28). However it is Eveline who lacks the capacity to speak, it is as if she has been silenced, her voice has been taken from her, and this reinforces Woolf's view that women are only 'seen in relation to the other sex' (Woolf, 1929: 1021). This is similar to position of the woman within 'Two Gallants', as it is the male gaze which constructs an impression of the female. Thus Frank's voice as the only one that is heard at the end of the story further demonstrates this silencing of women. Frank 'rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow' (Joyce, 2000: 29); Eveline was unable to give a voice to her thoughts, 'she answered nothing' (Joyce, 2000: 28), an interpretation such as this reflects the view of Eagleton where she insists that 'women frequently complain that they feel gagged in certain situations or what they do say is unheard or misheard or undervalued' (Eagleton, 1996: 16). Frank's voice is the only one remaining; it is described how 'he was shouted at to go on but he still called to her' (Joyce, 2000: 29). This credits language as dominated by men, Eveline's voice has ultimately been taken from her, and Frank's voice is the one that stands strong at the end of the story, the discourse to be heard is a male one. This

incident instantiates the feminist claim that language is phallogocentric, 'that is it is centred and organised through-out by implicit recourse to the phallus (used in a symbolic sense) both as its supposed "logos", or ground, and as its prime signifier and power source' (Abrams, 2009: 114). At the end of the story, Eveline is gripping the rails which themselves are phallic symbols, an image which further underscores my reading of this story. It can be argued that Joyce is affirming the traditional hierarchy of male dominating female, even on a linguistic level. The lack of a female voice asserts the feminist claim that when a woman does speak, she is automatically appropriated into this phallogocentric language, and that women need to locate themselves within the possibility of 'women's language' (Abrams, 2009: 114). Eveline is unable to find expression within what is considered a male dominated discourse as her 'eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition' (Joyce, 2000: 29), it is as if patriarchal language has failed her as Eveline remains both speechless and emotionless.

Indeed Eveline has been not alone silenced by what can only be described as a patriarchal society, but she also felt compliant to her male oppressors as she 'prayed to God to direct her, to show her what her duty was' (Joyce, 2000: 28). Eveline is represented as meek and powerless, she 'set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal' (Joyce, 2000: 29). She has been entrenched within a male centered society, thus Frank is described as 'drawing her into them: he would drown her' (Joyce, 2000: 28). Similarly Frank, when he sung of the love affair between himself and Eveline, stated that, it was the 'lass that loves a sailor' (Joyce, 2000: 27), this is the kind of patriarchal language which results in women experiencing a repressed sense of self. It is as if 'the ruling sex seeks to maintain and extend its power over the subordinate sex' (Moi, 2008: 26). It can be argued that Frank was affirming his own superiority by insinuating that it is Eveline who loves him, and not the other way around. Thus the patriarchal moral code of male

dominating female is confirmed and strengthened within this passage. These examples affirm the traditional feminist assumptions that society has fashioned women to believe in ‘the phallus and all the autonomous, “self” – originating, lawful, and monolithic power it represents’ (Leonard, 1997: 138).

In describing the gender-paralysis of Dublin, Joyce is giving voice to the constraints within which women were placed because of their gender. However, not all women were paralysed. The story ‘A Mother’ opens with a description of Mrs Kearney, which initially establishes her as a traditional female archetype. Indeed Mrs Kearney was fortunate to be ‘educated in a high-class convent where she had learned French and music’ (Joyce, 2000: 106), however, social expectation meant that when she came of age, the only career she embarked upon was that of marriage. She was ‘sent out to many houses where her playing and ivory manners were much admired’, and Mrs Kearney ‘waited for some suitor to brave it and offer her a brilliant life’ (Joyce, 2000: 106). Although ‘the young men whom she met were ordinary and she gave them no encouragement’ (Joyce, 2000: 106); nevertheless, the weight of social expectation, that deemed a women’s career to be that of marriage took hold on Mrs Kearney. In the end she married ‘out of spite’ (Joyce, 2000: 106). It is described how when she ‘drew near the limit and her friends began to loosen their tongues about her, she silenced them by marrying Mr Kearney’ (Joyce, 2000: 106), a ‘sober, thrifty and pious’ man who ‘went to the alter every first Friday’, and his conversation which was ‘serious took place at intervals in his great brown beard’ (Joyce, 2000: 106). The rationale to marrying Mr Kearney was that Mrs Kearney believed that ‘such a man would wear better than a romantic person’ (Joyce, 2000: 106), and that he was comparable to the General Post Office, ‘large, secure and fixed’ (Joyce, 2000: 110). This confirms that Mrs Kearney did not marry for love, and that the foundational building block of

this marriage was not any form of devotion, as she calls the marriage an ‘enterprise’ (Joyce, 2000: 107). It can be argued that she submitted to the existing social order by becoming a ‘good wife’ (Joyce, 2000: 106); thus she surrendered her own name, that of Miss Devlin, and assumed the role of Mrs Kearney, a woman who cared for her husband, for when ‘his cough troubled him, she put the eider-down quilt over his feet and made a strong punch’ (Joyce, 2000: 106). This initially represents Mrs Kearney as a conventional female, who ascribed to a patriarchal society, which claims a woman’s primary venture to be marriage and also locates them within the ‘hearth and home’ (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 303).

However throughout the course of the story, Mrs Kearney makes attempts to assert herself as an independent woman. She demonstrates forward-thinking by taking advantage of her daughter’s name, Kathleen, when the Irish Revival began to take hold. For Kathleen was musically-educated, and ‘soon the name of Miss Kathleen Kearney began to be heard often on people’s lips, people said that she was very clever at music and a very nice girl and, moreover, that she was a believer in the language movement’ (Joyce, 2000: 107). Thus when the opportunity arose for Mrs Kearney’s daughter to be the accompanist at a series of concerts, Mrs Kearney was satisfied that Kathleen was to receive ‘eight guineas for her services as accompanist at the four grand concerts’ (Joyce, 2000: 107). However, when the issue of payment came into question, it was Mrs Kearney who attempted to seize ‘control of male, urban life, the public life of concert halls, nationalist societies, the press, and public opinion: in short the power of money and language’ (Grace, 1988: 276). It is described how:

Mrs Kearney was now beginning to be alarmed. She called Mr Fitzpatrick away from his screen and told him that her daughter had signed for four concerts and that, of course, according to the terms of the contract, she should receive the sum originally stipulated for whether the society gave the concerts or not’. (Joyce, 2000: 109)

Mr Holohan and Mr Fitzpatrick reaffirm their supremacy and engage in a power struggle with regard to Kathleen's payment. They demonstrate the traditional belief that women who made some small claim to power should be portrayed in a demeaning light. 'She is a monster' (Grace, 1988: 274) and this can be seen through the language used by the men, with Mr Holohan stating that 'I thought you were a lady' (Joyce, 2000: 116).

The word 'lady' is repeated three times, thus implying that Mrs Kearney's fight for her daughter's fair payment was not in keeping with social conformity that insists that a lady be submissive to male authority, and that she perform tasks for no payment. Therefore, she is viewed by the men as an unreasonable woman, and her 'conduct was condemned on all hands: everyone approved of what the Committee had done' (Joyce, 2000: 116), which involved leaving Kathleen 'four shillings short' (Joyce, 2000: 114) and insisting that the other four guineas would be paid after the 'Committee meeting on the following Tuesday and that, in case her daughter did not play for the second part, the Committee would consider the contract broken and would pay nothing' (Joyce, 2000: 115). As Leonard insists, what Mrs Kearney failed to understand was that masculinity is distinguished as the prime signifier, and an 'attack on an individual male must be constructed by men as an attack on the very abstract values of masculinity' (Leonard, 1988: 144). Mrs Kearney acknowledges this inequality by stating 'they wouldn't have dared to have treated her like that if she had been a man' (Joyce, 2000: 115). Consequently, it can be seen that when a woman voices her opinion and demonstrates self-governance in speaking up for what she believes to be right within the public sphere, males like Mr Holohan and Mr Fitzpatrick, who take shelter within 'the Committee', view this as a threat to the patriarchal order, and therefore the social exclusion of this rebellious woman is necessary. For example, Mr Holohan states, 'I'm surprised at you' and 'I never thought you would treat us this way' (Joyce, 2000: 116). Mrs

Kearney's actions are considered to be irrational and emotionally driven, and she is regarded as a 'creature who cannot think straight as a consequence' (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 168), and her repeated attempts to take control of her daughter's situation are continually thwarted by the members of the committee.

Even more telling than the plot is the language used, which also reveals how women who attempt to assert their authority are regarded as improper and disruptive, and need to be excluded from the male world of the public sphere. Mrs Kearney has been excluded from all important decisions with regard to the arrangement of concerts; all the decisions regarding this matter were made by the men within the story: 'Mr Fitzpatrick came in, smiled vacantly at the room, and said well now, ladies and gentlemen, I suppose we'd better open the ball' (Joyce, 2000: 108). However it is through the spoken language of the characters that the full range of female repression is shown: 'I'm not done with you yet, she said, but I'm done with you, said Mr Holohan' (Joyce, 2000: 116). It can be noted how Mrs Kearney is not granted the full power of her name compared to Mr Holohan. Mrs Kearney is only referred to as 'she', which is reminiscent of the women in 'Two Gallants'. Both women are reduced to a pronoun, which has been constructed by society to signify one who is 'decorous and decorative, passive, silent' and dependent on 'male chivalry' (Grace 1988: 278). Similarly, Joyce, by allowing the men to have the final word: 'you did the proper thing, Holohan, said Mr O'Madden Burke, poised upon his umbrella in approval' (Joyce, 2000: 116), both reaffirms and reasserts a belief in the patriarchal order to which Mrs Kearney was a challenge. Hence, the story of 'A Mother' enunciates, in fictional form de Beauvoir's belief that women who make some claim to power are regarded as 'bad women', for this claim 'is regarded as evil' (de Beauvoir, 1949: 1407), as it is believed that some women 'appropriate their victims' fortunes or obtain legacies by using undue influences'

(de Beauvoir, 1949: 1407). Therefore women are only meant to be present ‘at home with their fathers, brothers, husbands, or lovers – as guardian angels’ (de Beauvoir, 1949: 1407). Mrs Kearney portrays a woman who attempts to challenge the androcentric realm of the concert hall, itself a metonym of the public sphere, and thus is rendered as an unruly woman. She is still acting as a guardian angel, but she is not seen as being in her ‘proper’ domain, namely the private sphere.

‘The Dead’ sees Miss Kate, Miss Julia and Mary host their annual ‘great affair, the Misses Morkan’s annual dance’. ‘For years it had gone off in splendid style as long as anyone could remember; ever since Kate and Julia, after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter and taken Mary Jane, their only niece, to live with them in the dark gaunt house on Usher’s Island’ (Joyce, 2000: 138). The women display self-rule and self-sufficiency in organising and running the annual dance, for the only time they relied on male intervention was when Kate sought Gabriel to carve the goose and give a speech at the end of the meal. Gabriel announces, ‘Ladies and Gentleman, it has fallen to my lot this evening, as in years past, to perform a very pleasing task for which I am afraid my poor powers as a speaker are all too inadequate’ (Joyce, 2000: 159). It is these ‘good ladies’, who make the party an accomplishment; however it is the male voice of Gabriel which must bid them the recognition of achieving this (Joyce, 2000: 159): their silence forms the audience to his speech. Therefore, it can be argued that Joyce maintains the patriarchal structure by having Gabriel, not alone make the speech, but take his ‘seat boldly at the head of the table’. He is also called upon to carve and serve the meat, ‘he felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table’ (Joyce, 2000: 155). In a way this is a parallel of



Eveline's father giving her back her own money as Gabriel has not contributed financially to the cost of the 'great affair', yet he is still in charge at the table.

Gabriel's placing at the table is symbolic of the male-female opposition, which sees the man as head of the family, the ruler, the dominant half of the binary opposition man/women. For example, Gabriel states, 'Miss Furlong, what shall I send you? he asked. A wing or a slice of the breast? Just a small slice of the breast? Miss Higgins, what for you? O, anything at all, Mr Conroy' (Joyce, 2000: 155). 'The Dead' confirms a belief in the patriarchal order as the women, although independent in their own right, still defer to male authority. It is descriptive of the paralysis of Dublin that encompasses gender relations.

