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*Mapping Dublin in James Joyce's
'Dubliners'.*

Dublin, a Static and Timeless Environment: a Text Narrative

Relatore
Prof. Francesco Giacobelli

Laureanda
Chiara Salvagno
n° matr.1034872 / LMLLA

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ABBREVIATIONS

D = *Dubliners*

All references used in this study are from: JOYCE, JAMES, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 2000.

INTRODUCTION

I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.¹



*Sackville Street c.1890-1910.*²

The book of stone, so solid and so durable, would give way to the book of paper, even more solid and more durable.³

When you remember that Dublin has been a capital for thousands of years, that it is the 'second' city of the British Empire, that it is nearly three times as big as Venice it seems strange that no artist has given it to the world.⁴

¹ F. BUDGEN, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses' and Other Writings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 67–68.

² *The National Archives of Ireland*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/main.html>.

³ V. HUGO, *Notre – Dame de Paris*, A. KRAILSHEIMER, trans., New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 192.

⁴ J. JOYCE, '18 September 1905' & '15 October 1905', in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, pp.72-75 & p.78.

Dubliners is not simply a volume of fifteen stories about Dubliners, but it is above all a novel about Dublin and about Ireland itself. In *Dubliners* Joyce sets Dublin on the literary map and on the world stage. He creates a panorama of the city by presenting a series of portraits of the Dubliners in which Dublin contributes to the dehumanizing experience of modern life. The capital affords not only an insight into the writer's personal experiences, but a picture of aspects of the social life of the city, whose descriptions function as mere scene-setting for the events of the novel.⁵ Joyce was in fact sure that his stories presented a kind of 'moral history' of Ireland, showing the life of the average Dubliner for what it was, with all its degradation, frustration and monotony.

My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. I have written it for the most part 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.⁶

In my writing I have tried to give a complete picture of Joyce's *Dubliners* looking at the fifteen stories as if in front of a geographical map in order to follow the Dubliners' path, and considering them in a close relationship between the microcosm of each short story and the macrocosm of the Irish world.

. . . because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void.⁷

We could quite imagine that someone has made a two-hour film by putting the camera on a tripod and let it run, and then brought the result directly to the screen, with no editing. Upon first reading, there seems to be no strategy behind Joyce's selection of obscure street names, stray thoughts, lost corkscrews, gold coins, lost plumcakes, confiscated adventure books, and forgotten novels of a dead priest. Never before, it seems, has a writer used so many details to explain so little.⁸ Besides, references reveal

⁵ L. M. CULLEN, 'Dublin', in J. McCOURT, ed., *James Joyce in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 172-183.

⁶ J. JOYCE, '5 May 1906', *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷ J. JOYCE, *Ulysses*, United Kingdom, Penguin Books, 1960, p. 171.

⁸G. LEONARD, 'Dubliners', in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 87.

the compactness⁹ of the stories, indeed the microscopic character of Joyce's microcosm, where 'everyone knows everyone else' (*D*, p.49) in the small cage represented by the city: Mr Kernan in 'Grace' knows Crofton of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', as Lenehan of 'Two Gallants' knows Holohan of 'A Mother', and the names of the streets in 'After the Race' are repeated in the story of 'Two Gallants'. Even the priest's house in 'Araby' reminds us of the house in which the priest of 'The Sisters' lived: 'the former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. [...] He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sisters' (*D*, p.19).

By following Joyce's Dubliners' trajectory, we could recreate our mental map of the Dubliners' traces. By doing so, we enter houses, churches, pubs, offices, cakeshops, railway stations, and walk down blind and narrow streets together with the characters of the stories, and in the meanwhile the public space of the city emerges.¹⁰ Joyce's Dublin is quite timeless and static. However, characters' movements are characterized by both moments of stasis and action, lack of orientation and arrest; their direction can also be eastward – such as in the first three stories of 'The Sisters', 'An Encounter' and 'Araby' – or westward, as for example 'The Dead', or even the movement can be from the outside to the inside – as in 'After the Race' or vice versa, as in 'Eveline'. Sometimes the Dubliners' direction lacks of time and orientation: they walk round and round the same streets for hours as in the story of 'Two Gallants', or as the horse in Gabriel's story in 'The Dead'. But even though the traces are irregular and the stories apparently different in places and facts, Dublin joins the fifteen stories together as a kind of huge manacle.

Given the fact that Joyce is principally an urban novelist, *Dubliners* is a perfect example of his obsession for accuracy in his depiction of his native Dublin. However, he conducted his 'topographical symphony'¹¹ from abroad: his books were in fact written during his voluntary exile in continental cities - Zurich, Trieste and Paris¹² – from which he contemplated Dublin through three different 'lenses'. An apparent paradox central to his work is that whilst fleeing from the 'nets' of State, Church and family in Ireland, these are the very themes that animate his writings from his short stories *Dubliners*, his autobiographical *Portrait of the Artist*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. One of the main

⁹ W. Y. TINDALL, *A reader's guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1959, pp. 39-41.

¹⁰ E. BULSON, 'Topics and Geographies', in J. M. RABATÉ, ed., *Palgrave Advances in James Joyce Studies*, Houndmills and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 100.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹² M. BEGNAL, *Joyce and the City: The Significance of Place*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2002, pp. xx-212.

reasons, apart from his disdain of the place, that brought Joyce to stay away from Dublin was that he dared not risk contaminating the remembered city in his head.¹³ By following Joyce's capacity to recreate Dublin inside his imagination, this work wants to show you a city that is no longer 'out there'¹⁴ in the world, but inside the writer as something that he is free to name, order, and give shape to. Dublin in *Dubliners* is the capital of literary cities, a microcosm of the universe, a veritable city of cities, in which Joyce was able to bring life.¹⁵

For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal.¹⁶

In the first chapter of my dissertation I begin by entering Dublin buildings, such as houses, pubs, workplaces, and I have a look at the Dubliners' life. Furthermore, I divide the first chapter into five paragraphs following Joyce's division in his writing of the book, i.e.: the four phases of a man – childhood, adolescence, maturity, public life. The fifth paragraph summarizes the main theme of *Dubliners*, i.e. death, which is the most tangible presence. In fact, nothing really happens in terms of action in *Dubliners*. The stories begin in the middle of something and stop unexpectedly with what may or may not be a new beginning, they end in exact moment of climax, paralyze the character in that moment leaving the reader to decide what will happen.¹⁷

The second chapter deals with the main motifs of the novel. In particular the first two paragraphs represent how the capital appears with its geometrical shape – it could be drawn by a circle – and its colours, which are not colours of life but of stagnation, paralysis and death. After a first look at the appearance of the city, I analyze its internal life: the paralysis which permeates the narrative of all the stories, and as a consequence the desire and, above all, the need for the protagonists to escape from the prison of Dublin. However, in particular the third and fourth paragraphs show the reader how the hope of a new life through an escape or a dream or the love for someone else or the view of 'green eye of the sailor' ('An Encounter') fail and in the end it remains nothing but romantic illusions. The last three paragraphs of the second chapter are about the

¹³ J. BANVILLE, 'James Joyce's Dublin', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 21, N° 2, Summer 2004, pp. 84-89.

¹⁴ E. BULSON, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁶ A. POWER, *From an Old Waterford House*, London, n.d., 1949, pp. 63-64.

¹⁷ G. LEONARD, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

difficulties that the Dubliners have to afford in the paralyzed and paralyzing capital. After the Great Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s there are still families who live in very poor conditions in Dublin's suburbs, for instance Mr Lenehan in 'Two Gallants', who can afford only a meal per day. What is more, many inhabitants live in a condition of psychological isolation, they feel entrapped in the conventions of the family, job and society such as Little Chandler of 'A Little Cloud', Mr Farrington in 'Counterparts' or Eveline in the story that shares her name, and as a result they become the actors – like Mr Farrington - or the victims – like Eveline - of violence as they need to give vent to their unexpressed frustration. Another consequence of the Dubliners' isolation and paralysis is alcoholism. As a way to forget their problems and restrictions of life, many Dubliners drink: Eveline's father has been drinking a lot after his wife's death; Mrs Sinico starts to go out very evening for a drink after her failure in love both with her husband and also with Mr Duffy in the story of 'A Painful Case'; Mr Farrington drinks everyday to pass over his frustration in the job that he hates. Thus, until the last two stories Joyce's characters drink: 'Grace' begins with a man who falls out of drunkenness, while 'The Dead' starts with a banquet where almost everyone drinks whiskey.

The third chapter goes beyond Dublin curtains, in particular it puts light on the religion in *Dubliners*. Just for this topic one would need a single book to deal with; however, I focus on a few main details starting from the presence of a paralyzed and paralyzing church in the city, considering Dublin as a fallen Eden in order to stop at some symbols and characters of the novel that suggest sterility in the religious institution. It is in the very fifth paragraph in which I want to underline the sterility in the Church and how in Joyce's time it was a means of economic affair as we can see in Father Purdon's words in the story of 'Grace'. Through an overall look at religion in *Dubliners*, the last section of this chapter gives us some information about religion in Joyce's life and in his city.

The following chapter summarizes *Dubliners'* main symbols which can be seen as a mirror, a reflection of the city itself. Windows can be found from the very first story in the boy's passing in front of Father Flynn's house and fill the last story of the novel. Then, almost in every story the Dubliners eat, and quite each story is set at sunset, in the evening, at night or in a dark atmosphere, and sometimes it is the very announcement of the day that breaks the magic happy feeling of the characters – such as in the case of Jimmy Doyle in 'After the Race'. The following paragraph is centered around dust. Not only in 'Eveline' does the protagonist wonder 'where on earth all the dust came from' (*D*,

p.25), but in every story we have the feeling that Dublin is surrounded by a dusty and musty atmosphere; so I recapitulate the concept of paralysis in *Dubliners*. Water will be analyzed according to its function in a religious way and also in its physical state as snow – focusing mainly on the last story of the novel. After the ‘Water’ paragraph, I gave the title of ‘Sound, Noise, Silence’ because when I read *Dubliners* for the second time, I had the feeling that all the stories are rich in acoustic sense, even though characters murmur as Father Flynn’s confession to the boy in ‘The Sisters’, or music is ‘broken’ like the harmonium in ‘Eveline’. As well as religion, music, too, is sold for money - this can be seen in ‘A Mother’. Moreover, one of the first images we get after a first reading is that of iron images – above all iron railings: they are the ‘manacles’ which highly suggest the sense of paralysis and inaction of the protagonist. While the last two sections of this fourth chapter consist of a wide survey of the images that recur in the background of many stories and that, if read in details, can show us hidden meanings, such the ‘yellowing photograph’ of a priest (‘Eveline’) or the presence of a ‘disused distillery’ outside the window (‘A Painful Case’).

The last chapter reveals Dublin background at the time of James Joyce. First of all, the first paragraph covers the Irish condition under the British pressure both in the people and in the urban landscape. Secondly, a few of modernity is described in the following section with the title ‘A Brush Stroke of Modernity’. In addition, another paragraph considers Dublin as a co-protagonist of the short stories; while, in the last three sections I place a final emphasis on the significance of the relationship between the city and the author.

Mr Joyce’s merit ... is that he carefully avoids telling you a lot that you don’t want to know. He presents his people swiftly and vividly, he does not sentimentalise over them, he does not weave convolutions. He is a realist. He does not believe “life” would be all right if we stopped vivisection or if we instituted a new sort of “economics.” He gives the thing as it is. He is not bound by the tiresome convention that any part of life, to be interesting, must be shaped into conventional form of a “story.” [...] Life for the most part does not happen in neat little diagrams and nothing is more tiresome than the continual pretence that it does. [...] He gives us things as they are, not only for Dublin, but for every city. Erase the local names and a few specifically local allusions, and a few historic events of the past, and substitute a few different local names, allusions and events, and these stories could be retold in any town.¹⁸

¹⁸ E. POUND, ‘Review of *Dubliners*’, *The Egoist*, 1, N° 14, 15 July 1914.

Joyce is completely detached from his work, he just observes his characters:

The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.¹⁹

¹⁹ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1968, p. 155.

CHAPTER ONE

I. DUBLINERS' STRUCTURE: LOOKING AT THE MAP

Dublin was a new and complex sensation ... In the beginning he contented himself with circling timidly round the neighbouring square or, at most, going half way down one of the side streets: but when he had made a skeleton map of the city in his mind he followed boldly one of its central lines until he reached the customhouse.¹

An intersection between geography and storytelling emerges in Joyce's *Dubliners*. Living in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris, Joyce did have a mental image, a 'queer idea of Dublin', that he would craft for his fiction from outside his homeland.² Joyce wanted to bring on his paper the geographical realism, this is why he wanted to write a novel complete with over two hundred street addresses.³

It is Budgen's book, in particular, that reveals Joyce's effort to bring the geographical and historical specificity of Dublin into being. Budgen recalls when Joyce claimed that *Ulysses* could function as a blueprint if the city happened to disappear, Joyce said: 'I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book'.⁴ Promoting the image of the artist as cartographer, Budgen celebrates a mode of writing in which the fifteen stories are told as if on a map and the characters arranged on it, and reveals the valuable role of geographical and temporal precision in the layout and development of the episode. In order to write himself out of the text into impersonality, Joyce maintains the focus on the city as though it were an objective reality and not the fanciful musings and memories of an exiled writer.⁵ And to enrich further our understanding of Dublin's

¹ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Dubliners*, K. J. H. DETTMAR, intr., New York, Barnes & Noble Books, 2004, p. 57.

² E. BULSON, "Joyce's Geodesy," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 25, N° 2, Winter 2001–2002, p. 81.

³ See: R. KAIN, *Fabulous Voyager: A Study of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1947; C. HART and L. KNUTH, *A Topographical to James Joyce's 'Ulysses'*, Colchester, Essex, Wake Newsletter Press, 1978; B. BENSTOCK, *Who's He When He's At Home: A James Joyce Directory*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1980; M. SEIDEL, *James Joyce's Epic Geography*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1978. For some of the more recent debates about Joyce, nationalism, and geography see: M. HOWES, "'Goodbye Ireland I'm Going to Gort': Geography, Scale, and Narrating the Nation", and E. DUFFY, "Disappearing Dublin: *Ulysses*, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Space", in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *Semicolonial Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁴ F. BUDGEN, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses' and Other Writings*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 67–68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

geography, it is necessary to stand back from the map so that we do not get lost in what one critic calls Joyce's 'fictional Baedeker of Dublin'.⁶

Joyce's 1906 'wish' for a map and his decision to map-out Dublin is nothing short of a political gesture that allowed him to bring Ireland to the world and give Ireland back to the Irish.⁷ In the socio-historical implications of map-reading and map-making, Henri Lefebvre recommends that maps be read as historical documents whose legend is historically contingent:

How many maps, in the descriptive or geographical sense, might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents? ... It is not only the codes - the map's legend, the conventional sign of map-making and map-reading - that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used.⁸

The map derives from a specific historical context, but it acts also as a kind of telescope through which we can notice the changing cultural and historical modes of interpretation that condition the perspective.⁹ In Irish maps, Joyce spies Irish historical events. The fragmented map of Dublin represents a type of narrative mediation through which Joyce can approach the English language, structure his story, and write his 'history of Ireland' from abroad.¹⁰

I.1. Childhood: 'The Sisters', 'An Encounter', 'Araby'.

As we continue to sit above the real and imagined coordinates of this version of Dublin conditioned by an exile's perspective, we need to wonder what Joyce passes on to us in the wake of his own geodesy.¹¹ From the first 'step' of the novel - 'The Sisters' - we come into contact with a strong atmosphere of paralysis. Joyce establishes the theme of

⁶ R. KAIN, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁷ D. LLOYD, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987, p. 93.

⁸ H. LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space*, D. N. SMITH, trans., Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, pp. 85-86.

⁹ E. BULSON, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

paralysis from the very first page: ‘Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word *paralysis*’ (*D*, p.3). ‘The Sisters’ is the first of the three stories in the collection told in the first-person point of view. As in the other two stories, ‘An Encounter’ and ‘Araby’, the narrator never reveals his name and rarely takes part into conversations. On the first page three words are set to understand of what *Dubliners* will deal about: paralysis, gnomon and simony. The first one means that people who live in Dublin are paralyzed by a city that is paralyzed itself. Gnomon in Euclid’s definition is both a parallelogram with a smaller parallelogram missing in one corner and the pillar of a sundial, which tells time by casting part of a circle into shadow.¹² Simony is the crime consisting of a trade of holy or spiritual things. Thus Dublin is the paralyzed and paralyzing city where imprisoned souls take part to their everyday degradation.¹³

Looking at the map of Dublin, we enter the child’s house and we meet other three *Dubliners*: the boy’s uncle, his aunt and Mr Cotter. Later, we go out again in Great Britain Street toward Father Flynn’s house, where his two sisters, Nannie and Eliza, welcome the boy and his aunt. What distinguishes the boy from the other characters is a condition of mind: if the adult *Dubliners* of the story think they know enough and gave up any search for meaning long ago, on the contrary, the boy is aware he knows little and he is opened to learning and experience seeking to arrive at understanding through inquiry.¹⁴

Mr Joyce’s ‘Araby’ is much better than a “story”, it is a vivid waiting.¹⁵

The places and trajectory of the young protagonist of the third story of *Dubliners*, ‘Araby’, seem to mirror ‘The Sisters’. Through the boy Joyce describes his cold and dark house in North Richmond Street in the north of Dublin in 1895, and from the very opening paragraph the topographic detail of a blind street is repeated twice foreshadowing how the city, a kind of Eliot’s *Waste Land*, does not allow a maturity of mind:

¹² D. GIFFORD, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for ‘Dubliners’ and ‘A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man’*, California, University of California Press, 1982, p. 27.

¹³ P. F. HERRING, “‘Dubliners’: The Trials of Adolescence”, in M. T. REYNOLDS, ed., *James Joyce: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliff, Prentice Hall, 1993, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁵ E. POUND, ‘Review of *Dubliners*’, *The Egoist*, 1, N° 14, 15 July 1914.

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.[...] When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre (*D*, p.19).

The 'hero' is a boy fascinated by old books and trapped in a musty place where all the objects give a sense of oldness, paralysis and ice: 'air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the page of which were curled and damp. [...] I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow' (*D*, p.19), and all is 'rusty' like the bicycle-pump or 'wild' like the garden behind the house. The protagonist falls in love with Mangan's sister who stands both for the Church and Ireland, as she cannot go to the bazaar because of a retreat in her convent, and described while turning a silver bracelet round and round her wrist, she mimics the circular movement and lack of freedom typical of Irish people. Symbolizing the enchanting East, exotic places and a rebirth, the bazaar offers experiences that differ from everyday Dublin and at the same time Mangan's sister intoxicates the narrator with new feelings of joy. However, his love for her must face apathy at school, his uncle's delay and Dublin trains. The boy promises Mangan's sister he will go to Araby to buy a gift for her, but these mundane realities shift his plans, and his desires are ultimately unfulfilled. Through the boy's eyes we can imagine this bazaar: 'in front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.[...] I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery (*D*, p.23)'. As the bazaar closes down, he realizes that his desire to get her love is only a vain wish for change. In the end the boy fails. Not only does he arrive too late at the bazaar, but instead of reaffirming his love thinking about new ideas to conquer the girl, he simply gives up. Thus, the blind street of the opening paragraph mirrors the blindness of the boy's soul: 'Then I turned away slowly [...]. Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger' (*D*, p.24)'. We get in contact with a stagnant reality in which, even in the most unusual events of the city like an annual bazaar, fulfillment and contentedness remain foreign for the Dubliners.

Going back to the second story, 'An Encounter', we notice that it can be seen both as a continuation of 'The Sisters' – the nameless boy is a little older now and he is a student at Belvedere of Great Denmark Street – and as a kind of bridge between 'The Sisters' and 'Araby'. In fact, it is set in an opening place, on a field far away from the boys' home and school, so outside the city centre, where two children can do new experiences:

When the restraining influence of the school was at a distance I began to hunger again for wild sensations, for the escape which those chronicles of disorder alone seemed to offer me. [...] But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad (*D*, p.12).

The narrator and his friends play games about the Wild West to disrupt the rote activity of school. They also read magazines of the Wild West and detective stories as opening doors to enter into imaginary worlds beyond their boring Irish culture. However, they never fully reach escape and the magical adventure ends when the two boys arrive tired through squalid streets to a destitute field on a cliff with musty biscuits for food and a bottle of raspberry lemonade as a drink:

It was too late and we were too tired to carry out our project of visiting the Pigeon House. [...] The sun went in behind some clouds and left us to our jaded thoughts and the crumbs of our provisions. There was nobody but ourselves in the field (*D*, pp.14-15).

On the other hand, their quest has not come to an end, yet, as they have a discomfiting encounter with an 'old jossler' with 'great gaps in his mouth between his yellow teeth' (*D*, p.16). Completely paralyzed by the old pervert man, the young narrator can do nothing but stare at the ground and listen, such as the next Dubliners, Bob Doran (in 'The Boarding House') and Eveline 'helpless animal', who are both victims of the situation and unable to move as stuck in that position. The ships, the river (the Liffey), the sea, the ferryboat might turn into symbols of new seduction and of romantic adventure for a different and new life that goes beyond the bound of the Dublin map and that does not belong to the mechanic scheme of the capital. However, Dublin wants Dubliners to remain inside its borders, both physically and mentally, and turns possible adventure or escape into inevitable failure.

The three first stories are located in the northern part of the city centre and the journeys of the narrators are directed toward the East. As a matter of fact, in ‘An Encounter’ and in ‘Araby’ young men seek experiences in the east of Dublin. In the former, two boys traverse Dublin east towards the Pigeon House off Sandymount in order to satisfy their lust for a fantasy at the other end of the world, the American West. Their final destination is Ringsend, about as far east as they could go in Dublin. In the latter, the trajectory of the boy’s movement is eastward as he walks from his home on North Richmond Street, south into Buckingham Street, to the station where he boards the special train that takes him past Westmoreland Row Station and therefore eastward toward the Araby bazaar. The title ‘Araby’ opens a series of a network of east imagery in *Dubliners*: ‘The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me’ (*D*, p.21). While in ‘The Sisters’ the eastward direction is not geographically traced but only confined to dream, as the boy dreams of far away east place, Persia. What is more, the protagonist’s journey to the house of Father Flynn’s sisters is apparently eastward: ‘the window-panes of the houses that looked to the west reflected the tawny gold of a great bank of clouds’ (*D*, p.6).¹⁶

I.2. Adolescence: ‘Eveline’, ‘After the Race’, ‘Two Gallants’, ‘The Boarding House’.

After the failure of the bazaar adventure outside the blind, narrow and musty streets of Dublin, we find ourselves entrapped again in a dusty house in the heart of the city, i.e. the heart of paralysis. Like the young male narrator in ‘Araby’, Eveline, in the story that shares her name, lives in one of those ‘little brown houses’, and she, too, is suffocating in such an atmosphere unable to renew, as she continually breathes ‘the odour of dusty cretonne’ (*D*, p.25).¹⁷ The female protagonist personifies James’s sister ‘Poppie’ (Margaret) who was 20 years old and who promised her mother she would take care of the house and of the family after her death, despite a violent and thoughtless father. All the oppressive atmosphere denies Eveline the possibility of being active in her life – ‘she was tired’ (*D*, p.25). Like the two boys of ‘An Encounter’ who start a new adventure, a turning point is possible in the protagonist’s life because she could abandon all of her

¹⁶ E. G. INGERSOLL, “The Psychic Geography of Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’”, *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 2002, 6, N° 4, Winter 2002, pp. 98-107.

¹⁷ V. CHENG, *Joyce, Race and Empire*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 101.

repressive life leaving for Buenos Ayres with her boyfriend Frank. However, contrasting feelings bombard her mind:

She would not be treated as her mother had been. [...] It was hard work – a hard life. [...] Now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life. She was about to explore another life with Frank (*D*, p.26).

Frank presents himself as both a traveller – in contrast to Eveline who is a prisoner of her house – and a man of some substance, who has a house in the West, in Buenos Ayres, and he represents for Eveline the possibility for a life free from the conventions of her home, family, city and religion. The boy has travelled as far West as it is possible to go:

He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday (*D*, p.27).

Sailing through the Straits of Magellan Frank went to the East which the boy in ‘Araby’ was bent on travelling.¹⁸ But, Frank wants to bring Eveline outside Dublin, outside the Irish map, he wants to challenge the city which paralyzes its inhabitants with its ‘iron railings’. And, again, Eveline cannot choose freely because of her father and because of the promise she made to her mother ‘to keep the home together as long as she could’ (*D*, p.28). The girl cannot escape from the prison of everyday Dublin, her reliance on everyday rituals causes Eveline to freeze and not to follow Frank onto the ship, suggesting that her immobility at this point eradicates any future ‘travel’ as well:

He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hand at the iron railings. [...] She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal (*D*, pp.28-29).

Unlike Joyce who left Dublin from ‘North Wall’ harbor with Nora Barnacle, Eveline’s frozen action is the first sign that she has not made a decision, she has no way

¹⁸ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

of escape but instead remains fixed in a circle of indecision: she will hover in mindless repetition, on her own, in a paralyzed and paralyzing Dublin.¹⁹

The next two stories are set above all along Dublin's streets. In the former - 'After the Race' - the narrative is set from the outside to the inside, and in the motion by Jimmy Doyle's desire for 'adventure' embodied in the automobile bearing him 'toward Dublin'; the latter - 'Two Gallants' - deals with two 'gallants' and with their hypocrite job in the city by night.

'After the Race' constitutes a variation in texture from most of the stories in *Dubliners*. It exchanges claustrophobia for a false sense of spaciousness, paralysis for a feverish and futile mobility.²⁰

The automobile race is a special international event which awakes the immobile and frozen Dublin. It is run between Naas (in the West of Dublin) and Inchicore, the neighbourhood in the south of Phoenix Park. Unlike the first stories in which the writer analyses the family as a social problem, now he explores a wide range of issues that focus on the gap between the poor and the rich in Dublin, or between the poor Irish and the rich European, and on the role played by money in society. The Frenchman's automobile, which moves Jimmy through the admiring gazes of 'the gratefully oppressed' Dubliners along the road, is bearing him toward East beyond Dublin - 'the Continent' (*D*, p.30) - , which will also energize Gabriel Conroy's desire until the end of 'The Dead', when he will turn his eyes 'westward'.²¹ Evidently, the day trip in the Frenchman's automobile has been for Jimmy the equivalent of the boy's journey to Araby. The passages representing Jimmy's sensibility suggest the metaphors of youthful energy and aspiration to travel, paralleling the metaphors of chivalric quest in the earlier story. However, like the previous boy, Jimmy is unable to reach his father's goal - who makes his money on contracts with the same police who uphold British law - , and like the luxury cars that speed away from the countryside to return to the continent after the race - as the title suggests - , all the money flees from Jimmy's pockets into those of others by the end of the story. On a yacht in Dublin's harbour, about as far 'east' as Jimmy is likely get in the

¹⁹ G. LEONARD, 'Dubliners', in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 87-102.

²⁰ J. C. VOELKER, "'Chronicles of Disorder': Reading the Margins of Joyce's *Dubliners*", *Colby Library Quarterly*, 18, N° 2, June 1982, p. 134.

²¹ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

world, the announcement of the day by an international player signalizes Jimmy's end of illusions and the return to the grey reality.

