

Who is Speaking (Here)?

Parentheses and Focalization Shifts in Free Indirect Discourse

By

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## Abstract

The present study argues that parentheses have an under-recognized potential to signal focalization shifts in free indirect discourse. By combining linguistic and narratological scholarship with criticism on the role parentheses play in the presentation of voice more generally, it asserts that the divisions in textual space created by parentheses facilitate focal transitions when free indirect discourse is implemented. Analyses of Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, H.D.'s *HER*, and Virginia Woolf's middle-period novels *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse* support this argument, demonstrating that these modernist authors use parentheses to mark alterations between narrator and character voice. Moreover, recognizing the influence that parentheses have in how focalization is presented in free indirect discourse has larger ramifications for interpreting the narrative characteristics of these texts. Critical readings concerned with Bowen's resistance to objective renderings of reality, H.D.'s interest in palimpsestic reexaminations of gender and myth, and Woolf's evolving methods of relinquishing authority are all enhanced by an understanding of how focal changes in parenthesized space impact narrative presence.

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And to Brooke: you are wonderful and I love you.

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## Introduction

The goals of this thesis are twofold: to assert that parentheses have an under-acknowledged impact on how focalization is presented in novels that use free indirect discourse (FID) to blur the line between narrator and character, and to demonstrate why recognizing the transitions that occur when moving into parenthesized space is vital for understanding a novel's narrative characteristics. By examining texts from three modernist authors known for promoting character interiority through the use of FID – Elizabeth Bowen, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), and Virginia Woolf – the present work aims to establish the role that round brackets play in marking changes in focal perspective and voice. Given modernism's reputation for presenting non-traditional approaches to narration, recognizing the manner in which parentheses help answer the question of "who is speaking here" in focally ambiguous passages presents another tool for scholars wishing to more accurately explicate texts of this era. Hopefully, the strength of these observations will warrant further investigation into how the use of parentheses should be evaluated in any subsequent analysis of FID, rather than being singled out as a tactic used by the specific writers under investigation, or a curiosity of the school of literary modernism more generally. Far from housing material that is needless, digressive, subordinate, or irrelevant, the parentheses have an established history of being used to attribute voice to particular speakers, and continue to do so when unusual or ambiguous situations require more creative typographical options.

However, the deployment of parentheses among Bowen, H.D., and Woolf is hardly uniform, as the ways in which individual authors use their parentheses are open to stylistic and interpretive complexity, resulting in a surprisingly flexible means of modulating narrative voice. For this reason, an examination of parentheses necessarily entails an understanding of these parentheses' place within an author's larger narrative style. The present investigation not only argues that the punctuation mark is a viable tool through which an author may better represent less monologic approaches to narration or voice, but also uses the parentheses as a means of scrutinizing the narrative tactics of these authors

specific to their individual texts, at points either clarifying or questioning assumptions made about the style of these authors in the current critical environment.

Chapter one provides necessary background for an understanding of how parentheses relate to the presentation of character and narrator voice, as well as outlining the markers of focalization within FID that will indicate how parenthesized passages will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. Drawing primarily on the work of John Lennard and Robert Williams, this chapter first details commonly held perceptions regarding the supplemental or marginal status of parenthesized clauses, with attention paid to the parentheses' representation in style manuals ranging from the sixteenth century to the modern era. An overlooked function of parentheses in prose, attribution of character speech, is recognized for its historical significance and is posited as still exerting an influence over how parentheses are deployed in contemporary texts, particularly in instances where conventional typography fails to represent the complexity of speech and thought acts in ambiguous contexts.

A detailed account of free indirect discourse is then provided, centered on discussion of the formal linguistic cues and markers of expressivity useful for recognizing and interpreting the narrative device. In addition to previewing the terminology and methodology that will be applied in chapters two and three, this discussion highlights more general concepts useful for the present analysis, namely the irreconcilable ambiguity inherent to passages presented in FID, the fact that passages within FID require both the representation of speech or thought as well as some indication that character vocal traits are present, and the notion of focal obstinacy, or the idea that segments of text within FID retain a consistent focalizer until said text provides a signal that a focalization shift has occurred. Most important among the potential marks of focalization discussed are typographical elements, like the dash, exclamation mark, paragraph break, and italics, some of which suggest expressivity via divisions in textual space. It is into this category that the present analysis aims to insert the parentheses. The discussion of what free indirect discourse is and how it functions is chiefly informed by Monika

Fludernik's comprehensive work on the subject, *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction*, but also draws from narratologist Mieke Bal and linguist Jacob Mey to more fully represent this information.

Before concluding, chapter one will then return to the topic of parentheses, and evaluate how contemporary critics have observed the relationship between the punctuation mark and the integration of shifts within narrative perspective. Covering the works of authors as diverse as Conrad, Tolstoy, Stendhal, and Flaubert, a trend is observed of parentheses allowing, due to their ability to mark divisions in textual space, either so-called authorial intrusion or the incorporation of character perspective in direct or indirect discourse. While these studies do not address the relationship between parentheses and the use of FID specifically, they do confirm earlier suspicions that parentheses still play an established role in the presentation of voice, setting a precedent that will inform the evolutions in parenthesized usage exhibited by the modernist authors in question.

Chapter two examines the parentheses in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* and H.D.'s *HER* with the goal of recognizing and categorizing the transitions in free indirect discourse that occur within parenthesized space. This is accomplished by comparing the occurrence rate of parentheses that perform focalization shifts within FID with those that incorporate changes in focal perspective without accompanying an indication of character speech, those that transition between modes of discourse within a single character (i.e. from representations of speech to thought), as well as the more conventional (and typically more common) presence of relative clauses. In addition to highlighting instances where transitions within FID exist across parenthesized boundaries, this chapter will acknowledge that many of Bowen's and H.D.'s parentheses, even if not acting in the service of FID, are relevant to some aspect of character presentation as distinct from pure, external narration.

The discussion of Bowen's and H.D.'s parentheses is placed within the larger critical contexts surrounding their works in an effort to prove that analysis of parentheses as it relates to narrative



presence is essential to a comprehensive understanding of either author. In regards to Bowen, who is most consistent among the authors under analysis in using her parentheses to better incorporate character interiority via FID, the chapter aims to respond to critics who see in Bowen an attempt to use an unconventional, difficult style to question language's capacity to accurately capture meaning by providing evidence that Bowen's prose is, in at least one respect, more standardized and predictable than previously appreciated. The analysis of H.D.'s parentheses likewise has ramifications for the critical interpretation of *HER*, as the relationship between parentheses and narration provides a means of incorporating the novel into her palimpsestic interest in gendered rereadings of mythology, most often recognized as an aspect of her poetry. As such, the chapter aims to demonstrate the viability of the hypothesis that parentheses serve as the site of transitions within FID while it simultaneously argues that this distinction has discernable applications to the criticism of these authors.

Chapter three continues the investigation of parentheses executed in chapter two by tracing the evolving relationship between parentheses and portrayal of character perspective in three of Virginia Woolf's novels: *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*. Steady progress is demonstrated as occurring between these novels with regard to the incorporation of character voice in free indirect discourse that is facilitated by parentheses. Further, as with chapter two's discussions of Bowen and H.D., this chapter grants attention to the fact that many of Woolf's parentheses that are not strictly related to FID still offer a means of organically honoring character perspective. As the deployment of FID requires an understanding of the interplay between external narrator-focalizers and their characters, this analysis also provides as much of a window into the makeup of Woolf's narrators as it does into the functions of a specific typographical entity, and, as such, the dissection of her parentheses provides additional evidence for arguments concerned with narrative presence within these novels more generally. While the majority of the space devoted to Woolf is concerned with the incorporation of FID in parentheses, the investigation into her brackets serves as an entry point into recognizing other

peculiar aspects of Woolf's narrative style, like the unusually expressive external narrator-focalizer of *Jacob's Room*, the brief and abandoned flirtation with using parentheses to oscillate *between* character voices in FID that is found mostly in *Mrs. Dalloway*, or the signs of abolishing the line between character and narrator by means of character vocal idiom contaminating the more objective text of the narrator-focalizer that is seen in *To the Lighthouse*.

A brief note on methodology: Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz's "Round Brackets in Jane Austen" served as a partial inspiration for this text for its attention to the relationship between narrative voice and parentheses, and is laudable for its incorporating into corpus stylistics a more sustained attention to punctuation. Likewise, Reiko Ikeo's "Connectives 'but' and 'for' in Viewpoint Shifting in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*" demonstrates the practicality of "corpus-assisted" approaches to discussions of linguistic shifts in FID in connection to one of the novels examined within these pages (331). However, while the statistical trends evidenced by the corpus method are useful, and to some degree necessary, for demonstrating the frequency with which parentheses are related to transitions within FID – indeed, chapter two and three will present some quantified frequencies of this application – the present study is weary of the tyranny of numbers in creating the impression of objective data where none exists. While Gonzalez-Diaz and Ikeo offer representations of clearly quantifiable entities, there is a difference between counting *instances* of shifts into FID or types of parenthesized use and counting *attributions of voice* within these shifts. As chapter one will address, free indirect discourse is an inherently ambiguous narrative tactic, defined by the partial presence of (at least) two differing voices, and so resolving responsibility for a speech act or thought in a given instance cannot be guaranteed even when deferring to the plethora of focalization markers discussed below. Nor would the present text wish to offer that guarantee were it possible. Free indirect discourse is of interest because of its potential for interpretive indeterminacy, and while this thesis does aim to demonstrate a recognizable and oft-repeated trend, I have no desire to render into dead, unquestioned numbers passages that only profit from being read as

vocally unfettered. Greater priority has been placed on demonstrating through specific passages how the focalization markers examined in the first chapter inform readings of the parenthesized approaches in Bowen, H.D., and Woolf, rather than on a statistical analysis whose numbers might obscure an inevitable subjectivity of interpretation.

## 1.1 Chapter Introduction

The present work investigates how certain modernist authors deploy parentheses to mark shifts in focalization when using free indirect discourse. Despite a reputation for mostly demarcating superfluous or inessential material, these punctuation marks are relevant to the presentation of narrative voice, drawing overt distinctions between narration and character speech and thought. This potential to signal a shift in voices has unacknowledged relevance to contemporary investigations of FID, a style in which subjective character voice is blended with that of a typically more objective, omniscient narrator. However, before examining the ways in which modernist authors like Elizabeth Bowen, H.D., and Virginia Woolf use parentheses in the service of honoring character perspective, the relationship between parentheses and FID must be demonstrated. The strength of these observations will ideally justify the argument that use of parentheses should be evaluated in future analyses of FID beyond the scope of the writers specifically under investigation in these pages.

### *1.2 Parentheses: Convention and Tradition*

Critics who elaborate on what effects parentheses create in literary writing often find themselves, unsurprisingly, responding first to received notions that content within brackets should be read as marginal to non-bracketed material. This task is difficult, not only because the topic is infrequently examined, but also because arguing that parentheses simply mark divisions in textual space without attributing value to these different spaces complicates attempts to elevate writing within brackets as central to interpreting texts as a whole. Style manuals are commonly cited as perpetuating the idea that parentheses are non-essential, and so are an appropriate place to start when trying to establish the lack of consideration granted to the punctuation mark.

Robert Williams is clearest in his vitriol against such manuals. On the subject of parentheses, he states that “what has been said in literary handbooks sounds strikingly denigrating and dismissive,” and that “[f]rom the Renaissance to the present, value judgements have obfuscated the ways in which

parenthesis generates meaning, and often have wheedled themselves into definitions of this figure” (53). The concern over negative “value judgments” is perhaps overstated – the manuals in question have pretensions of objectivity and so do not appear to share William’s emotional investment in the topic – but sixteenth century manuals favoring unity of composition do set the foundation for modern assumptions that parentheses are used primarily for “the interruption, the insertion, the aside” (53). Both Williams and John Lennard point to the primary “classification of the parenthesis by Elizabethan school-masters as a rhetorical figure, one of the hyperbaton figures that work by disorder, rather than as a mark of punctuation,” and, for rhetoricians concerned with clarity, this “disorder” of the hyperbaton is not a method through which to communicate a dramatic effect by varying order, but a specifically “*improper* placing of words or clauses” (Lennard 14; Williams 56, emphasis mine).<sup>1</sup> While it is important to avoid confusion between parenthesis as a rhetorical tactic and parentheses as marks of punctuation, Lennard’s statement suggests that for some Elizabethan writers this distinction was unclear, and that opinions concerning the rhetorical parenthesis were extended to material within brackets.

Another lasting tradition that limits the interpretation of parentheses is the recognized convention that parentheses most often contain relative clauses. In reference to a variety of seventeenth century texts, Lennard observes relative clauses “are often additional, and where that is true can readily be made parenthetical,” but adds that “[p]arentheses are expandable and exploitable; but need be neither expanded nor exploited” (Lennard 25). This combination of being interpreted as contributing largely “additional” content with the recognition that the punctuation mark is not essential in communicating this material places the parentheses in a peculiar position. They are well suited to provide commentary on non-parenthesized text, but their use can always be read as superfluous. It is

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<sup>1</sup> While Lennard does not grant specifics as to which manuals he is speaking of on the topic of the parenthesis as hyperbaton, Williams is responding directly to Henry Peacham’s 1577 *The Garden of Eloquence*.

likely for this reason, when coupled with assertions that parentheses disrupt grammatical order, that there is a lasting assumption that any writing “is syntactically complete without the parenthesis. From a certain point of view, the reader pressed for time could easily skip over it with no practical loss” (Solomon 184). The impression that text within brackets is only additive and can safely be excised without damaging the meaning of the text has long been reinforced by style manuals, leading to situations where “[f]or the many handbooks which characterize it as if it were its own epitaph, the parenthesis signifies dead text, an appendage to the work which is neither vital nor functional, an appendix which instead of contributing organic unity only stores toxic waste, [...] the intrusive adjunct which readers quickly skim over to return to the live text” (Williams 57).

With the edicts issued by sixteenth century stylists that parentheses should be used rarely to preserve clarity and contain text that can be safely omitted without damaging the meaning of a sentence, the marginal status of material within parentheses becomes the unquestioned standard by which subsequent style manuals operated. In writing of the style manuals of the early twentieth century, Susan Solomon gestures to John Manly’s *Writer’s Index* and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (1929) to point out similar sentiments: “Style manuals contemporary to Woolf [...] warn authors against using round brackets unless the content it envelops is ‘very remote from’ [...] or ‘wholly irrelevant to’ [...] the rest of the sentence” (Solomon 184). The tone pertaining to these instructions has grown more prescriptive, in that the prior thinking that parentheses should only include supplemental material has evolved into a dictate that anything relevant to non-parenthesized text should be incorporated without recourse to parentheses to maintain clarity. Twenty-first century style guides are little more accommodating to the parentheses’ potential. The seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* chides writers that “writing will be smoother and more readable if you use dashes and parentheses sparingly,” while *Gwynne’s Grammar* tersely observes that “[r]ound brackets, or parentheses, are usually for inserting something into a sentence that [...] does not grammatically belong there” (*MLA* 72; Gwynne 98). These

two contemporary writing manuals repeat the same advice that has persisted for nearly a half millennium: parentheses obscure meaning by subverting the proper order in which ideas are typically expressed.

To these judgments that parentheses are interrupting digressions, unnecessary to a full understanding of the text, writers like Lennard and Williams insist on the neutrality of the punctuation mark, observing that parentheses merely delineate difference in textual space and that the meaning of this difference is always open to interpretation. Williams states that “the parenthetical mark forms a boundary between two types of discourse, or, rather, divides a discourse against itself providing an alternative syntactic space,” where the nature of this spatial division may contain a range of relationships, from the “parasitical or symbiotic, antagonistic or complementary, arbitrary or integral, interruptive or continuous, imitative or innovative” (Williams 64, 65). Lennard echoes this sentiment that the relationship between parenthesized and non-parenthesized text is unrestricted. He rejects the “grammarian’s insistence that parentheses are additional, irrelevant, extraneous, subordinate, or damaging to the clarity of argument” because “in practice they are often original, relevant, central, emphatic, or indicative of the crux of argument. The fact is that a lunula marks a boundary between two textual states, [and the] relative value of those states is variable” (Lennard 242).<sup>2</sup> Put another way, “lunulae only distinguish. Their valency, whether that which they distinguish is subordinate, neutrally isolated, or emphatic, is determined by the pressures of use, definition, and convention on the context in which they are employed” (5).

Undoubtedly, these assessments are accurate and vital in questioning an overly limited critical understanding of what parenthetical space is capable of communicating. However, fighting the received interpretation by arguing that parentheses are at base neutral and have meanings dictated by

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<sup>2</sup> *Lunula* and *Lunulae* are Lennard’s terms for the punctuation marks themselves, used to circumvent confusion surrounding alternative meanings of the word *parenthesis*.

contextual matters – “use, definition, and convention” – does not go far in instructing readers how parentheses might be practically interpreted in the textual wild. Recalling the prescriptive tone of some of the more recent writing manuals, and given centuries of limited appreciation for what can be done with differences in textual space, there is little reason to assume that the context in which much parenthesized text came into being is not one that takes for granted the diminished importance of bracketed material. While Lennard and Williams are right to present more interpretive options, their ideas are stridently modern, and do little beyond offering their own isolated examples to indicate how parentheses may be read. To this point, it is telling that Lennard’s own work most often points out how poets elaborate on or exploit received conventions of reading parentheses rather than presenting outright rejections of these trends. It may be true that the meaning of differences in parenthesized space may be defined contextually, but to understand that context the reader needs knowledge of the traditions of how parentheses are commonly used and interpreted.

Fortunately, there is a conventional use of parentheses that, while largely overlooked by grammarians and stylists, has an uninterrupted history in influencing use of the punctuation and may partially inform our newly liberated readings: attribution of speech. When stressing that “lunulae require a context, and do not have an absolute value in the same fashion as the other [punctuation] marks,” Lennard establishes precedent for this interpretive flexibility by citing Joannes Sulpitius’ 1494 *Opus Grammaticum* (Lennard 7). In speaking of parentheses, Sulpitius himself uses them in three distinct ways that would come to be conventional applications in the sixteenth century: presenting relative clauses, containing conditional clauses, and attributing a line of text to a designated speaker.<sup>3</sup> This use for parentheses is prevalent since the inception of the mark, as “[t]wo of the six earliest lunulae

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<sup>3</sup> The line that Lennard sees as the beginning of this attributive tradition – “Parenthesis est ubi diversa oratio (ut inquit Perottus) imperfecti adhuc orationi interponitur” – is playfully self-referential (Sulpitius qtd. Lennard 7).



to appear in an English printed book enclose an attribution of speech,” and was so widely adopted that “until c. 1640 a substantial proportion of printed lunulae enclose attributions of speech” (20, 21).

Moreover, the mark was not merely deployed in a manner supplemental to other methods of identifying a speaker, as “the third person reporting [of Sulpitius’ example] does not emphasize the extent to which the lunulae function as the equivalent of the modern inverted comma” (20).

