

**‘No border is guaranteed, inside or out’: A Reading of the  
Speech/Writing opposition within Paul Howard, a.k.a Ross  
O’Carroll-Kelly’s Fictional Series.**

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The binary opposition speech/writing read against the Western Metaphysical persuasion views the written word as other to that of speech. The metaphysical thinkers from Aristotle and Plato through Rousseau to Saussure and Jakobson all deemed spoken language to reign supreme over that of the written word. They viewed speech closer to originating thought; there is a sense of immediacy attached to speech which is believed to be lost when writing. Saussure insists, one hears speech, one attributes to it the idea of representing a truth, a presence, and that ‘it is no absurdity to say that it is linguistic structure which gives language what unity it has’ (Saussure 1983, 11). Western logocentric thinking suggested that speech is a system that is comprehended instantly by its speaker and listener. Therefore, writing serves as an otherness to that of speech.

This paper will argue that by introducing Jacques Derrida’s concept of an ‘undecidable’, the border line between speech/writing is blurred. The idea of otherness is dismantled, as the boundary that constructs a sense of otherness becomes fluid and ambiguous. Derrida’s undecidables overturn the classical opposition, not to

the point where writing takes precedence over speech but a moment where doubt is imposed and seemingly different elements bleed into one another, and begin to alter the discursive field in which they are situated. The other infects the self and vice versa. This dismantling of the other that is writing within the speech/writing binary will be demonstrated through the contemporary works of Paul Howard, a.k.a Ross O'Carroll-Kelly. His fictional series when read through the lens of deconstruction is an aporia, a pathless path which, it can be argued is neither speech nor writing, but presents a type of mark that is both speech and writing. It is a type of writing which deconstructs the concept of self/other binary, it is spoken words in writing, and therefore, the other can no longer be viewed as such. Essentially, this paper shall follow the exploits of Ross, Howard's main protagonist and see the text coming 'undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability' (Derrida 1976, 1xxv) of the speech/writing dichotomy.

This philosophical opposition announces writing as the other, writing was deemed as 'the dead letter, it is the carrier of death' (Derrida 1976, 17). This otherness 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). Writing denotes otherness, it can be seen as a deconstruction of the authority and singularity of the author as sole controller of his or her text. These early philosophical thinkers insisted that spoken words are symbols of mental experiences, while written words are the symbols of the already existing spoken word. This alludes to the writing mark representing otherness within the speech/writing dichotomy. Derrida traces this speech/writing opposition and dismantles the perceived otherness of writing through predominantly the work of Plato. Derrida demonstrates that the binaries have more in

common than what divides them by showing that undecidability dwells at the heart of language.

This phonocentric favouring of speech over writing operates, in Derrida's view, according to the same logic as that of logocentrism and pahallocentrism. I aim to elucidate Derrida's deconstructive strategy of how binaries can be dismantled to the point of an undecidable - a double logic of 'neither/or' and 'both this and that' structure (Derrida 1988, 232). This paper will utilize Derrida's dismantling of the entire history of Western discourse, where Derrida shatters the idea of writing denoting otherness and illustrate how binary when dismantled bleed into one another and have more in common than what divides them within the texts of Howard.

It is essential to acknowledge the debt to an earlier paper entitled, *Maleness/Femaleness – The "Pharmatic" Status of Paul Howard a.k.a Ross O'Carroll-Kelly's work*, which was published within an earlier journal series, named *Otherness Essays and Studies 2.2*. Both papers rest within the same theoretical framework and use a similar author. However, they differ by applying alternative concepts in examining the same novels, speech and writing in this one and maleness/femaleness in the earlier paper. Similarly, the earlier paper uses Derrida's undecidable, the 'pharmakon', as a means of destabilising the opposition maleness/femaleness. This paper although valuing the importance of the 'pharmakon' will engage with another undecidable, the 'khōra', and this aporetic Derridean trope will form the conceptual basis for this paper when deconstructing the binary, speech and writing within Howard's works.

Derrida's essay *Plato's Pharmacy*, contained within his seminal work *Dissemination*, is where he proves that writing is merely a constructed other, and is just as significant as speech, illustrating that undecidability dwells within the heart of binary oppositions. Derrida subverts Plato's privileging of speech over writing, by

showing how this reversal is already at play in Plato's text, *Phaedrus*. This is a fictional conversation between two historical characters, Socrates and Phaedrus, in which Socrates uses the myth of Thoth to convince Phaedrus of the importance of speech over writing. Thoth who invented writing offers it as a gift to King Thamus. Thoth refers to the gift as a 'pharmakon', translated as a 'potion' and the king refuses it because he believes Thoth has not discovered a 'potion' for remembering (Plato 2001, 82) but it will aid forgetfulness. It is upon this word 'potion', 'pharmakon', that the text can be dismantled. A 'potion' is a beneficial and harmful drug; it acts both as a remedy and as a poison, thus, introducing ambivalence within the text. Derrida subverts this privileging of speech over writing by focusing on the word 'pharmakon'. The word is answerable to an either/or logic, shattering the phonocentric bias that Western philosophers held.