The main location of 'Two Gallants' is set in a South periphery of the centre of Dublin (Donnybrook) along South Circular Road, in a 'grey warm evening of August' (*D*, p.36). The names of the streets of 'After the Race' reappear here in Lenehan's trajectory: Nassau Street, Kildare Street, Hume Street, Merrion Street, Grafton Street, Capel Street, Dame Street, George Street, Baggot Street. Unlike the other stories of *Dubliners* in which the characters move towards east or west, here the protagonists' movements are circular, obsessive centripetal routes that symbolize a lack of renewal, a movement that is destined to collapse in madness and frustration – 'He walked listlessly round Stephen's Green and then down Grafton Street' (*D*, p.41). One of the two 'gallants', Corley, is described like a robot:

Corley ran his tongue swiftly along his upper lip. [...] He walked with his hands by his sides, holding himself erect and swaying his head from side to side. His head was large, globular and oily. [...] He always stared straight before him as if he were on parade and, when he wished to gaze after some one in the street, it was necessary for him to move his body from the hips (*D*, p.37).

Corley is the harp-player, the policeman, the conqueror who seduces the girl and Ireland - a nation that is betrayed by obscure people as this 'gallant': 'his harp, too, heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees, seemed weary alike of the eyes of strangers and of her master's hands' (*D*, p.40).²² In the end, the small gold coin in Corley's hand stands for the corruption of the city: Corley forces the girl to prostitute herself for him, demonstrating no conclusive sense of both his own and of the girl's condition.

We then leave the two gallants to continue our path. We enter a new house, 'The Boarding House', which was probably in 'Fairview', a neighbourhood in the North-East of Dublin's centre. 'The Boarding House' is a vignette of life in Mrs Mooney's in Hardwicke Street with 'its resident population ... made up of clerks from the city' (*D*, p.46). In an equally close observation of city life and social relationships, Mrs Mooney's boarding house is a rather typical establishment: its presence on Hardwicke Street

²² W. Y. TINDALL, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1959, p. 25.

represents a typical stage in the decline of a street of family residences through boarding houses and ‘private hotels’ into the twilight world of tenement living.²³ Mrs Mooney’s boarding house is a small place where ‘everyone knows everyone else’s business’ (*D*, p.49), a kind of microcosm of Dublin. There are in fact various classes mixed together under the same roof and class lines are constantly negotiated often crossing emotions like love; besides, the inhabitants are not free – as they are not in the city - to do what they choose because of unstated rules of decorum in the house. If from one side such rules maintain order, on the other side they also ensnare people in awkward situations when they try to compete and to have secret interests. Marriage offers not only profit and promise but also entrapment and loss. What begins as a simple affair becomes a tactical game of obligation and reparation between Bob Doran and Polly or – more precisely – between Bob and Polly’s mother. The society expects something from Mr Doran. The boy has an affair with Molly but this goes beyond his personal feelings ‘to remain free and not marry’, as he knows that ‘once you are married you are done for’ (*D*, p.50). When he descends the stairs to meet with Mrs Mooney, he yearns to escape but knows no one is on his side. The force that pushes him down the stairs is a force of anxiety about what others will think of him:

Going down the stairs his glasses became so dimmed with moisture that he had to take them off and polish them. He longed to ascend through the roof and fly away to another country where he would never hear again of his trouble, and yet a force pushed him downstairs step by step. The implacable faces of his employers and of the Madam stared upon his discomfiture (*D*, pp.50-51).

Joyce’s world is one of families striving to keep up modest middle-class appearances: clerks and small business people, the boarding house keeper, the ladies who give music lessons in their own rooms, all occupations which provide a modest and sometimes struggling respectability, and all on a social and geographical frontier uncomfortably close to a district suffering widespread if very recent social decay.²⁴

²³ L. M. CULLEN, ‘Dublin’, in J. McCOURT, ed., *James Joyce in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 172-183.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-183.

I.3. Maturity: 'A Little Cloud', 'Counterparts', 'Clay', 'A Painful Case'.

In the previous story we learnt from Bob Doran that 'Dublin is such a small city' (*D*, p.49), in the following one, 'A Little Cloud', the protagonist feels 'a prisoner for life' (*D*, p.64) and through his eyes Dublin appears in all its decline, poverty and squalor:

Little Chandler quickened his pace. For the first time in his life he felt himself superior to the people he passed. For the first time his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street. There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin (*D*, p.54).

The story is played in the north bank of the river Liffey, in the centre of Dublin, where Little Chandler works. The title could refer to a restoring rain or an incumbent darkness. The protagonist could embody the little cloud at the mercy of opposite forces: his family's principles and his job from one side, and his desire of being a poet from the other side. Another hypothesis is that the little cloud could be Ignatius Gallaher whose cumbersome presence obscures and confuses Chandler's quiet routine. 'A Little Cloud' maps the frustrated aspirations of the protagonist and contrasts Little Chandler's dissatisfaction with Gallaher's successful writing career abroad. In the story Little Chandler never writes, but he spends plenty of time imagining fame and indulging in poetic sentiments, and even though he has a collection of poetry books, he cannot muster the courage to read them aloud to his wife:

He remembered the books of poetry upon his shelves at home. [...] He had been tempted to take one down from the bookshelf and read out something to his wife. But shyness had always held him back; and so the books had remained on their shelves. At times he repeated lines to himself and this consoled him (*D*, pp.53-54).

Furthermore, if from one side the character uses his country to dream of success, on the other side he blames it for limiting that success: 'There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away' (*D*, p.54).

Concerning the time of the day, Dublin is again filmed at sunset in its dirty and suffocating air that makes its inhabitants likely to mice:

The golden sunset was waning and the air had grown sharp. A horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the thresholds. [...] He picked his way deftly through all that minute vermin-like life and under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in which the old nobility of Dublin had roistered. [...] It was a melancholy tempered by recurrences of faith and resignation and simple joy (*D*, pp.54-55).

As a mouse that runs around its wheel, the protagonist goes on living in the stagnation of the city, in his personality which has not ‘changed an atom’ according to his friend Gallaher, and as a man who has never been somewhere else living ‘in old jog-along Dublin where nothing is known of such things (*D*, pp.57-59). In the end, we see the protagonist filmed in his room, which, like Mrs Mooney’s boarding house, is a small claustrophobic sterile microcosm of Dublin. Here, Little Chandler experiences an epiphany that makes him realize he will never change his life: looking at a picture of his wife after returning home from the pub, he sees the mundane life he leads and briefly questions it;²⁵ his resistance is like a little cloud that passes in the sky. By keeping his child on his arm, he looks like an imprisoned husband and father:

[...] and glanced nervously round the room. [...] A dull resentment against his life awoke within him. Could he not escape from his little house? Was it too late for him to try to live bravely like Gallaher? Could he go to London? 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. [...] He couldn’t read. He couldn’t do anything. [...] It was useless, useless! (*D*, pp.63-64).

Like a bomb which is ready to blow up in a short time, in a moment of liberation Chandler shouts to his child’s face: ‘stop!’ But as soon as his wife comes back and tells him off, his moment of glory ends: his duties of a married Dubliner call him back to the everyday life – ‘He listened while the paroxysm of the child’s sobbing grew less and less; and tears of remorse started to his eyes’ (*D*, p.65). Therefore, the story finishes where it began: a small room in which a camera focuses on its subject, Little Chandler, who sighs about his unrealized aspirations, without reacting but submitting passively to the melancholy thought that it is useless to struggle against fortune and against Dublin itself, a kind of labyrinth of duties from which you cannot escape.

Like Jimmy Doyle and even Gabriel Conroy, Chandler has his eyes figuratively turned toward the east. Much as he notes ‘something vulgar in his friend’, Chandler

²⁵ G. LEONARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

cannot resist ‘look[ing] at his friend enviously’ (*D*, p.58) since Gallaher has been to ‘the Continent’ – to Paris and, even further east, Berlin. Gallaher affects familiarity with Europe. He sees the Continent as a glamorous and sophisticated marriage mart covering a moral squalor, implicit in his boasting of ‘thousands of rich Germans and Jews, rotten with money, that’s only be too glad ...’ (*D*, p.62).²⁶

‘Counterparts’ is quite fine – grim humour – a sense of Dublin as I saw it – a lurid glare over it.²⁷

The following story is located in the centre of Dublin, precisely, the protagonist lives in Sandymount, a suburb southeast of Dublin. As in ‘A Little Cloud’, in ‘Counterparts’ the protagonist Mr Farrington is an employee at a law office and looks for compensation in front of the frustration of the environment in which he lives. His job is based on duplication: he copies documents for a demanding boss producing replications of other things – thus the title ‘Counterparts’. The background is that of a Dublin of drunk people and employees who seem robots, and it highlights the mechanic and endless feature of Mr Farrington’s business life – it is not a coincidence that his name is introduced in the text through the telephone. His ‘heavy dirty eyes’ (*D*, p.72) stand for his blindness in soul and mirror the dirty air of the city. Unlike many characters in *Dubliners* who desire something and face obstacles that frustrate them, Mr Farrington sees everything in the world as an obstacle to his comfort.

Farrington’s movement mirrors the circular eastward journey of the characters as a result of their longing for the exotic, ... painfully, desirable and unattainable ... each locale – the office, the pubs, and home – holds a crisis for Farrington to which he responds with increasing fury.²⁸

Joyce had been battling to keep *Dubliners* as he had written it in the case of truth, i.e. truth demanded real names of places, wanted his character to speak the real language of Dublin.²⁹ Thus, the pubs the protagonist visits, such as that of Patrick O’Neill on Henry Street, exist. We need just a map to trace his movements: having pawned his watch at Terry Kelly’s pawnshop (at 48 Flee Street), he walks along Westmoreland Street (and

²⁶ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

²⁷ Letter to Joyce (29 June 1914), quoted in K. BECKSON and J. M. MUNRO, ‘Letters from Arthur Symons to James Joyce: 1904-1932’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 4, N° 2, Winter 1967, p. 98.

²⁸ R. B. KIBODEAUX, “‘Counterparts’: *Dubliners* without End”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 14, N° 1, 1976, p. 89.

²⁹ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics, 2000, p. viii.

must then follow College Green to Grafton Street and on into Duke Street) to Davy Byrne's pub (at 21 Duke Street); on leaving he walks (back to the corner of Duke and Grafton Streets, turns north towards the river Liffey) to the Scotch House (6-7 Burgh Quay on the Liffey); when it closes, he goes to Mulligan's (around the corner) in Poolbeg Street (8 Poolbeg Street).³⁰

In 'Clay' we meet another female protagonist: Maria. We are now in the laundry named 'Dublin by Lamplight' – at Ballsbridge Terrace, a district southeast of Dublin. Here Maria takes care of the copper boilers as if she metaphorically took care of the bodily remains of her city. In a Joyce's letter, it is said that:

The laundry is run by a society of Protestant spinsters, widows, and childless women [...]; and the phrase 'Dublin by Lamplight' means that Dublin by lamplight is a wicked place full of wicked and lost women whom a kindly committee gathers together for the good work of washing my dirty shirts.³¹

Now the camera shifts from Maria's work place to run along the streets: she is making a northwest trip to arrive to Drumcondra, where Joy and his family live. She is potentially striving for marriage and maternity, but there is lack of life in her: she in fact encapsulates the Irish symbol of life-in-death. The ring, the wedding-cake and the nice meeting with a gentleman in the tram belong to the sphere of a possible marriage for Maria who, however, does not seem to desire. As we can also perceive in the day of the dead, while playing, Maria does not choose the ring but the earth, or at the moment she sings her song from 'The Bohemian Girl', she omits the second part of the song where there are words of love and marriage as to indicate a taboo or censure for her. The title 'Clay' draws attention to Maria's state, i.e. the clay in the Halloween game applies that symbolism of early death to the story as a whole. Like the paralytic Father Flynn from 'The Sisters', Maria is unable to move beyond a superficial, material level, and like Farrington in 'Counterparts', she fails to recognize the tedious routine of her days, as her repetition of the song suggests. In a certain point of view, Maria allows her experience to shape her. The image of her face collapsing into itself in laughter implies that the woman in her blind happiness is mouldable and soft, like clay: 'Maria had to laugh and say she

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xix.

³¹ J. JOYCE, '13 November 1906', in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, p. 130.

didn't want any ring or man either; and when she laughed her grey-green eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness' (*D*, p.77).

Maria's life demands precision and organization and, like Eveline, she focuses intently on life's small details in order to avoid greater pains. Hence, Maria's life is packed in her working place: she has no experiences of everyday life and this is why, just because of the encounter with the gentleman in the tram, Maria fails in her surprise to bring Joe some cakes, or while talking with Joe she names his brother so that he gets angry. On the other hand, Joe shares the same behavior. In fact, he covers up his mysterious, tearful reaction to Maria's song by asking his wife for an ordinary household item, as he tried to hide the more difficult aspects of life with trivial matters. Joe's epiphany is one of barrenness, lovelessness, disorder and loss.³²

'A Painful Case' ends the cycle of maturity, developing the lack of love, the egotism of Chandler, the automatism of Farrington and the sterility of Maria. We are now in the very west side of Dublin, in Chapelizod near Phoenix Park. As many other houses or rooms in *Dubliners*, Mr Duffy's house – similar to a monastic cell and far away from the centre of the city – serves as a microcosm of his soul and of the Dublin atmosphere. Like Joyce himself, James Duffy lives 'a little distance' from his own image:³³ 'He lived at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side-glances. [...] He never gave alms to beggars and walked firmly, carrying a stout hazel' (*D*, p.83)'. The urban landscape that surrounds Duffy is characterized by details of degradation, abandon and sterility: the river is shallow; while the detailed description of the protagonist's home is an indirect presentation of Duffy's obsessive feeling of order and of sobriety that turns the house into a reclusion cell where disorder and spontaneity are unwelcome:

The lofty walls of his uncarpeted room were free from pictures. He had himself bought every article of furniture in the room. [...] Mr Duffy abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder (*D*, p.82).

The over-ripe apple, 'which might have been left there and forgotten' (*D*, p.82), foreshadows the end of the story representing a life-in-death. As a matter of fact, the protagonist is distant from everyone, he is unable to live, he is a solitary man 'with no friends, nor companions, nor church, living his spiritual life without any communion with

³² W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

others and only out of duty of social conventions of civic life he visits his relatives at Christmas and escorts them to the cemetery when they die' (*D*, p. 83) – as if his contact were with the dead. His regular life makes each day the same as the next. Unable of any kind of relationship and physical contact, even a woman, Emily Sinico, cannot free him from his routine:

They agreed to break off their intercourse: every bond, he said, is a bond to sorrow. [...] Mr Duffy returned to his even way of life. His room still bore witness of the orderliness of his mind (*D*, p.85).

Four years after his meeting with Mrs Sinico, he reads that she was run over by a train, and he comes to know how she had been living in solitude. Emily Sinico is a 'traveller'. She and Mr Duffy spend their evenings walking together, and the 'adventure' she offers Duffy at first arouses his desire to escape the deadening confines of his daily life made by routine movements from the bank where he works, to the pub where he eats the same food, to the monastic cell in which he sleeps. His routine movements parallel those of Emily's husband, a sea captain, and therefore a potential Odysseus; in fact, he is as confined as Duffy, playing his way endlessly between Dublin and Rotterdam. If in life Mrs Sinico invigorated Mr Duffy's routine and, through her intimacy, came close to warming his cold heart, it is only in death she succeeds in revealing his cycle of solitude to him:

She seemed to be near him in the darkness. [...] He felt his moral nature falling to pieces. [...] One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness. [...] He felt that he was alone (*D*, pp.89-90).

Duffy is offered the possibility of becoming a traveller with Emily, but retreats into that debilitating position of the other Dubliners.³⁴ Like other characters in *Dubliners* who experience epiphanies, Mr Duffy is not inspired to begin a new phase in his life, but instead he bitterly accepts his loneliness, remaining like that initial over-ripe apple, i.e. he has failed in his knowledge of humanity.³⁵ 'A Painful Case' concludes where it begins, with Mr Duffy alone. Like Eveline, Duffy hears the call to the journey, but it frightens him as a form of confinement, instead of enfranchisement. After reading the parody of 'A

³⁴ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

³⁵ S. BERSHTEL, "A Note on the Forgotten Apple in James Joyce's 'A Painful Case'", *Studies in Short Fiction*, 16, 1979, p. 239.

Painful Case', he seems to be setting out on a journey of empathetic identification with Emily Sinico, anticipating Gabriel Conroy's journey westward to embrace the vagrant spirit of Michael Furey. If Duffy is moving into Phoenix Park from Chapelizod Bridge, it would appear he is facing west, or at least north, on this evening of his call to the imaginative journey of joining the shade of Emily. However, he turns towards Dublin and the East turning his back on the West and his eyes to the east towards the lovers in the dark with their 'venal and furtive loves' (*D*, p.89).³⁶

I.4. Public Life: 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', 'A Mother', 'Grace'

'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' takes place in the heart of the commercial Dublin, in Wicklow Street, in the Royal Exchange Ward, the seat of Dublin's corporation. The story is located around the castle, in the centre of the city and on the south bank of the Liffey. The Royal Exchange Ward was built between 1769 and 1779 and, afterwards, became the place of political meetings and was called City Hall.³⁷ The story mourns the death of Parnell, but it also mourns the death of firm political opinion in general. The episode reveals how the past still shapes the present, but also how those living in the present fail to correct or atone for past wrongs: they will sit year after year, impotently wearing their ivy - 'Mr Hynes sat down again on the table. [...] Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing' (*D*, p.105).

Going on walking on Dubliners' tracks, in 'A Mother' we have a rest in a concert place in the centre of Dublin: the 'Antient Concert' near the Westland Row Station. The 'mother' is Mrs Kearney, who is both identified with the Irish Catholic Church and also with the East that has lost every redemptive force. This can be seen as Mrs Kearney is described in her voracity while eating in which she used to eat 'a great deal of Turkish Delight in secret' (*D*, p.106) – a first of sign of degradation of the exotic East³⁸ that comes back to the Dubliners to seduce them. In order to earn money the woman exploits her daughter Kathleen, who possess an Irish name and who is very clever at music. Before drawing the contract with Mr Holohan in which it is decided that Miss Kathleen will play four concerts in turn of money, Mrs Kearney 'brought him into the drawing-

³⁶ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

³⁷ A. and C. BLACK, *Black's Tourist's Guide to Ireland*, Edinburgh, A. and C. BLACK, eds., 1888, p. 33.

³⁸ C. H. PEAKE, *James Joyce, the Citizens and the Artist*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1977, p. 15.

room, made him sit down and brought out the decanter and the silver biscuit-barrel ... and finally a contract was drawn up by which Kathleen was to receive eight guineas for her services as accompanist at the four grand concerts' (*D*, p.107). At the final concert Mrs Kearney asks Mr Holohan when her daughter is going to be paid, showing her obsession for money such as the Catholic Church, which insists on having its money like the lousy politicians of the previous story. In the end the daughter is paid only four guineas and the whole family leaves the concert to go back home continuing the everyday monotonous life. Hence, Joyce wants us to see how art in Ireland is reduced to a commercial affair.

After a world of art, we enter a café in which another story starts in the centre of the city. 'Grace' begins with Kernan's fall out of drunkenness opening a metaphorically hell. Thanks to a friend of him he is brought home. The story offers figures of both travel and confinement. Kernan is a vital figure identified as a 'young man in a cycling-suit' (*D*, p.118). In his bicycling he anticipates that other cyclist, Gabriel, who tells Molly Ivors : 'every year I go for a cycling tour with some fellows ... to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany' (*D*, p.148) – so on the Continent. The 'young man in the cycling-suit' serves as Gabriel's forerunner by pointing to directions other than the East, since in Dublin, he cannot travel farther 'east' in this engendered geography of power. Ironically, Kernan manages to have an encounter with a 'travelling man', a genuinely free individual, without recognizing the potential for freeing himself from his own confinement as a prisoner of the house. He has traded the role of 'commercial traveller' for a sedentary job as a tea taster in a 'little office in Crowe Street on the window blind of which has been written the name of his firm with the address – London, E.C. [East Central]' (*D*, p.120). Like the other Dubliners, Kernan seems blinded by the East to whose hegemony he pledges his allegiance. The church in Gardner Street to which they 'travel' turns out to be a variety of bazaar, where Father Purdon is misleading his clients into believing that they can acquire the treasure of Divine Grace at bargain-basement prices:³⁹ 'He came to speak to business men and he would speak to them in a business-like way' (*D*, p.136).

In addition, 'Grace' is one of Joyce's best evocations of Dublin's life with its modest employees, Mr Kernan, Mr Power, Mr M'Coy, who with Mr Cunningham make up a little group 'which left the city shortly after noon on Sunday with the purpose of arriving as soon as possible at some public-house on the outskirts of the city where its

³⁹ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

members duly qualified themselves as *bona-fide* travellers' (*D*, p.124) and through whose eyes others of comparable social status are identified in a religious service at what may be described as the frontier church of Gardiner Street. This milieu can be summarized in the career progression of Mr M'Coy himself:⁴⁰

His line of life had not been the shortest distance between two points and for short periods he had been driven to live by his wits. He had been a clerk in the Midland Railway, a canvasser for advertisements for *The Irish Times* and for *The Freeman's Journal*, a town traveller for a coal firm on commission, a private inquiry agent, a clerk in the office of the Sub-Sheriff, and he had recently become secretary to the City Coroner (*D*, p. 123).

We eventually arrive at the last story completing our way on the Dublin map. As a camera that films sketches of different scenes, the last story addresses to the state of Ireland and seems to be the complete puzzle of all the previous fourteen episodes with all its topics, characters and places.

What binds 'Ivy Day' to 'The Dead' is that in both stories the central agitation derives from a character who never appears, who is dead, absent.⁴¹

I.5. 'The Dead'.

'The Dead' brings the themes of all other stories into vital relationship with each other, while at the same time it traces a complex process of self-recognition which purges *Dubliners* of all vestiges of provincialism.⁴²

In 'The Dead' we are invited to take part to the Morkans' party. The party is the final report of the boundless paralysis life and of the futile routines that make existence so lifeless in *Dubliners*. It is at once the summary and climax of *Dubliners*; of intermediate length, it is neither story nor novel.⁴³ In every space of Ireland snow touches the dead and the living together linking and fixing them in a state of tedium of frozen paralysis. The events of the party repeat each year like a carousel: Gabriel gives a speech, Freddy Malins arrives drunk, everyone dances the same memorized steps, everyone eats, and words of death cover the party in which past, present and future are interwoven together.

⁴⁰ L. M. CULLEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-183.

⁴¹ R. ELLMANN, "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'", *The Kenyon Review*, 20, N° 4, Autumn 1958, p. 526.

⁴² A. W. LITZ, *James Joyce*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1966, p. 55.

⁴³ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

In the last part of the story Gabriel is alone with his wife in a room at the Gresham Hotel, in the centre of the city and which faces west across Sackville Street:⁴⁴

He felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure' (*D*, pp.170-171).

Gabriel directs the gaze of his mind's eye toward the West and to the figure of Michael Furey, considering himself as a shadow of a person, flickering as a flake of snow in a world, in a Dublin, in which the living and the dead meet. In particular, through the seven repetitions of the word 'falling' in relation to the 'snow', there is a fine moment in which everything is dissolved into writing, into an evocation of a world elsewhere, in which conflict is annulled and the distinction between deathly paralysis and total liberation is designedly and canceled (*D*, p. 176).⁴⁵ And together with Gabriel, we too dissolve under the snow of a Dublin winter:

His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and live in was dissolving and dwindling (*D*, p.176).

⁴⁴ D. SPURR, 'Colonial Spaces in Joyce's Dublin', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 37, N° 1 / 2, 1999-2000, p. 28.

⁴⁵ D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

CHAPTER TWO

II. MOTIFS

As a cow devours grass, so literary themes are devoured; devices fray and crumble.¹

II.1. The Shape of the Capital: Dublin as a Circle.

In *Dubliners* one pattern comes to the fore time after time: the protagonist of a story (whether an individual or a group) is placed in a position which reveals the direction he must take if he is to live a full and creative life; but always he is or has been defeated by the combined forces of his environment.²

Nothing really happens in *Dubliners*. Joyce focuses on the details of everyday life, on routine formulas of everyday speech, and the rhetorical skills become so patterns of repetition.³ Compass directions, especially east and west, play important roles. Spatially, the 'world' of *Dubliners* is quite contradictory because, even if the protagonists frequently express desire to travel, and occasionally go so far as planning to leave Dublin, the city generally is hedged round with restrictions and inhibitions like the wall of thorns or fire around a fairy-tale castle.⁴

By looking at the stories singularly or together they move following a circular motion. The book begins with a boy that, in the darkness, 'studied the lighted square of window' (*D*, p.3) and, thinking about death, he feels his 'soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region' (*D*, p.4); it ends with a mature man that, while the snow falls in the darkness, looks at a window thinking about death and he is conscious that 'his soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead' (*D*, p.176). As a consequence, 'magnetized by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit' (*D*, p.16). The magnetizing words round

¹ V. SHKLOVSKY, 'The Aesthetics of Immediacy', in S. DANIUS, ed., *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*, Ithaca, Cornell, 2002, pp. 145-188.

² W. M. SCHUTTE, *M. Joyce and William Shakespeare: A Study in the Meaning of 'Ulysses'*, Archon Books, 1971, p. 136.

³ K. WALES, *The Language of James Joyce*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1992, p. 39.

⁴ E. G. INGERSOLL, "The Psychic Geography of Joyce's 'Dubliners'", *Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 6, N° 4, Winter 2002, pp. 98-107.

which all *Dubliners*' themes move are those which seduce the boy in the very first lines of the book, 'paralysis', 'gnomon', 'simony': the short stories are gnomons of paralysis and simony.⁵ Hence, if one wanted to represent Dublin with a unique continue line and without lifting the pen from the paper, one would draw a circle. Conventionally, the circle is associated with life and with positive connotations, such as in wedding rings and Christmas wreaths; however, in *Dubliners* it stands for a kind of invisible, huge manacle that blocks its victims denying their progress, growth and development. There is no way out in the circular itinerary in Dublin: the city is completely paralyzed.

The monotonous grammar of *Dubliners* itself accentuates the sense of infantile repetitiveness that is the abiding feature of Dublin's condition. Journey becomes a leitmotiv for the Dubliners' aspirations and the key to the journey is repetition.⁶ The repetition and the circularity of these Dubliners' lives appear vicious as they bring the traveller or escapee back to the beginning trapping him in circles of frustration, restraint and violence, and preventing him or her from being receptive to new experiences and happiness. In addition, restrictive routines and the repetitive, mundane details of everyday life mark the lives of not only those who face difficulties, but also those characters who have little open conflict in their lives. On the other hand, although Joyce's prose never entirely loses the love of monotony that affects *Dubliners*, it also incorporates as repetition a revival, an echo, or a memory, or an analogy, or a parallel.⁷

The young boy of 'An Encounter' yearns for a respite from the routine of school, only to find himself sitting in a field listening to a pervert man who is recycling disturbing thoughts. The figure, with his aspect and his movement, embodies the typical Dubliner routine. He walks in circles, approaching and passing the boys before retracing his steps to join them, and his speech is repetitive as if it mirrored his walking:

He gave me the impression that he was repeating something which he had learned by heart or that, magnetized by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit. [...] He repeated his phrases over and over again. [...] His mind, as if magnetized again by his speech, seemed to circle slowly round and round its new centre (*D*, pp.16-17).

⁵ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, M. E. CAPODILISTA, trans., Roma, Newton Compton Editori, 2007, p. 7.

