Hirvonen, P., D. Rellstab & N. Siponkoski (toim.) 2016. Teksti ja tekstuaalisuus, Text och textualitet, Text and Textuality, Text und Textualität. VAKKI-symposiumi XXXVI 11.–12.2.2016. VAKKI Publications 7. Vaasa, (127–138).

Colonial Discourse Undermined? J.G. Farrell's *Troubles*

Katri Annika Wessel
Department of Fennougric and Uralic Studies
LMU Munich

Der Beitrag untersucht, ob Elemente kolonialen Diskurses in J.G. Farrells 1970 erschienenem Roman Troubles *eine bloße Reproduktion des Diskurses präsentieren oder ob und wie sich ihre Gestaltung auch den Diskurs unterlaufenden Lesarten öffnet.* Troubles *zeichnet ein Bild der irischen Unruhen 1919–1921 und konfrontiert eine von ihrer Überlegenheit überzeugte Gruppe von Anglo-Iren mit ihre Welt erschütternden historischen Ereignissen. Drei Perspektiven auf Elemente kolonialen Diskurses zeigen, dass dieser im Text mehrfach durchbrochen und entlarvt wird.*

Keywords: Colonial Discourse, Historical Novel, J.G. Farrell, *Troubles,* Subversion

1 A Triptych of Turning Points in Imperial History

James Gordon Farrell pictured his historical novels as a "triptych" portraying "watersheds" of the Empire and hoped that each of its parts would shed some light on the others (McLeod 2007: 2). Set at different times in different regions of the British Empire, the novels depict the everyday life of a group of mainly British characters witnessing a crisis of colonial rule. *Troubles* (T, 1970) is set in Ireland during the guerrilla war for Irish independence (1919–1921). It won Farrell the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1971 and the Lost Man Booker Prize for 1970 (awarded posthumously in 2010). His Booker Prize-winning novel *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) portrays India in 1857 at the time which is referred to from the imperial point of view as the 'Indian mutiny' and *The Singapore Grip* (1978) is set in the Far East at the beginning of the 1940s. In all three novels historical events bring about fundamental changes to the characters' lives as they knew them.

The topic of British characters living in a colony, i.e. a region that might be exotically unfamiliar, almost immediately begs the question of how such colony is perceived and represented. This, in turn, is related to the workings of orientalist and colonial discourse. In this paper, I will take a closer look at colonial discourse in *Troubles* in order to find out to what extent it should be considered a pure replication of the discourse or if and how colonial points of view are in fact contested. I will approach the topic by first providing some background information on Farrell and *Troubles*. I will then briefly sum up some theoretical foundations of colonial discourse as a concept before turning to its workings in the novel. I will not, however, pass comment on the newspaper clippings inserted into it.

I will approach colonial discourse from three angles: firstly, I will look at how it shapes some of the characters' perceptions of the world and how its mechanisms fail them in Ireland. Next, I will very briefly outline how colonial discourse is mirrored in the attitudes of certain characters and finally, I will illustrate how power positions change and shift.

2 Life is Short. Life is Very, Very Short: James Gordon Farrell as a Novelist[1]

James Gordon Farrell, who may "be a difficult novelist to place" (Goodman 2015: 757), was a British writer of Irish descent who always felt a strong connection to Ireland. He was born in Liverpool in 1935 and published three novels (*A Man From Elsewhere* (1963), *The Lung* (1965), *A Girl in the Head* (1967)), before turning to crucial events in British history which he portrayed in his Empire novels. His last novel, *The Hill Station* (published posthumously in 1980) remained unfinished when Farrell drowned in 1979.

His historical novels depict a community of mainly British characters living in a colony, where they tend to be trapped by their obliviousness to the situation and their resulting helplessness (Bényei 2014: 211). They thus find themselves under siege in different respects (Saunders 2001: 456), with their community destroyed due to their lack of understanding of what is happening. Further, additional features are also shared: There is an omniscient narrator who acquaints the reader with the colony and the British community led by a middle-aged family man. The community is joined by a male visitor from Britain who has to get used to life in the colony and a female character who challenges established norms as Sarah Devlin in *Troubles*, who fiercely advocates the Irish cause. In the end, escalating events "fully overtake" the communities and destroy them (Morey 2000: 112).

