

POINT OF VIEW IN WILLIAM TREVOR'S “THE DRESSMAKER'S CHILD”: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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My paper seeks to provide a stylistic analysis of William Trevor's short story "The Dressmaker's Child", with a special focus on the linguistic expression of point of view as a key stylistic choice in text. The theoretical framework for this analysis is provided mainly by two texts: Paul Simpson's Language, Ideology and Point of View (1993), which develops the modal grammar proposed by Fowler and Uspensky into a comprehensive model for point of view identification and analysis; and John Douthwaite's "A Stylistic View of Modality" (2007), which complements Simpson's model by extending the notion of modaliser and by emphasising the role of pragmatics in text construction and processing. The analytic tools provided by these texts are used to account for the perspective represented in the story and to explain a number of effects it produces in text. Some possible applications of this type of analysis are also suggested.

The expression of point of view¹ has long been a major concern in linguistics. This research topic has been formalised by Fowler's (1966, 1986) and Uspensky's (1973) works on literary texts, and continued in more recent times through a variety of approaches and fields of inquiry². Since its very beginning, stylistics has emphasised

¹ The study of point of view in language aims at “exploring the ways in which things are ‘made to look’ in language” and focuses “on language as representation, as a projection of positions and perspectives, as a way of communicating attitudes and assumptions” (Simpson 1993, 2). This area of research is also referred to through cover terms such as evaluation, modality, appraisal and stance. In this essay, point of view is preferred over these options because of its established usage in stylistics in connection with literary texts, as is the case with the present analysis. For a more extensive treatment of relevant definitions, see “Evaluation: an Introduction” (Hunston and Thompson 1999).

² Point of view is a major concern of stylistics, discourse analysis, critical linguistics and translation studies on manipulation, to mention but a few

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the importance of the expression of point of view, as Leech and Short's manifesto *Style in Fiction* (1981/2007) testifies. The main focus of stylisticians in this area appears to be on how the perspective constructed in text influences meaning making and on how meaning is perceived by the reader. Thus, this type of analysis brings into light significant aspects of text construction and processing that may find useful applications in a variety of text-based activities, such as translation, both at preparatory and productive level, criticism, especially if based on close readings of texts, and a wide range of forms of creative writing. In this connection, this essay seeks to highlight how a number of elements of point of view are used to shape text and produce specific effects in a story by one of most distinguished contemporary Irish authors.

The theoretical framework for this analysis is provided mainly by two texts: Paul Simpson's *Language, Ideology and Point of View* (1993), which develops the modal grammar proposed by Fowler and Uspensky into a comprehensive model for point of view identification and analysis; and John Douthwaite's "A Stylistic View of Modality" (2007), which complements Simpson's model by extending the notion of modaliser and by emphasising the role of pragmatics in text construction and processing. Particularly, Simpson's volume explains the significance in terms of point of view of some specific linguistic categories, including deixis, Discourse Presentation, modality, transitivity and pragmatic concepts such as presupposition, implicature and defeasibility. Thus, he provides a set of linguistic elements which are commonly associated with the expression of point of view and which usually construct certain types of perspectives – with the aim of producing certain types of effects – in text. Douthwaite's paper, on the other hand, shows how linguistic categories or items not directly associated with point of view, and therefore considered "neutral" in the main modal grammars, may function as strong expressions of point of view (or modalisers) in actual communication, that is, through the interaction with the context in which they appear.

approaches to language research, thus intersecting a variety of genres and text types.

Turning to the text under analysis, the selection of this particular short story is motivated by the belief that the perspective created in text is particularly effective and functional to the narrative. Hence, this analysis aims to highlight the point-of-view-related linguistic elements concurring to this positive result. First published in *The New Yorker* in 2004, “The Dressmaker’s Child” is the opening story in the 2007 collection *Cheating at Canasta*, including eleven stories already appeared in periodicals, together with the then unpublished “Old Flame”. As the title suggests through the mention of “cheating”, the collection presents a gallery of liars, actors, make-believers, and the protagonist of the story is in no way inferior to his fellows in the book. The reader is made aware of this, and of a number of further significant aspects of the character’s worldview, thanks to the particular perspective created in text, which this essay will try to illustrate. A remarkable contribution to the construction of such a perspective is given by the very first paragraph:

Cahal sprayed WD-40 on to the only bolt his spanner wouldn’t shift. All the others had come out easily enough but this one was rusted in, the exhaust unit trailing from it. He had tried to hammer it out, he had tried wrenching the exhaust unit this way and that in the hope that something would give way, but nothing had. Half five, he’d told Heslin, and the bloody car wouldn’t be ready. (Trevor 1³)

The reader is immediately told who is going to occupy the most prominent position in the story: Cahal. His name occupies a place to which remarkable salience is attached in a clause, that of theme, which, in Hallidayan terms, represents “the point of departure of the message” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 64). But this clause is the very first one in the very first sentence of the very first paragraph, which gives it notable graphological prominence. Thus, “Cahal” is foregrounded through thematic and graphological prominence as the point of departure of the message, of the sentence and of the story.

³ As all quotations are from Trevor 2007, henceforward only page numbers will be shown.

