

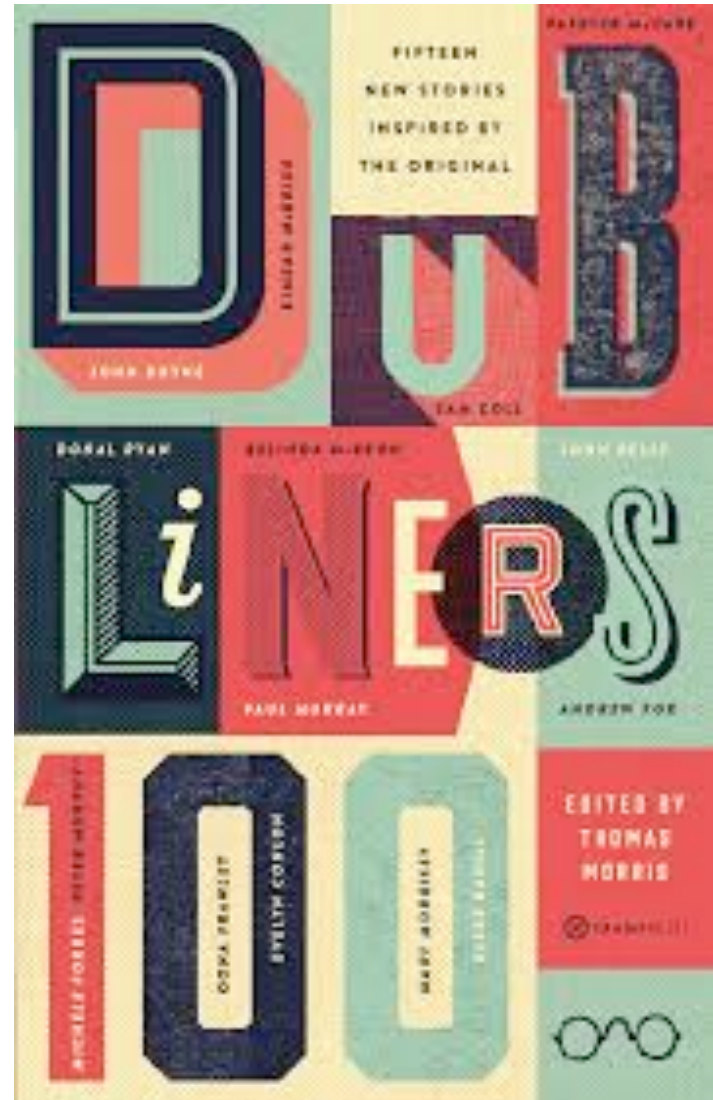
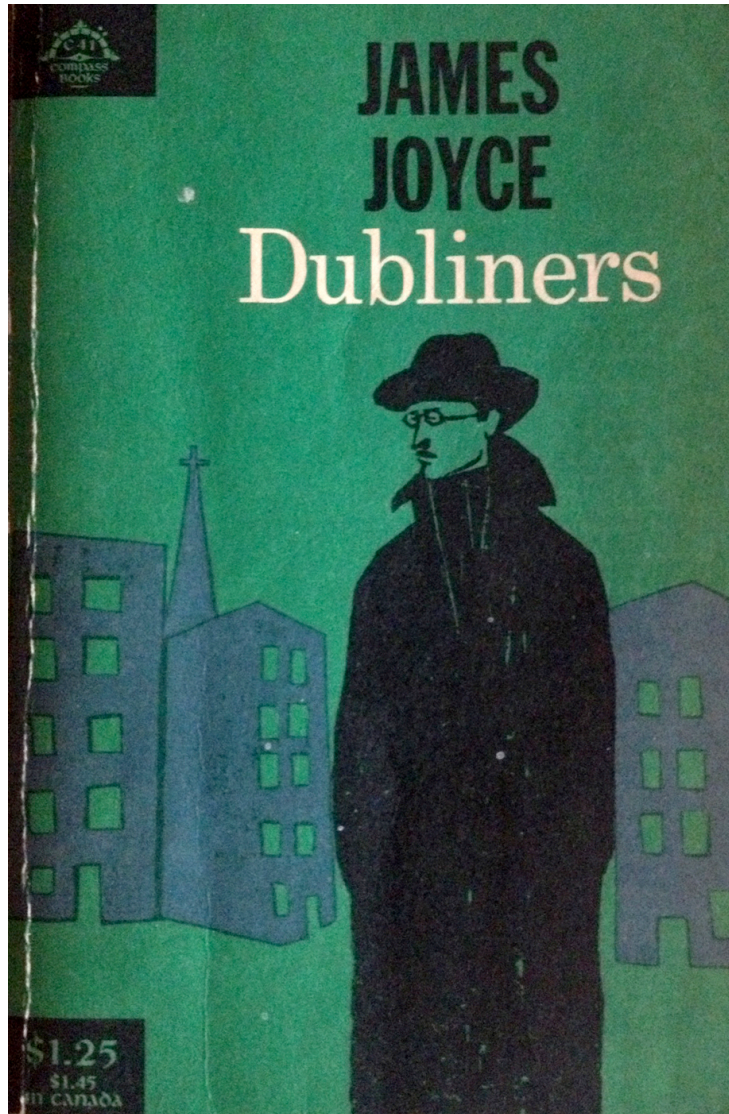


