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“[I]t wasn’t just a story but it was also, like, you know, ..I was leaving things open for a lot of interpretation. I was trying out a lot of stuff that I’d only heard about, maybe when I was half asleep in an English class somewhere.”

opmiehtcta

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– Sean Daley (Slug)

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James Joyce’s Minnesotians

Dubliners’ Themes and Techniques Reappearing in American Rap

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BA Thesis English Language and Culture, Utrecht University

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June 2017

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Abstract

This study endeavors to understand thematic and stylistic elements of rap lyrics by Slug of Atmosphere as resembling thematic and stylistic elements of James Joyce's *Dubliners*. Although limited in scope and depth, the analysis presents clear similarities between various stories and two of Atmosphere's songs, i.e. "The Waitress" and "Not Another Day."

Introduction

Since its publication in 1914, James Joyce's *Dubliners* has come to be considered a pivotal collection in the history of modern short stories. Its style and themes are remarkable due to a seemingly contradictory direct simplicity and inexhaustible depth. Although Joyce is still considered relevant to literary traditions of this day, less is known about the connection between Joyce and non-literary forms of art, that is, popular art. Vincent Cheng has taken some preliminary steps in this field, trying to show that both consciously and unconsciously Joyce is being appropriated in contemporary popular media. The conscious image of Joyce in popular culture is largely negative and focuses on his alleged weirdness (Cheng, 181). However, Cheng also makes an effort to show that Joyce's style is being used without conscious recognition. He provides examples ranging from TV-advertisements to "an episode of the critically acclaimed [...] *Thirtysomething*, shown on prime-time network television" (186). This construct consists mainly of Joycean stylistic devices that are considered to be extremely effective in conveying a message without relaying it literally. Furthermore, Cheng also discusses Joycean themes present in popular music, for example using Kate Bush's song "The Sensual World" to exemplify how Molly Bloom's monologue from *Ulysses* is covertly appropriated (187). These examples, among others, lead Cheng to believe that there exists a markedly Joycean cultural construct that is at play in popular culture, in a largely unconscious manner (182).

Since rap lyrics are not traditionally known for having great narratives, a comparison

between Joyce and any rapper, as two writers, might be unexpected. However, since its origin, rap music has also “developed a complex expressive range, driven by narratives” (*Anthology*, xxxi). The first steps in studying lyrics have culminated in a 2010 anthology. This anthology approaches “rap as a body of lyrics that responds to transcription, explication and analysis” (xxx). When stories in rap lyrics are approached as such, they can be analyzed and compared to Joyce or any other author.

One artist that is highly suitable for such a comparison is Slug, born as Sean Daley, the lyricist of the hip-hop duo Atmosphere, the other half being DJ/producer Ant. Similarities between him and Joyce can already be found in their biographies. Both artists are committed to making art that explicitly rejects embellishing the reality it represents. Joyce writes “in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard” (Letter to Richards, 5 May 1906). Similarly, Slug raps in an autobiographical song “the first rule is to keep the verse true/ Even if it hurts you/ You gotta wear the pain like a stain/ Respect the listener, respect the game/ Because there’s more to game than some dinner and fame” (“Give Me,” line 14-17). He is convinced that pain is a part of life that should be incorporated and that his art-discipline (i.e. “the game”) consists of more than wealth and success. Moreover, both artists work within a genre where their methods and subject matter is unexpected. Joyce first published his stories in *The Irish Homestead*. This magazine’s main goal was to advertise Ireland in a time of great emigration. It presented propaganda which stands in fundamental contrast with what Joyce wanted to present through his writing (Leonard, 94-95). Hip-hop culture, as we will see, has traditionally a very expressive nature (*Anthology*, xxxiv) and therefore seems an unlikely place for introspective and modest style and content that is characteristic of Atmosphere.

To investigate the extent to which these two writers write similarly, the lyrics of two

Atmosphere songs will be analyzed on their resemblance to stories in Joyce's *Dubliners*. The similarities will revolve around i) themes and subject matter, that is, working class people caught in mundane tragedies (e.g. alcoholism, (domestic) violence, petty criminality or unfulfilled dreams), ii) the use of free indirect speech to conflate subject and narrator, iii) the slow and limited release of information during the narrative. Whereas the first similarity pertains to the content of the texts, the latter two discuss the form in which this content is relayed. The rap lyrics will be approached as prose texts and therefore denoted as *text*, *lyrics* or *writing*. As preliminary steps, we will first look at the typical traits of rap lyrics and how the concept of narrative is operationalized in that context. Secondly, particular themes and stylistic devices from *Dubliners* will be presented as the analytical tools the comparison will be made with. Thirdly, lyrics of two songs by Atmosphere will be analyzed and finally, the conclusion will be presented. This study is limited in scope and depth. It is unable to examine the entirety of the remarkable style of *Dubliners*, not to mention other works by Joyce. It also cannot discuss the complete depth and reach of Slug's lyrics. However, it does provide an opportunity to advance our knowledge of the appropriation of Joyce in popular culture. Furthermore, it aims to spark further academic interest in hip-hop culture as being connected to other traditions than African American traditions.