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The reader is also immediately told what Cahal does for a living: the mention of WD-40, bolts, his spanner, exhaust units and the car to be fixed proves he is a car mechanic. This very early mention is also announcing that his job must be important to the story, along with the other job indicated so far – that of the dressmaker referred to in the title. And a first meaning that may be inferred at this very early stage is that a working class milieu is being evoked. Moreover, Cahal is an Irish name, which, with all likelihood, introduces an Irish environment. The first paragraph is thus providing the coordinates for locating the protagonist in space, time and social class.

This paragraph also assigns Cahal an extremely important function. What has developed under the reader's eyes in these few lines is a third person narrative, or heterodiegetic narration, in Genette's words (1980), usually associated with "an invisible, 'disembodied', nonparticipating narrator"⁴ (Simpson 1993, 51). The last sentence in the paragraph, however, features at least two elements contradicting this view. The first is the adjective "bloody", a strong value judgement, which implies that somebody's values are being expressed (Hunston and Thompson 1999, 5); in this case, it can be only Cahal's, who names the car "bloody" because it won't get fixed in time for him to abide by the agreement with his customer Heslin. Moreover, the adjective "bloody" is a swear word, usually associated with spontaneous forms of communication, especially oral (rather than written third person narrative), and with the expression of strong emotion (rather than with the detached attitude of a nonparticipating narrator). This signals that the narrator is not "disembodied" at all; rather, he is taking on the expression of Cahal's feelings and opinions by using what are represented as the actual words thought by the character.

This relates to the second element in contrast with the traditional view of the nonparticipating narrator, namely, the Discourse Presentation categories used. The introduction of Cahal's "real"

⁴ By contrast, a first person narrative is usually associated with the expression of thought and feelings on the part of the narrator, who is a character participating in the story.

words in a third person narrative and the use of backshifted tense (such as “he had told”) signal this is an instance of Free Indirect Thought. This mode of thought presentation, along with its speech counterpart, is a powerful tool for aligning the narrator’s perspective with that of a character and is regarded as “a fusion of narratorial and character voices” (Simpson 1993, 21). This means that the narrative is filtered by Cahal’s psychological perspective, which makes him a Reflector of fiction (Simpson 1993, 51). In other words, the narrative is originated by the limited perspective of one character and shaped by his or her values and opinions.

Also Free Direct Speech contributes to establishing Cahal’s perspective in the last sentence of the paragraph. The words actually spoken, “half four”, are deprived of quotation marks, which blurs the boundaries between the source of the narrative and the source of the words, thus emphasising the above-mentioned fusion of narratorial and character voices; moreover, they are followed by the reporting clause, which realises a marked structure⁵ placing further emphasis on them. This choice, when compared to the indirect option available “He’d told Heslin that the car would be ready by/at half four” is much more elliptic and therefore more effective in its mimesis of spoken language and of the immediacy of thought.

The psychological point of view strongly signalled by the last sentence extends to the previous sentences in the paragraph, as they are consistent with the value system introduced (that of a mechanic trying to fix a car as quickly as possible, as the lexical choices in the field of mechanics also prove) and with the register adopted. As for the latter point, the sentence

He had tried to hammer it out, he had tried wrenching the exhaust unit this way and that in the hope that something would give way, but nothing had. (1)

presents at least two elements that may be referred to Cahal’s perspective and related use of register. First, repetition of “he had

⁵ “The most neutral (‘unmarked’) ordering is Sayer-Process-Quoted” (Bloor and Bloor 1995, 122).

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tried" is a violation of the Gricean quantity maxim (Grice 1975)⁶. Text could have read "He had tried to hammer it out and wrench the exhaust unit" without the semantic meaning of the sentence being in the least changed. Repetition of the verb phrase mimics the reiteration of his attempts and creates the implicature that Cahal is expressing his annoyance and frustration about their being unsuccessful. Similarly, the adverbial expression "this way and that", which is made up of deictics pointing to Cahal as the reference point in space, and which retains a very colloquial flavour, again suggests that Cahal's actual thoughts in that situation are being accessed. Stylistic choices on the level of syntax and of register are therefore helping construct the Reflector's viewpoint (Douthwaite 2007).

We will see these devices at work throughout the story, as Cahal's perspective is the framework encompassing the largest part of the narrative. This does not mean that the whole text maintains this kind of focalisation⁷. Rather, there are two moments, one of which immediately follows, when the narrator's point of view shifts to Narratorial mode⁸ and adopts the external, bird's eye view more usually associated with third person narrative:

He was a lean, almost scrawny youth, dark-haired, his long face usually unsmiling. His garage overalls, over a yellow T-

⁶ On Gricean theory of conversational implicature and its applications to text analysis, see Grundy 2000.

⁷ Point of view usually shifts in the course of a narrative.