James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914): Modernist Narrative and the Irish Predicament

Christoph Reinfandt

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Questions/feedback: christoph.reinfandt@uni-tuebingen.de





Overview

1) Introduction

2) Reading *Dubliners*

3) *Dubliners* and the Irish Predicament

4) Modernist Narrative



1) Introduction

James Joyce (1882 Rathgar/Dublin – 1941 Zürich)





Works by James Joyce:

Dubliners (stories; 1904-1912, publ. 1914)

Chamber Music (poems; 1907)

Stephen Hero (part of the 1000-page first draft of
Portrait, written 1904/05, publ. 1944)

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (novel; 1914/15
in *The Egoist*, 1916 in one volume)

Exiles (play; 1918)

Ulysses (novel; 1922)

Pomes Penyeach (poems; 1927)

Finnegans Wake (novel; 1923-1938 known as 'Work in
Progress', publ. 1939)



2) Reading *Dubliners*

Earlier version of “The Sisters” (*The Irish Homestead*, August 13, 1904)

Three nights in succession I had found myself in Great Britain-street at that hour, as if by Providence. Three nights also I had raised my eyes to that lighted square of window and speculated. I seemed to understand that it would occur at night. But in spite of the Providence that had led my feet, and in spite of the reverent curiosity of my eyes, I had discovered nothing. Each night the square was lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. It was not the light of candles, so far as I could see. Therefore, it had not yet occurred.



On the fourth night at that hour I was in another part of the city. It may have been the same Providence that led me there—a whimsical kind of Providence to take me at a disadvantage. As I went home I wondered was that square of window lighted as before, or did it reveal the ceremonious candles in whose light the Christian must take his last sleep.



***Dubliners* Story 1: “The Sisters”**

THERE was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke. Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse. He had often said to me: "I am not long for this world," and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they



were true. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work.



> **first-person narration**

narrating I (earlier version)



experiencing I (later version)

=

homodiegetic narration

+ distanced internal focalisation (restricted zero foc.)
(earlier version)

+ internal focalisation
(later version)



increasing 'intensity' of narrative technique
(interiorization, experientiality, details)



