
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dubliners: Different Short Stories with One Place and a Pervading Theme

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ABSTRACT

The city's image acquired special prominence in many literary works related to modernist literature. In these works, the writers used the city details simultaneously to serve as symbols and references to the themes and issues that can appear in the works. This fact is especially actual in the case of James Joyce's Dublin - the permanent setting of most works by this great Irish modernist. It is worth noting that Joyce took the steps forward to discuss his city with the bright and dark sides. *Dubliners*, the collection of short stories, belonged to this type of modernist literature focused on the city. James Joyce wrote this collection in the early period of his writing career, and its title highlighted the significance of Dublin – as a city and its people. In each story of the collection, the capital of Ireland was not a mere setting but a unifying factor to portray a complete and comprehensive image of the collection. In every story, Joyce presented a single issue or a merged collection of obstacles found in Dublin and affected the people. In general, Joyce represented the capital city as the center of paralysis, affecting its citizens despite their age. This paper examined the prominence and symbolic meaning of the city in the text. Joyce demonstrated detailed descriptions while mapping his city. For instance, the writer presented the characters while meandering around Dublin's different types of streets. These incidents offered symbolic importance that the people of Dublin moved in circular routs in vain attempts to break the different layers of circles imposed over them at that time. Implicitly, this reference demonstrated the inability of the people of Dublin (the Dubliners) to escape the physical, cultural, political, and religious paralysis. Joyce's portrayal of paralysis in his collection mirrored the entire country of Ireland's broader social and political context during that time. Ireland was undergoing significant changes, yet it seemed imprisoned in inertia and stagnation. The characters and their stories served as microcosms to reflect the broader and extensive social condition, highlighting the challenges faced by the Irish people in breaking free from the paralysis that held them back without tangible outcomes.

KEYWORDS

Dubline, Religious domination, Epiphany, Paralysis, Modernism

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1. Introduction

James Joyce's *Dubliners* is a collection of fifteen stories, first published in 1914. Each depicted various aspects of life in Dublin, Ireland, at the turn of the 20th century. The stories presented a preview into the lives of ordinary people of Dublin, exploring a wide range of themes such as paralysis, epiphany, death, religious hegemony, and the constraints of Irish society. Joyce presented a realistic and often dark and bleak portrayal of Dublin throughout the different short stories, capturing its inhabitants' struggles, inner conflicts, and disappointments. Joyce used the realistic style to compose the stories in *Dubliners*. In addition, Joyce's characteristic attention to detailed anatomy of the different perspectives of Dublin's daily routine and extensive use of symbolism added a value-added advantage to the collection. Many of these stories revolved around a disclosure or a moment of self and collective realization, an epiphany. These moments exposed the characters' dissatisfaction with their lives and their profound depression and inability to break free from the multiple strict societal constraints.

Dubliners as a collection is rich and complex, containing various references and allusions like Catholicism, Irish nationalism, other literary references, and historical events. *Dubliners* is undoubtedly immersed in Irish culture, history, and literature due to the unique nature of issues treatment and Joyce's examination of his city. Joyce's use of various references and allusions added a prominent depth and richness to the collection, making it a pivotal work in the modernist literary movement. For instance, in *Dubliners*, the reader can apprehend that Ireland's solid Catholic influence was a constant backdrop throughout the collection. It reflected the moral, social, and cultural norms that shaped Dublin society then. The characters' struggles with religion, sin, and guilt were evident in stories such as *Grace* and *The Sisters*. Also, the stories in *Dubliners* often touched upon themes of Irish nationalism and the political context of the time. Compared to some stories like *Ivy Day in the Committee Room* and *A Mother*, Joyce explored the disillusionment and frustrations felt by many Irish nationalists at the lack of progress towards Irish independence. For this point, Joyce reflected not only others' point of view but also his point of view and disappointment. So, some critics considered this collection a self-reflection more than an ordinary fictional work.

Most importantly, the theme of paralysis pervaded the stories of the collection. The term "paralysis" represents a state of stagnation, immobility, and lack of progress experienced by the characters. Throughout the short stories, Joyce explores various forms of paralysis, including emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual. Therefore, "nearly all critics have recognized (paralysis) as Joyce's central theme in the collection" (Werner, 1988, p. 33) and the most reflective topic in these stories. The theme bore many symbolic references and gave multiple connotations. The characters in *Dubliners* were often trapped in mundane routines, unfulfilling relationships, and societal expectations, which prevented them from pursuing their dreams or achieving personal growth. The theme of paralysis harshly critiqued Dublin society and reflected the overall disillusionment and frustration prevalent in the characters' lives.