In *Troubles*, Farrell takes the reader to the deteriorating Hotel Majestic near the fictitious town of Kilnalough in Ireland. The hotel is run by Edward Spencer, who lives at the hotel with his daughter Angela, his son Ripon, his twins Faith and Charity and "his few faithful customers who kept coming every year without fail" (T: 11) – "steadily more impoverished" maiden ladies (T: 10). Other Anglo-Irish characters also visit the community, as is the intention of Major Brendan Archer, the traveller from London, when he sets out for the Majestic in 1919. He finds himself somehow engaged to Angela Spencer, although "he was sure that he had never actually proposed" (T: 12), and travels to Ireland hoping to resolve this delicate situation. However, Angela passes away before they ever get the chance to talk about their engagement and the Major, who feels more and more responsible for the people at the hotel, eventually stays for much longer than he intended. In all three historical novels the community's almost blind attitude to the developments in the colony is mirrored in the plots, which focus more on

[1] Farrell (1969, quoted in Greacen 2009: VI).

the British and assign less space to indigenous characters, who seldom speak and are rarely described in detail. This has not gone unnoticed and the depiction of Indian characters in *The Siege of Krishnapur* has provoked controversial discussions. Ross (2005) summarizes the sides taken for and against Farrell and suggests that Farrell simultaneously presents and subverts colonial views.

3 Colonial Discourse as an Instrument of Power

The works of Foucault and Said can be considered as the foundations upon which the concept of colonial discourse is built. Foucault analysed how discourses determine the way we perceive the world, how they order our entire knowledge according to their inherent requirements and establish and maintain relations of power (Kilian 2004: 64). They limit our perception by making preferred elements appear of natural or inherent importance and ignore others, they define "what can and must be said" (Reckwitz 1996: 121) and "organize and construct our world […] by differentiation and discrimination" (Chang 2008: 182).

All discourse is based on semiotic systems that assign meanings to signs within a system's social and historical context (Chauhan 1990: 170). When we combine different "patterns of symbols […] to express and communicate thoughts and feelings" (Chang 2008: 182), we are participating in discourses that are "characterized by […] a specific topic or subject-matter" as well as the respective "regularities of speech" (Nünning & Nünning 1996: 10) and that construct what we consider to be true. Despite being dominant in the moment, any discourse may be threatened by "interdiscoursive relations to other discourses" (ibid.) that try to subvert it and gain control (Childs 1998: 83), while, at the same time, it embodies the power which everybody is struggling to obtain and maintain (Foucault 2003: 11).

Said, in turn, coined the term 'orientalism' in his seminal study in 1978, when he described how the Western world imagined and perceived the Orient. 'Orientalism' designates "that collection of dreams, images and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line" (Said 1995: 73). Said revealed that the Western discourse on the oriental world is founded on a dichotomy of binary oppositions, which allows for any feature to be assigned exclusively to one point of view within the binary system, while its adversary is automatically assigned to the opposite point of view.

The Western discourse on the Orient assumes the powers of naming and exclusion by establishing Western virtues and achievements embodied by "arbitrary attributes of western-ness" (Corzo-Duchardt 2015: 407) as a normative 'truth' and tracing them in the oriental world. Based on differentiation and discrimination, this perspective highlights what the Orient lacks and, in deploying these mechanisms of 'othering',

automatically ascribes the opposite of all Western standards and all unwanted features to the oriental world. The strategies of the discourse construe the Orient as inferior, "static and regressive" (Turner 2004: 173) in every respect. By constantly repeating lexical items, images and symbols which ascribe these features to the Orient the discourse maintains relations of power (Reckwitz 1996: 122; Ezzaher 2003: 11; Nünning & Nünning 1996: 20).

Not only the Orient but also other regions and social groups all over the world have been perceived and pictured from a Western or European point of view and their images have been construed based on Western discoursive strategies. Mechanisms of colonial discourse that – although reminiscent of orientalist discourse – constitute a different discourse have shaped the perception of life in the colonies during the age of imperialism and thereafter. They can be described as relying on two opposed perspectives; the first – the colonizer's – claims to represent the truth and employs strategies "through which the colonized become 'othered'" (Reckwitz 1996: 122) and are assigned inferiority through a "set of codes, stereotypes, and vocabulary employed whenever the relationship between a colonial power and its colonies is written or spoken about" (Nünning & Nünning 1996: 10). Since the discourse is based on clear-cut and easily distinguishable categories, the process of 'othering' often merges heterogeneous aspects of the 'other' into one homogenous 'other' which can be dealt with more easily from a Western perspective (Ezzaher 2003: 5).