Likewise, the essay named *Khōra* is where Derrida draws on another Platonic text *Timaeus*, in order to further demonstrate his notion of undecidability. The original edition of the text was published by Editions Galilée, the book included an unbound four-page insert called in French the *Prière d'insérer*, and in this Derrida explains how Plato attempts to define the figure which he calls *khōra*. It is Plato who insists that:

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 1956, 70).

This demonstrates 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.

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, becomes clear. Western epistemology is constructed on the binary structure of the yes/no, and the true/false and in this paper speech/writing. 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* and the *pharmakon*, 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.

The very idea of the *khōra* troubles all binaries and the very order of polarity in general and applying this Derridean theory to the texts of Howard, indeed, undecidability can be uncovered within the opposition speech and writing. Howard puts forward a guide to understanding the upper middle-class or what has come to be labelled as the 'Dublin four' (D4) idiosyncratic idioms, for he satirically enunciates the snobbery and elitism that defined a generation in Ireland. The South-Dublin character, Ross O'Carroll-Kelly, imitates the wealthy, self-obsessed, South Dublin figure that has come to represent all that was wrong with the Celtic Tiger in Ireland. Howard encapsulated the materialistic and commodity-fetishized Dublin where shops possess a 'sound system, the pink PVC sofas, the giant plasma screen televisions

playing catwalk footage from all the major fashion shows' (Howard 2010, 97). Subsequently, Howard sought to capture the distinct spoken dialect which marked this social class context. In a way, he attempted to grasp in writing the Derridean notion of 'hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak [*s'entendre-parler*]' (Derrida 1976, 98). For it is an upper middle-class development of Cockney rhyming slang, for instance, 'cream cracker' refers to a 'person of low social status: knacker. Creamer' (Howard 2008, 331) or 'brown bread' signifies being 'dead' (Howard 2008, 326). What Howard is doing is providing the reader with the recorded speech patterns of this affluent class all through the medium of the written word, and establishing a speech/writing binary opposition. For 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 idiom. Howard set to denote the talk of the Dublin people; the spoken language is located within the written word. Therefore, Howard's narrative trope is made up of a conjoined venture of speech and writing. Howard in *South Dublin – How to get by on, like €10,000 a day*, included 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 'ThesauRoss' serves a purpose of codifying, or at least beginning to codify, this class and location-specific form of speech, which is expressed in writing. For instance, when Ross uses the term 'Tony Blair', he 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, 124).

Derrida's reading shows how language is far from binary in its logic, unless all ambiguities and play in the linguistic system are severely attenuated. The sensible inhabits the intelligible and vice versa, each term in each opposition is inhabited by its opposite resulting in an undecidability of meaning. Howard's fiction demonstrates writing and on the other hand, it can claim to be speech. Howard's works, it can be argued, formulate the law of undecidability. This thinking ruptures the belief in the otherness of the written word and deconstructs an assurance in the self/other structure, as oppositions are now answerable to a blurred boundary, where one half of the binary seems to bleed into the other.

A dismantling of the other, writing can be initially demonstrated by using one of Derrida's most notable phrases, '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*' (Derrida 1976, 158). This statement that there is nothing outside the text is derived from a discussion of Rousseau's autobiography, where he insists that individual's 'relation to "reality" already functions like a text' (Derrida 1981, 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 1981, 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 1981, xiv), this breaks with the traditional view that writing depicts otherness and it must imply something written. This 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 1992, 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, thus blurring the boundaries between the two. 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 focking 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 focking Tobler (Howard, 2007, 152).

words like, ‘Tobler’, ‘roysh’ and ‘focking’ 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 convey a linguistic distortion, as one may be required to speak aloud the phrases before one can grasp the connections. The deviant orthography and the uncertain status of whether the text is writing a proclamation of otherness 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, 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 a blurred boundary where the notion of otherness is immersed within the self: 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).

The division between speech and writing is shattered by Howard as he encapsulates through writing the linguistic portrayal of the D4 Individuals. This has come to be 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. 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 *khōra* which is neither an intelligible figure or a sensible figure, it is a bit like both. Similarly, Howard's texts are a bit like 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, which was traditionally portrayed as the other, 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 is 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, 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?” (NationMaster 2010, np). 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-ulatory-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?"' (NationMaster 2010, np). 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.

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 takes 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, ‘Ticknocks’, 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, a dismantling of the boundary between self and other. Indeed, 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 1976, 139). Writing has been sited within that of the spoken idiom, and speech has been sited within that of the written word, unearthing any belief in the concept of otherness. 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 – snoppy 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. Demonstrating that binary logic, does not adhere to

the notion of purity; there is a sense of openness attached to the opposition. The otherness that is considered writing is not separate from that of speech, oppositions possess a sense of fluidity, and they are underpinned by the law of an undecidable.

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