

# Symbolism in James Joyce's Dubliners

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SYMBOLISM IN JAMES JOYCE'S *DUBLINERS*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis sets out to examine James Joyce's collection of short stories *Dubliners*. The introduction of the thesis focuses on the historical, social and literary context of Joyce's collection, as well as the environment he grew up in and how it ultimately reflected in his literary work. In the first few chapters, along with the introduction to Joyce's life and work, some interesting facts will be presented about the long-lasting publication and the reception of *Dubliners* in Ireland, but Joyce's reception as a writer as well.

Furthermore, it will attempt to show the influence of Realism and Modernism in *Dubliners*, as well as portray some common themes and modernist literary techniques used in *Dubliners*. Lastly, the concept of epiphany will be briefly explained, as it will be present throughout the analysis of the chosen stories in this thesis.

Then, the focus will shift towards the main premise of the thesis which is how Realism and Modernism influenced *Dubliners* and Joyce's usage of symbolism through analysis of five chosen stories. They are chosen in particular order so that each aspect of life in *Dubliners* has its representative, and also to be able to depict how the main theme "paralysis" progresses as the stages of life change. From being perceived as what one could say, naive and narrow "point of view" of a child, to an entrapment in the adolescent years; then the third stage displays that "entrapment" as a mere life circle of which some protagonists are not even aware of, and the final group that displays the paralysis that has taken over the entire public life.

The chosen stories are; "Araby", "Eveline", "A Painful Case", "A Mother", and "The Dead".

After the analysis of the stories, and before the very end, the thesis will aim to explain the importance of colours as symbols used in *Dubliners*.

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## Introduction

“Symbolism is based on the theory of symbols and sensorial correspondences; it cultivates more refined sensitivity and emotions; it creates the blank verse; it is characterized by inner musicality, by the musical perception of the world; it relies on the force of suggestion; it cultivates solitude, without enthusiasm (as romanticists do) but discreetly and silently; it cultivates mysticism and intimacy, neuroses and mystery; the preference for autumnal settings and landscapes (rainy, foggy, with ravens in the light); there comes the poetry of towns, either large or provincial fairs: sad, melancholic, annihilating, overwhelmed by spleen, there comes the conscience of the void and internal confusion, of moral isolation, of the artist’s damnation in society; it paves the way for groups and proper modernist trends.” (Mihut, 1976:87)

Symbolism is the first manifestation of modernism that has appeared as a poetical transgression from romanticism. (Pedersen 2015: 1) French poets devised a response to the movements such as Naturalism and Realism, whose main ideas were to primarily depict the speedily changing cityscapes and landscapes due to the urbanization in the nineteenth century. “Symbolism sought to dissolve boundaries in the aesthetic sphere: between consciousness and unconsciousness, imagination and reality, the physical world and what lies beyond.” (Facos 2018) Meaning that through symbolism, poets were able to reveal psychological truth and the fact that there is a spiritual reality, beyond our tangible world. “It imposes new rhetoric, whose essential principles are; ambiguity, irony, pure poetry, the suggestion, the discursive character, and more.” (Pedersen 2015:1)

Symbolism can be viewed as a literary movement and as a stylistic device. As a literary movement of French, Belgian and Russian origin; it emerged in late nineteenth-century from poetry to other arts. It originated in the rebellion of various French poets who went against the rigorous conventions that dictated every aspect in traditional French poetry. “They attempted to evoke the ineffable intuitions and sense impressions of man’s inner life and to communicate the underlying mystery of existence through free and highly personal use of metaphors and images.” (Britannica 2013) It is both an artistic and a literary movement through which artists manage to convey ideas through symbols and emphasize the meaning behind different forms, shapes, and colours.

“Everything is a symbol, every molecule contains the handwriting of the universe ... and art, the expression of all symbols, ought to be an idealized drama, summarizing and annulling the naturalistic representations whose deepest meanings are found in the soul of the poet.” (Facos 2018)

On the other hand, as a stylistic device, writers exploit it so they can, not only evoke curiosity and interest in one's work but also to devise a deeper, more complex level of meaning. As a philosopher A. Whitehead suggested in his work; "Symbolism is no mere idle fancy or corrupt degeneration; it is inherent in the very texture of human life. The Language itself is a symbolism." (Whitehead 1955) It is safe to say that this idea has indeed "permeated" into every field of art, in such a way that it has become an intrinsic part of not only literature but everyday communication. As stated before, symbolism is such a powerful stylistic device that enables artists to express themselves and their deepest thoughts cryptically. Everything in the universe is connected through a series of symbols and the artists are the key to discovering this whole new realm of possibilities. Their subject matter is generally identified by an interest in the occult, dreams, melancholy, death, and themes as such, so they often combined religious mysticism, the perverse and immoral matters in their work.

As previously said, many artists rely on symbolism, and one of them is James Joyce; a well-known author of Irish descent who advanced the modernist avant-garde. His work is considered to be one of the most influential and important that has ever been written.

This thesis will manage to give a "peek behind the curtains" of Joyce's true meanings behind the symbols he used in the chosen short stories from *Dubliners*. Furthermore, this thesis will manage to show you the depth and complexity, symbolism as a stylistic figure can provide, and show how Joyce used it to arouse indirect relations and affinities, particularly between sound, sense, and colour, and on the other hand the tangible, material world and the divine one.

## 1. Historical, Social and Literary Context for James Joyce's *Dubliners*

### 1.1. *Dubliners* in Context of James Joyce's Life and Work

In this chapter, a short history of James Joyce's life and career will be given through which it will be attempted to depict his growth as a person, but the evolution of his reputation as a writer as well. It will focus on how the environment in which he grew up influenced his work, especially the *Dubliners*.

James Aloysius Joyce was a short story writer, teacher, poet and novelist of Irish descent. Known as one of the most distinguished modernist novelists, Joyce is often called "forefather of stream-of-consciousness novels". Born in Rathgar, Dublin, into a middle-class family, he was the oldest child. "Joyce's father was one of the most important influences upon his son's life. His personality, sayings and dispositions are diffused throughout Joyce's work." (Spinks 2009: 2)

Despite the turbulent life, he was successful in schools. Like his father, he went to Clongowes Wood College where he was given a strict Jesuitical education and became acquainted with Latin and the classics. "It was also at Clongowes that he first demonstrated his independent nature. Harshly punished by the prefect of studies for attending class with broken glasses, Joyce summoned the courage to complain of his treatment to the rector." (Gorman 1941: 34) Even though his education suddenly ended in 1891 as his father lost his fortune, he was given a chance to continue his schooling at Belvedere College. It was during his college life that he first came across the work of the Norwegian Playwright; Henrik Ibsen. He is one of the authors who had a great role in the formation of Joyce's style that was heavily influenced by the revolutionary shifts that happened in style with the arrival of "literary modernism".

"From Ibsen, Joyce took the conviction of an attitude as well as elements of a style. Ibsen's drama reconfirmed Joyce in his belief that paralysis of modern life arose from its adherence to a set of repressive social and moral conventions." (Spinks 2009: 16)

The way Ibsen portrayed the truth behind the human nature, regardless of religious and moral conventions, and "his attempt to create mythical structures, supplied Joyce with the rudiments of an aesthetic credo that would become central to each of his published works." (Spinks 2009: 4)

Furthermore, he was born into the Ireland that was trying to heal its scars from the political uproar that endangered the country's future in the nineteenth century.

“This political crisis began with widespread anti-Catholic discrimination by the British state and its Protestant representative class; deepened inexorably following the devastation inflicted upon the peasantry by the Great Famine of 1846–50; and eventually found expression in the series of nationalist movements calling for independence from the British state that helped to shape the political climate of Joyce's first forty years.” (Spinks 2009: 8)

After his graduation, he decided to move to Paris where “the lifestyle provided him the opportunity to transcend the limitations of provincial Irish society and to begin to fashion himself as an artist”. (Spinks 2009: 18) Unfortunately, he had to return to his country because of his mother's illness. Anxious and confused he returned to Dublin, concerned not only about his mother, but his freedom that he finally found in Paris. His devotion to his mother and love for his freedom clashed when “her fear of death put her in mind of her son's impiety, and on the days following Easter, she tried to persuade him to make his confession and take communion.” (Ellmann 1982: 129) Even though he refused to listen to his mother and caused a rift between them, “his mother's death severed the last vital attachment he felt to the family home.” (Spinks 2009: 20)

In the year, 1904, he met his partner for life, Nora Barnacle who later became his wife and mother of his children. It is believed that it was, among the others, her whom Joyce used as a foundation for his concept of inherent femininity in “Finnegans Wake” and “Ulysses”. In 1905, he and Nora left Pola and went to Trieste where he struggled with Stephen Hero, however, he soon overcame his blockage and devoted his attention to what was later known as *Dubliners*; a collection of fifteen short stories.