⁸ The second moment is when the question of the Virgin's statue at Pouldearg is explained (see note 10). Being the only two moments in which Narratorial mode is adopted, they stand out in this narrative. In other words, they are foregrounded because they deviate from an established pattern in this text (Douthwaite 2000). Narratorial mode features the detached, "disembodied" view of the narrated material that is typical of third person narrative, as opposed to Reflector mode, in which narrator's and character's viewpoint coincide; Reflector mode is usually a temporary choice against the background of Narratorial mode. The unmarked choice for a character's viewpoint to be aligned with the narrator's is first person narrative (Simpson 1993, 51).

shirt, were oil-stained, gone pale where their green dye had been washed out of them. He was nineteen years old. (2)

The external angle adopted in this sequence allows the reader to get a fuller picture of the character, as a detached narratorial position makes it possible to reveal information about Cahal he would be unlikely to mention about himself in naturally occurring thought or conversation. But the narrative soon returns to its “internal” perspective. A passage follows in which a Spanish couple enters the garage and asks Cahal for a lift to the statue of the Virgin Mary at Pouldearg. The dialogue is followed by a sequence introducing Cahal’s perspective as a Reflector again:

The woman’s black hair was silky, drawn back and tied with a red-and-blue ribbon. Her eyes were brown, her teeth very white, her skin olive. She wore the untidy clothes of a traveller: denim trousers, a woollen jacket over a striped red blouse. The man’s trousers were the same, his shirt a nondescript shade of greyish blue, a white kerchief at his neck. A few years older than himself, Cahal estimated they’d be. (3)

The first two sentences provide a physical description of the woman. The second sentence is made up of three coordinated clauses presenting the same structure: Noun phrase/Subject + Verb Phrase/Predicator (ellipted in the second and third clause) + Adjectival Phrase/Subject Attribute. The parallel structure, made more compact by ellipsis and by minimal coordination through commas rather than “and”, assigns special emphasis to the elements in focus in each clause: “brown”, “white” – further emphasised by its premodifier “very” – and “olive”. These are all adjectives describing her appearance and the extra focus they gain makes the implicature arise that there is something special about her looks. What is presumably special about brown eyes and olive skin and teeth looking very white against a dark complexion is that they appear unusual to an Irish young man who has not seen much of the

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world outside his garage and is more accustomed to fairer skin and eye colour. Thus, even this external description of the woman, although not explicitly attributed to Cahal, must be counted as mediated by his perspective. Similar considerations may be made for the next two sentences, describing her clothes and then the Spanish man's. The fact that three sentences are devoted to the woman's description and only one to the man's, and that the latter contains very generic reference such as "the man's trousers were *the same*" and "a *nonedescript* shade of greyish blue" (my emphasis), signals that the narrator's (hence Cahal's) gaze dwells more on the lady. The flouting of the Gricean maxims of quantity and manner makes the implicature arise that Cahal has a preference for the woman and is attracted to her. Another important element in the development of the story is suggested very obliquely through the protagonist's point of view.

The closing sentence in this paragraph follows a pattern already established at the end of the story's incipit: the technique of Free Indirect Thought is used to introduce Cahal's mental activity, thus signalling that the whole sequence is spoken from his perspective:

A few years older than himself, Cahal estimated they'd be. (3)

In this sentence the unmarked order of constituents is again subverted, as subject attribute "a few years older than himself" is usually positioned after the copula, whereas here it is placed in thematic position. This may well be representative of the immediacy of the thought itself, which gets a prominent status with respect to the mediated element of the reporting clause. The contraction "they'd" also helps imitating the less articulate nature of thought.

The same strategy is employed in the next passage, where Cahal is again assigned the role of Reflector:

He could charge them fifty euros, Pouldearg there and back, Cahal considered. He'd miss Germany versus Holland on the television, maybe the best match of the Cup, but never mind that for fifty euros. (3)

Once again the main thought is thematised (“He could charge them fifty euros”), rather than being placed after the reporting verb (“Cahal considered”) as would be the case with an unmarked sentence. In addition, the phrase “Pouldearg there and back” is not clearly integrated in sentence structure, thus imitating the spontaneous flow of mental activity. Even the second clause in the second sentence, “never mind that for fifty euros”, seems to provide access to the actual words occurred in Cahal’s mind. Moreover, Cahal’s focalisation also introduces elements of his cultural and ideological background that are relevant to the story’s development: the importance he attaches to the 50 euro reward, which strongly motivates him to accept the job, and his interest in football, presumably overcome only by that in money.

The following dialogue between Cahal and his father is also key to the view the reader gets about the story and the characters:

“What they want with Pouldearg?”
“Nothing, only the statue.”
“There’s no one goes to the statue these times.”
“It’s where they’re headed.”
“Did you tell them, though, how the thing was?”
“I did, of course.”
“Why they’d be going out there?”
“There’s people takes photographs of it.” (4-5)

The technique characterising the entire sequence is Free Direct Speech. Its free form is determined by the total absence of reporting clauses, which deprives text of narratorial control and suggests that the conversation is developing undisturbed under the reader’s eyes⁹.

⁹ “The basic principle of Free Direct presentation is the removal, wholly or in part, of the authorial and orthographic clues which accompany a straightforward Direct presentation. A consequence of stripping away these clues is that the reported material, to varying degrees, is liberated from narratorial control. In terms of speech presentation, this often results in

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The impression of realism this conveys is further emphasised by the mimesis of the spoken medium detectable at many levels of language. Lexis is characterised by the repetition of low-register verbs such as “go” and by simple and referential vocabulary, including “the thing” instead of, for example, its hyponym “the question”. As for grammar, typical elements of the oral medium are used, including contractions, non-standard forms such as a singular verb for “people”, the lack or incorrect sequencing of auxiliaries in questions (“What they want with Pouldearg?”, “Why they’d be going out there?”) and the reiterated omission of the relative pronoun “who” (“There’s no one goes to the statue these times.”, “There’s people takes photographs of it.”)