Lennard puts a mid-seventeenth century expiration date on the widespread prevalence of using parentheses to define who is speaking, largely due to changes in printing standards. He writes, “The use of lunulae to indicate attributions of speech has become rare since the employment of inverted commas, particularly since the establishment of firm conventions governing the indications of direct and indirect speech in prose” (216). It is worth stressing, however, that the tradition has not left English style, as “lunulae continue to be used when, for whatever reason, inverted commas are not desired” (216). A compelling, more modern example can be seen in T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”:

Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair –  
(They will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’)  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –  
(They will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’) (77)

Eliot’s parentheses are particularly interesting because they serve as a bridge between strict attributions of speech and the use of parenthesized space to transition between voices that will be explored below. The point that another (albeit imagined) voice is commenting on Eliot’s narrator requires no punctuation beyond the parentheses to make itself evident – a hypothetical “(How his hair is growing thin)” would communicate via the change in person between “my” and “his” and the

transition in narrative space signaled by the parentheses alone that the speaker has likely shifted – but Eliot indeed uses the parentheses, in conjunction with the colon, single quotation marks, emphatic exclamation point, and verb of speech, to present a new voice and signal who is now speaking. Here the parenthesized space is used to introduce another speaker, partially by virtue of the fact that the parentheses have a recognized tradition in clarifying to what speaker a given line may be attributed.

Lennard's observation on the persistence of the convention of speech attribution is illuminating, but limited by genre and time. His purview is limited to poetry, so the persistence of this tactic in prose goes without much elaboration, and he has little interest in modernist experimentations in form or style outside of Eliot. However, there are a number of points relevant to the question of whether the historical attribution of speech within parentheses has transitioned over time into methods of modulating voice within free indirect discourse. Lennard's aside on how parentheses contribute to the handling of speakers in the prose of science fiction is worth repeating here. He writes that "[w]here telepathic communication is transcribed, or alien languages in translation, or ulterior thoughts, it is necessary to find ways of distinguishing these strata from ordinary speech and the authorial voice: and the most popular solutions have been to employ italics or lunulae, separately or in combination" (Lennard 238). This quotation is intriguing for a pair of reasons. First, the "ulterior thoughts," and to a lesser extent the "telepathic communication," broaden the definition of attributed speech to include mental states as something akin to spoken communication, a point that will prove relevant to the consideration of how FID operates. Secondly, parentheses are used to clarify speakers in situations where available punctuation cannot effectively communicate this point, especially where confusion may arise not only in distinguishing between speakers/thinkers within a science fiction story, but also between the voice of the narrator or writer. If it is true that parentheses fell out of favor for distinguishing speech and speakers once typographical conventions no longer deemed them necessary, that authors revert to parenthetical punctuation to answer questions of who is speaking in new,

ambiguous contexts suggest that the parentheses' tradition of distinguishing between voices still has uses to contemporary writers. It is entirely possible, then, that because "the establishment of firm conventions governing the indications of direct and indirect speech in prose" rendered the parentheses outdated in speech attributions, they may still have some role in clarifying speech in the murky area between direct and indirect speech where typographical conventions are less firm (216).

Considering the fact that parentheses have an established tradition of regulating speakers in text, and considering that free indirect discourse may need additional punctuation to mark attribution of speakers because conventional punctuation is tied up in more common instances of direct and indirect speech, the question of whether parentheses' attributive abilities have been marshaled into the service of clarifying speakers in this new context merits investigation. This analysis will first consider whether parentheses may operate in a fashion consistent with other recognized focalization markers within FID. It will then examine whether other assessments of material within parenthesized space relating to voice suggest that the marriage between FID and parentheses is apt.

### *1.3 Focalization Markers in Free Indirect Discourse*

Free indirect discourse is a tactic for representing the speech and thoughts of characters in a manner that blends these discourses with that of a primary (typically non-character) narrator. By integrating an approximate representation of a character's perspective into the language of the primary narrator, it "frequently attempts to suggest the precise flavour of the original utterance or consciousness that is 'true' to a character's mind," by supporting an "automatic gear shifting between narration and character's minds, usually in the interests of empathy and narratorial inconspicuousness" (Fludernik 260, 73). Put another way, the primary narrator yields the floor by deferring to a potentially novel perspective, granting character consciousness a greater claim to mimetically informing the nature of a narrative. Here, character voice takes a turn as a partially narrating voice.

There are a few points that are common to most interpretations of free indirect discourse. A partial list of Gerald Prince's definition stipulates:

1. "Free indirect discourse...has the grammatical traits of 'normal' indirect discourse, but does not involve a tag clause ('he said that,' 'she thought that') introducing and qualifying the represented utterances and thoughts."
2. "Furthermore, it manifests at least some of the features of the character's enunciation"
3. "Free indirect discourse [...] is usually taken to contain mixed within it markers of two discourse events (a narrator's and a character's), two styles, two languages, two voices, two semantic and axiological systems" (34).<sup>4</sup>

Free indirect discourse is by nature largely ambiguous, as it removes overt references to which character is speaking, and involves an intermingling of two styles that can only be contextually defined by a reader familiar with the lexical patterns of both the primary narrator and any focalizing character. Further, there is added ambiguity in the question of precisely why an author would engage in this narrative tactic. Although there is a uniform honoring of character perspective in FID, it "is not a linguistic form that could be aligned with a specific function or meaning," and so is open to a variety of contextually defined approaches and meanings (Fludernik 11). While FID may be hard to recognize, and while there is no prescribed rule as to what function it performs within a text, this uncertainty may be considered one of the device's biggest strengths: "Free indirect discourse [is] eminently useful as a means of *deliberate ambiguity*" (81, emphasis in original). Far from offering a monolithic interpretation handed down from a supposedly objective narrator, FID permits a degree of interpretive flexibility by virtue of its blending differing perspectives.

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<sup>4</sup> While Ann Banfield rejects the dual voice hypothesis described here, within recent years this last point had reached near consensus among scholars of the device.

While this ambiguity may be central to why FID is a useful narrative tactic, it can lead to situations where identifying, let alone interpreting, passages written in the style can be difficult. Fortunately, grammatical transformation concerning how tense is deployed, as well as recognized clues provided by deictic reference, are widely regarded as consistent signals for the device.

On the topic of how tense often betrays the presence of FID, Jacob Mey observes that tense transformation is a consequence of the ‘indirect’ aspect of free indirect discourse, and so traces left by transformation rules pertaining to indirect discourse can still be found in the device. He states first of indirect discourse:

In many languages, such main clause ‘verbs of saying’ [...] can be said to embody, or ‘capture’ as their complement, some utterance. Thanks to this process, they exert a certain influence on the latter’s grammatical shape, such that the captured utterance, called ‘indirect discourse’ [...] is obligatorily subjected to certain morphological changes: tense and/or mood in the verb, case in the noun. (Mey 72)

So, for instance, the direct discourse contained within:

(1) The cat chirped softly at Brooke. She said, “The cat’s incessant meowing **is** annoying.”

will undergo a backshifting of the verb when rendered in indirect discourse as:

(2) The cat chirped softly at Brooke. She said that the cat’s incessant meowing **was** annoying.

Interestingly, while FID abandons the grammatical markers that most readily identify indirect discourse – the verb of speech and the nearly always present “that” – it retains the backshifted verb as if the influence from the verb of speech is still present. As FID is “*both* ‘stand alone’ *and* indirect discourse, the viewpoint of the speaker [is] being represented *as if* it were reported [...] yet at the same time, because it shows no overt ties to any reporting speech act [...] it comes on as a direct expression of the subjective perspective of the narrative character’s ‘speech or thought’” (Mey 73, emphasis in original). So, a rendering of the previous lines in FID would be:

(3) The cat chirped softly at Brooke. The cat's incessant meowing was annoying.

The ambiguity of speaker is apparent in this representation of FID, as it is difficult to discern the focalizer in (3), since the second sentence could either be the observation of an external narrator, or an expressive evaluation from a character. As such, additional markers beyond tense shifts are often required to identify focalizing voice. Similarly to how FID will carry a backshifted verb that aids in identifying the speaker, pronoun transformations and other deictic signals are likewise hallmarks of the technique. Moreover, these signals are typically more telling, as, while the tense transformation is consistent in applications of free indirect discourse, it is "*unmarked*," while deictic clues announce their presence (Fludernik 115). Because focalized observations provided by a character focalizer will no longer refer to the primary narrator (the "I" of a character-focalizer refers to the character, not the primary narrator), the rendering of these observations in a voice that poses as the primary narration will clarify this distinction by communicating an "impersonal" language situation (Bal 52). As a result, both indirect and free indirect discourse shift pronouns like "I" or "you" into the third person. For instance, the direct discourse of:

(4) Brooke said, "I am annoyed by the cat."

is shifted in indirect discourse to:

(5) Brooke said that **she** was annoyed by the cat.

and not:

(6) Brooke said that I was annoyed by the cat.

- - because the pronominal reference must remain consistent with the source of the speech or thought, not with whichever (potentially ambiguous) narrator is reporting the speech or thought act. These pronominal shifts are required transformations, but there are related word choices in (free) indirect discourse that are more linguistically untethered: deictic markers. Deictic terms are "words that only have meaning in the context in which they are uttered," and include the "personal pronouns *I* and *you*,

the (morphologically defined) class of demonstratives (*this, that*), a certain class of adverbs of time and space (*here, now, last week*) all of which directly refer to extra-textual entities, locations, or points of time” (Bal 30; Fludernik 42). Just as there is a difference communicated between personal and impersonal language situations when a primary narrator is either referring to itself or referring to the thought or speech of a character, deictic terms also communicate a degree of proximity that separates a character-focalizer from an external narrator-focalizer.

These linguistic cues – tense shifts, pronoun shifts, and related deictic gestures – are the firmest indicators that an author is deploying free indirect discourse within their texts, and an understanding of these cues will prove relevant to interpreting the writings of the modernist authors examined in the following chapters. However, they alone do not resolve FID’s characteristic ambiguity. While there is an absolutist approach to the interpretation of free indirect discourse that places faith only in linguistic markers, typified most famously by Ann Banfield’s handling of the subject, the majority of contemporary theorists argue that attributions of FID based on technical aspects are meaningless without supporting contextual readings to back them up. Monica Fludernik points out that instances of FID where the primary narration is composed in the present tense but transitions into the past during focalization – rare in contemporary English literature, but more common in early English and medieval writings – throws the transformation rules into confusion, leading to a situation where “tense shift certainly does not seem to be the rule and one may speculate about free stylistic variation” (90). Furthermore, she points out that deictic reference hardly guarantees the device, chiefly because of potential instances (more typical of spoken examples than literary) where the primary narrator may retranslate references within focalized speech or thought for enhanced clarity, such as “substituting *tomorrow* for the reportee’s *on Friday* in order to mark current relevance” (115). Due in part to these potential failings, and in part to the fact that such linguistic elements are meaningless unless there is a definite speech or thought act that informs a given sentence (which may potentially be difficult to determine), Fludernik

states “that free indirect discourse cannot actually be defined by such linguistic criteria, at least not in a definitive manner” (280).

These caveats, while important, do not diminish the relevance of grammatical transformations in identifying free indirect discourse, but rather indicate a distinction between a definition of the device requiring such signals and one that is supported by them. To wit, “a shift in tense never is a *necessary* condition for establishing the presence of FID, but [...] a shift sometimes may be a *sufficient* condition, depending on the circumstances of the text and its consumers. The grammar needs to be supplemented, but not supplanted, by other means of expression” (Mey 105, emphasis mine). The contextual supplement that Mey and others have in mind is one that suggests that a reported speech or thought act is taking place, and these supplements are often made up of markers of expressivity. If a portion of text is capable of communicating expressive characteristics, readers are presented with evidence to recognize FID even in instances where the grammatical transformations are absent or ambiguous in meaning, and these expressivity markers, in conjunction with the previously mentioned grammatical rules, remove much doubt that the primary narration has transitioned into a focalized speech act or thought. Not only do pragmatic readings based on expressivity supply guidelines on how to attribute voice, but they can, in fact, “override and sublimate the rules based, narrow context-determined identification of textual elements such as pronouns” (143). Expressive elements aren’t just useful in pointing in the right direction, but they can also trump markers based on more traditional types of evidence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to clarify, however, that expressive features themselves cannot define instances of free indirect discourse alone, and still rely on contextual readings and supplemental evidence to effectively signal the device. Fludernik is careful to point out that some primary narrators may engage in expressive tactics without necessarily indicating a reported speech or thought act. Such “colloquial,” yet apparently external and omniscient, narrators can be found in the novels of Joyce and Pynchon (326).



The importance of expressivity is grounded in attention to deictic reference in differentiating between primary and internal focalizers. Fludernik writes,

Such expressivity – in the narrative text – is interpreted as signaling the deictic centre of a *character*. The presence of these expressive elements in free indirect discourse has therefore been largely responsible for the traditional dual voice interpretation of free indirect discourse, in which the ‘voice’ of the narrator (signaled by referential and temporal ‘government’) and that of the character (the character’s deictic centre as instanced in the many expressive devices) intermingle in free indirect discourse. (227, emphasis in original)

Equating expressive qualities with deictic words or phrases is an intuitive move, and not only because such expressions rely on a character voice to carry meaning (they may point *out* from a particular perspective, as when the word “father” in a speech act denotes not any father but the father of a character-focalizer). Furthermore, such expressivities point *in*. Mieke Bal argues that in the “emotive function the narrator refers to itself [...] Signs of emotive functioning are, therefore, signs of self-reference,” as any proclamation of feeling or relation is inherently also a proclamation of presence (51).

Fludernik has compiled a largely comprehensive list of these expressive cues that merits partial summarizing here, both to prime later interpretations of Bowen, H.D., and Woolf, and to demonstrate the range of textual attributes capable of expressing the subjectivity of FID. Astute readers should be on the lookout for:

1. Lexical expressions of subjectivity: Lexemes of a foreign language; dialectal/sociolectal/ideological peculiarities; evaluative modifiers (“terrific,” “wonderful,” “marvelous,” “gorgeous,” “awful,” “peculiar,” etc.); intensifiers (“so,” “too”); epithets/profanity; modals/epistemic morphemes (“probably,” “certainly,” “perhaps,” “maybe”); private language; malapropisms; and idioms (261-266).

2. Patently deictic expressions of subjectivity: Pet names; titles; lack of names or indeterminate reference in thought acts;<sup>6</sup> vague or imprecise references (Fludernik cites Virginia Woolf's charming "Miss Whatsername"); use of articles that suggest familiarity; use of "this" and "that" to imply distance; and highly evaluative designations (141-146).
3. Typographical expressions of subjectivity: Use of colon or semicolon; exclamation and question marks; italics; capitals; dialectical spellings; abrupt breaks in the text communicated by a dash; and paragraph breaks (230-232, 328, 136).

Obviously, this last category is pertinent to whether parentheses may also express the needed subjectivity to signal an instance of free indirect discourse. Some of these typographical markers are self-explanatory in application, as an exclamation point or italicized word is a pronounced instance of expressivity; in fact, "[e]xclamatory sentences are one of the surest indications of free indirect discourse, particularly in the representation of figural consciousness" (159). Others, like the colon, semicolon, dashes, and paragraph breaks, require some elaboration. These markers operate through their handling of space. Fludernik tersely observes that "[s]ometimes free indirect discourse is separated from the narrative proper by means of a colon or semicolon," and as this is the only line of explanation granted to how these marks work, it is presumably by virtue of the marks' ability to separate narrative levels spatially that they have any communicative impact (231). Dashes presented at moments where the narrative halts mid-sentence are perhaps more straightforward in their expressivity, as it is not difficult to equate a break in the text with a "break in a character's train of ideas," and this proves to be another instance in which spatial aspects play a role in displaying a subjective speech or thought act (328). Paragraph breaks work similarly by demarcating spatial difference between instances of narration. Janyce Wiebe has commented on "the effects of paragraph

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<sup>6</sup> Fludernik's elaboration is helpful to this point: "In our thoughts we frequently do not think of people by their names. Joyce reflected this fact in Molly's ubiquitous *he* for a number of the men she muses about" (143).

boundaries on shifts of deictic centre,” and so the transition of topics between paragraphs can be considered sufficiently pronounced to end or begin a new instance of narration, complete with a new focalizing narrator (Fludernik 136).

Considering that textual space is not frequently a topic evoked in discussions of FID despite the existence of typographical markers of expressivity, it may not be immediately apparent how spatial cues may indicate character voice. To this point, Jacob Mey’s notion of obstinacy provides a clue as to why spatial differences matter. In instances of direct or indirect speech, it is not unusual for a reader to continue attributing speech to the highlighted reporter until the reader is given an indication, typographical or otherwise, that narration has reverted back to the primary narrator: “A parenthetical [here a tag clause, not defined by punctuation] that has been used to introduce a particular voice may be expected to be supplied by the reader further on, once the terms of the ‘narrator contract’ have been agreed upon, and the ‘contract’ has not been suspended by voices changing or clashing” (Mey 137). For instance, a depiction of dialogue between two characters may attribute who is speaking in a tag clause before the first instance of speech for each character, but then omit these attributions because the reader is capable of remembering whose “turn” is taking place in a given line. Until the text signals that it is moving on from alternating lines of dialogue, the reader will continue automatically assigning a speaker to each new line of text. Similarly, free indirect discourse may signal the presence of a focalizer speaker, and until the primary narrator reasserts itself via a textual clue, the reader will continue to attribute narration to the focalizer; this speaker’s “turn” is not over until the text signals this fact. Put more directly, “the reader, once s/he has started to read in terms of speech or thought representation, will continue processing the text in this frame until alerted by textual and semantic (contextual) features to reinterpret in terms of a new frame” (Fludernik 285).

Mey’s gesture toward “voices changing or clashing” as defining the moment when obstinacy halts is crucial to the issue of space, as the idea that punctuation’s spatial effects signal a narrative

change means that punctuation alone can be enough to mark the beginning or end of a focalized passage. With a shift in space comes the potential for a shift in narrator. Because the punctuation marks outlined by Fludernik have a recognized bearing on how we interpret speech – beyond quotation marks, even direct discourse makes use of colons, dashes, and paragraph breaks to indicate speaker – the punctuation marks themselves are a clue to the reader to be on the lookout for potential vocal changes pronounced enough to disrupt obstinacy.

What, then, of the parentheses? They, too, traditionally have been used to indicate speakers, and, as Williams and Lennard note, their effects are often spatial in nature because the interruptive nature of parentheses juxtaposes or intermingles two passages of text. Perhaps it is due to the fact that parentheses no longer conventionally attribute speech that they are not listed within the class of typographical expressions of subjectivity, but this omission ignores the fact that the parentheses' influence on speaker has not died, but has only changed as other marks of punctuation became associated with direct and indirect discourse. If it can be demonstrated that parentheses are used not only on occasion to attribute speech, but through spatial proximity bear influence on the relationship between speech acts, parentheses will prove to be, like colons, semicolons, interrupting dashes, and paragraph breaks, enough of an expressive marker to signal an obstinacy-ending shift in focalization.

#### *1.4 POV: Point of Voice*

The relationship between parenthesized and non-parenthesized text is often framed in spatial terms, with particular attention paid to a relationship that forms between the two demarcated types of textual space. While parentheses are credited as pertaining to representations of speech, it remains to be seen whether their spatial relationships can signal Mey's "changing or clashing" in narrative voice that would indicate that these spatial relationships can serve as an expressive indication of transitions within free indirect discourse. Although analysis of parentheses usage is hardly a well-represented topic, what few examinations of parenthetical style do exist indeed have much to say on the topic of

parenthesized space serving to accent narrative voice and facilitate some type of transition between levels of narration.