“The inspiration for these stories had initially come from George Russell, who, having read with interest the incomplete manuscript of Stephen Hero, asked Joyce in the summer of 1904 to contribute a story to the Irish Homestead newspaper.” (Spinks 2009: 25)



## 1.2. Dublin as a “centre of paralysis”

“Readers who encounter Joyce’s collection of short stories for the first time often come away with the impression that turn-of-the-century Dublin was an airless world, and that Joyce mercilessly arraigns its inhabitants for their helplessness.” (Mahaffey 2006: 2)

The environment in which Joyce wrote *Dubliners* heavily influenced not only the story and its characters, but the way he presented Dublin to the world. He said; “I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world.” (Letters II: 122)

“To present Dublin is to present an emerging city, complete with newspapers, trams, electric lights, advertising, music halls, pubs, offices, and the kind of modern home life that attempts to serve as an oasis of calm in the jostling life of an urban centre.” (Leonard 1998)

The period in which it was written was a period of stagnation for Ireland that began because of the Irish nationalist movement. The movement wanted independence from Great Britain because it was believed that they prevented their progress as a country and its politics, economics, and lastly their people. Joyce, fully aware of the situation Britain has put his country in, illustrated the “paralysis” that has taken over society in Ireland. He said; “my intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis.” (Joyce, Letters II: 134) He chose Dublin to be the scene in his short stories because it represented everything that was wrong with his country; “I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city”. (Joyce: 45)

As Garry Leonard stated;

“in his obsession to present the *Dubliners* he knew, and not the Irish heroes he was told to read about, he crafted a style of story-telling that allowed the apparently trivial world of everyday living to become the stuff of comedy, pathos, and tragedy in a way every bit as resonant as the works of Shakespeare.” (Leonard 2004:100)

Through this narrative technique, Joyce managed to successfully convey the perspectives and inner thoughts of his characters as they discovered the world.

### 1.3. The Long and Difficult Publication History of *Dubliners*

Joyce always strived to make his work diverse in comparison with the work of the older generation of Revivalist, including W.B. Yeats. Regardless of his aspiration to separate himself from the others, the short stories he wrote, later gathered into *Dubliners*, were primarily published by George Russell; an older man who served as an editorial adviser for *The Irish Homestead*. He encouraged Joyce to write something for his journal, and so he wrote the short story “The Sisters”, “a boldly experimental piece whose wholly equivocal mode of narratorial indirection promised, he later realized, to solve the technical difficulties posed by Stephen Hero.” (Spinks 2009: 25) Upon finalising the collection, he sent the manuscript to the London publisher; Grant Richards. After Richards agreed to publish the book, Joyce added another story to his collection “Two Gallants” in early 1906. “Almost immediately after agreeing to bring out the stories, however, Richards began to voice objections to portions of Joyce’s writing and thus refused to publish the collection.” (Fagnoli, Gillespie 2006: 45) “This began a series of challenges to the integrity of the collection which Joyce strove to address without compromising his work.” (Fagnoli, Gillespie 2006: 45)

After various other rejections, in 1909 the Dublin firm and its publisher; George Roberts finally agreed to publish the collection. However, he did not go through with the publication because he was worried about a passage in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” regarding the late King Edward VII. After Richards decided to sign another contract with Joyce, they came upon the agreement to use an early stage of the Maunsel page proofs as the first edition.

When Joyce read proof the new edition, he wanted to make some additional changes, however, he did not have them at hand, and so they were not incorporated into the first edition. Along with that, Richards’s printer did not include another two hundred corrections made by Joyce as well as another thirty that Joyce handed separately. In this way, the first edition that was published was “robbed” of “Joyce’s” final touch, and so considered to be “corrupt text”.

After nine long years, “it would be the spring of 1914, after many unsuccessful attempts to have the work published.” (Fagnoli, Gillespie 2006: 46) It finally happened because of his dedication and tirelessness, as seen in one of his letters to a publisher;

“It is not my fault that the odour of ash pits and old weeds and offal hangs around my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having a good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass.” (Ellmann 1966:134)

#### 1.4. The Reception of *Dubliners*

“It might be said of Joyce, as is said of Jimmy Doyle in ‘After the Race’, that he ‘felt obscurely the lack of an audience.’” (qt. in Nash 2006: 28, Joyce 48)

“This lack of an audience – indeed, its impossibility – is one of the principal preoccupations of Joyce’s work. Such a lack would remain with him throughout his career as, paradoxically, one of the constituent characteristics of reception: whereas his work refers to particular readers and scenes of reading, it is unwilling to foresee an audience for itself.” (Nash 2006: 28)

Joyce, unlike Yeats; “who on numerous occasions envisioned having a perfect audience, refused the possibility of this prospect. Instead, a dual concern with the need for readers, but also unwillingness to write for a readership can be detected in Joyce’s work from the earliest stages.” (Nash 2006: 28) The biggest issue in gaining readership was that even though Joyce did indeed have some similar aims as the revivalist writers such as Yeats or Synge; “his well-known estrangement from both the Abbey and the Gaelic League, as well as from both the Anglo-Irish establishment and the Catholic hierarchy was the issue.” (Nash 2006: 28)

“‘The Dead’, it could be said, is Joyce’s characteristically ambiguous, distanced and deflating contribution to the idea of a national audience.” (Nash 2006: 29) That particular story is often identified with a change that happened in Joyce’s cultural politics, “whether that shift has been seen as an exilic ‘softening’ towards Ireland, a commitment to a form of modern nationalism, or a turn to an ambivalent aestheticism.” (Ellmann 1995: 245)

“Joyce witnessed, either at first hand or from abroad, the famous controversies of the Literary Revival and, in his short stories, he satirised the distance between actual Dublin theatregoers and the rural Ireland, especially of the West, that was performed on the Revival stage.” (Nash 2006: 29)

Joyce was aware of the degree to which “regular Dublin” composed an audience to the “Protestant-led Revival’s construction of ‘Ireland’” (Nash 2006: 29), and he of course as well became the abroad audience to Dublin.

“At its close, then, *Dubliners* is unable to address an audience or even to anticipate a readership.” (Nash 2006: 61) As stated, Joyce’s work was not honoured or accepted from its beginning; the response was rather feeble, with

readers addressing the immortality of the short stories which was not common for the given time. One could argue that the problem wasn't Joyce's usage of symbols but rather their incompatibility with the readers' expectation. (Nash 2011) As Nash highlights, "if it was both realistic and immoral why complain at the book and not at life?" (Nash 2011) "The Dead", being written when the collection required a publisher, "reads like rumination on the impossibility of an audience, a feature that Joyce may have wryly noted in theatres in Dublin." (Nash 2006: 61)

"It can only inscribe the presumptuousness and futility of such an address and identify an underlying malaise as the ongoing condition of the society from which any audience would have to be formed. This is the state of reception that Joyce postulates: it is not an address to an audience, nor is it even laying the foundations for an audience; it is an analysis of the generic and cultural clashes that colour reception." (Nash 2016: 61)

Joyce thought that the Irish audience could only be perceived through claiming the contradictory significance of a potential readership, and on the other hand, a rejection to succumb "to a direct delivery, even to inscribe the impossibility of that delivery. The denial of an audience was therefore not necessarily a political evasion." (Nash 2006: 61)

However, his influence on literature is undeniable; "He was a prominent symbolist, modernist, realist and formalist whose work have marked the beginning of an era in prose writing" (Goldman, 1968: 5). His new and experimental way of writing and expressing his thoughts was exactly the thing that made him different from his contemporaries. "The unprecedented explicitness with which Joyce introduced the trivial details of ordinary life into the realm of art opened up a rich new territory for writers" (Attridge, 2004: 1).