***Dubliners* (Overview):**

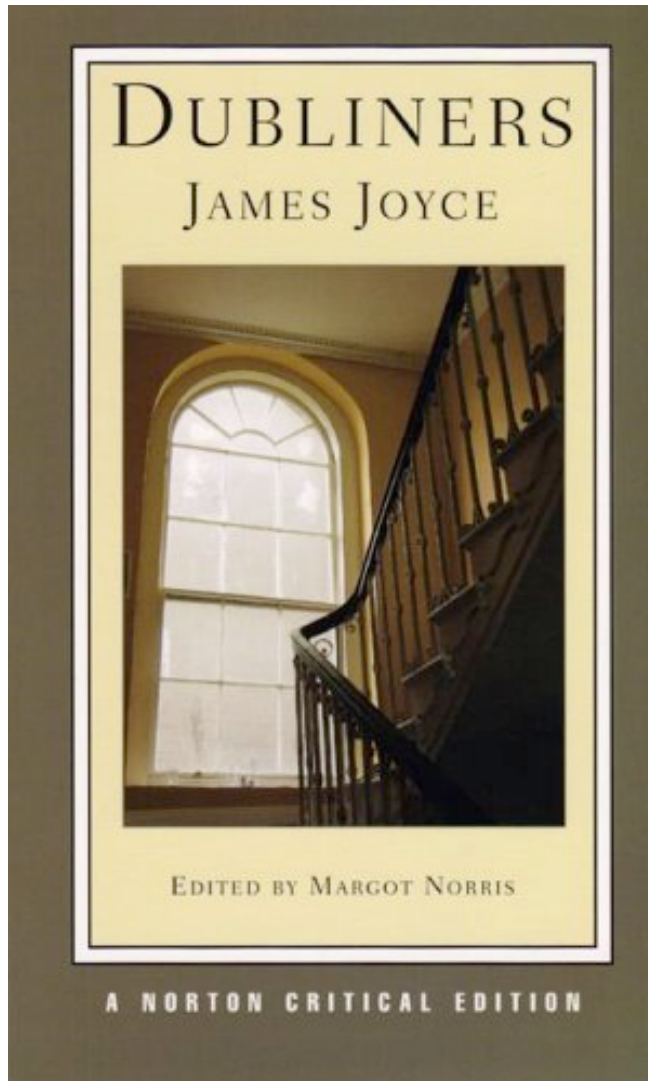
- 3 stories of childhood:
“The Sisters” / “An Encounter” / “Araby”
> homodiegetic narration, internal focalisation
- 4 stories of adolescence:
“Eveline” / “After the Race” / “Two Gallants” /
“The Boarding House”
> heterodiegetic narration, zero/internal focalisation
- 4 stories of maturity:
“A Little Cloud” / “Counterparts” / “Clay” / “A Painful Case”
> heterodiegetic narration, zero/internal focalisation
- 3 stories of public life:
“Ivy Day in the Committee Room” / “A Mother” / “Grace”
> heterodiegetic narration, zero/external focalisation
- “The Dead” (<> “The Sisters”)



Coordinates:

- Keywords: death, sexuality/gender, class, politics, religion
- private vs. public life
- paralysis vs. longing for escape
(Joyce in a letter to Grant Richards 1906:
“My intention was to write a chapter in the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis.”)
- insistence on reference and naturalistic detail
(cf. *The Mapping Dubliners Project*, Jasmin Mulliken,
<http://mulliken.okstate.edu/> (Nov 25, 2014))
 - > ‘scrupulous meanness’ vs. symbolism, poeticity
- narration remains covert/invisible (‘showing’ vs. ‘telling’)
- intensity of vision vs. oblique subtexts

> the function of secondary literature?!



Recommended edition:

James Joyce, *Dubliners: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*.
Ed. Margot Norris.
New York/London:
Norton, 2006.



3) *Dubliners* and the Irish Predicament

Irish Paralysis

> Time Line of Modern Irish History

- 1167-69 Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland begins
- 1590s Elizabethan Conquest – Nine Years War
- 1641 Catholic-Gaelic rebellion against Protestant domination
- 1649 Cromwell's 'Cruel Crusade'
- 1690 Battle of the Boyne – Victory of the Protestant army of William of Orange (King Billy) over the Catholic forces of James II
- 1695 Anti-Catholic Penal Laws
- 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion fails
- 1800 Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain
- 1845-51 Great Famine



-
- 1848 Young Ireland Rebellion fails
 - 1867 Fenian Rebellion fails
 - 1886- Three Home Rule Bills at Westminster – attempts to give
-1912 Ireland limited political autonomy fail
 - 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin
 - 1919-21 Irish war of Independence (Black-and-Tan War)
 - 1920 Partition – Free State and Northern Ireland

- > the oppressive presence of the colonizer paralyzes life in Dublin, countered and compounded by the oppressive presence of religion caught between 'Irish' Catholicism and English Protestantism/Anglicanism
- > both are subliminally present in the stories



“After the Race”

The cars came scudding towards Dublin ... At the crest of the hill at Inchicore sightseers had gathered in clumps to watch the cars careering homeward and through this channel of poverty and inaction the continent sped its wealth and industry. Now and again the clumps of people raised the cheer of the gratefully oppressed. Their sympathy, however, was for the blue cars – the cars of their friends, the French.