However, as part of the double writing that is so central to Joyce's work, as well as showing male power, there are women in 'The Dead' such as Molly Ivors and Gretta Conroy who defy this male power. For instance Molly Ivors, a colleague of Gabriel's at the University, challenges him at the dance. She states, 'I have a crow to pluck with you' (Joyce, 2000: 147), and contest Gabriel's decision to 'write for *The Daily Express*. She insists, 'now aren't you ashamed of yourself' (Joyce, 2000: 147). Molly holds nationalistic values and this is reinforced by the fact that she is wearing a 'large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar' which 'bore on it an Irish device' (Joyce, 2000: 147). Molly even labels Gabriel a 'West Briton' and exclaims she is ashamed of him (Joyce, 2000: 148). It is Benstock who insists that Gabriel is 'vulnerable, unsure of how to handle female creatures' (Benstock, 1977: 3), thus overturning male supremacy. Gabriel is challenged by a woman and his reaction is one of embarrassment, 'he continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books' (Joyce, 2000: 148). Subsequently, Molly confronts Gabriel's Irishness, by questioning his decision not to visit the 'Aran Isles' over the summer

(Joyce, 2000: 148); instead Gabriel is taking a trip to Europe. Molly insists, 'haven't you your own land to visit', 'your own people, and your own country' (Joyce, 2000: 149). Gabriel reacts by 'trying to cover his agitation by taking part in the dance with great energy' (Joyce, 2000: 149), and it is then that Molly 'whispers into his ear: West Briton' (Joyce, 2000: 149). It can be argued that Molly Ivors 'delivers the first serious wound' to Gabriel, thus rupturing patriarchal power, and Gretta 'delivers the fatal one' (Benstock, 1977: 3).

Gretta, as we have seen, has her own rich internal life to which she gives voice when telling Gabriel about Michael Furey, a previous love interest who died and the song playing at the party 'The Lass of Aughrim' brought Gretta back to her roots in Galway. It is deemed that, 'the years of marriage to Gabriel, her life as wife and mother', have only been a 'vague interlude, broken when she hears 'The Lass of Aughrim', and she is returned to the origins of her consciousness in the West' (Benstock, 1977: 5). Gretta describes how 'part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried' (Joyce, 2000: 176) and the story ends with her words ringing in his ear and with Gabriel staring silently at the snow falling. Just as the book began with Eveline silently watching the dust, the image of Gabriel, his own sense of control shattered as he watches the snow, is suggestive of a possible reversal of that binary, a reversal that is complete in Molly's terminal 'Yes' which, as Derrida notes, acts as a counter-signature to the book as a whole (Derrida, 1992: 288). In Joyce, there are possibilities here for a redefining of gender roles.

Joyce can be read also as presenting in *Dubliners* a double-minded portrayal of women, a double gesture and a double reading of the role of women. *Dubliners* can be understood as conjoining opposites, there are examples of women who confirm to a male dominance and other women who attempt to undermine this patriarchal society by declaring themselves as equal to

men, like Molly Ivors, who can be seen as a nomenclature precursor of Molly Bloom, they can take care of themselves.

Another example can be demonstrated in the story 'The Boarding House', which sees a young man being tricked into marriage by a 'scheming mother' (Jones, 1970: 15). Mrs Mooney describes how, 'she thought of some mothers she knew who could not get their daughters off their hands' (Joyce, 2000: 49). Mrs Mooney undermines the cultural dimension which sees the concept of matrimony deeply entrenched within patriarchy. For example traditionally it is the female who is asked for her hand in marriage by the male, her father walks her up the aisle and hands her over to another man: the woman is largely passive in the whole process. However, Mrs Mooney allows Polly to 'flirt with other young men but she cleverly blackmails Mr Doran, fearful of scandal, into marrying Polly for his one indiscretion' (Jones, 1970: 20). It is described how Mrs Mooney noted the affair between Polly and Mr Doran, but kept silent till she deemed it an appropriate time to intervene. Carefully 'she watched the pair and kept her own counsel', until the possibility of the 'loss of her daughter's honour' became overt (Joyce, 2000: 47). The fate of a girl who became pregnant in that society was to become destitute and either be sent away to a home or Magdalene laundry or else face a life on the streets. In all of this Polly would seem to be, like Eveline, an overt victim of a patriarchal attitude to sex which allowed men to enjoy sex while women took the consequences. As Ehrlich describes, one of the horrors of *Dubliners* was the 'seduction of a disempowered working-class women by an empowered man of higher social class' (Ehrlich, 1997: 98). However, Mrs Mooney has cleverly used the prevailing symbolic order of the public sphere to her own advantage here. Mr Doran succumbs to Polly's, flirtatious ways, for she sang, 'I'm a ... naughty girl. You needn't sham: You know I am' (Joyce, 2000: 47). However, it is Polly's mother's forward thinking that outsmarts and traps Mr Doran. She reviews

how she is going to ‘handle him’ (Hart, 1969: 73) as Mr Doran was employed for ‘thirteen years in a great Catholic wine-master’s office’, and Mrs Mooney knew the implications for Mr Doran of making the affair public, ‘perhaps the loss of his seat’ (Joyce, 2000: 49). This mother further expresses the tactical approach to trapping Mr Doran, she insists:

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 hour, and he had simply abused her hospitality. He was thirty-four or thirty five years of age, so that youth could not be pleaded as his excuse; nor could ignorance be his excuse since he was a man who had seen something of the world. (Joyce, 2000: 48)

Mrs Mooney is aware that if he did not marry her daughter, the affair would be spoken of and ‘his employers would be certain to hear of it’, because ‘Dublin is a small city: everyone knows everyone else’s business’ (Joyce, 2000: 49). Mrs Mooney believed that she did not think that ‘he would face publicity’ and the question was now ‘what reparation would he make?’ (Joyce, 2000: 48). The authority Mrs Mooney upheld is further illustrated in the language used, for she repeats twice through the story that, ‘she was sure she would win’ (Joyce, 2000: 48). This exemplifies that this strong mother reversed not alone the entire proceedings of male controlling the female entity, but also the patriarchal system of matrimony; it is the mother who calculates her daughter’s marriage, and who, symbolically at least, gives her away to Bob Doran, who is very much the passive party in this matrimonial narrative.

Therefore, it can be seen that some of the women in *Dubliners* are both suffering and silent, but also there are fearless women who actively engage with the dominance of men by making ‘some small claim to power’ (Kearney, 1988: 275). We have already looked at another woman who deconstructs the binary gender order of western culture in the shape of Molly Bloom. Molly deconstructs the norm of the time, where men were allowed, however covertly, to

have a wife and family, with a mistress on the side; Molly inverts this by having a husband and a lover. She deconstructs all of the norms by having her husband cook her breakfast and obligingly leave the house so she can have sex with Blazes Boylan. Derrida, however, sees her as an even more irruptive figure in the discourse of the book.

Joyce's signature at the end of *Ulysses*, is, as Derrida contends, contaminated by the final 'yes' of Molly's monologue. Molly is granted the privilege of occupying the entire final chapter of Joyce's text, and her long rambling monologue both begins and ends with a 'yes'. The final yes, 'occupies the place of the signature at the bottom right of the text', on the same page which marks Joyce's own signature in the form of a date and place name ('Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914-1921'). Derrida reads Molly's final capitalized 'Yes' as a counter-signature to the text. He explains: 'even if one distinguishes, as one must [...] do, these two signatures (that of Molly and that of *Ulysses*) from that of Joyce, they read each other and call out to each other. To be precise, they call to each other across a *yes*, which always inaugurates a scene of call and request: it confirms and countersigns' (Derrida, 1992: 288). Molly countersigns Joyce in her final resounding double affirmation, 'yes I said yes I will Yes' (Joyce, 1922: 732), which must be read in order to differentiate between the final capitalised 'Yes', and those 'yesses' that precede it. As a fictional character, this signature breaks down the boundaries between author and character, and between text and context.

Derrida's description of Molly as 'the beautiful plant, the herb or *pharmakon*' attributes to Molly, according to Derrida's previous use of the *pharmakon* in his deconstruction of Plato's *Phaedrus*, the status of an undecidable. Alan Roughley suggests that 'Molly's *oui* or yes and ALP's yes to HCE', are examples of 'Joyce's deconstructive privileging of the female position in language' (Roughley, 1999: 66) in both *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake*. The play between

Joyce's signature and Molly's countersignature is indicative of Joyce's intention to incorporate the other of language within his text. He privileges 'the female position in language' by allowing Molly the final say in *Ulysses*, an affirmation which is a necessary call to the other. Molly's countersignature provides an alternative to the language of the Father that structures the entire history of Western discourse. Her 'Yes' is a countersignature which in habits and deconstructs the authorial signature: 'one doubles the other, not as a countable presence, but as a ghost [...] I hear this vibration as the very music of *Ulysses*' (Derrida, 1992: 307-308). I would contend that some of this deconstructive music is to be found in the characters of Juno and Jack in *Juno and the Paycock*.

### ***4.3 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – O'Casey***

In Derrida's view:

"male" and "female" are fixed containers, prisons, trapping men no less than women within one place, one role, closing off the possibility of "innumerable" genders, not just two. That is why "feminism", while constituting a strategically necessary moment of "reversal" a salutary overturning that purges the system of its present masculinist hegemony, must give way to "displacement", which is a more radical "gender bender" in which the whole masculine/feminine schema is skewed. (Caputo, 1997a: 104-105)

Thus, the inversion of the opposing terms masculine/feminine produces 'an unexpected gap', a 'new concept' (Leitch, 2001: 180), where the labels of "masculine" and "feminine" are seen as 'narrow, contingent, constraining straitjackets' (Caputo, 1997a: 105). It is my contention that the characters of Boyle and Juno can be broken down so that the hierarchical male/female opposition comes undone to the point of undecidability. This moment of ambiguity 'often starts at a given point of weakness in the discourse' (Leitch, 1983: 182), and to repeat a significant metaphor put forward by Caputo, a *lento* reader is like an inspector who is concerned with the little cracks they

observe in an airplane's fuselage, 'while everyone else on the inspection team is eager to break for lunch' (Caputo, 1997a: 79), as a deconstructive reading is one where Derrida invites us to abandon our ordinary realm of experience in speaking, hearing, reading, and understanding language. In terms of the work of O'Casey, I am going to show not merely that there is an overturning of binary opposition that deems male superior over that of the female, as this strategic orthodoxy has been examined in the previous section on Joyce. Rather will I suggest that there is a progressive dismantling of binary distinctions to the point where the opposition itself gives way.

Derrida suggests that a violent binary hierarchy like man/woman is 'so familiar an argument that we would accept it readily if we did not stop to think about it' (Derrida, 1976: xvi). *Juno and the Paycock* interrogates this perspective by portraying women and men who manage to disrupt this patriarchal ideology. Mrs Boyle (Juno) ruptures the entire patriarchal system, the logocentric systematic which deems the male as the dominant half of the binary. For this reason, I am going to focus solely on *Juno and the Paycock*, as, although it is the Anglo-Irish war of the 1920s which forms the backdrop to the play, it is Juno a 'humane, pragmatic, apolitical women' (Benstock, 1970: 74) who holds this tenement world together. She is the Cathleen Ni Houlihan of the Dublin slum life which is embellished with poverty, hardship and suffering. Kosok describes her as the central and most significant character of the play, 'dramaturgically she is the most important link between different lines of action, participating equally in all of them. Moreover, she has to bear the weight of all three catastrophes' (Kosok, 1987: 165), namely the Boyle family receiving no money from Jack Boyle's cousin's will; Johnny being shot by the die-hards; and Mary falling pregnant. This can be read as subversive of the traditional male/female paradigm, as O'Casey places a female as the central figure. It is Juno

who takes centre stage and surpasses the male characters; Juno is the ‘dramatist’s most important device in preserving the unity of the play’, therefore overturning the balancing power where men were traditionally central characters, and where female characters occupied the periphery (Kosok, 1987: 165). In *Juno and the Paycock*, the majority of male characters are ‘too weak and too conventional to rival the strong-minded and vibrant woman’ that is Juno (Benstock, 1970: 85). She is the heroine of the play and O’Casey credits her with the same name as a Roman goddess, the wife of Jupiter, king of the Gods and with her ‘train of peacocks, functioned as the guardian of the hearth and the protectress of matrimony’ (Kosok, 1987: 167). From the outset, Juno demands more attention than any of the other characters; she develops from a ‘nagging wife who blooms into mature heroism under adverse circumstances’ (Benstock, 1970: 74). Such is her command of the action that, like Molly Bloom, she makes the private sphere and its interactions more significant than the great events of the public sphere, thereby transforming our perception of what is significant in the world of the play.