In viewing how parenthesized text relates to the material into which it is situated, there is sustained attention to the fact that a sort of transition or change does take place. Hugh Epstein, addressing the parenthesized portions of Joseph Conrad, writes that the “parentheses of *Nostromo* very often lift the reader, literally at a stroke, from a discourse of narrative to a discourse of commentary, and thus the context for our reading is momentarily changed,” adding that one “pervasive effect of *Nostromo*’s parenthetical style extends the portrayal of competing histories through marked shifts in perspective whose tendency is to promote an ironic reading of communism and capitalism” (79, 84). While these particular transitions have less to do with character-focalizers than with more general narrative tactics, it is worth considering that the parentheses are a site for “marked shifts of perspective” and “momentarily changed” reading contexts. Rather than merely performing the function of providing supplemental commentary, and rather than presenting unrelated material to spur the reader into thought via juxtaposition alone, the parentheses here serve to alert the reader that a sort of transition has occurred, that the mode of discourse has been shifted. Difference in textual space signaled by the parentheses need not necessarily be read as transitional – it is only a difference, and what that difference communicates is always at an author’s discretion – but it is telling that many authors see parentheses as always communicating a change in narrative mode. As “[p]arentheses constitute an irruption into the text, which frees the encapsulated discourse from the constraints imposed by the text’s established syntax and voice,” and “these insertions effect the shift in tone and point of view characteristic of this device,” there is a repeated attention to the effects that follow the collision of parenthesized and non-parenthesized material (Morrissey 49; Lyngstad 405). Whether it is the abandonment of previously presented textual norms, or whether it is an act of deferring to another viewpoint, parentheses do suggest through their use of space that something different may be afoot.

Alexandra Lyngstad's singling out point of view as the "characteristic" shift suggested by differences in parenthesized space is a typical, and telling, approach to parenthesized transitions. Examinations of the use of parentheses in nineteenth century literature mention that this space is at first used to allow authorial intrusion, where a conventional narrative discourse temporally changes its point of view to a perceivable and expressive speaker to permit authorial elaboration or commentary. Parentheses are "related to Tolstoj's projection of his authorial sphere through explanatory comments into the narrative" and "often defines more closely the point of view of the author himself, his personal judgments" (Lyngstad 406). For the first type of this authorial interruption, that of "explanatory comments," Balzac also acts accordingly. Robert Morrissey states that the majority of Balzac's parentheses in *Le Pere Goriot* – twenty-three of twenty-nine instances – are related to attributions of character speech, but some of the remainder are, interestingly, "the author/narrator commenting on the language of the characters, making the text more 'readable,' by explaining the use or abuse of a word, the manner of naming a thing. He is, in short, employing a metalanguage, one that has a certain autonomy in relation to the language of the tale" (52). In commenting on the language choices of his characters, Balzac uses the parentheses to break into his own narrative, wresting the point of view away from his characters to reassert his interpretation of what is unfolding. For the second type of this use of parentheses to inject authorial point of view – the assertion of personal opinions and commentary – Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* serves as a representative case: "For in parentheses Stendhal takes the first step in establishing the [external] narrator's identity" where "breaking in is an act of bravado. Almost gratuitously the narrator interrupts the flow of the text to express for the first time an explicit judgment in the first person," to the extent that there is a "danger of the narrator taking over, displacing the story, or rather becoming the story" (Morrissey 52-53). In both cases, parentheses alert the reader that a change in perspective is taking place, and that what is written on one side of the bracket is of a different narrative perspective than what is written on the other.

The tendency for authorial point of view to be presented through parentheses also accommodates shifts in character perspectives. Tolstoy perhaps stands at the beginning of this sort of parenthesized usage, as he handles authorial interjection in part through ironic deferral to points of view that clash with the previous narration: “The parenthetical insertion introduces a new point of view, that of drawing-room society as shared by Prince Vasilij and Anna Pavlona,” where, implicitly, “Tolstoj’s mocking attitude toward this point of view is apparent” (Lyngstad 405). Conrad, as well, is recognized as using parentheses to change point of view between characters, and this transition carries with it an accompanying change in point of voice. Epstein observes that “Conrad can be seen using brackets extensively in ‘Falk’ and ‘Amy Foster’ [...] primarily as a means of representing modulations of a narrator’s speaking voice” but also “he uses it [parenthetical punctuation] to not only give a confidential inner voice to Captain Whalley (and, to a lesser degree, Massy, Sterne and Van Wyk) but on occasion also ironically amplify what would otherwise remain purely factual details” (75). Here we see an instance where the identified relationship between parentheses and speech acts is related to how parenthetical space permits transitions in perspective. It is not enough that Conrad’s parentheses indicate who is speaking, but they also communicate *how* they are speaking, and the attention to irony (similar to Tolstoy’s approach) means that there is attention granted to how character perspectives differ from that of the narrator-focalizer. The fact that both Lyngstad and Epstein comment on the ironic nature of these perspective shifts – and irony that can only function if the reader can recognize some dissonance between character perspective and that of the primary narrator – is compelling evidence that the sort of “changing or clashing” of voice that Mey has in mind is indeed occurring in parenthesized space. In Conrad, these clashing voices are so consistently parenthesized that his “parentheses conspicuously display the competition of perception conducted everywhere, to the point that it would be a misdirected attention to seek a consistent voice for the implied author” (Epstein 87). Likewise, in Tolstoy there are situations where “an observer’s point of view and that of the author

toward the observer are combined in one and the same parenthetical remark” (Lyngstad 406). It is specifically because of the parentheses that the reader is confronted with ambiguous narration, one both blended and self-conflicted, and it is because of this resulting clash in voice or perspective that readers are left questioning just whose voice is speaking in a given passage.

Punctuation is supposed to clarify text, not complicate it. Not only has the influence of parenthetical space on transitions in character perspective and voice left us with a potential ambiguity, a question, but it is a question that is typically confronted not by stylists, but by theorists who map out the boundaries of free indirect discourse: who is speaking here? Morrissey recognizes this question in Flaubert, observing, “The first question to arise concerning these parenthetical insertions is perhaps that of voice: ‘Who is speaking? Who is the parenthesist?’” (56). However, the answer proves irrelevant. “What does matter,” he continues, “is that these questions have been evoked, or rather provoked. [...] On the level of narration, the parentheses play a deictic role, calling attention to the *enunciation*, and what they point to here is, precisely, the power to choose the place of things in space and time and to choose their form” (56). This type of deixis pointing to the text itself can only be exploited by an author or narrator credited with the construction of the text; only they, after all, have the capability to use parentheses deliberately to elicit certain effects. The description of FID offered previously suggested that anything that is loudly self-referential is also, by nature, self-expressive. While parentheses may or may not do much to indicate who is serving as a focalizer for a given passage, they are well suited to reinforce the fact that there is a distinct, expressive speaker, and any resulting confusion over perspective due to the transitions in narrative that occur during these parentheses compels the reader to recognize that issues of voice require their attention.

In the previous section, several distinctions for what sort of traits define a focalization marker in free indirect discourse were presented. Because purely linguistic definitions for the device were suggested to be insufficient, a contextual demonstration that a passage of text is part of a speech or



thought act was stipulated. Outside of more overt cues that a speech or thought act is taking place, scholars like Fludernik highlight expressive markers of subjectivity to bolster contextual claims that FID is present. In addition, within these expressive markers they recognize typographical expressions of subjectivity, markers that function largely because their handling of textual space implies that a sort of “changing or clashing” between narrative voices has taken place, and the reader is free to abandon obstinate opinions over who to that point has been speaking.

Parentheses, then, prove to be a nearly textbook example of the sort of focalization marker that can suggest that free indirect discourse is taking place. They have an established tradition of defining or clarifying actors within speech acts. They are, by virtue of a self-referential deictic tendency to reinforce the author’s presence, to some extent inherently expressive. They are spoken of frequently in terms of difference in narrative space, a difference that proves relevant to contrasting or incorporating two differing focalizations, so that the mark of the parentheses itself becomes a site for a transition in voice. In essence, if an author has already indicated that FID is being used to allow shifts in narrative voice, the parentheses are pronounced enough a marker that careful readers should begin examining what relevant changes in voice occur on either side of the brackets.

Focalization changes indeed take place within parentheses, and this occurs so consistently that we should begin viewing parentheses as a potential signal for the device. However, it has also been said that parentheses, like free indirect discourse itself, may be uniform in appearance but diverse in applications. The following chapter will examine precisely how modernist authors Elizabeth Bowen and H.D. use their parentheses to influence changes in focalizations, and how recognizing the role of the parentheses helps the reader approach their texts.

## 2.1 Chapter Introduction

The works of Elizabeth Bowen and H.D. are not frequently placed in conversation. Aside from recognitions that these artists draw stylistic influence from the writings of Virginia Woolf, few overt similarities are noted. However, both authors are accused of strained, frustrating, or otherwise unartful prose styles that, upon closer observation, may instead work toward mimetic portraits of character interiority while simultaneously questioning phallogocentric means of textual expression, to say nothing of their examinations of history, gender, sexuality, and the nature of the self's relationship to language. As such, the writers deserve closer attention to how their means of expression influence the content of their works. Of chief interest to the present study is their use of free indirect discourse to facilitate differences in focalization between characters and narrators, and the ways in which Bowen and H.D. refine their use of FID through parenthesized insertions.

The primary objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the validity of the assertions in chapter one, that parentheses may serve as a marker of focalization and are often deployed to guide interpretation of passages rendered in FID. The linguistic cues and markers of expressivity outlined previously will be the primary means by which focalization within these novels will be categorized, used in conjunction with an analysis of the novels' particular use of divisions in parenthesized space to show narrative transitions. Once the relevance of parentheses to Bowen's and H.D.'s prose styles has been demonstrated, these pages aim to argue that a recognition of the parentheses' influence has ramifications for how the novels under examination – *The Last September* and *HER* – relate to the critical literature surrounding their creators. Bowen's parentheses suggest a level of artistic control and consistency too frequently ignored in her work, a point that adds nuance to, but does not reject outright, the work of critics who suggest that Bowen's writing is antagonistic to the notion that written language can capture objective meaning. Alternately, H.D.'s parentheses prove vital in linking *HER* to

critical discussions pertaining to other areas of her *oeuvre*, which simultaneously bolsters the criticism of others while better defining the objectives of H.D.'s overarching poetic project.

## 2.2 Critical Context: Elizabeth Bowen and the Strangeness of Style

Fortunately, criticism on Bowen's writing has in recent years shifted away from purely thematic, historical, or plot-focused discussions to better incorporate analyses of her often idiosyncratic style. While this broadening of critical considerations is undoubtedly welcome, as Bowen remains interesting as much for the manner in which she wrote as for her stories themselves, many of the stylistic examinations tend to be preoccupied with Bowen's resistance to easy interpretation. Ambiguity in Bowen's work is certainly present and relevant to the study of her style, as is to be expected from an author so reliant on the use of free indirect discourse to blend the voices of her narrators and characters, but frequently this ambiguity is interpreted either as a consequence of sloppiness or error, or as indicative of a critical stance toward objective meaning itself. That her style might be a calculated, consistent means to mimetically enhance an intended and coherent interpretation rather than refute the possibility of it – that readability does not suffer from this approach to narrative – is too rarely considered.

Susan Osborn, who advanced concerns over Bowen's style, tempers her admiration with recognition of how unusual Bowen's writing often is to most readers. Regarding *The Last September*, she references Bowen's "notoriously strange style, which produces in almost every sentence – either explicitly or subliminally – some disorientation of sense, some deviation from standard meaning," a style marked by "the often apparently arbitrary use of punctuation; the odd, seemingly rash and indiscriminate word choices; the convoluted and at times insensible syntax" (34, 39). Osborn rejects the assumptions that these instances of strangeness are the products of writerly inexperience, and instead insists that Bowen's purpose for peculiar prose is to complicate conventional literary interpretation, to "discomfit the mimetic project...and suggest that the comprehension of meaning is dependent on an

understanding of a provisional and unsettled relation between the congruous and the incongruous” (59). The leisurely world described by Bowen where war lurks on the fringes is neither tidy nor easy to decipher, and so it is only appropriate that a chaotic style that resists definitive meaning, one that, through disharmony, draws attention to its own status as language to obscure what these words aim to represent, is the only way to accurately reflect the content it captures.

Siân White likewise suggests that Bowen is calling into question the possibility for language to engender objective interpretation through straightforward use of the word. Also focusing on *The Last September*, she observes that Bowen’s style resists positioning “the novel as a vehicle for presenting a full view of reality,” and that Bowen “undercuts any notion of *narration* as a device that allows a full, unobstructed view of reality” by virtue of ostentatious self-reference to the artificiality of prose through stylistic weirdness and the narrator’s indifference to moderating in differences between character viewpoints (86, emphasis mine). White is keenly aware of Bowen’s use of free indirect discourse to foster ambiguity between the voices of characters and that of the external narrator, but is less than generous in characterizing how FID is communicated in her work. She returns repeatedly to the imprecision that marks Bowen’s focalization shifts, noting “subtly shifting focalizations and verb tenses that, in their attempts to be precise, obscure rather than elucidate the plot-relevant content of the sentence, leaving the meaning ambiguous,” and “the kind of implication that marks Bowen’s style, often manifested as a mere slippage between focalizations, is, however, especially curious for its lack of uniformity” (79, 83-84). Like Osborn, White notes that the ambiguity in Bowen’s work is reinforced by its non-uniform style, and this lack of precision is meant to mirror Bowen’s disavowal of structured, conventional prose’s power to represent an unstructured, disordered situation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Readings of Bowen’s fiction that hinge on her rejection of language’s ability to capture objective meaning have led to compelling interpretations that I do not aim to disparage or question. Of particular note is Harriet S. Chessman’s work in framing Bowen’s disinterest in narrative objectivity in terms of a gendered

While there is little denying that Bowen's use of free indirect discourse leads to a narrative ambiguity in service of a mimetic reflection of character – such a result is often the point of using FID, not an unintended consequence – assertions that her style is so ostentatiously flawed that it brings into question the capacity for language to convey meaning are perhaps overstated. Bowen's writing does require vigilance and patience on the part of the reader, but it is also structured and considered to a degree beyond which she often receives credit. In arguing that Bowen's style actively attempts to resist interpretation, White spends a good deal of space focusing on her use of parentheses, noting that while "Bowen's prose is riddled with parenthetical injections [...] the purpose, role and effectiveness of those interjections are highly variable and inconsistent" (91).<sup>8</sup> Further, White is troubled by how focalization is "presented inconsistently in parenthetical commentary," to the point that the "voices and views presented in parentheses vary widely, representing multiple focalizations as well as the tensions and contradictions that exist even within one subjectivity," ultimately resulting in a use of the punctuation mark where the "overly complicated layering of voices and views suggests that Bowen is striving for precision but trying so hard to be accurate about what the narrator and characters think and know that the effort frustrates clarity for the reader" (90-91). While it is beyond the purview of this chapter to address all of the aspects of Bowen's style that may resist interpretation, it is worth considering whether White's assessment of Bowen's parentheses is accurate.

### 2.3 *Parentheses in The Last September*

Far from White's claims that Bowen's use of parentheses is "highly variable" and prone to interpretive indeterminacy, the parentheses of *The Last September* are strikingly uniform in marking shifts in either character focalization or mode of discourse. The novel contains thirty instances of

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restriction to the access to language, observing "a profound ambivalence toward her own powers of authorship" that "involves a sense of her betrayal of her own gender" (124).

<sup>8</sup> N.B. White's use of "parenthetical" is strictly in reference to statements within brackets.

bracketed material in the span of roughly 300 pages, and of these, twenty-six (86.6%) are used to announce such a switch in discourse mode or voice related to character speech and thought acts. Of these twenty-six that signal narrative transitions, eight (26.6% of the novel's total) mark transitions between focalizers in direct or indirect discourse, similar to the sort of speech attributions within parentheses outlined in chapter one; six (20%) present a transition in discourse type without altering focalization, typically a move from character speech to character thought or vice versa; and twelve (40%) are instances where the parentheses mark a change of focalization within free indirect discourse. There are only four instances where parentheses are in no way transitional, three of which are still extensions of character expression – for example, where a bracketed statement is presented within a letter written by Lois – and there is but a single instance of “conventional” parentheses use, one aside spoken in the voice of the external narrator presented in the novel's penultimate paragraph. Considering that the prevailing use of parentheses is to elaborate on character speech or thought acts, and considering that examples concerning free indirect discourse are essentially combinations of the two other categories of shifted materials (focalizer and discourse type), a strong plurality of Bowen's parentheses confirm the parentheses as a potential typographical clue that the narrator is permitting character expression through FID.

Bowen's bracketed transitions into attributed speech and thought are consistent with the usage of authors like Tolstoy and Conrad, where the result is defined less by a simple indication of who is speaking a given line, but instead are used as an opportunity to either unobtrusively intermingle the narrator's and character's perspectives, or demonstrate a relationship between two character expressions. These parenthesized insertions cannot properly be considered instances of FID, as they carry the tags more in keeping with both direct and indirect discourse, but they are relevant to this discussion because they still clarify an intermingling of voice. For instance, a passage that at first appears to be written in FID with Gerald acting as focalizer, but which turns out to be an instance of

indirect discourse, occurs when Gerald meets Lois within a fir plantation: “He looked past her, the path led to Lois. This green open path spaced out with trees had (he afterwards thought) a place in heaven” (121). A reader may be primed to suspect that the omitted conjunction in the first sentence indicates a degree of narrative expressiveness telling of a passage in FID, and the proximity implied by the deictic pronoun “this” beginning the second sentence seems like further proof. However, the novel has already shown that the comma splice is not out of line with the external narrator’s natural style – an interpretation based on this point would require supplemental evidence – and, more importantly, the parenthesized tag attributing thought firmly indicates that the surrounding sentence is an example of indirect discourse where the narrator takes ownership of a second-hand account of Gerald’s thought. However, the placement of the bracketed attribution here is interesting, as it interrupts the observation, leading to some ambiguity of what material precisely constitutes Gerald’s observation. Is the thought reported by the narrator the entirety of “This green open path spaced out with trees had a place in heaven,” or is it merely the material that follows the parentheses, the “a place in heaven”?<sup>9</sup> While this line cannot be said to be an instance where Bowen uses her parentheses as a focalization marker within FID, the eight attributive parenthesized statements that work in this fashion do often result in the effects that one elicits through free indirect discourse: the change of focalizer, the intermingling of character voices to promote a productive ambiguity, and the partial disavowal of the narrator’s authority by virtue of a blurring between objective and subjective reports. Even instances where character voices are clearly attributed, such as with the line “Mrs. Vermont could talk of nothing but poor Denise. (‘As though,’ said Livvy, ‘she were having at least a baby instead of only a dance’),” the reader is presented with character speech breaking into a longer section of external narration, a

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<sup>9</sup> The fact that Gerald’s thoughts are specifically after the fact – “he afterwards thought” – means that the reader had lost a vital clue here in noting whether the verb “had” is tense-shifted.

focalization change that leads to a simultaneity of voices that presents character speech as having the same importance as more objective observation (216).

The second identified type of shift singled by Bowen's parentheses is concerned with alternating between types of discourse while maintaining a consistent character focalizer. Typically, these passages are themselves rendered within free indirect discourse, meaning that parentheses are not deployed to signal a disruption in narrative obstinacy. However, the changes that they do incorporate are relevant to the discussion of how parentheses relate to FID, as they allow a fluid transition between the kinds of speech acts and thoughts that writing in FID captures. When Lois's aunt Lady Naylor suggests that Gerald meet her alone at the Fogarty's, Gerald is eager to discuss his intentions toward Lois with her. This leads to a line that not only demonstrates the relevance of typographical cues to deciphering the controlling focalizer more generally, but also to the capacity of parentheses to switch between speech and thought: "He, feeling himself ordered like a taxi – better still, like a nephew – had flushed with pleasure. *Rath-er*; he'd make a point – (Would she then call him Gerald?)" (261). The reader is presented in the first sentence a clear instance of free indirect discourse, where the more objective description that "[h]e...had flushed with pleasure" contains a revision of how to classify a feeling that suggests a thought, complete with the telling relational term "nephew," where Gerald is focalizing. The revision of the feeling from taxi to nephew is set off by dashes, which, with the supporting evaluative description "better still," refers to the previous clause and indicates that everything following the comma after the initial "he" is likewise necessarily described from Gerald's perspective. The following sentence presents a speech act that, while differing in shades of accuracy in depiction, maintains Gerald's focalizer status. The first word, "*Rath-er*," is an instance of direct discourse despite not being presented with quotation marks nor having any sort of tagging, but clearly a representative speech (as opposed to thought) act by virtue of the italic stress and the dash indicative of pronunciation. After the semi-colon, the speech act reverts back to FID, which is made obvious by the use of a contraction (which



the external narrator is not wont to do), the shifted tense, the dash suggesting interrupted speech, and the fact that the pronoun “he” prevents reading this line as a continuation of the previous direct discourse. Finally, there are the parentheses, containing a representation of thought that is in FID by virtue of its pronoun use and its presenting an internal question. Despite the wide variety of discourse types presented in this sequence, evidenced by shrewd use of typographical marks, Gerald maintains a consistent status as focalizer.