## 2. Realism, Modernism and Symbolism in *Dubliners*

### 2.1. James Joyce and Literary Modernism

“There are many kinds of modernism- one has only to think of the differences between Picasso and Kandinsky, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, or Joyce and Kafka to appreciate this.” (Butler, 2004:67) At the beginning of the century, modernist artists were exploring the new freedom and courage in stylistic experiments. These stylistic experiments were “something they saw as radically new ideas, current in that period, concerning consciousness, time, and the nature of knowledge, which were to be found in the work of Nietzsche, Bergson, Freud, Einstein, Croce, Weber, and others.” (Butler 2004: 67)

Joyce’s approach towards the modernist climate of ideas “thus has largely to be inferred from his essentially solitary (and egoistical) experimentalism, and from our sense of the ideological risks it ran.” (Butler 2004: 69) This was visible when he was writing *Ulysses* and determined to write a book in as many styles as possible, he wrote it from eighteen different points of view. That type of stylistic variety depicts what is actually a relativist approach towards the accurate image of reality. “He thus uses modernist techniques, as Karen Lawrence argues, to adopt a ‘series of rhetorical masks’ which make us ‘doubt the authority of any particular style.’” (Butler 2004:69) *Ulysses’* success as an experimental achievement can be seen from its influence on great writers such as William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, Vladimir Nabokov, and more.

“All these early modernists thus work through Symbolism and its derivatives; and then go significantly beyond it, by inventing radically new languages for art. What they do not do is ally themselves to an avant-garde which expresses its revolutionary intentions in manifestos.” (Butler 2004:71) Joyce makes such adjustment to tradition throughout his work up to *Ulysses*, in an identical approach: “by producing a distinctly Chekhovian set of stories, the last of which, “The Dead”, which is profoundly Symbolist and Ibsenic at the same time.” (Butler 2004: 71)

“It is the ideology of avant-garde movements which Joyce finds irrelevant to his purposes; and my judgement is that he quickly appropriated all available modernist techniques, while keeping himself well clear of the often inflated claims for ‘simultaneity’, the ‘destruction of the past’, and so on, of the manifestos.” (Butler 2004: 76) James Joyce’s

literary work constantly seeks from its readers to cherish and ultimately shed some light on the “manoeuvres of the hidden hand”. (Butler 2004: 83)

As Joyce desired to be portrayed and ultimately understood; he acted in accordance with one of the focal points of early modernism, which was to engage an audience which was willing to give it a try in decoding the connections between stylistic medium and message. “His works, from Stephen Hero to Finnegans Wake, mark in this respect the essential steps in the evolution of literature from the Symbolist epoch to the post-modern.” ( Butler 2004: 83)

## 2.2. *Dubliners*: Realism vs. Modernism

There are two types of critics when it comes to discussing the “real” nature of *Dubliners*; the Realists and the Symbolists. On one hand, the Realists perceive *Dubliners* as the most transparent of Joyce’s works, which usually results in them overlooking the revolutionary nature of work the *Dubliners* present. On the other hand, the Symbolists are the one who tend to ignore the rebellious ideas behind his symbols. “Joyce’s use of symbolism and realism and also his different layers of narration is what endow significance, life and glamour to the simple plots of his stories.” (Khorsand 2014: 93)

“The rejection of religion and nationalism is not I think the most important part of the story concerning Joyce’s turn-of-the-century scepticism. For it also resides, paradoxically enough, in his extraordinary attachment to fact. The “scrupulous meanness” of *Dubliners* is his way of seeing things as they really are: and it is his realism which perpetually combats larger ideological commitments.” (Butler 2004:68)

It is undeniable that many critics consider *Dubliners* to be a perfect example of a realistic text, and by that, they mean “in style of writing that tends to reject symbolism in favour of realistic representation of daily life because it functions as a window on reality in Dublin.” (Yee 1997: 20) It is realistic in terms of places, people and themes portrayed throughout the stories. An example of such theme narrated in *Dubliners* would be the story “A Painful Case” in which a married woman starts something with another person, but when he rejected her she committed suicide.

“A pattern of what constitutes the “substance” and “style” of “Joyce’s” work; the “substance” being Joyce’s representation of the incapable reality of Dublin for each character, and the “style” being a focus on symbolism highly unlike that of any other realist author at the time.” (Johnson 1) This very mixture of Realism and Symbolism, along with his autobiographical tendencies, makes his image of Dublin’s paralysed reality bitter, yet moving. “Joyce’s realism makes us see a perpetually conflicting dialogue, and that it is by means of interruptions and clashes that a new nation and a new artist can raise.” (Piccolo- Birkbeck 2006: 7)

“In order to depict reality faithfully Joyce expanded the limits of nineteen-century realism of writers such as Honorè de Balzac and George Eliot. The distinctiveness of Joyce’s realism lies in the close relationship between subject matter and style, between objectivity and

language.” (Piccolo-Birkbeck 2006: 2) For Joyce, the narration in the stories cannot be considered “realistic” unless people speak for themselves.

On the other hand, many would say that *Dubliners*’ style and content can be seen only as modernist. “Its content relates to the spiritual deadness and emotional paralysis of its characters; these are common themes of modernist texts.” (Lyngdoh: 2) A perfect example would be one of the stories that will, later on, be discussed in this thesis; “The Dead”. It ends with an image of Dublin covered with a snow “blanket”, symbolising the deadness of its dwellers. The main character within the story, Gabriel, is perceived as a “living dead” on a spiritual level; and spiritual deadness is undoubtedly a feature of modernism.

“Joyce’s modernist tendencies; especially that of fragmentation as invoked by lack of communication and by themes of immobility and paralysis; impressionism as invoked by interiority, quietness, and an unstable human nature, and the need to establish a grand narrative as invoked by his desire to create a literature that is distinctly Irish; become signposts for the structure that Joyce constructs.” (Lyngdoh: 2)

What is meant is that the structure binds the stories in the collection together as they exist in the same desolate universe, and the characters that are imprisoned. “Joyce’s extraordinary fidelity to past time thus means that the ideas he presents in his books are not those of the modernist avant-garde. It is through his style that modernism is implied.” (Butler 2004:73)

Without any explicit evidence provided by Joyce, Realists and Modernists are unable to conclude any critical analysis. As Sonja Bašić states, the book "should be seen not just as a realist/naturalist masterpiece, but as a significant stepping- stone integrated into the modernist structure of Joyce's mature work."(Bašić 1998)



### 2.3. Common Themes and Modernist Literary Techniques In *Dubliners*

Modernism is considered to be not only an artistic movement but a cultural one as well due to its time of emerging. It developed with industrialization and urbanization in the Western countries in times when people's lives changed on a spiritual level and material. Life was changing on every front which was crucial because even the religion progressively lost its position in people's everyday life. Those rapid changes resulted in alienation between people and society and ultimately depicted the everyday struggle humans had to go through in the given time of their society. In the early twentieth century, after World War I, some people found a way to cope with loss and traumatic experience they went through; in various modernist forms. Modernism is a very broad term when it comes to art movements, but speaking of literary modernism, it has its origins in the late nineteenth century. "This literary movement was driven by a conscious desire to overturn traditional modes of representation and express the new sensibilities of their time." (Childs 2008: 4)

*Dubliners* is considered to be the beginning of Joyce's exploration of modernism. The modernist features of *Dubliners* are presented to the readers through fifteen short stories by Joyce's usage of common modernist themes and modernistic literary techniques such as the shift of perspectives and dilution of plots. With these literary techniques, Joyce expresses his thoughts and concern for the modern society in which isolation, paralysis and ultimately death, dominate. In terms of the plots of the stories, usually every story's plot is comprised of a start, conflict, climax, and of course, the end. However, in *Dubliners*, Joyce chose to dilute his plots and reject the traditional story plots so that his stories can reflect real life.

On the other hand, there is another narrative technique present in the book; the shift of narrative perspectives. "Generally speaking, a narrative perspective means the perspective from which a story is told. Adopting the perspectives of different characters to narrate stories, narrators can render readers opportunities to observe the same event from different sides and make their own judgments." (Yuan 2004) That shift of narrative perspectives allows the readers to get a real notion of what is happening with the characters and it shows readers different personalities and points of view. Furthermore, because it precisely exhibits the "inner world" of each character, it unveils the public state of modern Ireland.

As previously mentioned, the changes that happened in society had a great effect on artists and their ways of expressing thoughts and inner feelings. Modernist's novels largely focused on alienation, loneliness, fear and other problems that troubled the society. They

mainly put the focus of their attention on the spiritual world of the characters, rather than the material one. They did that because people's inner reality became the most important aspect that hasn't yet been fully explored. Some of the modernist themes that will be discussed include loneliness, paralysis, and death.