The matter-of-factness deriving from this faithful representation of an oral exchange in a similar context, along with the absence of the narratorial modality which reporting mechanisms are apt to convey, concur to give the sequence what Paul Simpson defines as a neutral shading in his modal grammar of point of view (1993, 55). What is neutral in the passage is the attitude expressed by the narrator, who abstains from opinionating on the narrative, so that readers are encouraged to elaborate meaning on their own to form their own view and interpretation of narrated events. In this case, readers know from previous co-text that Cahal has given the Spanish tourists no explanation about the statue. Consequently, when his father asks Cahal whether he has told them “how the thing was” and he confirms, readers realise there is, in Gricean terms, a flouting of the quality maxim or, to put it simply, that Cahal is lying. In other words, his lie is recovered by inference by the readers, who know the previous context. This being a conclusion the readers reach for themselves, rather than receiving it from explicit text, its communicative effect is likely to be more successful than a simple statement of the same meaning (Simpson 1993, 122). Moreover, the neutral shading displayed is representative of our Reflector’s attitude towards his father: he abstains from opinionating as a narrator because he knows he is lying and provides his father with as

characters ‘speaking for themselves’ within dialogues that contain little, if any, authorial interference” (Simpson 1993, 23).

little information as possible not to give himself away here or at a later stage – a rule liars should always observe.

It is also worth noticing that the clause “how the thing was” is a superb example of indeterminacy, given the already mentioned versatility of the term “thing” and the minimal information conveyed by the verb “be”. In this way, suspense is kept intact about a matter which must be paramount about the ongoing events, as the preceding text suggests. Explanation is provided in the following paragraph, where the narrator tells us that the statue the Spaniards want to visit in Pouldearg was said to weep when penitents asked for pardon of their sins, and that its cult was dropped after a curate had proved that her tears were mere raindrops. The passage introduces the important themes of deception and self-deception: nature had deceived people, or people had deceived themselves, into believing that a miracle had been going on, a situation which will soon find a relevant parallel in Cahal’s behaviour. This portion of the narrative is different from the rest as it features very formal language, mainly of Latin origin, and is entirely told through the Discourse Presentation technique of Narrative Report, providing a narratorial detachment which is extremely rare in this story¹⁰. In other words, the predominant use of Free Indirect Discourse and Reflector mode has created a secondary norm in text (Leech and Short 2007), and deviation from the norm foregrounds the deviating passage and its meaning (Douthwaite 2000).

The narrative then returns to its dominant techniques; Free Indirect Discourse and Reflector mode now interact to represent how Cahal lies to himself to justify his mean conduct towards the Spanish couple:

It wouldn’t be hard to stretch the journey by four or five miles, and if they were misled by the names they’d heard the statue given in Dublin it was no concern of his. (6)

¹⁰ See note 8.

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This sentence is rich in evaluative language: a cleft structure (“it wouldn’t be hard to stretch the journey”) is used, which is in itself evaluative (Hunston and Thompson, 1999) by allowing two elements to be placed in focus rather than just one as in an unmarked clause (Douthwaite, 2000); by the same token, negatives are an evaluative choice as they create emphasis in comparison to the corresponding positive option – “it would be easy”, “it is somebody else’s concern” (Hunston and Thompson 1999, 21); the adjective “(not) hard” expresses positive assessment of a situation in which the driver stretches the journey to justify the cost of the ride; the negative hypothesis “if they were misled” is subverted by the closing remark “it was no concern of his”. All the above-mentioned material obviously points to the Reflector Cahal as the source of evaluation, whose dishonest intentions are unambiguously declared along with his attempt to play down his own responsibilities in lying to the Spaniards. “It was no concern of his”, moreover, retains some flavour of the spoken language in spite of third person usage and the past tense in line with narratorial position, thus making the representation of his thoughts more realistic.

The journey to Pouldearg with the couple is all filtered by Cahal’s perception and consciousness, and also Narrative Report is used as well as Free Direct and Indirect Speech to picture him as a Reflector¹¹, as the following excerpt exemplifies:

He turned out onto the Loye Road. Spanish was spoken in the back of the car. The radio wasn’t working or he’d have put it on for company. The car was a black Ford Cortina with a hundred and eighty thousand miles on the clock; his father had taken it in part exchange. They’d use it until the tax disc expired and then put it aside for spares. (7)

The first sentence, thanks to the directional verb “turn out”, establishes Cahal driving his car as the deictic centre in the sequence

¹¹ This further strengthens the hypothesis that a linguistic element or strategy not directly associated with the expression of point of view may turn out to be highly evaluative in context (Douthwaite 2007).