Chapter one presented a list culled from Fludernik of the sort of typographical expressions of subjectivity into which I argue the parentheses deserve mention. This list includes semi-colons, question marks, italics, and dashes, particularly dashes that point to a break in the text. In the previous quotation, these typographical marks each demonstrate why they are considered as such markers, as do the parentheses in the final question. However, my point is not only that the parentheses belong to this set of expressive markers because of their ability to guide how focally busy passages such as this should be read – though they do. This quotation is particularly relevant because there is no other typographical mark that would allow Bowen to transition from Gerald’s speech to thought without having to resort to a more formal style bearing quotation marks and tags. Omitting the parentheses would suggest that, despite the interruptive dash, the question “Would she then call him Gerald?” should be read as a continuation of the speech act, rendering Gerald as a pleading child incapable of discretion rather than as someone hopeful for romantic success. One could eliminate both the interruptive dash and the parentheses without changing the question’s status as thought, but then the preceding “he’d make a point” becomes unclear as to whether it accompanies the former statement as speech or the latter one as thought. The parentheses are, in this case, the only typographical marks capable of facilitating this transition between speech and thought where Bowen can maintain her signature style, free of tags, and its use feels natural given Bowen’s reliance on parentheses to show such transitions elsewhere in the novel.

However, the largest percentage of Bowen's parentheses combine into FID both of the kinds of shifting presented previously: that concerned with who is focalizing and that concerned with the type of discourse on display. Bowen's parentheses accommodate the use of free indirect discourse not only by being a vehicle by which focalized observations may be inserted into a section of text, but also because the brackets themselves signal that previous focal obstinacy has been frustrated. Put another way, instances where FID within interruptive parentheses is identifiable via the expressive markers outlined previously prepare readers to identify passages where focalization changes are signaled by the presence of brackets alone.

A simple example of a transition into free indirect discourse occurring within parentheses, complete with telling cues beyond the parenthesized insertion itself, comes from the same meeting between Gerald and Lady Naylor. The scene starts off focalized by the external narrator with "He had never been given an assignation so directly. For she had said (this now divinely probable aunt of his): 'I may be at the Fogarty's, resting, at half-past three'" (261). Before the narration has the opportunity to move into the direct discourse of Lady Naylor's speech, there is a parenthesized pause where Gerald is afforded a moment of expression through free indirect discourse, a point made evident in the familiarity implied by the pronoun "this," a sense of immediacy at odds with the past tense narration carried by the word "now," the subjective expressivity of "divinely," and finally, the fact that only Gerald would consider her a "probable" aunt, as the narrator and reader both know by this point that Mrs. Naylor is setting out to dissuade Gerald from pursuing Lois. These parentheses offer a painfully ironic bit of interjection from Gerald, and that the addition relies on so many distinct cues of focalization prevents any confusion as to whether Gerald's voice has any place in the surrounding text.

Bowen also uses clear instances of FID transitions in parentheses communicated through juxtapositions of character knowledge rather than linguistic markers, and while these are not examples where the presence of FID is indicated by the brackets themselves, they are instances where the

parentheses are vital for breaking focal obstinacy without any other assistance. One scene describes how Gerald's thoughts affect his behavior: "His alertness was blunted, while he approached the ladies, by a slight stupor of effort; he was groping for something Napoleon had once said, something remarkably neat and apposite that Gerald had once copied into a pocket book" (133). Not long after this observation, there is a passage where Lois acts as focalizer, and such focalization is largely demonstrated contextually by how her interpretation of Gerald's behavior differs from what the reader was just presented with, rather than by formal markers. Unable to resist a tongue-in-cheek deflation of Lois's perspective, the external narrator breaks her focalization in parentheses: "Lois, watching Gerald approach with an absence of smile that was almost a shadow, was certain she must have done him injustice. His constraint (the pursuit of Napoleon) had a rather grave beauty. Their kiss under this high ceiling must be present and palpable to him also" (134). No marker, save potentially the brackets, signals that the parenthesized content is not an aspect of Lois' focalized thought; the reader must notice the humor here by bringing privileged knowledge into Lois' musings. Also, while the focalization shift is communicated more by content than by typography, the brackets are crucial in juxtaposing these two positions, to say nothing of their perhaps subtly setting the expectation, due to Bowen's previous parenthesized transitions, that this inserted content does not derive from Lois's thoughts.

These indications that Bowen uses parentheses as a means of transitioning between focalizers within FID prove useful in addressing lines where the only hint that anything has changed lies in the segmentation of textual space itself, and recognizing this tendency helps clarify statements that may be unclear on their own. Returning to Gerald's unfortunate meeting with Lady Naylor, there is a moment when "Disregarding the chair Gerald trundled up with its loads of cushions, she placed herself (unaccountably, it would have to appear) on the narrow window-seat" (262). There are two, at first, equally viable readings of this line that hinge on the fact that "appear" carries no direct object. The first, where focalization does not change and the line remains told from the perspective of the external

narrator, suggests that Lady Naylor's action in choosing a less comfortable seat would likely seem without justification to a hypothetical outside observer. The second, where through FID the words "unaccountably" and "would have to" are rendered as a partially mediated representation of Lady Naylor's thinking, displays that she is toying with the desperate and befuddled Gerald; he "would have to," or necessarily, interpret this behavior as without account, furthering his confusion and thus her dominance in the situation. Bowen's record of parentheses deployment, as well as the fact that this move is calculated to unsettle Gerald in a manner consistent with the remainder of Lady Naylor's actions in this chapter, warrant accepting this second, more nuanced reading over the strictly descriptive interpretation. Without the awareness that Bowen often uses parentheses to communicate passages through FID, readers would likely miss that Lady Naylor is explaining her reasoning for her behavior instead of the narrator simply offering a description of how that behavior could be received.

The fact that Bowen's use of parentheses in *The Last September* is in service of shifting between focalizations in passages of free indirect discourse more often than for any other use is evidence in its own right that the punctuation mark should, at least in certain circumstances, serve as a marker for the device. Furthermore, it is compelling that the majority of the parentheses that do not act in service of FID are still related to the types of shifting that occur with the device, either transitions in focal perspective or in the modes of discourse in use. Bowen is remarkably consistent in these applications, suggesting that the relationship between parentheses and narrative voice is a valid one, and prompting a reexamination of some of the recent criticism regarding the author's unique style.

#### *2.4 Bowen's Parentheses: Critical Implications*

Julia Kind's exploration of metaphor and simile in *The Last September* articulates a nuanced examination of Bowen's style that is worth placing in contrast with the work of the scholars mentioned here. Kind sets out to refute critical readings that have "tended to disregard Bowen's use of lexicon, syntax, punctuation and images as a sign of artistic incompetence rather than recognizing it as one of

skill,” and is successful in demonstrating syntactical consistency relevant to Bowen’s use of certain figures of speech to mimetically capture a given character’s relationship with others and their environment (130). She makes a point of placing her work in conversation with Osborn, noting that she endorses Osborn’s assessment that Bowen’s complicated style contributes to a necessary “interdependence of form, meaning and reader” in interpreting the novel, but Kind also strives to argue that Bowen’s effects are based on “specific and systematic patterns in narrative discourse and [give] rise to likewise specific and systematic cognitive structures” (130). Rather than observing an erratic style meant to cast doubt upon narrative objectivity due to language that points to its own artificiality, Kind suggests that Bowen has a clear point that she wishes to express, and the consistence with which she syntactically presents her metaphors points to a writer with faith in narrative’s ability to communicate a specific and intended meaning.

It is likely telling, then, that the passage that Kind selects to analyze in depth is one that Osborn previously points out as displaying the “monstrous incompatibility to many of Bowen’s images,” and a “shocking taint of primitivism, of pressures exerted by energies more typically repressed, that provokes unease and anxiety and suggests a freedom of association that borders on anarchy” (Osborn 55). Osborn sees here an attempt on Bowen’s part to defamiliarize the reader from a recognizable and easy to interpret reality – Osborn’s anarchy is concerned with reader interpretation, and not merely indicative of the mentality of the character focalizing the given metaphor – and Kind agrees, to a point. She states that “Osborn’s claim that Bowen’s tropes pose cognitive challenges for the reader and influence the aesthetic experience may hold true,” but is quick to add that “this sense of textual disorder is not a textual feature in itself, but an effect of systematic and recurring patterns which are well-conceived” to “work to the end of producing confusion” (133-134). Put another way, both critics agree on the results of Bowen’s metaphors, that disorientation in the reader stems from mimetically represented confusion within a character’s focalized observations, but Kind is adamant in stressing that

this result is an intended consequence communicated through Bowen's adept writing style rather than a byproduct of self-questioning stylistic strangeness. It stands to reason that if these results are calculated, and delivered via syntactical structures that are more governed and intentional than typically recognized, arguments that Bowen's style is crafted to call into question the capacity for a narrator to deliver an objective portrayal are more difficult to accept.

Just as Kind preserves much of Osborn's analysis while giving greater credit to Bowen's ability to dictate an intended and decipherable meaning, hopefully a close examination of Bowen's use of parentheses serves as a mild corrective to White's interpretation of the punctuation as it relates to FID. Much of White's attention to parentheses is worth heralding, especially considering the fact that the topic is so under-examined. Her observation that "[e]xamples of Bowen's use of parentheses include those that enable the interjection of one character's thought into a sentence or passage focused on another, which reveals the simultaneity of thoughts at the diegetic level" is spot-on, and this capacity for simultaneity is a point worth considering when interpreting the punctuation in authors other than Bowen (White 90). Moreover, her observation that the parentheses may present character "subjectivity in multiple layers, one more interior than the other" is an apt and useful elaboration on Bowen's use of the punctuation to present differing modes of discourse within a single focalization, a method to capture what a character "does not say while offering greater insight into his inner thoughts" (90, 91). However, White's insistence that Bowen's use of parentheses is unstructured and randomly presented to the point that it "mocks the mimetic project more broadly," because "the variability and inconsistency draw even more attention to their role in service of the narration," seriously overlooks just how consistently Bowen deploys her parentheses for a specific effect (91). A majority of Bowen's parentheses are used to signal a relevant transition in representing character perspective, be that between focalizers, the manner of discourse presented, or a combination that alerts the reader to the presence of a statement within free indirect discourse. Furthermore, Bowen's use of the parentheses is

often an unobtrusive way of presenting complementary character interpretations without resorting to an inordinate number of cumbersome tag clauses or separate sentences, and thus serve to show multiple character perspectives with minimal stylistic artifice. Rather than being deployed “intrusively” so as to call attention to the fact that “parenthetical commentary, conventionally intended to elucidate meaning, further confounds it,” Bowen’s parentheses repeatedly (and subtly) indicate that transitions are occurring, and often incorporate many of the established signals of FID in conjunction with the division of textual space (90). Granted, passages do exist that permit multiple, potentially ambiguous interpretations. However, this ambiguity is a consequence – and often the objective – of writing within free indirect discourse more generally, and so assuming that the lack of clarity is due to the manner in which Bowen presents FID rather than her intended purpose denies the polish and purpose of Bowen’s style. Bowen’s parentheses do not “mock” mimesis, but enhance it, and at least here further complicate any argument that Bowen’s writing is so unstructured that it aims to question a narrative’s ability to communicate effectively.

### *2.5 Who is Speaking (HER)e?*

The prose work of H.D. shares a number of striking but unacknowledged similarities to that of Bowen. Sustained attention to specific aesthetic aspects of both artists is underrepresented in the critical literature, in which scholars instead focus the majority of their attention on explicating issues more concretely related to plot, theme, history, gender, sexuality, and the role of the writer. This lack of attention is particularly curious because both writers deploy unconventional styles that some interpret as indicating a lack of control or artistic craft, while others (more accurately) assert that their atypical styles strive for a less-logocentric means of rendering the difficult relationship between femininity and language. Like previous critics who wrote off Bowen as exhibiting unintended error rather than creative daring, Lawrence Rainey casts doubt on the idea that H.D. displays mastery over writing’s “basic formal resources – rhythm, syntax, diction,” leading to an author with “impoverished stylistic resources.” (108,

121). In response, Robert Spoo, editor of H.D.'s *Asphodel*, points toward H.D.'s consistent formal structure of the chapters in both *HER* and *Asphodel*, her deliberate punctuation, and the "unusually skillful" rendering of dialogue in contrast to the rest of the text, one that "uses crisp individuation and alert mimicry to exploit a wholly different aesthetic from the labile subjectivity of the narrative passages" (211-212). Despite this tension concerning the notorious peculiarity of H.D.'s prose voice, and despite decades of scholars gesturing to this lack of attention in regretful asides, the paucity of work devoted to her prose aesthetics largely remains as much the case now as when H.D. re-flowered into the critical landscape in the eighties.

As is the case with Bowen, H.D.'s uncertain style has been tied to a mimetic rendering of character consciousness, albeit typically with greater priority placed on thematic explication than aesthetic investigation. In reference to H.D.'s semi-autobiographical novel *HER*, Ingrid Galtung convincingly links passages that exhibit higher degrees of free association, linguistic indeterminacy, and juxtaposition of at first unrelated images with mental breaks suffered by the protagonist, Her Gart. When Her's would-be mother-in-law compares Her to either Undine or Hans Christian Anderson's Little Mermaid – Her has difficulty recalling precisely which sea-creature she is compared to – the notion that Her's voice or soul will soon be defined chiefly by a husband has repercussions for both Her's mental stability and the text through which she is represented. Galtung observes that "the moment the name 'Undine' is voiced, the notion of the 'correlated subject' shatters, as does the logic of the text. The coherent sequence of narrative and the linear time of language now breaks down; the novel enters 'hysterical time,'" leading to a narrative that "breaks up into a jumble of unrelated episodes that have recently taken place, whereupon the novel moves into non-temporality" (58).

Furthermore, Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel DuPlessis note that H.D.'s syntax itself occasionally betrays, through unconventional language, discernable alterations in Her's perspective. Describing a moment when Her joins romantically with Fayne Rabb, Friedman and DuPlessis observe



that “aroused, they merge as H.D.’s syntax obliterates the distinction between them: ‘Her bent forward, face bent toward Her’” (212). Friedman and DuPlessis do not elaborate on precisely what they mean by “syntax,” whether they are referring to a reading in which the comma marks an abrupt and unexpected reversal of subject and object in the sentence, or in which H.D. removes the previous distinction between “Her” as a name and “her” as an object pronoun, capitalizing an instance of the pronoun usage to suggest an identifying union between the women. For either reading, their point stands: H.D. uses peculiarity in language itself to represent the thought processes of her characters, here suggesting unity between subject and object, a reading that Her later deliriously confirms: “Fayne being me, I was her. Fayne being Her I was Fayne. Fayne being Her was HER so that Her saw Fayne” (210).<sup>10</sup> In both cases, either in reference to sequence of events or syntactical playfulness, H.D. can be seen representing her protagonist’s consciousness through a mimetic style.

However, H.D.’s style is not limited to the portrayal of character interiority. The rejection of conventional style as a means to relate content via form, as with Bowen, is recognized as pointing to a distinct *écriture féminine* used to explore the difficulties of female writers working within a language to which they are granted limited access. Dianne Chisholm detects in H.D.’s breaks from traditional methods of expression a subversion of “the very notions of language and speech by attempting to articulate the imaginary, primary world of child and woman outside the discourse of nations, outside the exchange of signs between citizen-men, the talk of patriots and/or patriarch” (84-85). Likewise, in *Ashpodel* – a sequel to *HER* – Spoo reads into H.D.’s commas a particularly female means of representation. Though her commas are deemed “often irregular, inconsistent, begun but not concluded – a series of broken pledges and torn contracts,” they “frequently have [a] kind of emotive-

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that the final verb in this sequence is “saw” rather than the repeated past-tense version of the verb to be, “was,” almost as if the identification between Her and Fayne is so complete that it permits reading the sentence backwards.

mimetic function,” conveying in one instance a “sense of alarm, a staggering and stumbling, a juggernaut male presence pushing past a mother to clutch at her infant” complementary to the details of plot (Spoo 213).

Both of these consequences of style – rendering of character interiority and reflection on specifically female means of textual production – prove relevant to an analysis of H.D.’s use of parentheses to signal focalization in *HER*. However, before examining how H.D.’s parentheses operate, some discussion of narrative voice in general is necessary. Matters of interpreting narrative voice are complicated by a style that often does not announce shifts in focalization, resulting in passages that fluidly swing between external, third person narration, free indirect discourse, and interior monologue with dizzying frequency and imprecision. In fact, there is little consensus on how precisely to categorize *Her’s* narration. Chisholm speaks only of “*HER’s* complex, third person narrator” (94). Alternatively, Friedman and DuPlessis characterize the narration as “rendered unstintingly in a lucid, associative interior monologue,” even in reference to passages that lack any marker of depicting thoughts, first-person or otherwise (and such instances do not crop up with any consistency until well into the novel) (210). Spoo is perhaps most accurate – and most poetic – in his recognition of the “spectral glidings from the third-person-limited discourse to first-person memoir to intimate, visceral stream of consciousness,” even if these “spectral glidings” elide differences in these modes of narration (212).