It is worth noting that the different stories of this collection were published at the beginning of the twentieth century, the age of Irish nationalism and the pursuit of its independence from the control of its stronger neighbor, Great Britain. At that time, the Great Empire tightened its control over Ireland in different ways: politically, socially, educationally, economically, and religiously. The British church played an important role in strengthening the restrictions and limitations over the Irish people and caused an overall stagnation status in the country. Joyce experienced all these incidents and issues, so he reflected this status of paralysis in his stories and made his characters move through different stages of self-realization to enable them to break the tedious ties of their daily routine in the hope of giving them the power to change their situation and move forward. Throughout the stories, Joyce wanted to show the people of Dublin, in particular, that they missed many things to do in their lives, and that caused this paralytic state in their lives. Hence, they had to change these things to push their lives forward, gain independence, and cope with their developed neighbors. Joyce did not want to write a novel or different stories about his country, but he wanted to mirror real life and make a harsh satirical literary work; as he stated, "the Dubliners were not able to move forward because they were kept from making any progress" and his "intention was not to write just a mere novel about his country, but a satire which should help to release Ireland" (Delany, 1972, p. 257). So, he made his protagonists experience a kind of epiphany to realize their weaknesses and paralysis as a part of psychological shock to urge them to change this dull and dead life.

In other words, Joyce wanted to awaken the deep ego of those people to push them forward and seek their independence away from the "parental" control of the Great Empire. This untouchable relationship with their "sacred" Empire was one of the reasons behind writing these stories and picturing his city in this satirical and dark way because Joyce "believed in the people's awareness and they would lead the Irish nation to realize their inadequacies" (Delany, 1972, p. 257). Another reason behind writing this collection might be elicited from the first line of the first story in this collection, *The Sisters*. In the foremost line of this story, Joyce states that "there was no hope for him this time" (Joyce, 1996, p. 1) to describe Father Flynn's situation. This statement revealed Joyce's belief that there was no hope in the Catholic Church or anything related to the religious institutions. Joyce wanted to explain how the church imprisoned the people in endless circles of traditions, prohibitions, and instructions, which turned their lives into a tedious repetition of daily routine. Then, Joyce declared that "every night as I looked up at the window, I said gently to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded weirdly in [my] ears, similar to the term gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism." (Joyce, 1996, p. 1). The type of relationship between the young boy and the priest was a clear indication of the relationship between the Great Empire and Ireland. The young boy had an intense fear after Flynn's death as he did not know how he would move forward in his life without the protection and instructions of the priest. This inner feeling of the young boy caused a paralysis that made him unable to think about his future without the existence of Father Flynn, the same as Ireland's people thought about their lives without the legacy of Britain. So, paralysis was strongly accompanied by the religious domination of the church, as mentioned in the first story of this collection.

On a personal level, Joyce was so annoyed by the church's control over people's lives that he thought it was the real reason behind the state of paralysis. He believed that religious commitment to the church created a state of stagnation, as in the case of the young boy: "I felt even irritated at discovering in myself a feeling of freedom as if I had been freed from something by the death" (Joyce, 1996, p. 4). Joyce used the case of Father Flynn's death and the young boy's hesitation to parallel the relationship

between Ireland and Britain and to stimulate the inner feeling of Ireland's people (particularly the young generation) to break free of the ties, escape from the church's control, and look for their independence. So, Joyce wanted to send this message to the young people to get full power over their lives and look for complete independence in the future.

Concerning this collection's multiple themes and references, the critics advised the readers to read and examine *Dubliners* as a whole novel rather than a collection of different stories. Paralysis, for example, can be applied to everyone regardless of age or cultural background. So, all characters of the different stories experienced a certain kind of paralysis. All characters were exposed as spiritually weak, scared, and, to a certain extent, restrained by many external and internal limitations and presented in the context of the period of stagnation in Ireland. Transparently, *Dubliners* reflected Joyce's frustration with the overall situation of Dublin and Ireland in general, in addition to his disappointment with the inability of the people of Dublin to change their situation and their "uncritical allegiance to tradition" (Buttigieg, 1987, p. 9). Likewise, the collection explored themes of death, love, and the complexities of human relationships. For example, *The Dead* was considered one of Joyce's most significant works and served as the final story in the collection. Joyce tried to conclude all themes in the theme of death to refer to the final destination of Dublin and its people's status.

In *Dubliners*, Joyce presented his characters' want and intention to change their current situation and move forward to escape from all restrictions and limitations and also run away from their past in some cases. Still, when they got the opportunity to do so, they thought twice and changed their minds to stay changeless in the same place. They did not want to achieve any progress and preferred to do the same things per their routine and within the frame of Irish traditions and legacy. In real life, the people of Dublin suffered from the exact status of hesitation and paralysis due to their habits and traditions; they were worried about change in general. Joyce wanted to highlight these feelings and reflect on this stagnant situation to give the Dubliners hope to change and break free from their mental limitations and social restraints. Finally, *Dubliners* was a precursor to Joyce's later, more complex works, such as *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. It was an essential work in developing modernist literature and was highly regarded for its literary innovation and rich portrayal of Dublin life.