Chapter 1

Narratives in hip-hop music

Academic interest in hip-hop culture has been growing the past two decades. Various universities, especially in The United States, offer courses and programs covering different aspects of hip-hop culture. One key aspect of hip-hop culture is its lyrical manifestation, i.e. rap. A general understanding of rap-lyrics begins with the fact that "MCs, hip-hop's masters of ceremonies, are its literary artists. They are poets and rap is the poetry of hip-hop culture"

(*Anthology*, xxix). The first major trait of rap lyrics is that they tend to be confrontational due to the expressive and competitive nature of hip-hop culture in general (Kautny, 102). Dissing is shown both in direct competition, as in battle raps, but also in an attempt to outdo an unspecified other. “The young hope to confound the old; the poor, the rich; the black, the white; the people from one part of town want to distinguish themselves from the people in another” (xxxvi). A second, related major element of rap lyrics is braggadocio. Lyricists aim to identify themselves positively by listing their artistic skills, economic wealth, extravagant lifestyles or sexual conquest. Thirdly, it is important to recognize that rap lyrics contain profanity. This profanity does not impede the lyrical worth of these lyrics; it is merely the most appropriate mode of relating its affrontal quality. “The fact that rap’s rhymed expression is often blunt and confrontational, aggressive and offensive, makes profanity a necessary, even defining, element of its art” (xxxviii). Thematically, rap lyrics are characterized by “violence, misogyny, sexism, and homophobia” as well as wealth and extravagance (xxxviii). In short, these themes, the profanity, the bragging and dissing are all characteristic of the majority of rap-lyrics.

However, in order to express their identity new artists continually aim to differentiate themselves from what already exists. One of the alternative elements that has gained prominence is the narrative element. Storytelling has come to replace bragging and boasting as the centerpiece for many songs.

It is important to note here what is understood by *narrative*. The term narrative can be seen as a complex of characteristics, none of which is a sufficient or necessary criterion to call any given text a narrative on its own. However, “prototypical instances of narrative” (Herman, 9) show a sequence of events ordered in time, at least one of which has a causal relationship with an impression or action in the mental or physical world of a character experiencing those events (9).

One of the earliest famous examples of a narrative rap song is “Stan” by Eminem.¹ This song features a fictional character, Stan, who addresses his idol, Eminem, in letters. The first two verses showcase much of the themes and profanity typical of hip-hop, as they portray Stan as a zealous fan. However, as the song progresses it becomes clear that Stan is mentally unstable and very dependent upon his imagined relationship to Eminem.

I can relate to what you're saying in your songs
so when I have a shitty day, I drift away and put 'em on
cause I don't really got shit else so that shit helps when I'm depressed
I even got a tattoo of your name across the chest
Sometimes I even cut myself to see how much it bleeds. (line 41-45)

The third verse relates the story of Stan driving his car off a bridge with his pregnant girlfriend in the trunk. He kills himself because Eminem has not responded to his letters in half a year (line 56). Finally, in the fourth verse Eminem is writing a letter to Stan thanking him for his support and coaxing him to get psychological help (line 89). By the end of this verse Eminem remembers hearing about Stan’s suicide on the news and realizes his advice is too late. In this song, two admittedly grim narratives are presented. On the one hand there is the one-sided correspondence (i.e. the event) leading to Stan’s death (i.e. the action). On the other hand is Stan’s death (i.e. the event) belatedly stopping Eminem in finally writing back (i.e. the action). The example of “Stan” clearly presents all the traits of the narrative, resulting in two clear plotlines.

In his narrative songs, Slug’s lyrics tend to showcase some stylistic devices that are reminiscent of James Joyce’s style found in *Dubliners*, as well as thematic similarities. Due to the limited scope of this study, only two songs can be used for the analysis. The choice is based on the resemblance to particular *Dubliners* themes and stylistic devices.

¹ Full lyrics in appendix.

“The Waitress” is the penultimate song of the incredibly narrative-oriented album *When Life Gives You Lemons, You Paint That Shit Gold*. It is about a homeless man who is a regular visitor at the restaurant where his daughter works. The song’s protagonist talks about himself and the waitress, without disclosing it is his daughter until the very last line. The song “Not Another Day” is off of another 2008 release *Sad Clown Bad Spring 12*. It features three different protagonists. Their stories, however short, present a glimpse into their habits and working class lifestyles. These two songs showcase thematic and stylistic similarities with various stories in *Dubliners*. In an attempt to present a most general comparison, the analysis uses multiple stories from *Dubliners*, none of them exclusively usable for this analysis. Similarly to the choosing of the songs, these examples are chosen to give the comparison a striking quality.

Dubliners and the dublinesque

What follows is a presentation of some defining traits of *Dubliners*. Since we are unable to cover them all with sufficient attention, only those used in the analysis of Slug’s lyrics will be presented here.