...

Jimmy understood that the game lay between Routh and Ségouin. What excitement! Jimmy was excited too; he would lose, of course. How much had he written away? The men rose to their feet to play the last tricks, talking and gesticulating. Routh won. The cabin shook with the young men’s cheering and the cards were bundled together. They began then to gather in what they had won. Farley and Jimmy were the heaviest losers. ...



“Counterparts”

The bell rang furiously and, when Miss Parker went to the tube, a furious voice called out in a piercing north of Ireland accent:

- Send Farrington here!

...

Weathers was showing his biceps muscle to the company and boasting so much that the other two had called on Farrington to uphold the national honour ... The trial began. After about thirty seconds Weathers brought his opponents hand slowly down on to the table. Farrington’s dark winecoloured face flushed darker still with anger and humiliation at having been defeated by such a stripling.

...



“The Dead”

...

Lancers were arranged. Gabriel found himself partnered with Miss Ivors. She was a frank-mannered talkative young lady, with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes. She did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device.

When they had taken their places she said abruptly:

—I have a crow to pluck with you.

—With me? said Gabriel.

She nodded her head gravely.

—What is it? asked Gabriel, smiling at her solemn manner.

—Who is G. C.? answered Miss Ivors, turning her eyes upon him.

Gabriel coloured and was about to knit his brows, as if he did not understand, when she said bluntly:

—O, innocent Amy! I have found out that you write for *The Daily Express*. Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself?



—Why should I be ashamed of myself? asked Gabriel, blinking his eyes and trying to smile.

—Well, I'm ashamed of you, said Miss Ivors frankly. To say you'd write for a rag like that. I didn't think you were a West Briton.

A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel's face. It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday in The Daily Express, for which he was paid fifteen shillings. But that did not make him a West Briton surely. The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry cheque. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. Nearly every day when his teaching in the college was ended he used to wander down the quays to the second-hand booksellers, to Hickey's on Bachelor's Walk, to Webb's or Massey's on Aston's Quay, or to O'Clohissey's in the by-street. He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had



been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books.

When their turn to cross had come he was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors promptly took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone:

—Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.

...

Aunt Kate turned fiercely on her niece and said:

—I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it's not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it. But it's not just, Mary Jane, and it's not right.



She had worked herself into a passion and would have continued in defence of her sister for it was a sore subject with her but Mary Jane, seeing that all the dancers had come back, intervened pacifically:

—Now, Aunt Kate, you're giving scandal to Mr Browne who is of the other persuasion.

Aunt Kate turned to Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to his religion, and said hastily:

—O, I don't question the pope's being right. I'm only a stupid old woman and I wouldn't presume to do such a thing. But there's such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia's place I'd tell that Father Healy straight up to his face . . .

—And besides, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane, we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very quarrelsome.

...



The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dimly with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.



A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.



The Technique of ‘Epiphany’

Stephen Hero (1904/05): ch. XXV

[...]

He was passing through Eccles’ St one evening, one misty evening, with all these thoughts dancing the dance of unrest in his brain when a trivial incident set him composing some ardent verses which he entitled ‘Vilanelle of the Temptress’. A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis.

A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area. Stephen as he passed on his quest heard the following fragment of colloquy of which he received an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.



The Young Lady – (drawing discreetly) ... O, yes ... I was
... at the ... cha ... pel ...

The Young Gentleman – (inaudibly) ... I ... (again inaudibly)
... I ...

The Young Lady – (softly) ... O ... but you're ... ve ... ry ...
wick ... ed ...



This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. Cranly questioned the inscrutable dial of the Ballast Office with no less inscrutable countenance.



— Yes, said Stephen. I will pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany.

— What?

— Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanized. It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty.

— Yes? said Cranly absently.