As we are dealing with a classic binary opposition, the character of Jack Boyle (the Captain), Juno’s husband, similarly blurs the divisions of traditional male/female stereotypes. Boyle strutted across the O’Casey stage as a poser, layabout and talker, supported by Juno, who stressed his work shy-attitude: ‘you’d do far more work with a knife an’ fork than ever you’ll do with a shovel’ (O’Casey, 1988: 59). Boyle unravels the conventional image of father/husband being the ‘breadwinner’ of the household, and instead he ‘relies on the earning power of wife and daughter’ (Benstock, 1976: 11). Juno complains, ‘you’d think he was bringin’ twenty poun’s a week into the house the way he’s going on’ (O’Casey, 1988: 50). The consequence of his idleness is that his ‘poor wife’ is ‘slavin’ to keep the bit in your mouth, an’ you gallivantin’ about all the day like a paycock’ (O’Casey, 1988: 59). O’Casey dismantles the traditional belief



that female characters are generally shunted to the periphery, and only ever depicted through their connection to the male central characters. This embodies Derrida's belief that there exists through the process of destabilizing oppositions a system:

which is no longer that of presence but of *différance*, a system that no longer tolerates the opposition of activity and passivity, nor that of cause and effect, not of indetermination and determination, etc. (Derrida, 1982: 18)

The play opens within the Boyle tenement, with Mary and Juno discussing the death of Mrs. Tranced's son, who was shot by the 'Free-staters', as he was a member of the 'Die-hards', and Mary reads in the morning paper that 'seven wounds he had – one enterin' the neck, with an exit wound beneath the left shoulder-blade' (O'Casey, 1988: 49). At the outset, Juno displays conventional female attributes by preparing Boyle's breakfast. However, her reason for doing this is not a traditional sense of wifely duty, but because she knows Boyle will be accompanied by Joxer when he arrives home, and they will 'burn all the coal an' dhrink all the tea in the place, to show them what a good Samaritan he is! But I'll stop here till he comes in if I have to wait till to-morrow mornin' (O'Casey, 1988: 50). It is Juno who is the strong voice within the domestic private sphere of the home; she is the one who concerns herself with, not alone the upkeep of the house, but also with paying the bills. Juno describes how 'when I go into oul' Murphy's tomorrow, an' he gets to know that, instead o' payin' all, I'm goin' to borry more' (O'Casey, 1988: 51). It is Juno, then, who maintains the household, thus establishing her character as an orthodox female archetype; Juno is associated with the private sphere of the home and sustaining the household. As she says, 'amn't I nicely handicapped with the whole o' yous! I don't know what any o' yous ud do without your ma' (O'Casey, 1988: 52).

Juno is a mother who shows care and compassion for Johnny, as ‘he’s afther goin’ through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm blew off in the fight in O’Connell Street’ (O’Casey, 1988: 79). Juno says ‘there, now; go back an’ lie down agen, an’ I’ll bring you in a nice cup o’ tay’ (O’Casey, 1988: 52), and she is also the one who comforts Johnny when he breaks down by stating, ‘I seen him, I seen him ... kneelin’ in front o’ the statue ... merciful Jesus, have pity on me! (O’Casey, 1988: 95), and it is she who insists on getting him a ‘glass o’ whisky’ (O’Casey, 1988: 95). She is also the one who makes sure that the light is lighting in front the statue of the Virgin Mary in order to calm Johnny’s nerves, she says, ‘yis, yis! The wan inside to St. Anthony isn’t enough, but he must have another wan to the Virgin here!’ (O’Casey, 1988: 52).

Initially it can be argued that Juno assumes a more subordinate role within the household, one traditionally associated with being female. As Lips, defines it, the female stereotype ‘combines attributes that add up to expressiveness: an orientation toward emotion and relationships’ (Lips, 1997: 6). There is truth to the common assumption that women are the affectionate, appreciative, carers of the home, for Juno provides a central presence for both Johnny and Mary, and when money from the will is promised, Juno no longer views Boyle as a ‘good-for-nothing’ (Bloom, 1987: 165) husband. She states, ‘you won’t have many pains in your legs when you hear what Mr Bentham has to tell you’ (O’Casey, 1988: 80). Juno exhibits the most notable female stereotype that of ‘warmth-expressiveness’ (Lips, 1997: 6), when she says to Boyle, ‘you won’t have to trouble about a job for a while, Jack’ (O’Casey, 1988: 81). Similarly, she combines attributes of a traditional female model by comforting Mrs Tancred upon the loss of her son. Juno states ‘come in an’ have a hot cup o’ tay, Mrs Tancred, before you go’ (O’Casey, 1988: 105). Juno also expresses concern by stating ‘you’d want a shawl, Mrs

Tancred; it's a cowld night, an' the win's blowin' sharp' (O'Casey, 1988: 105). This demonstrates Juno's 'compassion to include a larger group than the family' (Simmons, 1983: 73).

It is Juno who can be interpreted as standing firm as a symbol of all mothers: she is a 'Junoesque mother' (Benstock, 1976: 66), and demonstrates this notion of universal motherhood, embodied with 'a positive, life-giving force' (Moffatt, 1988: 25). When speaking about the death of Mrs Tancred's son, Juno says, 'the Lord be good to him! God help his poor oul' creature of a mother, for no matther whose friend or enemy he was, he was her poor son' (O'Casey, 1988: 106). It is Juno who realises the tragedy and pain of those who suffered the most – mothers. She questions those who are supposedly fighting for the good of Ireland's freedom, critiquing all these illusions of war which depict the dead person as a hero, as well as seeing the image of the soldiers who 'die bravely and beautifully for their country' as a delusion (Krause, 1960: 70). It was Juno who looked at the harsh brutality of war through the realistic eyes of 'working-class' women (Krause, 1960: 70), whose sons made up the bulk of the casualties. Juno represents the 'mothers and wives, the women of the tenements – earthly, shrewd, laughing, suffering, bawling, independent women' (Krause, 1967: 74). Juno displays the core trait of women, that of 'niceness/nurturance' (Lips, 1997: 7). The initial portrayal of Juno is that of a mother-characterization embedded within the domestic sphere of the home.

However, in that double gesture with which we have become familiar, Juno also blurs the boundaries between the oppositions of public/private spheres. She overturns this gendered cultural context by combining the running of the home with the public arena of work. Juno is the 'breadwinner and maid-of-all-work for a whole family', and she is 'so defined as soon as she enters with a parcel of food in her hand, hurrying home from a job' (Ayling, 1985: 114). Juno

traverses 'the boundaries of the home and engages with the public sphere in ways that would have been at one time thought impossible' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 10). Therefore, she embraces the public working world, traditionally thought to be associated with the male. She insists that Boyle, 'sit down an' take your breakfast, an' let me go to me work, for I'm an hour late already waitin' for you' (O'Casey, 1988: 61). Juno displays a 'blurring of home with the public arena' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 10); she is the one who is 'workin' an' he sthрутtin' about from mornin' till night' (O'Casey, 1988: 54). Juno, by engaging in the act of work in the public sphere, supports her family; she is 'the only one who makes sure that everyone is fed' (Benstock, 1988: 54). Consequently, she ruptures the conventional view that the male is head of the family and the idea that 'a man's home is his empire' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 8). Boyle ignores his 'function as parent and breadwinner' (Benstock, 1988: 64), and Juno realises it is the 'drink and the talk that goes with it that keeps "the paycock" out of the house and out of work' (Benstock, 1988: 56). As Kosok observes, 'Boyle neglects his family in a most irresponsible way, leaving the burden of care solely to his wife' (Kosok, 1987: 163). As Juno explains, 'he wore out the Health Insurance long ago, he's after wearin' out the unemployment dole, an' now he's thryin' to wear out me!' (O'Casey, 1988: 50). She depicts a 'complex society in which women also worked' (Dowler, Carubia and Szczygiel, 2005: 9-10); she is 'provider and protector, breadwinner, wife and parent all rolled into one' (Moffatt, 1988: 27).

Boyle, by refusing to be part of the working world, which was conventionally considered as a place for men only, also calls into question the stability of the created world of the gendered private/public sphere. Boyle lies about 'pains in his leg whenever a job is offered to him' (Bloom, 1987: 164); he says, 'how d'ye expect me to be able to go up a ladder with these legs;

(O'Casey, 1988: 62), he is an exemplar of a 'lumpen proletariat with no vestige of the work ethic to encourage him to take a job, even when one is miraculously available' (Krause and Lowery, 1980: 53). In Act One, when Jerry Devin brings news of a job for Boyle, he states 'I have a message for you from Father Farrell: he says that if you go to the job that's on in Rathmines, an' ask for Foreman Mangan, you'll get a start' (O'Casey, 1988: 62). However Juno's unending task of persuading Boyle to work is hindered by his rebellious attitude, expressed through his constant fictive pains in his legs. Boyle affirms his rationale for declining the job by insisting that 'nobody but meself knows the sufferin' I'm goin' though with the pains in these legs o' mine' (O'Casey, 1988: 64) and 'U-ugh, I'm afther gettin' a terrible twinge in me right leg' (O'Casey, 1988: 62), and when the prospect of a job is mentioned, he exclaims 'there's another twinge in me other leg' (O'Casey, 1988: 64). Juno understands his 'desire for an easy life' (Simmons, 1985: 69), when she states, 'it's miraculous that whenever he scents a job in from of him, his legs begin to fail him! Then, me bucko, if you lose this chance, you may go an' furrage for yourself! (O'Casey, 1988: 62). Thus, the character of Boyle suggests that the landscapes of private/public spheres, and the borders which divide them, are arbitrary, constructed and fragile; Boyle blurs these boundaries by choosing not to be associated with either the values of the middle classes or with an androcentric public sphere.

Conventionally, it was women who felt the need to declare themselves independent of male authority, in order to achieve self-determination and autonomy, because patriarchy subordinated the female to the male or treated the female as an inferior male. It is believed that women have often struggled to express their own concerns because society is so heavily rooted in the notion of a phallogocentric ideology. However it can be argued that *Juno and the Paycock*

dismantles this idea, because it is Boyle who feels he has to declare his independence from the powers and control of Juno:

To-day, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance. (O'Casey, 1988: 76)

Boyle's declaration of freedom from Juno parallels that of the rebels who declared Ireland's independence in the proclamation of 1916. It is the central male character who feels he is ruled by the authority of this wife; this subverts the entire patriarchal system which insists upon male domination and the degradation of the female and it also destabilizes the traditional view that power dwells within the sphere of maleness. It is the husband who is fearful of his wife and this adds a comic element to the play; it is Boyle and Joxer who are nervous about the return of Juno, as Boyle puts it, 'come on, come on in, Joxer; she's gone out long ago, we'll furrage out a cup o'tay, anyway' (O'Casey, 1988: 55), and Joxer announces 'It's a terrible thing to be tied to a woman that's always grousin'. I don't know how you stick it – it ud put years on me. It's a good job she has to be so ofen away, for when the cat's away, the mice can play' (O'Casey, 1988: 55). The power which Juno holds is demonstrated through the language which Joxer uses 'it's a terrible thing to be tied to a woman' (O'Casey, 1988: 55). The humour lies in Joxer escaping onto the window ledge in order to avoid meeting Juno, 'Holy God, here she is' (O'Casey, 1988: 76), which transpires just after Boyle had announced his independence and freedom from Juno and Joxer is after saying 'be firm, be firm, Captain; the first few minutes'll be the worst' (O'Casey, 1988: 76).

Through the three acts, the correlation between Boyle and a peacock – pronounced 'paycock' by the Dublin dialect – is evident. As previously indicated, Boyle is the paycock of the play's title, 'the nickname in itself is very telling', as the dominant reading insists that Juno's pet

name may link to the 'Juno of Rome methodology', she had a 'peacock that followed her about' (Moffatt, 1988: 28), thus implying that it is Boyle who follows the lead of Juno. Juno comes to incarnate 'those life-sustaining principles subsumed by her Roman counterpart' – the Goddess who 'cares for the unborn child', the Goddess of 'domesticity, of the family hearth, the female principle of existence' (Ayling, 1985: 114). It is her strength, resilience and force of passion which sees herself and Mary cope with the loss of Johnny, and with Mary's pregnancy, while Boyle is left a broken man who 'subsides to the floor on a level with Joxer', as soon as 'Juno abandons her hold on him he sinks as quickly as she rises' (Ayling, 1985: 110). He states, 'I'm able to go no farther .... Two polis, ey ... what were they doin' here, I wondher' (O'Casey, 1988: 144). 'Boyle needs her authority' (Moffatt, 1988: 27) in this play, which results in a reversal of the male/female bond. Therefore it can be argued that O'Casey has overturned phallogocentric assumptions, and it is a woman who is indomitable: 'she performs her mock-goddess roll', she 'embodies the sense of earthbound reality' (Ayling, 1985: 117). Juno exclaims:

What was the pain I suffered, Johnny, bringin' you into the world to carryin' you out o' the world to bring you to your grace! Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin.  
(O'Casey, 1988: 143)

It is Juno who subsequently states how she has to 'face th' ordeal meself' (O'Casey, 1988: 142), namely that of Johnny's death, while Boyle remains 'disastrously committed to his illusions' and embodies one of the core messages of the play, that 'O'Casey's men fail' (Ayling, 1985: 117). This demonstrates a reversal of patriarchal power, it is the central woman who triumphs, 'Juno – that name so indicative of Godlike sovereignty' (Ayling, 1985: 110).