As it became increasingly apparent that the Western way of perceiving the world and its discourses were "not monolithic but rather polyphonic and contradictory" (Corzo-Duchardt 2015: 404), these aspects had to be accounted for, which Bhabha did by transforming the rigid framework of oppositions into a process of differentiation and negotiation which permanently contests the positions within the discourse. As there is no authentic or static identity detached from any context, there is no such thing as a position within a discourse that does not depend on its other and no naturally inherent justification of colonial presence (Corzo-Duchardt 2015: 406). Bhabha (1994: 153) interprets the latter as ambivalent, as it aims at appearing "original and authoritative" and naturally superior despite having only assumed this position after the introduction of colonial difference, hence, not being an original state. Consequently colonial presence and superiority need to be repeatedly claimed as original states in order to construe this view as true through constant repetition. This, however, points to what lies beyond the alleged truth of the claim, implying that there is an 'other', a counterpart, of both claim and truth, as the claim of superiority can only exist and be perceived in terms of its difference from this counterpart. Colonial presence can therefore be described as a construct based on repetition and differentiation from its other and as maintaining the difference in order to justify its claims. Within colonial discourse the position and identity of colonizer and colonized alike are construed through a permanent differentiation as well as re-evaluation and negotiation of positions. This process disrupts, disturbs and

destabilizes fixed colonial authority within the discourse which, thus, itself contains precisely those elements that contest its power and is always deficient (Sasani 2015: 325; Easthope 1998: 199; Reckwitz 1996: 129). Bhabha (quoted in Hartadi 2009: 158) places this infinite process of 'mutual othering' to establish and negotiate positions in the Third Space, where the positions of discourse are confronted with contradictions and aspects of knowledge that are either denied or excluded from the discourse by one position.

In order to preserve the difference between colonial power and the indigenous people, the discourse produces an image of an 'other' controlled by the colonizer, i.e. an 'authorized other'. This is achieved by viewing the indigenous people as imitating the representatives of the power position and aspiring to rise to the same level by copying the superior position's attitude and manners. The discourse, however, cannot allow them to become identical to the colonizers as this would abolish the difference between the two positions and thus the headstone of the claim of superiority. Imitation, therefore, turns out to be an ambivalent process and it "is at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha 1994: 123). Furthermore, imitation or mimicry provides the colonized other with two forms of resistance, as the position of power may either be imitated perfectly and thus all difference blurred – which cannot be allowed to happen – or the colonizer may be imitated too perfectly in an exaggerating way which again exposes the power position to ridicule (Sasani 2015: 327).

Bhabha's perspective and his concept of mimicry allow for different readings of how the indigenous populations' ways of speaking and remaining silent are depicted, as both are related to processes of establishing and negotiating identities. Ezzaher (2003: 10) states that Fanon interprets the indigenous populations' use of the dominant language as supporting the culture of oppression; Ferns (1994), in turn, reads their missing voices as an even stronger sign of oppression. The elimination of their voices from the text – which can be read as denying their existence – calls "into question the authority of the dominant discourse" (Ferns, 1994: 119), as the existence of one position implies the existence of the other. If this other is silenced, the question as to why this happened contests the discourse.

The depiction of the indigenous people's mastery of the dominant language as deficient can be read as marking them as inferior and exposing them to ridicule. According to Bhabha, however, this kind of individual (and, from an imperial point of view, incorrect) use of the language not only creates disturbances within the discourse, but also embodies 'authorized otherness', as it aims to imitate the colonizers' language (Ezzaher 2003: 16). At the same time the indigenous people's use of the dominant tongue must be deficient so as to be different enough from the colonizers' use of it to justify colonial superiority.

4 Colonial Discourse as a Means of Perceiving and Interpreting the World in *Troubles*

Throughout *Troubles* Major Brendan Archer's perception of Ireland is framed by a colonial point of view as is implied by the title of the first part of the novel, "A Member of the Quality" (T: 7), which points to a society that is hierarchically ordered according to social status and thus to a discourse of power. Although his attitude remains mainly informed by a colonial view, it, however, changes, as he gains some insight into the problems in Ireland.