In terms of loneliness, it is one of the more frequent themes of modernist literature. In *Dubliners* that loneliness is expressed through people's depression. As their discontent started to grow, their isolation deepened. On the other hand, there is a theme which is constant throughout the whole collection; the theme of paralysis. In the *Dubliners*, the motif of paralysis is introduced in the very first short story; "Every night as I gaze up at the window I said softly to myself the world paralysis." (Joyce 1993: 3) As the stories develop, the paralysis increases. As Lloyd said about the paralysis in the "Counterparts"; "This spare and desolate story, together with many others in *Dubliners*, is bitterly diagnostic of the paralysis of Irish men in colonial Ireland, of their alienation and anomie which, so often, is counterpointed by drinking." (Lloyd 2000: 129) It invaded public life in Dublin and became an illness nobody could get rid of. Joyce presented paralysis throughout his stories in two ways: as paralysis of Dublin and as spiritual paralysis. Even though some people eventually realized the condition they were in, no one in *Dubliners* achieved the ultimate success of escaping the paralysis.

"The Dead" is another story that will be analysed in this thesis, and it portrays a perfect example of the modernist theme of death. The readers are introduced with the theme of death from the very beginning. It is omnipresent throughout the entire collection; starting from the very first story "The Sisters" with the death of the priest Flynn, and ending with an image of Ireland covered in snow; which portrays a scene of deafening silence and the atmosphere of "death and isolation" that ruled throughout Ireland. As the name itself says "The Dead" appears in the final narration of death and paralysis so it's not unusual for readers to instantly associate its theme with the theme of the whole collection.

To sum up, James Joyce exploited different modernist literary techniques in order to depict the character's inner state and the complexity of social life in modern Ireland. Along with the literary techniques, as mentioned above, he also used modernist themes that allowed him to portray his readers what it has been like to suffer from depression when faced with rigorous political and religious rules during the early twentieth century in his country.

#### 2.4. *Dubliners* and the concept of epiphany

To fully understand the content that will be discussed further on, it is of great importance to mention “Epiphanies”. Three main issues set the notion in Joyce’s works; nationality, religion, and language. The never-ending problem of his plots is based on at least one of the mentioned themes, and one of his characters is usually held captive by them. The characters are then put in a dilemma in which a revelation would eventually lead the character to an epiphany. That term is used to describe mysterious and unexpected occurrence that ultimately enlightens a person. The Epiphany was the part of the Christian story where the wise men came to see the baby Jesus for the first time. The way Joyce decided to “adopt” that religious word is best explained in these words;

“By an epiphany, he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments”. (Spencer 1977: 188)

What is more, after reading these stories it could come to one’s mind that each short story has its specific epiphany; in a way, that epiphany is a sudden exposure to the paralysis.

Unlike in *Ulysses*, Joyce did not use stream-of-consciousness in *Dubliners* but rather focused on the epiphany. In the collection, almost every character was able to gain insight into some matter by the end of the story, and with epiphanies, Joyce was able to bring each story to its climax in a new, innovative way. It cannot come to the epiphany unless the protagonist has experienced some painful trauma and reflection on his actions. For example, in the short story “Araby”, which will be discussed later on in the thesis; the young boy was not entirely aware of his environment when he went to the Araby bazaar, just so he could pursue the love in his mind. Unfortunately, he soon became rather disappointed with the situation he witnessed at the bazaar, after hearing a dialogue between a few people. That provoked a severe reaction in his heart, he felt disappointment in real life as well as love life, which made him aware of his ignorance and at that very moment he experienced an “epiphany”: “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.” (Joyce 1993: 33) Through this example, it is easier to understand how and why Joyce used epiphanies. It bursts the bubble that a character lives in, and it reveals the “ugly” truth about the reality they live in.

Furthermore, it could be said that both paralysis and epiphany serve as a connection between the stories.

### 3. SYMBOLISM AND NARRATION IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES FROM *DUBLINERS*;

#### 3.1. The Structure and composition of *Dubliners*

“Even though every short story in this collection seems to have something to say, to a person who has never encountered with *Dubliners*, the stories could appear to be about nothing in particular. Meaning that “they begin in the middle of something and stop unexpectedly with what may or may not be a new beginning.” (Leonard 2004:87)

As previously discussed, *Dubliners* is a collection of fifteen short stories that was successfully published in 1914. They depict Dublin life in the nineteenth century, showing some of the unhappiest occasions in one’s life. Some of the predominant themes that occur in *Dubliners* are missed opportunities, an inability of individuals to escape the circumstances, and lost innocence. The written stories could roughly be sorted into four different aspects of life; childhood that consists of “The Sisters”, “An Encounter” and “Araby”; adolescence including “Eveline”, “After the Race”, “Two Gallants” and “The Boarding House”. Maturity involves stories “A Little Cloud”, “Counterparts”, “Clay” and “A Painful Case”, and the final aspect is public life that covers stories; “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” and “A Mother and Grace”. The last story in his collection “The Dead”, stands alone, and is by far his best and most complex one. It could be seen “as an epilogue, summarizing and perhaps qualifying the principal themes of the entire collection.” (Garrett 1968: 1,2)

This thesis will attempt to analyse modernistic and realistic features in *Dubliners*, and the importance of symbolism used in the chosen stories. It will focus on five short stories, each chosen to represent an aspect of life in *Dubliners*. The theme of paralysis is omnipresent throughout the entire collection, but as it will be pointed out later on, the paralysis grows stronger as each story progresses. Throughout the first three aspects of life; childhood, adolescence, and maturity, the paralysis seems to be present on the personal level. In the next aspect; the public life, the real growth of paralysis is shown as it is no longer “attached” to an individual, but a group paralysis that ultimately has an effect on every sphere of life in Dublin. The chosen stories of this thesis are: “Araby”, “Eveline”, “A Painful Case”, “A Mother” and “The Dead”.

### 3.2. Araby

The short story “Araby” is believed to represent the first aspect of life in *Dubliners*; the childhood. It is a story that starts with Joyce’s description of gloomy and depressive Dublin and its paralyzing atmosphere through a young boy’s narration of the street he lives in;

“NORTH RICHMOND STREET being blind was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brother’s School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two stories stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.” (Joyce 1993: 25)

The words used at the beginning of the story “Araby”, such as “quiet”, “blind end”, “detached”, “brown imperturbable face”, and many more, convey the notion of how the protagonist was not able to “escape” that “quiet street”. Moreover, with descriptions such as this one, Joyce suggests that craving for perfect love or the pursuit of one’s dreams and wishes would be futile for the Dubliners. The story contains numerous images and symbols, along with shifts of narration, and the first significant critic that studies the opaque symbolism of it is Stone who “highlights how the various themes given in this story are the fundamental basis from which Joyce’s mature and complex works will spring out.” (Stone 1965)

As previously mentioned, from the very beginning, the boy sets the atmosphere of the whole story by describing the street he lives in as a “blind” street. Symbolically looking at the “blind” street, it could represent the boy himself, being that because of his young age; he is “literary blind”. As Joyce wrote; “The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.” (Joyce 1993: 25) The adjective “brown” is one of the few he used, and it should not be overlooked, because it could represent the deterioration and collapse of the Irish people.

Moreover, as previously stated in the paper, religion had a great influence on Joyce, so the fact that it became one of his main topics and problems to write about, is not entirely shocking; and “Araby” is not an exception. Although he mentioned the “Christian Brothers’ school” in the very first sentence of the story, what caught my eye was “a priest” who had died in the “back drawing-room”. The way he chooses to describe it sets a notion that religion is, represented by the death of the priest, slowly fading and losing its importance, as he talks about “a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp”. (Joyce 1993:

25) With their old-fashioned ways and traditions, one could think that there is less and less benefit to the youth in Ireland, and so religion is slowly but safely being left behind. Not only is it slowly being “left behind”, but the way he described the books also suggests the further decay and ultimately death. The titles of the books, on the other hand, give the story a romantic note, but the fact that the books are decaying could ultimately be seen as the progress of the boy’s romantic view of the world. Another biblical reference could also be the apple tree; “The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree..” (Joyce 1993: 25) As widely known, an apple has been considered as a symbol of the first sin since the beginning of time, and it represents knowledge and temptation. With that being said, it could be potentially indicating that the boy will gain some new insight, or should I say experience some kind of revelation (epiphany), at some point in the story.