Juno rightly describes his leisurely ways through this central quote when she states, 'I killin' meself workin', an' he sthruttin' about from mornin' till night like a paycock' (O'Casey,

1988: 54). Boyle's playing the role of paycock collapses a most basic gender binary – the mind/body split, where women through the ages were perceived as vain creatures that concerned themselves with their appearance, whereas traditionally men were connected with the androcentric world of the mind, which is thought to demonstrate rationality, consciousness, reason and masculinity. For example, Mary, in Act One, demonstrates this binary by seeking advice from Juno as to what ribbon she should wear, 'I don't like this ribbon, ma; I think I'll wear the green – it looks better than the blue' (O'Casey, 1988: 50). But throughout the play, Boyle is the one who remains self-obsessed; he is a 'vain man' (Simmons, 1983: 69). Subsequently it is Boyle who orders a new suit when money from the will is promised, although he has no intention of paying the 'six poun's – six' (O'Casey, 1988: 121), he feels his appearance would be enhanced if he possessed a 'good heavy top-coat – Irish freeze' (O'Casey, 1988: 121). This is opposed to Juno who demonstrates the rational presence of mind by stating, 'I'm afraid we're runnin' into too much debt; first the furniture, an' now this' (O'Casey, 1988: 91); she is the one who is concerned about the finances of the house, whereas Boyle is the one who remains irrational when he insists, 'the whole lot won't be much out of £2000' (O'Casey, 1988: 91). This confirms an oppositional ambiguity within the mind/body dualism; the play ruptures these traditional antimonies which are thought to characterize the discourse of 'logocentric' reason. Boyle is the one who exhibits the female characteristics of concerning himself with his appearance, a concern which will be echoed by Howard's narcissistic Ross, while Juno displays responsibility in terms of money matters and running the house, a concern which will, to a degree be mirrored by Sorcha.

As Moffatt observes in his introductory notes to *Juno and the Paycock*, Boyle is a modern day 'Don Quixote', and it is 'difficult to say anything positive about Boyle' (Moffatt,



1988: 28), as he views Jerry's news of a job as disruptive of his layabout lifestyle, and deems Jerry as an unnatural person because he 'never heard him usin' a curse; I don't believe he was ever dhrunk in his life – sure he's not a Christian' at all' (O'Casey, 1988: 72). Similarly Boyle's self-aggrandising is demonstrated when he gives himself the title 'Captain', and he describes his seafaring adventures to Joxer by stating:

'them were the days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin' was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism. Ofen, an' ofen when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlinspike, an' the wins blowin' fierce an' the waves lahin' an' lashin', till you'd think every minute was goin' to be your last'. (O'Casey, 1988: 73)

Interestingly, it is revealed by Juno that Boyle was only ever on a ship once in his life, and that ship was 'an oul' collier from here to Liverpool' (O'Casey, 1988: 60), whereas Boyle almost describes himself as 'a second Christo For Columbus' (O'Casey, 1988: 60).

In terms of the deconstructive crack that is found by Caputo's deconstructive inspector (Caputo, 1997a: 79), and in terms of Miller's *lento* reading, the word 'paycock' can be used to display how the 'text is at war with itself' (Barry, 2009: 69), as it is upon this 'key word' (Lodge and Wood, 1988: 64), that the opposition unravels to the point of becoming undecidable. The term signals the 'play of heterogeneous or doubled signifiers' which 'refuses definitive ordering or successful totalisation' (Leitch, 2001: 99). By deconstructing the term 'paycock', one can collapse oppositional structures and expose how language explodes into a multiplicity of meanings, denoting the notion of an 'undecidable'. Up to this, the argument stands that the character of Jack Boyle is a poseur, a source of comedy and ultimately tragedy, that he signals a reversal of the gender stereotypes which underpin the male/female opposition. Boyle is the one

who concerns himself with his appearance, he neglects responsibilities as father and provider of the family and he has been described as a 'universal lazy braggart' (Simmons, 1983: 73).

However, if one closely examines the markings of a peacock's feathers, they are marked with iridescent spots, which are often seen as being similar to the shape of the eye. Boyle's nickname of 'paycock' is exceptionally telling, as the markings of the eyes can represent an 'all seeing' (Moffatt, 1988: 28), knowledgeable Boyle, shattering the dominant, *allegro* interpretation of Boyle as a vain, self-important man who makes a proud display of himself. The word 'paycock' can be deconstructed in order to depict an educated informed Boyle. He may be vain, but he also sees more than is generally thought. His vanity is one way in which he enacts a blurring of distinctions between the opposition male/female and embodies Woolf's point, towards the end of *A Room of One's Own*, that 'it is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man womanly' (Woolf, 1929: 313). Boyle declares his superiority by stating, 'ever since the Will was passed I've run hundhreds o' dockyments through me hans – I tell you, you have to keep your wits about you' (O'Casey, 1988: 86). Reading Boyle against the grain like this liberates a more 'productive, fine-grained, distinctly deconstructive reading' (Caputo, 1997a: 76) of the character as someone who is aware of the structural inequalities in society and is unwilling to take up his assigned role at the bottom of the social pyramid. Therefore the term peacock or 'paycock' can be used to undermine previous assertions with regard to Boyle and demonstrate a collapse of borders, and an image of a knowledgeable, articulate Boyle who displays profound insights into the working of society, as opposed to the vain, self-obsessed man portrayed within the dominant, *allegro* reading.

Boyle, when speaking with Bentham (a school teacher with the intention of becoming a solicitor), states, 'I seen be the paper this mornin' that Consols was down half per cent'. 'That's

serious, min' you an' shows the whole counthry's in a state o' chassiss' (O'Casey, 1988: 92). This familiarity with the world of stocks and consolidated shares, establishes that Boyle both knows and understands stock-market terminology, undermining the claim that Boyle is 'incapable of such an insight' (Bloom, 1987: 163). Subsequently, the reading of Boyle being presented as an indolent man breaks down when he interprets the world as having margins/limits that are only imagined. For just as Derrida is a thinker without borders (Royle, 2003: 15), so Boyle can be seen, through a double reading, as a similar type of thinker: he realises that institutions, laws, society and subjectivity are a human invention to enable individuals to make sense of the world. Boyle challenges the values of the Catholic church, as he states the only reason the clergy want people to 'work work work', 'from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues' (O'Casey, 1988: 73). He realises that one is free to do anything, as long as one is willing to accept that one cannot disobey the arbitrary rules and values of society. Boyle also insists that the clergy 'always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country' (O'Casey, 1988: 72) and he questions the church's absoluteness by stating, 'isn't all religion curious – if they weren't you wouldn't get anyone to believe in them' (O'Casey, 1988: 72). Boyle, by describing religion as 'curious', is subjecting the structure to the notion of uncertainty. Therefore Boyle realises the idea of 'God'; is 'not a stable concept but a metaphor' (McQuillan, 2000: 20), and thus it is through the clergy that the meaning of God is denoted into a stable reality. Just as Derrida, 'describes and transforms; so too does Boyle. His depiction of a true Christian as a 'hymn-singing, prayer-spoutin, craw-thumpin, Confraternity men! (O'Casey, 1988: 73) stresses the unquestioning sense of belonging that is central to organised religion, as well as foregrounding the prescribed words and actions associated with religious practice. The words of the hymns and prayers are set out with no room for Derridean

play, and even the gestures are prescribed, as the penitent thumping of the breast comes at predefined moments in each prayer.

Boyle's view of structures is that they are not natural but rather ideological. For instance, Mary belongs to the working class, and her lack of education prevents her from occupying a higher social standing (middle class). She realises this, and attempts to educate herself by reading books. Boyle acknowledges these boundaries are mere inventions, as he calls the books 'thrash' (O'Casey, 1988: 70). Similarly by his choosing not to work, it can be argued that Boyle is critical of the symbolic order of early twentieth century Ireland. By opting out of his responsibility to work and support his family, he challenging bourgeois values; he states a man would be better off 'dead' than having to conform within a working population (O'Casey, 1988: 73). Boyle's questioning of these systems is illustrated through his choosing not to participate in them, and thus his actions can be seen as a critiquing of these structures. Boyle also states, 'I often looked up at the sky an' ass myself the question, what is the stars?' Boyle further asks, 'what is the moon?' (O'Casey, 1988: 74). This question posed by Boyle can be read as challenging the given interpretation of the world. He is not questioning that there are the stars or a moon, but rather is asking the question what are they? His questions are ontological. As he states, 'I seen things, I seen things' (O'Casey, 1988: 73), which resonates with the eyes on the tail of the peacock, and suggests that he is a man who sees beyond the symbolic order and class division by asking questions that the mass population take for granted. Likewise, when Boyle articulates that there is 'one that says all is God an' no man; an' th' other that says all is man an' no God' (O'Casey, 1988: 90), he is signalling the arguments of two leading philosophies of the time – religion and Marxism. Marx suggested that it was man that created God and not God that created man. He felt that humans invented a God in order to structure and organise the world, fulfilling our need for

order. Boyle's rethinking and questioning of the order of the universe, and his realisation that society is ruled by arbitrary conventions that 'makes systems possible' (McQuillan, 2000: 20), deconstructs the standard reading of him as a somewhat ignorant and colourful layabout.

This deconstructive reading of Boyle has already been cited in terms of his most famous word: 'chassis' (O'Casey, 1988: 144). As we have seen, rather than taking the word as a mispronunciation, if we subject this term to a *lento* reading, to use Miller's terms, we see that Boyle may well be commenting on the unseen ideological structures that control his world. 'Chassis', as already noted, can be read as the support frame of a structure. This meaning of 'chassis' reinforces the educated reading of Boyle. He thus can be deconstructed as acknowledging that the world is in a 'terr ... ible state o' [structures]. Thus by reading 'chassis' as denoting structures, an educated Boyle reveals an insightful view of society, and of how the world is a constructed 'conceptual order which predicates the non-conceptual orders of lived reality', with these structures finding their 'expression in language and users of language can be trained into accepting these circumstances through its habitual use' (McQuillan, 2000: 10). Therefore by owning the final word of the play, Boyle displays the knowledge and scholarly thinking that 'any code, any system of referral in general' is 'a system of conceptuality' (McQuillan, 2000: 18).

For individuals, the world exists in a synchronised ideal, the structures that organise the world are ideologically created, and Boyle acknowledges this by following his view of the stock market by using the word 'chassis' (O'Casey, 1988: 92). The stock market is another name for stock exchange, and is defined as, 'a highly organised market facilitating the purchases and sale of securities and operated by professional stockbrokers and market makers according to fixed rules' (Collins, 2003: 1589). Boyle enacts Derrida's analysis of Western thought, in that it is

through the habitualisation of the signifier these structures are presented as natural. Boyle understands that individuals take for granted what the term 'stock market' signifies, because of the belief in what Lacan describes as 'a truthful structure' (Rabaté, 2001: 4). Boyle grasps that individuals link a signifier with a single signified, rather than with different ones, in order to create a coherent meaning within language.