Dubliners deals with many subjects and themes that revolve around working class lifestyles. The characters struggle with their work, their relationships (romantic and otherwise), and their self-image. These themes interact with each other differently in each story. In each story the interacting themes also bring about a sense of paralysis. This overarching theme manifests itself differently in each story, most often as a struggle with the desire to change something in their lives (e.g. their circumstances or themselves). Sometimes characters do not even grasp their own desire fully, as we see when Eveline cannot decide if she wants to stay in Dublin or leave it forever (*Dubliners*, 29-30). In other stories the desire to achieve a goal is clear and overwhelming, like in “Araby,” but is still not achieved because of forces beyond the boy’s control (24-25). These two examples show paralyzed characters

because of the interplay between their desire for change and their family or identity. Thematic representations of internal external forces result in paralysis throughout *Dubliners*.

A second important quality of *Dubliners* is the use of free indirect speech. Free indirect speech is a narratological mode consisting of a narrative voice that presents itself as an objective and therefore authorial voice, but mimics the language use of the character (Leonard, 96; Attridge, 5). The result of this conflation is twofold. On the one hand, the character's mental world is transparent, seemingly without an authorial voice intervening. On the other hand, there is also no authorial voice commenting on the character's perspective. The reader is not able to discern whether the character is trustworthy in their account of the situation (Leonard, 96). In *Dubliners* Joyce employs free indirect speech in frequent alternation with descriptive narrator's text. The following excerpt from "Counterparts" relays the mental world of the protagonist Farrington:

He felt strong enough to clear out the whole office singlehanded. His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence. All the indignities of his life enraged him...Could he ask the cashier privately for an advance? No, the cashier was no good, no damn good: he wouldn't give an advance...He knew where he would meet the boys: Leonard and O'Halloran and Nosey Flynn. The barometer of his emotional nature was set for a spell of riot.

(*Dubliners*, 77)

The first three sentences show no formal contrast of narrative voice: both present the protagonist in the second person. However, the words we encounter seem to hint at a difference in narrators. The first sentence is a simple boast about Farrington's strength, but the second sentence relates much of the same message in literary vocabulary. To revel in violence, or to be enraged by the indignities of one's life are not typical speech or thoughts for Farrington. To pass verdict on the cashier based on what Farrington could get from him is

more in line with what the rest of the story has told us about him. Moreover, the next three sentences not only uses Farrington's vocabulary, but also mimics the way in which thoughts are formed, with literal repetition of words and pauses indicated by ellipses. The last sentence, again without any formal change of narrative voice, returns to poetically descriptive narrator text.

A third and final trait that is discussed here is the characteristic lack of information we encounter in *Dubliners*. In every story, ellipses are abundant and much of what is not written plays an important role in Joyce's stories. This "sparse verbal terrain" (Attridge, 7) is a result of combining the realistic presentation of a mind and the construction of a narrative with a recognizable plot. The characters know what they know, and not naturally reiterate pieces of information that might be essential for the reader to understand the plot. Using this style the author has the power to keep the reader in the dark. Through "the slow release of information, [...] hints and presuppositions that we are invited to elaborate on," (4) the reader comes to fulfill an active role in the construction of the plot.

The following chapter will showcase how Slug, in a different era and country, writes about topics and themes comparable to those in *Dubliners*, and with it, employs Joycean stylistic devices we have discussed here.

Chapter 2

The Waitress²

The first song to be analyzed is "The Waitress." It is about a homeless man frequenting a diner where his daughter is a waitress. We read about their relationship only as the relationship between a bum and a waitress, and are unaware of their true connection until the last line of the song. The lyrics are written from the perspective of the man. He talks about

² Full lyrics in the appendix.

how he visits her every day, about his poverty and about the fact that he only gets to visit if he buys something to eat (line 5). The majority of the lyrics might be addressed to her, but since there is no reply, this might also be simply in his head. Although there is a clear sense of antagonism, he also talks about how important she is to him. The contrast between these two elements creates a tension that is only resolved in the last line when we read that he is her father and that the deteriorated status of their relationship is his fault, which explains both elements and why they are combined in this way.

Themes

The most heavily featured themes in this text are relationships between unequals, and ultimately, about fathers and daughters. The fact that this latter relationship is only revealed in the last line facilitates the discussion of the former. We first encounter a first person narrator admiring “that waitress” (line 1), where the definite pronoun *that*, in contrast to the indefinite *a*, indicates some familiarity between them. We then learn of their inequality. Since he is homeless and a vagrant, she does not treat him as a proper customer (line 2, 7). Although the protagonist asks for her sympathy throughout the lyrics (line 12, 19, 20), he also challenges her and in this way contributes to the antagonism. He claims she has a negative self-image and is prone to addiction because of it (line 13 to 18). In the interlude and second verse it becomes clear that the man sees the waitress as the only reason for staying alive. Ultimately, he characterizes himself as “a thorn in her hip” (line 37). When we find out about their true connection, we also learn that the relationship is beyond repair (line 23, 24, 43, 44). The relationship is characterized both by the combination of intimacy and antagonism and their social inequality.