2. *Dubliners*: A Documentary Narrative Collection

James Joyce wrote his stories at a time of great national shaking, stagnation, and mental paralysis on the national and individual levels. Ireland, in general, and Dublin, was in a severe state of political, economic, and cultural turbulence, seeking independence from Great Britain's hegemony. At that time, Great Britain profoundly restricted all aspects of Irish people's lives, hindering Irish forward development. Ironically, the people of Dublin did not pay honest attention or genuine interest in changing this situation; instead, they stayed helpless and passive. Joyce's love and loyalty to his city made him clear and aware in giving this dull portrayal of the city and its people. However, he received harsh critical commentaries on this attitude and this portrayal. Joyce responded to these critical commentaries by saying that his "intention was writing a chapter of the moral history of (his) country and (he) selected Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to (him) the center of paralysis" (Peake, 1977, p. 1). Throughout the fifteen stories, Joyce presented a detailed anatomy of the "miserable" situation of Dublin and its people. Also, he realized that many reasons like self-denial, a long history of habits and traditions, the robust diffusion of the political parties, and the hegemony of the British church could enhance this lack of genuine desire for change. These reasons resulted in this paralysis and inability to move forward to detach from the British legacy and domination. Nevertheless, Joyce believed in his people's capability to reach this moment of self-recognition and discharge British domination, which would be the first step toward their independence nationally and individually.

Accordingly, due to the different levels of restrictions, the history of Ireland told us the proof of a sequence of failures to gain complete independence to maintain itself as a nation and assert the national identity of its people. In *Dubliners*, Joyce sincerely reflected on these failures while elucidating the root causes of this situation. Religious ideals and the domination of the British church played an important role in segregating the people in parallel with the rise of political tension that enhanced internal division and conflicts. This combination of religious and political tension created an overall status of paralysis that froze any trials to develop or break free of the restraints. Kain referred to this situation by stating:

Glorious as the Irish patriots sounded, they were often mutually exclusive, even conflicting. Their partial fulfillment or failure reveals the fantastic blindness or inexperience of their advocates. Political and religious zeal does not breed tolerance, and there are often heartbreaking consequences. (Kain, 1990, p. 107)

Joyce experienced many frustrating traumas and failures that pushed Ireland to the edge of this unbearable status and impacted its economic, political, and cultural aspects. Although he did not take part in any of the political activities, Joyce was fully aware and involved in all of his country and (specifically) his city's traumas. Joyce witnessed the degradation of his country on all levels due to the impacts of Great Britain, which considered Ireland the backyard and subsidiary attachment to the Great Empire. He experienced the ultimate domination of Catholic traditions and the commanding role of the church in Irish society. Joyce

considered Ireland trapped between "two imperialisms, British and Roman Catholic" (Deans, 1990, p. 51). To reflect this situation as per Joyce's point of view, he stated Ireland's frustrating situation before publishing *Dubliners* by saying that:

The economic and intellectual conditions in [Ireland] do not permit the development of individuality. The country's soul is deteriorated by centuries of unserviceable struggle and broken treaties, and individual initiative is paralyzed by the influence and cautions of the church while the police, the tax office, and the garrison manacle its body. No one who has any self-respect stays in Ireland. (Joyce et al., 1989, p. 171)

So, many critics considered this collection of stories a historical document and a genuine mirror that boldly and, most importantly, honestly exposed the upheavals and turmoil of this country and the nation. Due to the high level of transparency in reflecting the status of this country, this collection placed a prominent position in the literary arena and is still an exciting spot for many academics, critics, researchers, and students. In his letters to the publisher, Joyce admitted many things that were settled in his mind while composing his stories. He stated, "I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history exactly as I have composed it, I have taken the first step towards the mystical deliverance of my country" (Joyce et al., 1957, p. 18).

In this collection, Joyce's portrayals reflected the different aspects of the useless, static life of Dublin and its people. For example, *Eveline* depicted the protagonist's inner feelings and psychological conflicts. Examining the protagonist's life, attitudes, behaviors, and final destinations might apply to the paralysis of all Irish women in general. Joyce started his story by saying, "She sat at the window viewing the evening invade the path" (Joyce, 1996, p. 24). Then, he refers to the static life: "Her time was consecutively out, but she continued to sit by the window" (Joyce, 1996, p. 27). These two statements refer to physical paralysis, which manifests as psychological paralysis. She is aware of the rapid changes around her but cannot move forward like Ireland's people, who could not cope. Joyce presents this metaphor to establish a solid background to discuss the country's overall state. The people could not find a way to escape from the British control.

In addition to the physical paralysis presented at the story's beginning, Eveline suffers from another form of paralysis: a verbal inability to express his genuine love and desire to be with her lover, Frank. Eveline loved this gentleman and wanted to marry him, but at the last moment, she decided to stay home and not leave her family and her place. Joyce cleverly created an ironic state where Eveline found an opportunity to start a new life and move forward away from her abusive father and boring life, but due to her mental and psychological feeling of paralysis, Eveline refused to leave and to keep moveless. She sacrificed her love and hope for a better life because of duty and responsibility toward her family. Despite the father's lousy treatment and miserable life, Eveline urged herself to stay home and leave her love and future life by recalling the good memories with her family. The same thing happened with Ireland's people, who recalled the glorious history of their unity with the Great Empire. Joyce wanted to draw attention to the reasons that hindered the Irish people from moving forward away from the glorification of the British past. Eveline's case and the implication for the Irish people could be a clear example of the overall state of the timeless and paralyzed environment at the time. Joyce referred to this state as Eveline turned to be a "helpless animal" (Joyce, 1996, 28) to describe the indifference of the people and their laziness to change anything. Joyce wanted to urge them to act upon their desires, and they could not change their life without eradicating the effects of the past and tearing up the ties of their blind following to Britain and, accordingly, to the British church.