Boyle, then, through a double reading, can be interpreted as anticipating Derrida's belief that society is constructed according to arbitrary structures, and that Western thought is ordered in terms of structured dichotomies. However it is Juno, and to a lesser extent Sorcha in Howard's texts, who can be credited with shattering the entire notion of structurality in this play. Juno demonstrates that the concepts of oppositions are merely illusions created by society so that a centred universe can be imagined, a universe with a 'fixed point of reference' (Barry, 2009: 59). Juno shatters the 'most basic binary polarity' (Barry, 2009: 50), one which has been viewed as 'fundamental to the human way of perceiving and organising reality' (Barry, 2009: 50), that of gender structures. Juno declares her independence of all male authority by leaving Boyle and venturing out into the public sphere with Mary, 'we'll go Mary, an' we'll never come back here. Let your father furrage for himself' (O'Casey, 1988: 142). This female, like Molly Ivors and Sorcha, no longer needs a male in order to define herself, thus dismantling the notion of the male/female binary. This is similar to the situation of Sorcha, as she is the one that decides that her marriage to Ross is over. Indeed, Ross exclaims, 'This can't be the end ... but she gives me this smile, roysh, a sad smile, as if to say, basically, it is' (Howard, 2007: 202). In both texts, then, there is an Ibsenesque moment of female independence, and I would argue that this moment is one in a series of deconstructive moments as characters deconstruct the structures which hold them prisoner. Juno also 'recognises the limits of mortality' (Ayling, 1985: 128), as

when she hears of Mary's pregnancy, she urges Mary to go on living and make a new life for herself, for when speaking of Mary's unborn child she say, 'it'll have what's far better – it'll have two mothers' (O'Casey, 1988: 142). This can be interpreted as blurring the boundaries, frames, divisions, limits and borders which have structured logocentric thinking; Juno and Sorcha no longer invest a belief in a world of binary opposition; both have surpassed the convention phallogocentric thinking, they view the world without limits without structurality

#### ***4.4 The Male/Female opposition applied to the text – Howard***

Ross O'Carroll-Kelly's 'casual misogyny snobbery, elitism and all round obnoxiousness' ([www.irishindependent.com](http://www.irishindependent.com)) towards women embodies what feminists believe to be the basic structure of culture - women being subject to an androcentric worldview . For example Ross states, 'a bird walks by in literally just a bikini – a ringer for Hayden Panettierre. She has a good look – gagging for me' (Howard, 2009: 37). This male vocal domain is paradigmatic of patriarchal society, which highlights men as naturally dominating women. Ross and associated characters are templates for the infamous 'Celtic tiger cubs', where an attitude of extreme materialism and commodity fetishism was funded by newly generated wealth and trust funds. This became signified by an obsession with brands and labels. For instance Erika describes how, she is wearing a 'Brette Sandler sheer tunic and that everyone's going to be wearing them this year' (Howard, 2009: 48), or Sorcha, insists, 'I am so excited about my plans for the shop', 'I'm going to be bringing in. We're talking Literature. We're talking Bailey. We're talking KLS. We're talking Cash Lords. And a simple question – why is no one in Ireland doing Antik and Traverniti jeans?' (Howard, 2009: 34). Ross's Ralph Lauren jacket and dubs are a fundamental part of his wardrobe. This South Dublin cultural mentality is narrated through the character of

Ross, who sees women in terms of the culturally paradigmatic commodity fetishism and label-driven consumerism that pervade every other facet of his lifestyle.

Just as his shoes and jacket have to be mirror images of brand names, so also the women to whom he is attracted must also be mirrored by famous ‘brands’ in terms their resemblance to beautiful women from the world of film, media and the celebrity circuit. For example, Ross exclaims, ‘she looks a bit like America Ferrera in *real* life’ (Howard, 2009: 326), at the beginning of *Rhino What You Did Last Summer*, he exclaims ‘but here I am, in an unbelievable apartment on La Cienega Boulevard, wedged between Sahara, who wants me bad, and Corey, who’s a banger for Odette Yustman, while Nia, - if I had to compare her to someone, I’d have say Holly Madison ...’ (Howard, 2009: 40). This male chauvinism can be further exemplified through the lines, ‘fock, she looks like Samia Ghadie’ (Howard, 2007: 80), ‘she’s actually a ringer for Adele Silva’ (Howard, 2007: 23) or ‘this bird – who I’m not exaggerating – is the spitting image of Amanda Brunner. It’s like, HELLO? How can you not be sisters?’ (Howard, 2006: 85). One could list hundreds of examples from all the books as this is a paradigmatic trope in Ross’s vocabulary of desire: for a woman to be attractive to him, the reader must compare her to some unobtainable, beautiful woman who she resembles, so that Ross will become the object of envy for being able to attract such a desirable woman.

Similarly Ross illustrates how men objectify women by describing Chloe’s breast augmentation in the following terms:

‘Jesus Christ! I think those two words actually come out of my mouth. I’m not the only one either. Where the fock did she get those? Every focker knows that Chloe’s flatter than a carpenter’s dream – or even was. I’ve never seen a rack like it. We’re talking focking huge. They’re so big they should have traffic cones and a focking guardrail around them’ (Howard, 2007: 56).



Clearly, this reinforces the feminist argument that women are controlled by a male perspective and a male gaze and are reduced to a sexual object. It is Ross who insists that, 'I'm sitting back, watching the sights. In the next lane, this – if I'm being honest – Alessandra Ambrosio lookalike in a Mercedes SLK Luxury Roadster' (Howard, 2009: 48). Society focuses on women's appearance, thus attenuating any other form of value or worth that women may have to offer. Ross often comments 'she looks well' or on 'the beauty' (Howard, 2009: 52), when he is commenting on women. They are controlled by the male gaze or scopical drive, where woman is valued only inasmuch as she is valued by male desire. Similarly, Ross constructs an image of Sorcha for the reader, he states, 'she has un-fucking-believable Jakki Deggs, in fairness to her, smooth and tanned, and the way she's dangling her Havaiana on the end of her foot is doing it for me in a big-time way' (Howard, 2009: 20). In addition, Ross further demonstrates how the concept of women is constructed by the male lens, when he says that he was 'basically chilling, watching the birds go by, we're talking serious hotties here, and I see this bird coming from, like, fifty yards, away and – not being racist here, roysh – but she's black. I swear to God she is so like Jamelia, roysh, you would swear it was her' (Howard, 2006: 129). Also Ross presents a very negative image of Sorcha's grandmother because she is old and therefore unattractive to him: 'she looks a state. Big grey coat on her. Roy Cropper shopping bag. Big fucking tea cosy on her head. I don't even know how she got in here' (Howard, 2006: 210). This exemplifies that it is the male optical lens of Ross that mediates an image of the female aesthetic, thus reinforcing patriarchal ideology; it is Ross who constructs a comparative framework in order to value, or rank, women.

Ross can also be seen as sexist and ill-mannered to the feelings of others, and his language further portrays women as devalued entities by constantly equating them with pet

names. Ross brands women as 'babes' (Howard, 2007: 163), 'hotties' (Howard, 2006: 129), 'sugarbabes' (Howard, 2009: 344) and 'honeys' (Howard, 2006: 188). Just as the women within Joyce's 'Two Gallants' remains unnamed; the mother within the story 'A Mother' is allied with the label 'lady' and Emma Clery is reduced to the initials E. C., so too, Ross reveals how women do not exist as individuals or as indivisible entities, they are labelled as 'birds' (Howard, 2006: 63), which is similar to the image Stephen ascribes to Emma Clery. Emma is hailed the 'bird-girl' thus devaluing her sense of self through a comparison with a bird (a term which has a further connection with the female in the vocabulary of Ross). This signals that women require a phallic stamp, and this 'branding determines their value in sexual commerce' (Atkins and Morrow, 1989: 188). Therefore one can argue that in the contemporary world of Ross, a women's importance is scaled between the opposition of 'either too pretty or too ugly' (Woolf, 1990: 69), they are lodged between the extremities of 'positive and negative' (Woolf, 1990: 70). For instance Ross distinguishes between women on the grounds that they are 'dressed like the queue for the 77 bus' (Howard, 2010: 344) or that other women are 'pretty cute', and dressed in the likes of 'white-chocolate Clearcoat Lincoln Navigator' (Howard, 2010: 352).

Another example is in *The Oh My God Delusion*, where he is speaking about 'lady cops', and insists that 'the only reason I haven't gone into any detail about her, by the way, is because she's one of the ugliest life forms I've ever set eyes on. I wouldn't touch her with asbestos fucking gloves' (Howard, 2010: 359). Or even he refers to a girl called Suzette in *Rhino What You Did Last Summer* as being 'not the best looking wise' (Howard, 2009: 127). Ross insists, 'now, I've had my share of beautiful women over the years' (Howard, 2009: 127), and his motto has always been, 'choose em, use'em and lose'em' (Howard, 2010: 126). This reveals the male dominated public social sphere where there has been an attenuation of the female subject into the

beautiful and the ugly; the attractive and the unattractive. These are the only criteria of value as far as he is concerned: 'Erika looks incredible and I'm only mentioning that as a statement of fact' (Howard, 2010: 144). Women for Ross, have continued to be signified by a system of sex-role stereotyping, they are associated with how they present themselves or natural beauty, thus these labels, equates to what Marchbank and Letherby call the 'beauty myth' – 'white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired ideal' (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 309).

It was Naomi Woolf who explored this notion of 'the beauty myth' and how it transgressed from the introduction of women's magazines. Woolf declared that, 'women's magazines accompanied women's advances and the simultaneous evolution of the beauty myth' (Woolf, 1990: 62). She felt that:

the rise in women's magazines was brought about by large investments of capital combined with increased literacy and purchasing power of lower-middle – and working-class women: the democratization of beauty had begun. (Woolf, 1990: 62)

Women have been ideologically interpellated into thinking that a 'heroine' must 'keep on being beautiful' (Woolf, 1990: 66), thus 'we tuck flowers and ribbons in our hair and try to keep our faces looking pretty as you please' (Woolf, 1990: 63). This ideology has been internalized by women and compels them to serve as aspiring beauties, hence 'in diet, skin care, and surgery features, it sells women the deadliest version of the beauty myth money can buy' (Woolf, 1990: 69). Woolf argues that magazines like *Vogue* 'focus on the body as much as on the clothes', and also that 'the number of diet-related articles rose 70 per cent from 1972 to 1986, while articles on dieting in the popular press soared from 60 in the year 1979 to 66 in the month of January 1980 alone' (Woolf, 1990: 67). Sorcha reveals how she reads the likes of 'The Oprah Magazine' (Howard, 2009: 189), or Ross describes how 'Erika goes on flicking through her magazine.

Sorcha says there's, like, an amazing Hale Bob dress in there – “the next page, on the page after” – and that she loves busy prints because you can wear them with, like, minimal accessories’ (Howard, 2009: 308). It is Woolf who summarises the effects of reading magazines, suggesting that they give women a ‘weird mixture of anticipation and dread, a sort of stirred-up euphoria’ (Woolf, 1990: 62). She describes this sensation in terms redolent of the final chapter of *Ulysses*:

yes! Wow I can be better starting from right this minute! Look at her! Look at her! But right afterwards, I feel like throwing out all my clothes and everything in my refrigerator and telling my boyfriend never to call me again and blowtorching my whole life. I'm ashamed to admit that I read them every month. (Woolf: 1990: 62)

Howard touches on the dangers of the ‘beauty myth’ through Aoife, Sorcha’s friend, experiencing a crisis of identity; she suffered from an eating disorder, which leads to her subsequent death. As Ross recounts, Aoife was ‘more in love with the idea of playing golf than the game itself – especially the four or five hours of walking involved in a round, which she thought about in terms of calories rather than putts’ (Howard, 2007: 311). The political implication is ‘that no women or group of women, whether housewives, prostitutes, astronauts, politicians or feminists, can survive unscathed the no-win scrutiny of the beauty myth’ (Woolf, 1990: 69). For example, a banner at the 1969 Miss America pageant read, ‘there’s only one thing wrong with Miss America – she’s beautiful and jealousy will get you nowhere’ (Woolf, 1990: 68). In addition, Woolf insist that feminists have often been referenced as, ‘a bunch of ugly women screaming at each other on television’ (Woolf, 1990: 68).

Such is the power of the beauty myth and the male gaze that women are often complicit in attempting to make themselves as attractive as they can to that male gaze, to the exclusion of all other values and attributes. Ross voices his shock when Sorcha intends to put Honor into a

pair of Stilettos, he states, 'I was convinced that Sorcha was shitting me when I saw them first. Stilettos for babies. I asked her was it not, like, dangerous, but she said that girls eventually have to learn to wear designer heels and it's best that they start young' (Howard, 2009: 17). It is Ross who indicates the dangerous consequences of this by revealing that 'I could have pointed out that Chloe back home has been told that she has to have both hips replaced, the result of a lifetime wearing designer heels' (Howard, 2009: 17). This shows that 'the system contains the materials for its own subversion' (Leitch, 2001: 193), as through the idea of the 'beauty myth', males like Ross are not solely responsible for devaluing the female entity by equating their worth with the labelled clothes they wear and with their appearance. Females within Howard's fiction also view themselves within the beauty/ugly duality; they too are obsessed with their appearance and view their worth in conjunction with the labelled cloths they are wearing. This echoes Derrida's thinking that he is 'not dismantling the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself' (Leitch, 2001: 193/194), because although the story is told through the eyes of Ross, the first person narrator, the women when they do speak demonstrate a reality whereby they are fixated with their appearance, as they discuss dieting and constant comparisons of themselves with stars of film, TV, music and magazines.