(Simpson 1993, 15). The next four sentences are not explicitly related to one another through conjunction; rather, they are simply separated by full stops. What establishes a connection among them is Cahal's train of thoughts: hearing a foreign language spoken makes him think of the radio; the fact that it is not working makes him think that the car is old; the car's age makes him think of what is going to happen when it is used up. And the consistency and realism with which this is carried out is remarkable: putting the car aside for spares is exactly what any professional car mechanic would do!

As text progresses, Cahal's viewpoint becomes more and more prominent:

The girl clapped her hands, and he could see her smiling in the rearview mirror. God, a woman like that, he thought. Give me a woman like that, he said to himself, and he imagined he was in the car alone with her, that the man wasn't there, that he hadn't come to Ireland with her, that he didn't exist. (8)

The locative phrase "in the rearview mirror" introduces his visual perspective, which is followed by an indication of what is going on in his mind, this time through Free Direct Thought. Once again the Quoted precedes the Process, both with "God, a woman like that" and "Give me a woman like that", and punctuation signalling Direct Speech is avoided to facilitate the merging of narratorial and character's voices. Moreover, Cahal's indulging in such a train of thoughts leads to the introduction of another character, his girlfriend Minnie Fennelly, whose evaluation on the part of our Reflector is not exactly the one a girlfriend would wish to receive:

He was going with Minnie Fennelly, but, no doubt about it, this woman had the better of her. (9)

After the visit to the statue, the account of the back journey becomes more and more associated with the topics of loving couples and marriage:

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They brought up the man they'd met in the public house in Dublin. They kept repeating something, a gabble of English words that still appeared to be about getting married. In the end, it seemed to Cahal that this man had told them people received a marriage blessing when they came to Pouldearg as penitents.

"Did you buy him drinks?" he asked, but that wasn't understood, either. (10)

Here modality is key in representing Cahal's difficulty making sense of his guests' words. The perception modalisers "appeared" and "seem" represent his uncertainty about the real meaning they are trying to express, which is underlined by the noun "gabble" in relation to their English words and by the phrase "In the end", emphasising the effort the whole process has required. Eventually, however, his understanding of the situation seems to increase to the point that he suggests a humorous interpretation of the events they are reporting. His question about the drinks, the relevance of which escapes the Spaniards' comprehension, makes the implicature arise that the man in the pub has made up a story about marriage blessings and Pouldearg to please them and sponge a couple of drinks off them. But this failure in conversation puts an end to the exchange and soon the couple engage in a more rewarding occupation:

They weren't talking anymore; when he looked in the mirror they were kissing, no more than shadows in the gloom, arms around one another. (11)

The narrative keeps on being consistently carried out from Cahal's perspective, as the indication of his perception ("he looked in the mirror") reminds us. This is extremely important for preparing the main turn in the story: given both his visual perspective – he is looking in the mirror rather than keeping his eyes on the road – and his psychological perspective – he is a teenager with a soft spot for the Spanish girl catching a glimpse of her kissing her fiancé in the

back seat – he inevitably gets distracted, which will have fatal consequences:

It was then, just after they'd passed the dead trees, that the child ran out. She came out of the blue cottage and ran at the car. (11)

Another cleft structure introduces the main event in the tale. “Then” carries the focus in the first segment, the more so as it is preceded by scanty informative linguistic material (the dummy subject “it” and the verb “was”) and followed by a comma. Moreover, the following rankshifted clause expands the notion of “then” by linking it to a spatial consideration (“after they'd passed the dead trees”). The clause between commas itself, separating the *it*-clause from the *that*-clause, is representative of the distance actually run by the Reflector before the main happening, the dead trees providing an ominous foreboding of what is to follow. The suddenness with which the girl appears is rendered through the use of monosyllabic words only (“the child ran out”) and by the powerful effect achieved by the use of the definite article. “The” is in fact a trigger of strong existential presupposition: by saying “the child”, a speaker presupposes that a child exists and that it is that one in particular (Simpson 1993, 115). In other words, a speaker uses “the” because s/he takes for granted that the noun it refers to is known to her/himself and the addressees, or, to put it shortly, that it is given information (Bloor and Bloor 1995, 66). Excluding the title, however, the child has never been mentioned before in the story. Therefore the use of the linguistic resources to point at given information when the information is actually totally new and unrelated to previous co-text has the strong effect of making the child appear suddenly and unexpectedly before the eyes of the reader, so that s/he experiences some of Cahal's astonishment and bewilderment.

The following clause compound again underlines, through the use of very short and structurally essential constituents, how quickly everything happens and how out of control everything is for the driver: the child is the only Actor in the sentence, performing two

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intentional material processes, suggesting that she deliberately approaches the moving vehicle (Bloor and Bloor 1995, 111). In this sentence, however, the reader again experiences deception. The first time one reads this section, in fact, it is natural to make sense of "out of the blue" as a unit in itself and thus to understand that she appeared suddenly and unexpectedly on the road. As one reads on, however, one realises that "blue" is a premodifier of "cottage", thus merely indicating the colour of the building of her provenance. A trick played by the writer to bring the leitmotiv of cheating to the level of information status, and to warn his audience that nobody is safe from deception.