The question of who, exactly, is narrating *HER* is complicated by alternative strategies concerning how best to approach the autobiographical nature of H.D.’s *roman à clef*. Considering the degree to which the events of *HER* mirror those of H.D.’s Pennsylvania upbringing, complete with thinly veiled inclusions of H.D.’s romantic partners Ezra Pound (here George Lowndes) and Frances Gregg (Fayne Rabb), it is easy to read the narrative voice as H.D. herself trying to make sense of her earlier years. Interpretations that suggest that *HER* operates as a “form of therapy that delivers woman’s writing from the debilitating structures of phallogocentrism and that recovers a trace of or a style of

tracing a specifically feminine symbolic,” or that require external knowledge of the author’s life for full understanding, as “once the biographical key for the *roman à clef* is discovered, the novel’s disguises dissolve,” do little to distinguish the narrative voice from that of the author and view the novel as an act of poetic (re)creation of self (Chisolm 103-104; Friedman and Duplessis 215). On the other hand, some critics are suspicious of such conflation, noting that “[a]s tempting as it might be to equate the story of Hermione with the facts of H.D.’s life, the novel defies the existence of a conscious, self-determining subject. Thereby, Her resists being read autobiographically” (Galtung 12). In this view, the narrator-focalizer still shares some identity with Her Gert as character, but the connection between Her (and her narrator) and H.D. is denied. The present study is likewise wary of any potential biographical fallacy, but also cannot neatly deny the relevance of author biography in how the novel is read by others, or the degree to which the novel itself invites these readings. *HER*’s primary narrator resists disentanglement from the other roles of poetic subject and artistic creator, resulting in a tension-laden voice that has a greater sense of identity with the character it describes than would a traditional narrator. This, unfortunately, leads to situations where markers of expressivity that would suggest character focalization in the works of other authors retain enough ambiguity to frustrate attempts at objective classification of voice; it is often impossible to nail down just which element of H.D.’s tripartite narrative persona – fictionalized and often focalizing character/lyrically expressive narrator/textually external autobiographer – is potentially focalizing at a given moment.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.6 (*Her*)mione

At first blush, *HER* does not present as strong an argument that parentheses play a role in signaling the presence of free indirect discourse as does *The Last September*. Considering the vague

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted, though, that for as complicating as the three interlocking aspects of H.D.’s narrative makeup is in *HER*, this construction itself is not particularly unusual or without literary precedent in (semi)autobiographical fiction. Interestingly, *HER*’s narrator is little different from the more straightforward “author-narrator-hero Marcel” that Genette observes in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* (249).

boundaries of the narrative's "spectral glidings," it is little surprise that, of the 242 examples of parentheses in the novel, sixty-four (26.4%) deny conclusive classification regarding any shift or consistency in focalization, leading to situations where a statement could be attributed to Her's focalization or her related but distinct external narrator. However, many of the remaining 178 bracketed statements do prove relevant to an appreciation of which voice is directing the narrative within the novel, due both to conventional means of signaling breaks in obstinacy as well as to setting up telling focal relationships between parenthesized and non-parenthesized space. Within *HER*, sixty-one (25.2%) parentheses overtly signal shifts between focalization in free indirect discourse and either third-person narration or interior monologue; fifty seven (23.6%) exhibit consistent focalization, where either the primary narrator or Her Gart retains the role as speaker, typically offering conventional digressions in relative clauses; and sixty (24.7%) are related to character speech in either direct or indirect discourse, most often deployed to capture a parenthetical comment that a character makes within uninterrupted dialogue or to attribute speech or thought, similarly to Bowen's uses previously mentioned.

The sixty-four examples that can confidently be said to alter narrative focalization within FID are identified by their use of the sort of markers outlined in chapter one. Given that the narrator-focalizer begins the novel by situating itself further ahead in time than Her Gart's experiences, as evidenced by its use of Freudian terminology like "'failure complex,' 'compensation reflex,' and that conniving phrase 'arrested development'" to which the character Her has no access because she is "no prophet," a more common index of a focalization shift is that of the tense shift or other gestures toward difference in temporal positioning (H.D. 3). Instances like "Lightning pulsed (it's only heat lightning) above the black line that was the forest where it was banked against their lawn" are clear in their division between focalizing voices because of the transition from the expressive narrator's past tense description to Her's present tense assessment; compellingly, this particular example serves as a fulcrum for focalization for

the entire paragraph, as everything preceding this line is offered in a past tense, third-person narration that bears no trace of Her's voice, while everything afterward is presented in a present tense blend of interior monologue and free indirect discourse (83). While some instances of these tense shifts suggest the beginning of free indirect discourse at the end of a passage that is governed by the narrator-focalizer, they are equally likely to signal the end of FID and the beginning of more overt examples of first-person interior monologue. For example, a passage in which Fayne is being compared to a clock in FID contains the observation:

Fayne was part of the clock that had jumped forward with little-cricket almost perceptible jerk of its metallic little hand; and in stillness against the potpourri-coloured curtains (everything in this house is getting potpourri-colored) it struck its little bellnote sounding from far its note like a bell on the throat of that little dog of Iseult, the book George had brought her bound in vellum with a moiré dark rose ribbon to keep the place, beautiful little book about Iseult and her little dog with a bell on his collar. (131)

The reader can be confident that the non-parenthesized portion of this sentence is in textbook FID because the use of the past tense and the pronoun "her" indicate that the recursive, syntactically expressive, and heavily evaluative passage is not merely an instance of interior monologue. Although, the material within parentheses cannot be considered a continuation of FID. The transition from "was" to "is" signals that the bracketed material should be read as an unmediated account of Her's interior thought-process, a fact that is bolstered by the proximity implied by "this house."

Other, more subtle, markers are present within parentheses to help distinguish narrative focalization. While H.D.'s syntax is often rolling and unconventional, the degree of formality in sentence construction often gives a clue to who is speaking in a given instance. In a sequence of sentences that begins in conventional narration and segues into free indirect discourse, the reversion to external narration within parentheses only highlights that the surrounding sentence is more focalized through

Her: “She now braced herself decisively against her own tree. She rubbed her shoulder blades against that small tree. Small hard tree trunk (as she rubbed her shoulders to more raw reality) swayed a little, upright swaying little tree swayed” (68). Here the first two sentences are relatively standard in syntax, and the use of “that small tree” (as opposed to “this small tree”) in the second sentence reinforces the notion that the narrator has some distance from the act being described. The third sentence, with its deletion of all anticipated articles, its failure to supply supportive commas, and bizarre repetition both in content and vocabulary, suggest an interpretation of the scene that is more focalized through Her, save the parenthesized material. The parentheses contain a clue within their brackets that these words are more objectively describing the non-parenthesized action via the simultaneity implied by “as,” the more standardized syntactical structure – including a roughly verbatim rehash of a four-word sequence presented previously in the non-focalized narration – and the more comprehensible assessment of the description; the peculiarly phrased material outside of the brackets is, in Her’s mind, a representation of “raw reality.” Due to its more standard syntactical construction, the text within parentheses proves to be a move back into third-person external narration, and this distinction reinforces the fact that the surrounding material is focalized through Her.

Likewise, the novel suggests focalization, in and out of parentheses, through idiomatic character language. The present study is reluctant to attribute focalization based on such language use, considering the porousness between Her’s language and that of the narrator-focalizer, but vocal habits do lead to some parenthesized attributions that can be confidently ascribed. For instance, a sentence describing Her looking at her father attributes via the parentheses an assessment of color that is anchored in indirect discourse, making it clear that the thought act and phrasing are explicitly Her’s: “She had stopped crying suddenly at the sight of Carl Gart in his assassin’s hat pulled over eyes that were (she knew) too-blue under the white eyebrows above the beaked nose” (91). In addition to the centering of the color description within Her’s thought act, “too-blue” can confidently be attributed to

Her because of previous comments rendered in first-person interior monologue focusing on the intensity of certain colors complete with a hyphenated description, including a reference to a picture of Egyptian wood carvings with “agate-dark dark eyes with bright very-white white around them” (91). When, later in the novel, a section begins with “Seated in cold steel light, drawn back again, away from that blue-white face, face too-white (eyes too-blue, eyes set in marble, black-glass eyes like eyes set in pre-pyramid Egyptian effigy) Her Gart saw rings and circles,” the reader can be certain that this description of Fayne’s eyes is focalized through Her rather than being offered solely by the primary narrator (164). The hyphenated color descriptions offer a suggestion of this point before reaching the first bracket, but it is not until within the parentheses that the reader receives the “too-blue” that was previously attributed to Her, which, in addition to the repeated reference to Egyptian art, indicate that at least the parenthesized description is safely focalized through Her.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, an abrupt end to idiomatic language may signal the end of a passage rendered in FID or interior monologue in favor of external narration, as with “Best have it out with mama, go on shelling peas (she was sitting on the porch floor) for Mandy” (95).

Again, instances where these sorts of parenthesized focalization cues help decipher narrative voice related to FID account for approximately a quarter of the punctuation’s presence. While this is not as significant a presence as in Bowen’s work, it is not insignificant, particularly in a text where focalization is so liquid. However, the value of the parentheses in orienting the reader to just whose voice drives the narrative is not limited to examples where pragmatic clues can help the reader parse meaning, and prove to be tied more closely to two unique aspects of H.D.’s poetic project: recursive echoing and palimpsestic rewriting.

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<sup>12</sup> I will leave to H.D.’s many Freudian readers just what to make of this electrifying descriptive equivalency between Fayne’s and Carl’s eyes.

## 2.7 ( ): *The Echoing Shell*

Susan Gubar, in writing about H.D.'s cycle of war poetry, *Trilogy*, examines images that repeatedly present themselves within the poems, relating them to back to H.D.'s pursuit of a distinctly female voice. Of particular interest is her examination of Echo, the mythological figure who was confined to speak only through the language of others. She observes,

In this respect, [Echo] serves as a paradigm of the secondary status of women who have traditionally been reduced to supporting, assuaging, serving, and thereby echoing the work, wishes, and words of men. Specifically, she serves as a model for H.D.'s sense of her own belatedness as she repeats the warped words she experiences as prior authorities on her own spiritual and psychic experiences [...] However, just as Echo manages to express her desires, even making sexual advances by dropping certain words and altering her inflection, H.D. manages to get her secrets sung, making of her echoes a personal response to the literary and linguistic conventions she inherits. (Gubar 313)

Echo proves to be waiting within the pages of *HER* as well, even if only by suggestion. When Her declares to George, "I won't ever – ever be your wife, my Georgio," adding in a line that is simultaneously a declaration of self-love and a recognition of feeling for Fayne, "Anyhow, I love – I love Her, only Her, Her, Her, Her," George only hears the self-reference and dubs her "Narcissus in the reeds. Narcissa." Not yet done echoing herself, Her denies the charge of narcissism, simply saying, "No, no, no – George have another orange?" (170). Far from playing Narcissus, the repeated, resounding instances of "ever," "love," "no," and the five instances of "Her" suggest that Her is the polar opposite, the voiceless Echo who, denied her own speech, will end up abandoned by the narcissistic lover due to a poverty of language. This exchange could easily be read as only a sly jab at Pound – the idea that he would misread H.D. as completely as possible, including favoring a male perspective over a more obvious female one, is relatively in line with modern assessments of his readings of her poetry – if



this defiance of cultural expectation were not itself an echo of the novel's opening paragraph: "Her Gart went round in circles. 'I am Her', she said to herself; she repeated, 'Her, Her, Her.' [...] she cried in her dementia, 'I am Her, Her, Her'" (3).<sup>13</sup> That the novel aims to position her as an Echo figure perhaps explains something of the oddly repetitious style, particularly the repetitions that enter the text through parenthesized insertion.

*HER*'s tendency toward repetition is one of the more easily identifiable hallmarks of its style. Galtung asserts that the novel chiefly communicates through "associative language that works through repetition rather than precision," and, in describing the consistency of the novel's chapter structure, Spoo notices that "each chapter is in turn made up of long paragraphs that first fix an image or emotion in the manner of H.D.'s early poems, then proceed to stretch and develop it in a discourse that is private, sometimes cryptic, digressive and recursive, full of wanderings and returns" (Galtung 12; Spoo 211). While parenthesized space is by no means the only location where these repetitions enter the text, the parentheses themselves do often facilitate these recursive references, permitting the insertion of the repeated image without disrupting the flow of thought. No fewer than twenty-one parenthesized comments, just under 10% of the novel's total, either refer back to an image previously described or present text that has, roughly verbatim, been previously delivered. For instance, Her's sense of dread concerning her sister-in-law Minnie is initially expressed in a passage focalized through Her as "Shadow crept up, heavy metal toward the lawn step. If the shadow crept further it would cut Her down, a black blade of black-scythe," only to return the following page in a passage, similarly focalized through Her in which she contemplates the fall of the entire Gart family with "Her ankles, concentrated terror (that scythe shadow) impelled Her Gart across the wide porch [...] a hand, touching the housefront found sanctuary at an altar" (H.D. 21, 22). While there is not quite enough evidence to suggest that this

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<sup>13</sup> This opening paragraph also references Her metaphorically "drowning," so there might also be something to George's linking Her to Narcissus after all (3).

particular parenthesized instance displays a shift in focalization from Her to the narrator-focalizer, the distance implied by “that” (as opposed to “this,” “the,” or simply the image of the scythe shadow) does hint that the primary narrator is directing the reader back to this image, rather than Her Gart making this comparison via thought.

If *HER*’s parentheses do help perform an Echo function within the text, one would anticipate that in the majority of these instances Her Gart would be acting as focalizer – it is natural to assume that the character striving toward speech would be more likely to express itself through necessary echoing than a more competent and knowing external narrator. However, interestingly, while most of these bracketed repetitions lack enough markers to make confident rulings regarding who is speaking, the few instances of repetitious parentheses that do make their speaker clear point to the expressive narrator as focalizer. There are instances where the echo within brackets refers back to information to which Her has no access; it was observed previously that the reader may detect a division between Her and the narrator due to differences in time, as evidenced by a reference to Freudian terminology, and these specific words reemerge later within brackets: “(‘failure reflex,’ ‘compensation reflex’)” (4). There are instances where repeated parentheses refer to previous parenthesized language and addresses it specifically as language rather than the meaning of the words: Her reflects on her mother’s giving birth without medical assistance and imagines, with a conventional aside, “Demeter (such a dear nurse) lifting the tired shoulders of a young Eugenia had driven the wind back, back,” and in the following paragraph we encounter the strange echo “Demeter (“such a dear nurse”) had driven the raging storm back” (89, 90). It seems unlikely that Her Gart would interrupt her own thought process to quote herself with an active recognition of her words *as words* within quotation marks – even in this novel, this degree of reflexive behavior would border on absurdity – so once more it seems as if the external narrator is the echoing voice. Again, the statistics presented in these pages do not reflect a reading where this sort of repetition is considered enough of a focalization marker by virtue of these parenthesized statements

redirecting the reader to a previous image, but this does seem to be a tactic of the focalized narrator rather than instances of Her replaying images and words within her mind and speech.

Why an expressive narrator-focalizer should echo due to presumed limitations in speech, using the words of others to find meaning for itself, may be explained through an examination of why H.D. revisits myths in the first place. Gubar, in speaking of the relevance of mythical image to her reading of *Trilogy*, notes that because we are stuck “[i]nheriting uncomfortable male-defined images of women and of history, H.D. responds with palimpsestic or encoded revisions of male myths,” leading to writing that “testifies to the continued need for approaching the center, for retelling and rewriting and adding to a palimpsest even as she realizes that such an approach is a regression, and that – as the word ‘re-cover’ implies – she hides what she seeks to reveal” (298, 315). A feminine narrator who is denied full access to language then aims not to speak declaratively – this is impossible – but to revise what has been spoken, altering and changing present texts without writing over what has come before. Hence *HER* presents a style that strives to speak, as Galtung mentions, through repetition and variation rather than precision, leading to writing that is less about the textual “product” than the “process through which the subject gains access to herself, recognizes and reads herself, creating grounds for a continuous rewriting of her own text” (Galtung 70). Remarkably, even beyond the revised Echo of *HER*’s narrator, the parentheses in the novel express this (re)visionary, palimpsestic attitude, justifying our ascribing this textual desire to the primary narrator rather than simply the author behind it.

A convincing example of the narrator interrogating the veracity of the text and then actively reinscribing details of the story can be spotted while Her recuperates from her mental breakdown: “Light made intricate pattern on a black sky. Light heaved and blazed, made pattern like white wisteria brushing in a storm across a dark wire netting. The screen door wouldn’t fasten and white lilac (it was white lilac) makes a pattern” (203-204). Not only does the text repeat the image, attacking it from different angles in an attempt to capture the precise nuance of metaphor, but the revision from wisteria

to lilac is actively pointed out in separated textual space, as if the narrator wished to call attention to its own potential fallibility in recording events. Furthermore, the present tense “makes” announces that focalization has switched over to Her at some point in this sentence, likely at the conjunction, meaning that Her’s subjective assessment that “white lilac makes a pattern” overwrites the previous narrative declaration of wisteria as the appropriate metaphor. This is a generous privileging of focalized character interpretation, and points to a narrator who is more invested in repeated self-questioning and revision than using the word as a blunt instrument. Additional parenthesized insertions support this depiction of the narrator-focalizer, as it is between brackets that the text is openly questioned for its truth value, simultaneously denying the power of speech while, ironically, creating an even more convincing narrative presence. The parentheses ponder and refute: “the colour was (wasn’t it?) green”; “A bird (the same bird?) swung again its trapeze flight”; “This afternoon (was it this afternoon?) her head had sunk back and back into moss”; “They would drag people up, things from Ptolemy to Pericles to Phidias (no not Phidias)”; “He didn’t care (he did care) about the rice paper” (112, 125, 84, 36, 233). While some of these parenthesized questions and revisions cannot authoritatively be said to exhibit markers of the expressive narrator’s focalization, this trend of using the parentheses to make a palimpsest of a text still in the process of delivering its initial statement, as with the Echo function, certainly seems external to Her’s focalized observations. Once more, the parentheses prove relevant to identifying voice within narratively complex passages, even if they do not lend the degree of precision in doing so that authors like Bowen permit.

## 2.8 Chapter Conclusion

The consideration in chapter one of the parentheses’ role in using textual space to delineate character perspectives prepared the present investigation into the punctuation marks’ potential use in signaling focalization changes specifically in free indirect discourse. In examining *The Last September* by Elizabeth Bowen and H.D.’s *HER*, the relevance of parentheses to interpreting a focalizer within FID, at

least in the work of two modernist authors with reputations for stylistic complexity, proves strong. Bowen is by far more consistent in use of parentheses to clarify narrative voice, both in FID specifically and also in incorporating other transitions related to speaker and modes of discourse. H.D. is less likely to use her parentheses to concretely signal a focalizer, but still does so with a frequency that suggests that the present theory is viable. Even more, while pragmatic markers often fail in the face of H.D.'s prose to conclusively highlight a focalizer, certain trends within *HER* related to the presence of an *écriture féminine* are bolstered and clarified by the parentheses' capacity to distinguish between character focalization and that of an expressive, external narrator.

### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

The use of free indirect discourse to better represent character consciousness is one of the more examined facets of Virginia Woolf's style. Woolf is an essential figure in any discussion of the device, and an exemplar, even among modernists, of diminishing the authority of external narrators in favor of honoring subjective character interiority. Kathy Mezei points out that "Woolf's narrative strategy, particularly from *Jacob's Room* (1922) to *Between the Acts* (1941), was to decenter the subject and to diffuse the monologic patriarchal voice through multiple focalizers and FID" (81). Similarly, Molly Hite characterizes the importance of free indirect discourse to Woolf's work by noticing, "Although Woolf uses potentially authoritative third-person narrators in all her novels, she tends to forgo strategies that would validate an attitude or opinion [...]. Her free indirect discourse, especially in the middle-period novels *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*, insists that point of view is always *someone's* point of view" (252, italics in original). However, the present study hopes to avoid characterizing Woolf's use of FID as a static technique executed consistently between her most celebrated novels. Mezei's and Hite's assessments are certainly accurate, but they are perhaps overstated in characterizing Woolf's approach to FID as being as monolithic as it is novel-spanning, and Hite's insistence that there is always a "*someone*" speaking in particular elides the existence of Woolf's expressive but disembodied narrator-focalizers. The question of whether parentheses mark a transition in focalizer within FID requires an understanding of who the potential speakers are, and so a byproduct of examining Woolf's changing voices within parentheses is insight into how her larger use of free indirect discourse and narrative diversity develops over the course of her work.