The next paragraph continues with the already dark and dreary atmosphere that has been set at the beginning of the story;

“The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness.”  
(Joyce 1993: 26)

He manages to maintain such atmosphere with expressions such as “cold air”, “dark muddy lanes” and “dark odorous stables”. However, despite the abundance of phrases such as the ones named above, there are a few remarks about the “light” such as; “the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas.” (Joyce 1993: 26) Furthermore, two new characters are introduced in this part of the story; the boy’s uncle and Mangan’s sister. “The realism and objectivity of the author can be best traced in his introducing of these two characters, especially Mangan’s sister.” (Khorsand 2014: 95) She is introduced very straightforwardly and in as few plain sentences as possible; as he does for his uncle. They can both be viewed as authoritative roles that stand as a symbol for England, with a possibility of Mangan’s sister being viewed as the representation of Ireland itself. “He represents another world in Joyce’s story, a world juxtaposed to that of the narrator, one which does not hope and therefore doesn’t suffer: a world of oblivious to life’s tragic dimension.” (Almond 2001: 51) Apart from the numerous symbols he used in this paragraph, he also shifted the narration. What

started as a narration from a boy's point of view, which is noticeable from the way he energetically narrates the story, shifts to a more mature way of narrating, as if the boy's state of mind changed, and so did the tone of narrating.

Even though Joyce introduced its readers with the romantically idealistic picture the narrator has created of her; "I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood. Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance." (Joyce 1993: 27) It shifts abruptly to the realm of realism with street descriptions such as "drunken men", "curses", and "the troubles of our native land". The way in which he proposes a paradox such as this one, makes it look easy when in reality takes a lot of time and imagination. It can be interpreted as a paradox between an idealistic Ireland, where love and opportunities exist, and the harsh reality of what life in Ireland looks like.

As stated before, throughout the story it seems as if the boy who narrates the story matures as the story progresses, which is visible in the way he narrates the story. For example at one point the language becomes more sophisticated and in general, more poetic;

"Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires." (Joyce 1993: 27)

Furthermore, along with the language and manner change, there is another shift in narration visible; "Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings." (Joyce 1993: 28) The fact that he was rather spending time at the railings alone than hanging out with his friends indicates that he is slowly maturing. Could the word "railing" have a deeper, more complex meaning? It could symbolize the idea of the boy's journey to "Araby", or maybe it supports the idea of his actual passage from childhood to maturity and revelation.

With a sentence like this, Joyce gives his readers small clues which will ultimately reveal the boy's future; "The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me." (Joyce 1993: 29) These words give us a slight notion of what is about to happen. Moreover, the way in which his uncle treats him could symbolically represent how England treats and reacts to the rightful demands of Irish people. Talking about Ireland, some words Joyce used such as

“dark horse” and “brown-clad figure” symbolize the horrific and decaying conditions of Ireland. It portrays Joyce’s way of thinking about his country and its future; with brown colour symbolising that his country lost its Irish values that were once cherished, and so became a soulless city, with no brightness or sunshine left, only dark and coldness.

When the boy finally reached the Araby bazaar, it was so late that almost everything was dark and closed; “I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness.” (Joyce 1993: 31) The boy then examined the deafening silence of the bazaar in contrast to that of a “church after service”. (Joyce 1993: 31) The flirtatious conversation he witnessed was of great importance because he realized that he has never had such relation with Mangan’s sister, and that was the beginning of his epiphany. It made him realize that his attempt was useless and that instead of finding love and his identity, he found darkness. That’s when the epiphany happens when he utters; “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity, and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.” (Joyce 1993: 33) In the beginning, he was sentimental and eager, full of hope, but as the end of his quest was approaching, when he faced reality, there was nothing but anger and fear. As Sexton described; “the boy’s quest is made on behalf of his native country, the vanity of this search goes to the people who are its citizens.” (Sexton 2003)

After reading the given analysis of the short story “Araby”, provided in this chapter of the thesis, and concluding that the girl symbolizes Ireland, the boy represents an Irish citizen, and the Araby bazaar stands for church, then one could say that this was Joyce’s attempt of showing how an attempt of a regular Irishman to serve his country is ruthlessly stopped by the power and darkness of both England and religion.



### 3.2. Eveline

The second short story to be discussed in this thesis is “Eveline”. It is a story that represents the next aspect of life in *Dubliners*; adolescence. What is so fascinating about this story is the fact that in the story nothing seemingly happens because the main character is passive and static. This particular story has some similarities with “Araby” when it comes to symbolism. As in “Araby”, there is an old, yellow photo of a priest that signifies the deterioration and eventually collapse of religion. Moreover, Joyce mentions the brown colour again, as he did in “Araby”, to emphasize the wasted lives of the people from his country.

“Through the story “Eveline”, Joyce introduces his readers with women in Dublin who are trapped with the burden of responsibilities of family and social norms. The nineteen years old Eveline was trapped and paralyzed socially, sexually and spiritually because of living within the restrictive life style imposed on her by her father and dead mother.” (Sharif 2013: 11) She longs for a change, for an escape from the same fate as her mother. Eveline’s wish to escape her life can be read as her wish to escape Ireland and to escape from herself to one extent. This is the reason why Eveline was not able to get away, because, in the end, nobody can escape from themselves, not even her.

From the very beginning, Joyce presents the character of the father whose superiority and harshness toward Eveline set the background to as why she is not happy, and finally thinking about escaping. He symbolically portrays the picture of England; he is oppressive, bitter and detached. (Khorsand 2014: 99) The “relationship” they have does not even begin to resemble the one between a father and daughter. On the other hand, there is Frank, a symbol of freedom, but also the “unknown”. Although he was her escape, he was also an unknown image that sparked her fear of the uncertain outcome of their escape, and ultimately their future. “Frank is an idealized symbol of a person who has broken the capturing nets of –at least- nationality, and probably religion and language as well. But the problem arises exactly from the same notion of idealizing.” (Khorsand 2014: 99) When reading through Eveline’s description of Frank, it is clear that the image she created of him is idealized and far from being real. Furthermore, what is interesting is the fact that she never states that she loves him, but rather that she likes him, which indicates the gap between what she wants from their relationship, and what Frank wants from her. The way she views her future life with Frank is shown with her hesitation toward him. While analysing his role in the story, it could be said that on a larger scale, “Eveline represents Ireland and he undeniably stands as a symbol of

freedom. Eveline with her doubt and indecisiveness represents Ireland from that era; she represents the future of Ireland and all the limitations and uncertainty that it might stumble upon when exposed to the opportunity of having freedom.” (Khorsand 2014: 100)

As stated at the beginning, this particular story does not have a complex storyline, meaning that nothing, in particular, happened other than the fact that the only action in the story is the one when Eveline decides not to take action. The rest of the story is filled with the flow and expression of her thoughts and doubts. Even though it seems like the whole story is narrated through her eyes, there is a short part in the story where it seems like the story is narrated from a different point of view; “She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.” (Joyce 1993: 34)

She depicts a sad and depressive life she leads, and the relationship she has with her father, adding the financial troubles they are going through and above it all, the numerous responsibilities she had to take on. Even after all that being said, Eveline adds an unexpected image stating; “It was hard work—a hard life—but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.” (Joyce 1993:36-37) A sentence that has an immense meaning; she lives a miserable life, and yet when given the opportunity for a new life, a better life, freedom, her fear of the unknown holds her back. Furthermore, whenever she mentions “the future”, she uses the verb “would” which is yet another sign of the doubts and hesitations she is experiencing; “People would treat her with respect then” (Joyce 1993: 36) or “He would save her. He would give her life..he would take her in his arms.” (Joyce 1993: 38-39) This is just an example of her hesitations that appear throughout the story. When she starts talking about Frank, the very first sentence sounds more like her trying to reassure herself than a discovery or the way she sees him. Through the way she talks it is evident that she is completely confused and unaware of what she should do.

A very important symbol in this story that could ultimately give a reader a sense of what’s coming is the fact that Frank’s name is synonymous to the name of her brother, Earnest, who is dead. As Attridge put it; “Has Eveline found a rescuer or just another Dublin betrayer? How accurate is her assessment of him – for which the story gives no objective evidence – as ‘kind, manly, open-hearted’?” (Attridge 2004: 5) If we indeed view Eveline as a symbol of Ireland, maybe “Frank” could after all, provided that his intentions are sincere, save the country from its decaying state, and give a chance for a brighter future.

In the next part of the story, the narrator thinks about the promise she gave to her mother, that she would try to keep the home together for as long as possible. What scares Eveline is the fact that her mother symbolizes her hometown, Ireland, and Eveline is a new, younger version of her mother, so the fear of the same fate waiting for her is extremely terrifying. Then the language suddenly starts to have a gloomy tone to it, as the culmination of the story slowly starts to creep in. Up until this point, she has been sitting next to the window and thinking and reminiscing out loud, as if having a conversation with herself, and nothing but that happened. However, in the very last part of the story, the author used more active images to show the growing unrest inside her mind.