Then the narrative starts to foreground Cahal's active mind again:

He'd heard of it before, the child on this road who ran out at cars. It had never happened to himself, he'd never even seen a child there any time he'd passed, but often it was mentioned. He felt the thud no more than a second after the headlights picked out the white dress by the wall and then the sudden movement of the child running out. (11)

Through the description of his mental activity, introduced by verbs of perception such as "heard", "he'd [...] seen", "felt", the reader is informed that Cahal is acquainted with the existence of a child running at cars in the area, that he recognises this is the child in question, and above all that he clearly, though briefly, perceives the impact of her body against his car. In this way, when he drives on and the text goes: "He saw something white lying there but said to himself he had imagined it," the reader is also informed as to how strong Cahal's self-deception can be.

The state of confusion Cahal falls into after the accident is well represented in the passage recounting the next morning, when Cahal tries to ease his mind by thinking of the football match he had finally watched the night before, only to be overwhelmed by anxiety again.

In the very early morning, just after half past one, Cahal woke up and couldn't sleep again. He *tried to recall* what he'd seen of the football, the moves there'd been, the saves, the yellow card shown twice. But nothing *seemed* quite right, as if the television pictures and snatches of the commentary had come from a dream, which he *knew* they hadn't. [...] He should have stopped; he *didn't know* why he hadn't. He *couldn't remember* braking. He *didn't know* if he'd tried to, he *didn't know* if there hadn't been time. (12)

The passage is dense with epistemic modalisers (italicised), especially with negative polarity (couldn't remember, didn't know), all lowering the commitment the Reflector expresses towards the modalised propositions. These are all markers of what Simpson calls negative shading in narrative, where negative refers to the fact that the narrator, in this case the Reflector, presents the narrative material as uncertain, doubtful, unreliable (Simpson 1993, 53). Another marker of such polarity is the use of comparators, such as "as if" or "like", of which we have an example in this excerpt: "as if the television pictures and snatches of the commentary had come from a dream". Comparison also denies the quality of the narrative material, as it projects a different conceptual framework on it. The effect the combination of these linguistic resources has on the reader is that of conveying a nightmarish feeling of precariousness about both the narrated events and the reliability of the narratorial voice. Suffice it to say that the prototypical author for this kind of shading is Franz Kafka (Simpson 1993, 70).

Then Cahal's nocturnal reflections move on to the child's mother:

He'd seen the woman who lived there a few times when she came in to the shops, a dressmaker they said she was, small and wiry with dark inquisitive eyes and a twist in her features that made them less appealing than they might have been. When her child had been born to her, the father had not been known—not even to herself, so it was said, though possibly

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without justification. People said she didn't speak about the birth of her child. (13)

This is the first mention of the dressmaker in the story, and its salience for Cahal is underscored by the marked structure in which "a dressmaker" is placed: although it functions as subject attribute, it is thematised in the clause, which both expresses emphasis and connects this clause to the previous one, by referring to "the woman", and to the following further realisations of subject attribute, "small and wiry", thus contributing to a strongly cohesive sentence, representative of the associations the protagonist makes while thinking. The following physical description, "small and wiry with dark inquisitive eyes and a twist in her features", offers a sombre, grotesque picture of her, which is foregrounded by alliteration of the sound /w/, to be found in "wiry", "with", "inquisitive" and "twist". As to the rumours, Speech Presentation is again an important element in suggesting opinion. In this case, it is the community's opinion, not Cahal's, as emphasised by the reporting verb "say", which is repeated three times, two of which in connection with "they" and "people," the remaining one being part of an agentless passive clause¹². In relation to the father who had not been known, "not even to herself" echoes the actual utterance pronounced by gossips, which is foregrounded both graphologically through punctuation (a dash and a comma distinctly isolating it in the sentence) and syntactically by its upshifting to the level of clause, which confers extra informative salience¹³ on it. The word "herself" carries the main focus in this unit, its importance being increased by quantitative comparison: it is the only disyllable after a sequence of three monosyllables and before a sequence of four. The stress on the pronoun conveys the blame she is charged with by her

¹² "When her child had been born to her" is a marked option if compared to the more straightforward "When she had had a child", foregrounding her lack of control over this important event in her life, as she is represented as a mere Beneficiary in the process.

¹³ For the importance of rankscale manipulation for meaning making, see chapter 4 in Douthwaite 2000.

community. Cahal's opinion, however, seems to diminish the harshness of people's judgement by introducing an element of doubt: the adversative conjunction "though", the epistemic adverb "possibly" and the prepositional phrase "without justification".

Again, sequencing amplifies meaning through relevant associations, as the next paragraph starts with a foreshadowing of the child's destiny in line with Cahal's fears:

"One day that kid'll be killed," he heard Fitzie Gill saying, and someone else said the woman wasn't up to looking after the kid. The child was left alone in the house, people said, even for a night while the woman drank by herself in Leahy's, looking around for a man to keep her company. (14)

Through what should be by now a familiar strategy, the Quoted is given special emphasis by right dislocation and by the alliterative pattern repeating /d/, /k/ and /l/ sounds, which further emphasises the prominence the words have. Moreover, it is the only example of Direct Speech in the paragraph, which also distinctly foregrounds it. The alliterated succession of monosyllables has a very strong effect, representative of the impression the words had on Cahal, who still remembers them and the person who pronounced them. The Sayers of the remaining reported clauses are unspecified and information is provided in a more oblique way through the use of Indirect Speech introduced by the reporting clauses "someone else said" and "people said," thus giving the impression that Cahal's connection with such utterances is less vivid and straightforward.