Unequal relationships are abundant in *Dubliners*, perhaps most central in “A Little Cloud.” Here too we encounter both the intimacy of a longstanding relationship and the antagonism due to perceived inequality. Little Chandler holds Gallaher in reverence

throughout the opening paragraphs. However, as the night progresses, and Little Chandler becomes aware of his friends patronizing attitude (*Dubliners*, 67), the antagonism between the two friends is sparked. It reaches a modest climax when Little Chandler, with atypical conviction, states that even Gallaher will settle down eventually. “Some day you will, said Little Chandler calmly. [...] You’ll put your head in the sack, repeated Little Chandler stoutly, like everyone else if you can find the girl” (68). With this remark, Little Chandler becomes a thorn in Gallaher’s hip, as can be seen by the vehement reaction it invokes.

- Why, man alive, said Ignatius Gallaher, vehemently, [...] There are hundreds – what am I saying? – thousands of rich Germans and Jews, rotten with money, that’d only be too glad... You wait a while my boy. See if I don’t play my cards properly. When I go about a thing I mean business, I tell you. You just wait.

He tossed his glass to his mouth, finished his drink and laughed loudly. Then he looked thoughtfully before him and said in a calmer tone:

- But I’m in no hurry. They can wait. (68-69)

Gallaher heated words are atypical compared to the offhanded degrading of Dublinesque rurality that is showcased in the last line of this excerpt and throughout the story. For a moment, Little Chandler is the calm established man and Gallaher needs to prove himself: a very brief reversal of the inequality that characterizes their relationship.

Noticeably, the procession from intimacy to antagonism of the relationships is reversed in the texts. “A Little Cloud” starts at the height of intimacy between the two characters, and the friendship deteriorates through the course of the story, ending in the confrontation described above. In “The Waitress” the antagonism is highest at the start of the lyrics, and the intimate nature of their relationship is only fully discovered in the last line.

A final similarity lies in the fact that both protagonists eventually exhibit paralysis.

The bum of Slug's lyrics summarizes his situation with the words "So there it is and I have to live with it/ I had the chance to make a difference, but I didn't [...] damn, I should've been a better father to my daughter" ("The Waitress," line 45-48). Similarly, Little Chandler's behavior reinstates the dominant inequality introduced in the first nine paragraphs. He once again reveres Gallaher and legitimizes his own inactive state: "Was it too late for him to try to live bravely like Gallaher? [...] There was the furniture still to be paid for. If he could only write a book and get it published, that might open the way for him" (*Dubliners*, 70). The importance of relationship for the notion of the self is evident in both texts. Both the man and Little Chandler show their paralyzed selves most significantly by facilitating the other (i.e. the waitress and Gallaher respectively) as being distanced from them.

Form

One of the most striking stylistic devices in this song is the slow and limited release of information. Slug keeps the reader in the dark about the intentions of the bum, and his relationship to the waitress. To him, the waitress is his favorite person in the city ("The Waitress, line 1), and "the only woman in my world that acknowledges my existence" (line 42), but his actions are antagonistic. This puzzling contradiction perseveres through the song by virtue of a lack of information. In this way the gaps play a major role in the reading of the lyrics. A similar effect can be seen in "The Sisters." The relationship between the boy and the Father Flynn is mainly defined through the many ellipses in the conversations and blurry dream-visions. We learn that they were "great friends" (*Dubliners*, 2), but Joyce hints at sinful elements relationships (e.g. "it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region" (3)). The boy's attitude is contradictorily described as fearful and fascinated with death (1); thankful for Father Flynn's tutelage but liberated by his death (4). It is possible that Joyce gives no more information than that the boy thinks he should allow himself to think. Or, what we read is all the boy was ever able to understand about Father

Flynn and their relationship. The relationship remains undetermined by either characters or the narrator, and the interpretation of the gaps by the reader are decisive to the meaning of the story.

Of course, Slug ultimately discloses the true nature of the relationship and with it, decides much of the meaning of the text. However, the reading experience up to that point is similarly full of gaps as to what is going on. As a result of presenting characters that have no need to verbalize things they already know, the texts present such “sparse verbal terrain” (7) that the reader is needed complete one possible interpretation of the narrative.

Not Another Day³

The second song under investigation is “Not Another Day.” This song presents three narratives in three verses. The first is about a mother on her way to work. She tries to provide for her child but is pressed for time. She has already been late twice to work, and will be fired if she is late again. There are no indications of her enjoying her work-life or her private one. Her only goal seems to be to provide for her baby. Coffee and music are the two means by which she is able to continue a life that consists of “live to work to live to work to live” (“Day,” line 11). The second verse introduces a boy in school who is being bullied regularly. Although he has come to terms with his loneliness and victimhood, he still hopes that *this* day will be unlike the others, but we’re told this is not to be (line 36). The third story is about a paranoid vagrant. His life consists of panhandling to survive and roaming from one city to the next. Due to his psychological weakness he seems to have almost no autonomy.