Furthermore, it is evident that the epiphany arrived at the very end of the story, when she poured all of her feelings out. The way she describes those last moments before making a decision reveals just how helpless and desperate she has become; “She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty.” (Joyce 1993: 39) Both “Eveline” and “Araby” are stories that are immensely affected by the paralysis which growth is evident as the stories progress from one aspect of life to the other. In their essence; both stories revolve around some type of disappointment. The importance of a story such as “Eveline” and its greatness lies in the way Joyce managed to successfully shift the narrative perspectives throughout the story. The severeness of her paralysis is demonstrated through that shift, as the readers become aware that in the end, she was not able to leave Ireland. Even though she knew she would be returning to her alcoholic and violent father, terrible job and her hell, she chose to stay. As W. Fuger states; “Though Eveline’s “passage had been booked” and Frank is telling her “something about the passage over and over”, she is unable to pass the barrier of the North Wall station, cannot resist her instinctive urge to “draw back”” (Fuger 1989: 90)

Different, but similar would be the words to describe the two stories analysed in the previous chapters of the thesis. Even though the characters and their wishes completely differ, certain parts of the stories correlate to one another. For example, that darkness the boy felt at the Araby bazaar can be compared to the “hollowness” of “Eveline” which brings us back to that concept and importance of paralysis. The final scene of “Eveline” shows the extent to which the paralysis has come, ultimately symbolizing the life of people in Dublin, who even when presented with a choice, cannot make one because they are trapped. When she made the decision to sacrifice herself, it was more than just that or keeping the promise she gave to her mother; “It is the aversion reaction of one who is habituated to abuse.” (Heyward 1997)

### 3.3. "A Painful Case"

The next story, "A Painful Case", is the last in Joyce's "maturity segment" of *Dubliners*. It is the last story of that aspect of life, because it marks the maturity of paralyzed life, as life and death interlace in order to reveal a paralyzed reality. Once again, we are presented with "the life of a lonely adult man in "A Painful Case" who represents the paralytic mentality of the Dublin adults. Like Eveline, he had also become socially, sexually and spiritually paralyzed because of being trapped in a colourless and spiritless everyday routine life." (Sharif 2013: 12-13)

The story itself revolves around a relationship between James Duffy and Emily Sinico, and all the hopeless events that ultimately lead to Mrs. Sinico's death. It seems that in the story, the true love symbolizes an escape that James Duffy scorns, and as a result, he finds himself unintentionally imprisoned by himself. The very essence of this story is Duffy's powerlessness and reevaluation of his life after hearing of his former lover's death.

There is a small dose of irony implied in the title itself, as the painful case is Duffy's, but the captions within the story are meant for Mrs. Sinico. Moreover, as the end of the story approaches, it becomes evident that there is no more hope for Duffy, as he will continue to live as an emotionally paralysed individual. With the way Joyce decided to compose this story, he gave the readers an ultimate opportunity to observe the unforgettable consequence that death has upon the living. He managed to do that with the death of Mrs. Sinico that unexpectedly happened in the story, and how it affected the life of James Duffy.

As previously stated above, James Duffy became a socially and spiritually paralyzed individual, just like "Eveline". The difference is that unlike the other stories where characters were condemned to the situation they lived in; Mr. Duffy decided to live in it by his own choice. He decided to live a routine life and avoid other people as much as possible; "Mr. Duffy lived in Chapelized because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all the other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern and pretentious." (Joyce 1993: 116) As Joyce said; "He had neither companions nor friends, church nor creed" (Joyce 1993: 118); he was not a "people's person". That daily routine he was gladly stuck in imprisoned him and made him socially paralyzed.

Nevertheless, one day he met Mrs. Sinico and over some time, they began to spend more and more time together and finally they developed a friendship. The fact that Joyce

wrote, “With almost maternal solicitude she urged him to let his nature open to the full: she became his confessor.” (Joyce 1993: 120); shows the attachment of Irishmen and their religious traditions. She was not only his friend but also a sanctuary, a “church, and a priest”. (Sharif 2013: 14) He glorified their connection and relationship they had developed, so when she showed a little more passion and affection, he could not hide his disappointment. Her act of putting his hand to her cheek scared James Duffy; he was afraid of the outcome and the possibility of changes in his “peaceful and planned” life. Therefore, he decided to stop seeing her and return to the life he was well accustomed to.

Even though this story represents the “mature” part of life, and Mr. Duffy is an adult man, he never showed any sexual feelings towards Emily. He wanted a true, platonic friendship whereas she made it clear she wanted more. She was married but felt lonely and unloved, so when she started talking with Mr. Duffy and felt his kindness and friendliness, she decided to share her emotions with him. Unfortunately, he was afraid that if they continue their “relationship” in the way she wanted that she would be disappointed in him not meeting her expectations. When he decided to end their friendship, he gave a statement; “Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse, and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse.” (Joyce 1993: 125) However, after Emily’s death, he came to a realization that he has been spiritually paralyzed for as long as he could remember and he let her die alone and helpless. “A closer inspection of Duffy’s reaction to Mrs. Sinico’s death reveals the level of his paralysis and ultimately reveals the primary deficiency that her death illuminates.” (Gallman 2008) With him not being able to do anything outside his routine, Joyce effortlessly portrays another “Dubliner” who shows the growth and strength of paralysis from the beginning until now. The harsh reality shows that adults are even more opposed to changes in their lives than the younger Dubliners who also had no luck in trying to change their lives, but at least they tried.

When comparing the characters from previous stories “Araby” and “Eveline” to Mr. Duffy from “A Painful Case”, the biggest difference is the fact that he did not even try to get out of his monotonous life, instead, he preferred to be alone and avoided Dublin as much as he could. “However, unconsciously he might have also desired an escape from his monotonous life. He allowed little changes in his life when he started meeting with Mrs. Sinico and he also became interested to have her as a companion.” (Sharif 2013: 26) He was different when he was around her; satisfied and comfortable because he finally had someone

to confide in. If he was so opposed to any kind of change in his life, why did he let a stranger into his life? Then, fuelled by the fear he decided to end things between them before they go any further, without giving a second thought how will that decision affect Emily who felt exactly the opposite. Running from the loneliness in her marriage she thought she found someone who admired her, someone who would make her feel less lonely and more loved. His decision broke her and she continued her search for a way to make the loneliness go away; “She was finally able to escape from her miserable life through death as we have seen death as a passage to escape in “The Sisters”. Like Father Flynn she also might have come to the conclusion that she can escape from her lonely disrespected life through only death.” (Sharif 2013: 27)

Conclusively, Joyce’s story “A Painful Case” reveals the completely paralyzed existence that slowly developed from the initial repression which continued to deepen by Duffy closing himself further within his mind. Once again, Joyce showed that the dead will expose the disease called “paralysis” that has infected the living.

### 3.4. "A Mother"

This is a story that belongs to the aspect of "public life", which is also the last aspect of life in *Dubliners*, being that "The Dead" is a story that stands for itself. "The story line focuses on her intention of bolstering her daughter's musical career but subsequently failing." (Fagnoli, Gillespie: 65-66) She represents all of the mothers in Joyce's *Dubliners*, and even though it seems at first she holds all the good qualities and values a good mother should have, she eventually unwillingly shows her true colours. "Moreover, we ultimately realise that her daughter Kathleen voices all other children of Dubliners' mothers who also suffer from a certain kind of paralysis." (Paige, Rohrer: 329)

From the very beginning of the story, we are introduced to Mrs. Kearney who appears to be detached and unemotional and yet dreams of romance. The way she is described gives us enough information to get an impression of the stage of paralysis she is in; "As she was naturally pale and unbending in manner she made few friends at school." (Joyce 1993: 150) She proves to be unable to adjust to a different situation, to any kind of change in her life. This inability to adapt is present throughout the whole story. Moreover, she is not capable of showing deeper feelings or any kind of attraction:

"She respected her husband in the same way as she respected the General Post Office, as something large, secure and fixed; and though she knew the small number of his talents she appreciated his abstract value as a male."  
(Joyce 1993: 157)

While reading the story it seems "as if her whole life and the lives of the members of her family are bounded within a circle of repetitive events." (Huttlova 2016: 33) The monthly visits at the altar, Mrs. Kearney's concern about her husband's cough, the annual holidays in either Skerries are just a few examples that Joyce used to portray the routine of their lifeless lives. When it comes to her daughter's career, the contract as a symbol has great importance concerning paralysis. The contract "seems not only a means for this *Dubliners* mother to guarantee a monetary hold on her daughter's performance, but also it serves, metaphorically, as a vehicle for retaining other kinds of strangle holds on Kathleen, binding her both physically and emotionally" (Paige: 331). Joyce used that contract as a symbol of restraint, as an embodiment of Kathleen's paralysis. Apart from the contract, Joyce's comparison of the mother to an "angry stone image" (Joyce 1993: 167) emphasizes her inability to accept any kind of change in her life even more. The irony of it all is that even though she is so persistent

in having every single aspect of her life planned and under control, she ends up being depressed and frustrated, and finally the one who is paralyzed the most.