⁶ D. SEAMUS, 'Dead ends: Joyce's finest moments', in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *Semicolonial Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 21-35.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Both his speech and his walk remind us of the boy protagonist of 'The Sisters' who feels his 'soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region' (*D*, p.4), and the man's obsession is a form of mental and emotional paralysis, a circuit of feelings from which, like Father Flynn, he cannot escape.⁸

In 'Araby' a young boy wants to go to the bazaar to buy a gift for the girl he loves, but he is late because his uncle becomes mired in the routine of his workday. In 'Eveline' the girl chooses her sad and abuse familiar life instead of an unknown adventure with the boy she loves and a freedom from the cage of Dublin. The race cars in 'After the Race' convey images of circular or oval tracks where starting and finish lines are one and the same, and indeed, the story's protagonist seems stuck in a pointless circuit of false friendships. In 'A Little Cloud' the automatism of the protagonist's life is perfectly described by the adverb 'punctiliously': 'when his hour had struck he stood up and took leave of his desk and of his fellow-clerks punctiliously' (*D*, p.54). In 'Counterparts' Farrington's work mirrors his social and home life, i.e.: he makes a living copying documents. His speech is repetitive, too: he repeats the story of the confrontation with Mr Alleyne to his friends, who then also repeat it in turn. In addition, as if each person were chained to the other in a circle, everyone in a group takes turns buying drinks for all the companions, and the protagonist continually spends money and consumes more alcohol. As a result, his circular activities become more and more brutal. His repetitive existence demonstrates the dangerous potential of repetition which causes him to become more and more angry until he arrives to an explosive physical reaction: he beats his child at home. In 'Clay' for Maria everything demands organization and precision, and like a circle, whose geometrical shape is the symbol of perfection, she 'punctiliously' supervises the distribution of food portions at the charity and she repeatedly divides her day – and also her life – minute after minute:

The women would have their tea at six o'clock and she would be able to get away before seven. From Ballsbridge to the Pillar, twenty minutes; from the Pillar to Drumcondra, twenty minutes; and twenty minutes to buy the things. She would be there before eight (*D*, p.76).

In 'A Painful Case' the narrative circle mimics the protagonist's routine. Mr Duffy is so obsessed with his predictable life – for example he spends a small piece of the day in

⁸ P. PARRINDER, *James Joyce*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 56.

his secular setting in the eating-house in George's Street – that even after Mrs Sinico's love manifestations, her death and his awareness of his own solitude in life, the protagonist does not change 'an atom'⁹ the life he has created for himself. He is physically and spiritually paralyzed in the schemes of Dublin's life.

In 'Two Gallants' and 'The Dead' characters travel around and around, never moving truly forward, never actually arriving anywhere: their circular movement, that of Lenehan or of Gabriel Conroy in the Morkans' hall, suggests hopeless acceptance.¹⁰ In the former Lenehan travels in a large and meaningless loop around Dublin, stopping only for a paltry meal and ending near to where he began. Lenehan's actions, three in number, are not without possible significance: he looks, eats a mess of peas and wanders around the city. As for his wandering around the city: a map of Dublin shows his course to be almost circular, like that of the racing cars or of the pervert's mind.¹¹ In the latter Gabriel's grandfather is said to have owned a horse named Johnny who worked for the family at the factory 'walking round and round in order to drive the mill' (*D*, p.163). One day, according to family legend, the 'old gentleman' harnessed Johnny to a carriage and led him out into the city. However, as soon as the animal reached a famous statue of King William, it was unable to master any mode of locomotion, instead he started to plod dumbly in an endless circle around the statue – 'anyhow he began to walk round the statue' (*D*, p.164). The horse, a creature of habit going round in circles, is a true Dubliner¹² that reflects the Dubliners' expected routine at this party, which repeats every year, and in particular Gabriel, who while telling the story mimics the animal circling the front hall of the Morkans' house in his galoshes.

⁹ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 2000; quoted in 'A Little Cloud' in the meeting between Ignatius Gallaher and Little Chandler – 'Tommy, he said, I see you haven't changed an atom', p. 57.

¹⁰ W. Y. TINDALL, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1959, p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹² P. PARRINDER, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

II.2. The Colours of Dublin: a World of Blindness and Stagnation.

The book is a clinically detailed diagnosis of hemiplegia and all conclusions concerning the quality of actions within its pages are necessarily foregone. *Dubliners* presupposes a world without possibility, a modernist *Inferno*, a place in which, as Little Chandler puts it, 'You could do nothing'.¹³

Dubliners shows a city filled with the colours and shades of autumn and winter.¹⁴ Yellow, green, brown and grey are the main colours that paint the city of Dublin. In particular, brown and yellow are Joyce's colours of paralysis and decay; yellow and green are tints of stagnation, while the grey stands for hypocrisy.¹⁵

Yellow is the colour of oldness, dirtiness. The old men in *Dubliners*' first two stories show yellow teeth when they smile - '[Father Flynn] used to uncover his big discoloured teeth' (*D*, p.6); in 'An Encounter' '[the old man] had great gaps in his mouth between his yellow teeth' (*D*, p.16). The picture of a priest is yellowing in Eveline symbolizing that religion has been part of Eveline's past education and how in Dublin it is now paralyzed.¹⁶ Yellow – or gold – is also the colour of the dust as in 'A Little Cloud': looking out the window Little Chandler sees 'a shower of kindly golden dust on the untidy nurses and decrepit old men who drowsed on the benches' (*D*, p.53). While in 'The Dead' the colour of the light - 'a dull yellow light' (*D*, p.167) - suggests the end of the party and anticipates the end of the story.

The green, which usually stands for the exotic and hope, assumes an opposite meaning in Joyce's Dublin turning into something similar to the stagnant water, another trap for the Dubliners.¹⁷ When dissociated from the water of the sea, its natural colour becomes the symbol of degeneracy and spiritual limitation like the physical limitation of water in a green bottle.¹⁸ The old man's green eyes in 'An Encounter', at first symbolizing the hope for a new life in the sailor's eyes, turn into something dangerous and unsettling, they represent the perversion and insanity of the man.¹⁹ In 'Two Gallants'

¹³ B. GHISELIN, "The Unity of 'Dubliners'", *Accent*, 16, Spring 1956, pp. 75-88; Summer 1956, pp. 196-213.

¹⁴ C. TÓIBÍN, 'Colm Tóibín on Joyce's Dublin: City of Dreamers and Chancers', *The Guardian*, Friday 15 June 2012.

¹⁵ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹⁶ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, introduzione e note di A. BRILLI, Milano, Rizzoli Editore, 1980, p. 73.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1961, p. 15 & 61.

¹⁸ B. GHISELIN, "The Unity of 'Dubliners'", in M. BEJA, ed., *James Joyce: 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man': A Casebook*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1973, p. 114.

¹⁹ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, 1961, p. 15.

Lenahan's meal reflects the colours of the Irish flag - the green peas and the orange ginger beer (*D*, p.38) - which does not stand for a rebirth of the nation but for its degradation and for its people's inability to maintain consistent beliefs as we can see from the story of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'.

Even the brown mirrors decay in Dublin. In 'Araby' Mangan's sister is a 'brown figure' who both reflects the brown faces of the buildings that line the street, and evokes the skin colour of romanticized images of Arabia that flood the narrator's head. In 'A Painful Case' Dublin's streets reflect Duffy's mood and physical appearance. The close association between Duffy and the city is emphasized: the Gaelic name 'Duffy' recalls Dublin as in Gaelic Duffy means 'dark' or 'brown'.²⁰

His face, which carried the entire tale of his years, was of the brown tint of Dublin streets' (*D*, p.82).

Anyway, 'Browne is everywhere' (*D*, p.162) is said in the last story: Mr Browne, uniting the browns of Joyce's Dublin, is 'all brown', and, as one of the aunts acutely observes, seems 'everywhere'.²¹ In addition, like Mr Browne himself, the 'brown' roast goose provided by the sisters and carved by Gabriel, displays the colour of Dublin.²²

Grey and darkness envelop many stories and they convey both mystery and hypocrisy, often suggesting a nightly double-face Dublin. The darkness in Araby bazaar obscures not only love and faith but also the previous two stories which mirror Joyce's childhood. 'The upper part of the hall was completely dark' (*D*, p.24), it reminds the first sentence in which the story starts '...being blind' and it also refers to the 'wild garden' where hope, regeneration, changes are impossible. In 'Eveline' 'The black mass of the boat' could signify, in a Catholic context, that Eveline perceives the boat, and the choice of going in the boat, as either death (the 'black mass' was popular name for the requiem mass given for the dead) or blasphemy (the term is also used of satanic or other blasphemous rites).²³ In 'After the Race' the final announcement of the day break by an international player, who is 'standing in a shaft of grey light', puts an end to Jimmy's dreams and aspirations (*D*, p.35). 'Two Gallants' is set in a claustrophobic and dark

²⁰ J. J. DUFFY, "The Stories of Frederick Wedmore: Some Correspondences with 'Dubliners'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 5, N° 2, Winter 1968, p. 147.

²¹ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, 1961, p. 15.

²² W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

²³ J. MAUD and T. BROWN, *Dubliners*. James Joyce, Genoa, Cideb Black Cat, 1995, p.18.

atmosphere, in ‘the grey warm evening of August’ (*D*, p.36). In ‘The Dead’ Gabriel’s aunts belong to the past and so to the colour of oldness, the grey:

His aunts were two small, plainly dressed old women. Aunt Julia was an inch or so the taller. Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face (*D*, p.141).

Again narrow spaces are presented in the story as the ‘dark part of the hall’ where Gabriel stands gazing up his wife ‘in the shadow’ (*D*, p.165), ‘who did not join in the conversation’ (*D*, p.167). And at the end of the story, Gabriel is looking outside the window of the hotel and thinks of ‘a grey impalpable world’ (*D*, p.176).

II.3. Paralysis in the City.

I am writing a series of epicleti – ten – for a paper. I call the series Dubliners to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city.²⁴

The soul of the country... is paralyzed by the influence and admonitions of the church, while its body is manacled by the police, the tax office, and the garrison.²⁵

In the fifteen stories, Joyce’s Dublin is a village filled with dreamers and chancers whom he placed in a kind of cage.²⁶

In *Dubliners* unrelated characters are knitted together by the theme of paralysis. Joyce was convinced that the colonization of Ireland by England would turn Ireland not just into a country politically powerless, but would make the people of Ireland psychologically paralyzed as well. It is significant that Joyce gave the title *Dubliners* and not *Dublin* to his book of short stories to highlight the inhabitants trapped in a stagnant city. The word ‘paralysis’ appears on the first page when every night the young nameless narrator gazes up at his window and repeats the word *paralysis* softly (*D*, p.3). Written in italic, the word is applicable both to the priest and to those who mourn him, perhaps even

²⁴ J. JOYCE, ‘Early July 1904’, in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber & Faber, 1992, p. 22.

²⁵ D. SPURR, ‘Colonial Spaces in Joyce’s Dublin’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 37, N° 1/2, 1999-2000, pp. 26-27.

²⁶ C. TÓIBÍN, *op. cit.*, Friday 15 June 2012.

his young friend in his interpretative dilemma, or even the reader.²⁷ In the final story the world ‘dead’ – that final paralysis – might be linked both to the dead lying in their graves and to the survivors who are physically and mentally frozen in the city, unable to take action and chances.²⁸ ‘The Dead’ suggests, in fact, that the real dead are the very people that still walk Dublin’s streets: a deep blanket of snow is ‘general all over Ireland’ and falls upon ‘all the living and the dead’ (*D*, p.176).²⁹

As said before, the theme is used to tie the stories together, weaving different episodes. It is figured in many different ways: as illness in ‘The Sisters’, as imprisonment in ‘Araby’, in the iron railing imagery of other stories, or as the frozen landscape of ‘The Dead’. There are also emblems of paralysis and dysfunction: the empty fireplace in ‘The Sisters’, the rusty bicycle pump in ‘Araby’, the broken harmonium in ‘Eveline’, the disused distillery in ‘A Painful Case’, the horse going round and round the statue in ‘The Dead’. When characters are crippled by a moral paralysis, an inability to act, this is figured in a physical immobility, such as Eveline’s refusal to pass the physical barrier at the end of her story or Doran, who sits ‘helplessly on the side of the bed’ (*D*, p.50).

In the first story we find three words in italic: *paralysis*, *gnomon* and *simony*. A gnomon is an imperfect figure and simony is an imperfection, while paralysis is physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual imperfection. Father James Flynn is the victim and embodiment of this syndrome. The encounter of the boy with the priest and his survivors – the sisters, his uncle, his aunt and Old Cotter - is that of a boy with what surrounds him in Ireland.³⁰ These moments evoke the theme of death in life as they show characters in a state of inaction and numbness.

The main character of ‘An Encounter’ wants ‘real adventures’ (*D*, p.12), but he is waylaid on his quest for the Pigeon House by a stranger who masturbates - another kind of paralysis because it is sex that does not have the goal of procreation or even love. The Pigeon House itself is symbolic: a pigeon is a bird that always returns home, even though it has flown very far away. In the end, the boy – as well as the boy in ‘The Sisters’ – feels ashamed of calling to his companion for help, and ‘penitent’ for having earlier despised him. These emotions suggest that the boy is learning to take on himself the guilt of the

²⁷ P. F. HERRING, “‘Dubliners’: The Trials of Adolescence”, in M. T. REYNOLDS, ed., *James Joyce: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliff, Prentice Hall, 1993, p. 72.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁰ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-17.

adult world, and also the circularity of a system of feeling in which 'sin' is forever being chased by 'penitence'.³¹

The young boy in 'Araby' halts in the middle of the dark bazaar, knowing that he will never escape the tedious restrictiveness of Dublin. He has arrived too late at the bazaar because his uncle, who held the money that could make the excursion possible, had been out drinking. Eveline freezes like an animal, fearing the possible new experience of life away from home, away from her dead-end and alienated Dublin life. Mr Duffy's emotional paralysis in 'A Painful Case' forces him into a long life of loneliness, his sterile room is the outward and visible sign of an inner state, and, eventually, not Mrs Sinico but Mr Duffy is the painful case.³²

Throughout the collection this stifling state appears as part of daily life in Dublin, which all Dubliners ultimately acknowledge and accept. Indeed, characters in *Dubliners* are forever returning home. Paradoxically, when characters do something, indeed anything, they are forced by social constraints back into powerlessness and submission. For instance, in 'Counterparts', Farrington experiences a moment of triumph over his boss, Mr Alleyne, only to be later criticized and forced to apologize for fear of losing his job. Similarly in 'A Little Cloud' Little Chandler finds himself quickly swallowed by his domestic situation when he takes the first step toward writing poetry. Eveline cannot move either physically or psychologically when the door to her cage is thrown open by her fiancé Frank: she can get on the ship to save her life but stands instead paralyzed on the dock. We are invited to see how first of all Eveline's home, where she catalogues the things she has dusted, becomes a psychological prison, and how, at the same time, Eveline's incomprehension of the pattern revealed by these objects silently demonstrates how subtly and imperceptibly she has been put in a situation where potential insight is systematically reconfigured into panic and paralysis.³³

In 'Clay' fate - the Halloween game at Joe's - forces Maria into a nun-like existence and keeps her from realizing her dream of marriage - her choice of death and prayer suits Joyce's idea of his moribund, pious country.³⁴ By not choosing the ring the

³¹ P. PARRINDER, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³² W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³³ G. LEONARD, 'Dubliners', in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 100.

³⁴ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

game shows us how Maria's future will be like: she will continue her life in a place of internment, as the laundry is.³⁵

In 'Ivy Day of the Committee Room' Dublin is displayed so entirely that nowhere else has Joyce captured so well its authentic tone and quality: Dublin as epitome or microcosm of everywhere. People, rhythm, movement and texture, working together, produce Dublin's epiphany.³⁶ Joyce's Dubliners live without faith, hope, moral or charity, always beaten back down to their prison-like-life. Even Mr Hynes' poem, the most faithful and hopeful sign, is a little shoddy. Whether nationalist or conservative, whether moral, neutral or sentimental, these unprincipled politicians agree in nothing but disloyalty: they are immobilized in their narrow-minded state of life. Parnell had offered not only a political hope, but also a kind of spiritual hope.³⁷ Thus the story dramatizes the empty shell of the society after its leader's death, in a city in which public life had become a joke, the citizens confined to cliché and searching for drink and mawkish companionship. The sense of banality and inconsequence in every line of dialogue and in every character suggests that the glory has departed, that the light has been turned out and the characters left groping in a strange limbo.³⁸

Even the third-rate concert of 'artistes' in the Antient Concert Rooms – 'A Mother' – is as desolating as the meeting of third-rate politicians in Wicklow Street. Plainly Dublin suffers from cultural as well as political paralysis.³⁹ In 'Grace' Kernan's bitten tongue creating articulating distortion acts as both a cause and an effect of Irish paralysis:⁴⁰ Dubliners speak by biting their tongues.

In the final story Gabriel's way of condescending to his genteel aunts, to Lily, the caretaker's daughter, to Miss Ivors and to the other guests is presented as essential to his character, an aspect of his alienation. In his failure to embrace the world, he carries the reader with him in a way that only the strangely obsessed children in the first three or four stories do. He is filled with ambiguities – he is well-meaning as well as pompous, oddly kind as well as superior, nervous as well as resentful. He is proud but easily undermined and threatened. He lives in possession of a knowledge which has not helped him to live; it

³⁵ R. CESERANI, *Argilla: Interpretazione di un Racconto di James Joyce*, Napoli, Guida Editori, 1965, p.72.

³⁶ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

³⁷ C. TÓIBÍN, *op. cit.*, Friday 15 June 2012.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Friday 15 June 2012.

³⁹ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-36.

⁴⁰ J. KANE, "Imperial Pathologies: Medical Discourse and Drink in *Dubliners* 'Grace'", *Literature and Medicine*, 1995, pp. 191-209.

appears instead like the bars of a cage. The party itself, through his eyes, is a cage in which the guests are trapped.⁴¹

We are meant to see that paralysis is epidemic in Ireland's capital. The protagonists in all of these stories have sought light, positive images, and have been taught by negatives, shadows, the incomplete geometric shape instead of the whole one. This is why, according to the author, the only way to break paralysis is to flee from Ireland.⁴²

II.4. Longing for Escape: Romantic Illusions.

When a soul is born in Ireland, there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight, you talk to me of religion, nationality and language, I will fly by those nets.⁴³

Things almost happen. The characters are arrested in mid-air; the author deliberately avoids anything like an event.⁴⁴

The silent cock shall crow at last. The west shall shake the east awake. Walk while ye have the night for morn, lightbreakfastbringer ...⁴⁵

James Joyce lived most of his life abroad, above all in Paris, and he had always been obsessed that the only way an Irish writer could find success was to leave his native land. We can see his obsession of fleeing Ireland transferred onto many of the characters in *Dubliners*. In fact, the theme of journeys and the impulse to escape is evident in many stories through everyday experiences of a group of Dubliners who long for escape and adventure in other countries, abandoning the deadly West forever. They are like exiles who are trying to reach their lost country where innocence seems still possible.⁴⁶ On the other hand, such longings are never actually realized by the stories' protagonists. The main geographical orientation of the characters is eastward, that is towards the outskirts of Dublin or beyond them. The East is usually depicted as an exotic, fabulous, far-away world, strictly connected with the sense of adventure and represented by the image of the

⁴¹ C. TÓIBÍN, *op. cit.*, Friday 15 June 2012.

⁴² P. F. HERRING, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴³ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, London, Penguin Popular Classics, 1996, p. 214.

⁴⁴ H. LEVIN, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, New York, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1960, p. 30.

⁴⁵ J. JOYCE, *Finnegans Wake*, R. ELLMANN, ed., London, Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 473.

⁴⁶ J. PARIS, *Joyce par lui-même*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1958, p. 39.

sea; to go eastward means to go towards life, while westward orientation means death.⁴⁷ Thus the East stands for the desire to escape from the corrupt life of Dublin, however, this desire is confined only to dreams and ends to be overcome by frustration and failure.

More often than offering a literal escape from a physical place, the stories tell of opportunities to escape from smaller, more personal or interior restraints. The schoolboy in 'An Encounter' yearns for escape and Wild West excitement far away from the tedium of the school and of the city itself, but in the end he finds himself to be relegated to the imagination and to the confines of Dublin. His private quest for a romantic ideal focuses on the green eyes of two characters. However, he is disappointed twice: first by the green-eyed Norwegian sailor, who, shouting 'All right! All right!' (*D*, p.14) seems to belong to nothing romantic but to commonplace, and next by the pervert man with his 'bottle-green eyes' (*D*, p.17). Again paralyzing Dublin, destructive of all ideals, has intervened turning the romantic quest to be as frustrating as the ignoble reality of the Pigeon House. The title might also suggest an encounter with the self rather than with someone's else. It is as if the boy met himself for the first time and suddenly knew himself, his sin, his folly and maybe the nature of Dublin.⁴⁸

Unlike epiphany, which implies that the character learns something or comes to some knowledge (whether accurate or not), if characters experience an epicletic moment, they may or may not experience an epiphany. The key to epicleti is the move of the mundane into the brilliant. The unnamed narrator of 'Araby' in love with a comrade's older sister experiences the epicletic while speaking with her one day:

She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light of the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease (*D*, p.21).

The attention the boy pays to her physicality is more than mere lust. The young boy can be defined a romantic of the most hopeless sort, corrupted by the visions of the exotic East - for example he possesses the ability to see beauty on brown 'blind' Richmond Street. Moreover, the boy can transform the squalor of a market into 'a single sensation', her name into 'a prayer', his body into 'a harp' and 'her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires' (*D*, p.20). His imagination is so overactive that

⁴⁷ B. GHISELIN, "The Unity of 'Dubliners'", in M. BEJA, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁴⁸ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

his idealization of Mangan's sister becomes an adolescent folly which, at the conclusion of the tale, makes the boy's revelation see himself as 'a creature, driven and derided by vanity' (*D*, p.24), and it turns the epicletic into a reverse-epicletic moment. The boy becomes less than a boy, he becomes a 'creature', and Dublin becomes a little bit bleaker.⁴⁹

Even Eveline's hopes for a new life in Buenos Ayres - which literally means 'good air' and which symbolizes freshness and circulation in contrast with the musty and stagnant interior of Eveline's living room - dissolve on the docks of the city's river, where the iron railings of the dock change into manacles which immobilize her preventing any possibility of escape. 'Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!' (*D*, p.28), it is her mother's voice while dying because of some 'damned Italian' players. According to Don Gifford, there are two interpretations of the phrase which Eveline's mother repeats on her deathbed. Gifford notes that Patrick Henchy believes the words to be corrupt Gaelic for 'the end of pleasure is pain', and Ronald Smith thinks they are corrupt Irish, meaning 'the end of the song is raving madness'.⁵⁰ While an Irish-speaking informant, Marian Lovett of the University of Limerick, spontaneously renders the phrase as 'I have been there; you should go there!' taking to be the Irish 'do raibh ann, siar ann', i.e. in English 'derivaun sheraun'. Later the meaning has been modified in '(some)one has gone there, (one must) go (back) there' accentuating the dilemma of staying or going. The story is full with references to coming and going, from the evening 'invading' the avenue, the many links to be at 'home' or away from it, the priest who has left for Melbourne, and the 'damned Italians' coming over to Ireland, to Frank's unanswered call for Eveline to 'come!'.⁵¹ But in the end, the girl, who looks for release from domestic duties through marriage, cannot move, she simply cannot psychologically fathom leaving and thus she cannot move physically:⁵²

She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition (*D*, p.29).

⁴⁹J. A. McDERMOTT and S. F. AUSTIN, 'American Epicleti: Using James Joyce to Read Raymond Carver', *The Raymond Carver Review*, pp. 39-40.

⁵⁰D. GIFFORD, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, pp. 51-52.

⁵¹W. TIGGES, "'Derevaun Seraun!': Resignation or Escape?", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 32, N° 1, 1994, pp. 102-103.

⁵²W. BECK, *Joyce's Dubliners: Substance, Vision and Art*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1969, p. 111.

In 'After the Race' Jimmy's desire for excitement and escape from 'dear dirty Dublin'⁵³ has its price in gambling losses. Another Dubliner, Little Chandler, fantasizes about the London press job of his old friend Gallaher, escapes into reading poetry and dreams of being a famous poet, but he cannot even pick up a pen. The title 'A Little Cloud' comes from the Bible - 1 Kings, 18:44. Here, Elijah makes rain to relieve the drought in a literal and moral wasteland: 'Elijah Is coming! Is coming!! Is coming!!!' Gallaher, having gone away, has lived. A Dubliner no more, he is a man of the world.⁵⁴ In 'Two Gallants' Lenehan wishes to escape his life of schemes, but he cannot take action to do so. Mr Doran wants to escape marrying Polly in 'A Boarding House', but he knows he must relent, and never is the pressure of environment more obviously displayed than in this story: the pressure in Bob Doran's life, within which the 'Madam' and her daughter work, is bigger and bigger throughout the short plot.⁵⁵ Like Eveline, Bob is afraid of disobeying the moral laws dictated by society and religion; he is caught between Mrs Mooney and the Church⁵⁶, which is represented by the priest to whom he tells his sin, and his catholic employer, who will sack him unless he marries the girl. Mr Farrington in 'Counterparts' attempts to escape into alcohol, but even that time provides him no respite: 'he felt humiliated and discontented; he did not even feel drunk' (*D*, p.74). At the same time, his wife escapes into religion as does Maria in 'Clay', who 'would enter a convent before the year was out because she had got the prayer-book' (*D*, p.81). Maria chooses the prayer book after the clay, which suggests she might find escape in the cloistered life of a convent, and whether Maria escapes or not, some part of her will die. She will lose her vibrancy to the dullness of routine, or she will lose the life she knows for one that is unfamiliar. Maria's northward direction could thus be interpreted as a journey towards death, symbolized by clay.

Even in 'The Dead' Gabriel lives fantasizing with chances of escape: he uses his summer to spend his holidays to the east of Ireland, in Europe, fleeing the land in which he feels trapped and not proud of it.⁵⁷ During most of the story, the west of Ireland is connected in Gabriel's mind with a dark and rather painful primitivism, an aspect of his country which he has abjured going off the continent. The west is savagery; to the east

⁵³ 'Dear dirty Dublin', a phrase from the story 'A Little Cloud' (*D*, p.57) that suggests Joyce's divided feeling.

⁵⁴ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁶ W. BECK, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁵⁷ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

and south lie people who drink wine and wear galoshes.⁵⁸ Moreover, it is interesting to notice that in the party, instead of the typical turkey – usually eaten at Christmas – , Joyce makes his characters eat goose to reinforce the topic of escape, because ‘wild geese’ (*D*, p.154) are those Irishmen who, unlike Little Chandler, have escaped from Ireland to become Napoleonic marshals.⁵⁹ Despite of the restricted ‘escape’, many of the characters direct their eyes toward deliverance in the East; at the same time, in the most important story in the collection, ‘The Dead’, freedom seems possible, if at all, by journeying westward through Ireland’s psychic geography:⁶⁰ ‘the time had come for him to set out on his journey westward’ (*D*, p.176).

The journey towards west can be read as a journey into the reign of the dead. In front of a paralyzed and paralyzing Dublin, Gabriel resigns to that life waiting for death as only possible escape and peace for his tormented soul. Freedom to travel is a male prerogative in turn-of-the-century Dublin culture, it is no surprise that these implications of travel will be contested by Molly Ivors whose independent spirit, like Emily Sinico’s, encourages her to lay claim to the male privilege of travel. Gabriel refuses Emily’s invitation to a journey westward, ‘travel’ can be meaningful for him only if it is directed toward the East. The East stands in this context for the England of Robert Browning, whose poetry Gabriel has reviewed to earn the title of ‘West Briton’, and above all the Continent, to which Dubliners like Little Chandler and Jimmy Doyle had turned their eyes.⁶¹ It is the East to which the narrators of ‘An Encounter’ and ‘Araby’ have been ‘oriented’ – the realm of the unknown, mystery, and the exotic. Molly’s invitation to join ‘an excursion to the Aran Isles’ does not mean ‘travel’ at all to Gabriel, because going westward is moving ‘backward’, to use Maria Tymoczko’s⁶² translation of the Irish ‘siar’, or ‘westward’. In this psychic geography, travel towards the East is a trope for enfranchisement, while travel toward the West suggests confinement, a regression toward the vulnerability of the ‘feminine’.⁶³ In addition, turning to the east has a long history as a literary and religious metaphor of renewal and hope, resurrection and rebirth. To the east of Ireland is the imperial power that oppresses her, England, and east of that is the Europe of which many Irish people wanted to be a part (independent statehood as a European

⁵⁸ R. ELLMANN, *James Joyce*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 248

⁵⁹ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁰ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-107.