Theme

The first verse focusses on the hardship of a woman who is struggling with two competing interests, i.e. caring for her child and retaining her job. She has to go to work incredibly early, and has to bring her child to a daycare. She works overtime, which means more money to

³ Full lyrics in the appendix.

provide for, but also more time away from her child. In *Dubliners*, the thematic combination of career and motherhood can be seen in Mrs Mooney. Mrs Mooney has no trouble with running the boarding house, and the story ends with taking care of Polly's future by finding her a husband. However, there is tension between Mrs Mooney's job and her being a mother. Since Polly has grown up in the boarding house, populated by residents that "shared in common tastes and occupations" (*Dubliners*, 51), she has become "a little vulgar" (55). This makes it harder for Mrs Mooney to find a husband for her. In fact, she was on the verge of "sending Polly back to typewriting" (52) because none of the residents were making serious advances. Mr Doran's reluctance to marry Polly further accentuates her ineligibility. Mrs Mooney has to plot a scheme to both run a boarding house and marrying of her daughter, two interests competing with each other.

The second verse features a young male protagonist. As a result of him being bullied repeatedly, he contemplates shooting his bullies "like them kids on the news did" ("Day," line 27). A thematic manifestation of violence as a vent for mental pain in *Dubliners* is seen in Farrington in "Counterparts." Already during his first confrontation of the day, Farrington experiences "[a] spasm of rage" (*Dubliners*, 74). After being humiliated again and again throughout the day and night, he manhandles his son for letting the fire out (84). Although the boy in "Not Another Day" quickly resigns his violent plans in contrast with Farrington, both instances of violence are caused by the same repeated humiliation they endure. Another theme in the second verse that is recognizable from *Dubliners* is the feeling of loneliness the boy experiences. We readily read that he has no social contact in school ("Day," line 22-23). The only interaction with others is the bullying. Neither interaction nor lack of it is portrayed as positive. In *Dubliners*, "A Painful Case" shows great ambivalence to social contact. Both his enjoyment of the solitary life ("he wished to live as far as possible from the city" (*Dubliners*, 92)) and his enjoyment of the relationship ("this union exalted him, [...] emotionalised his

mental life” (96)) seem to have real mental weight. This tension propels the plot forward. First, the relationship breaks down because Mrs Sinico wants a more intimate relationship. Before and directly after her suicide, Mr Duffy shows no signs of missing her, indicative of his love for the solitary life. However, after first denouncing her for her suicide, Mr Duffy later begins “to feel ill at ease” (101). The relationship with Mrs Sinico causes him to feel partially responsible for her fate. With her death, her absence takes on a new power over him, causing him to feel alone. The final word of the story, “alone,” embodies the ambivalence as the reader is left to interpret it as either *lonely* or simply *without others*. Neither solitude nor company is given a straightforward positive characterization in “A Painful Case” and the second verse of “Not Another Day.”

The third verse, about a paranoid vagrant, seems to be more about the world external to him than about himself. This verse showcases identity as a theme, but uses a different approach: it defines the identity of the vagrant through the description of his surroundings and circumstances. It is the noise of the bus that wakes him up (“Day,” line 41-42), the unpromising city that makes him sleep near the bus station in the first place (line 46), and the winter that makes him leave yet another town (line 49). The theme of identity as defined by external forces can also be seen in the presentation of Jimmy Doyle in “After The Race.” As an addendum to the group of truly influential young men, Jimmy gets carried away, mentally and physically. Jimmy’s influence is stomped by Séguin, when the party discusses politics (*Dubliners*, 35) and the card game is not only beyond Jimmy’s influence but also beyond his comprehension (36). Both Jimmy and the vagrant are ultimately dependent upon the external world. These characters can only ever reach “*transient* freedom,” (my emphasis, line 47) through circumstances beyond their control and are characterized without any real autonomy.

Although each of the verses/stories has its own particular themes pertaining to particular struggles of an unglamorous lifestyle, the overarching theme that takes the separate

verses and forms one homogenous whole is the theme of stuckness, i.e. paralysis. The repetition of their struggles is the major theme they all share. It is manifested in the chorus as a cry for “not another day of the same old song” (“Day” line 19).

Form

The similarities in themes are further strengthened by the similarities of style. Most notably in this song, the narrative voice used in the song is comparable to that used in *Dubliners*. Free indirect speech is frequently alternated with narrator text. We will discuss the most exemplary instances. In the first verse idiomatic vocabulary is used to establish free indirect speech in line 1 and 8. *Catching the bus* in line 1 alludes more to the subjective experience of being just in time for the bus. Similarly, it is far more likely that the character thanks God that the day-care is close to the bus stop than the narrator in line 8. Line 4, 5 and 14 exemplify what Leonard relayed as his experience of reading *Dubliners*: “I was [...] puzzled that a writer I had been told was a master of the English language had to use the word ‘that’ three times in this strangely uncommunicative sentence” (Leonard, 87). In line 4, 5 and 14 the words “that” and “she” appear twice and the second reiterations might scarcely be said to carry much communicative value. Such literal repetition “would be clumsy writing in novelistic prose but a natural repetition in thought or speech” (my emphasis, Attridge, 6). The repetition and use of idioms as used here are exemplary of free indirect speech and help the reader to empathize with the character by accessing her mental world.