Parentheses themselves are an easily identifiable component of Woolf's style, and in novels like *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* they occur at a frequency greater than once per page. Given the rate of their implementation, Woolf's brackets have received attention for how they contribute to Woolf's mimetic presentation of character. Susan Solomon observes, "In Woolf's work the modern

human consciousness is often connected to its social and environmental surroundings through patterns of fragmentation and dissonance, which we see performed both in the rhythmical syntax and the visual form of the dashes, parentheses, semi-colons, commas, and single quotation marks,” and it is no accident that of all the typographical phenomena that Solomon describes, it is the parentheses that receive the majority of her attention, as they are the marks best suited to influence structure “by opening meaningful spaces, disjoints, and caesuras” (174, 182). In addition, while Solomon does not relate Woolf’s parentheses directly to her use of FID, other scholars have noted this relationship, particularly Yaxiao Cui’s examination of parentheses within *Mrs. Dalloway*. Cui remarks that “[parentheses are] one important means by which Woolf presents multiple points of view and creates the special interaction between various sources of consciousness,” stipulating that while additional “functions of parentheticals, such as the attribution of speech and the narratorial description of characters, can also be found in *Mrs Dalloway*,” it is important to recognize that “using a parenthetical to add a new consciousness and interrupt the progression of the sentence is noteworthy” (176, 180). Even beyond those scholars who devote sustained attention to the punctuation mark, the abundance of parentheses within Woolf’s writing, and in particular within passages presented in FID, means that the brackets arise in many analyses of Woolf’s use of the narrative technique, many of which display at least a tacit recognition that something relevant to narration has happened in between these curved lines.

This chapter’s primary objective is to illustrate that, as Cui suggests, parentheses do signal transitions between focalizers in passages of text presented in FID, not just in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but throughout Woolf’s middle period novels. This tendency, when paired with the similar usage observed in Bowen and H.D., contributes to the argument that parentheses should be acknowledged as performing this function within FID regardless of which particular author is under examination, and that its presence should be taken into consideration in future analyses of FID. Beyond this goal, this chapter aims to provide a more comprehensive statistical breakdown of Woolf’s parentheses than is currently

available, demonstrating in the process that even parenthesized statements not bearing markers of FID can be recognized as having an effect on either character perspective or transitions in the representation of speech and thought, components themselves related to character that suggest Woolf's parentheses often contribute to her project in subjective character representation. Finally, as the analysis of focalizers within brackets rests on an understanding of the relationship between external narrators and the stories and characters they help relate, this chapter will help chart nuances in Woolf's evolving use of external narration as reflected through parenthesized statements.

### 3.2 *Jacob's Room*

*Jacob's Room*, a novel that “has conventionally been treated as [Woolf's] first sustained attempt at presenting the fragmented nature of consciousness and perception,” marks the beginning of Woolf's tendency to question narrative objectivity by approaching character description via free indirect discourse (Flint 264). By this point in Woolf's career, the use of parentheses as a marker to help modulate the shifts between necessarily partial character interpretations and that of a governing narrative presence had not yet fully developed, and yet even within this novel signs of the punctuation mark's eventual relevance to the presentation of character consciousness are visible. Of the novel's ninety-seven parenthesized statements, twenty-five (25.8%) indicate a change in focalizer in passages containing FID.<sup>14</sup> Of these twenty-five instances, the majority – twenty-one – are used specifically to disrupt a character-focalized statement in favor of commentary from the often expressive narrator-focalizer, a move that may be considered rather conventional given the recognized use of parenthesized space to insert “authorial” commentary as described in chapter one. There are only four examples in the novel where parentheses are used not only to disrupt narrative obstinacy, but also to honor character voice by adding their subjective assessments to text governed by the narrator-focalizer. Still,

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<sup>14</sup> The statistics provided here pertain only to the use of round brackets, and do not reflect the presence of *Jacob's Room's* one peculiar statement in square brackets.



that parentheses would come to play a more prominent role in Woolf's approach to FID can be noticed not only in her tendency to relegate the narrator-focalizer to parenthesized space when character-focalizers are contributing actively to the discourse, but also in the way that parentheses not related to FID also act in service of Woolf's more modern approach to elevating subjective character reality.

Forty-three of the novel's parenthesized statements, nearly half of the total count, are largely conventional in nature, most often providing a relative clause that is syntactically independent from the rest of the sentence while maintaining a single narrative voice. Of these forty-three, twenty-three (approximately 23.7% of the novel's total) are delivered solely and definitively in the voice of the narrator-focalizer, eleven (11.3%) are parenthesized asides within a passage presented by a character focalizer where no change in character voice occurs, and nine (9.2%) exhibit an indeterminate focalizer while also providing no indication that the narrative voice has shifted within parenthesized space.

The difficulty in assigning a defined speaker to these last nine instances is a consequence of expressive tendencies in the narrator-focalizer, tendencies that Kathleen Wall suggests are defined by the "narrator's uneven authority and [...] inconsistent relationship to the textual world" (282). Similar to the external narrator-focalizer of *HER*, Woolf's expressive narrator is preoccupied with its own lack of omniscience in recounting the story, and this professed lack of access to an objective truth creates the impression of a subjective presence distinct from both the author and any characters within the text. Considering that the interplay of voices and the denial of authorial interpretation are important aspects of how Woolf presents character reality, a narrator who "sometimes abrogates to herself a great deal of authority, though who more frequently acknowledges and laments her lack of knowledge" not only helps situate the external narrator as not having a voice more privileged than those of its characters, but also feeds into a larger "epistemological crisis of authority that in part characterizes modernism" (Wall 288, 291). While presenting the narrator in this manner does help illustrate why capturing character focalization through FID is so relevant to Woolf's novelistic agenda – the "crisis of authority" results in

characters supplying their own interpretations, a move that necessitates a style that does not marginalize its characters to a less narratively impactful position – this leveling of the playing field between narrator and character results in a narrator whose own expressivity complicates the question of who is speaking.

The narrator-focalizer actively points to its own diminished authority in capturing a story apparently independent from its own creative powers – in describing Jacob, it halts mid-thought, stating “but surely, of all futile occupations this of cataloging features is the worst. One word is sufficient. But if one cannot find it?” – and it reflexively comments in the first person on its own difficulty in selecting a subjective lens through which to tell the story: “In short, the observer is choked with observations [...] But the difficulty remains – one has to choose. For though I have no wish to be Queen of England – or only for a moment – I would willingly sit beside her [...] But no – we must choose. Never was there a harsher necessity! or one which entails greater pain, more certain disaster” (*Jacob’s Room* 55, 53). Due to the expressive nature of the narrator-focalizer (not only is it conversational, but it deploys some of the expressivity markers, like the exclamation point, that would normally point to a focalizing character), more information is required to ascribe a speaker to certain parenthesized statements, information that often isn’t present. When the text reads, “These houses (Mrs. Garfit’s daughter, Mrs. Whitehorn, was the landlady of this one) were built, say, a hundred and fifty years ago,” neither the deictic proximity of “this one” within the parentheses, nor the conversational, speculative tone implied by the “say” outside of the parentheses sufficiently point to a character focalizer, when this would likely be the case in a novel moderated by a more detached narrative voice (54). Considering that the paragraph that surrounds this sentence displays markers of both the expressive narrator-focalizer and a character-focalizer, context provides no additional clue to who is speaking, and in the interest of approaching the topic conservatively, no definite focalizer can be neatly assigned here. While this self-doubting narrator does not persist into the text of either *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*, the potential for ambiguous

narrative versus character deixis demonstrated here proves relevant to disentangling the narrative voice of the second of these novels.

In addition to the forty-three instances where focalization is conventionally consistent between parenthesized transitions, there are twenty-nine examples of parentheses that cannot be considered to demonstrate transitions in FID, but which do indicate some shift in representation of character perspective. Of these, nine are attributions of indirect speech or thought, six are transitions between speech and thought maintaining a consistent character focalizer, and fourteen provide commentary from the narrator-focalizer on examples of direct and indirect speech. As with Bowen's *The Last September*, the use of parentheses to examine at least one aspect of the two elements that constitute free indirect discourse – specific character language and the representation of a defined speech act or thought – suggests an awareness of the punctuation's capacity to indicate character subjectivity, even if these examples cannot be said to relate directly to the deployment of FID.

Attribution of speaker is one of three observed original uses of parentheses within literary prose, and although this use has fallen out of favor, its presence in modern novels demonstrates a familiarity with the punctuation as a means of controlling character voice. *Jacob's Room* contains nine such attributions. What is interesting about Woolf's attributive use, though, is that her parenthesized attributions are often the only thing that differentiates a passage in FID from one in indirect discourse, and her tendency to deploy these parentheses either in the middle or the end of sentences – to say nothing of the frequency with which these attributions dwell at the end of longer, multi-sentence passages of indeterminate focalization – means that for a moment these lines of indirect discourse are indistinguishable from their "freer" counterparts. When the text states, "Great men are truthful, and these little prostitutes, staring in the fire, taking out a powder-puff, decorating lips at an inch of looking glass, have (so Jacob thought) an inviolable fidelity," the reader is not explicitly informed that this passage is an indirect representation of Jacob's thought act until the final clause, in effect blurring the

voice responsible for this thought between the narrator-focalizer and Jacob until this ambiguity is finally resolved (74).

Not only do Woolf's parenthesized attributions indicate that a speech act or thought can be assigned to a character, but she also uses the punctuation mark to transition between speech and thought in individual characters rendered in direct discourse. Admittedly, this sort of usage is rare. There are but six examples of this type of parentheses use, four of which occur in rapid succession:

("I'm twenty-two. It's nearly the end of October. Life is thoroughly pleasant, although unfortunately there are a great number of fools about [...]" )

"I say, Bonamy, what about Beethoven?"

("Bonamy is an amazing fellow. He knows practically everything [...]" )

"I rather suspect you are talking rot, Bonamy. In spite of what you say, poor old Tennyson..."

("The truth is one ought to have been taught French. Now, I suppose, old Barfoot is talking to my mother. That's an odd affair to be sure. I can't see Bonamy down there. Damn London!")  
for the market carts were lumbering down the street.

"What about a walk on Saturday?"

("What's happening on Saturday?" ) (56)

Despite their infrequency, these examples are effective in capturing character interiority by portraying the difference between a character's speech and mental activity, and they demonstrate Woolf's awareness of parenthesized space as a place where nuance in character perspective may be presented. Rather than simply using the punctuation mark to exhibit two distinct trains of thought, Woolf's parentheses here continually posit a relationship between speech and thought, seen either in Jacob's speaking something contrary to his beliefs ("He knows practically everything" versus "I rather suspect you are talking rot"), or in how speech guides later mental activity (as when the proposal to take a walk on Saturday prompts Jacob to remember that Saturday marks the Durrant's party). What is

particularly interesting about this passage is that it occurs immediately after a section break, where a transition into a first-person account of Jacob's character would not be unnatural. Woolf begins this section with a parenthesized statement first, a move that suggests not only that she bucks the convention that parentheses act as a supplement to a host clause – as here the non-parenthesized writing springs forth from the parenthesized, not the other way around – but also that there is something particular about interior character thought that, when juxtaposed with speech or external narration, warrants the use of the parentheses as a marker. It is important in light of this distinction to note, then, how the external narrator comments on the content of Jacob's parenthesized "Damn London!" with an objective explanation of the thought within the syntactically unattached clause "for the market carts were lumbering down the street." This fragment, completely divorced from any less subjective sentence within external narration to ground it, for all the world appears as though it would belong within parentheses had the preceding text not been parenthesized itself. It is here that we may observe that Woolf deploys parentheses as a means of demonstrating a *relationship* between different sections of text, rather than operating under the traditional rules that would suggest that material within the brackets has an assigned relevance value.

Finally, fourteen parenthesized statements provide a marked transition between focalizers, but cannot be said to affect the use of FID because they transition between external narration and speech acts or thought portrayed in either direct or indirect discourse. For example, a conversation between Jacob and Timmy Durrant contains the following exchange: "'There's the cash difficulty,' said Jacob. 'My people'll see to that,' said Durrant (the son of a banker, deceased)" (27). Here the external narrator-focalizer asserts itself to provide information required to make full sense of character speech, namely how Durrant's family may specifically resolve a problem with funds. This move is compelling in its own right because it permits a more true-to-life depiction of dialogue, free of the artificial additions that might mar a pre-modernist author's portrayal of character. However, beyond this transition between

focalizing speakers, examples such as these are telling because they mirror the majority of the cases where the narrator interrupts focal obstinacy to comment on passages that are presented through FID. It stands to reason that if narrative commentary on direct character discourse is required to supply supplemental information required for comprehension in a way that preserves the integrity of character speech, then this use within FID is similarly motivated.

So while the majority of the parentheses used in *Jacob's Room* – seventy-two of ninety-seven – do not relate precisely to transitions within FID, we can observe that Woolf's usage does indicate an understanding of how the mark may be a means of approaching character subjectivity. Furthermore, the novel does present twenty-five instances where the parentheses do indicate a focalization shift within FID, a trend that will be elaborated upon in later novels. While the expressive narrator does make singling out these examples more difficult (in ambiguous cases I defer to Mey's obstinacy rule and posit no change in focalization), expressivity markers, attention to tense, observations of particular character vocal tics, and the narrator's access to privileged information do provide the groundwork for Woolf's later experimentation capturing FID shifts within brackets. Consider the following quotation:

But this service in King's College Chapel – why allow women to take part in it? Surely, if the mind wanders (and Jacob looked extraordinarily vacant, his head thrown back, his hymn-book open at the wrong place), if the mind wanders it is because several hat shops and cupboards upon cupboards of coloured dresses are displayed upon rush-bottomed chairs. (23)

We can confidently assert that the host sentence is focalized through Jacob in FID due to the rhetorical question and the indicated interruption in thought, both communicated by punctuation marks defined previously as expressivity markers.<sup>15</sup> The material within the brackets may just as safely be attributed to the narrator-focalizer, as it provides evaluative commentary on Jacob's appearance to which he would

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<sup>15</sup> These more linguistic markers are bolstered by observing Jacob's characteristic sexism and the ogling male gaze, both of which may contribute to passages being assigned to Jacob as focalizer elsewhere in the novel.

not have access; it is unlikely that an observation of one's own appearance from an external perspective could be a part of one's thought, and it is almost certain that the "hymn-book open at the wrong place" is a detail that escapes Jacob's perception. In situations where a character is expressing itself through FID, the narrator-focalizer positions itself within parentheses to provide objective commentary or explanation without too overtly disrupting the character's thought, as, even though Jacob is aware of his own mind wandering, the narrator steps in to flesh out the extent of this distraction to a degree that Jacob himself could not.

An overwhelming number of the parentheses that help facilitate shifts of focalizer within FID, twenty-one of the twenty-five examples, perform in just this manner, similar to how they operate in relation to passages of direct discourse: commentary provided by the narrator-focalizer. While *Jacob's Room* does foreshadow the relevance of parentheses to Woolf's handling of FID, these twenty-one instances where focalized character speech is commented upon by the narrator-focalizer within brackets is not an uncharacteristic move. As examined in chapter one, authors ranging from Stendhal to Conrad used brackets to situate "authorial" or narratorial commentary in their fictions, and while *Jacob's Room's* expressive narrator cannot be said to be the same entity as the authorial Woolf, these breaks in focal obstinacy are not so different in nature from what came before her. In essence, Woolf's punctuation use in many places still adheres to convention. However, Woolf hints at her later use of brackets to signal transitions within FID with four lines that privilege subjective character narration by situating it into passages of more objective external narration. A pair of instances occur early in the novel, when Jacob boards a train and his physical appearance is observed, focalized through a judgmental Mrs. Norman: "Taking note of socks (loose), of tie (shabby), she once more reached his face. She dwelt upon his mouth. The lips were shut" (21). The non-parenthesized text bears no marker of language belonging to anyone other than the narrator-focalizer, while the parenthesized judgments can be taken as representative of Mrs. Norman's thought due to previous renderings of Jacob in FID through

her (as demonstrated by the shift to present tense in “Nevertheless, it is a fact that men are dangerous”), and the fact that, paragraphs later, the narrator flaunts its own disdain for character description by crediting Mrs. Norman for all facets of the previous physical account with “One must do the best one can with her report [...] It is no use trying to sum people up” (21, 22). These may just be a pair of words, but they are Mrs. Norman’s evaluations, not the narrator’s, and yet they are presented without tags or marks beyond the parentheses to label them as such. These examples prepare readers to recognize the two later instances where Jacob’s interior thoughts irrupt into the narration via FID, as when he delivers a near non-sequitur in response to Miss Perry holding a kettle-holder – “indeed Miss Perry was clasping it to her breast. (Had she, then, loved Jacob’s father?)” – and when spending time with the Williams couple, where “then Mrs. Williams asked him (as they strolled on the terrace smoking – and how could he refuse that man’s cigar?)” (82, 115). Both of these latter examples rely on punctuation other than the parentheses, the self-interrogative question mark and the stuttering dash, as expressivity markers to suggest Jacob’s use of language, and both portray mental states that are unquestionably Jacob’s own. While these uses of parentheses to favor subjective character perspectives through FID are but a mere few examples sprinkled throughout the text, this technique will be revisited with greater frequency as Woolf moves on to later novels.

### 3.3 *Mrs. Dalloway*

The increased frequency of parentheses in *Mrs. Dalloway* suggests that Woolf recognizes their potential in capturing character nuance. While this novel is not dramatically longer than its predecessor, the number of parenthesized statements has tripled, jumping from ninety-seven to 290. Of these, 205, or approximately 70.7%, are not related to signaling transitions in focalizer within passages of FID, falling into categories similar to those outlined for *Jacob’s Room*: 125 parenthesized statements (43.1%) contain conventional relative or conditional clauses delivered in segments of text governed by character focalizers; thirty-two (11%) perform similarly, only pertaining to text communicated by a more objective



narrator-focalizer; thirty-one (10.6%) provide commentary from the narrator-focalizer on character speech or thought rendered in either direct or indirect discourse; and seventeen (5.8%) provide either attributions of speech and thought acts or contain snippets of direct or indirect discourse independent from the host clause.

Before addressing the eighty-five instances of parenthesized FID management (constituting 29.3% of the novel's total), it is worth commenting on how the more conventional use of the parentheses reflects a drastic change in narrative presence between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Jacob's Room*. While the amount of more standard parenthesized clauses within parentheses relative to the whole is largely consistent between the two novels – forty-three out of ninety-seven for *Jacob's Room* and 157 out of 290 for *Mrs. Dalloway*, or roughly 44% and 54% respectively – the uses from *Jacob's Room* greatly favor expression from the narrator-focalizer, who speaks in twenty-three out of forty-three cases. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, this use of the parentheses to deliver a relative clause from the narrator-focalizer has diminished to thirty-two out of 157 instances, marking a notable shift toward permitting character-focalizers authority in dictating the text. This metric proves useful in quantifying an aspect that is difficult to ignore when reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, but that is also hard to pin down, namely the reduced presence of the narrator-focalizer more generally. *Jacob's Room* offers a narrator who vocally denies its own powers in crafting the text in favor of selecting subjective character perspectives from which the action is observed, but *Mrs. Dalloway* makes good on this promised approach to character, actively permitting character-focalizers to speak for themselves with only limited interference from an external source.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Kathy Mezei observes Woolf “employing a polyphony of voices” that “paradoxically effaces the narrator, who is seemingly diminished by the presence of so many other (internalized) voices, yet she also enormously augments the narrator's structural role as he/she weaves from one voice to the next” (81). This diminishment of narrator due to the heightened attention to

transitioning between character perspectives is all the more noticeable because of the rare instance when Woolf breaks this habit and begins to speak authoritatively. Several scholars have singled out Woolf's description of Bradshaw as displaying markers of not only perspective divorced from any discernable focalizer, but also, because of its ironic frustration at the arrogance of a psychiatric doctor, hints of an authorial Woolf slipping into the text. While H.M. Daleski labels this passage as an instance where "the narrator does not refrain from *inconsistently* intruding his or her own characteristic voice into a character's monologue," Molly Hite goes further, observing that within this passage the "narrator appears to be not only authoritative but authorial, a rare instance in Woolf's fiction of a third-person speaker unaffected by any character's point of view, stating what is the case in the narrative universe" (Daleski 239, emphasis mine; Hite 255).