⁶² M. TYMOCZKO and E. GENTZLER, *Translation and Power*, USA, University of Massachusetts Press, 2002, p. 24.

⁶³ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

nation was seen as a desired alternative to being part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain).⁶⁴ It is as if in *Dubliners* the important thing is to get out of Dublin as the author did together with Nora. This story - as well as 'After the Race' - offers its protagonist an object lesson: the journey eastward toward the 'excitement' of London and, especially, the Continent can end only in their greater discontent with their confinement in the Irish domesticity of the family business, or of the 'family home'.⁶⁵

II.5. Poverty.

In the 1840s, above all the West of Ireland suffered from the so-called Great Irish Potato Famine. The period during which *Dubliners* is set follows this brutal period - for which many Irish held the British responsible - and after which a movement for Irish independence (led by the nationalist leader Charles Stewart Parnell) occurred and which failed when Parnell was betrayed by his own countrymen.⁶⁶ For Joyce's generation it was a historical memory that had faded into the distance. Although there is no reference of that Famine - just beneath the surface of the ending of the story the theme is present - Joyce's stories are homage to a history of suffering, paid in the knowledge that the rest of his work, whilst continuing to bear the burden of it, will also point beyond it.⁶⁷

Joyce believed Ireland was trapped in a mire created by a stagnant economy, the Catholic Church, family necessity and class differences. Even though money cannot buy happiness, the lack of money is usually the cause of sadness. In this Dublin, money talks, while poverty is both powerless and quietly resentful.⁶⁸ Poverty is, in fact, a widespread problem that can sometimes restrict and even imprison a person to the point that battling seems pointless. Although Joyce never refers to his characters as 'poor', he presents us their social condition through details revealing how money problems, family responsibilities and other social duties the *Dubliners* have to face.

A type of these 'poor' *Dubliners* is for example the nameless adolescent in 'Araby', who does not have the money to buy a simple gift for Mangan's sister, the girl he loves (*D*, p.22). In 'Eveline', the girl has a chance to save herself from a life of poverty but cannot move when her chance to flee arrives. She is trapped and hypnotized by her poverty that makes her family dependent upon her economically and by the social

⁶⁴ J. MAUD and T. BROWN, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁵ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

⁶⁶ J. S. JR. DONNELLY, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, Sutton, Sutton Publishing, 2002, p. 31.

⁶⁷ A. GIBSON, *James Joyce*, Trowbridge & Wiltshire, Cromwell Press, 2006, pp. 68-76.

⁶⁸ M. T. REYNOLDS, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-95.

conventions that want her to care for her family. As her mother did, she chooses a life of sacrifices until she too loses her mind: 'that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness' (*D*, p.28). What we see in 'After the Race' is the Joyce method of counterpoising what is undeniably real (money, food and feeding) to something which is undeniably fake. The 'real' can be swallowed up in the illusory world, surrounded to it, by those who are, like Dubliners, hungry for illusion, grateful to be oppressed by something 'magical' that somehow dissolves or seems to dissolve the squalor of the actual. Regarding the 'real', two kinds of capital are involved here: capital investment and capital city.⁶⁹ In 'Two Gallants' Lenehan's poverty can be observed by the meager meal he consumes. He has not eaten since breakfast and late at night, while he is waiting for Corley to come back with money, he orders a meal of peas and vinegar with a bottle of ginger beer for his dinner (*D*, p.42). He simply does not have the money for a proper meal. In 'Clay' the older unmarried character Maria lives a life of diligent sacrifice. Joyce never tells us of her poverty but he shows us it when she loses the plumcake she has purchased at great expense to bring joy to others and her consequent affliction (*D*, p.79). Mrs Mooney in 'The Boarding House' does, in fact, prostitute her daughter: she insists that Polly leave her office job and stay at home at the boarding house in order to entertain the male lodgers with possibility for a future recompense for the social and economical status of the family's pockets. Even though Mr Doran does not love Polly and even though he knows she is of a lower class and her family will 'look down on her' (*D*, p.50), he must marry her because her mother's boarding house 'was beginning to get a certain fame' (*D*, p.50). In 'Counterparts' Joyce portrays Farrington's poverty by having him sell his watch to buy the spirits that will provide temporary relief. Yet he must get money somewhere or other: he had spent his last penny for the g.p. (i.e. a glass of porter) and soon it would be too late for getting money anywhere (*D*, p.71).

In all of this Joyce illustrates how poverty motivates people to behave in aberrant ways. However, he never offers hope to the impoverished. He states how their lives are awful, dismal and without romance. *Dubliners* is most definitely not romantic. Nor does it offer false hope.⁷⁰ And we know this from the very first line of the first story: 'There was no hope for him this time' (*D*, p.3). Dublin with slums like those observed by the adventurous boys in 'An Encounter' is an economically depressed and stagnant city

⁶⁹ D. SEAMUS, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁷⁰ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

where all live in danger of sliding quickly down the social ladder. Simply, it never gets better.

It was surely a consequence of the city's marginality, geographically and politically, that 'Dublin had the worst housed urban citizenry in the British Isles in 1914'.⁷¹ Its extensive slums were not limited to the back-streets or to impoverished ghettos. By 1911 the city slums also incorporated great Georgian houses on previously fashionable streets and squares. As the wealthy moved to the suburbs over the course of the 19th century, their huge, red-brick buildings were abandoned to the rent-paying poor. Tenements in inner-city Dublin were filthy, overcrowded, disease-ridden, teeming with malnourished children and very much at odds with the elite world of colonial and middle-class Dublin.⁷² The decay of Dublin was epitomized by Henrietta Street, which had once been home to generations of lawyers, but was, by 1911, overflowing with poverty. An astonishing 835 people lived in 15 houses. At number 10 Henrietta Street, the Sisters of Charity ran a laundry with more than 50 single women inside. The other houses on the street were filled with families. For example, there were members of nineteen different families living in Number 7. Among the 104 people who shared the house were charwomen, domestic servants, labourers, porters, messengers, painters, carpenters, pensioners, a postman, a tailor, and a whole class of schoolchildren. Out the back were a stable and a piggery.⁷³



*Children at play on Henrietta Street in the early 1920s.*⁷⁴

⁷¹ J. PRUNTY, *Dublin Slums, 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1998, p. 646.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 646.

⁷³ *The National Archives of Ireland*, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/poverty_health.html.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The story of Henrietta Street was replicated across the city, as streets amalgamated into slums. Life in the slums was raw and desperate. In 1911 nearly 26,000 families lived in inner-city tenements, and 20,000 of these families lived in just one room.⁷⁵

Death emphasised the precariousness of life for the poor: tenement dwellers died younger, died more often from tuberculosis, died more often in childhood; child mortality was very high (6 survivors from 13 children); sometimes buildings in which they lived collapsed around them (in 1913, tenements owned by Mrs Ryan on Church St. collapsed killing up to seven people). Overall, the death rate in Dublin per thousand was 22.3.⁷⁶



On the left: one-room tenement dwelling, Francis St.⁷⁷ On the right: the poverty of working class Dublin ensured that many children left full-time education before finishing national school.⁷⁸

In the city many families were forced to put their children selling wares on the streets. By dealing with the problem of the thousands of children street-selling, a 1902 report noted that in one in six cases, one or both parents were dead; others were from homes riven by illness, drunkenness or unemployment.⁷⁹ In the meanwhile, there were many emigrants – Dubliners but above all many from the Irish countryside - who left a country unable to offer even the possibilities of a basic existence. Behind them they left the brutal reality of daily life for tens of thousands who lived in tenement slums, starved into ill-health, begging on the fringes of society. Dublin was incredibly poor: almost 33% of all families lived in one-roomed accommodation. The slums of Dublin were the worst

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/poverty_health.html.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/education.html>.

⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/poverty_health.html.

in the United Kingdom, dark, disease-ridden and largely ignored by those who prospered in other parts of the city.⁸⁰

For those living in poverty, some succour came from the Liberal Government of David Lloyd George and Henry Asquith, arguably the most radical administration to govern Ireland in the twentieth century. Its legacy included the introduction of old age pensions in 1908, labour exchanges in 1909, and a national insurance scheme to afford workers protection against sickness, invalidity and unemployment in 1911. The introduction of the old-age pension for the over-70s was of enormous importance, alleviating some of the distress that attended the last years of those no longer able to work.⁸¹

II.6. Isolation and Violence.

The theme of isolation permeates Joyce's *Dubliners*. *Dubliners* has some profoundly lonely characters in it, but the theme of isolation does not end there. Isolation is not only a matter of living alone, but it is also synonym of failed communication. In other stories, conversations are striking for how little meaningful communication takes place. The best example of this topic can be seen in 'The Dead' when Gabriel and Gretta leave the party. While Gabriel thinks about his life with Gretta and how much he desires her – 'if she would only turn to him or come to him of her own accord!' (*D*, p.171) -, Gretta cannot stop thinking about the young boy, her first love, who died for need of her – 'I was great with him at that time' (*D*, p.172). Husband and wife have been in the same room, but they may as well have been on different planets.

Not only do Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case' and Maria in 'Clay' represent the emptiness of isolation as they both live alone, but also Mrs Sinico and Joe - in these two stories - feel alone, although they have a partner. In fact, Mrs Sinico prefers death instead of life as she cannot muster the happiness to go on living with her husband, who does not seem to share any interest in her, so that he considers the meeting with Duffy in relation with their daughter: 'Captain Sinico encouraged his visits, thinking that his daughter's hand was in question. He had dismissed his wife so sincerely from his gallery of pleasures

⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/main.html>

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

that he did not suspect that anyone else would take an interest in her' (*D*, p.84). Even Joe's words with his wife are strictly related to practical details: 'But Joe said he would not lose his temper on account of the night it was and asked his wife to open some more stout' (*D*, p.80), and after Maria's song he just asks his wife to give him a corkscrew '... his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was' (*D*, p.81).

The main characters of the stories 'A Little Cloud' and 'Counterparts' seem to have nothing in common except the repetitive jobs they despise; however, their profound sense of isolation and their intense desire to escape link them together. Little Chandler had a chance to do something 'but shyness had always held him back' (*D*, pp.53-54), and he is too afraid to fly, so to speak, so he remains trapped in Dublin, isolated in harsh personal feelings. Farrington on the other hand hangs on to his similarly boring, monotonous job which repeats mechanically every day. Both men long for escape and freedom: Chandler normally to poetry books and dreams of making it big in London and Farrington to the warmth and comfort of pub and friends. It is to the bar that each man runs to find comfort and cast aside their overwhelming isolation. However, both Chandler's meeting with Gallaher and Farrington's visit to the pub end in the same manner making both of them feel more isolated, frustrated and ashamed. Both are emasculated by a disapproving woman: at the pub Mr Farrington 'watched her leave the room in the hope that she would look back at him, but he was disappointed' (*D*, p.73), and at home Little Chandler feels remorse after making his son cry and above all after being criticized by his wife who gives 'no heed to him' walking up and down the room (*D*, p.64). Besides, Farrington is twice frustrated as he also loses an arm-wrestling contest: 'Farrington's dark wine-coloured face flushed darker still with anger and humiliation at having been defeated by such a stripling' (*D*, p.73). The two stories end at the protagonists' home presenting us two frustrated and angry Dubliners, who turn their anger – as manifestation of a suffocating life - towards their children.

Central in *Dubliners* is Joyce's handling of sexual and family relationships. If in the first three stories the child can be an orphan who lives with his uncle and aunt, in the other stories the family – especially the father – embodies the signs of paralysis. Fathers tend to be drunken, quarrelsome, inadequate at work and ineffectual in the home. They are bullies who take out their frustrations on their wives and children. Regarding the mothers: Eveline thinks of her mother's 'life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness' (*D*, p.28); Joe's and Maria's mother is mysteriously absent; Mrs Sinico takes to

the bottle; Little Chandler's baby is caught between a weak-minded father and an over-protective mother; Farrington's wife, and the mother of his five children, is 'a little sharp-faced woman who bullied her husband when he was sober and was bullied by him when he was drunk' (*D*, p.74).⁸²

According to the middle-class norms of more prosperous countries, most of the relationships and - unlucky - courtships in *Dubliners* are degenerate.⁸³ Lenehan in 'Two Gallants' dreams of having 'a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to' (*D*, p.42). He could live happily 'if he could only come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready' (*D*, p.43). His friend Corley has found such a girl, but has no intention of marrying her. In 'The Boarding House' marriage is forced on the unwilling Bob Doran by a determined mother-in-law: the bride, i.e. her daughter, Polly Mooney is nineteen; the future husband, Bob Doran, is around thirty-five. Mrs Kearney in 'A Mother' got married 'out of spite'. Before marriage 'the young men whom she met were ordinary and she gave them no encouragement, trying to console her romantic desires by eating a great deal of Turkish Delight in secret' (*D*, p.106), and, in the end, she also settled for a much older man. At the beginning of the twentieth century, chances for marriage in Ireland were slim; indeed, Gabriel and Gretta Conroy are the only married couple. Whilst, Lily is bitterly resentful of opposite sex, and Freddy Malins, a middle-aged soak, is figured as an eligible 'young man of about forty' (*D*, p.145).

Florence L. Walzl argues that Joyce's portrayal of Dublin family life reflects the position of early twentieth-century Ireland as one of the poorest countries in the civilized world, with a population depleted by the Great Famine and by mass emigration:⁸⁴ 'for over a century following 1841, Ireland had the lowest marriage and birth rates in the civilized world. As a natural concomitant, it also had the highest rate of unmarried men and women in the world'.⁸⁵

There should not be room for solitude and egoism when bread and wine are shared, but in *Dubliners* there are two cases of solitary meals, symbolizing a broken harmony between participants, or between a single participant and his environment. In 'Two Gallants', after he has left Corley, Lenehan goes into a pub to have his supper. His lonely meal may be seen as an inversion of the Last Supper: Lenehan is a solitary

⁸² P. PARRINDER, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁸⁵ F. L. WALZL, 'Dubliners: Women in Irish Society', in S. HENKE and E. UNKELESS, eds., *Women in Joyce*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982, p. 33.

apostle⁸⁶ and this idea is reinforced in the end where he is presented to us as Corley's 'disciple' (*D*, p.45). It is Sunday but what should have been a Communion Feast has become a furtive meal. However, it is in 'A Painful Case' that we fully become aware of Eucharistic failure. James Duffy 'hates' drinking, eats 'by himself' and refuses any communion. In his daily ritual he lunches on beer and biscuits, but resists bringing Mrs Sinico into his private communion.⁸⁷ And if in the end he feels an outcast from life's 'feast' (*D*, p.90) it is because he has renounced participating in the splendid meal with mankind.

Violence is strictly connected with isolation both as a cause and as a result. The main twin sources of both violence and paralysis for the Dubliners are the Catholic Church and the British Government.⁸⁸ The Catholic Church cripples the Dubliners by making them feel guilty and shameful about their natural desires. The British Government cripples them by taking away their autonomy, infantilising them, robbing them of their sense of self, their national identity, and their ability to control their own lives. As a consequence, Dublin men, who are frustrated and emasculated both sexually and politically, find vent in alcoholism and in violence on those even less powerful than themselves. Hence, Dublin women and children are often the victims not only of the Catholic Church and the British Government but also of Dublin men:⁸⁹ if a man is bullied at work by his boss and comes home after a night of hard drinking, he will bully his son in turn, as it is shown in 'Counterparts'.⁹⁰

In terms of crime in Dublin, it tended to be more associated with petty theft than with violence. The city was notable for its high level of public drunkenness and its attendant disorder. In 1910 there were 2,462 charges of drunkenness in the Dublin Metropolitan police district, while a total of 3,758 people were drunk when they were taken into custody.⁹¹

⁸⁶ F. L. WALZL, 'Joyce's The Sisters: a Development', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 2, 1965, pp. 73-81. Quoted by A. W. LITZ, 'Two Gallants', in C. HART, ed., *James Joyce's Dubliners*, London, Faber, 1969, p. 69.

⁸⁷ R. ADICKS, 'The Unconsecrated Eucharist in Dubliners', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 5, 1968, p. 296.

⁸⁸ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, pp. vii-xl.

⁸⁹ J. MAUD and T. BROWN, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-63.

⁹⁰ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/law_order.html.

II.7. Drinking.

With fell design, England suppressed our commerce, our factories, our mines, our industries, and left us only the distillery.⁹²

Many of the characters in *Dubliners* drink. Drinking is presented as a natural act: the Dubliners drink without thinking too much. J. B. Lyons notes that ‘the most prevalent disease in *Dubliners* is alcoholism’, and James Fairhall observes that the collection ‘reveals a sharp awareness of the social damage caused by drinking’.⁹³ Almost every story refers to drunkenness, usually among the petit-bourgeois Catholic men who represent Joyce’s Ireland, and they become a model of physical and emotional incapacity.⁹⁴

In *Dubliners*, middle-class Irish men experience liberation solely through a rebellion that reaffirms their dependence.⁹⁵ The drinkers of the stories satisfy corporeal desires that the author believes colonial Irish culture and its institutions deny, repress, and fear. This gratification, however, is illusory, temporary, and destructive.⁹⁶ The term ‘alcoholism’, coined during the mid-nineteenth century, argues that chronic drinking has to be considered more a disease state rather than as a simple moral failing.⁹⁷ The image of drunkenness describes a country that resists imperial definition at the cost of existence itself - not through assertive rebellion but through a passive and mute self-destruction (people speak with a ‘bitten tongue’).⁹⁸

We meet the first drunk Dubliner in ‘Araby’. The boy’s uncle comes back home late at night because he spent the evening outside in drinking and he has completely forgotten of the boy’s request to go to the bazaar:

⁹² F. M. KELLY, ‘Temperance Crusader’, in F. SHOVLIN, ed., *Journey Westward. Joyce, ‘Dubliners’ and the Literary Revival*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012, p. 12.

⁹³ J. B. LYONS, *Thrust Syphilis Down to Hell and Other Rejoyceana: Studies in the Border-Lands of Literature and Medicine*, Dublin, Glendale Press, 1988, p. 54; and J. FAIRHALL, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 99.

⁹⁴ J. KANE, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-209.

⁹⁵ L. P. Jr. CURTIS, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts; a Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Conference on British Studies at the University of Bridgeport, 1968; and E. HIRSCH, ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, *pmla*, 106, N° 5, October 1991, pp. 1116-1133.

⁹⁶ J. KANE, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-209.

⁹⁷ M. HUSS, *Alcoholismus Chronicus eller chronisk alkoholsjukdom; ett bidrag till dyskrassiernas kännedom enligt egen och andras erfarenhet*, (trans.: *Alcoholismus Chronicus*), Stockholm, Edition NP, 1849, p. 12.

⁹⁸ J. KANE, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-209.

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. [...] I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten (*D*, p.22).

In the following story, Eveline is forced to live and support the restrictiveness of her home and, above all, of her father who is used to spending money for alcohol. Alcohol turns Eveline's father into a violent and hateful man:

He had begun to threaten her [...] And now she has nobody to protect her. [...] the trouble was to get any money from her father [...] he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night (*D*, p.26).

The constant imbibing in 'After the Race' fuels Jimmy's attempts to convince himself he belongs to his upper-class companions. He is drinking himself into inebriation as to cover the awareness that Routh, the Englishman, and these 'Continental' have been 'taking him for a ride', and that now he must pay for the meager fulfillment of his desire.⁹⁹ Whilst in 'Counterparts' Farrington's drinking allows him to forget the stress of his job and duties of life: 'the dark damp night was coming and he longed to spend it in the bars, drinking with his friends amid the glare of gas and the clatter of glasses' (*D*, p.68). David Lloyd links the alcoholic excess of the story to the despair of a conquered land, describing 'Counterparts' as being 'bitterly diagnostic of the paralysis of Irish men in colonial Ireland, of their alienation and anomie which, so often, is counterpointed by drinking'.¹⁰⁰ In 'Ivy Day of the Committee Room' the men who should promise room for the National Party supporting their candidate spend the time in meaningless discussions overindulging in drink.

The leitmotiv of drinking is displayed above all in 'Grace'. From the very beginning of the story, Tom Kernan is presented as an intoxicated man who falls down the lavatory stairs out of drunkenness and lands in the basement: 'two gentlemen tried to lift him up: but he was quite helpless' (*D*, p.117). He has been drinking so much that he is now incapable and crippled of standing on his own two feet. He is paralyzed as well as the men who attempt to help him. In fact, the people in the bar send for a policeman

⁹⁹ E. G. INGERSOLL, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

¹⁰⁰ D. LLOYD, 'Counterparts: *Dubliners*, Masculinity, and Temperance Nationalism', in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 129.

instead of a doctor and the friends who visit him at his home are useless¹⁰¹ – idiot – men who look for a religious key instead of a medical facility in order to help Kernan's 'little accident' (*D*, p.118). It is curious how they never say the word 'drunk' and, maybe, they could not even admit the reason of their visit. Mr Kernan's wife is very upset about Tom's life but she brings drinks up to the bedroom where the men are engaged in a sort of Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. When Mr M'Coy joins the well-meaning circle, he brings whiskey as his contribution: 'the light music of whisky falling into glasses made an agreeable interlude' (*D*, p.132). Kernan has bitten his tongue and lost his voice literally and metaphorically: 'I an't y'ongue is hurt' (*D*, p.119), and he will never admit the cause of his problem. Unable to understand his real problem, his friends accompany Mr Kernan to a mess to let him listen to a lecture on how Jesus acts as a spiritual accountant. In short, while attention is paid to Kernan's physical and mental distress, the cause is entirely evaded and the paralytic status quo is preserved.

On the other hand, not only do men drink in Dublin's streets and pubs, but also women. Mrs Sinico in 'A Painful Case' is the best example: she started to drink to overcome her solitude and lack of love in her life. In the last two years of her life and, in particular, after the end of the short relationship with Mr Duffy, she 'had been in the habit of going out at night to buy spirits' (*D*, p.88), until one night she was run over by a train.

¹⁰¹ J. KANE, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-209.

CHAPTER THREE

III. BEHIND DUBLIN CURTAINS. *DUBLINERS*' RELIGION

Don't you think there is a certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass and what I am trying to do? I mean that I am trying ... to give people some kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own ... for their mental moral and spiritual uplift.¹

In *Dubliners* nothing is wasted. Every word and every phrase are made to carry their own burden in the story and in the collection as a whole.² 'Meanness', thus, can also mean strict economy in order to give meaning even to the smallest detail, which is part to the common experience. The detail does not have 'meaning' in itself,³ but the moment it is illuminated it turns alive with echoes and resonances. It is as if we followed a way backwards starting from naturalistic details to achieve an allusive and meaningful world without altering the realism of the story. Religion can be a fundamental key of reading this way of discovery, and we can see religion as part of the macrostructure of *Dubliners*, as it is part of Joyce's aim to show Dublin's moral paralysis in the four ages of man. Above all in background with its invisible presence, as an epiphany, religion plays an important role giving us information which we can find out from neither the inconclusive plots nor from the Dubliners' dull existences.

References to priests, religious belief and spiritual experience appear throughout the stories and ultimately paint an unflattering portrait of religion. The first sentence of 'The Sisters', and of *Dubliners*, is like that of a composer stating his opening theme: 'There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke' (*D*, p.3). Thus Joyce begins his book with a pronouncement on the clergy of the Church which he felt had rejected him; he excommunicates it, damning it as he would continue to do all the days of his life.⁴ In addition, if we consider that 'Grace' was intended to be the last story of *Dubliners*,

¹ S. JOYCE and R. ELLMANN and T. S. ELIOT, *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*, New York, Viking Press, 1958, pp. 103-104.

² A. W. LITZ, *James Joyce*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1966, p. 50.

³ D. GIFFORD, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Joyce. 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'*, New York, Dutton, 1967, p. 12.

⁴ L. ALBERT, "Gnomonology: Joyce's 'The Sisters'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27, N° 2, Winter 1990, pp. 353-364.

religion would have opened and closed the cycle of Joyce's stories started with 'The Sisters'.

III.1. A Paralyzing and Paralyzed Church.

I think people might be willing to pay for the special odour of corruption which, I hope, floats over my stories.⁵

Religion's tangible presence is felt throughout the book. Some priests are met, the Church and its precepts exert pressure on the individual's choices, and a sense of sin hangs heavy over some characters and thwarts their aims. Dublin is saturated with religion, which is not a positive force but instead it turns into an instrument of paralysis like every aspect of Dublin's public life.

Joyce presents us a church not distinct from any secular institution: it defines behavior according to binary codes that appear to be fixed; it seeks to enlarge its membership and to preempt other institutions in the struggle for social control. The conversation of the individual has become a function of hegemonic maneuvers in that the church teaches its members to become better businesspeople and to help themselves to a bigger piece of the financial pie.⁶ Religion has gone mad, departed, or become, as in 'Grace', the bastard of 'business'; hence, the efforts of the Dubliners to live by a religious code perpetuate their willed blindness to the economic and political conditions. As 'Grace' presents it, church is undeniably among the powers responsible for the paralysis of the Dubliners. That state is not just a result of ineptitude: Tom Kernan has fallen from social grace not simply because he is not up on the latest business methods but also because he is controlled by institutions that respond to an oppressive economic system. Kernan goes to church to remedy the ills wrought in him by the business world and discovers in the chapel nothing else but the same. Purdon does not so much deviate from doctrine as he reveals its practical impact.⁷ As if he operated a spiritual cash register, the savior of the story's conclusion answers the pub 'curate' of its opening scene. The Church in Dublin is now infected with economic interests, and it spatially stands alongside, not

⁵ J. JOYCE, '15 October 1905', in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber & Faber, 1992, p. 79.

⁶ H. CHERYL, 'Sermon as Massproduct: "Grace" and *A Portrait*', in M. T. REYNOLDS, ed., *James Joyce. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliff, Prentice Hall, 1993, p. 83.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

opposite, the pub, through its interest in accrual, male bonding, and maintenance of the status quo - for drinking supports one of Dublin's principal trades.⁸

Regarding Bob Doran, he fears religion as much as Dublin's gossip, and religious hypocrisy is mirrored in Mrs Mooney, the respectable churchgoing 'Madame'. The Church in Dublin is a net with an authoritarian impact, especially on family life, and which traps the spirit of those who would like to fly such as Eveline and Bob. Both of them are timid people, and they cannot but be submitted by the pressure of a rigid social system governed by hypocritical imperatives and whose main forces secretly work to maintain the status quo. In 'Araby' the Bazaar is presented as a sort of profit-driven and indifferent Church, as the boy's sense of despair mounts, the 'Church' is described as gradually dimming its lights.⁹

In *Dubliners* the presence of religion is greatly felt, but we find no indication that it can help man to a balanced creative life. The real spirit of religion has been deformed and the Dubliners have been left without values and faith. The Church has allowed hypocrisy to subdue it, and it has allied with the same immorality and falsity which support political, economical and social forces. The Dubliners, instead of regarding religion as a liberating force, feel paralyzed in a rigid scheme. Paralyzed religion is a powerful force of control in Dublin as it imposes its authoritarian impact on all the levels of society: culture (see Father Butler), politics and above all family life. People, in their turn, contribute to strengthening the senseless rigidity and paralyzing effect of religion.