What is also disturbing is the way she thinks about her husband, and being confident that she truly is in control of her family, she degrades her husband to a degree where she compares him to a pair of boots; “After the first year of married life, Mrs. Kearney perceived that such a man would wear better than a romantic person.” (Joyce 1993: 152) Not only does she control her daughter’s every move, but she also controls and belittles the significance of male characters in the story, and not only that but the way in which Joyce portrays Mr. Holohan, undermines his masculinity even more. He does so by giving him the name “Hoppy Holohan”, which “reminds of hollow hand which also symbolizes male impotence or ineptitude.” (Paige: 331)

Another point that needs to be discussed is the contrast between their competence and organization skills. In the *Dubliners* the narrator talks about how Mr. Holohan handles pressure and how in the end it is Mrs. Kearney who puts everything in order. An interesting uptake on the concert debacle caught my eye; Margot Norris states “who is to blame for the concert disaster: the weak male management or the strong woman, Mrs. Kearney and why do Mr. Holohan and Mr. Fitzpatrick hesitate to proceed with the payment?” (Norris 2003: 189,192) The fact is that she could be a symbol for women who are driven by their unhealthy ambitions into despair and ultimately, defeat. From a different point of view though, it could be related to the position women had in patriarchal Ireland in the previous centuries. As Norris states; “there are some feminist critics who claim that Mrs Kearney is a victim of a gender ideology which chastises female strength and courage, and that the story itself reveals a symbolic deconstruction of the male authority.” (Norris 2003: 185)

However, a possible answer to the argument written above could be read from these lines in *Dubliners* “‘I thought you were a lady’, said Mr. Holohan, walking away from her abruptly.” (Joyce 1993: 166) With this statement, not only does he disrespect her as a woman, but he explicitly diminishes her very existence as a human being. With this said, one could argue that at this point it does not matter if she achieves victory in the “gender war”, because both sides were “undoubtedly harmed by the sexual ambiguity of the story.” (Huttlova 2016: 35)



### 3.5. "The Dead"

This is the last and the longest story in Joyce's collection *Dubliners*. Its length and the level of complexity is different from other stories and is why it stands alone. "Most obviously, it recapitulates and elaborates upon the major theme of paralysis that permeates the narratives of all the stories." (Fragnoli, Gillespie 2006: 73) It illustrates a variety of themes that were previously explored through different main characters. One of which is the frustration towards society and its behaviour. Even though he always spoke highly of Ireland and people's hospitality, he was without a doubt exhausted and irritated by Irish behaviour which is confirmed with his statement; "I am sick of my own country, sick of it." (Ryan 2012: 1)

Furthermore, this story also differs from the others; Gabriel Conroy is, for the first time used as a possible escape route. As seen in the previous stories, every character presented in them was passive and static, unable to escape the paralysis that has overtaken this country and its people. This is where Gabriel presents "an escape route" through himself because "his realization presents an inversion of the previous egoistical and internalizing responses to the dead." (Gallman 2008: 61) What should also be noted is the symbolism behind their names;

"Gabriel's profound realization in the presence of Michael Furey's ghost offers a sense of grace and optimism to the entire collection. As a result, both Conroy and Furey can be examined as potential Christ figures, and the connotations associated with each man's Biblical counterparts (the archangels Gabriel and Michael) represent an interesting intersection of life and death that point to each character's larger role within *Dubliners*."

(Gallman 2008: 61)

"Furthermore, Gabriel's embracing of his Irish heritage, in his turn westward, represents a full acceptance of the dead. Geographically, this turn reverses the eastern trend found in the collection generally." (Ghiselin 38)

Even though other stories from *Dubliners* depict some moments that happened in his life, "The Dead" is by far the most important. For example, to Joyce, Gabriel represents everything he feared to become if he had chosen to stay in Ireland. However, the biggest resemblance between the story and the author's personal life is the incident that took place in the final revelation. He described an actual event from his life using different names when talking about Gretta, Michael, and their sad "love story".

The very first quotation of the story established the modernistic theme of death; “LILY, the caretaker’s daughter, was literally run off her feet.” (Joyce 1993: 199) The name “Lily” refers to a flower, however, it is usually known as the flower commonly used for funerals. And so once again “the dead are already hovering over this story, and there is some sort of intersection with the living.” (Benstock 1969: 153)

“In “The Dead,” Joyce presents several characters ignorantly paralyzed by routine and passionless lives, which the party comes to epitomize.” (Gallman 2008: 62) Gabriel is at the very centre of the group of “living-dead” defined as; “those who remain alive, but fail to live; the disillusioned, the self-destructive, the blighted and wasted lives.” (Benstock 1969: 154)

One of the major arguments in the story is how the protagonist identifies himself when it comes to communication with people, particularly women. With this being said, there is no wonder that throughout the story there is a recurring conflict between femininity and masculinity. Gabriel believes he is dominant over his guests, specifically the women, but the paradox is the fact that they have an immense role in “sabotaging” his status. What is interesting is the way they think of him, and what he thinks of them in return; “as ignorant old women.” (Joyce 1993: 220)

Further on, throughout the story, there are a lot of events through which Gabriel manages to humiliate himself and then tries to regain his masculinity, which ultimately leads to his last humiliation. His masculinity is first threatened when confronted with Lily; “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.” (Joyce 1993: 202) He took her statement to heart; it offended his ego and authority. Another example would be when Molly Ivors invited him to the Aran Isles and said that he is incompetent to even give an understanding answer; “Of course, you’ve no answer.” (Joyce 1993: 216) This moment is actually very interesting because it shows how he reacts to a situation where his authority is being questioned by non-other than by a woman. It is a paradox where he is an excellent speaker and yet cannot express his thoughts. Moreover, she could be seen as a symbol for the “ancient Ireland” and its culture full of rigorous rules that do not allow its people to “betray” their own culture when accusing Gabriel of betrayal because he wrote for “the Europeans”. On the other hand, Gretta stands for Ireland in a completely different form; she stands for an inferior form of Ireland because as seen in the story, she is subordinate to Gabriel who symbolically stands for Britain.

Lastly, his “final” defeat is presented when he compares his wife to an object; a mere symbol. The part where he asked himself what Gretta stands for could possibly indicate the beginning of his epiphany; “There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of.” (Joyce 1993: 241) That particular example gives the readers a perfect picture of how Gabriel sees women, and what they mean to him. His point of view is contrasted to Michael’s who achieved at a young age what Gabriel never could; overpower his own ego and ultimately die for Gretta. With this act, Gabriel lost his masculinity to the young boy. One could easily state that Gabriel is, in fact, an adult version of the boy from the story “An Encounter”. The difference between them would be that the boy is undoubtedly naïve, but notices his vanity by himself, whereas Gabriel is compelled to do so by others. However, as previously stated, it seems that towards the end he finally experienced epiphany which left him with his thoughts and a sudden realization of his blindness and shallowness. The result was his awakening and the start of compassion within him.

Furthermore, snow is a very important symbol that needs to be analysed. It suggests that the lives of the Dubliners were actually in a “frozen state”. Gabriel and the rest of them were spiritually dead from having the same dull life, based on a routine; a “dead life”. As many critics agree, snow represents death in *Dubliners*, as it connects the whole country; “the Irish thus seem joined in a kind of living death.” (Garrett 1968) However, even though snow is often perceived as a symbol of cold and death, in this story, snow could also represent hope. In the story itself, it is implied that as Gabriel is starting to experience the revelation; the epiphany; so is the snow slowly starting to melt. If perceived like this, snow could indeed represent hope and a possibility for a new, better life. “The final image of the falling snow represents an “enlargement and liberation” that is “an achievement of true beauty” that is without rival in *Dubliners*.” (Ghiselin 60) “Thus, Gabriel’s realization here and the image of the falling snow essentially diffuse the various conflicts set up in *Dubliners*: Dublin versus the east, the individual and his environment, and the living and the dead.” (Gallman 2008: 78)

When talking about Michael Furey, it is undeniable that his presence in the story has immense importance. His role in the story was to deflate Gabriel’s ego and expectations and basically act as a “disruptor” just like Mrs. Sinico. As seen in the story, Gabriel repeatedly plays different scenarios in his head throughout the story which could represent his aim towards perfection, however, when the “disruption” happened, he was obviously not prepared

for it. That “breaking point” reached its peak when Gretta told the story of the young boy. Her saying that she thinks Michael gave his life for her has a great effect on Gabriel; “a vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer, as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world.” (Joyce 1993: 253) This shows not only Michael’s effect on Gabriel but his overall importance in the development of the story. Moreover, “The Dead” who discreetly appear throughout the story come together in one image; an image of Michael Furey, a dead young boy whose story managed to discourage and further paralyze Gabriel in his realization. What is left afterwards is a scene where the line between the dead and alive is not clear anymore, as both are covered by endless snow, and none looking or feeling more alive than the other.