In addition, it may be worth noticing that repetition of the verb "say" plays two important functions in this excerpt. First, like many other lexical choices, it signals the limited vocabulary a teenage uneducated mechanic presumably has at his disposal, which further underscores Cahal's role as a Reflector. Second, it is part of a foregrounding device based on parallelism, as the use of the same verb emphasizes the similarity among the three clauses 'he heard Fitzie Gill saying', 'someone else said' and 'people said'. Turning to what is different in the clauses, a climactic structure may be

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identified, as the number of people expressing judgment on the child and her mother increases from one ("Fitzie Gill") to some ("someone else") to a multitude ("people"), which is representative of the increasing criticism being moved to the dressmaker.

As days go by without news of the accident spreading, Cahal starts indulging in the self-deceiving idea that the child may not have been killed in the accident. This disposition, however, is changed when he and Minnie meet the dressmaker in a bar.

"Will I make your wedding dress for you?" the dressmaker offered. "Would you think of me at all when it'll be time you'd want it?"

And Minnie Fennelly laughed and said no way they were ready for wedding dresses yet.

(16)

This is the first time the dressmaker appears as a character directly participating in the narrative. Significantly, she addresses Minnie Fennelly instead of Cahal. What is also unexpected is her asking about her wedding dress, which abruptly brings the topic of marriage back. The girl's response exploits a free indirect form which makes her contribution extremely vivid: although third person is used, "no way" retains the directness and conciseness of a spontaneous answer, reinforced by the absence of "that" after the reporting verb "said" and by the fact it is not well integrated in the grammar of the sentence. Once again, style expresses point of view (Douthwaite 2007): the foregrounding of these words is representative of the special meaning they acquire for Cahal as a foreboding of his rejection on the part of Minnie.

When the body of the child is finally discovered, the transitivity pattern employed emphasises her lifelessness:

The dressmaker's child was found where she'd lain for several days, at the bottom of a fissure, half covered with shale, in the exhausted quarry half a mile from where she'd lived. (18)

“Was found”, “covered” are the processes of which she is a mere object, whereas the process “she’d lived”, of which she is actor, is represented as more distant on a temporal plane by the use of the past perfect, and less important in the sentence by being downshifted, as it is placed within a relative clause embedded in a prepositional phrase, which in turn belongs to another prepositional phrase (Douthwaite 2000, 286).

This, however, is not the end of Cahal’s trouble. One night, while he is on his way to meeting Minnie Fennelly, he finds out the dressmaker is there and wants to talk to him. At first she invites him to her place, only to meet with his refusal. Then she turns to the night of the accident:

“I didn’t go to them [the police] any quicker for fear they’d track down the way it was when the lead would be fresh for them. D’you understand me, Cahal?” (19) [...]

“I swear before God, what’s happened is done with. Come back with me now, Cahal.”

“Nothing happened, nothing’s done with. There was Spanish people in the car the entire time. I drove them out to Pouldearg and back again to Macey’s Hotel.”

“Minnie Fennelly’s no use to you, Cahal.” (21)

Free Direct Speech in its neutral polarity leaves disturbing truths for the reader to elaborate: that she has not reported her daughter disappearance for the police not to track Cahal, an appalling statement on the part of a mother who has lost her child that way; that she is willing to forget everything and take Cahal to her place – quite a puzzling invitation; that Cahal keeps on lying, especially to himself, by denying the accident before a woman who seems to be perfectly aware of the events. The closing remark, apparently unrelated to the rest of the conversation, as Minnie has hitherto not been mentioned in this dialogue, begins to cast some light on the previous remarks. The dressmaker has saved Cahal from jail, wants him home with her and believes Minnie not to be the right girl for

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him. Although Cahal is not acquainted with the Gricean maxim of relevance, the connection does not escape him; and in the next paragraph, where a description of her from his spatial and psychological point of view unfolds, he strikes a comparison between her and the Spanish girl, thus implying the sexual connotation of his judgement:

He had never seen the dressmaker up close before. She was younger than he'd thought, but still looked what she was—a fair bit older than himself, maybe twelve or thirteen years. The twist in her face wasn't ugly, but it spoiled what might have been beauty of a kind, and he remembered the flawless beauty of the Spanish girl and the silkiness of her hair. The dressmaker's hair was black, too, but wild and matted, limply straggling, falling to her shoulders. The eyes that had stared so intensely at him in the Cyber Café were bleary. Her full lips were drawn back in a smile, one of her teeth slightly chipped. Cahal walked away and she did not follow him. (21)

The passage still features Cahal as the Reflector of fiction. His spatial perspective is established by deixis, indicating his closeness to the dressmaker at the beginning (“up close”) and movement away from her at the end (“walked away,” “she did not follow him”). In between, we have a description of the woman the point of reference of which is always Cahal, either in space, time and/or psychological situation.