III.2. Dublin: a Fallen Eden?

Dublin has the appearance of a fallen Eden.¹⁰ In *Dubliners* emblematic references to the earthly paradise add important pieces to Dublin's moral tableau:

I hid my books in the long grass near the ashpit at the end of the garden
where nobody ever came (*D*, p.12).

⁸ J. FAIRHALL, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 99.

⁹ G. LEONARD, 'Dubliners', in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 91.

¹⁰ D. E. JONES, "Approaches to 'Dubliners'": Joyce's', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 15, N° 2, Winter 1978, p. 114.

The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump (*D*, p.19).

The career of our play brought us [...] to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits ... (*D*, p.19).

One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it [...]. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field [...]. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick [...]. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then (*D*, p.25).

In 'Araby' there are different Biblical allusions. We read of a garden with a central apple tree and a pump under it: it is the tree of life,¹¹ the fruit of which caused the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, while the pump represents the snake which tempted Eve.¹² The field Eveline is recalling reminds us of the Garden like a happy and peaceful place. But what has happened to the garden? What has happened to Dublin? The garden is wild and dark, the grass has not been cut for a long time, odours arise from the ashpits and the stables, and children no longer play happily together: the garden has become decadent and harmony has been broken. If the Eden was once the symbol of regeneration, now it has turned into an emblem of sterility, and life has given place to death. Not only the serpent but also divine afflatus¹³ does the bicycle pump represent, as the pump is an instrument of inflation. However, the pump is rusty, so it is no longer in use. An old rusty bicycle pump in a wild garden draws a picture of a Dublin where solitude, darkness, disharmony and sterility co-exist among its citizens.

III.3. Symbolizing Religion: the Elements of Sterility.

In *Dubliners* we find many Eucharistic elements - such as the wine and the light of candles of the very first story, or the Baptismal water and the divine light of 'Grace', or even the 'broken bread' in 'The Boarding House' - which have failed to bring any kind of regeneration into Dublin's world.

¹¹ W. Y. TINDALL, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1968, p. 20.

¹² J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, introduzione e note di A. Brillì, Milano, Rizzoli Editore, 1980, p. 64.

¹³ W. Y. TINDALL, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

In the first story of the book, Father Flynn cannot keep a strong grip on the chalice and goes mad in a confessional box. The chalice is the pivot of the story. From Eliza's words we come to know that the priest had become 'odd' after he had broken a chalice, which 'contained nothing' symbolizing the impossibility for the priest to give the Last Supper. As the cup used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the chalice stands for redemption (Christ's blood shed on the cross for mankind's regeneration) and communion (the Eucharist in the Lord's Last Supper); it contains wine and bread, which turn into the blood and the body of Christ in the ceremony of the Mass. So looking at Father Flynn's empty and broken chalice, we can recognize that religion is empty, it has become nothing else than a sterile ritual.¹⁴ The chalice which the boy in 'Araby' imagines to bring 'safely in a throng of foes' (*D*, p.20) leads him to disillusionment, too.¹⁵

Even the boy's dream in 'The Sisters' is very interesting to focus on the religious details. The child dreams of Father Flynn's vicious face and imagines to be in Persia. Not only does Persia stand for a desire for escape, as east, life against the deadly west, but it also refers to those churches which were built with their head to the east placing the high altar against the east wall, so that the celebrant of the Mass and the people faced east. In doing so they looked toward Eden.¹⁶ According to Brewster Ghiselin, probably Joyce did know that Christ returning for the Last Judgment was expected to come from the east, and 'he must have shared that profound human feeling ... which has made the sunrise ... an emblem of the return of life and has made the east, therefore, an emblem of beginning'.¹⁷ To sum up, the child wants to escape as religion does not offer him an alternative life but just an empty ritual, where Spirit is present only in contemptible people such as Old Cotter – who works in a distillery – and where communion is no longer possible because it is given by two ineffectual priests. In addition, the light of God has been put out suggesting that the real paralysis is not physical but spiritual.

Water symbolism appears over and over again throughout the book. In religion it recalls the idea of purification: in the Baptism, water is used to purge away our sins. However, the sisters sell umbrellas to keep heavenly rain, i.e. God's grace away.¹⁸ Even bread and wine, the sacred elements of the altar, frequently appear in the stories in the secular guise of biscuits, raspberry lemonade, cake, tea, with the function to stress the

¹⁴ C. H. PEAKE, *James Joyce, the Citizens and the Artist*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1977, p. 13.

¹⁵ R. ADICKS, 'The Unconsecrated Eucharist in Dubliners', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 5, 1968, p. 296.

¹⁶ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁷ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹⁸ B. GHISELIN, "The Unity of 'Dubliners'", in M. BEJA, ed., *James Joyce: 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man': A Casebook*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1973, p. 110.

lack of communion and spiritual failure. Like the water they are deprived of their deeper meaning and they stand for a kind of communion without redemption.

The sherry and crackers in 'The Sisters' play important functions to present us a sterile Church. During the wake, Nannie and Eliza, as if they were two actual priests, make a grotesque parody of the mass offering sherry and crackers – metaphorically symbolizing wine and bread - after having ordered the assembly (composed by the boy and his aunt) to kneel down and to pray for Father Flynn. So by refusing to take the crackers, the boy refuses to take part in the communion, which is no longer an instrument of regeneration as it is held by two old and empty priests.¹⁹ A similar banquet is offered by Mrs Kearney in 'A Mother' who, in the day of the affair with Mr Holohan, brings him 'the decanter and the silver biscuit-barrel' (*D*, p.107) as part of her strategy to get some benefits for her daughter.²⁰

In 'Clay, in the limited world of the laundry, the distribution of cake and tea turn into a Eucharistic rite where Maria superintends the distribution as a celebrant in the Mass:²¹

Maria superintended the distribution of the barmbrack [...]. There was a great deal of laughing and joking during the meal. [...] Ginger Mooney lifted her mug of tea and proposed Maria's health while all the other women clattered with their mugs on the table ... (*D*, p.77).

Before going to Joe's house, Maria buys plumcake – i.e. another version of the sacred bread²² -, but as soon as she arrives at Joe's she finds out that she has forgotten it on the tram, failing to bring the Eucharistic bread into the house.

Communion signifies also unity between the participants and God. The two boys of 'An Encounter' eat biscuits and drink lemonade during their adventure. But the biscuits are 'musty' and instead of reaching the Pigeon House – i.e. the House of the Holy Spirit, thus of the Father²³ – they meet a pervert devotee of God, 'a queer old joss' - where 'joss' is a pidgin word for God²⁴.

¹⁹ F. L. WALZL, 'Joyce's The Sisters: a Development', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 10, N° 4, Summer 1973, p. 406. See also: M. MAGALANER and R. M. KAIN, *Joyce: the Man, the Work, the Reputation*, New York, New York University Press, 1956, p. 74.

²⁰ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, p.189.

²¹ M. MAGALANER and R. M. KAIN, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

²² R. ADICKS, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-296.

²³ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 17. See also: D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁴ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

The men united together in the committee room, speaking about politics and drinking stout, are a parody of the gathering of the apostles in the room in which Christ held His Last Supper.²⁵ Like Christ's followers, the men sit around a table, i.e. the altar, and the shade of Parnell, i.e. Christ, permeates the scene. However, they do not struggle for the same ideal and they are ready for betrayal. Unlike the sacred wine, the stout stands for their lack of unity and faith, and, unlike Christ, Parnell cannot rise from the dead because his followers have let their spirit die.²⁶

Dubliners ends with a table loaded with food and bottled water and liquors in order to highlight the idea of Communion presented throughout the whole book. Gabriel Conroy together with the other guests eat and drink, but it is the hunger of the soul for bread and wine, rather than the body, that needs to be satisfied.²⁷ Eucharist has failed. Thus, if the boy of the first story refuses to take part in the Communion this is due to the fact that bread and wine can never turn into the bread of unity and the blood of redemption.

III.4. Symbolizing Religion: the Characters of Sterility.

Not only objects does Joyce use to speak about the Irish Church, but his characters embody important features, too. For example, the old jossler in 'An Encounter' - 'dressed in a suit of greenish-black' (*D*, p.15) - with his ritual and desire to initiate others into the mystery could be connected to the Catholic Church, burner of Irish joss sticks. Or in 'A Mother', like the Church, Mrs Kearney slips 'the doubtful items in between the old favourites' (*D*, p.107) offering wine and biscuits to the visitors whom she dominates. Like the Church, she insists on being paid – a demand that is louder than that of the politicians in 'Ivy Day of the Committee Room' -; and like the Church, she futilely excommunicates those who displease her.

'Grace' reflects the financial enterprise of the church and it attacks the automatic response to the sacred.²⁸ Tom Kernan's fall and absent redemption put light on the inefficacy of a religion which is just another daily ritual of repetition that shapes you with its power showing the harmony of the business world with the religious teaching

²⁵ S. H. HOROWITZ, "More Christian Allegory in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 21, N° 2, Winter 1984, p. 145.

²⁶ M. CHURCH, 'Dubliners and Vico', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 5, 1968, pp. 154-155.

²⁷ B. GHISELIN, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²⁸ H. CHERYL, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

available for popular consumption. Martin Cunningham proposes making ‘a good holy pious and God-fearing Roman Catholic’ (*D*, p.133) out of his fallen friend, an ex-Protestant and bad Catholic, whose rejection of candles may imply Protestant habit, capricious humor, or loathing of light. The conversation round the bed, the sermon, which proves Dublin’s religion to be as worldly as the world, is presented by indirect discourse for greater concentration and more desolating impact.²⁹

Throughout *Dubliners* the chief representatives of Dublin’s Church are: Father Flynn, Father Keon and Father Purdon. Each of them throws light on a particular aspect of religion. Father Purdon shows that a compromise can exist between religious demands and public needs. Father Keon, instead, has found out that there is no contrast between religion and politics. Father Flynn is analyzed in his relation with a boy and he mirrors what religion offers to education of the individual:

... he had taught me to pronounce Latin properly. He had told me stories about the catacombs and about Napoleon Bonaparte, and he had explained to me the meaning of the different ceremonies of the Mass and of the different vestments worn by the priest. Sometimes he had amused himself by putting difficult questions to me [...]. His questions showed me how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church [...]. The duties of the priest towards the Eucharist and towards the secrecy of the confessional seemed so grave to me that I wondered how anybody had ever found in himself the courage to undertake them (*D*, pp.5-6).

Through the boy’s eyes of ‘The Sisters’ the church’s mission to teach doctrines seem complex, the administration of the sacraments difficult and the Church as a governing body, a vast legal machine.³⁰

If Father Flynn had to retire because of his breakdown, and the boy was the only audience left to him, Father Purdon is a great success and better typifies Dublin’s Church:

“He won’t be too hard on us...; He’s a man of the world like ourselves... It’s not exactly a sermon, you know. It’s just kind of a friendly talk, you know, in a common-sense way” (*D*, pp.128-129).

²⁹ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-41.

³⁰ F. L. WALZL, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

And the following Sunday, in the Church in Gardiner Street, Father Purdon is not too hard on them, on the contrary, he tells them they do not have to change their behaviour to achieve God's grace. Thanks to his elaborate metaphor, God's grace becomes the period accorded in financial circles to debtors:³¹

If he might use the metaphor, he said, he was their spiritual accountant; and he wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they tallied accurately with conscience (*D*, p.136).

Father Purdon, whose name reminds one of Purdon Street in the brothel quarter of Dublin³², personifies religion which has prostituted spiritual values for material comfort and prestige. If with Father Flynn religion had been deprived of any spiritual content, here it is seen as a means of acquiring social grace. Twice the word grace is associated with 'hat', which is a symbol of bourgeois respectability.³³

Concerning Father Keon, his duality is revealed by his physical description:

A person resembling a poor clergyman or a poor actor appeared in the doorway ... it was impossible to say whether he wore a clergyman's collar or a layman's ... He opened his very long mouth suddenly to express disappointment and at the same time opened wide his very bright blue eyes to express pleasure and surprise (*D*, p.97).

Father Keon is 'a black sheep' (*D*, p.98) because he has allied with political power. He embodies the feature of religion which is in relation with the Politics.³⁴ It is simony – the word in italic which first appeared in the very first sentences of the first story and which permeates the whole book – as we can see how the Church is ready to close a blind eye on political hypocrisy to get some material benefits out of it:

"I think I know the little game they're at", said Mr Henchy. "You must owe the City Fathers money nowadays if you want to be made Lord Mayor ... I'm thinking seriously of becoming a City Father myself (*D*, p.98).

³¹ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³² C. H. PEAKE, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³³ R. M. KAIN, 'Grace', in C. HART, ed., *James Joyce's Dubliners*, London, Faber, 1969, p. 139.

³⁴ W. BECK, *Joyce's Dubliners: Substance, Vision and Art*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1969, p. 254.

Three priests have shown us Dublin's religious paralysis. Religion is nothing else than an outer cloak and has made an 'unholy' alliance with money, social hypocrisy and immorality.

III.5. Sterility, Money and Superstition.

'Grace' can be linked to Dante's *Divina Commedia*. The scene opens in a lavatory of a pub, i.e. the Inferno:³⁵

Two gentlemen who were in the lavatory at the time tried to lift him up: but he was quite helpless. He lay curled up at the foot of the stairs down which he had fallen. They succeeded in turning him over. His hat had rolled a few yards away and his clothes were smeared with the filth and ooze of the floor on which he had lain, face downwards. His eyes were closed and he breathed with a grunting noise (*D*, p.117).

Since Tom Kernan's eyes are closed he cannot see the divine light and like Father Flynn's paralyzed tongue, Tom is wounded in the tongue, the source of the Word.³⁶ In his bedroom, i.e. the Purgatorio, the 'invalid' begins his 'convalescence'. Mrs Kernan prepares him breakfast, i.e. communion.³⁷ It is in the very assembly in Tom Kernan's room that religion reveals all its sterility. The friends' conversation is about religious matters which are beyond their understanding and knowledge.³⁸ Their discussion about the Popes and the Jesuits is full of common clichés, mottos and nominal matters which remind us of Father Flynn's empty and scrupulous doctrine:

"Pope Leo, you know, was a great scholar and a poet". "He had a strong face," said Mr Kernan. "Yes," said Mr Cunningham. "He wrote Latin poetry." "I remember reading," said Mr Cunningham, "that one of Pope Leo's poems was on the invention of the photograph - in Latin, of course." "Well, you know", said Mr M'Coy, "isn't the photograph wonderful when you come to think of it?" (*D*, p.131).

³⁵ S. JOYCE, 'The Background to Dubliners', *The Listener*, 1954, pp. 526-527.

³⁶ V. MOSELEY, "The 'Coincidence' of 'Contraries' in 'Grace'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 6, N° 1, 1968, p. 10.

³⁷ R. BOYLE, "Swiftian Allegory and Dantean Parody in Joyce's 'Grace'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 7, N° 1, 1969, p. 13.

³⁸ R. M. KAIN, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

The friends' superficiality is revealed also by Kernan's recollection of Father Burke. Everybody remembers his voice, his style, but not the subject of his discourse. It is then interesting to notice that Tom Kernan uses the theatrical term 'pit' (*D*, p.129) instead of the church term 'nave'. Together with his friends, Kernan decides to take part to the retreat: he has attained 'grace' and he can enter the Church in Gardiner street, where the Gardiner stands for Garden which in turn stands for Eden.³⁹ The church is like a vast stage and Father Purdon's large gestures are those of an actor who has learned his part very well:

A powerful-looking figure, the upper part of which was draped with a white surplice, was observed to be struggling into the pulpit. Simultaneously the congregation unsettled, produced handkerchiefs and knelt upon them with care. [...] The preacher turned back each wide sleeve of his surplice with an elaborate large gesture and slowly surveyed the array of faces (*D*, pp.135-136).

There is an atmosphere of decorum in the church, and when the retreat is over everyone will go back home without any real change in their lives. This is why Kernan accepts the retreat just because he has surrendered to the superficial aspects of the Church's prestige.⁴⁰ So, unlike Dante's proceeding from the Hell to the Heaven, Tom is going backwards. When he sits in front of Father Purdon, we see something nauseating and a flavor of corruption in his words. The Gardiner Street Church is a businessmen's cathedral, the usurer's paradise,⁴¹ and the five men could represent the five wounds⁴² of Christ, as if the quincunx were there to crucify Him again. In the end, Tom Kernan achieves a respectable place in the social paradise, where his hat, the chief emblem of grace, is restored, and at the same time he enters a spiritual Hell.

Joyce more directly questions the role of the Church in the lives of the Dubliners and searching for grace becomes yet another repetitive cycle for them. Dublin's popular religion is best incarnated in Mrs Kernan: she is a practical, realistic woman and her religion is well integrated with her way of facing life:

³⁹ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁴⁰ W. BECK, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁴¹ F. R. CUNNINGHAM, "Joyce's 'Grace': Gracelessness in a Lost Paradise", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 6, N° 3, Spring 1969, p. 220.

⁴² D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

After a quarter of a century of married life, she had very few illusions left. Religion for her was a habit, and she suspected that a man of her husband's age would not change greatly before death. [...] However, Mr Cunningham was a capable man; and religion was religion. The scheme might do good and, at least, it could do no harm. Her beliefs were not extravagant. She believed steadily in the Sacred Heart as the most generally useful of all Catholic devotions and approved of the sacraments. Her faith was bounded by her kitchen, but, if she was put to it, she could believe also in the banshee and in the Holy Ghost (*D*, p.123).

Mrs Kernan's life is more accustomed to prudence than to hope, and her religion is a mixture of religion and superstition tempered by fatalistic realism. She allows religion to enter her life provided that it does not alter her everyday life equilibrium. Unlike Eveline and Bob Doran, she is not shaped by religious imperatives. For the woman, as for most Dubliners, religion is a habit.

In 'The Sisters' Nannie and Eliza praise the priest's great efficiency in supervising funeral arrangements, getting newspaper-publicity and handling the insurance. In other words, the Church is a well run, materialistically minded organization, which satisfies ignorant and superficial people by efficient administration of church services and financial affairs.⁴³

A parallel has been drawn also between the pubs and the churches, as they have been attributed a similar function: in Dublin, as alcohol is the man's relief, so the women's solace is the church.⁴⁴ For example, in 'Counterparts' Farrington spends all the evening drinking, and when he arrives home he does not find his wife because she is at the chapel. In addition, the child begs his father not to beat him, and he will say for him a Holy Mary, as if he were convinced that a prayer could heal his father's anger. Here religious practices are reduced to a kind of witchcraft⁴⁵, as if a prayer, like a magic formula, will set everything right. In Dublin drunkenness co-exists with superstitious religiosity, as both are outlet-valves for the frustration of everyday life. So, the consolation which Farrington's wife seeks at the chapel is the counterpart of that which the man seeks in the pub.

⁴³ F. L. WALZL, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

⁴⁴ W. BECK, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁴⁵ C. H. PEAKE, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

III.6. Figures in the Shadow and the Meaning of Proper Names.

Throughout the stories we see that the limit which separates the living from the dead, and illusion from reality cannot be fully drawn.⁴⁶ In Dublin's clear-out world, in which real people move in actual places and where almost nothing happens, there can hide strange echoes of a far-off world. This happens because the background against which the Dubliners move is not empty, but populated by invisible figures belonging to a religious or literary tradition, and some traits of the individual's life or a situation, when intensely illuminated, reflect light around them:⁴⁷ the profile of an old woman, some proper names or a shining coin in the night echoes an allusive world populated by allegoric figures.

Starting from the story 'Clay' we can find religious elements woven together in the main character. Maria is compared to the Virgin as:⁴⁸ her name, as a matter of fact in the previous story of 'Counterparts' Farrington's child wants to pray a Holy Mary for his father; her qualities as peace-maker and invoked to prevent conflicts – 'she was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace' (*D*, p.76) - ; her status, i.e. she is not married but she has been Joe' and Alphy's putative mother: 'she had nursed him and Alphy too; and Joe used often say: "Mamma is mamma but Maria is my proper mother"' (*D*, p.77). So she is both the blessed Virgin and the Holy Mother; the environment in which she works – 'The Laundry by Lamplight' – where water and light mixed together suggest purification and illumination, i.e. Baptism. Like the Immaculate Virgin, Maria contributes to purging the Dubliners' sins away. Like a celebrant in the Mass, Maria superintends communion rite, i.e. cake stands for bread while tea for wine, and she also grows plants in a conservatory, a kind of little garden of Eden. Furthermore, she is a devout catholic and she is going to attend mass the following morning, November 1. It will be 'All Saints' Day' and Maria is herself a saint as she lives in poverty, following the Beatitudes⁴⁹: 'Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God'. Maria is also going to bring some gifts to Joe's family; thus her trip reminds us of the Magi's travelling bearing their gifts to Christ.⁵⁰ However, Maria does not play a real role in the world⁵¹, and her innocence and perfection have to do more

⁴⁶ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴⁷ C. H. PEAKE, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ M. MAGALANER and R. M. KAIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁹ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁰ C. LOBNER, "Maria as *La Befana* in 'Clay'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 16, N° 4, Summer 1979, p. 478.

⁵¹ C. H. PEAKE, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

with blindness than with spiritual greatness. The world is nice and good because Maria, unconsciously, avoids the unpleasantness,⁵² and like a child, the woman does not see the corruption around her.

Through personal names Joyce creates a correspondence between the image and its meaning.⁵³ In Christian tradition, Gabriel is the archangel who presides over renewal as well as end. It is he who announces the coming of Christ and he who will announce the second coming (he will blow the Last Trumpet). Gabriel, in other words, is the guardian of the celestial treasury and the messenger of good news.⁵⁴ As a divine missionary, Gabriel Conroy enters his aunts' house on the Christmas night to attend a social affair. But, unlike the archangel, he arrives late and his speech takes on the wrong tone:⁵⁵ 'He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure' (*D*, p.141).

In addition, the house Gabriel enters resembles the house of the dead: Julia and Kate are old and decadent; death seems to be hovering over the party. In fact, the guests talk about Mount Melleray's monks, who sleep in their coffins, and of dead singers. The dance is a dance of death which mirrors Dublin society's moral order and hypocrisy, and the Morkan sisters symbolize sterility and death. Julia possesses deadly features: 'her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face [...] and parted lips...' (*D*, p.141). Words of death shadow the atmosphere, as if there were a bridge with the world of the dead: '...it was a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower (*D*, p.146). Gabriel thinks about outside, about the snow and a monument of the dead: 'how pleasant it would be to walk out alone...The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument' (*D*, p.151). Furthermore, Miss Ivors' greeting 'Beannacht libh' in her Gaelic language is as a sort of blessing to the party that stresses the atmosphere of shadows of the dead (*D*, p.154). Even Gabriel, instead of announcing renewal to people who are spiritually dead, increase the presence of death as guest of the party – in which a kind of Last Supper takes place:

⁵² A. EASSON, "Parody as Comment in James Joyce's 'Clay'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 7, N° 2, Winter 1970, p. 80.

⁵³ S. BOLT, *A Preface to James Joyce*, London, Longman, 1981, p. 41.

⁵⁴ For the religious allusions to Gabriel see: W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47; D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 113; A. LYTLE, "A Reading of Joyce's 'The Dead'", *Sewanee Review*, 77, 1969, p. 196.

⁵⁵ M. CHURCH, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

...there are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here to-night. Our path through life is strewn with many such sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim, and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavours (*D*, p.160).

In the scene of the Annunciation Gabriel the Archangel is generally portrayed with a lily in his hand, as a symbol of the Virgin's purity. Moreover, a lily serves at funerals and in the ceremony that celebrates the Resurrection at Easter as a symbol of death and rebirth.⁵⁶ When the 'archangel' enters the house, it is a corrupted Lilly that he meets. Like the flower she is slim, grown-up and pale - 'the gas in the pantry made her look still paler' (*D*, p.139), but her heart has no longer the purity of a lily. As soon as Gabriel mentions her future wedding her reaction is quite bitter - 'the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you' (*D*, p.140) -: the bitterness of her retort betrays that she is already cynically world-weary.

Gretta plays an important role, too, in the connotation of religious details. She is caught in the balance of light and dark, and her details – her mystery and grace, the blue of her hat, her elevated position and her other-worldly attitude – are traditionally associated with the Virgin:⁵⁷

A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terra-cotta and salmon-pink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white [...]. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness [...]. 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 [...]. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones (*D*, p.165).

Even later, in the hotel room, her transparency is stressed: she walks in, out and upon light, as if she were not so much tangible.⁵⁸ She appears like a reflection, a shadow of herself, and her body takes shape in a mirror. In the hotel, Gabriel would like to announce his message of love to his wife, but the parts are reversed: it is the messenger who is announced by his wife's past love. Gabriel's place has been usurped by Michael.

⁵⁶ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 112; and B. BENSTOCK, "The Dead", in C. HART, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁷ T. EGGERS, "What is a Woman...a Symbol of?", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 18, N° 4, Summer 1981, p. 389.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390.

Michael is the archangel of the Church militant; he is mentioned in the Bible as disputing with Satan about the body of Moses⁵⁹ and as warring against the dragon Satan and his forces in the upper regions.⁶⁰ But now Michael is no longer Satan's adversary but Gabriel's with whom he should live in harmony:

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 (*D*, p.174).

So, the scene highlights Gabriel as 'a fallen angel' throughout the story. The messenger of good news turns out to preside over death and in the end he receives news of death from a 'virgin' wife – 'virgin' because the passion exists in Gretta's Galway past, not in her present.⁶¹

III.7. Betrayal.

'Betrayal' is one of Joyce's key words.⁶² Throughout his life Joyce felt surrounded by treacherous friends and enemies. All Dubliners are somehow betrayed by their expectations, as the gap between what they dream of and what they actually do will never be fulfilled. Besides, most Dubliners can be regarded as traitors to their humanity.

Father Purdon and Father Flynn betray religious principles and consequently, God. By breaking the chalice which contained the precious blood, Father Flynn has failed as representative of Christ in the Mass. This sense of betrayal can be linked to the first sentence of the story - '...it was the third stroke' (*D*, p.3) – connecting Father Flynn to the three denials by Peter, who became aware of his betrayal after the third crowing of the cock.⁶³ Mr Duffy betrays his fellowmen by refusing to 'sit' with them at the feast of life; Jimmy Doyle renounces his individuality to be accepted by his rich friends; Mrs Kearney betrays Irish nationalism for eight guineas; Bob Doran has been entrapped by Polly and

⁵⁹ 'Jude, 9'.

⁶⁰ 'Revelation, 12:7-9'.

⁶¹ R. ELLMANN, "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'", *James Joyce*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 257.

⁶² J. PARIS, *Joyce par lui-même*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1957, p. 23.

⁶³ E. KENNEDY, 'Lying Still: Another Look at "The Sisters"', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 12, N° 4, Summer 1975, p. 363.

her mother, but he is, in his turn, a traitor because he fears to escape from their base betrayal. However, it is in the very stories of ‘Two Gallants’ and ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ that betrayal is the pivot of the stories as in both there is the shadow of Judas in the figure of Corley and in the eight canvassers gathered together in the committee room.