— No esthetic theory, pursued Stephen relentlessly, is of any value which investigates with the aid of the lantern of tradition. What we symbolize in black the Chinaman may symbolize in yellow: each has his own tradition. Greek beauty laughs at Coptic beauty and the American Indian derides them both. It is almost impossible to reconcile all tradition whereas it is by no means impossible to find the justification of every form of beauty which has been adored on the earth by an examination into the mechanism of esthetic apprehension whether it be dressed in red, white, yellow or black. We have no reason for thinking that the Chinaman has a different system of digestion from that which we have though our diets are quite dissimilar. The apprehensive faculty must be scrutinized in action.

— Yes ...

[...]



4) Modernist Narrative

Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction” (1919)

So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the [realistic] story is not only labour thrown away but labour misplaced [...] The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability [...] But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this?

Must novels be like this?



Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this’. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions [...] From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. [...] We are not merely pleading for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it. [...] Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.



Alan Friedman, *The Turn of the Novel* (1966)

The shift to which I refer was gradual, but it took place [...] with the greatest velocity at the turn of this century [i.e. from the 19th to the 20th century] [...] It was not merely plot, or characterization, or technique, or point of view, or thought, or symbolic organization that changed; it was not a matter of irreconcilable meanings, conflicting themes, or difficult problems. The change in the novel took place at a more fundamental level than these [...] The process which underlay the novel was itself disrupted and reorganized. The new flux of experience insisted on a new vision of existence; it stressed an ethical vision of continual expansion and virtually unrelieved openness in the experience of life.



Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (1994)

The modern change that came to fiction was not always so revolutionary, and was much more complicated [...]

There were key **social reasons**: the growth of urban populations, the acceleration of technological change, the coming of improved education and literacy, the shifting relation of the classes, the expansion of leisure, the gradual increase in personal wealth. There were crucial **intellectual reasons**: the decline of a religious teleology and of the confident, theocentric, progressive Victorian world view, the rise of science and secular philosophies like sociology and psychology, the coming



of a more material vision of life. There were important **psychological reasons**, as changing notions of the nature of the individual, social life, sex and gender relations, and rising awareness of the distinctive, increasingly mobile and fast-changing nature of experience in a modernizing age gave a new, more fluid view of consciousness and identity.

There were important **changes in the role of literature itself**: the dying of the Victorian ‘three-decker’ novel, designed for libraries and associated with moral uplift, the rise of the literary marketplace and the development of the book as an item of purchase, the restratification of the cultural hierarchies in an age of increasing democracy [...]



[H]owever we explain the change, the effects are apparent. The established form of the novel – fictional prose narrative – was acquiring a different kind of writer, a different kind of subject, a different kind of writing process, a different kind of reader, a different social and economic foundation. It was altering in length, appearance, price, and in social moral and commercial purpose. It was multiplying, dividing its audience, reaching into new kinds of expression [...]: new rights to social and sexual frankness, new complexities of discourse and form. Over the course of the twentieth century [...] this transformation would continue [...]



Changing, subdividing, [...] the novel would assume many roles. It would become a relaxing toy of leisure and fantasy, *and* a complex mechanism for imaginative and artistic discovery. It would serve as naïve popular entertainment, and would transmit radical, often outrageous or surprising, visions and opinions. Above all it would become a central literary prototype, taking an importance it had never had as *the* literary medium of the age, dislodging poetry, to some degree even sidelining drama – until, later in the century, its dominance was in turn challenged by new technological media that promised or threatened to replace book-based culture with something more immediate, visual and serial. [...]



But the break was never really to become complete. Many of the Victorian conventions and myths continued to haunt the radical surprise of the modern novel, and Victorian fiction – with its omniscient and godlike voice, its weighty realism, its chronological plotting, its presiding moral confidence, its role as the bourgeois epic – leaves its lasting imprint on British fiction to this moment. [...]

The modern novel came, but the Victorian novel did not entirely go away; and that is one of the essential secrets of the modern novel. (3-5)



From Realism to Modernism: The Interiorization of Narrative Situations (Franz K. Stanzel, *Theory of Narrative*, 1984)

1st-person narr. sit.
narrating I



experiencing I



interior monologue

↳ stream of consciousness-techniques ◀

authorial narr. sit.
overt narrator



covert narrator



figural narr. sit.

telling



showing



Thank
you!