Verse 2 features exemplary instances of free indirect speech in lines 23, 27, 28, and 33. Line 23 and 33 consist of questions often posed to oneself mimicking a judgement imagined to be given by an outsider (“If he disappeared would they even see the blank spot?” (line 23) and “What doesn’t break you just makes you stronger right?” (“Day,” line 33)). Joyce also uses these questions to show the mental world of a character. For example, Lenehan doubts his own choices in life after imagining a more comfortable lifestyle: “Would he

never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own?" (*Dubliners*, 46). Line 28 and 29 show a contrast in judgement through a contrast in narrative voice. The first is from the perspective of the boy being about the hypothetical situation of the boy shooting up his school, and the second from the perspective of the narrator about the nature of the boy. Noticeably, both judgements ultimately describe the same situation. The use of free indirect speech in lines 30 to 33 also result in questions about the reliability of the narrative voice. Is the boy just used to the life of a bully victim as stated in line 30 and 31, or does he have some sort of moral high ground due to which he transcends the bullies as we read in line 32 and 33? If we assume to discern an external narrator in the line 30 and 31 and a subjective narrator in line 32 and 33, we might say that the boy needs more justification for his inaction than the narrator.

The third verse noticeably shows very little use of free indirect speech. The only subjectivity we find within the narrator text is in the first line, where the more common expression 'crack of dawn' is replaced with "taste of dawn" ("Day," line 39), implying that someone is doing the tasting. However, the lack of free indirect speech in this verse is as meaningful as its appearance in the first two verses. The narrator's inability to present thoughts, to partake in his view of the world might be caused by the character's inability to construct fully-fledged thoughts.

Both thematically and stylistically the lyrics of "Not Another Day" show great similarities to various stories in *Dubliners*. Like those in *Dubliners*, each of these characters has their own personal challenges in life, but share the paralysis and developmental void which gives the overall song its Joycean quality. Stylistically, both texts make great use of free indirect speech which results in elaborate and precise representations of mind states and characters and a subtle conflation of objectivity and subjectivity in the narrative voice.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the connection between James Joyce's *Dubliners* and the lyrics of two Atmosphere songs, written by the lyricist Slug. Stylistically, the results show clear similarities in the use of free indirect speech and the supply of limited information.

Thematically, a clear use of paralysis as an overarching theme is found in "Not Another Day." "The Waitress" is comparable to "The Sisters" in its treatment of relationships as containing both antagonism and intimacy. However, as this study provides only two instances of Atmosphere's music and uses Joyce in a sample-like fashion, the results are unsuitable for generalization. Therefore a more comprehensive study should continue this approach to rap lyrics, to complete the analysis of the similarities between Joyce and Slug. Fruitful academic endeavors can also be accomplished beyond these two writers, as connections between "the game" and literary history still represents an underdeveloped field of research.

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Appendix⁴

Eminem - Stan

The Marshall Mathers LP (2000)

Adapted from: <http://ohhla.com/anonymous/eminem/marshall/stan.mnm.txt>

Chorus

- 1 My tea's gone cold I'm wondering why I..
- 2 got out of bed at all
- 3 The morning rain clouds up my window..
- 4 and I can't see at all
- 5 And even if I could it'll all be gray,
- 6 but your picture on my wall
- 7 It reminds me, that it's not so bad,
- 8 it's not so bad..

Verse 1 (Eminem as Stan)

- 9 Dear Slim, I wrote but you still ain't callin
- 10 I left my cell, my pager, and my home phone at the bottom
- 11 I sent two letters back in autumn, you must not-a got 'em
- 12 There probably was a problem at the post office or somethin
- 13 Sometimes I scribble addresses too sloppy when I jot 'em
- 14 but anyways; fuck it, what's been up? Man how's your daughter?
- 15 My girlfriend's pregnant too, I'm bout to be a father
- 16 If I have a daughter, guess what I'ma call her?
- 17 I'ma name her Bonnie
- 18 I read about your Uncle Ronnie too I'm sorry

⁴ The transcription of the lyrics is facilitated by www.ohhla.com. Since typos and small errors are abundant, I have made additions and corrections where warranted.