When, the Major sets out for "Ireland to claim his bride, Angela Spencer" (T: 11), who is of Anglo-Irish descent, he feels as if he is going home (T: 13) as Angela has "recorded her life in detail" (T: 16) and has already provided him with a portrait of life in Ireland. From the train he glimpses a river's "smoothly running water, the amber tea colour of so many streams in Ireland" (T: 16) and thus associates the colour of the water with an important element of British, or imperial, culture. This reveals that he interprets Irish nature based on a colonial frame of reference. The use of tea as a specific reference to imperial culture is supported by the fact that the ladies at the Hotel Majestic insist upon having their afternoon tea, despite it becoming increasingly difficult. The importance of the tea and the ladies' obliviousness to the situation become apparent when "the giant M of MAJESTIC detached itself from the façade of the building" (T: 286) demolishing a table along with the cup of tea one of the ladies had gone to great efforts to obtain. Her main grievance, however, is not the crumbling of the hotel, but the loss of her tea. Apart from associating the color of the water with tea, the Major merges social and religious heterogeneity into a homogeneous concept of 'the Irish' when telling his fellow- passengers that he is going to marry "an Irish girl" while, at the same time, he wonders "whether Angela would be pleased to be described as 'an Irish girl'" (T: 15). Despite the feeling that there is something disturbing about this notion, the Major's attitude remains "full of colonial clichés" (Bényei, 20014: 226) which he resorts to when baffled by his encounters in Ireland.

Upon the Major's arrival in Kilnalough, his colonial perspective is confronted with disturbances when he realizes that his knowledge of Ireland, shaped by colonialism, does not match reality, partly as Angela has failed to mention her brother Ripon and her poor state of health. The fact that his knowledge is deficient seems to shatter the Major's confidence and impair his view until he detects symbols of colonial rule which restore his perspective and certainty of knowing how to interpret the world. On his way to the Hotel Majestic, he cannot see any of the places Ripon shows him in Kilnalough in the same light: "A wonderful little town. A splendid place, really" (T: 17). Instead he sees "here and there, silent men and women" in doorways and on doorsteps. As they pass, "[o]ne or two of the older men touched their caps." (T: 17). As the Major's view is reduced to merely seeing things at face value, his colonial attitude fails him as a frame of reference

and he does not recognize the motion as a greeting and gesture of respect towards the Anglo-Irish.

Only when the Major sets eyes on the Hotel Majestic, is his contested colonial attitude reinstated: he sees "a life-sized statue of a plump lady on horseback, stained green by the weather. […] It was Queen Victoria, and she, at least, was exactly as he had expected." (T: 19). Hence, the first 'woman' the Major meets in Ireland proves to be a symbol of imperial rule that restores the Major's confidence in his colonial perspective. Nevertheless events continue to baffle him and when confronted by things he does not understand, he resorts to merging these disturbing elements into the concept of "incredibly Irish" (T: 28, 39). Not only does he ignore that there is no homogenous 'Irishness', but he also links being Irish to madness when wondering about life at the Majestic: "How incredibly Irish it all is! […] The family seems to be completely mad" (T: 28). This again creates a twist of irony, as it reveals the arbitrariness of colonial discourse by illustrating how easily the mechanisms of discrimination are directed at any available 'other'. In this case, madness is assigned to 'the Irish' who, actually, represent the Anglo-Irish and thus imperial power, rendering colonial discourse absurd and hollow as its mechanisms of discrimination are turned on itself.

The stereotypical perception of everything as 'incredibly Irish' is repeated when the undergraduates arrive "in order to get to the bottom of the Irish question [...], [...] to get to grips with the feeling of the Irish people, not just the Shinners!" (T: 404). They are enthusiastic about Ireland: "Amazing! Everything people said about Ireland was true! The Irish were completely mad!" (T: 406). Their attitudes, however, are revealed as arbitrary and hollow as their division of the Irish into 'the Irish people' and 'the Shinners' pretends to differentiate the view of Ireland, but testifies to a colonialist view merging everybody but Sinn Fein into one concept of 'the Irish'. Sinn Fein, however, can be conceived as an arbitrarily chosen additional 'other'. Thus the mechanisms of colonial discourse are rendered absurd once again and reveal the undergraduates' view as obstructed.

The Major's attitude changes as it is repeatedly confronted by disturbing aspects. While he still considers events outside the hotel as 'delightful', 'typical' and 'splendidly Irish' (T: 59, 74), he perceives peculiarities at the hotel as "typical of the Spencers" (T: 105) and during the ball, his view of the Anglo-Irish is even rather sinister and critical: "And this horse face […] – these equine features again and again all the way down the glittering ballroom […]. This was the face of the Anglo-Irish, the inbred Protestant aristocracy" (T: 336).