In ‘Two Gallants’ the theme of betrayal is underlined in the final sentence: ‘a small gold coin shone in the palm’ (*D*, p.45). The small coin explains the nature of Corley and Lenehan’s relation, and the political implications present in the story. It is as if in Corley’s palm we perceived the shadow of the thirty pieces of silver which were given Judas as a token of his betrayal.⁶⁴ Regarding Corley: he is a contemptible and corrupt man. Even his body has something repulsive about it: ‘his head was large, globular and oily; it sweated in all weathers; and his large round hat, set upon it sideways, looked like a bulb which had grown out of another’ (*D*, p.37). He is an exploiter: ‘he spoke without listening to the speech of his companions’ (*D*, p.38). In addition, he is a ‘stag’, a police informer; his perversity is revealed by some attitudes: ‘he moistened his upper lip by running his tongue along it. The recollection brightened his eyes’ (*D*, p.39). He plays the part of a Judas who exploits his ladies, instead of serving them (he is a ‘gallant’) and gives others away to the police to get some money. His habit of aspirating the first letter of his name after the manner of the Florentines discloses Corley’s true nature, i.e. he is a whore. In fact, the Florentines aspirate ‘c’ as ‘h’, thus Corley becomes Horley or Whorely.⁶⁵ When Lenehan, out of jest, calls him ‘a base betrayer’ (*D*, p.39), he says a fundamental truth about him. Lenehan is waiting for that coin with anxiety. Even in Lenehan there is a link with the prostitution motif when, referring to his favourite expression – i.e. ‘biscuit’, like ‘cookie’, ‘cake’, and ‘tart’ –, an early twentieth-century slang for a prostitute is revealed.⁶⁶ As Corley’s ‘disciple’, Lenehan shares Corley’s plan to have some benefits. Like the young slave, he is Corley’s victim because he lacks his friend’s self-confidence and independence: ‘his bright, small eyes searched his companion’s face for reassurance’ (*D*, p.39). Because of his incapability of renouncing his state of a sponger, the coin will doom him to step aside, all his life, in order to make room for his friend:

⁶⁴ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁶⁵ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁶⁶ C. A. CULLETON, “‘Taking the Biscuit’: Narrative Cheekiness in *Dubliners*”, in M. R. BOLLETTIERI, BOSINELLI and Jr. H. F. MOSHER, eds., *ReJoycing: New Readings of ‘Dubliners’*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1998, pp. 110-111.

... the other, who walked on the verge of the path and was at times obliged to step on to the road, owing to his companion's rudeness. [...] The swing of his burly body made his friend execute a few light skips from the path to the roadway and back again (*D*, p.36).

The coin stands also for the political betrayal. On their way the two friends meet a harpist who is playing 'Silent, O Moyle': 'He plucked at the wires heedlessly [...]. His harp, too, heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees, seemed weary alike of the eyes of strangers and of her master's hands' (*D*, pp.39-40). We can see a link between the slave and the harp: both must in fact submit to their master's hands.⁶⁷ The harp is a traditional symbol of Ireland golden age⁶⁸, thus, in the personification of the harp, it is suggested the nation's degradation as its inhabitants have betrayed political independence and national pride to obey an English master.⁶⁹ Like Lir's daughter, a spell has been cast over Ireland,⁷⁰ which has lost its freedom. A political reference has been given also to Corley as his connection with the police fits him for the role of Ireland's conqueror and traitor.⁷¹

The lamps of the streets and the circled moon, which beginning were shining to sustain the atmosphere of happiness on a Sunday day, now have given place to a single lamp enlightening a hard bright disc, and the small coin in a palm stands in relief against the dark night. The palm belongs to Corley / Judas, who acted deceitfully toward a slave, contributed to corrupting a 'leech' (*D*, p.36) and, as a symbol of the Irish, sold his country treacherously.

In 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' Joyce commemorates the memory of Parnell, a kind of Jesus Christ. Like Christ, Parnell was 'un re senza corona',⁷² who ruled over Ireland with spiritual greatness; like Christ he was betrayed by a friend of his, i.e. Ireland. The Irish 'vendettero Parnell loro maestro alla coscienza farisaica di non conformisti inglesi senza esigere i trenta scudi.'⁷³

⁶⁷ A. W. LITZ, *James Joyce*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1966, p. 68.

⁶⁸ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁶⁹ A. W. LITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁷⁰ D. GIFFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁷¹ W. Y. TINDALL, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁷² J. JOYCE, *Scritti Italiani*, a cura di G. CORSINI & G. MELCHIORI, Milano, Mondadori Editore, p. 80.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

La tristezza che devastò la sua anima era forse la profonda convinzione che nell'ora del bisogno uno dei discepoli che intingeva la mano con lui nel catino stava per tradirlo.⁷⁴

In the scene the shadow of Judas hangs over the eight canvassers gathered together in the committee room the very day on which Parnell died: October, 6. But what should be a possibility of commemorating the dead leader turns into an occasion to betray him for the second time. It is as if the scene took place at the Last Supper and, after Christ / Parnell's death, the Apostles receive the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ The canvassers sit round a table, i.e. an altar, and drink stout, i.e. the sacred wine.⁷⁶ But unlike the faith which unites the Apostles, the men in the room have lost it and politics becomes only a matter of money. An apparently harmony is achieved only when they drink some stout, which, together with money, is one of the goals the men are struggling for. The memory of their dead leader is let die out like the fire in the room. Besides, the people who praise and applaud Hynes can be identified with the people he describes as Parnell's traitors.⁷⁷

He lies slain by the coward hounds/ He raised to glory from the mire/.../
Shame on the coward, caitiff hands/ That smote their Lord or with a kiss/
Betrayed him to the rabble-rout/ Of fawning priests - no friends of his/ (D,
pp.103-104).

It is as if the canvassers were applauding at their condemnation.⁷⁸ Regarding the way the Irish commemorated their heroes, Joyce said:

Gli Irlandesi anche quando spezzano il cuore di coloro che sacrificano la loro vita per la patria, non mancano mai di testimoniare grande riverenza ai defunti.⁷⁹

Parnell is indeed dead, even in the memory of his fellow-citizens. The eight men stand for what Irish politics has become after Parnell's fall. Like Christ Parnell has been

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ S. H. HOROWITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

⁷⁶ M. CHURCH, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

⁷⁷ H. CIXOUS, "Political Ignominy: 'Ivy Day'", in W. M. CHACE, ed., *Joyce: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1974, p. 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁹ J. JOYCE, *Scritti Italiani, op. cit.*, p. 49.

forgotten and each Judas 'lifts the bitter drink of guilty conscience to his lips, but no toast is drunk to freedom because they are soon to drink to King Edward.'⁸⁰

III.8. Joyce's Religion.

I make open war upon it by what I write and say and do.⁸¹

... abbandonata la fede l'ossessione religiosa non abbandona Joyce. Presenze della passata ortodossia riemergono continuamente in tutta la sua opera sotto forma di una mitologia personalissima e di accanimenti blasfematori che a loro volta rivelano permanenze affettive ... È sempre e semplicemente il riecheggiare di memorie che riemergono dal subcosciente.⁸²

Joyce attended a prestigious Jesuit school. During the three years at Clongowes Wood he absorbed the basic beliefs of Catholicism. The most important religious experience of Joyce's life occurred at Belvedere College, which he attended from the age of 11 to the age of 16.⁸³ The *Portrait* shows Dedalus sunk deep in the Roman Catholic faith. The hidden fullness of details of the mass attracts and frightens him by their power. Allusion to the inexpressible, images of Mary, the sacred Heart, or the dark flames of Jesuit Hell are his daily intellectual and emotional fare. However, by the time he reaches University College his allegiance with the Jesuits has ended. At the end of the *Portrait* Dedalus – Joyce declares that he will not serve the Country, the Family and the Church any more as they are three nets which trap man and thwart his spiritual uplift.⁸⁴ And in *Dubliners* the vision we get of religion is certainly not edifying.

But if Joyce consciously frees himself from the Roman Catholic Church and achieves intellectual emancipation, his involvement with the Church never ends as his mind remains saturated with the religion in which he refuses to believe.⁸⁵ His Christianity evolves from a religion into a system of metaphors⁸⁶, which has great influence on his art.

Joyce approaches aesthetics through theology. At Belvedere, he decides that he will not be a priest, but he was late to become a priest of the imagination. As in the

⁸⁰ H. CIXOUS, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁸¹ J. JOYCE, '29 August 1904', *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁸² U. ECO, *Le Poetiche di Joyce*, Milano, Bompiani Editore, 1966, pp. 12-14.

⁸³ R. ELLMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31; p. 46.

⁸⁴ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, London, Penguin Popular Classics, 1996, p. 197.

⁸⁵ A. W. LITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁸⁶ R. ELLMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

Eucharist the wine and he bread are transubstantiated by the priest, in the same way the artist must transform the raw material of experience without altering its attributes.⁸⁷ ‘Epicleti’, ‘epiphany’ and ‘post-creation’ are words which Joyce derives from Catholic terminology and which he uses to express his aesthetic theories.⁸⁸ Stephen Dedalus says that an object must be isolated so that its harmony, wholeness and radiance will be disclosed.⁸⁹ And in *Dubliners* some objects and characters have been isolated, but they have become ‘epiphanic’ only after they have been set against a background which is not empty, but rich in images, symbols and figures belonging to Joyce’s real Catholic world.

In 1911 the city was 83% Catholic, 13% Church of Ireland, 2% Presbyterian and Methodist and 2% others, including a growing Jewish presence.⁹⁰



On the left: in the predominantly Protestant suburb of Monkstown, the churches of the two main religious denominations stand side by side.⁹¹ *On the right:* as a result of the disestablishment of the church in 1872, St. Patrick's became a national cathedral for the Church of Ireland. This is a view c. 1900.⁹²

⁸⁷ S. BOLT, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

⁸⁸ J. JOYCE, ‘Early July 1904’, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁸⁹ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁹⁰ *The National Archives of Ireland*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/religion.html>.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/education.html>.

CHAPTER FOUR

IV. SYMBOLS: A MIRROR OF DUBLIN

The sketches in *Dubliners* are perfect, each in its own way and all in one way: they imply a vast deal that is not said. They are small as the eye-glass of the telescope is small; you look through them to depths and distances.¹

IV.1. Windows.

Windows in *Dubliners* consistently evoke the anticipation of events or encounters that are about to happen. For example, the narrator in 'The Sisters' looks into a window each night, waiting for signs of Father Flynn's death, and the narrator in 'Araby' watches from his parlor window for the appearance of Mangan's sister. The opening image of the window reinforces the sense of detached observation and of distance adopted by the unnamed young narrators, creating a suspense that separates the boys' interior life from the exterior one.

Windows also mark the threshold between domestic space and the outside world. For example, in 'Eveline' the window is a screen which separates Eveline's life - stuck among the house walls - and the possibility of freedom outside the claustrophobic place. Through windows the characters in *Dubliners* observe both their own lives and those of the others: Eveline turns to the house window as if it were a mirror on which she could reflect herself when she thinks about her own situations, her relationships, and it is in the very moment of sudden revelation in which past, present and future are linked together. Even in 'A Little Cloud' Little Chandler is found while looking out the window:

He turned often from his tiresome writing to gaze out of the office window. [...] He watched the scene and thought of life; and (as always happened when he thought of life) he became sad. A gentle melancholy took possession of him. He felt how useless it was to struggle against fortune (*D*, p.53).

¹ J. MACY, 'Review of A Portrait and Dubliners', in R. DEMING, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, London, Routledge & P. Kegan, 1970, p. 109.

In 'A Painful Case', after Mrs Sinico's death, Mr Duffy thinks about his 'overripe' life gazing out of the window:

Mr Duffy raised his eyes from the paper and gazed out of his window on the cheerless evening landscape. [...] The whole narrative of her death revolted him and it revolted him to think that he had ever spoken to her of what he held sacred. [...] He thought of the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman. Just God, what an end!' (*D*, p.88).

In 'The Dead' the word 'window' is repeated seventeen times. More times it is Gabriel who is drawn at the window looking out, as he could escape from the room, from that microcosm of Dublin and as if he wanted to vanish with the flakes of snow.

Cab windows rattling all the way, and the east wind blowing in after we passed Merrion' (*D*, p.141).

When he saw Freddy Malins coming across the room to visit his mother Gabriel left the chair free for him and retired into the embrasure of the window (*D*, p.151).

Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone (*D*, p.151).

People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music (*D*, p.159).

The confusion grew greater and the cabman was directed differently by Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head out through a window of the cab. [...] As for Freddy Malins he was speechless with laughter. He popped his head in and out of the window every moment to the great danger of his hat (*D*, p.164).

He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace (*D*, p.168).

A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft from one window to the door. Gabriel threw his overcoat and hat on a couch and crossed the room towards the window. He looked down into the street in order that his emotion might calm a little (*D*, p.170).

Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window (*D*, p.175).

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward (*D*, p.176).

The last window metaphorically symbolizes the border between Gabriel's present life and a possible journey westward, perhaps towards the dead.²

Even Gretta often stands near a window or looks out of it. It is in the hotel window in which her past comes into her mind, and she recalls a boy who died out of love for her in a cold night, as if the hotel window were the same of her past house window:

She was looking out of the window and seemed tired (*D*, p.169).

She went on to the window and stood there, looking out. [...] He was in such a fever of rage and desire that he did not hear her come from the window (*D*, p.171).

She looked away from him along the shaft of light towards the window in silence (*D*, p.173).

"Then the night before I left, I was in my grandmother's house in Nuns' Island, packing up, and I heard gravel thrown up against the window. The window was so wet I couldn't see, so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering" (*D*, p. 174).

IV.2. Dusk and Night: Light-Dark Imagery.

'What are you doing in the dark?' (*D*, p.92) is a question that Mr Hynes puts to the canvassers in the committee room and that can suit every character in *Dubliners*, as darkness seems to be their dominant condition. Night is everywhere in a Dublin where light-dark imagery dominates, and references to candles, fire and electric lamps contrast sharply with images of impending darkness.

Thus, *Dubliners* opens in darkness with a boy staring at a window lighted faintly from within, and speaking of the dead:

There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke. Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time). [...] Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis (*D*, p.3).

² R. ELLMANN, "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'", *James Joyce*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 258.

Joyce's Dublin is perpetually dark. No streams of sunlight or cheery landscapes illuminate these stories. Instead, a spectrum of grey and black underscores their somber tone. Characters walk through Dublin at dusk, an in-between time that hovers between the activity of the day and the stillness of the night, and live their most profound moments in the darkness of late hours. These dark backdrops evoke the half-life or in-between state the Dubliners occupy, both physically and emotionally, suggesting the intermingling of life and death that marks every story. In this state, life can exist and proceed, but the darkness renders the Dubliners' experiences dire and doomed.

The twilight, half-lit, street-lit, candle-lit, gas-lit, fire-lit settings inhabited by shadows and silhouettes remind us both of the insubstantial nature of these lives and also of their latent and repressed possibilities.³ These people are shades who have never lived, vicarious inhabitants of a universe ruled by others. They are exemplary types of a general condition in which individuality is dissolved. The city of Dublin – not just the place but also the cultural system that constitutes it – exercises an almost dogmatic authority over the people who inhabit it. The Dubliners have acclimatized themselves to a servitude they affect to resist.⁴ Like the sightseers of 'After the Race', the cheer they raise is that of 'the gratefully oppressed' (*D*, p.30).

Generally the wax of the candles is the body of Christ, the wick his soul and the flame His divinity.⁵ However, the flame of the candles in Father Flynn's room is pale and thin in the dusky light (*D*, p.7). They are no longer symbol of the divine presence, i.e. life, instead they represent death.⁶

In 'Araby' the boy asks 'for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night', in a 'dark rainy evening' (*D*, pp.20-21). When he arrives at the bazaar 'the greater part of the hall was in darkness' (*D*, p.23), and in the end all the lights are out. The entire world seems to be in the dark, the bazaar is like Father Flynn's gloomy house.⁷

Lamps or candles are often lit to face the impending night, but they seem impotent to overcome it and to dispel the dark:

³ S. DEANE, 'Dead Ends: Joyce's Finest Moments', in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *Semicolonial Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵ D. GIFFORD, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Joyce: 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man'*, New York, Dutton, 1967, p. 30.

⁶ F. L. WALZL, "Joyce's 'The Sisters': a Development", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 10, N° 4, Summer, 1973, p. 384.

⁷ M. MAGALANER and R. M. KAIN, *Joyce: the Man, the Work, the Reputation*, New York, New York University Press, 1956, p. 77.

... towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns (*D*, p.19).

Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me (*D*, p.20).

Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly (*D*, p.3).

The room through the lace end of the blind was suffused with dusky golden light amid which the candles looked like pale thin flames (*D*, p.7).

Pale thin flames in the night ... 'I bare the candles!' (*D*, p.134).

They sat well back and gazed formally at the distant speck of red light which was suspended before the high altar (*D*, p.135).

Then he set his unstable candle down on a toilet-table ... (*D*, p.170).

Darkness is in religion too, and the Church and the priests are deeply rooted in it; but what is more astonishing is that nobody seems to be willing to overcome it. Most characters offer their back to life, let the fire die, and refuse the help of candles.

The book closes with a mature man in a dark room gazing through a window at a light outside and thinking of the dead.⁸ On the other hand, in the first story the search for light seems still possible: after the priest's death, the boy avoids entering the 'dark' room and walks 'along the sunny side of the street' (*D*, p.5); in 'The Dead' this wish is completely frustrated as Gabriel thinks about the westward journey and about the dead.

IV.3. Food.

Food and drink in *Dubliners* allow Joyce to portray his characters and their experiences through a substance that both sustains life yet also symbolizes its restraints. Nearly all of the characters in *Dubliners* eat or drink, and in most cases food serves as a reminder of both the threatening dullness of routine and the joys and difficulties of togetherness.

In 'A Painful Case' Mr Duffy's solitary dining 'moderately in George's Street' (*D*, p.86) is the same of 'every evening'. The party meal in 'The Dead' might evoke conviviality, but the rigid order of the rich table instead suggests military battle. In 'Two

⁸ J. W. CORRINGTON, 'The Sisters', in C. HART, ed., *James Joyce's Dubliners*, London, Faber, 1969, p. 17.

Gallants', Lenehan's quiet meal of peas and ginger beer allows him to dwell on his self-absorbed life, so lacking in meaningful relationships and security:⁹

This vision made him feel keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit. He was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues. [...] He thought how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to (*D*, p.42).

IV.4. Dust.

Dust permeates almost the entire collection of *Dubliners*, and even if it is not literally written down, in every building we 'enter', we have the feeling of being pressed in a musty and dusty atmosphere. For instance, in Father Flynn's house, in the boy's of 'Araby' and in Eveline's house - where 'in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne' (*D*, p.25) - it seems the characters have difficulties in taking a long breath. The boarding house quite summarizes all the houses in Dublin, a microcosm of a suffocating air in which different social classes are mixed and share the same closed place. Even in Maria's working place and in Little Chandler's house the dust enters their nostril in their monotony life. In 'The Dead' we read of the presence of dust in the Morkans' house - 'She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair' (*D*, p.167) - and only by going out of Dublin could escaping westwards give Gabriel - and every Dubliner - the possibility of breathing fresh free air. As a matter of fact, it seems that not only closed places are dusty but the city itself is metaphorically dusty as it is paralyzed in its static condition like the musty biscuits in 'An Encounter', and its inhabitants are a kind of unique soul trapped in the gross body of the city.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from (*D*, p.25).

⁹ E. G. INGERSOLL, "The Psychic Geography of Joyce's 'Dubliners'", *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 6, N° 4, Winter, 2002, pp. 98-107.

Eveline is the housekeeper who performs her cleaning tasks regularly, and she often wonders how it is that dust silently accumulates on all the surface of the room. At first glance, dust appears insignificant, but it is also impossible, without extraordinary effort, to stop it entirely or control it completely. One becomes aware of it in those quiet intervals in which neither a string of words nor a train of thought distracts one.¹⁰

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. [...] Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne (*D*, p.25 & 27).

In 'Eveline' the presence of dust is pervasive and invasive. Eveline has its odour 'in her nostrils' and she 'inhales' it, as if she took a sombre comfort from this action: she breathes it to calm herself. Her duty is to make sure that dust remains beneath notice for the men in the household. However, much they ignore it, the dust silently accumulates on everything in their known world – even more unobtrusively, yet more insistently, than the snow in 'The Dead'.¹¹ Unlike Eveline who is so familiar with the dust as to wonder about its origin, her father knows nothing about it. The only other person who knows something about the curious case of dust – Eveline's mother – is now dust. Before her mother's death, Eveline promised her to 'keep the home together as long as she could', and so dusting routinely would be one of the 'commonplace sacrifices' she would be expected to make (*D*, p.26). Although much of the girl's anxiety seems to come from whether or not she will feel right about leaving her father, the more primary question is whether or not she can break her promise to her mother: can she leave the secret world of dust that connects her to her dead mother?¹² As a unit of exchange in a sexual commerce, Eveline is the daughter of her father and the sweetheart of Frank, but her life as the daughter of her mother is an existence that is as worthless as dust.¹³ The pervasive dust in the story becomes a correlative for the stagnation and decay of a living paralysis, in which everything settles; in which all boys and girls must, as chimney sweepers, come to dust.¹⁴

¹⁰ G. M. LEONARD, *Reading Dubliners Again. A Lacanian Perspective*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1993, p. 95.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁴ V. CHENG, *Joyce, Race and Empire*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 101.

Dust has also a symbolic meaning in Christian funeral rites: ‘ashes to ashes, dust to dust’ in funeral service means that humanity was created by God from dust, and after life on earth the human body becomes dust once more – such as Eveline’s mother. The dust in Eveline’s house is therefore symbolic of death, and a possible answer to the question ‘where does all the dust come from?’ would be that it comes from the generations of the Dubliners who have lived as Eveline is living and died as Eveline will die, without ever having really lived at all.

IV.5. Water.

Water means life, rebirth, illumination; it is the chief symbol of the Baptism as it purges our sins away. In *Dubliners* the search for the sea is a spiritual quest for regeneration. Eveline is excited at the thought of reaching the harbour. In her mind the sea stands for a chance of a new life. The sea is ‘open’ unlike the prison in which she lives and of the dust which is everywhere, in her house and in her nostrils. However, when she arrives at the dock, she stops at the gate, as if at the brink of Baptismal font¹⁵, unable to proceed. The sea turns now into a monster who wants to devour the girl, and the sea causes her a terror which freezes her:

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. [...] She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.[...] Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish! [...] She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal (*D*, pp.28-29).

Thus, the sea becomes the mirror of the Dubliners’ state as, in their paralysis, they have turned a symbol of life into an instrument of death.¹⁶

In *Dubliners* estuaries, canals and rivers are often crossed,¹⁷ but they never lead to an actual escape and liberation. For example, the two boys of ‘An Encounter’ have to cross a river to fulfill their dream, i.e. the visit to the Pigeon House, which is ‘out’, near the sea. As well as the sea for Eveline, here the Liffey stands for freedom. Unlike Eveline the friends do embark upon the river, but like her, they come back home frustrated. As a

¹⁵ B. GHISELIN, “The Unity of ‘Dubliners’”, in M. BEJA, ed., *James Joyce: ‘Dubliners’ and ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’: A Casebook*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1973, p. 110.

¹⁶ W. Y. TINDALL, *A Reader’s Guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1968, p. 22.

¹⁷ See: ‘Araby’, ‘Two Gallants’, ‘Counterparts’ and ‘Clay’, in: J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics, 2000.

matter of fact, on the other bank no Promised Land is waiting for them, on the contrary they have to face 'a pair of bottle-green eyes' (*D*, p.17).

Jimmy Doyle in 'After the Race' reaches Kingstown Harbour, but the vessel where is going to spend the night is lying at anchor and the harbour, one of the chief goals for many Dubliners, is never left.¹⁸

Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case' looks at the river everytime he is out for a walk:

... from his windows he could look into the disused distillery or upwards along the shallow river on which Dublin is built. [...] When he gained the crest of the Magazine Hill he halted and looked along the river towards Dublin. [...] No one wanted him; he was outcast from life's feast. He turned his eyes to the grey gleaming river (*D*, pp.82-90).

The river comes from the sea, is fed by it and returns to it. Probably, the river is there to witness James Duffy's failure. The man looks at it but he does not understand its call as he has not allowed the water of regeneration to 'wash' him; he is condemned to a sort of spiritual suicide.

The unconscious aversion to water can also be seen through the clothes some characters wear. Lenehan, for example, is dressed in this way:

A yachting cap was shoved far back from his forehead [...]. Once or twice he rearranged the light waterproof which he had slung over one shoulder [...]. His breeches, his white rubber shoes and his jauntily slung waterproof expressed youth (*D*, p.36).

Lenehan's waterproof and rubber shoes have the same function of Eliza' and Nannie's umbrellas: they are used for keeping heavenly rain away.¹⁹ God's grace, indeed, is often referred to rain which pours down to regenerate the earth. Thus, Lenehan, preventing the rain from falling over him, refuses spiritual regeneration. Maria, too, before leaving her laundry, remembers to take her raincloak: 'when she got outside the streets were shining with rain and she was glad of her old brown raincloak' (*D*, p.78). In 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' it is pouring and the canvassers take shelter in the Committee Room. To avoid being soaked, Mr O'Connor spends a great part of the day by the fire because his boots 'let in the wet' (*D*, p.91); Mr Hynes is well protected by his hat

¹⁸ B. GHISELIN, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

and the collar of his jacket-coat is 'turned up' (*D*, p.92). Also Father Keon is repaired by a big hat and his collar is turned up about his neck (*D*, p.97), and Mr Crofton wears a very high double collar and a wide-brimmed bowler hat (*D*, p.100).

The water of life appears also in the state of suspension.²⁰ In 'The Dead' the water is in the physical state of snow which falls down covering everything with its purity. However, Gabriel avoids it wearing galoshes, and he makes Gretta wear them. In the festive setting, upon which the snow keeps offering a different perspective until the snow itself changes, Joyce develops Gabriel's private tremors, his sense of inadequacy, his uncomfortable insistence on his small pretensions.²¹ The snow that falls upon Gabriel, Gretta and Michael Furey, upon the Misses Morkan, upon the dead singers and the living, is mutuality, a sense of their connection with each other, a sense that none is alone.²² The snow does not stand alone in the story: it is part of the complex imagery that includes heat and cold air, fire, and rain, as well as snow.²³ During the party, the people seem contrasted with the cold outside, as in the warmth of Gabriel's hand on the 'cold pane' (*D*, p.151). But this warmth is felt by Gabriel as stuffy and confining, and the cold outside is repeatedly linked with what is fragrant and fresh. In this way, the cold culminates in the picture of Michael Furey in the rain and darkness of the Galway night.²⁴ Another warmth is connected with Gabriel's memory of his own love for Gretta, he recalls incidents in his love's history as stars, burning with pure and distant intensity, and recalls moments of his passion for her as having 'the fire of stars' (*D*, p.168). Gabriel remembers a moment of happiness, his standing with his wife in the cold, their looking in through a window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace, and his suddenly calling out to the man, 'Is the fire hot, sir?' (*D*, p.168). Gabriel's furthest point of love of which he is capable is past; Furey's passion is also past because of his sudden death; Gretta is perhaps the most pitiful as she has known Furey's passion but she did not die to live to 'wane' in Gabriel's way, and in this night she too is fatigued, not beautiful her clothes lie crumpled beside her. All of this decline is shared by the snow; viewed from inside at the party, it is desirable, unattainable, just as his first knowledge with Michael Furey - Gabriel envies him.²⁵ In the end as the partygoers walk to the cab the snow is slushy and in patches, and then, seen from the window of the hotel room, it belongs to all men, it is general mutual. Under its

²⁰ A. LYTLE, "A Reading of Joyce's 'The Dead'", *The Sewanee Review*, 77, 1969, p. 194.

²¹ W. Y. TINDALL, *The literary Symbol*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, p. 227.