The consistent thread among these critics is the notion that the narrator-focalizer's presence is discerned and highlighted by an otherwise consistent absence with which this passage alone fails to comply; the Bradshaw description, coming from the pen of the all-too-present, expressive narrator of *Jacob's Room*, would hardly raise concern. Undoubtedly, the "incongruity" of this "singular occurrence of an obtrusive narratorial voice [...] who speaks here for a few passages without continually dissolving into the discourses of other, which has been the novel's narrative pattern" is defined by how out of character (so to speak) this narrative voicing is (Mezei 84). However, given Woolf's reliance on FID, and considering that free indirect discourse is deployed to permit a certain ambiguity to questions of who is speaking, this argument from absence runs into the problem of whether the supposed narrative absence is necessarily the case. If the narrator is capable and willing in one instance to assert opinions not attributable to particular characters, there is limited guarantee that it does not do so elsewhere, and so the text provides limited guarantee as to whether a proposition is either character- or narrator-based. Fortunately, the previous observations regarding the startlingly diminished use of parentheses to incorporate digressions from the narrative voice help bolster assertions that *Mrs. Dalloway* contains a

narrator who is typically comfortable abdicating its role as speaker. Considering that the focalizer of traditional asides in *Jacob's Room* was the narrator in roughly 54% of such uses, and that this number has dwindled to approximately 20% within *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mezei's "effacement" of the external narrator seems to be granted slightly more evidence than simply an assertion of absence based on an example of presence.

While the use of parentheses within the Bradshaw passage does not indicate firmly that the speaker is actually anyone other than the external narrator, Daleski astutely points out that it is precisely through use of brackets that Woolf's narrator attempts to disclaim ownership of this section. He notes that in "this long denunciation, there is a half-hearted attempt to relate the condemnation of Sir William to Septimus's wife when it is noted, in parenthesis, that 'Rezia Warren Smith [divines]' what is being said. But no reader will be fooled by this. The condemnation of the doctor comes straight and unvarnished from the narrator" (Daleski 249). Indeed, no reader would assume that Rezia is responsible for this passage, especially considering her previous deference to medical opinion. However, even if this pinning of focalization onto Rezia fails, it is telling of Woolf's overall method of attributing thought to character that it is through a parenthesized insertion that the narrator attempts to hide behind a character focalizer at all. This particular example is not in its own right an example of Woolf's use of parentheses to modulate perspective in FID, but it does point toward a larger trend of using these spatial transitions for similar reasons.

What is compelling about the diminished presence of an external narrator-focalizer is that parentheses do not only affirm that this is the case, but parenthetical space itself frequently becomes the home of a narrator aiming to situate itself within its margins. *Mrs. Dalloway* continues the practice of providing more objective commentary within brackets so as not to render character speech and thought artificial, a tendency that means that proclamations asserting truth-values when read in the main text often become attributed to a given character focalizer, but those within parenthesized space,

specifically because they elaborate on, contradict, or affirm such character assertions, are more likely to be considered an interjection from the narrator-focalizer. So, for instance, in a line like “That girl, thought Mrs. Dempster (who saved crusts for the squirrels and often ate her lunch in Regent’s Park), don’t know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little stout, a little slack, a little moderate in one’s expectations. Percy drank,” the text presents a line of indirect discourse that is interrupted by a parenthesized insertion that cannot be attributed to either Mrs. Dempster or the previous focalizer, Maisie Johnson, as the former would not break her own train of thought to reflect on her own general habits and the latter would not have access to this sort of privileged information (*Mrs. Dalloway* 26). As the passage continues, Mrs. Dempster’s thought, rendered in indirect discourse, segues into FID, first signaled by the thrice repeated “little,” indicative more of a character thought pattern rather than narrative caprice, and then supported by the introduction of a character name, Percy, with whom the focalizer is clearly familiar but who has never been introduced to the reader before. Removing the parenthesized statement, here we have a not unusual move, where focalization is signaled by the narrator recounting a thought act in indirect discourse, followed by narration entirely within FID. It is only within the parenthesized space that the narrator-focalizer, explaining why Mrs. Dempster is in the park and providing a touch of external character information, is able to insert itself without unnecessarily complicating Mrs. Dempster’s focalized observations. The narrator repeatedly uses the parenthesized space to assert itself in this manner, handling attributions of speech or thought in a manner that contributes additional, external characterization, as with “Every penny they had he had earned. As a little boy (her voice trembled) he had carried great sacks,” or explaining nuances of direct discourse so that the speech is not needlessly burdened by unnatural speech, as with ““They had to be back at ten!’ she said. ‘So they don’t know what happened,’ she said. ‘That does seem hard luck,’ she said (for her servants stayed later, if they asked her)” (186, 38). These types of narratorial insertions are not new – indeed, much of the FID-relevant parenthesized space within *Jacob’s Room* performed a

similar function – but they do take on a different valence when presented in a text so consistently focalized through character perspectives. If these insertions are building on the tradition of using parentheses to insert markedly authorial commentary into traditionally narrated texts (as described in chapter one), then it is interesting that what gets inserted into a predominantly focalized text is more objective, external, but non-authorial, narration. The parentheses in either case mark a difference in objectivity, but the degree of authority involved is directly related to the subjectivity of the host text into which they are inserted.

Then, perhaps unsurprisingly, the use of parentheses to insert objective observation into passages focalized through characters plays a direct role in how *Mrs. Dalloway* signals focalization shifts within FID. Continuing the trend from *Jacob's Room* of deploying parentheses within passages of FID to disrupt the obstinacy of specifically character focalization, *Mrs. Dalloway's* eighty-five examples of FID-related parentheses favor the inclusion of the narrator-focalizer, occurring in fifty cases. While this usage constitutes the most prevalent relationship between parentheses and FID, and is used in relation to all major focalizing characters, it can be most obviously noted in passages focalized through Septimus, whose mental instability is so pronounced – and so faithfully represented within FID – that the more objective parenthesized commentary proves vital for the reader to appreciate how Septimus truly relates to his surroundings. This tendency is established early, where a passage focalized through Septimus includes the untagged observation, “Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down)” (24). Here the disjointed sentence topics, the twice-deployed imperative, the use of the present tense, and the shortened, choppy syntax would suggest Septimus's vocal patterns even if the content of the sentences themselves did not originate from the narrative-focalizer. While the abbreviated syntax does not make for the most concrete evidence for a link to Septimus' internal mental state – the narrator itself knows the impact of a few shortened lines delivered rapidly – it is

specifically within these lines that Daleski observes Septimus's "representative idiom," as the "thoughts of the shell-shocked Septimus Warren Smith [...] are stark in comparison with Clarissa's and sharp in the intensity of his delusions" (248-249). In addition to Septimus's idiomatic speech standing in contrast to that of the other characters, these non-parenthesized portrayals of a fractured mental state are in opposition to the parenthesized additions from the narrator-focalizer, who is obviously speaking due to the return to the past tense, the more standard sentence construction, the use of Septimus as a subject while his own thoughts are concerned with the external world, and the deflation of Septimus's observations by observing that such "revelations" about the nature of the world are recorded on scratch-paper. Given the strangeness of Septimus's narration, the narrator-focalizer serves as a rudder to convey action in a way that Septimus could not organically, and this relationship between speakers persists until his suicide: "It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing. (He sat on the sill). But he would wait till the very last moment" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 146). The first bracketed insertion provides commentary on the thought portrayed in FID, serving not only as an explanation of the temporarily ambiguous pronoun "they," but also as an indication that the statement of Rezia's feelings about suicide cannot be read as anything other than Septimus's altered view of reality. The second bracketed statement is more direct, providing an account of Septimus's actions that would not constitute an addition to his thought process; without corrupting his final mental soliloquy, the narrator draws on parenthesized space to relate his progress toward the window.

Where *Mrs. Dalloway* marks progress in Woolf's use of parentheses to facilitate transitions in FID is in the increased number of instances in which character-focalized text break into passages previously governed by the narrator-focalizer. The novel still relies on parentheses to suggest shifts in voice, but for the first time the characters are able to talk back to the objective narration in a more sustained fashion. Eighteen of the eighty-five bracketed shifts within FID are related to the introduction

of character perspective, and while this amount is not particularly high in its own right (constituting approximately 6% of the novel's total), it is a considerable increase over the four examples in *Jacob's Room*, and seems to be deployed in a more deliberate manner. Furthermore, this number of character-focalized interruptions into external narration is even more intriguing because, considering the distribution of character-focalized versus non-character-focalized stretches of text within *Mrs. Dalloway* as a whole, there are far fewer opportunities for this type of parenthesized commentary to exist in the first place.

Transitioning into FID via parentheses is signaled by a number of the anticipated markers. Punctuation and other typographical distinctions, like use of italics, play a large role in signaling these shifts, as can be seen in a passage where Peter Walsh ruminates on the lasting effects of his friendship with Clarissa and Sally Seton. A lengthy passage focalized through Peter – marked by the presence of “you” to reflect Peter’s thinking to himself – ends with the narrator reasserting itself to summarize the breadth and character of his thinking: “Thus she had come to him; on board ship; in the Himalayas; suggested by the oddest things (so Sally Seton, generous, enthusiastic goose! thought of *him* when she saw blue hydrangeas)” (149-150). That the host segment of this sentence has stopped being an expression of Peter’s vocal characteristic through FID can be seen not only in the transition of pronoun used to refer to Peter, here “you” becoming “he,” but also in the use of “thus” to indicate that this is reflexive commentary on the thought act, an action that Peter would not perform as a part of his own thought process, but one typical of the sorts of commentary provided by the narrator-focalizer. However, the bracketed material is clearly Peter speaking through FID, as demonstrated by the “so” indicating the continuation of a thought, the personalized language of the epithet “goose” (a term that he and Clarissa share), and, most obviously, the exclamation point and italicized writing demonstrating a marked degree of expressivity.

Deictic markers and use of modals also prove relevant to identifying when the parentheses house a character expression within free indirect discourse. In describing the removal of Septimus's corpse, the text offers, "'He is dead,' she said, smiling at the poor old woman who guarded her with her honest light-blue eyes fixed on the door. (They wouldn't bring him in here, would they?)" (147). It is uncertain whether the parenthesized question is a speech act or thought performed by Mrs. Filmer, but she is clearly responsibly for the assertion, as this line is presented verbatim previously in connection with her character. Also, it is obvious that this is an example of a transition into a character speech act or thought, given the deictic proximity implied by "in here," as well as the presence of a question (and accompanying punctuation) that precludes this line being uttered by the narrator-focalizer. Modals likewise assist interpretation, as when a stand-alone paragraph, consisting of only the parenthesized line "(Clarissa must speak to Lady Burton)," interrupts a pair of passages largely focalized through Aunt Helana (175). The necessity communicated by "must," as well as the shift between past tense and present tenses, indicate that this line is a character expression – even if the writing remains ambiguous as to just whose thought this is, whether it is an aside from Helena, and a mental explanation of Clarissa's sudden departure coming from Peter, or an instance where the narrative influence in FID states Clarissa as the agent before the remainder of the clause presents her own recognition of the need to move on.

Occasionally these parenthesized illuminations of character perspective that personalize and ground narrative are detected less through linguistic markers than a near tautological reframing of non-parenthesized text into something more indicative of a thought, as when a passage describing Clarissa's exhaustion states, "Despairing of human relationships (people were so difficult), she often went into her garden and got from her flowers a peace which men and women never gave her" (188). Here the host sentence bears little evidence of expressivity or focalization, and the detached "Despairing of human relationships" sounds like an abstracted rationalization of Clarissa seeking refuge among plants.



However, the parenthesized text, marked by the intensifier “so” and a reframing of the previous words into a generalizing expression of exhaustion, offers an evaluative statement that is more in character for Clarissa than it would be for the more objective narrator. To this category we should include instances where character focalization is detected less by formal criteria than by repeated instances of recognized character vocal habits, like when Septimus’s “for one must be scientific, above all scientific” recurs to signal his processing of events described more narratively (21). In a section that is at first explicitly focalized through Septimus in FID, but then transitions into a more objective description of Septimus’s observations, Septimus can still be noted as processing the scene, where “Beauty, the world seemed to say. And as if to prove it (scientifically) wherever he looked at the houses, at the railings, at the antelopes stretching over the palings, beauty sprang instantly” (68). The narrator-focalized text lacks the magical thinking or disjointed associations that typically define Septimus’s language, and further is careful to situate these elements as perceived rather than real (“seemed to say,” “as if to prove”), and yet Septimus’s speech irrupt into the text with his characteristic focus on science turning metaphor into reality to demonstrate his own understanding of these observations.

This integration of subjective character perspective into portions of the text that bear markers of the more objective narrator is a move that Woolf will return to in *To the Lighthouse*, a point that demonstrates the parentheses’ usefulness in portraying character interiority through FID. *Mrs. Dalloway* shows development on this front since *Jacob’s Room*, and so the punctuation mark has evolved from a means of specifically controlling narrator voice to one of presenting differing perspectives as a whole. However, Woolf’s experimentation with bracketed character voices in *Mrs. Dalloway* also explores a use for the parentheses that will go on to be largely abandoned moving forward, likely as a result of the fact that narrative-focalizer of *To the Lighthouse* is in a certain manner more present than it is here. Especially in the later portions of *Mrs. Dalloway*, where the party scene features a mixture of speakers blending together and changing conversational partners, FID deployment

within parentheses often incorporates transitions *between* character-focalizers, where the use of FID itself is consistent, but the focalizing characters trade ownership of the text.

Parentheses of this variety make up seventeen examples of the novel's total, putting its use as roughly equal to those transitioning from narrator-focalizer to character-focalizer. The line "they wouldn't bring the body in here, would they?" can be attributed to Mrs. Filmer based on the instance when this line first breaks into a section of text firmly focalized through Rezia. After Rezia has been given a sedative,

It seemed to her as she drank the sweet stuff that she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden. But where? The clock was striking – one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six and Mrs. Filmer waving her apron (they wouldn't bring the body in here, would they?) seemed part of the garden; or a flag. (146)

The immediacy and questioning of the "But where?" the uncertainty of the impression communicated by "some" garden, the deixis indicated by "all this thumping," the dash setting off the in-time perception of the clock chiming, and the sentence constructions in which a semi-colon suggests an elaborating yet fragmented afterthought (perhaps a mimetic representation of Rezia's drugged thinking) all indicate that the majority of the text is indeed focalized through the sedated Rezia, and yet the parenthesized expressivity markers cannot be attributed to either her or the external narrator.

Although the parenthesized line is safely designated as a speech act or thought that undoubtedly belongs to Mrs. Filmer on the following page, Rezia is in no state to be concerned about "the body" – moreover, considering that the previous sentence references a present assessment of her husband's characteristics with "like Septimus himself," one would anticipate a more familiar use of "him" or "Septimus" if this line came from Rezia, rather than the detached, impersonal "body" – but the deixis of "here" cannot refer to Rezia's perception as she, herself, is not "here" with the corpse any longer. Both

sides of the parentheses posit her presence within a dream-like garden, complete with sense perceptions consistent with the garden imagery, and so Rezia's "here" would not refer to the room where Septimus's corpse may be carried. In short, "here" must be elsewhere, pointing to Mrs. Filmer as the articulator.

This sort of quick switch between character-focalizers in parenthesized space is perhaps the most unique aspect of *Mrs. Dalloway's* use of parentheses, as it is a use of the punctuation that Woolf does not return to in a sustained manner later. Before the party scene, this use appears occasionally in poignant moments of character interaction to portray both interpretive angles without resorting to objective assertion, as when a passage defined by Clarissa's expressivity – "What a surprise!" – segues into the brackets incorporating her husband's perspective with "He was holding out flowers – roses, red and white roses (But he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words)," where the "not in so many words" has been previously established as a recurring vocal tic of Richard's (115). However, it is most often seen in the novel's closing pages, where the voices of guests and their internal impressions of each other, blur into a dizzying mélange.

Cui has written on the use of parentheses in *Mrs. Dalloway* to signal transitions within FID, and it is no accident that the majority of her examples are drawn from the novel's final pages, where both conversation and character reflection upon this conversation dominate the text. She devotes significant space to a pair of exchanges related to Lady Bradshaw, and concludes that the "parenthetical is used to insert a new source of consciousness," as well as "[draw the] readers' attention to the listener of a conversation. The presentation of Lady Bradshaw's speech engages readers in her subjectivity, but at the same time, readers get to see how her speech and action is perceived and evaluated by Clarissa" (181, 182). Lady Bradshaw's characteristic language choices can be seen in non-parenthesized space due to her husband-reverence, repetition of the word "common," and evaluative adjective selection in "Sinking her voice, drawing Mrs. Dalloway into the shelter of a common femininity, a common pride in

the illustrious qualities of husbands and their sad tendency to overwork, Lady Bradshaw (poor goose – one didn’t dislike her) murmured [...],” where the parentheses present Clarissa an opportunity to express her own evaluation of Lady Bradshaw, complete with its own recognized vocal habits and expressive punctuation use (*Mrs. Dalloway* 179). In addition, while Cui posits that, within the parentheses, there “are no explicit indicators of viewpoint attribution, but the epithet *poor goose* and the verb of consciousness *dislike* point to Clarissa Dalloway’s subjectivity,” it should be added that the expressive punctuation use also plays a role here, as the dash implies a halting pace of vocalized thought that mimetically implies Clarissa’s presence (Cui 182). This back-and-forth between characters results in what Cui dubs a “double-focalisation,” which proves to be yet another potent means of character expression through punctuated divisions in space, a narrative technique so engaging that it is curious that Woolf would not return to it in the future (182). For all of the progress that *Mrs. Dalloway* exhibits in elevating subjective character experience via FID’s narratorial boundary testing, both inside and outside the brackets, the more present narrator-focalizer of *To the Lighthouse* will render this type of “double-focalisation” largely unnecessary.

### 3.4 *To the Lighthouse*

For all of the experimentation with free indirect discourse evident in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* exhibits a more restrained approach to the device as a means of presenting character perspective. The narrative strategy of both novels is largely defined by the use of FID, but where focalization through character was near constant in the former novel, the returning presence of an external, narrative-focalizer becomes more evident in the latter. While the narrator of *To the Lighthouse* is in no way as self-conscious as that of *Jacob’s Room*, and does not often exhibit expressivity markers or enough of a vocal identity to be considered a character presence, there are a number of passages that cannot be attributed to anyone other than an external, more objective source.