As mentioned earlier, the characters, the young boy and his relationship with Father Flynn and Eveline, can epitomize the overall static life and prevailing stagnation in Dublin and the entire country. Joyce mirrored the state of society and its people to put them in front of their responsibility to change this reality as soon as possible after revealing their weaknesses and illnesses. The readers might feel negative after getting these dull and dark portrayals, but Joyce did not forget to give a kind of hope at the end. He wanted to enlighten the people to know their reality and realize they can do something for themselves and the coming generations. In other words, he wanted to give them a choice whether to continue this tedious life and keep this paralysis control their life or to move forward and terminate these restrictions for a better life.

Joyce successfully offered a crystal-clear catalog of the Irish status and inner conflicts and tension during his time. Throughout *Dubliners*, he exposed ambiguous conceptions about hopes and changes. He tried to open a window for recalling the national identity to urge the Irish to step away from their habits and traditions, but on the other hand, he failed to confirm this way of remediation or liberation correctly. So, the readers might receive a very dull and dark picture of the situation of the people of Ireland. Ultimately, paralysis as a theme and overall feeling prevailed in all the stories and impacted all the characters. It reflected Joyce's internal belief that his people were not severe enough to change their situation. It is worth noting that this collection was rejected for many years, and the publishers asked him to add some changes to decrease his harsh criticism of Dublin. However, he succeeded in securing a prominent position in Irish culture and history as one of the evokers of maintaining the national identity.

It is worth noting that Joyce significantly impacted Irish people through his innovative writing style, exploration of Irish identity, and critique of societal norms. For instance, his experimental narrative techniques, stream-of-consciousness writing, and use of interior monologue revolutionized the literary landscape. For instance, his works *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* challenged traditional storytelling conventions and inspired generations of writers worldwide. Also, Joyce's writing delved deep into the complexities of Irish identity and the cultural and political forces shaping it. He explored themes of nationalism, religion, history, and the impact of colonialism on Ireland. His works gave voice to the Irish experience and offered a nuanced portrayal of the country's social and cultural fabric.

Furthermore, Joyce's works often confronted and critiqued Irish society's conservative and repressive aspects, particularly in *Dubliners*. His frank portrayals of sexuality, religion, and the hypocrisies of the Catholic Church stirred controversy but also encouraged a reevaluation of societal norms. Joyce's willingness to tackle taboo subjects helped spark dialogue and reflection among Irish readers. Moreover, Joyce's legacy extended beyond literature. His works became integral to Irish cultural heritage, celebrated in Dublin and beyond, showcasing his writing's enduring impact on Irish culture. So, Joyce's writing style, exploration of Irish identity, and critique of societal norms left a lasting impact on Irish people. His contributions to literature and his unflinching examination of Irish society shaped how the Irish viewed themselves and their cultural heritage.

3. *Dubliners*: Different Short Stories with One Place and Prevailing Theme

Dubliners is more than an ordinary collection of short stories. It is a genuine mirror of the real life of the city of Dublin at the beginning of the twentieth century. James Joyce used all his creative skills to picture his home city's illnesses and issues.

He deployed a more traditional structure style of writing to make his stories more accessible and understandable to the readers. Many critics stated that the different stories offered different themes and issues, but the entire collection served one central theme, "paralysis." Joyce manipulated this theme as a metaphor to expose the degrading status of his country in general and Dublin specifically. The reader can see a paralyzed community on all levels due to the other external impacts. In his stories, Joyce also narrates the people's suffering, which was caused by their passivity and unwilling interest to break their ties to the outdated traditions and habits and additionally to the overwhelming dominating role played by the British church to keep the *Dubliners* prisoned in the cage of the great Empire. He reflected on the old generation's misery in such a society to find a way for themselves amid multiple uncertainties and torn feelings between their traditions and the continually changed outside world.

Joyce scrutinized Dublin from different angles and presented this city from the eyes of different ages: children, adolescents, and adults, and then from the public point of view. He depicted the details of the city: homes, buildings, and streets, and he examined its traditions and people's habits. All of these anatomical layers of the picture were presented to reflect Dublin's suffocating atmosphere and paralyzed environment. The stories presented the *Dubliners*' spiritual, cultural, political, and physical paralysis. Throughout the stories, Joyce succeeds in building a comprehensive portrayal of Dublin but gradually gives the readers enough space to imagine the different phases of forming this smothering community and contemplate the reasons behind the outcomes of the society at that time. Mahaffey stated that it "grew by increments, in which each story was a gnomon or partial figure that added new facets while failing to change the shape of the whole" (Mahaffey, 2012, p. 44). The niche of this picture presented in these stories might give the reader this feeling of impossibility to escape from this city, which was stuck in the status of paralysis and imposed all people moving within a repetitive circle of daily routine and enforcing habits. Joyce gave us a close eye on the details of Dublin's life and moved to open the cadre to highlight the overall status of the city. This diversity in using microanalysis and macroanalysis gave the reader a chance to know almost everything about this city and live the real feelings of the characters. All details were presented from the insiders' view, and in other stances, Joyce presented the outsiders' opinions about this city, as in the case of *An Encounter* and *Araby*. Also, he narrated the misery of men and women; on the other hand, he told us about children's suffering and the old generation's challenging situation in dealing with the new world.