²² R. ELLMANN, *James Joyce*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 251.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

canopy, all human beings, whatever their degrees of intensity, fall into union. The mutuality is that all men feel and lose feeling, all interact, all warrant the sympathy that Gabriel now extends to Furey, to Gretta, to himself, even to old Aunt Julia.²⁶

The Dubliners dislike and fear water in all its forms because they are unable to begin a new life. The waterproof is the symbol of their moral condition: they are thus impermeable to any regeneration. The open sea is there, in front of many characters but never embarked upon.

IV.6. Sound, Noise, Silence.

Behove this sound of Irish sense ... Here English might be seen ... One sovereign punned to petery pence ... The silence speaks the scene.²⁷

IV.6.1. Silence: Murmuring Words in 'The Sisters'.

From the very first story, we come to know that in a city such as Dublin there is not only noise and sounds but also silence, and sometimes characters almost murmur or cannot speak as paralyzed:

But the grey face still followed me. It murmured; and I understood that it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me. It began to confess to me in a murmuring voice and I wondered why it smiled continually and why the lips were so moist with spittle. But then I remembered that it had died of paralysis ... (*D*, p.4).

I too listened; but there was no sound in the house: and I knew that the old priest was lying still in his coffin as we had seen him, solemn and truculent in death, an idle chalice on his breast (*D*, p.10).

The image of Father Flynn's 'lips moist with spittle' foreshadows Joyce's later use of moist lips, or spitting in place of speech, as metaphors for the paralysis of speech and the difficulty of the narrative act.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

²⁷ J. JOYCE, *Finnegans Wake*, in N. PEARSON, ed., 'Death Sentences: Silence, Colonial Memory and the Voice of the Dead in *Dubliners*', in C. JAURRETCHE, ed., *Beckett, Joyce and the Art of the Negative*, Amsterdam, New York, Editions Rodopi B.V., 2005, p. 141.

IV.6.2.Noise in Dublin's Streets: 'An Encounter', 'After the Race' and 'Two Gallants'.

In the following story of 'An Encounter' – as well as in 'After the Race' - the streets the protagonist walks on are rich in sounds:

We spent a long time walking about the noisy streets flanked by high stone walls [...] We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me ... (*D*, p.13 & 20).

Besides Villona's humming would confuse anybody; the noise of the car, too...Villona and Riviere were the noisiest ... (*D*, pp.31- 33).

Dublin by night is full of noise in 'Two Gallants'. The reader can 'listen to' some music which is played along the streets, and, we can see how metaphorically the harpist personifies Corley as conqueror and seducer, while the harp - the symbol of Ireland - stands for the girl who like the nation itself has been betrayed²⁹:

... he laughed noiselessly for fully half a minute [...] a harpist stood in the roadway, playing to a little ring of listeners ... One hand played in the bass the melody of Silent, O Moyle, while the other hand careered in the treble after each group of notes. The notes of the air sounded deep and full. The two young men walked up the street without speaking, the mournful music following them ... Here the noise of trams, the lights and the crowd released them from their silence... His bulk, his easy pace, and the solid sound of his boots had something of the conqueror in them (*D*, p.36 & 40).

IV.6.3. The Acoustic World in 'Eveline'.

The music in 'Eveline' is associated with death. The 'broken harmonium' is one of a series of images of dysfunction in *Dubliners*. It suggests that a society has ceased to function, lives amid ruins. It is a musical instrument, but its name shares its roots with the word 'harmony', and therefore the broken harmonium becomes symbolic of the comparative harmony of the family's life during Eveline's childhood – when her mother

²⁸ N. PEARSON, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

²⁹ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, Milano, Rizzoli Editore, 1961, p. 93.

was still alive and her circle of friends was still big -, which is now ‘broken’, ruined, a thing of the past.

Music is listened to also at the very moment her mother was dying. Eveline remembers how some Italian players were playing their instruments, making her father angrier and angrier:

... she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying: “Damned Italians! coming over here!” As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother’s life laid its spell on the very quick of her being - that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother’s voice saying constantly with foolish insistence: “Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!” (*D*, p.28).

Thus, the acoustic world in this story is both broken – there is the ‘broken harmonium’ with the ‘yellowing photograph’ of the priest hanging above it – and also removed from the house in which she lives – in fact, Frank, a singer, comes from ‘a distant unknown country’ and the organ player is ordered to go away.

IV.6.4. A Paralyzing Silence in ‘A Little Cloud’.

In ‘A Little Cloud’ as the drinking and storytelling intensify, Gallaher begins to contrast ‘dear dirty Dublin’ to the ‘beautiful’ city of Paris (*D*, p.57). Little Chandler gulps a shot of whisky and then soon orders another. Little Chandler is not able to create a competing voice for a verbal confrontation, but he literally drowns out this voice by drinking instead of speaking, and we are left with a paralyzing silence akin to the one at the end of ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’, where the election canvassers respond to Joe Hynes’s romantic ode to Parnell by ‘dr[inking] from their bottle in silence’ (*D*, p.105). It is as if Little Chandler became afraid of voice and action, and opted instead – as will Freddy Malins in ‘The Dead’ – for the comfort of an inebriated silence.³⁰ In addition, Chandler has an encounter with ‘inaudible ... insistent voices’ that deny him the ability to express himself in tired, exhausted forms and ultimately refuse him the comfortable paralysis of silence. Chandler and Gabriel hear or sense ‘voices’ that will haunt them until they force less restricted modes of expression to come into being. The silence is definitely

³⁰ N. PEARSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-158.

broken in the final scene where Little Chandler tries to quiet his crying infant. The episode represents a metaphor for this hearing of disruptive voices. While Chandler is reading a poem by Byron – his wife has just left – the infant suddenly starts to scream. Through an ellipsis as a clear break, we quickly shift from the protagonist’s melancholy thoughts to the loud, insistent, language-defying cries of the waking infant:³¹

How melancholy it was! Could he, too, write like that, express the melancholy of his soul in verse? There were so many things he wanted to describe: his sensation of a few hours before on Grattan Bridge, for example. If he could get back again into that mood [...].

The child awoke and began to cry. He turned from the page and tried to hush it: but it would not be hushed. He began to rock it to and fro in his arms but its wailing cry grew keener (*D*, pp.63-64).

The elliptical silence can also be read as a revelation of a voice. Chandler’s ‘mood’, a case of Irish artistic silence and paralysis, is interrupted by ellipses and, immediately thereafter, by the voice of the sobbing infant.³² As in ‘The Sisters’, the silence in the house is broken, although this time much more audibly, by an indecipherable voice. We could see the screaming child as a metonym for a waking voice that is trying to interrupt the silencing mechanisms of both Chandler’s melancholy mood and the narrative itself. Nevertheless, here there is also a cultural illusion in the word ‘keener’, giving a specific Irish significance to the voice of the crying child. In Irish tradition, to ‘keen’ is to wail in a prolonged way for the dead.³³ Thus the insistent voice prohibiting Chandler from maintaining his ‘Celtic mood’ is simultaneously a waking voice and a voice crying for dead:

He rocked [the child] faster while his eyes began to read the second stanza:

*Within this narrow cell reclines her clay,
That clay where once ...*

It was useless. He couldn’t read. He couldn’t do anything. The wailing of the child pierced the drum of his ear. It was useless, useless! [...] “Stop!”

The child stopped for an instant, had a spasm of fright and began to scream. [...] The thin walls of the room echoed the sound. He tried to soothe it but it sobbed more convulsively (*D*, p.64).

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 157-159.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-159.

IV.6.5. Noise against Frustration in ‘Counterparts’ and the Silent Woman in ‘A Painful Case’.

Noise in the pubs of ‘Counterparts’ can mean a chance for Mr Farrington to give vent to his frustration:

His head was full of the noises of tram-gongs and swishing trolleys and his nose already sniffed the curling fumes of punch ... The bar was full of men and loud with the noise of tongues and glasses (*D*, pp.71-72).

The history of ‘A Painful Case’ lies in the history that it tells – the possible story, or stories about Emily Sinico that the narrator’s ruthless and inexorable subjective fixation, and the newspaper’s dialectically opposed language of objective verifiability, do not permit us to hear. In fact, we know very little about Emily’s life. Perhaps Emily stands for the most silenced figure in *Dubliners*: she not only combines the theme of the muted woman and the muted dead, but she also suggests a drastically different story of womanhood in Ireland.³⁴

IV.6.6. Music sold for Money in ‘A Mother’.

Music can also become a way to make personal profit such as in ‘A Mother’, in which Mrs Kearney’s daughter’s voice is sold in a concert for money:

They were all friends of the Kearneys - musical friends or Nationalist friends; and, when they had played every little counter of gossip, they shook hands with one another all together ... Soon the name of Miss Kathleen Kearney began to be heard often on people’s lips. People said that she was very clever at music and a very nice girl and, moreover, that she was a believer in the language movement. Mrs Kearney was well content at this (*D*, p.107).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

IV.6.7. Dublin's Music and 'The Lass of Aughrim': 'The Dead'

Dubliners ends giving a broad view of Dublin's musical life.³⁵

... at the sound of the piano ... Gabriel recognized the prelude. It was that of an old song of Aunt Julia's - Arrayed for the Bridal. Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes ... I never heard your voice sound so fresh ... There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass-stoppers ... A pause followed, broken only by the noise of the wine and by unsettlings of chairs ... The peal of laughter which followed Gabriel's imitation of the incident was interrupted by a resounding knock at the hall door ... She was walking on before him so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear ... At the corner of Winetavern Street they met a cab. He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation (*D*, pp.146-169).

'The Lass of Aughrim' is the song that paralyzes Gabriel's wife on the stairs; while Gabriel does not listen to the words. Aughrim is a little village in the west not far from Galway. The song deals with a young mother who has been seduced and abandoned by Lord Gregory, and who comes with her baby to seek his help on a stormy night, but she is turned away from the house by Gregory's mother - 'Lady' Gregory - and is left to die with her child in the freezing night.³⁶ Joyce heard this ballad from Nora, and he used it to connect the west with Michael Furey's visit in the rain to Gretta.³⁷

The rain beats at my yellow locks and the dew wets me still,
Oh, the rain rains on my yellow locks And the dew drops on my chin,
Let the rain beat my yellow locks, Let the dew beat my skin
The babe is cold in my arms, Lord Gregory, let me in.
My baby is cold in my arms, Lord Gregory, let me in.
Let the bonny lass of Aughrim And her baby come in.³⁸

'The Lass of Aughrim' was, for Joyce, both a convenient way to heap scorn on Lady Gregory and a perfect allegory of the unhappy relationship between Ireland and England. A female Ireland is seduced and abandoned by a male England, the peasantry are left to beg and die in the rain while the landlords turn in their beds. In recent years, several Joyceans have attempted to read 'The Dead' as a response to memories of the

³⁵ P. PARRINDER, *James Joyce*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 42.

³⁶ F. SHOVLIN, "'Endless Stories About the Distillery': Joyce, Death, and Whiskey", *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2007, 2008, p. 148.

³⁷ R. ELLMANN, *James Joyce, op. cit.*, p. 248.

³⁸ H. SHIELDS, "'The History of *The Lass of Aughrim*,'" in G. GILLEN and H. WHITE, eds., *Irish Musical Studies 1: Musicology in Ireland*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1990, p. 64.

potato famine of the 1840s.³⁹ The year 1852, which many historians give as the final year of famine, was the year in which Lady Gregory was born. Coming to womanhood on a vast Galway demesne, she was part of one of the few west of Ireland families left relatively unscathed by the Great Hunger. Joyce was born just thirty years after the end of that catastrophe, so he would have grown up around people for whom it was a vivid memory.⁴⁰

Another reference of Joyce's relation with music comes from a letter of Stanislaus Joyce who mentioned, while attending a concert of Plunket Greene, the Irish baritone, which included one of Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies' called 'O, Ye Dead!'⁴¹. The song is a dialogue between the living and the dead, and in the second stanza the dead answers the living, as if they were whimpering for the bodied existence they could no longer enjoy:⁴²

It is true, It is true, We are shadows cold and wan;
And the fair, and the brave whom we loved on earth are gone,
But still thus ev'n in death,
So sweet the living breath
Of the fields and the flow'rs in our youth we wander'd o'er,
That ere, condemn'd, we go,
To freeze 'mid Hecla's snow,
We would taste it awhile, and think we live once more!

James's feelings about his wife's dead lover found a dramatic counterpart in the jealousy of the dead for the living in Moore's song: it would seem that the living and the dead are jealous of each other.⁴³

The Dublin of 'The Dead' has echoes in Barcelona or Calcutta or Edinburgh in the early years of the 20th century, as places where musical life could be conducted with a peculiar intensity, and songs and singers handed a strange power not only as a form of entertainment.⁴⁴

³⁹ See, for instance: B. ROOS, "James Joyce's 'The Dead' and Bret Harte's *Gabriel Conroy*: The Nature of the Feast," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15, N° 1, Spring 2002, pp. 99–126; and K. WHELAN, "The Memories of 'The Dead'", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15, N° 1, Spring 2002, pp. 59–97.

⁴⁰ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁴¹ S. JOYCE, 'The Background to "Dubliners"', *Listener*, LI, 25 March 1954, pp. 526-527.

⁴² R. ELLMANN, *James Joyce, op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁴⁴ C. TÓIBÍN, 'Colm Tóibín on Joyce's Dublin: City of Dreamers and Chancers', *The Guardian*, Friday 15 June 2012.

IV.7. Iron.

Iron images spread in all the stories of *Dubliners* and they contribute to the sense that the Dubliners are imprisoned by their culture. In most cases, they are used to give a sense of paralysis such as in Mr Duffy's life whose house mirrors his mental and physical condition:

He had himself bought every article of furniture in the room: a black iron bedstead, an iron washstand, four cane chairs, a clothes-rack, a coal-scuttle, a fender and irons and a squaretable on which lay a double desk (*D*, p.82).

In 'An Encounter' the name of the place where the two boys arrive contains the word 'iron' which suggests the failure of their quest:

When we came to the Smoothing Iron we arranged a siege; but it was a failure because you must have at least three (*D*, p.13).

The iron is also the means that denies Eveline the escape from Dublin toward Argentina with her boyfriend Frank. The railings at the North Wall figure Ireland as a prison and Eveline as a 'helpless animal' in the cage. At the moment of the departure it is as if the iron railing turned into manacles which block Eveline at the dock:

She gripped with both hands at the iron railing. "Come!" No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish! (*D*, pp.28-29).

In 'The Boarding House' the nineteen-year-old Polly succeeds in her mother's plan to make her marry a man, Bob Doran. In the end, even though Mr Doran's will is influenced by their will, he cannot change his destiny, and he is ready to talk with Mrs Mooney while Polly waits in her room. The presence of irons in her room foreshadows the following sentence which describes her expression: '[Polly] rested the nape of her neck against the cool iron bed-rail and fell into a reverie. There was no longer any perturbation visible on her face' (*D*, p.52).

In 'Clay' only Maria does charge the irons: it is her work, her daily routine and maybe the only thing she can do as it is inside her working place, i.e. a microcosm where everything is under her control, frozen in its immobility:

And Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria. Everyone was so fond of Maria (*D*, p.76).

IV.8. Pictures, Mirrors and Photographs.

Throughout the stories, if we read them in detail, we can find out the presence of three 'impassive witnesses' of the events: a yellow photograph, a picture, a mirror.⁴⁵ All of them are memorial signs linked to the past, to the routine and enemy to everything that comes from outside and that is unknown. They are voiceless characters who are both passive and active. Although they do not play any role in the scene, they stand there and the Dubliners know of their constant presence.

In 'Eveline' the yellow photograph of the priest who has died and the print of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque remind the protagonist of her duties in the family, religion and city, making her a prisoner of life.⁴⁶ In 'The Dead' the Misses Morkan celebrate the annual ceremony under two pictures. The first is the picture of the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet – which reminds the characters of the constant presence of death – and beside it there is a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower of London which Aunt Julia worked in red, blue and brown wools when she was a girl (*D*, p.146). Both of these, one with its associations with England's national bard and the other nodding toward royalist sympathies, suggest a household largely uninterested in the budding Irish nationalism of the day as represented by Miss Ivors. As such, one might see the presence of a Protestant as being of a piece with the pictures hanging on the drawing room wall. But if one considers Browne's other unique attribute - his whiskey drinking - along with his religious affiliation, then another, more complex picture emerges.⁴⁷

At the end of the story, the presence of the mirror makes Gabriel's mask fall down, and in a kind of sudden revelation:

He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror (*D*, p.173).

⁴⁵ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

However, Gabriel Conroy cannot keep living without a mask and, like Little Chandler, he ‘instinctively turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead’ (*D*, p.173). When the relation between the character and the mirror is broken, i.e. in the mirror there is his sense of guilt and the image on the mirror turns into a detective who looks at you, this image needs to be taken away from the character’s sight.⁴⁸

IV.9. The Distillery.

Lord Iveagh once cashed a sevenfigure cheque for a million in the bank of Ireland. Shows you the money to be made out of porter. Still the other brother lord Ardilaun has to change his short four times a day, they say. Skin breeds lice or vermin. A million pounds, wait a moment. Twopence a pint, fourpence a quart, eightpence a gallon of porter, no, one and fourpence a gallon of porter.⁴⁹

On *Dubliners*’ opening paragraph there is a seemingly innocuous word which is also used by Joyce in a couple of paragraphs later. The word is ‘distillery’, which immediately prompts thoughts of whiskey and its production.⁵⁰

Old Cotter, the ‘tiresome old fool’ of ‘The Sisters’, tells ‘endless stories about the distillery’ (*D*, p.3); the pallid Mr Duffy of ‘A Painful Case’ lives in a house from which ‘he could look into the disused distillery’ (*D*, p.82); the sour-faced office manager of ‘Counterparts’ named after a former distillery manager whom Joyce believed to have swindled his father; the tragic Michael Furey of ‘The Dead’ sang his last song to Gretta in a street synonymous with distillation; Mr Browne of the same story is the only member of the party to drink whiskey. Whiskey and its production become for Joyce a means by which to criticize and undermine the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, and one of that movement’s leading figures, Lady Augusta Gregory.

We could find some answers to the significance of whiskey from Nora Barnacle’s hometown of Galway and, more precisely, in the Nuns’ Island of Gretta Conroy’s final meeting with her young love, Michael Furey. The lead headline in the *Galway Advertiser*

⁴⁸ J. JOYCE, *Gente di Dublino*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ J. JOYCE, *Ulysses*, United Kingdom, Penguin Books, 1982, p. 304.

⁵⁰ J. GORDON, *Joyce and Reality: The Empirical Strikes Back*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2004, pp. 33–54; and M. BRIAN, “‘A Very Fine Piece of Writing’: An Etymological, Dantean, and Gnostic Reading of Joyce’s ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’”, in R. M. B. BOSINELLI and H. F. MOSHER, eds., *ReJoycing: New Readings of ‘Dubliners’*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1998, pp. 206–227.

of August 11, 2005, declared that a bottle of Galway-distilled whiskey appeared in a specialist whiskey shop in Swindon, England, and the shop's proprietor valued the bottle at £100,000, making it the most highly priced bottle of whiskey in history.⁵¹ The proprietor explained that the bottle, with cork and seal intact, had made its way to Swindon via a circuitous route:

This particular bottle has an interesting history. The son of the Persse family, who owned the distillery, decided that his future in life was not in the family business but in racehorse training. He moved to Lambourne, England (not far from this shop) and became a racehorse trainer. He kept one bottle from the distillery which was passed on to a lady friend when he passed away, with the view that it will be worth something one day.⁵²

The whiskey in question was a bottle of 'Persse's Nuns' Island', from the Persse Distillery located at Nuns' Island, Galway. This business spread during the second half of the nineteenth century, but it ceased production in 1915. Within thirty years of its passing, Persse's was being described as 'the finest whiskey in the world'.⁵³

In *Dubliners*, it is in a rain-soaked garden on Nuns' Island that Michael Furey meets Gretta Conroy for the last time. Gretta has been living there with her grandmother and will shortly go to work in a Dublin convent. In the dark quiet of their Gresham Hotel room, Gretta recounts to her husband Gabriel that last fatal encounter:

"Then the night before I left, I was in my grandmother's house in Nuns' Island, packing up, and I heard gravel thrown up against the window. The window was so wet I couldn't see, so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering."

"And did you not tell him to go back?" asked Gabriel.

"I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree."

"And did he go home?" asked Gabriel.

"Yes, he went home. And when I was only a week in the convent he died and he was buried in Oughterard, where his people came from. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!"

She stopped, choking with sobs, and, overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window (*D*, pp.174-175).

⁵¹ P. CULLEN, 'Last of Nun's Island whiskey for 146,000', *The Irish Times*, 13 August 2005.

⁵² J. HOUGH, 'Bottle of rare Galway whiskey to reach 145,000: Historic Nuns' Island bottle turns up in UK whiskey shop', *Galway Advertiser*, 11 August 2005.

⁵³ M. WALSH, 'Whiskey', *The Bell*, 2, N° 5, August 1941, p. 24.

The Persse distillery did not begin life on Nuns' Island but on nearby Earl's Island in 1815. By the 1820s, Burton Persse owned two separate distilleries in Galway, one in Newcastle, the other at Newtownsmyth. 'By 1846', writes the whiskey historian E. B. McGuire, 'the Newcastle distillery was being run by Thomas Moore Persse and Company, but shortly afterwards the Newcastle lease expired and Persse restored the old Joyce distillery which became known as Nun's Island distillery'.⁵⁴

By the time Barnard came to write about Galway's drinks industry, the Persses had moved decisively from brewing to distilling, and this change was at the expense of the Joyces:

The Nun's Island Distillery was established at the beginning of the century, and is the only Distillery in Connaught. It was purchased from the Encumbered Estates Court in the year 1840, by the father of the present proprietor, who considerably enlarged and improved it. Prior to that date, from 1815 to the period mentioned, it belonged to the Joyce family.⁵⁵

The drinks trade ran on both sides of James Joyce's family, but his father had a particular intimacy with whiskey production, having owned a large number of shares and having been secretary of the Dublin and Chapelizod Distillery, which had operated in Chapelizod through the later 1870s. By the time of Bernard's tour, this distillery had changed hands and become known as the Phoenix Park Distillery.⁵⁶ It is a place mentioned in 'A Painful Case' where Mr James Duffy has his home: 'He lived in an old sombre house and from his windows he could look into the disused distillery or upwards along the shallow river on which Dublin is built' (*D*, p.82).

James was also familiar with the tale of the villainous Mr Alleyne and, as Stanislaus (James's Brother) also reports, chose to exact a delicate measure of revenge in 'Counterparts', his story of office unhappiness and the violence attendant upon alcoholic overindulgence. This story looks at a day in the life of its central protagonist, Farrington, who longs to get away from his desk job at the firm of Crosbie & Alleyne, and who has a rather pathetic showdown with Mr Alleyne (echoing John Joyce's brush with another Mr Alleyne). Later Farrington goes on a drinking spree in which several small humiliations

⁵⁴ E. B. MCGUIRE, *Irish Whiskey: A History of Distilling, the Spirit Trade, and Excise Controls in Ireland*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan Publishers; New York, Barnes & Noble Books, 1973, pp. 359–360.

⁵⁵ A. BARNARD, *The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom*, int. R. Joynson, 1887, Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2003, p. v.

⁵⁶ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

make him angry and frustrated – such as his defeat at the hands of an Englishman, Weathers, in an arm-wrestling contest – and returns home drunk, where he beats his little son above the cries of the boy’s protestations.⁵⁷

David Lloyd links the alcoholic excess of ‘Counterparts’ to the despair of a conquered land, describing the story as being ‘bitterly diagnostic of the paralysis of Irish men in colonial Ireland, of their alienation and anomie which, so often, is counterpointed by drinking.’⁵⁸ The indirect association of social and economic superiority with whiskey is embodied in ‘Counterparts’ through the figure of Alleyne, an Ulsterman and, judging by his name, almost certainly a Protestant. The direct association of English domination, in the person of Weathers, with the spirit reemerges in the figure of Mr Browne in ‘The Dead’, the only Protestant and the only one who drinks whiskey.⁵⁹

Arthur Clery writes of Joyce’s Ireland that ‘apart from Drink, which Protestants make and Catholics sell’, all other Irish industries are Protestant controlled.⁶⁰ Protestant grandee families with names such as Guinness, Jameson, and Persse had, from the late eighteenth century, made fortunes from the manufacture of alcohol, a product for which there was enormous demand both at home and abroad.⁶¹ For Joyce’s Irish Catholic contemporaries, whiskey and its production were associated with England, with the landlord caste and with imperial domination generally.⁶² This association between empire and alcohol was a powerful strand in the temperance movement of the time, as it is evident in a late nineteenth-century sermon made by the temperance priest Father Michael Kelly: ‘With fell design England suppressed our commerce, our factories, our mines, our industries, and left us only the distillery.’⁶³

Given this contemporary view of whiskey, and taking into account the Joyce family’s own misfortunes in the failed distillery at Chapelizod, it is not so surprising that Joyce blends the spirit into the mix of *Dubliners* as a consistently negative omen. And it is in this light that we must read the Protestant Mr Browne’s quaffing of the liquor at the Morkans’ Christmas party. As Donald Torchiana asserts, Mr Browne in ‘The Dead’ is death itself.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁸ D. LLOYD, ‘Counterparts: *Dubliners*, masculinity, and temperance nationalism’, in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵⁹ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁶⁰ A. CLERY, *Dublin Essays*, Dublin and London, Maunsel and Company, 1919, p. 46.

⁶¹ F. SHOVLIN, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁶³ F. S. L. LYONS, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890–1939*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979, p. 80.

⁶⁴ D. TORCHIANA, *Backgrounds for Joyce’s Dubliners*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1986, p. 245.

CHAPTER FIVE

V. INSIDE THE DUBLIN BACKGROUND: DEFEAT, STASIS AND ANXIETY

The Dublin of 1904 was not an immense city: it could be known in all its moods by a single person – it was more like an overgrown village – and Joyce was intimately familiar with all aspects of the life of the city. And yet, in spite of its limited size, Dublin embodied the major forces of Irish life.¹

At the time of the stories, Joyce's Dublin is a defeated city, the capital of a conquered nation, in which the political world is still suffering from Charles Stewart Parnell's death. In *Dubliners* there are no direct critics against the state of Irish politics and the effects of colonization on the people. However, the colonization of Ireland is paralleled by the sense of defeat and anxiety in the lives of individuals in a Dublin where not much moves and where a feeling of stasis hovers in the air giving the city the appearance of a prison.²

V.1. Ireland under the British Pressure: the People and the Urban Landscape.

The 'mental paralysis' that permeates the stories of *Dubliners* can be seen as a consequence of The Industrial Revolution that spread in almost all West Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. The city of Joyce is like a whole representation both of the pressure of modern technology and of English oppression, and it serves as a constant reminder to the characters of their powerlessness.³

The technology and the spatial form of the city of Dublin are a kind of echo of London in many ways.⁴ Railings, trains, cars, clocks, trams, streets, docks, statues, palaces ... are symbols of modernity. In 'A Painful Case' Mrs Sinico is killed by a train, which, in the story of 'Araby' because of its delay, denies the boy the possibility to arrive at the bazaar in time. Railings recur in many stories, in particular the very railings in

¹ A. W. LITZ, *James Joyce*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1966, p. 49.

² J. SHAPIRO, 'The Identity and Anxiety of Colonial Dublin in Joyce's *Dubliners*', Boston University, 20 March 2011, pp. 385-394.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 385-394.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 385-394.

‘Eveline’ better stand for the manacles of a modernity that blocks the individual and gives him no chance of thinking.