5 Colonial Attitude Mirrored in the Attitude of the Characters

Among the characters Edward Spencer embodies "imperial values as the Empire itself is crumbling" (Saunders 2001: 456) as is mirrored in his statement:

> Did the people of Ireland want to govern themselves? They most certainly did not. They knew on which side their bread was buttered. Ask any decent Irishman what he thinks and he'll answer the same thing. It was only criminals, fanatics, and certain people with a grudge who were interested in starting trouble. I ask you, is Murphy capable of governing himself? He could not even govern his Aunt Fanny! (T: 73)

Edward claims authority of what the Irish population thinks and divides them into 'decent' people, who are assigned insight into the benefits of colonial rule, and people questioning it. According to the mechanisms of the discourse, this latter group is viewed as having a dubious character and deprived of any insight into the benefits. The reference to the manservant Murphy does not only associate him with the troublemakers, fanatics and criminals objecting to colonial rule, but also contests Edward's attitude by raising the question of why he does not surround himself with more loyal Irishmen. The dynamics of the discourse, however, need to perceive the Irish people as not too loyal and not being too similar to the Anglo-Irish in order to preserve a certain degree of difference that will justify the claim of superiority. Faced with potentially disloyal Irish people, Edward, from his allegedly superior position, determines what these people are and are not able to achieve, for instance the management of their personal lives. Later on, Edward's claim of superiority and authority is ridiculed when he extends it to the Major, who after his prolonged stay at the hotel, is told: "You don't know what living in Ireland is like" (T: 379). Again discursive mechanisms are turned on themselves, as a representative of colonial power is excluded from the position of knowing and construed as an 'other' who lacks insight.

Although the Major opens up to the situation in Ireland, his view remains mainly colonial, as his view on the situation in Ireland reveals:

> For the important fact was this: the presence of the British signified a *moral* authority, not just an administrative one […]. It would have to be matched by the Irish before self-government became an acceptable proposition. (T: 57)

The allegedly beneficial colonial authority is perceived as based on two aspects, with the moral one being emphasised by the use of italics. Introducing an element of difference and a state of moral superiority the Irish cannot possibly achieve, no matter how good their administrative achievements are, justifies imperial rule because otherwise "the British would have to recognize the subjects' capacity for and right to self-rule, thus deligitimizing British sovereignty" (Corzo-Duchardt 2015: 407). Later on, the Irish cause is reduced to just another disturbance of colonial rule which might be a nuisance but does not essentially question colonialism, when the Major wonders, how one could

take an interest in the events in Ireland when there are crises all over the world (T: 113) or states "there had always been some corner of the Empire where His Majesty's subjects were causing trouble" (T: 215).

In the novel, colonial attitudes are contested and reinforced by views and convictions contributed by different characters and the reader is left with the task of processing the contradictions and challenges to the perspectives presented. It is only Sarah Devlin, who fiercely advocates the Irish cause and explicitly confronts the Major in a rather aggressive manner when telling him that in Ireland everybody must choose their side (T: 34) and asking him if Ireland wanted "to be defended" when he comments on Irish loyalty to the British, "[who] so busily engaged in defending Ireland against the Kaiser" (T: 83).

6 Challenges to the Position of Power within Colonial Discourse

Although everyday life in the hotel mainly relies on the servants, they rarely speak; instead their words are rather reported – a mechanism that subordinates and controls their utterances (Ferns 1994: 213). This control can be read as depriving them of the right to speak which, in turn, is even stressed by the physical presence of the characters and "becomes in Farrell's hands another tool for" questioning the power position (Ferns 1994: 119). The position of power is indeed contested: as the events in Ireland escalate, the servants at the hotel speak up, whereas before their instances of direct speech served to repeat orders or to react to them (T: 22, 146). Their speaking can be interpreted as a challenge to the power position, as it mirrors the developments outside the hotel and also reflects the Anglo-Irish characters' loss of control. When Edward asks a maid about his revolver, his loss of control of his weapons, the situation and his servants becomes evident:

> 'The cook has it, sir. She does have it in safe in the press in the kitchen.'
> 'What the devil does she have it for?'
> 'She does be afraid of the Volunteers.' (T: 203)

On the one hand, the fact that the maid's English deviates from the standard can be read as confirming her inferiority; on the other hand, the fact that she is speaking at all points to a shift in power positions and contributes to the comic dimensions of the dialogue, which revolves around 'she', 'does' and changing word order. It is Edward who seems to mimic the maid's use of 'to do', which implies a complete reversal of positions and adds a layer of irony diverting attention from Edward's correct English as well as from the fact that some servants arm themselves. The Major has to face changing positions of power when objecting to new guests staying at the hotel. Murphy answers back, overruling the Major's assessment of the situation by gleefully pitting Edward's authority against the Major's: "'But the master does be saying they can,' countered Murphy with relish" (T: 404).