These stories collectively presented a vivid portrait of Dublin and its inhabitants, showcasing Joyce's skills in capturing the complexities of human nature and the social and cultural dynamics of early 20th-century Ireland. For example, *The Sisters* explored the relationship between a young boy and his elderly mentor, a priest. In this story, he wanted to uncover the inner feelings of the young generation in dealing with the idea of dealing with the future with the assistance of the old's guidance or "control." *An Encounter* is another story that follows two boys who skip school and encounter a peculiar man on an adventure. Also, *Araby* told a tale of a young boy's infatuation with his friend's sister and his journey to buy her a gift from the Araby bazaar. Then, Joyce moved to narrate the story of a young woman torn between her desire to start a new life abroad and her responsibilities to her family in *Eveline*. In this story, Joyce discussed the emotions of the young girls and their unbearable duties toward their families to the extent that they might abandon their dreams for the family's sake.

Furthermore, *After the Race* portrays the excitement and disillusionment experienced by a group of young Irishmen after participating in a car race. Additionally, *Two Gallants* focuses on the exploits of two con artists as they manipulate a servant girl. In *The Boarding House*, Joyce composes a story about Mrs. Mooney, who managed a boarding house, and her daughter's relationship

with one of the tenants. Moreover, *A Little Cloud* delved into the frustrations and unfulfilled aspirations of a man named Little Chandler. In *Counterparts*, Joyce depicts a day in the life of Farrington, an alcoholic office worker who faces a series of frustrations and confrontations. Also, *Clay's* story centers around Maria, a spinster who celebrates Halloween with her friends and experiences melancholy. The following story, *A Painful Case*, presents the tragic consequences of an isolated man's emotional detachment from society.

Moreover, *Ivy Day in the Committee Room* explored the discussions and political maneuverings of a group of men working for a political party on Ivy Day. Also, *A Mother* followed Mrs. Kearney, a determined woman who pushed her talented daughter to perform in a concert. In *Grace*, Joyce tells the story of a religious conversion and its impact on the characters attending a religious retreat. The concluding story, *The Dead*, the most famous story in the collection, explored themes of mortality, love, and the contrast between life and death. Joyce collected all of his themes in the idea of death to give a symbolic reference to Dublin's situation.

Historically, this paralysis status was caused by the Act of Union of 1801, which affected Ireland and left it under the imperative influence of the Great Empire. This status left the people of Ireland in a great mess and turned them into passive citizens and only outsiders without paying any attention to moving forward or changing their reality to accommodate the surrounding industrial revolutions, which spread in all the neighborhood countries. As mentioned earlier, Joyce's portrayal of Ireland's people echoed his previous story, *Ulysses'* character, to describe himself as "the servant of two masters." He meant here that the people of Ireland were firmly attached to "the imperial British state" and, at the same time, "the holy Roman catholic church." This internal feeling of loyalty and mind control of both entities made Ireland's people lazy and inactive enough to break free of the British restrictions politically, religiously, and culturally. Joyce portrayed them as "unconsciously 'collaborating' with the enemy insofar as they internalized the values of the imperial power, including the denigration of the indigenous Irish as helpless, lazy, and incapable of governing themselves" (Mahaffey, 2012, p.1). To some extent, Dubliners were content with their mundane routine, repeating itself day after day. Hence, the world of Dublin in the collection, despite its urban cityscapes (docks, industrial areas), demonstrated several characteristics of Bakhtin's provincial town chronotype with its "cyclical everyday time":

There are no events, only "doings" that continually reappear themselves. Time here has no proceeding historical movement; it moves instead in slim rounds: the circle of the day, of the week, of the month, of a person's whole life. A day is just a day, a year is just a year- a life is just a life. Day in and day out, the identical round of activities are repeated, the same themes of discussion, the exact words... The markers of this time are simple, crude, and material, fused with the everyday details of specific locales, with the old-fashioned little houses and rooms of the town, with the drowsy streets, the dust and flies, the club, the billiards, and so on and so on. Therefore, time here is without event and almost seems to stand still. (Bakhtin, 1982, pp.247-248)

Although it was the capital of Ireland and the second old city of Great Britain, Joyce presented Dublin as a provincial town, and the characters of the stories were moving in non-stop circles of dead routine without changes or tasting the joys of life and without willing to move outside the expected frame or conquer new horizons. Again, all these incidents resulted from their unquestioning following of the instructions, traditions, and legacy of its strong neighbor and the dominating church. On the other hand, Joyce kept an attentive eye on picking both sides of his city to balance his portrayal and maintain his city's dignity in the history books. Although he described Dublin as "dirty old Dublin," he praised the people's trials to maintain the traditions of generosity and welcome where strangers can be helped and supported by the people.