Another symbol to consider would undoubtedly be this image of rural, western Ireland that is discreetly mentioned throughout this story. It could in one sense represent the very “crossroad” of the living and the dead. To Gabriel who is not overly fond of his country, West only represents the very core of historic Ireland. “Gabriel's need to emerge from Ireland is in a conflict with his irritation when called a (Gallman 2008: 41) "West Briton"”. (Joyce 1993: 214) “Such a label alludes to an Irish person who considers Ireland a western continuation of Britain and is in accordance with it.” (Gallman 2008: 41) However, as the end of the story approached so did his view towards the West change. When he heard the story of Gretta’s passionate young love, the West became a less “dark” place for him, and by the end, it portrayed the exact opposite of the dullness of the city life. As Beck said; “the west is where passion takes place and boys die for love; the graveyard where Michael Furey lies buried is, in a sense, a place of life”. (Beck 1969) Ultimately, Joyce used the West as one final, symbolic unity of the living and the dead. Gabriel’s realization at the end of the story sets a notion that there is indeed hope that lies in the West. As seen in the previous stories, there is no “bright future” waiting for anyone in Dublin, however, it seems that life awaits in the oldest parts of his homeland.

To conclude this chapter on “The Dead”, the focus will put on the very ending of the story and how does it differ from the rest of the collection. It seems as if in his final story, Joyce decided to show that even after everything that we just read there will always be some hope left for the humankind, if willing to change and overcome our differences. This is evident in the way he chose to end the story, without the pessimistic, dark tone found in many stories before; one of them being “A Painful Case”. Instead, the story ends in a more

determined, strong-willed spirit. After reading and analyzing every story from the collection, it is visible that “Dubliners exhibits a “pattern” in which “the protagonist of a story is placed in a position which reveals the direction he must take if he is to live a full and creative life”. (Corrington 1975) Unfortunately, the characters are never able to escape and change the course of their lives and are instead overpowered with the people and their surroundings. However, this is not the case with Joyce’s character, Gabriel. He portrays every second chance in life and shows that not only did he manage to realize in what direction his life should be headed, but what is more, he showed how to accept it. Every character experienced their epiphany, however, while their epiphanies were depicted as futile and pessimistic; Gabriel’s realization is depicted in a more optimistic and light-bearing tone that possibly implies that a brighter future awaits for him after all.

## 5. THE SYMBOLISM OF COLOURS IN *DUBLINERS*

This part of the thesis will focus on some of the colours Joyce used as symbols in the mentioned stories above.

Colour symbols have complex metaphorical meaning and they allow authors to illustrate everything from abstract entities to people's characters and moods. In his book, Joyce used various colours so that he can graphically depict the deadness, the paralysis of people in their society as a consequence of a merciless and devastating war. Through them, he portrays the state of decay and helplessness the Irishmen were going through, and their inability to escape the dark future awaiting them.

In the "Araby", the narrator says; "Among these, I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant*, and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow." (Joyce 1993: 25) As seen from this citation, the boy "likes" that the leaves were yellow because it is something old and belongs to the past, however, he is just a boy so he might not know or fully understand what has happened in the past. Moreover, similar usage of that colour can be seen in "Eveline" as well, where it also represents the past which is distant and unknown, and although both protagonists show some fondness towards it, they have forgotten why it is beloved because there is nothing they can remember from the past. Moreover, yellow doesn't only represent the old, or the past, in "Eveline" it also represents a state of decay, dullness and later on in "The Dead", paralysis, from which nobody can escape; "A dull, yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending." (Joyce 1993: 244) This particular sentence can be interpreted as a description of Dublin. It seems as if their moral and their principles were destroyed and paralysis started to spread. With the shift of their values, the meaning of colours also changed. What yellow once represented has been replaced by its complete contradiction.

Another colour that has already been mentioned in this thesis is brown. Almost everything in Dublin seems to be brown; from clothes and houses to the physical features of people. The first story that has been analysed in this thesis, "Araby" contains the following sentence; "The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." (Joyce 1993: 25) After reading the passage for the first time, one might not think too much about it, or maybe not being able to understand it, however, after reading *Eveline*, the hidden meaning is no longer hidden. As the lines from

“Eveline” say; “Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it—not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs.” (Joyce 1993: 34) The brown houses mentioned above, from the “Araby”, represent something natural and typical for Dublin, however, they “look” with “imperturbable faces” which signifies that the brown colour no longer represents the stability, but the exact opposite. This passage is about the complete transformation of Dublin. Their country lost its Irish values that were once cherished and became a soulless city. Moreover, in the story “A Painful Case”, Mr. Duffy’s name is derived from an old Irish name O’Dubhthaig, which would roughly mean “brown”. With this being said, brown is also a colour Joyce used to symbolize unreliability; “His face, which carried the entire tale of his years, was of the brown tint of Dublin streets.” (Joyce 1993: 117) With this sentence, Joyce almost explicitly highlighted the similarities that James and Dublin share. Mr. Duffy lives in the past and is afraid of any kind of change that could leave his future uncertain. In the end, he winds up alone, just like Joyce thinks the future of Dublin could look like; an abandoned place from which everyone wants to escape because just like Mr. Duffy, it cannot provide stability.

In the last story “The Dead”, Joyce used colour grey when describing Aunt Julia’s hair. “Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face.” (Joyce 1993: 204) Even though she is an old woman, and is probably too old to chase a new life outside Ireland, she is also a symbol of what’s wrong with the Irish society from that era which is evident when Gabriel tells a joke and both aunts laugh happily, but she soon stops smiling because she does not understand the meaning of a word “galoshes”. This is a perfect situation that shows to what extent they isolated themselves from everything and everyone. The colour grey is undeniably aimed to focus on the theme of paralysis for people in Ireland.

To sum up, through this chapter, thesis attempted to portray the significance of the colours used throughout the collection. Even though the symbols Joyce used throughout the entire collection are rather complex to explain, and as Ellmann stated; “I have put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries.” (Ellmann 1983: 521); each colour undoubtedly has its exact place and role in each story.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to explain how modernism and realism influenced Joyce's *Dubliners* while analysing the symbolism used in five chosen stories. While doing so, it attempted to portray the state of Ireland and how it affected its content. It is portrayed how *Dubliners* indeed could be seen as a perfect example of realist text;

“With the *Dubliners* stories, Joyce breaks with ‘classic realism’. A classic realist text is defined as one that ‘refuses’ to acknowledge its status as a linguistic artefact; instead, it claims to function as a window on reality.” (Yee 1997: 20)

However, as pointed out before, Joyce's passage from realism to the realm of modernism starts with the epiphanies; “which lack any appeal to reality which would define what writing produces.” (Yee 1997: 20)

To portray the influence of both realism and modernism, the thesis thoroughly analysed five chosen stories and the symbolism used in them; explaining to some extent their meaning and role in each story. Moreover, it showed how Joyce's background and the environment influenced his writing, as he tried to incorporate through his characters the reality of Irish people in the twentieth century, and the significance of religion in their lives, but with a twist of modernist themes and techniques.

Joyce managed, with his experimental ways of writing and expressing his thoughts, to distinguish himself from his contemporaries. What we saw throughout this thesis is how he effortlessly managed to use modernist techniques such as dilution of plots, to somehow portray the realistic image of life, and that's where his greatness lies. He wrote *Dubliners* through “realistic eyes” yet with a modern twist; adding another layer to the collection by using different symbols. The thesis portrayed through the analysis of the stories Joyce's effort to write a “moral history” of his country, which undoubtedly illuminates the realistic side of *Dubliners*. However, his style suggests that *Dubliners* is in fact, an excellent example of a symbolist piece of work. Nonetheless, as Sonja Bašić states, “*Dubliners* simultaneously invites and undermines categorization and sense making.” (Bašić 1998: 351)



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