During the ball, which is meant to remind everybody of the glorious old days, the positions are reversed even further, adding another lawyer of irony to this re-enacting of the glorious past of seemingly untroubled colonial rule. Edward's teenage-daughter Charity, who has had too much to drink, loses her balance on the dance-floor and falls, "bringing her partner sprawling on top of her" (T: 349). Everybody falls abruptly silent at the sight of Charity losing control over her body. It becomes apparent that, once again, the positions of power have changed, when the maid who states that Charity is drunk opens the floor to elements of Gaelic that resound in the silence: "'The poor thing is *stōshus*!' cried one of the maids in the sudden silence" (T: 349). Once the linguistic predominance of English has been breached in the colonial setting of the hotel, Murphy, too, changes from English to Gaelic. After the Anglo-Irish have left for good, he prepares to burn down the hotel and his last exclamation in English is '[d]ead', after which he sings a song he learnt "as a young man in Wicklow Town" (T: 439). With the Anglo-Irish gone the power positions within the hotel shift once more and Gaelic becomes the resounding language; Murphy's last English word can be read as an explicit reference to the end of Anglo-Irish presence in Kilnalough.

Outside the hotel the Anglo-Irish characters' claim of colonial authority is contested in a provocative way when some of them venture into Kilnalough "to have a drink and show the flag" (T: 85), i.e. to demonstrate Anglo-Irish colonial superiority by symbolically displaying the flag as the alleged justification of their colonial presence in Ireland. They head for Byrne's pub, where nobody "would think of going […] unless for the purpose of harassing the natives […]" (T: 86), their objective thus being clearly to (re-)claim superiority and disturb the local people in an unpleasant manner, thereby re-imposing colonial superiority on them. Although the party from the Majestic assumes the right to do this, they still feel frightened about actually going through with it, which can be read as uncertainty about the position they claim and a reference to the ambivalence of the claim of colonial presence, which has to be maintained by repetition, as suggested by Bhabha. When they enter the pub, the Irish patrons stop talking and watch them sit down. In this situation, the group from the Majestic is faced with the silence of the locals and expects them to "start talking again, in respectful undertones, of course" (T: 87), thus assuming the right to dominate their voices. Instead they start laughing. The expected mode of communication is thereby confronted with a competing mode. Due to their intimidation, the Anglo-Irish characters also change their mode of communication in a bid to regain their authority and resort to singing the national anthem, another powerful symbol of the Empire. The singing of the anthem, again, can be read in two ways. On the one hand it demonstrates loyalty to the Empire: the Anglo-Irish not only display this loyalty, they also offer the Irish the chance to prove their own loyalty by joining in and, thus, to accept colonial rule as legitimate, a practice which the imperial forces actually employed to intimidate the Irish population (Markey 2014: 92). The anthem, however, does not only function as a symbol of acceptance of British colonial superiority but also of its rejection, if the Irish do not join in. As, according to Lévi-Strauss

(quoted in Porter 2005: 322), singing can be interpreted as a type of mask and a less direct form of communication, singing the anthem may indicate that the Anglo-Irish feel insecure and intimidated. It can therefore be read as mirroring the repeated claim for imperial authority as well as its ambivalent character which – when in doubt – has to be maintained and strengthened by repetition.

When the Irish characters joyfully greet the singing with "a great rolling storm of applause, laughter, of clapping and crying and cheering" (T: 88), Edward, helpless as he is, rises to launch "once more into the National Anthem, singing the same verse as before" (T: 88) and the Irish join in. The repetition of the same verse can be interpreted as stubbornly clinging on to a position of power without being able to provide further justification and also as a further attempt at strengthening colonial authority by quite literally repeating the claim for it. The Irish, in response, fully reverse the control of the situation when one of them begins to pose as a conductor. Eventually, the Anglo-Irish leave the pub humiliated, wondering if the Irish were making fun of them, as they feel that they failed in their mission which can be read as having been exposed to two strategies of resistance: the laughter following the silence and the exaggerated imitation of their singing to the point of taking over and reducing the demonstration of colonial superiority to ridicule.

7 Conclusion

In Farrell's portrayal of Ireland from 1919 to 1921, the workings of colonial discourse can be observed on different levels. They are often interspersed with contesting elements and subjected to subversion, which opens the text to ambivalences that, far more often than not, undermine colonial discourse in *Troubles* in a complex and intriguing way.

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