Joyce's manifestation of the characters' meandering around the streets of Dublin gave the reader a reference to the idea that Joyce revealed in these stories that Dubliners were consistently unable to break free from the circles imposed on them. In *Two Gallants*, Lenehan moves in different streets and roads to demonstrate the same idea that the *Araby* narrator's visual and geographical routes through Dublin mirror the paths of Lenehan and Corley in "Two Gallants"; this mirroring provides a glimpse of an alternative to the direct and driven narrative vision of romance that the former idealizes and the latter parodies, albeit un-self-consciously. (Mahaffey, 2012. p. 76)

Unfortunately, Joyce showed that all these movements and walks could not achieve anything in the end and always finished with failure.

It is critical to mention that Joyce intended to anatomize Dublin rather than giving generalized terms or descriptions about his city to enable his readers to understand the collection as one story and one view, focusing on his city's central issue of paralysis and stagnation. So, he moved with the term and noticed it to grow step by step in a chronological development order like childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life" (Joyce et al., 1957, p. 134). Joyce used everything in his stories to serve this view, from formal techniques to the narrator and subject. So, many critics advised the readers to read the fifteen stories as an entire novel, not only a mere collection of stories, to get the right feeling and comprehend the deliberate messages. Importantly,

stories hinted at the nature of the relationship between the city and Joyce to the extent that some critics asked about his true feelings towards his city: did he love Dublin or hate it? The answer to the question can be logically analyzed and supported by the stories. The reader can elicit a type of fluctuating relationship between Joyce and Dublin; the early stages of his life in Dublin were marked by deep affection and attachment, and after experiencing the misery of this community and the people's inability to move forward and leaving the city, his relationship turned to be cynical rather than childish love of a place. Ultimately, his way of criticizing the opposing sides of Dublin and analyzing the people's life routine should reflect a genuine love for the city. Joyce stated his intentions to write about Dublin as:

[I] tried to give the color and tone of Dublin with [my] words; the drab yet sparkly atmosphere of Dublin, its hallucinatory vapors, its torn misperception, the atmosphere of its bars, its social rigidity; they could only be conveyed by the texture of my words. Thought and plot are not as critical as some would make them out to be. (Igoe, 1997, p. 150)

Also, Joyce deliberately selected the setting of these stories to reflect not only the portrayals of the people of Dublin but also the entire situation of the city. In *Dubliners*, Joyce presented a dull picture of his city and thought he might help it "in the course of civilization in Ireland" (Joyce et al., 1957, p. 18). He presented this picture to help the people of Dublin wake up, change this situation, and break free of all the restrictions and limitations imposed by the past that hindered them from achieving progress. Joyce believed those crystal-clear pictures of Dublin's daily routine might alert the people to realize the extent of the degradation of their city and country. In other words, he thought that the people might be able to see the decay of their lives and the extent of the stagnation which their society suffered from to understand the oppression caused by the traditions and the religious instructions of the British church and, hence, they might revolt against and change them.

For Joyce, Dublin, the great European city previously presented in many literary works as a cradle of the new Christianity and the beginning of European civilization, was a suffocating environment and damning city with many aspects of corruption and poverty during the early twentieth century. Throughout *Dubliners*, Joyce exposed an accurate picture of the people's suffering and how they were trapped in endless and futile daily routines while aiming at their personal and short-term interests. Those people who suffered from all types of paralysis in their lives and became lazy enough not only to change this semi-dead life but also unable to realize the misery of their situation. So, Joyce's *Dubliners* "centered around the lower middle-class milieu of the depressed northeast quadrant of the city that Joyce grounded the archive of contemporary Irish history" (Harding, 2003, p. 33). Consequently, Dublin, as reflected in his stories, was far from the glorious image of the nineteenth century due to many external factors and powers as well as internal factors. Joyce saw his city as a degrading city with "ruinous houses" and "dull inelegant" (Buttigieg, 1987, pp. 35 & 78), and he presented the city with "the dysfunctional forms of modernization" (Gibbson, 2000, p. 171). Goldberg commented on the dull picture of Dublin as mentioned in *Dubliners* by saying, "*Dubliners* is a dispassionate, morally realistic account of modern life, Joyce's discovery of his lifelong attitude to his lifelong subject" (Garrett, 1968, p.88) and he added:

The stories (of *Dubliners*) become images of paralyzed automatism of the will, the paralyzing hand of the past, a paralyzing feebleness of moral imagination, a simoniacal willingness to buy and sell the life of the spirit, timidly, frustration, self-righteousness, fear of convention, fear of sin, hypocrisy, vulgarity pettiness. With a fine dexterity, each vivisects its material to lay bare the moral disease that distorts it to its present shape. (Garrett, 1962, p. 38)

This picture can be traced clearly in various short stories like *Araby* when Joyce made the main character of this story, showing the readers the situation of North Richmond Street as a "blind, quiet street" full of "uninhabited houses of two stories that stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a quadrangular of descent ground and the houses grow somber" at night and "gaze at one another with brown imperturbable faces. (Joyce, 1996, p. 29). This quotation signified the paralyzed status of the city, and the inhabitants left their houses due to the degrading economic situation. It also referred to the dead life in these avenues and the suffocating atmosphere. In another stance, Joyce described the boy when he returned to visit the "mourning house" where a "priest had died in the back-drawing room" and where the air smelled "musty from having been long enclosed" (Joyce, 1996, p. 29). With these pictures, Joyce wanted to highlight the people's detachment and how they felt irrelevant to the city. In general, all the pictures caught in this story and others within this collection presented the darkness of the city and the miserable life, which was covered by all types of corruption and paralysis. These evocative pictures might make the readers aware of the dreariness that combined personal and social life and made Dublin a blind city with blind people who reached their deaths with this stagnation and carelessness.