For example, Ross outlines the sole reason for Sorcha's call is to tell him that 'lace is the sexiest fabric this year with Prada, Vuitton and Stella' (Howard, 2009: 85). Another example is where Sorcha runs a fashion show in Aid of the 'Jolie-Pitt Foundations, which is one of the most – Oh My God – amazing charities' (Howard, 2009: 188), however throughout the show there is a constant comparison with stars of TV, for instance, 'Elodine totally pulls it off with this Touch Luxe silver scales jacket, Louboutin heels and – can we see the pin, Elodine? – a Lucite flower pin by Alexis, as seen in *Sex and the City*' (Howard, 2009: 189). Therefore the women in the

series are victims of the beauty myth, and the celebrity myth, they also compare themselves to famous women, just as Ross does, through their focus on their bodily appearance, and through their ascription of value almost solely within this paradigm. This raises the question as to whether men are exclusively responsible for the objectification of women or are they merely commenting on social codes as embodied by women. It was Lee Bartky, when discussing the male gaze, who insists that ‘a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women, women learn to appraise themselves through male eyes within a patriarchal culture’ (Bartky, 2005: 468). This illustrates a blurring of maleness/femaleness, as men too live within the confines of beauty bondage. It would be inconceivable for Ross to be seen with a woman who was not some reflection of a well-defined beautiful woman in the media. He can only find women attractive who have been socially-designated as attractive by the cultural media. This is why Fionnuala’s espousal of her own middle-aged sexuality is so repulsive to him, as in the magazines and programmes which arbitrate such matters; it is only younger women who are deemed to be attractive in this discourse.

In this context, it is useful to examine the case of Sorcha, when she insists on taking Ross for a day out. His idea of a day together is ‘wrapping his face’ around a plate of wings and ‘a couple of JDs’ (Howard, 2009: 51). However Sorcha plan is a trip to ‘Kitson, the boutique on Robertson Bouvelard where she’s already go – oh my God – so many ideas for her own shop’ (Howard, 2009: 51). Sorcha insists, ‘Robertson is the place to be’, that’s why they’re all here, Ross – Kitson, Curve, Lisa Kline. Because they know all the celebrities hang out here. Having Katie or Halle or Reese photographed walking into your shop in, like, a supermarket tabloid is better than a two-age add in *Vogue*. I read that in the *LA Times*’ (Howard, 2009: 52). This demonstrates what Derrida termed a ‘subversion of logocentric metaphysics’ and what appears

are ‘new notions of interpretations’ (Leitch, 2001: 194), where it is not alone men who degrade the female entity by comparing them with the ‘beauty myth’, but women who also ascribe to similar self-assessments. Women’s economy is one of labels fuelling the need to keep their ‘Feminine Quotient’ high (Woolf, 1990: 63). Another example is where Sorcha receives an instant text about the stars and the cloths they are wearing: it is reported that ‘Halle Berry wore a satin Monique Lhuillier dress with peacock feathers along with Terry de Havilland strappy sandals and glittery Chopard diamonds to some movie premier’ (Howard, 2009: 51). Importantly, Sorcha repeats ‘every word of this carefully, like she’s memorizing it, then she nods, like she approves’ (Howard, 2009: 51). This suggests that ideologically Sorcha has been interpellated into the beauty myth, which would seem to suggest that this text is just replicating the culture of patriarchy; however, in a double writing, it is also suggesting that men have become equally captivated by the beauty myth. In the Dublin 4 world, similar identity assessments apply to both males and females as they both judge each gender and the other gender in terms of physical appearance and designer clothes.

Another example of the internalization of the ‘beauty myth’ can be seen in terms of the metonymic value of shoes. On hearing that Chloe has to get two hip replacements, due to years of wearing designer shoes by ‘Manolo Blahnik’ and ‘Jummy Choo’ (Howard, 2010: 41), Sorcha bursts into tears exclaiming, ‘what if Chloe can never wear amazing shoes again’ (Howard, 2010: 45). This implies that Chole’s self-worth will be diminished if she can never wear designer labelled shoes after the operation. Sorcha seems to have little concern over the debilitating effects of two hip operations at such a young age. It is Ross who displays logical reason by insisting that it’s all ‘very Izzie focking Stevens’, referring to a character from the television series *Grey’s Anatomy*, and he puts his arm around Sorcha insisting ‘that won’t happen’

(Howard, 2010: 45). This echoes Virginia Woolf, and her notion of the ‘looking-glass’ where women themselves collude in their own victimisation by acting as mirrors and reflecting back to men their desired image. In *Rhino What You Did Last Summer*, it is described how women have combined both athletic ability and beauty, by hosting ‘the California High-Heel-A-Thon’, indeed, ‘in lane one, wearing a stunning pair of Kurt Geiger snake-skin platform courts, *from* the TV show *The Biggest Loser*, ladies and gentlemen, Alison Sweeney.....’ (Howard, 2009: 318). This underlines that the assumption of woman as ‘other’ is further internalised by women themselves. For Woolf writes:

A woman cannot find in them that fountain of perpetual life which the critics assure her is there. It is not only that they celebrate male virtues, enforce male value and describe the world of men. (Woolf, 1929: 1028)

This illustrates the point that males and females are not so distinctly different, ‘there is a play of spacing by which the elements relate to each other’ (Atkins and Marrow, 1989: 141), and in this case, that relation is to the ‘beauty myth’, and later in this section, Ross’s own obsession with beauty will be outlined.

A further illustration of how the male/female opposition is subject to the concept of an undecidable is to be found within the character of Sorcha herself. In the prologue to *This Champagne Mojito is the Last Thing I Own*, Sorcha has embraced the public working-world, conventionally a male dominated sphere, to become, ‘owner and manager of Sorcha’s Fashions in Dublin’s Powerscourt Townhouse Center, one of the hottest boutiques in the city right now, with exclusive Chloé and LoveKylie ranges’ (Howard, 2007: 3). This echoes a previous point made by Virginia Woolf where domestic life, the interior space, is a female one and Woolf celebrates any female who chooses to leave this private sphere. Ross recounts how ‘we’re



having Sunday lunch in LePanto, roysh, in the Radisson in Booterstown, and what we're celebrating is the fact that, from tomorrow, Sorcha's shop is going to be the first in Ireland to sell Rock & Republic jeans' (Howard, 2007: 73). It is also suggested that Sorcha has a 'great business brain' (Howard, 2007: 74), as she says how the jeans cost 'four hundred and fifty euro a pair and I cannot believe the demand for them already. We've got, like, twenty pairs of VB Rocks arriving in tomorrow and orders for, like forty-five. It's like, *oh my God*' (Howard, 2007: 74). Sorcha demonstrates a rejection of the traditional confinement of women to the private sphere by choosing to return to work soon after Honor was born and hiring a nanny. This is to the disbelief of her parents, who insist that 'stay-at-home mum's form a bond with their children that working mum's don't' (Howard, 2007: 74). Sorcha situates herself as an independent, self-regulating woman who does not view herself as marginalised or dominated by men. Indeed, she reminds Ross that 'I got maximum points in my Leaving Cert., you got minimum. Has something happened in the meantime to persuade you that you're smarter than me' (Howard, 2007: 101). Although Sorcha's boutique does not survive the recession, she still destabilizes the binary by illustrating the self-determination of setting up the boutique. Sorcha has altered the social order which according to the traditional wave of feminists programmes women to be dominated by men.

Similarly Ross's mother, Fionnuala O'Carroll-Kelly, presents a powerful destabilizing image of patriarchal society. Fionnuala surpasses her male counterpart, her husband Charles O'Carroll-Kelly, and establishes herself as part of 'the new wave of women's fiction writers'. She goes on to become an 'international best-selling author', with her initial book *Criminal Assets* (Howard, 2007: 110), which can be credited with placing her husband in jail because she published his unethical financial dealings in fictional form. Ross claims, when visiting his father

in jail, that ‘the old dear wrote a supposed book about some sexless trout whose husband was on the take ... she’s a fucking hound. She’s the reason you’re in here and now she’s just like leaving you to rot’ (Howard, 2007: 9). This demonstrates that Fionnuala did not feel that as a female, she was hindered by patriarchal social power. She was prepared to enter the public sphere as a writer and later as a celebrity cook. In many ways, she is the key figure in the books, as Ross has a pathologically intense relationship with her which he denies and represses by insulting her at every opportunity.

In *Should Have Got off At Sydney Parade*, Ross describes Christmas dinner with his parents, calling his mother as the ‘old dear’, and telling how she is ‘already half-pissed on amaretto and apricot daiquiris, the fucking soak that she is’ (Howard, 2007: 5). Ross further insults his mother by describing the dinner she cooks, saying that ‘this is fucking revolting’ (Howard, 2007: 7), even though the truth is his mother is an ‘unbelievable cook’ and he secretly admits that the food is ‘incredible roysh’ (Howard, 2007: 6). Similarly, in *Rhino What You Did Last Summer*, where Fionnuala become famous in America, Ross’s reaction to her success in one of resentment and antipathy, for as Fionnuala participates in the ‘California High-Heel-A-Thon’, (Howard, 2009: 319), he describes ‘her face suddenly comes up on the huge screen they’ve got and I’m staring at her big, all of a sudden bee-stung lips and it’s like, who gets botoxed before something like this? She looks like a fucking monkey with hot tea in its mouth’ (Howard, 2009: 319). Ross further complements his mother when she announces that she intends to marry Trevion, and has been shopping for a wedding dress. Ross insists that ‘her hips would look big in a fucking circus tent’ (Howard, 2009: 330), and he points out that ‘unbelievable! Un-fucking-believable! and what I mean by that is that she has spent the morning shopping for a wedding dress, even though she’s already married’ (Howard, 2009: 330). It is only within *We Need to*

*Talk about Ross*, that the reader is presented with answers for Ross's extreme abhorrence toward his mother. Ross reveals how, he felt never wanted: 'I was a total accident. She didn't want kids. Seriously, if I hadn't come along, they wouldn't have even stayed together. They'd have got, like, separated years before they actually did' (Howard, 2009: 22). In addition to this, Ross discloses that he 'couldn't even read till he was fourteen', and the reason he never exposed this information to anyone, was firstly, he 'didn't want people knowing I was stupid' and secondly, who was he going to tell, 'the old pair were never around' (Howard, 2009: 22). This sheds light on the reasoning behind the intense relationship Ross and his Mother shared. It illustrates the rationale behind Ross describing his mother as a 'wizened old filth-bag' (Howard, 2007: 236).

Howard overturns the conventional argument that women's literature has been viewed as inferior to the male author, indeed it is Fionnuala's 'sensuous' (Howard, 2007: 108) writing which ruptures the politics of power as traditionally, it would have been male authors that were viewed as being the more significant. Fionnuala exemplifies the gynocritical perspective that Elaine Showalter, an American feminist critic, describes. The gynocritic focuses on the female authors and characters, and on the female experience, as a marker of reality, in particular of a collective understanding of what it means to be a woman. Eagleton defines the term as someone who:

discovers in her authors and characters an understanding of female identity – not that she expects her author and heroines to be superwomen, but the essential struggle will be towards a coherent identity, a realization of selfhood and autonomy. (Eagleton, 1991: 9)

A gynocritical reading is comprised of the relation from 'reality, to author, to reader, to reality: there is an objective reality which the author apprehends and describes truthfully in her text' (Eagleton, 1991: 9). This feminist theory links literature with life, as readers have the freedom to

immerse themselves within fictions, and then return to a changed reality; the theory maintains a blurring of boundary between text and reality and this act of reading is seen as a ‘communication between the life (experience) of the author and the life of the reader’ (Moi, 2002: 42).