19 I had a friend kill himself over some bitch who didn't want him
20 I know you probably hear this every day, but I'm your biggest fan
21 I even got the underground shit that you did with Skam
22 I got a room full of your posters and your pictures man
23 I like the shit you did with Rawkus too, that shit was fat
24 Anyways, I hope you get this man, hit me back,
25 just to chat, truly yours, your biggest fan
26 This is Stan

[Chorus]

Verse 2 (Eminem as Stan)

27 Dear Slim, you still ain't called or wrote, I hope you have a chance
28 I ain't mad - I just think it's FUCKED UP you don't answer fans
29 If you didn't wanna talk to me outside your concert
30 you didn't have to, but you coulda signed an autograph for Matthew
31 That's my little brother man, he's only six years old
32 We waited in the blistering cold for you,
33 for four hours and you just said, "No."
34 That's pretty shitty man - you're like his fuckin idol
35 He wants to be just like you man, he likes you more than I do
36 I ain't that mad though, I just don't like bein lied to
37 Remember when we met in Denver - you said if I'd write you
38 you would write back - see I'm just like you in a way
39 I never knew my father neither;
40 he used to always cheat on my mom and beat her
41 I can relate to what you're saying in your songs

42 so when I have a shitty day, I drift away and put 'em on
43 cause I don't really got shit else so that shit helps when I'm depressed
44 I even got a tattoo of your name across the chest
45 Sometimes I even cut myself to see how much it bleeds
46 It's like adrenaline, the pain is such a sudden rush for me
47 See everything you say is real, and I respect you cause you tell it
48 My girlfriend's jealous cause I talk about you 24/7
49 But she don't know you like I know you Slim, no one does
50 She don't know what it was like for people like us growin up
51 You gotta call me man, I'll be the biggest fan you'll ever lose
52 Sincerely yours, Stan -- P.S.
53 We should be together too

[Chorus]

Verse 3 (Eminem as Stan)

54 Dear Mister-I'm-Too-Good-To-Call-Or-Write-My-Fans,
55 this'll be the last package I ever send your ass
56 It's been six months and still no word - I don't deserve it?
57 I know you got my last two letters;
58 I wrote the addresses on 'em perfect
59 So this is my cassette I'm sending you, I hope you hear it
60 I'm in the car right now, I'm doing 90 on the freeway
61 Hey Slim, I drank a fifth of vodka, you dare me to drive?
62 You know the song by Phil Collins, "In the Air of the Night"
63 about that guy who coulda saved that other guy from drowning
64 but didn't, then Phil saw it all, then at a a show he found him?

65 That's kinda how this is, you coulda rescued me from drowning
66 Now it's too late - I'm on a 1000 downers now, I'm drowsy
67 and all I wanted was a lousy letter or a call
68 I hope you know I ripped +ALL+ of your pictures off the wall
69 I love you Slim, we coulda been together, think about it
70 You ruined it now, I hope you can't sleep and you dream about it
71 And when you dream I hope you can't sleep and you SCREAM about it
72 I hope your conscience EATS AT YOU and you can't BREATHE without me
73 See Slim; { * muffled screaming* } Shut up bitch! I'm tryin to talk!
74 Hey Slim, that's my girlfriend screamin in the trunk
75 but I didn't slit her throat, I just tied her up, see I ain't like you
76 cause if she suffocates she'll suffer more, and then she'll die too
77 Well, gotta go, I'm almost at the bridge now
78 Oh shit, I forgot, how'm I supposed to send this shit out?

{*car tires squeal*} { *CRASH* }

{*brief silence*} .. { *LOUD splash* }

[Chorus]

Verse 4

79 Dear Stan, I meant to write you sooner but I just been busy
80 You said your girlfriend's pregnant now, how far along is she?
81 Look, I'm really flattered you would call your daughter that
82 and here's an autograph for your brother,
83 I wrote it on the Starter cap

84 I'm sorry I didn't see you at the show, I musta missed you
85 Don't think I did that shit intentionally just to diss you
86 But what's this shit you said about you like to cut your wrists too?
87 I say that shit just clownin dogg,
88 c'mon - how fucked up is you?
89 You got some issues Stan, I think you need some counseling
90 to help your ass from bouncing off the walls when you get down some
91 And what's this shit about us meant to be together?
92 That type of shit'll make me not want us to meet each other
93 I really think you and your girlfriend need each other
94 or maybe you just need to treat her better
95 I hope you get to read this letter, I just hope it reaches you in time
96 before you hurt yourself, I think that you'll be doin just fine
97 if you relax a little, I'm glad I inspire you but Stan
98 why are you so mad? Try to understand, that I do want you as a fan
99 I just don't want you to do some crazy shit
100I seen this one shit on the news a couple weeks ago that made me sick
101Some dude was drunk and drove his car over a bridge
102and had his girlfriend in the trunk, and she was pregnant with his kid
103and in the car they found a tape, but they didn't say who it was to
104Come to think about, his name was.. it was you
105Damn!