In another story, Joyce moved with the women feeling and how they suffered in this damning life in Dublin. In *Eveline*, Joyce presents the protagonist of this story living in a house full of "dusty cretonne," along with "brown houses" (Joyce, 1996, p. 37). This description also drew attention to the city's situation and its houses. The repetition of using "dust" and "dark" in describing the houses or the streets of the city referred to "the pervasive dust in the story becomes a correlative for the stagnation and decay

of a living paralysis, in which everything settles" (Cheng, 2000, p. 255). Concerning the status of women, Joyce described Eveline as a piece of furniture of her dusty house "from which she had never dreamed of being divided" (Joyce, 1996, p. 38).

Moreover, it was not surprising to find this stereotypical image of women as it was taken from the demeaning image of women that prevailed during the Victorian age. So, as part of the social and cultural following, the people of Dublin should pursue the same values as the stronger neighbor. The main character of *A Painful Case*, Mr. Duffy, was not away from the same degrading situation as *Eveline*. Joyce presented this character as suffering from a detachment from Dublin's society. He lived lonely and frustrated in a sparsely furnished "old somber house" made of "iron railings and black, scarlet rugs" because, ironically, Mr. Duffy finds all the other suburbs of the city as "mean modern and pretentious" (Joyce, 1996, p. 119).

The examples mentioned above and the pictures may give the reader many references to Dublin's most degrading and suffocating situation, which made the city an iron cage that made the people more oppressed, frustrated, and unable to move forward. With these stories, Joyce did not want to give justifications or even excuses to the people, but he wanted to draw the map of his country's decline regarding the many reasons and factors that caused this situation. Joyce was aware of his country's illness, and he diagnosed the reasons behind this paralysis and stagnation, but he wanted to make his people aware of the status to urge them to move to change this situation. Joyce commented, "What is the matter with you is that you are afraid to live, you and people like you. Dublin is suffering from hemiplegia of the determination" (Joyce et al., 1989, p. 42).

Before stepping to the next point, after examining different sources about *Dubliners*, it was clear that Joyce's intention behind writing these stories as a collection was to build a landmark in the genre of city stories. In addition, Joyce wanted to offer a clear and honest picture of himself because he thought his city deserved more than the miserable status. He wished to find his city in a more important place than its situation due to its history and "being a capital of Europe for several years, it is thought to be the second main city of the Great Empire, and it is nearly three times as big as Venice" (Joyce et al., 1989, p. 208). In describing his city with the same name and mentioning the people this way, Joyce preceded any other writer and established himself as a pioneer of this newly developed genre. Generally, the stories written between 1904 and 1914 may seem straightforward without a clear linkage with other stories. However, with a close and careful reading and analysis, the reader can understand the overall link among all stories: paralysis.

4. Paralysis in *Dubliners*: More than A Central Theme

Through vivid depictions of characters and their mundane routines, Joyce captured the inertia and stagnation that gripped Dublin society at the time. The characters in *Dubliners* often found themselves entombed in unfulfilling jobs, suffocated by religious and societal expectations, and unable to break free from the constraints of their own lives.

The paralysis depicted in the stories mirrored the broader paralysis experienced by Ireland as it struggled with political, cultural, and social stagnation. Joyce's portrayal of this paralysis can be seen as a critique of the restrictive nature of Irish society and its impact on individual lives. Overall, *Dubliners* served as a powerful exploration of the themes of paralysis and stagnation, shedding light on the Irish people's challenges during that period. Joyce's concept of paralysis, which he explored in the collection, referred to the emotional, intellectual, and moral stagnation experienced by the characters and, by extension, the Irish people of that era. Throughout the different stories, Joyce meticulously portrayed characters confined in their own lives, unable to break free from the constraints of their environment, society, and personal circumstances. This paralysis manifested in various forms, such as unfulfilled ambitions, failed relationships, religious and social restrictions, and apathy. All the characters who yearned for change, liberation, and self-realization found themselves incapable of taking decisive action. Their lives were characterized by repetition, routine, and a pervasive hopelessness. Joyce's scrupulous attention to detail and his use of vivid imagery emphasize the suffocating nature of their existence.

Joyce's exploration of paralysis in *Dubliners* offered a profound critique of the limitations imposed on individuals by their society and the struggle to overcome the inertia that hindered personal growth and societal progress. Paralysis was more than a central theme that ran throughout *Dubliners* by James Joyce. The theme represented stagnation, emotional paralysis, and the inability of the characters to escape their restrictive circumstances. So, the reader can find different types of paralysis, like the physical paralysis that was presented in the opening story, *The Sisters*. The narrator's elderly friend, Father Flynn, was described as suffering from paralysis before his death. This physical paralysis mirrored the emotional and psychological paralysis that many characters experience in their lives. Another type of paralysis can be traced in *An Encounter* and *Eveline*, which reflected the emotional paralysis and inability to avoid their problems. Many characters in *Dubliners* were mentally imprisoned and unable to escape their monotonous routines and unsatisfactory relationships. This emotional paralysis was depicted in stories such as *An Encounter*, where the boys' desire for adventure was constrained by societal expectations, and in *Eveline*, where the protagonist was paralyzed by her fear of leaving her familiar surroundings.