In his article, ‘Colonial Spaces in Joyce’s Dublin’, David Spurr writes that ‘architectural elements such as railings and parapets add to the feeling of confinement’.⁵ In ‘Two Gallants’ Corley goes out of his way as the two were passing ‘along the railings of Trinity College... skip[ping] out into the road’ to look at the clock (*D*, p.39). In the same story Lenehan runs his hand along the railings of the Duke’s Lawn as he passes by. At this time a statue of Queen Victoria - first unveiled by King Edward VII in 1904 - stood in front of Leinster House, which was then the headquarters of the Royal Dublin Society, an intellectual society for the improvement of the arts in Dublin. This complex also contained the National Library and museum, again highlighting the poor man’s exclusion from all things intellectual and worldly, which here are literally out of Lenehan’s reach.⁶ The Dubliners of this period faced a constant symbolic defeat in walking their own streets, forced to pass by the icons of their own oppression on a daily basis. As a matter of fact, the railings might as well be prison bars, reminding the ‘gallant’ that he will never leave Dublin and never improve his situation. While the clock near the Royal College of Surgeons can be linked to one of the main symbols in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*. The clock, the Big Ben in London, represents not only the modern capitalism but also the British capital, and in *Dubliners* serves as a reminder that the Irish are ruled by England.⁷ It is as if the physical and psychological time in the Big Ben of *Mrs Dalloway* stroke also the time in the Dubliners’ soul.

According to Joyce, British domination is part of both the architectural and the subjective environments; both architectural space and the space of consciousness are sites of a continual struggle among the competing claims of individual freedom, national aspirations, and imperial authority.⁸

A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers ... – from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat.⁹

⁵ D. SPURR, ‘Colonial Spaces in Joyce’s Dublin’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 37, N° 1 / 2, 1999 - Winter 2000, pp. 24-26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-42.

⁸ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁹ M. FOUCAULT, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, A. SHERIDAN, trans., New York, Pantheon Books, 1977. The quotation is from ‘The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou



On the left: two trams meet at a Terenure crossroads c. 1900. There were 330 trams in operation in 1911.¹⁰ In the middle: the motor-car age: a 20 hp Panhard with driver and four passengers turns off Stephen's Green c. 1897-1904.¹¹ On the right: Railway transport facilitated the growth of outer suburbs like Monkstown.¹²



On the left: Pigeon House c 1890.¹³ On the right: Ship docked at pier, Kingstown, Co. Dublin, 1910-20.¹⁴



On the left: Kildare Street was home to the National Museum, c. 1900. On the right: the Phoenix Park, c. 1900.¹⁵

and Michelle Perrot', in C. GORDON, ed. and trans., *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, p. 149.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/transport.html>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *The National Archives of Ireland*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/suburbs.html>.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/waters.html>.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/emigration_migration.html.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/social.html>.

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending. It was snowy underfoot; and only streaks and patches of snow lay on the roofs, on the parapets of the quay and on the area railings. The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air and, across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky (*D*, pp.167-168).

Joyce establishes an analogy between the oppressive urban landscape and the psychology of the subject. It is quite curious to see Joyce's characterization of the Four Courts building, as a courthouse is conventionally thought of as a symbol of justice and progress, a symbol that would only be threatening to a criminal.¹⁶ Yet here the Four Courts building is described as 'menacing' because it represents British power. Spurr asserts that 'the paragraph resonates with [Gabriel's] subjective experience', arguing that the heaviness of the landscape and sky which Gabriel perceives is a response to the exchange he had at the party with Miss Ivors, who calls him a 'West Briton', for, as Spurr writes, 'his indifference to the Nationalist cause and to the Irish cultural revival, which for her involves learning the Irish language and taking trips to the West of Ireland, home of an ostensibly more primitive and indigenous Irish people'.¹⁷ Gabriel is very troubled at this accusation, and he replies: 'O, to tell you the truth, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!' (*D*, p.149). In a letter to Nora Barnacle Joyce said: 'How sick, sick, sick I am of Dublin! It is the city of failure, of rancour and unhappiness. I long to be out of it'¹⁸; however, he went on to write of his native city and country men using the most magnificent prose and depicting them with an infused humanity.

In Joyce's point of view, the geographical influence and variation are much more important than the evolutionary similarity and essence.¹⁹ The confining atmosphere of the city serves as an exterior manifestation of Gabriel's 'sickness' – the paralysis of a subject trapped between the narrow-oppressive effects of colonial domination. As a symbol of the latter, Joyce has chosen the 'menacing' aspect of the palace of the Four Courts, built by the British architect James Gandon in the 1790s.²⁰

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹⁸ J. JOYCE, '22 August 1909', in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, p. 163.

¹⁹ M. MANGANARO, *Culture 1922, The Emergence of a Concept*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 119.

²⁰ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

Walter Benjamin says that there is a corresponding value placed on the individual's private and subjective experience.²¹ Private living space turns into the antithesis of the work space: 'The private person who squares his accounts with reality in his office demands that the [private] interior be maintained in his allusions'.²²

A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fire of stars moments of their life together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illumined his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers (*D*, p.168).

Joyce registers the privacy as a condition of modern urban existence. However, Gretta Conroy is absorbed in her own memory of a lost love, and the oppressive presence of the Four Courts has its counterpart in the marriage, whose conditions have led her to conceal from her jealous and pompous husband the memory of a young man who loved her long ago and, as she believes, died for her.²³

His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling (*D*, p.176).

This solid world is the concrete environment of the urban landscape that loses its distinctive qualities as Gabriel's own begins to fade, as if his identity, along with his feeling of entrapment within it, somehow depended on the material solidity of his surroundings.²⁴

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²² W. BENJAMIN, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, P. DEMETZ, ed., E. JEPHCOTT, trans., New York, Schocken Books, 1986, p. 154.

²³ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

V. 2. A Brush Stroke of Modernity.

By modernity I mean the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent which make up one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable.²⁵

Typical features of Modern fiction in *Dubliners* are, for example, the images of drab and dingy cityscapes, or the feeling of alienation and loneliness embodied by the protagonist as in the shortest story of 'Eveline', in which a girl lives a life with no real meaning and with a deepening sense of frustration. James Joyce can be defined a Modernist, first of all, in his development of the most imaginative narrative techniques to capture the realities of a rapidly changing world; secondly, in his continuing concern for characterization and even plot as necessary means to communicate that vision; then, in his ability to move us deeply through his characters and the rhythms of their language with which he evokes them; in his ability not just to perceive a changing world but, in doing so, to help bring it into existence and to give it solidity.²⁶ Characterization in Joyce is finally reducible to a few stylized gestures and simplified attitudes: his characters move in space, but they do not develop in time; they only look forward to the ruin of all space, to time's livid final flame, to doomsday.²⁷ Joyce can be compared to a volcano which acts upon an ancient city and petrifies its inhabitants in an eternal paralysis while they are at home, in a brothel, in a bazaar, or in a committee room.²⁸

Modernism has been called an art of cities, meaning that it is produced in cities, those cities are its natural habitat, and those Modern works are largely about the city and its effects on human consciousness. Of the various formal elements of urban space, the most important for Joyce is circulation, the constant movement of persons and objects in all directions within a defined space. The concept of circulation belongs to his concern for addressing the specific conditions of modernity.²⁹ Foucault defines circulation one of the main characteristics of the modern 'site', which has superseded the stable, hierarchized,

²⁵ C. BAUDELAIRE, 'The Painter of Modern Life', *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, P.E. CHARVET, trans., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 399; in J. MAYNE, ed. and trans., *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995, p. 13.

²⁶ M. P. LEVITT, 'Beyond Dublin: Joyce and Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 1999, pp. 385-394.

²⁷ H. LEVIN, *James Joyce*, London, Faber and Faber, 1960, pp. 116-117.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

²⁹ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

and sanctified notion of 'place' belonging to the Middle Ages.³⁰ The circulation of capital that forms the economic basis of the city has its physical extension in the circulation of life and machines through the city streets.³¹ Michel de Certeau remarks that the city is 'simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity', meaning that the city generates the historical conditions of modernity while it also becomes a mythic construct in the discourse of modernity.³² The dynamic of the city drives the narrative of Joyce's work, while it also becomes the principal subject of that narrative.³³

Is it possible to imagine a nationalism without the primal scene of space, of national territory? The extent of the national territory, and the matter of its border, was at the crux of an ideology in the 20th century.³⁴

V.3. Dublin, the Main Character in *Dubliners*.

I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world.³⁵

In *Dubliners* Joyce gives us multiple distinctive individuals. They are at once 'real' and 'symbolic'. This symbolism can be seen finally in the way that the stories represent not only a metamorphosing 'human' subject, but they collectively represent Dublin itself. 'I have chosen to present it (Dublin)...under four of its aspects'³⁶. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce would imagine the city of Dublin as figuring the body of a sleeping supine giant, stretched out with his head, and he would imagine *Ulysses*, the most Dublin of Dublin texts, as one gigantic corpus, in which each episode represents a different organ of the body. *Dubliners* gives us Dublin personified.³⁷

Looking at the stories from this perspective also demands that we look at the history of modernity as a history, and not just as something that happened. The history of the Industrial Revolution is also the history of machines and their effect on labour and society, but one needs to know in addition of the history of the things these machines

³⁰ M. FOUCAULT, 'Of Other Spaces', J. MISKOWIEC, trans., *Diacritics*, 16, Spring 1986, p. 23.

³¹ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

³² M. DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, S. RENDALL, trans., Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p. 95.

³³ D. SPURR, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³⁴ E. DUFFY, 'Disappearing Dublin: *Ulysses*, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Space', in D. ATTRIDGE and M. HOWES, eds., *Semicolonial Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 37.

³⁵ J. JOYCE, '15 October 1905', *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁶ J. JOYCE, '5 May 1906', *op. cit.*, p. 83.

³⁷ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 2000, pp. xvi-xvii.

produced, and their effect on modern configurations of subjectivity as demonstrated through specific constructions of identity, gender, desire, and pleasure. 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.³⁸ The city itself can serve as a source of exhilaration or disappointment, compensation, or deprivation. Hynes's public rendition of a nostalgic poem in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' seems part of an older, oral tradition of consolation in the face of futility, but Joyce was aware that mass media might provide more popular forms.³⁹ After all, the Araby Bazaar is described as a magical land of electrical lights, a prototype of the modern shopping mall. The description of the hypnotizing force of the Bazaar is deliberately opposed to an earlier description in the story of a more traditional street market where unexciting items are haphazardly displayed in the undifferentiated light of daytime. Whereas the street market jostles and disturbs the boy - 'I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes' (*D*, p.20) - , the Araby Bazaar, at least at first, unexpectedly activates a dream of potential fulfilment and contentment that overtakes his every waking thought - 'I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days' (*D*, p.21). The subsequent frustration when the boy is unable to find what would complete him, and would cause Mangan's sister to love him, is perhaps a common feeling even today: 'If I go, I said, I will bring you something ... I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless...' (*D*, p.21 & 24).⁴⁰

V. 4. Joyce's Dublin.

Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in 'Dubliners' at least) none of the attractions of the city for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it except Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe ... And yet I know how useless these reflections are.⁴¹

³⁸ G. LEONARD, 'Dubliners', in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 98-99.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

⁴¹ J. JOYCE, '25 September 1906', *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Dublin was a mass of contradictions and a melting pot of different cultures and classes: it was the second city of the British Empire and also the first city of nationalist Ireland; rich and poor, immigrant and native, nationalist and unionist, Catholic, Protestant, Jew and Quaker were all bound together in the life of the city.⁴²



*Dublin Castle was the focal point of British rule in Ireland. Here is the Castle Yard as it was in the early 20th century.*⁴³

In 1911 at the heart of the city stood the huge stone fort of Dublin Castle, the focal point of British rule in Ireland.⁴⁴ Ireland had lost its parliament through the Act of Union in 1800 and all political power in Ireland flowed through the gates of the castle. In 1911 the Castle was presided over by the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Aberdeen, and run by the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell. The great administrative importance of the Castle and the government offices which stood in the most prestigious streets of the city defined the colonial nature of Dublin's existence. The iconic streets of Bloomsday (16 June 1904, the date on which James Joyce set *Ulysses* and Leopold Bloom's epic tour of Dublin) were already being lost. The city was changing also in transport, above all the private motor car was getting more and more important.⁴⁵

Regarding Dublin politics, the expanding Catholic middle class was growing in importance. These were apparently nationalist in aspect; however, as the centre for British rule in Ireland for eight centuries, Dublin was the focal point of the substance and symbols of British culture.⁴⁶

Dublin affords not only an insight into his personal experiences, but a picture of aspects of the social life of the city. *Dubliners* is primarily an account of life on the north side, or in the case of 'The Dead', of a Christmas party held in a house on Usher's Island,

⁴² *Op. cit.*, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/exhibition/dublin/main.html>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

across the Liffey. In a geographical sense, Joyce's Dublin was simply the Mountjoy Ward or more precisely that part of the Gardiner estate, laid out in the eighteenth century by the rich political landlord family of Gardiner, which lay to the east of the line of O'Connell Street and North Frederick Street. His descriptions of many parts of Dublin often function as mere scene-setting for the events of the novel. The population of Dublin in 1904 was 400,000 in the built-up areas. Three districts are figured in Joyce Dublin: the old district of the Liberties; the Mountjoy Ward; Fitzwilliam Square and Stephens' Green. Joyce lived in many houses inside and outside the city: in the prosperous early days, the family lived as far afield as Bray and their time in Blackrock marked the final stage of this relatively comfortable period of his life. From there the family moved at the end of 1892 or early 1893 successively to Hardwicke Street and Fitzgibbon Street.⁴⁷

V. 5. *Dubliners*' Streets and the 'Joyces': the Rhythm of the City.

Walking is a key activity in Joyce's fiction. Joyce himself was also an avid wanderer of Dublin streets. The Mountjoy Square, Gardiner Street, Rutland Square, Buckingham Street, Hardwicke Street and Place locations recur throughout his writing. If Joyce chose to be European and international he did so by also being true to his local origins, to the area in which he lived throughout his Belvedere years from 1893 to 1898, mostly at the heart of the Gardiner estate in the vicinity of Mountjoy Square. This is the 'Joyce Country', a district that was undergoing commercial and social change at an accelerating rate which continued into the 1920s and even beyond.⁴⁸

The revelation of Dublin to its citizens and of Dubliners to themselves shows our world and ourselves, and even if on the one hand Dublin is a moral and spiritual 'dunghill'⁴⁹, 'Joyce would not change a bloody word'.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the streets and houses are fascinating, if not always beautiful, and the people are eloquent and often agreeable. Not only a picture of what he had escaped, the book is a picture of what, had he remained, he might have become. Many of the characters are possible Joyces – Joyces who, lacking his enterprise and sharing Eveline's paralysis, have become as corrupt as their city, Joyce who might have been. Two Dubliners are named James: Father James

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ L. M. CULLEN, 'Dublin', in J. McCOURT, ed., *James Joyce in Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 172-183.

⁴⁹ J. JOYCE, '6 November 1906', *op. cit.*, pp. 123-127.

⁵⁰ W. Y. TINDALL, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1959, p. 5.

Flynn, who is what Joyce might have been as Parish priest; and James Duffy or what Joyce, confused with brother Stanislaus, might have been as bank clerk. The green-eyed pervert of ‘An Encounter’, Lenehan of ‘Two Gallants’, and Hynes in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ are projections of parts and potentialities of their creator. But the principal portrait of Joyce as moribund Dubliner is Gabriel Conroy of ‘The Dead’, who is what Joyce, married to Gretta / Nora, might have become had he stayed to teach at his University and had he continued to write reviews for the *Daily Express*. Joyce felt safer away from Dublin, contemplating his favourite city at a suitable distance. Each story may be thought of as a great epiphany and the container of little epiphanies, an epiphany of epiphanies.⁵¹



*James Joyce and Nora Barnacle in London on the day of their wedding in 1931.*⁵²

V.6. The Artist and the City.

It is very important to put light on how the Dubliners coped – smoothly or inexpertly, unreflectively or thoughtfully – with the environment that situated and shaped their way of being.⁵³ To analyze this, one has first to discover the relationship between the artist and the city - whether the artist is a painter, a poet, a novelist or a composer. The artists can discover in the life of the city a mirroring or doubling of their own moods and attitudes and apprehensions; the monumental form of many works of 19th-century fiction and philosophy and history mirror the bulk and concentration of the 19th-century city,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-13.

⁵² C. TÓIBÍN, ‘Colm Tóibín on Joyce’s Dublin: city of dreamers and chancers’, *The Guardian*, Friday 15 June 2012.

⁵³ T. CHERYL, ‘Being in Joyce’s world’, in J. McCOURT, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 163.

with its streets and neighborhoods and ever-expanding dimensions. The city became thus the ‘topos’ as well as the locus of writing when a new literate public was forming and when the cultural, economic, and political power of the nation was shifting to urban centers. Robert Alter argues in his book, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*⁵⁴ that the artist can make of the modern city many things, can see various sides or angles in the urban mirror. Its underlying thesis is that only by looking at the language of the novel can we understand how the city experience impacts literary traditions.⁵⁵ When he writes that Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* presents ‘the city as a theater of vitality and transience’, he wants to say that the pressures of urban life can, paradoxically, help a person define his individuality. He observes that in *L’Éducation Sentimentale* by Flaubert there is ‘a kind of complicity between the consciousness of the protagonist and the nature of the city itself’. In *Der Prozess* by Kafka, Alter sees ‘the distracting noise and clutter and the intractable disorderliness of the urban surroundings’ as ‘an external mirroring of the moral and spiritual disorder’ within K. The very emptiness of the city, punctuated by a few striking images - figures at a window, the noise from a workshop - imposes a mental landscape. In Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the narrative style, with its collage of impressions, grows out of the pressures of walking through the city, and the clamor of words suggests a passionate love affair with the jangling assault of urban experience: ‘High voices. Sunwarm silk. Jingling harnesses. All for a woman, home and houses, silk webs, silver, rich fruits, spicy from Jaffa. Agendath Netaim. Wealth of the world’. Here the rhythms of the city and the play of the imagination become one. And Alter observes that the ebullience ‘Joyce sees in expanding Dublin at the beginning of the 20th century is no more than an intensification and variegation’ of older urban excitements, with ‘the trams, the telegraph, the printing press accelerating the back-and-forth movement of people and information that has been manifested in cities through the ages’. The cities of art and literature are cities twice imagined, as the communal creation must be recreated through the singular imagination.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ R. ALERT, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 72.

⁵⁵ E. SICHER, ‘Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel’, *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 5, N° 1, January 2007, pp. 131-135.

⁵⁶ J. PERL, “‘Imagined Cities’: The Urban Mirror”, *The New York Times*, 19 June 2005.

CONCLUSION

Joyce uses Dublin as a topographical ideal setting to express the phenomenon of ‘hemiplegia or paralysis’¹. At the beginning of the twentieth century fundamental institutions such as Family, Church and Homeland are fossilized as if frozen, and every kind of building or street in the city expresses ‘the restrictions and fixations of life in Ireland’.² As a result Joyce’s Dublin is immersed in ‘hatred and frustrations which give way to an inner sense of panic at being trapped by a dying way of life’ for the Dubliner, a moribund organism of the Irish society.³ In Joyce’s society Family value, Politics, Culture and Religion are overcome by corruption, alcoholism and violence, which give life to a paralyzed – and in turn paralyzing – Dublin.

Thus, James Joyce’s *Dubliners* is not simple a group of short stories structured according to stages of human development. The author meant *Dubliners* to be read as a novel of a city’s development, of a city as a character, with its inhabitants growing from innocence to experience. In a letter to his editor Grant Richards, Joyce writes:

Thus the organization of the volume became read as a representation of the fullest range of the people who were Dubliners and, by extension, the Irish.⁴

In novelistic writing the city figures mainly as background or setting or as determinant of character and behavior, and it is only in the twentieth century that a type of novel emerges in which ‘the figure of the city is in the foreground of the text’. Characters’ wandering consciousness fails to find resolution in the fragmentary encounters of a particular city and its streets, so that the text becomes plural - a ‘chorus of mutually interacting voices’ depicting the city from a number of perspectives - and a sense of overall signification eludes the reader as it escapes the characters.⁵

¹ This definition is included in one of James Joyce’s letters to P. Curran; it is in: S. GILBERT, *Letters of James Joyce*, New York, The Viking Press, 1957, p. 55.

² B. GHISELIN, “The Unity of ‘Dubliners’”, in M. BEJA, ed., *James Joyce: ‘Dubliners’ and ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’: A Casebook*, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1973, p. 116.

³ J. K. DAVIS, “The City as Radical Order: James Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’”, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 3 October 1970, p. 81.

⁴ M. MANGANARO, *Culture 1922. The Emergence of a Concept*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 106.

⁵ P. I. BARTA, *Bely, Joyce, and Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1996, p. 59.

When *Dubliners* appeared, it was said that:

Mr Joyce seems to regard this objective and dirty and crawling world with the cold detachment of an unamiable god ... He dares to let people to speak for themselves with the awkward meticulousness, the persistent incompetent repetition, of actual human intercourse ... [and] insists upon aspects of life which are ordinarily not mentioned.⁶

At first glance his stories are ‘somewhat bitter and sordid’, but he argued that: ‘I have written nothing whatever indecent in *Dubliners*’.⁷ ‘Offending people’ was the inevitable consequence of his programme directed towards cutting through Ireland’s legitimate discourse, ‘the swaddling cotton wool of euphemism and linguistic indirection through which he felt Ireland (and its political and religious authorities) represented itself to itself’.⁸ He had written, as no writer had done, in a completely frank and honest way about Dublin and its citizens and had not depicted them as the prototypes of virtue they obviously felt themselves to be. In his writings he had made fun of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and its ministers and had mocked the holy cow of Irish nationalism which was probably the most grievous sin of all, and then his own lifestyle did not exactly conform to the norm of Irish life at the time.⁹ Kenner assumes that Joyce was not a man with a box of mysteries, but a writer with a subject: his native European metropolis of Dublin, the dual nature of this city at the turn of the century, approaching urbanization and preserving its Catholic traditions.¹⁰

From Joyce’s letters we see that the city of Dublin reflects Joyce’s ambivalent feelings towards it – feelings of love, hate, disgust, nostalgia, pity and frustration. It is crucial to understand that when Joyce spoke of *Dubliners*, the people of Dublin, he was including himself and was speaking of ‘us’ not of ‘them’, despite his lifetime exile: *Dubliners* is about how we are everywhere – it’s the experience of modern urban life’.

We walk through ourselves.¹¹

⁶ G. GOULD, ‘Review of ‘*Dubliners*’’, *New Statesman*, 3, 27 June 1914, pp. 374-375, repr. in R. H. DEMING, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, London, Routledge & P. Kegan, 1970, i. 63.

⁷ J. JOYCE, ‘23 June 1906’, in R. ELLMANN, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, p. 89.

⁸ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, J. JOHNSON, ed., Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics, 2000, p. x.

⁹ K. MONAGHAN, ‘Dublin in the Time of Joyce’, *Joyce Studies Annual*, Fordham University Press, 12, 2001, p. 70.

¹⁰ H. KENNER, *Dublin’s Joyce*, Columbia University Press, 1956.

¹¹ J. JOYCE, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, London, Penguin Popular Classics, 1996, p. 3.

Joyce plays the part of a filmmaker that shoots *Dubliners* as if it were the story of a typical Dubliner, a sort of everyday man, passing through different experiences, a kind of urban everyman that is no more an individual but part of the masses. By giving the story of ‘Counterparts’, Joyce shows us a Dubliner who lives a life of counterparts, to dangerous ends, a life that repeats itself: at work, in the pub and at home. In one sentence he is the familiar character of Farrington that the reader follows throughout the story, yet in another he is ‘the man’ on the street, on the train, in an office. Farrington, in a sense, acts as an exchangeable or general type, both a specific man and everyman. Joyce’s fluid way of addressing him thus serves to weave Farrington into the Dublin streetscape and suggests that his brutality is nothing unusual. And as a series of sketches, the stories communicate significance through what the characters know or wish to know, but also what they are unable to see, or are afraid to feel: this may suggest that the stories are an elaborate crossword puzzle, where we use the clues we are given to ‘fill in’ the information we lack.¹² These tales catch glimpses of moments in the lives of ordinary Dubliners (only four out of fifteen cover in narrative time more than a few hours): they present ‘tranches de vie’, slices of life, of Dublin life at the turn of the last century, which was for Joyce ‘exceptionally violent; painful and violent’.¹³

Umberto Eco says about *Dubliners*:

un accorto montaggio di avvenimenti, di effetti narrativi sapientemente calcolati per far esplodere ciascuna novella nella rivelazione centrale, in cui i nodi degli umani rapporti, la paralisi irlandese, la fatuità del piccolo lenone, la solitudine del padre buono, la morte incontrata per la prima volta di fronte al cadavere del vecchio prete, la morte intuita come tonalità generale dell’esistenza nella novella finale, mentre scende la neve, tutto questo si fa chiaro in una parola, in un gesto, nell’espressione di un volto, nel bagliore di una moneta fatta balzare sul palmo della mano. E tuttavia secondo i modi esteriori di un realismo lineare e puntiglioso, preciso e scientifico.¹⁴

But what makes ‘Eveline’ so apparently simple, and yet so wondrously complex, is the way Joyce works within the formula of the anti-emigration story and uses it to show that people stay where they are in Dublin not because they discover the wisdom of doing

¹² G. LEONARD, ‘Dubliners’, in D. ATTRIDGE, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 101.

¹³ A. POWER, *Conversations with James Joyce*, C. HART, ed., New York, Barnes and Noble; London, Millington, 1974, p. 36.

¹⁴ U. ECO, in una recensione del 1963, cit. in G. MELCHIORI, *Joyce: Il Mestiere dello Scrittore*, Torino, Einaudi Editore, pp. 82-83.

so, but because they are trapped – and one of the ways they are trapped is the ideology of a pure and lovely Ireland. His whole purpose was to polish the mirror of *Dubliners* until it could give nothing but an accurate reflection of what was there, to present life as it appeared to him, and not as how he had been told it was:

It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass.¹⁵

Joyce also believed that such an existence was impossible in Ireland at the time, so he believed ‘that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country’.¹⁶ Besides, his almost complete refusal to alter anything in the text of *Dubliners* is explained by his felt desire to tell the ‘truth’¹⁷ as he saw it (and even how he smelled it) and thus stand against the tide of sentimentalized Irish nationalism he blamed for distorting the reality everywhere before their eyes.¹⁸

In terms of narration, Joyce refuses to be an omniscient narrator because the twentieth century is anything but an Age of Faith. It is a time of deep incertitude, with an accompanying deep suspicion of all meta-narratives (that is, theories which claim to explain everything). Father Flynn’s loss of faith, the discovery that his chalice ‘contained nothing’ – is this crisis in faith something he passed on to the boy without ever identifying it as such?¹⁹: ‘Sometimes he had amused himself by putting difficult questions to me’ (*D*, p.6). Readers of Joyce know how the boy feels. We, too, have puzzled with the boy to extract meaning over Old Cotter’s remarks: ‘I puzzled my head to extract meaning from his unfinished sentences’ (*D*, p.4).²⁰

The Dublin papers will object to my stories as to a caricature of Dublin life [...] At times the spirit directing my pen seems to me so plainly mischievous that I am almost prepared to let the Dublin critics have their way.²¹

¹⁵ J. JOYCE, ‘23 June 1906’, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁶ J. JOYCE, ‘20 May 1906’, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁷ J. JOYCE, *Dubliners*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

¹⁸ G. LEONARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²¹ J. JOYCE, ‘19 July 1905’, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

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