Atmosphere - The Waitress

When Life Gives You Lemons, You Paint That Shit Gold (2008)

Adapted from source: <http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/atmos/whenlife/waitress.atm.txt>

Verse 1

- 1 A city full of people and my favorite is that waitress
- 2 And she treats me like some type of common vagrant
- 3 I see her every day, but there's nothing to say
- 4 Unless I decide to step inside of that cafe
- 5 I only get to sit if I buy something to eat
- 6 Otherwise it's best to keep my feet moving down that street
- 7 And god damn she's a hard bitch
- 8 Talks at me like I'm the bad dog that got into the garbage
- 9 Yeah I know that the toilet is for customers
- 10 You ain't got to tangle up the strings to make this puppet work
- 11 It doesn't have to be a game of patty cake
- 12 But it ain't like you don't know I sleep in that alleyway
- 13 And by the way, I can see it in your eyes
- 14 You're angry with your life, not a stranger to the fight
- 15 I bet you hate every man that you date
- 16 And you're probably addicted to all types of escape
- 17 You take it out on me that you're all alone
- 18 When you know you got your own closet full of hollow bones
- 19 Watch the tone when you speak to old folks

20 I'm grown, just trying to get out of this Minnesota cold

Interlude (Spoken)

21 Look lady, I'm homeless, I'm crazy

22 I'm so hopeless, I'm suicidal daily

23 If you and I can't co-exist, let's fake it

24 Cause I ain't got the energy it takes for this relationship

Verse 2

25 I'm waiting for a city bus to flatten me

26 And transport me to the ever after happily

27 Maybe reincarnated with luck

28 Come back to Earth as a cockroach in your tip cup

29 She said she's had it up to here

30 She's gonna call authorities if I don't disappear

31 I love her threats, it rejuvenates my breath

32 I give her stress for the reaction that it gets

33 I got a pocket full of panhandled money

34 On a cup of bad coffee and a stale honey bun

35 In front of everyone she calls me bum

36 But she notices my absence on them afternoons I don't come

37 So here I am, thorn in her hip

38 Holding down the corner table all morning with some corn chips

39 Ignoring the insults and evil eyes

40 I feed off of 'em, I wonder when she'll realize
41 That she's the only reason I visit
42 The only woman in my world that acknowledges my existence
43 And if my ship ever comes, I'll miss it
44 Because I'm getting old and I ain't got much left to give it
45 So there it is and I have to live with it
46 I had the chance to make a difference, but I didn't
47 In the cafe bathroom drinking free tap water
48 Thinking, damn, I should've been a better father to my daughter

Atmosphere - Not Another Day

Album: *Sad Clown Bad Spring 12* (2008)

Adapted from source: http://www.ohhla.com/anonymous/atmos/sc clown12/not_anot.atm.txt

Verse 1

- 1 Caught the bus at 5:06
- 2 That's in the AM for all you little trust fund kids
- 3 And it's a forty-five minute trip
- 4 If she ain't in by six, she'll catch another pink slip
- 5 And that's three and that means fired
- 6 The coffee thermos in the purse to help her keep wired
- 7 The day-care where she drops the baby off
- 8 Thank god it's on the same block as the bus stop
- 9 By 5:30, she's halfway there
- 10 And her back already hurts from the bus' plastic chair
- 11 Live to work to live to work to live
- 12 Gotta feed the kid and give it all she's got to give
- 13 Plus she tryna catch a little overtime
- 14 If she stays till four she could be home by five
- 15 Shuts her eyes for the rest of the route
- 16 And keeps her headphones loud to drown everything out
- 17 But the same old song...

Chorus

- 18 Whoa... whoa, not another day!
- 19 Not another day of the same old song

20 Whoa... whoa, not another day!

21 Not another day of the same old song

Verse 2

22 Seemed like nobody even knew his name, huh

23 If he disappeared would they even see the blank spot?

24 The only kids who might notice are the ones who

25 Push him up and down the hallways and in the lunchrooms

26 Sometimes he looks at his bruises and wants to come to school with

27 A gun like them kids on the news did

28 But nah man they don't deserve to die

29 He's the type that couldn't even murder a fly

30 I guess you get used to the life

31 Maybe that's why he refuses to cry

32 Takes it on the chin, takes it in stride

33 What doesn't break you just makes you stronger right?

34 So he sits by himself on the school bus

35 Hoping that today he wouldn't have to put his dupes up

36 But just like any other, here they come

37 To fuck with his comfort, can't wait for summer

38 It's the same old song...

[Chorus]

Verse 3

39 Woke up at the taste of dawn

40 When the city's bloodline starts to push it along

41 The generators on those public buses
42 Is enough to bust you out of any dream that you stuck in
43 I guess that's the chance you taking
44 When you camp out in front of that transfer station
45 And this town got no answers to chase
46 That's why he always sleeps near the transportation
47 Panhandling, transient freedom
48 Transplant, he ain't from this region
49 And when the wind starts to whisper its lips
50 He knows enough to pack it up and dip out before the winter hits
51 Childhood dreams washed down the gutter
52 Both parents gone, no sisters, no brothers
53 Weak memory, strong paranoia
54 While the same song repeats in his head
55 Over and over and over and over it goes...

[Chorus - twice]



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