Also, social paralysis was found in the collection, as in *A Painful Case*. Joyce often portrayed characters trapped in a society that restricted their aspirations. In *A Painful Case*, Mr. Duffy failed to forge meaningful social connections due to his introverted nature and detachment from society. He eventually experienced a deep sense of loneliness and regret. Moreover, due to the dominating role of the British church at that time, Joyce criticized the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church in Dublin and how it contributed to individuals' feelings of paralysis. So, the meaning and impacts of religious paralysis presented in Grace's story were evident. The main character's religious upbringing and fear of sin prevented him from finding fulfillment outside the church. Consequently, Joyce suggested that Irish society and culture were also paralyzed by their fixation on the past and resistance to change. So, he manifested the cultural paralysis through the characters of *The Dead*, who attended an annual dance that had become a stagnant tradition, symbolizing the broader cultural inertia.

In *The Dead*, the concept of death was correlative with the concept of paralysis and served as the final destination of this status. Joyce wanted to say that experiencing death should be the beginning of seeing or realizing reality and thinking about life's continuation. Although this idea of death paralyzed most characters, they should overcome and move forward. It is believed that Joyce intended to depict the paralyzed Irish society via physically, morally, socially, and psychologically paralyzed characters. The utmost interest that Joyce insisted on conveying was "giving the case history of a nation, tracing a paralyzing disorder from its first partially observable effects through increasing degrees of prostration to a final immobilizing stroke (Walzl, 1961, p. 228). He did not want to give this utterly desperate scene, but due to the gloomy atmosphere of Dublin, the readers did not find any way of escaping from these desperate emotions, although he tried to break down in the last story.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, *Dubliners* exposed the miserable life and paralyzed status of the middle and lower-class people who lived in Dublin during the early 20th century. In that period, Ireland suffered from multiple facets of complicated situations, starting from the pressures of British colonization and moving to the dominance of the Catholic church and reaching internal turbulence due to the beginning of Irish nationalism. Throughout the years, the Great Empire restricted the role of Ireland and the Irish people in politics to the extent of decaying the political life in Ireland, in addition to the corrupt Catholic church that had also added to the misery of Ireland and Irish people (English, 2009, p. 102). With these pressures and a suffocating atmosphere, Dubliners did not feel any hope for the future, and hence, they lost hope of getting their independence. So, Dubliners and Irish people were generally stuck with this national feeling of paralysis and despair.

Joyce's loyalty to his city, in particular, and country, in general, pushed him to present this picture of his city to the world and stimulate the national impulses of the nation to work hard for their independence and to change their situation. It is worth noting that Joyce had to wait more than nine years to get his stories published by his publisher, Grant Richards, due to the harsh and immense criticism of the Great Empire and the detailed exposition of the paralytic status of Dublin (Johnson, 2000, p. 41). Many publishers asked Joyce to soften his language and release his criticism of these stories. Although he was suffering from financial and social problems, Joyce insisted on conveying his message clearly and transparently without adding any makeup touches to the current status of his country, and he succeeded in giving a clear picture of Dublin as "the center of paralysis."

Paralysis is not only the central theme of *Dubliners* but also reflects the multiple references and impacts on the Irish people over the years. As mentioned in many male and female characters, emotional paralysis controls their different aspects of life. It hindered their individual and collective decisions. Sigmund Freud explained that "the psychic development of the individual is a short repetition of the course of development of the race" (Freud, 2005, p. 109). The paralytic status of some characters in *Dubliners* reflected the status of all Dubliners' conditions. In this gloomy and hopeless atmosphere, the Dubliners lived a non-stop, repetitive routine despite their gender and age. This deadly repetition of the daily routine, along with unbearable paralysis, killed all signs of desire or ambitions toward the future.

It is so difficult to separate between the plot and symbols in *Dubliners*. In other words, the single stories of this collection can be analyzed and examined conventionally as fictional pieces of writing, but in the surrounding context, the entire collection can tell more than the written lines. The stories can convey more messages that James Joyce himself has adopted. Many critics refer to the significance of the moments of self-realization and epiphany. Joyce exposed these moments to enable people to deal with their psychological problems and inner conflicts and realize their situation without deviation, hoping for the right time to move forward. In *Dubliners*, Joyce focused on the decline of the whole country due to all types of paralysis presented in most of the characters and almost all of the incidents. So, he offered the illness, investigated the root causes, and suggested the pathways to resolve this situation. Due to his honest and sincere interest and dedication in telling the stories of his country, James Joyce placed an essential position in the history of Irish culture. *Dubliners* remained a prominent masterpiece not only in Modernist literature but also in English literature.

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