Fionnuala’s feminine writing, captures not alone ‘steamy love scenes’ (Howard, 2007: 108), but also elements of female experience. For example:

She stood in front of the nineteenth-century giltwood mirror, catching her reflection from different angles in the dim light of the room. She had a cool, lascivious sense of herself this morning. (Howard, 2006: 121)

Ross’s reaction to this is that ‘who wants to know their old dear has all this sick shit in her head’ (Howard, 2006: 122). However, this example shows that it is the female pen that reigns supreme here, and I would suggest that Fionnuala’s very fluid personal style is both a pastiche of, and also an acknowledgement of, a form of *écriture féminine*. It is a deconstructive double writing where Howard is both making fun of the over-blown style of some romantic novels, while at the same time, allowing Fionnuala’s voice to be heard in the public sphere. This debate demonstrates a deconstruction of the patriarchal norm that ‘literary values and convention have themselves been shaped by men, and women have often struggled’ to express their perspective in narrative (Selden and Widdowson, 1993: 215). Traditionally it has been the male pen that has shaped the female entity, but this example from Howard demonstrates a reversal, as it is Fionnuala’s female pen that constructed the character of Charles, who ironically is powerless against the female gaze, which has painted the picture of Charles O’Carroll-Kelly, the ‘controversial businessman and independent councillor’ (Howard, 2007: 110). Indeed, Charles’s identity has been constructed through the Fionnuala’s female perspective and in *We Need to Talk about Ross*, Fionnuala reconstructs this earlier representation of Charles. This book, published as a

companion to the series, serves as a type of mockumentary in which the invisible author, Paul Howard ‘interviews’ a number of the characters in the series. Fionnuala describes Charles in glowing terms, ‘I should start by saying that he’s the most adorable man I’ve ever met. Honestly – before or since’; ‘he was always so, well, charming obviously. So chivalrous, which I loved’ (Howard, 2009: 72). Fionnuala further insists he was:

very old-fashioned in that way, even for the times – I’m talking about the later fifties, early sixties. Even the way he dressed. He seemed to be five years behind whatever was the fashion. And of course he has that lovely bumbling way about him. You know what he’s like. (Howard, 2009: 72)

Fionnuala describes how ‘oh, yes, I was smitten’, adding that ‘everybody loved Charlie’ (Howard, 2009: 72). This demonstrates a reversal of the traditional female role, as the woman in this instance is credited with constructing the identity of her male counterpart. This is part of the multi-layered presentation within Howard’s fiction. There is a chick-lit style embedded in popular culture style, and there is a character in the book who is writing a book, inside another book, which is presented in a diary/blog/confession of another character – Ross. So there are three layers at work here, and the destabilizing of the narrative structure points to the destabilizing of the patriarchal conventions of authority and authorship. This polymorphous style can be argued as Howard playing with narrative presentation and subsequently, as an empowering of the female voice, of Fionnuala O’Carroll-Kelly.

As Derrida insists, the history of Western thinking is based upon logocentrism which entails hierarchical binary oppositions, and the concept of feminism is embedded within that of sexual difference, as evidenced by the socially-constructed inequalities between the opposition male/female. Cixous puts forward the notion that language is also specifically characterized by a

male/female dualism, and it was Virginia Woolf who was the first to acknowledge differences between male and female language. In *Women and Fiction* (1929), Woolf suggests that:

The average novel by a woman is far more genuine and far more interesting today than it was a hundred or even fifty years ago. But it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty – so simple, apparently: in reality, so baffling – that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. (Woolf, 1929: 313)

Woolf contended that language is gendered, and that the sentence is unsuited to enunciate female experience. Woolf called for a woman's style of language: a 'natural, shapely sentence' in which there exist a 'looser sequence, rather than carefully balanced and patterned as in male prose' (Barry, 2009: 121). For example, Fionnuala's 'graphic realism' (Howard, 2009: 169) in her latest novel *Karma Suits You – States of Ecstasy*, mirrors Woolf's declaration that there exists a female language:

she handed him a fifty-dollar bill and he turned to the till. His low-slung jeans revealed three inches of cleavage, which made her stomach heave. She tried not to think about it. Instead, she thought about the journey that had brought her to this point ... she should have been repulsed by this. But the truth was she suddenly felt herself oddly aroused by his teasing. (Howard, 2009: 171)

Another earlier example can be taken from Fionnuala's first novel, *Criminal Assets*, where the main character, Valerie, describes how her husband Richard is in jail for tax evasion and how she is having an affair with a younger man named Lovell Power. It is described how, 'the Criminal Assets Bureau had taken virtually everything', 'twelve of their bank accounts had been seized, she remembered she had their home in the well-to-do area of Foxrock, their apartments in Stillorgan, Ticknock and Charlesland', 'they took the horses, including the three Arabian

stallions, to say nothing of the two Jack B. Yeats originals and their 66ft, ocean-going oyster yacht' (Howard, 2007: 42). Although, Ross demeans Fionnuala's writing by insisting, 'I'm thinking, this shit is so bad it's, like, actually funny' (Howard, 2007: 45), when Fionnuala openly describes the details of the affair, his reaction is one of dismay, he states, 'no! No way!' (Howard, 2007: 75). Fionnuala's writing can be used to denote a female language; it focuses on Valerie's female sexual experience, for instance:

Lovell was still sleeping. They'd been up all night, making fantastic love until the first light of dawn fingered the red, linen curtains. The night had been a rollercoaster ride, not a cheap, three-euro trip either .... She couldn't remember how many times she'd exploded in orgasmic ecstasy. (Howard, 2007: 122)

Ross is horrified by this. He exclaims, 'where she getting this? It's not roysh' (Howard, 2007: 94). His horror stems from a very male view of his mother as a non-sexual being, and is redolent of the same trope in literature, for example Hamlet's obsession with his mother's sexual frisson with Claudius. Howard allows Fionnuala to voice her own sense of pleasure in sex, and in her own body in a manner redolent of Molly Bloom:

She watched his sturdy, educated fingers carve away the few small pieces of recalcitrant flesh that had attached themselves to the stone and suddenly herself having to fend off thoughts, impure thoughts that fixated on those thick, fleshy hands. (Howard, 2007: 75)

The overblown style is starkly juxtaposed to the more pragmatic style of the rest of the book, and Howard demonstrates a writing of the body here in her descriptions of female sexual pleasure which certainly can be read as *écriture féminine*:

Somehow she knew he'd be a sensational lover but this was so good it frightened her. She threw her arms behind her head as his thrusts continued until they were soaked with sweat and not even a seawall could hold back the wave of pleasure that was coming. Soon, the perfect breaker arrived

and they rode it together, before collapsing into a sticky embrace and savoured every second of the post-coital peace.

Then they went upstairs and did it again. (Howard, 2007: 94)

While there are strong elements of pastiche and parody at work here, nevertheless there is also a sense of a different kind of writing, which enunciates a specific experience, and as we have seen, in the deconstructive mode of double reading and double writing, the binary logic of either/or is supplemented by a more inclusive logic of both/and. This can be interpreted as Howard attempting to destabilise phallogentrism, by giving a voice to the female experience. A female-driven narrative is contained within this book as Fionnuala's pen demonstrates a female language, it emphasises a female struggle. Thus the text is not beholdng to the eponymous narrator that is Ross.

However, it was Cixous who furthers Woolf's thinking on a female language, she insists that there exists a female writing, *écriture féminine*, for she deems that 'phallogentrism is the enemy' (Cixous, 1980: 360). Therefore to repeat a quote from earlier in the thesis, Cixous defines this female writing as:

a radical, disruptive mode of "female" writing that is opposed to patriarchal discourse with its rigid grammar boundaries, and categories; tapping into the Imaginary, it gives voice to the unconscious, the body, the non-subjective, and polymorphous. (Cixous, 1976a: 16)

It is in 'The Laugh of the Medusa', that she speaks of '*l'écriture féminine*', this was both 'the means and the product of releasing the libido repressed by a masculine economy that represents woman only as lack, as the castrated, deficient mirror of man' (Atkins and Morrow, 1989: 187). Cixous believed that it was only through writing that the female gender could critique Western civilization's privileging of masculine reason and meaning. I would argue that the writings of



Fionnuala can be used to demonstrate this serious point, despite the strong elements of parody and pastiche which Howard attaches to her narrative style and voice. The extracts from her books, which are separately inserted throughout Howard's fiction, reveal a uniquely feminine style of writing, which deconstruct the phallogocentric economy of Ross's narrative voice. For example:

his face was frozen in shock. Then she turned and walked away, hearing his forlorn cries of 'Valerie! Valerie!' echoing after her, down the long, cavernous corridors, which she knew she'd never have to walk again. She could feel her migraine lifting. (Howard, 2006: 179)

The image of her walking recalls the unmanned girl in 'Two Gallants', who was also walking in the public sphere the, or of Molly Ivors, walking out into the night in 'The Dead', and it shows how much things have changed for women. Now, Fionnuala is free to walk the streets without anyone casting aspersions on her moral character. She also about the body as an agent of feeling in her book: 'suddenly he crushed her with a long, lingering kiss. She put up a perfunctory fight but soon felt herself surrender in his powerful arms' (Howard, 2006: 93). This parallels Cixous's thinking in 'The Laugh of the Medusa', where women 'must write their bodies, write their desires and so unleash their power' (Cixous, 1980: 38). Cixous gives an example of this style of writing, it is a language 'of those wonderful hysterics who subjected Freud to their passionate body-words, haunting him with their inaudible thundering' (Weil, 2006: 162). Similarities can be drawn from Fionnuala's text, as she too 'cannot be tamed, the poetic body, the true mistress of the signifier' (Weil, 2006: 162). Ross's reaction to this style of writing underlines its success: 'this is weird shit' (Howard, 2006: 93). Ross's bemused reactions can be seen as a stereotypical male response to writing that enunciates the demands of the female body. In this sense, the book enacts the desire of women to break free from patriarchal, phallogocentric language, and the

bemused and angry reaction of that phallogocentric discourse. However when Fionnuala writes: ‘you ran out on me, he said, a disappointed note entering his voice. Just before the spinach, chicken and crème fraiche filo parcels were ready...’ (Howard, 2006: 93), this illustrates the feminine writing which is characterized by ‘gaps, silences, puns, rhythms and new images’ (Waugh, 2006: 335). Fionnuala symbolizes the female voice which has been repressed for so long. Her writing is marked by fluidity and by a rhythm which dismantles ‘the order and logic of standard writing’ (Peck and Coyle, 2002: 168). Taking an extended quote from *Karma Suits You – States of Ecstasy*, we will see these stylistic points:

“yes,” she said. “That would be very nice.” After thirty silent but tension-filled minutes in the car, Valerie found herself staring up at the God-like majesty of these natural superstructures. “Big,” he whispered. She felt his hands seize her tiny waist and felt his breath in her ear, rank, like bad Gorgonzola. “Big..... and firm. (Howard, 2009: 172)

Here there is evidence of what Cixous insists is characteristic of a feminine writing. Firstly Fionnuala is writing from the body and describing bodily experiences: a sexual encounter between Valerie and a service station man. Fionnuala is depicting images of the female subject in command of her body and enjoying sensuous experiences on her own terms. The simile which compares his breath to cheese is an interesting use of the traditional domestic discourse in a different context. The passage also has gaps in the narrative and it is up to the reader to fill them in. Fionnuala depicts this by inserting ellipses which must be filled in by the reader. There is also evidence of silences within the narrative, typifying female language: ‘dirty, naked and perspiring profusely, enjoying the post-coital moment....’ (Howard, 2009: 174). Cixous insists that it is within the non-verbal communication that a feminine expression dwells. One might question the application of the theory of Cixous to what is a pastiche of romantic novel writing, but Cixous at

no stage sets out a high literature/popular literature line of demarcation; her point is that women write in a different register, and I feel that Fionnuala, like Molly Bloom, embodies this. The fact that both women are characters in the texts of male writers, further underscores the deconstructive potential of the writers under discussion.

One can link Fionnuala and Molly Bloom's portrayal of language in terms of versions of *écriture féminine*. Molly's soliloquy can be read as an effort to undo phallogentrism, as Joyce breaks with the style of carefully-balanced male prose into a looser sequence of writing which is indicative of a female language. Joyce poses language in a way that it enunciates the feminine, as the subject matter of *Penelope* is Molly's endless thoughts about sexually, her body, her affair with Boylan and her valuation of Bloom. For example Molly states, 'I don't wonder in the least because he was very handsome at that time trying to look like lord Byron I said I liked though he was too beautiful for a man and he was a little before we got engaged afterwards through she didnt like it so much....' (Joyce, 2000: 695). This echoes Cixous' notion that women must write their body, indeed 'a woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardour – once, by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction' (Cixous, 1976a: 885). In this way, a female language is presented by Joyce in the 'loosened grammatical structure' (Barry, 2009: 122), which differs from the rest of *Ulysses*. Joyce's limited use of punctuation in the entire chapter of eight sentences, spread out over forty three pages, indicates a lack of forma; grammatical and syntactical structure, and gives a sense of words and thoughts flowing, as one line drifts into next without a pause. This is a distinguishing trait of *écriture féminine*, a writing that displays a sense of fluidity. Molly's stream of consciousness has swept away a rationalist syntax, writing the realm of the body. For example, 'I used to tell her a good bit of what went on between us not all but just enough to make her mouth

water' (Joyce, 2000: 695). This illustrates a undermining of the phallogocentric order, it is a splitting open of the structure which deems language to be solely characterized by maleness.