Similarly to how some have intuited a narrative presence within *Mrs. Dalloway* based on a passage where no character-focalizers can be said to be expressing themselves, the unbound narrator of “Time Passes” suggests a defined narrative presence (and, given the intentional presentation and separation of this section, accusations that this narrative presence is a sort of fluke or error cannot be entertained, as they might be in the Bradshaw passage). Mezei is overt in comparing the presence of objective narrators within these novels, saying of *Mrs. Dalloway*’s Bradshaw description that “[i]n its narratological incongruity, this passage reminds us of the ‘Time Passes’ section in *To the Lighthouse*,” as “Time Passes” is

given over to the narratorial voice, with the consequence that the reader is sharply reminded of the difference between a present, speaking narrator and an absent or effaced narrator and is thus alerted to the agility and hidden power of the narrator in “The Window” and “The Lighthouse” sections. Evidently, Woolf realized that FID was an effective device to disrupt distinctions between narrator and character and a strategic sit within which to locate the apparent effacement of the narrator. (84, 82)

With the increased space in which the external narrator announces itself, Mezei suggests that it is still drawing attention to its own absence in the sections on either side of “Time Passes,” while simultaneously reminding readers that it is a subdued yet controlling factor in all sections. The external narrator may be presenting an objective, disembodied account of a decade’s passing within a designated space, but in doing so frustrates any argument that the entirety of the novel’s focalization is dedicated to switching between purely subjective character experiences, as some suggest of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Susan Solomon, herself intrigued by Woolf’s use of parentheses, presents a similar analysis of external narration in “Time Passes” with an inspired metaphor, suggesting that readers “see the middle book or passageway of ‘Time Passes’ as the parenthesis to the novel as a whole [...]. As many scholars have established, the inner life and daydream provide the main clauses of the novel’s sentences, and

orienting or situating events or details are inserted as digressions as they interrupt the ongoing thoughts" (183). Here the novel's form mirrors its textual strategy of presenting objective details as textually different from subjective character experience; while Solomon does not concern herself with the relationship between parentheses and the use of free indirect discourse, her metaphor applies aptly to the present discussion: if "Time Passes" is a parenthesis to the novel, it is where the subjective focalization strategies of the host sections are disrupted to incorporate a new focal perspective.

Moreover, as Mezei indicates, the external narrator cannot be said to be safely contained within the middle section of the novel. While not nearly as expressive as in *Jacob's Room*, any notion that the narrator is even comparatively absent in "The Window" or "The Lighthouse" becomes untenable. Eric Rundquist, in examining a bracketed transition in FID within *To the Lighthouse*, has noted focal ambiguity generated by the narrator's use of deictic gestures. Referring to a passage mainly focalized through Mrs. Ramsay, where "Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience (she accomplished here something dexterous with her needles) but as a wedge of darkness," Rundquist states,

Once again the language of the parenthetical obviously does not originate with Mrs. Ramsay or convey her reflective thought: it breaks with the content of her thought in the root-S by providing a description of her actions. Nevertheless, the clause is ambiguous between a narratorial and figural point of view on the action it describes. The deictic adverb 'here' can be understood as either a discourse deictic from the narrator's perspective or a temporal deictic from Mrs. Ramsay's. (*To the Lighthouse* 66; Rundquist 166)

Although the present study differs from Rundquist in how to resolve this ambiguity – I maintain that these parentheses house an observation by the narrator-focalizer – the observation that the narrative introduces uncertainty concerning the potential referent for deixis is a potent one, as this type of gesturing to character speech and thought is characteristic of the narrator of *To the Lighthouse*. Considering that narratorial deixis is one of the quieter but identifiable traits of the expressive narrator

of *Jacob's Room*, as Wall points out, "Woolf's narrator early establishes her presence within the world of the text through deictic markers that place her, for example, in Scarborough during Jacob's youth," the narrator of *To the Lighthouse* in some ways abandons the near total deference to character perspective seen in *Mrs. Dalloway* (289).

Just as the use of FID in general is tempered in favor of greater narrator presence within *To the Lighthouse*, the use of parentheses to modulate changes within character focalization becomes likewise more nuanced and understated. However, this does not mean that Woolf has abandoned the progress gained with the use of brackets to represent character speech and thought, and in fact this use becomes slightly more prevalent. The novel contains 234 parenthesized statements, and of these, 120 (51.2%) exhibit consistent focalization to communicate a conventional digressive clause; eighty six (36.7%) prove relevant to the implementation of FID in the manner discussed within these pages; and twenty four (10.2%) serve as (a) directly attributive, (b) ascribing a passage that had been presented within FID with a determining tag that renders the previous text into indirect discourse, or (c) providing narrator commentary on either direct or indirect discourse – uses that are all, like their representations in the other novels, concerned with the management of narrative voice but not directly applicable to issues of transitions in FID. Finally, four are, by virtue of their length, not properly assessed by their handling of narrative voice, but rather their ability to transition between casts, settings, sections, and times.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding those parentheses that may be classed as purely conventional in function and where focalization is consistent, an analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* reveals an increased attention to character-focalizers, with 125 instances used for digressive comments issued from these characters and only thirty-two attributed to the narrator-focalizer. In *To the Lighthouse* these categories have largely

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<sup>16</sup> While these long-form parentheses, two of which span entire chapters, *can* represent alterations in character perspective and voicing, their length permits a rich variety of focal strategies, and as such complicate the present discussion. As Solomon notes, this use of parentheses "interrupts narrative, not syntax," and so are classed here as representing a different textual phenomenon (90).

stabilized, and the digressive use is nearly equally exploited by character- and narrator-focalizers alike: the narrator issues traditional asides in sixteen cases, while the characters do in sixty-seven. This slight preference for characters expressing themselves is more pronounced upon recognizing that sixteen of the fifty-three narrator cases occur in the “Time Passes” section, where, for the most part, the narrator-focalizer has unchallenged speaking presence.

As with the previous novels, even the use of these parentheses that do not directly apply to considerations of FID contribute to the impression that Woolf uses them deliberately to capture aspects of character interiority. In a passage expressed in FID, focalized through Mrs. Ramsay, there is a clear transition in the nature of her thoughts with “Had she not laughed about it? Was she not forgetting again how strongly she influenced people? Marriage needed – oh, all sorts of qualities (the bill for the greenhouse would be fifty pounds); one – she need not name it – that was essential” (*To the Lighthouse* 63). Neither focalization nor FID more specifically is interrupted in this example, but this does seem to contribute to a mimetic representation of Mrs. Ramsay’s thinking, as the parenthesized statement does not relate to the host clause and instead suggests the free-associative nature of a mind in action.

Likewise, we should consider the twenty-four other uses of parentheses that serve a variety of functions in identifying speakers that are not related to FID. As Solomon suggests, *To the Lighthouse* “surrounds identifying and clarifying phrases in parentheses, and it seems—as M.B. Parkes has noted—that these interruptions compensate for Woolf’s disorienting multiperspectival narrative. The majority of parentheses in *To the Lighthouse* do not mark temporal interludes or oblique parabasis [...] but attribute speech or thought to a particular character” (187). While considering them the “majority” usage would be hyperbolic unless transitions into FID are part of Solomon’s interpretation, the presence of these types of parenthesized statements, including clear-cut attributions and authorial commentary on direct or indirect discourse, have not significantly altered in form, function, or frequency among the



three of Woolf's novels under investigation, and as such they are just as important in demonstrating the relevance of parentheses in controlling narrative voice now as they were for *Jacob's Room*.

Of the parentheses that do demonstrate some transition in focalization relevant to FID, Woolf maintains a marked preference for using the brackets to inject the narrator-focalizer into sections otherwise presented by character-focalizers, accounting for fifty-six of eighty-six such uses. Not much has significantly changed between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* relevant to these uses – the representation of this subsection of the FID category, as well as the size of the FID category itself, is remarkably consistent between the two works – other than the aforementioned use of narrative deixis occasionally deployed by the narrator-focalizer. This sort of deixis can be spotted when Mrs. Ramsay ruminates on her relationship with Mr. Carmichael:

She went out of her way indeed to be friendly. Do you want stamps, do you want tobacco?

Here's a book you might like and so on. And after all – after all (here insensibly she drew herself together, physically, the sense of her own beauty becoming, as it did so seldom, present to her) after all, she had not generally any difficulty in making people like her. (44)

There can be little doubt that the non-parenthesized text can be seen as an FID representation of Mrs. Ramsay's mental activity, considering the conversational language of "and so on," the dash mimetically representing some hesitancy within a speech act or thought, the thrice repeated "after all," and the rendering of questions addressed to Mr. Carmichael without any indication of their being instances of direct or indirect discourse, implying that they are examples of Mrs. Ramsay mentally reflecting on her own speech habits. However, the parenthesized writing must exhibit a transition to the narrator-focalizer, as this material possesses privileged knowledge to which Mrs. Ramsay has no access; she could not reflect on a physical reaction that was "insensible," nor is it likely that she knew the "seldom" frequency with which she was capable of recognizing her own beauty. So the use of the word "here" to begin the parenthesized segment is undoubtedly that of the narrator-focalizer, gesturing

directly to the reader the point in Mrs. Ramsay's internalized narration that an external, physical event occurs, rather than being an instance where the intimate proximity implied by "here" (as opposed to "there") serves as a marker of character focalization as it would be interpreted in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Undoubtedly, the "here" within the parentheses does not function in the same manner of or point to the same location as the "here" of "here's a book." While this increased intimacy between the narrator-focalizer and its subjects is not disproportionately expressed within bracketed space, examples such as this do shine light on the diminished distance between focalizing voices.

More pronounced are the examples where parenthesized space makes a transition from the narrator-focalizer to a character breaking into text. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, there were eighteen instances of this usage, most of which are contained within the novel's closing pages, where the character density of the party scene justifies this tactic, and *To the Lighthouse* displays a slightly heavier reliance on this technique, with it occurring in twenty-seven of the eighty-six FID related examples.<sup>17</sup> Beyond the increased frequency, the purpose of use and means of identification have not significantly evolved between these novels. Repetitions of distinct character language are still the means by which many of these focalization shifts are communicated, for instance when Lily's remembrance of Mr. Bankes' former naming convention for the children earlier in one paragraph reinserts itself into the otherwise objective "Only James (certainly the Sullen) scowled at the lamp" (*To the Lighthouse* 152). Likewise, tense and modal words are still useful in identifying these transitions, as when Charles Tansley stands waiting for Mrs. Ramsay to return:

He heard her quick step above; heard her voice cheerful, then low; looked at the mats; tea-caddies, glass shades; waited quite impatiently; looked forward eagerly to the walk home;

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<sup>17</sup> This increase may not be a consequence of Woolf recognizing the usefulness of inserting character voice through brackets in itself, but rather a byproduct of an increased presence of the narrator-focalizer more generally. An increased amount of space narrated objectively necessarily permits greater opportunities for the narrator-to-character focal transition.

determined to carry her bag; then heard her come out; shut a door; say they must keep the windows open and the doors shut, ask at the house for anything they wanted (she must be talking to a child). (17)

While this passage is unquestionably focalized through Charles throughout, it is not until the brackets that the text demonstrates characteristics of a thought distinctly his own, thus indicating presence of FID. There is some ambiguity in the pre-parenthesized portion regarding who is speaking, as the litany separated by semi-colons may be indicative of a disjointed representation of thought and the opening triplet of adjectives – “quick,” “cheerful,” “low” – could either claim origin in either narrator or character. However, it is unlikely that this stretch of text can be an FID representation of Charles’ thinking due to adverbs describing his actions, which demonstrate an external assessment of behavior; one does not typically recognize, let alone mentally vocalize, “I am waiting impatiently.” The introduction of the parentheses clarifies the previous writing, as it is clearly an untagged rendering of a thought in FID, demonstrated by the modal assertion of necessity “must” and the tense shift, with the previous past verb “heard” (“say” and “ask” marking Charles’ processing of indirect discourse acts that he “heard”) becoming present tense.

If *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates an increased reliance on parentheses to insert character expressions through FID, in essence endorsing the success of Woolf’s experiments in the punctuation marks that begin in *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is surprising that a large component of the previous usage has been rejected in the later novel. There are but three examples where differences in parenthesized space mark transitions between character focalizers in FID, a use that found seventeen expressions in *Mrs. Dalloway*. There is no ignoring that such shifts exist, but it may be the case that these instances are components of the reasserted narrator-focalizer’s presence within the work, where the narrator-focalizer *imperceptibly* repeats character-focalized speech as a sort of echo to material with which the

reader is familiar. When Mr. Bankes reflects on Mr. Ramsay as he walks with Lily, there is a moment when an apparently clear FID transition occurs:

While he walked up the drive and Lily Briscoe said yes and no and capped his comments (for she was in love with them all, in love with this world) he weighed Ramsay's case, commiserated him, envied him, as if he had seen him divest himself of all those glories of isolation and austerity which crowned him in youth to cumber him definitely with fluttering wings and clucking domesticities. (26)

The text surrounding this passage is, on both sides, focalized through Bankes, a focalization whose obstinacy remains unbroken through his perception of Lily's affirmations and denials, the expressive qualities of his interpretation of Mr. Ramsay ("all those glories of isolation and austerity"), and an introductory reference to the hen that he will equate with a change in Ramsay's life through a flashback. Yet within the parentheses there is an insertion of text lifted nearly verbatim from a section previously attributed to Lily in direct discourse, where she asks, "but what could one say to her? 'I'm in love with you?' No, that was not true. 'I'm in love with this all,' waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children" (23). The parenthesized repetition of an exact instance of a direct, vocalized thought suggests a transition into FID, bolstered by the deictic gesturing of "this world," and the present classification recognizes this as an instance of Lily focalizing through free indirect discourse. However, this case remains ambiguous, as it is potentially the case that this is an assertion from the narrator-focalizer parroting Lily's vocal character, a suggestion that character vocal traits are capable of contaminating the more objective stance of a more objective narrator.

As a point of contrast, it should be noted that the novel elsewhere exhibits hints of this type of focal/vocal contamination. Early in the work there is a moment when Mrs. Ramsay offers a physical description of Lily within FID, stating, "Lily's picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face, she would never marry" (21). This characterization, clearly originating with

Mrs. Ramsay, as evidenced by the exclamation point, the modal assertion of “never marry,” and the expressive nature of the description itself being related to an assumed result, recurs four more times throughout the novel, with diminishing connection to Mrs. Ramsay. The comparison is made again in an indirect discourse thought attributed to Mrs. Ramsay a few pages later – “she said, thinking that Lily’s charm was her Chinese eyes, aslant in her white, puckered little face” – but two of the three following instances cannot be so safely ascribed to Mrs. Ramsay (29).<sup>18</sup> In a passage set during dinner, a section focalized through Lily herself segues into the narrator-focalizer, observing, “But, she thought, screwing up her Chinese eyes, and remembering how he sneered at women,” which cannot be considered a continuation of Lily’s focalization, nor could it be an insertion from Mrs. Ramsay, who would not have access to the content of Lily’s thinking (96). Lest there be any doubt that the narrator has adopted this vocal tic from one of the characters, the final example of this description occurs after Mrs. Ramsay has died, and so it can only be the narrator-focalizer cutting into Lily’s FID-contained thought, here within a parenthesized transition: “There was something (she stood screwing up her little Chinese eyes in her small puckered face), something she remembered in the relations of those lines cutting across, slicing down” (160). The wording of this narrator insertion is eerily close to that of Mrs. Ramsay’s original first utterance, and short of the possibility that the narration of “The Lighthouse” is literally haunted by her presence, the novel seems to be using parenthesized space as one means for the narrator to reflexively reintroduce character thoughts without these being *instances* of character thoughts. This sort of behavior does not happen frequently enough to be a defining factor of Woolf’s parentheses use, nor does this type of contamination only occur within brackets, but it is worth stressing that at least twice the transition that happens between perspective and speaker within parenthesized space incorporates this fluidity between speakers, reaffirming the punctuation’s relevance to character portrayal.

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<sup>18</sup> For the other example of this description as presented by Mrs. Ramsay in FID, please see *To the Lighthouse*, p. 106.

## Concluding Remarks

The primary purpose of this argument, to assert that parentheses play a role in permitting shifts between focalizers in free indirect discourse within the work of Elizabeth Bowen, H.D., and Virginia Woolf, hopefully requires little additional comment. As 40% of the parentheses in *The Last September* and 25.2% of those in *HER* overtly signal a transition in focalizing speaker, the punctuation's relevance to the narrative device clearly warrants recognition. While the manner of Woolf's bracket use to facilitate these focalization shifts itself undergoes changes over the course of her career, particularly in regards to the variable attention granted to character irruption into external narrative, the transition from 25.8% applicable cases in *Jacob's Room*, to 29.3% in *Mrs. Dalloway*, to 36.7% in *To the Lighthouse* shows a marked reliance on the punctuation as a means of clarifying (and complicating) issues of which speaker holds the floor.

Additionally, the discussion of how parenthesis usage relates to the larger stylistic and narrative techniques of these authors justifies the attention given to the punctuation mark, demonstrating that analysis of the supposedly "digressive" parentheses is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the modernists under review. With Bowen, the consistency of her parentheses deployment bolsters arguments of the sort proposed by Julia Kind, that Bowen's style deserves greater attention to how calculated it is in manner, perhaps requiring a reexamination of assertions that Bowen's writing is so chaotic that it questions language's capacity to communicate an intended message. An exploration of H.D.'s parentheses not only helps distinguish aspects of *HER*'s tri-part narrative persona, but also, through observing the echoing, revising nature of the text within parenthesized space, helps tie the novel to H.D.'s poetic interest in palimpsests and the rewriting of myth. As for Woolf, the growing reliance on parentheses to present transitions within free indirect discourse proves to be only part of what makes their relevance to narrative so pertinent, as it is in the evolution from using the brackets more consistently in service of the narrator-focalizer in *Jacob's Room*, to better elevate character

perspective and present a more genuinely polyphonic free-exchange between speakers within *Mrs. Dalloway*, to the moderation between these narrative poles and the introduction of new, more ambiguous methods of contaminating narrator speech with the vocal traits of characters in *To the Lighthouse*, that the investigation of parentheses establishes its full worth.

Moving forward, the incorporation of parentheses into any schematic that recognizes their potential as a marker of focalization shifts requires a broadening of scope beyond modernism. While modernism's greater incorporation of free indirect discourse to represent character perspective makes it a practical proving-ground for the punctuation's relationship to the device, free indirect discourse neither was born in the modern period nor died with the arrival of post-modernism. The works of Jane Austen would likely serve as a fruitful point of entry into whether the parentheses serve this narrative function more generally, largely because of the existing body of critical attention paid to Austen's use of FID.<sup>19</sup> The scale of this document precludes discussion of Austen's use of parentheses to incorporate focal transitions in free indirect discourse, but time spent with *Mansfield Park* in particular suggests that the interplay between parentheses and FID is developed as early as the early nineteenth century, despite this novel's dearth of parentheses when compared to more modern texts. Regarding authors beyond the modern period, the present attention to how parenthesized divisions within textual space relate to narrative may have bearing on readings of Vladimir Nabokov's acrobatic style.

However, more in need of critical attention is the potential relationship between the use of parentheses to inject character interiority and instances of an *écriture féminine* operating in response to established phallogocentric methods of narrative ordering. The non-traditional, less-linear stylistic experimentations of all three authors under review have been linked to attempts to resist patriarchal standards in textual presentation, as evidenced by Harriet Chessman's interpretation of Bowen's stylistic

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<sup>19</sup> For existing information on how Austen's parentheses themselves relate to her use of FID, see Gonzalez-Diaz, esp. 192-200.

uniqueness, Diane Chisholm's writing on H.D., and Kathy Mezei's framing of Woolf's narrative approaches (to single out just a few of the many scholars mentioned here, and countless elsewhere, who share this opinion). Considering that the rejection of an authoritative narrator in favor of promoting a collaborative, multi-vocal construction of meaning is a defining characteristic of free indirect discourse, that the parentheses prove useful in the presentation of voice in FID may be one component of a distinctly feminist response to previous, monologic forms of narrative is compelling, and an interpretation that the present study endorses within the context of the early twentieth century authors under investigation. The largest failing of the present text is due to the fact that more space than is currently available is necessary to do justice to whether the use of parentheses in relation to FID may be in any way considered an especially gendered tactic without reductively essentializing female literary contributions. However, a cursory examination of male modernists offers some promise to this point, as male modernists like Faulkner and Joyce do not appear to use their parentheses to promote transitions between narrator and character perspectives in the manner described here, and in general deploy the mark less frequently.



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