This encounter marks the beginning of an obsessed state of mind on Cahal's part, brilliantly suggested by the opening of the next paragraph:

That was the beginning; there was no end. In the town, though never again at night, she was always there: Cahal knew that was an illusion, that she wasn't always there but seemed so because her presence on each occasion meant so much. (21)

In the first sentence, the two main clauses, connected only by a semi-colon, with their parallel structures emphasise this is a turning point in the story. She begins to haunt him, and he gets to know from rumours and gossip that her life has taken a new direction thanks to a more sober and respectable conduct. He also changes his ways, causing his astonished family to search for an explanation. His own preoccupations, however, are well expressed by the next paragraph:

During all this time – passing in other ways quite normally – the child was lifted again and again from the cleft in the rocks, still in her nightdress as Cahal had seen her, laid out and wrapped as the dead are wrapped. If he hadn't had to change the wheel he would have passed the cottage at a different time and the chances were she wouldn't have been ready to run out, wouldn't just then have felt inclined to. If he'd explained to the Spaniards about the Virgin's tears being no more than rain he wouldn't have been on the road at all.
(22)

The fronted adverbial sets a long time span as a framework for the clauses to follow, where repetition is the keyword. Linguistic repetition (“again and again”, “wrapped as the dead are wrapped”) is representative of the repetitiveness with which such images haunt his mind. Even the next two sentences, both containing a conditional structure, present the incidents occurred on that night as negative possibilities, thus suggesting that he thinks over and over again of what might have been. And a further sign of his obsession is that the news of Minnie's wedding is reported in relation to the time of the drive to the statue.

When a little more than a year had passed since the evening he'd driven the Spanish couple out to Pouldearg, he attended Minnie Fennelly's wedding to Des Downey, a vet from Athenry. (23)

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Immediately after this disclosure, a revelation in line with Cahal's remorseful reflections follows:

The dressmaker had not said it, but it was what there had been between them in the darkened streets: that he had gone back, walking out as he had wanted to that night when he'd lain awake, that her child had been there where she had fallen on the road, that he had carried her to the quarry. And Cahal knew it was the dressmaker, not he, who had done that. (23)

The last sentence in the paragraph provides a solution to the mystery, but not to the young man's problems. And it does not put an end to Cahal's deception and self-deception either. He never confesses the truth to anybody, but he starts visiting the Virgin of Pouldearg to ask for forgiveness, also experiencing the view of teardrops on the statue's face:

Once when he was at Pouldearg Cahal noticed the glisten of what had once been taken for tears on the Virgin's cheek. He touched the hollow where this moisture had accumulated and raised his dampened finger to his lips. It did not taste of salt, but that made no difference. (23)

Whether the tears are real or not does not make any difference in the story, just as lying or telling the truth does not make any difference in Cahal's community. The only one who is able to perceive the difference is the reader, because s/he has access to Cahal's point of view.

For a full recognition of the import of this representation of point of view, a few conclusive remarks may be needed. This analysis has attempted to illustrate how the protagonist's point of view is constructed and sustained throughout the story. This choice of point of view is an unusual one, because third person narratives normally avail themselves of a similar alignment of narrator and character viewpoint to a much lesser extent than this story. Thus, as a deviation from a genre-related norm, it may take extra effort to be

consciously acknowledged. This may not seem to be the case in Joycian prose, for example; but there the rules of textual presentation are more blatantly unattended, which signals deviation from a norm more clearly. Here we do not have the degree of ellipsis characterising many famous excerpts from *Ulysses* or *Finnegan's Wake*¹⁴. But we do have marked choices producing particular effects at a pragmatic level, as the examples cited above have hopefully demonstrated. For this reason, I believe that this analysis may have shed some light on aspects of Trevor's texts that may otherwise be difficult to identify. For the same reason, I think an analysis aimed at highlighting how point of view is represented in this as well as in other texts may provide a useful toolkit for those who work on text and need to identify this important constitutive element in it. For example, I believe this theoretical and practical exercise may be of extreme importance for translators and interpreters, who need to understand and render not only the semantic, but also the pragmatic and textual aspects of the source text¹⁵. This type of analysis may also serve as a basis for critics who are concerned with close analyses of texts. Even those professionals who wish to transpose written text into a different form, for example by turning a novel or a short story it into a film or play, may profit from this analysis because the perspective on the narrated material is undoubtedly one of the main features to be transposed. Most importantly, the elements of point of view identified in this analysis

¹⁴ "Stream of consciousness, or 'interior monologue' as it is otherwise known, may be characterized as a form of Free Direct Thought which displays ellipsis. A little crude and simplistic, to be sure, but at least it is a definition which is related explicitly to stylistic criteria. A further implication of the use of FDT is that if it is sustained over a period the narrative gradually switches to first-person focalization. As Booth observes, 'any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator' (1961:164)." (Simpson 1993, 25). Simpson also relates the technique of Free Indirect Discourse to the so called "indirect interior monologue" (26).

¹⁵ For a treatment of the semantic, pragmatic and textual aspects of meaning in translation, see House 1997.

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do not realise their functions only in this text. Rather, they work in similar ways in literary, non-literary and multimodal texts. Hence, an in-depth comprehension of the angle of telling represented in text is an asset in a number of communicative situations and contexts, and may therefore find useful applications in a variety of forms of communication.

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