While Cixous has noted that *écriture féminine* can be produced by males as well as females, nevertheless she 'finds it rare for men to write in this mode since they have much investment in the "phallogocentric" order encoding their supremacy' (Todd, 1988: 57). There exists a 'decipherable libidinal femininity which can be read in writing produced by a male or female' (Moi, 2002: 106), Therefore it is not the sex of the author that matters, but the kind of writing that is produced; there is a danger of confusing the 'sex of the author with the "sex" of the writing he or she produces' (Moi, 2002: 106). I would argue Howard and Joyce achieved this *écriture féminine*, threatening the superiority of a male language, and reinforcing Derrida's view that binaries are always subject to a revelation through the notion of an undecidable. One can 'delimit such a closure', of male/female (Derrida, 1976: 16), as one can often find significations of femininity 'in writings signed by men: it does happen' (Moi, 2002: 106).

Subsequently, Fionnuala further blurs the borderlines between the categories of male/female by evolving from an upper-middle class housewife into 'a fashion icon', as she becomes the 'new face of Crème de la Mère', and we learn that she is going to be 'modelling some of Paul Costello's new designs at London Fashion Week' (Howard, 2007: 108). Fionnuala also becomes the main focus of the reality TV show which takes place during their move to the United States:

South Dublin – born chicklit phenomenon Fionnuala O'Carroll-Kelly as she sets out to conquer both the US book and music charts against the backdrop of her extended family's disintegration. Fionnuala, the estranged wife of disgraced businessman and politician Charles O'Carroll-Kelly, is currently recording an album of duets with The Late Jeff Buckley. (Howard, 2009: 294)

Interestingly in terms of breaking down binaries, the ultimate binary that frames human existence, that of life and death, is broken here as Jeff Buckley has been dead for some years and so the ‘duets’ will be created through technological voice fusion of his recordings, and her live performance. Fionnuala’s latest book *Karma Suits You – States of Ecstasy*, is described by Sorcha as ‘her best yet’, and Sorcha goes on to say that her friend Emmy has only met Fionnuala once and ‘she’s already thinking of going back to UCLA to do gender studies’ (Howard, 2009: 154). This illustrates that Fionnuala ruptures the hierarchical belief that situates ‘women [as] less advanced than men’ (Lips, 1992: 11), and also that her writing can serve as a source of inspiration for younger women in search of a sense of identity. Another example is in *The Oh My God Delusion*, where Fionnuala establishes herself as a TV icon, with her ‘new cookery show’ (Howard, 2010: 48). It has been named as ‘RTÉ’s FO’CK Cooking’ (Howard, 2010: 48). Fionnuala overturns the unwritten social code which saw women consigned to the private sphere by taking an activity that is almost metonymic of women’s private sphere, namely meal preparation, and turning it into an activity which becomes central to the public sphere.

Just as Fionnuala ruptures traditional aspects of the gender definition that underlines the binary of male/female, so the character of Ross can also be used to show a destabilizing of the patriarchal ideology from a male perspective. Ross ‘lived a life of insulated splendour revolving around a series of parties and minor social disasters’ (irishindependent.com). An example of his unerring ability to bring disaster to a normal event is when he decided to add ‘Vodka, Southern Comfort...’ to the punch bowl at a children’s party; his excuse is that ‘I just wanted to liven things up a bit in here. Jesus, I’ve been at fucking autopsies with a better atmos’ (Howard, 2010: 89). In a manner reminiscent of Boyle, Ross is a vain man; he insists ‘I’m trying to be objective here, but I’m quite honestly one of the best-looking men I’ve ever seen, although, really, I’d have

to leave that for others to say' (Howard, 2007: 328). Ross concerns himself with his appearance, a stereotype commonly associated with being feminine. He states, 'those who said that I couldn't get any better-looking have been proven well and truly wrong and naturally I'm thinking, maybe I'll give the old tantric a miss tonight, hit Les Deux instead, or maybe even Goa – have me some non-committal fun' (Howard, 2009: 328). Ross demonstrates how binary gender categories are fluid, as he is obsessed with his appearance and estimates both his self-worth and an individual's worth by the labels attached to their clothing. For instance he states at the beginning of *The Oh My God Delusion*, that after one of his 'better one-night stands, it has to be said' (Howard, 2010: 1), how he throws 'on the old Apple Crumble, step into my chinos and my Cole Hanns, then fix my hair in the mirror' (Howard, 2010: 1).

His grasp of fashion is a trait that has been traditionally associated with women. When speaking of Erika, he describes how 'she's wearing the sky-blue Abaeté dress that Sorcha lent her with, like XOXO flats and Jill Jacobson floral cuffs' (Howard, 2009: 247). Ross overturns the gender difference by ascribing to the 'beauty myth', an ideology with which girls and women have long been associated (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 309). Ross further demonstrates this within the book, *With love, from me... to me: A Letter to My Sixteen-Year-Old Self*, where Ross's letter begins with: 'first of all – and I know this is going to sound big headed- but let me just say how well you're looking at the moment. Get used to it! Those looks are going nowhere' (Gillano, 2010: 20). This deconstructs the terms of the traditional binary opposition where men have been associated with 'reason, objectivity and logic' as opposed to women who have been adjoined with 'body matter and emotions' (Ryan 1999: 102). Essentially, this is the mind/body dualism, and Ross demonstrates that the oppositions are essentially fluid and ambiguous. Women are generally seen to be 'concerned about how they present themselves, anxious about whether they

match up to the beauty myth' (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 309), but in this book, it is Ross who displays this trait. He even goes as far as to get cosmetic surgery, noting, after getting his rhinoplasty, that 'it's possibly the most perfect nose I've ever seen. It makes me look a good twenty per cent better-looking, if you can believe that's even possible' (Howard, 2009: 328). He insists that he cannot stop 'checking it out' or 'touching it either' (Howard, 2009: 328). Interestingly, cosmetic surgery has been viewed as a 'gendered practice', as 'surgeons are almost exclusively male and patients largely female' (Marchbank and Letherby, 2007: 309). In this case, it is the male character who invests in the world of plastic surgery; he describes the procedure as, 'the last thing I hear is Harvey go, "Oh! My! God!" and Trevion go "Goodnight, Joycie!" I'm like, "Just don't make me look like..." and I'm out of the game before I can even say La Toya Jackson' (Howard, 2009: 223).

Howard further demonstrates a breaking down of the gender structure by demonstrating how emotional Ross can be, especially in *Should Have Got Off at Sydney Parade*, a book which sees an emotional, moving and often expressive Ross, who is in touch with his feelings, despite himself. He describes how 'I'm crying. I'm there, look at me! Crying like a fucking bird! Seriously, I'm pretty much on the verge of tears all the time and I don't even know why' (Howard, 2006: 102). Ross displays a heightened sensitivity towards his emotions, as he exhibits symptoms associated with a 'sympathetic pregnancy' (Howard, 2006: 82), a phenomenon explained by Ross as 'chucking up my guts for no reason and, like, bursting into tears at the slightest thing' (Howard, 2006: 82). The symptoms extend as far as Ross experiencing 'bad cramps in my legs and lower back' (Howard, 2006: 82). He even expresses how he feels left out of Sorcha's pregnancy, as Claire 'as in Claire from, like Brayruit, of all places', was asked by

Sorcha 'to be her, like, birth partner' (Howard, 2006: 13). Indeed when the women are discussing the birth plan, Ross describes how:

Claire all of a sudden gets up, roysh, and goes, "you can't be comfortable sitting in that hard chair like that. Sorcha," and she grabs a cushion off the sofa, roysh, and puts it behind Sorcha's back and goes, "for support..." and I'm left standing there, thinking, hey that's my job. (Howard, 2006: 88)

Ross even insists, 'it's like I'm not even there' (Howard, 2006: 88), therefore what is presented to the reader is a sensitive Ross who is in touch with his emotions. He is unable to verbalise these, except to Marty, and it is his body which signifies his feelings, through vomiting and food cravings. In this sense, he embodies Cixous's ideas about how *écriture féminine* writes the body, and is this deconstructing the traditional gender stereotypes through his body, even as he endorses them through his overtly sexist language.

To conclude, the power relations between the male/female binary opposition is subject to an either/or logic. The writing of Joyce, Synge and Howard deconstructs this either/or logic by creating characters who embody properties that seem to be those of the other side of the binary opposition. Thus Boyle, Gabriel, Little Chandler and Ross and can display elements of passivity, vanity and emotion, while Juno, Molly Ivors and Molly Bloom, and Fionnuala embody the more stereotypical elements of control and dominance. They embody the notion of what Derrida 'has called the undecidable' which interrogates:

unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialects. (Derrida, 1981a: 43)



## Conclusion

In this thesis I examined Derrida's deconstructive practices with regard to binary oppositions in order to demonstrate through a process of deconstructive reading, where the opposition is at first reversed and then reinscribed into a new structure and a new discursive field, wherein the two elements of a binary opposition bleed into each other, and create what can be termed an undecidable. I used Derrida's reading practices to deconstruct the binary oppositions of high and popular literature; speech and writing and maleness and femaleness which were teased out in the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard. In essence, the thesis was a *lento* reading of these texts, with particular focus on these binary oppositions. I looked for the irruptive elements, the cracks and fault lines in the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard in order to demonstrate the problematic nature of boundaries, and to 'crack open and disturb the tranquillity' (Caputo, 1997a: 32) of dominant readings of these texts. It was my contention that these three Dubliners wrote texts which deconstructed the three binary oppositions in question, and the structure of my thesis was set up in order to demonstrate this process.

The first chapter presented a Derridean framework which formed the basis of the thesis. I looked at the process of deconstruction as a double gesture, and at important terms such as *différance*, *khōra* and *pharmakon*, and examined how they each undercut the assumptions of logocentric discourse. I provided a working example of the initial stages of deconstruction – inverting the hierarchy through the process of 'rupture' and subsequently applying a double reading which reinscribed the binaries in a new less hierarchical structure. As an example of this process, I looked at the overturning of the binary between the northside of Dublin and the southside – an opposition which is found in the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard. This

reading did not stop at this inversion of the binary, but asserted that binaries are answerable to ‘a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime’ (Derrida, 1981a: 42) – an undecidable.

The second chapter provided a dismantling of the hierarchical opposition of high and popular literature in relation to the theoretical methodology outlined in chapter one. The three writers in question have been socially constructed to represent either half of the high/popular dichotomy, suggesting that the field of literature is defined in logocentric terms. I problematized some of the underlying assumptions of this definition, and showed how specific qualities that denote high literature are also found in popular literature, and *vice versa*. For just as the term *pharmakon*, is neither poison nor cure, a similar point can be made to the term literature, as the term, in its broadest signification, does not purport to being either high or popular; instead it is both/and in terms of its epistemological structure.

Chapter three challenged the privileging of speech over writing, in the three writers’ work by examining the way in which they enunciate the phonetic qualities of speech in their own writing. Looking at Joyce’s stream of consciousness, at O’Casey’s unusual spelling to denote working class idiolect and his use of slang terms, and at Howard’s use of deviant orthography and eye dialect to signify the idiolects of different social classes in Dublin, the binary of speech and writing was defamiliarised and deconstructed. The formal way of writing words has been changed in order to signify the spoken language of the Dublin people. In the case of all three writers, the text is both written and ‘on the other hand’ it is spoken (Wolfreys, 2009: 29), and this is what formulates the law of undecidability.

Chapter four focused on gender. The traditional gender roles of maleness and femaleness have been broken down, suggesting that in these texts, men and women no longer ascribe to

stereotyped positions. The female gender has been traditionally associated with the body, with women generally represented in terms of feeling and emotions, while the male is traditionally associated with the logical and rational concepts of the mind. The exploration of the politics of gender in the three writers' work was not a case of a simple inversion of the binary, but again a displacement to the point where one half of the binary inhabited aspects of the other half and *vice versa*. In the case of Molly Bloom, Juno Boyle, Sorcha Lalor and Fionnuala O'Carroll-Kelly, the normative binary opposition which would relegate them to a lower hierarchical status is deconstructed through their characters and actions, and they demonstrate that they can be an irruptive force that challenges the gender norms of their cultural contexts.

Overall, this thesis suggests that social and ideological structures that are based on the seemingly static binary oppositions, specifically high and popular literature, speech and writing and maleness and femaleness, are deconstructed in the texts of the three authors in question. This focus is on a specifically Irish context, and I would argue that these writers liberate meanings and significations about the Irish public sphere that are valuable and worthy of study. It is Derrida's confrontation with philosophical texts that destabilises binary oppositions, and I have used his thinking to illustrate that oppositions possess a sense of fluidity, when deconstructed. There is never a clear-cut logocentric distinction: aspects of each element of the binary opposition are also to be found in other element. Thus dichotomies are deconstructed by the play of *différance*, and I have examined this within the texts of Joyce, O'Casey and Howard.

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