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**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University of Tlemcen**



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# **Irish Social Ills in Joyce's "The Sisters" and "The Dead"**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
a Master's Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilisation*

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2015/2016

## **Dedication**

To everyone who knows me, had faith in me and most of all  
believed in the person I am destined to be.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, all thanks to Allah the Lord of the world who guided me and helped me, and to whom everyone owes everything.

For her guidance, and her continued encouragement and helpful suggestions, I acknowledge with gratitude my supervisor Dr Wassila Mouro for her advice, encouragement and tolerance.

My sincere deep gratitude to my co-supervisor Mrs Berbar Souad who helped me from the very beginning of my work. She has never ceased an effort to provide insightful comments and advice till the completion of this work.

I must also express my deep appreciation to Mr Rahmoun Omar; the great teacher of the year who enlightened us about the world of literature.

I must finish by thanking all the teachers of English Department for their willingness help.

## Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to shed light on Irish social ills in both short stories; “The Sisters” and “The Dead” written by James Joyce. This latter in both short stories, he highlights how the Irish people lived that time and what were their main chief social problems. These problems are deeply rooted in Irish society and hit the right string of social life and as well as the spiritual one. Such problems reflect the inner state and the real life of the Irish people who suffer in silence without having the will of change. To fulfil such a process, the present work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a reference to Irish society and its impact over Irish literature. Then we review the principles of both movements; Naturalism and Modernism along with stating a short biography of the Irish writer James Joyce and his collection of short stories Dubliners. The second chapter deals with “The Sisters” and “The Dead” and highlights the social problems of the Irish society.

**Key words:** Irish society, Naturalism, Modernism, James Joyce, “The Sisters”, “The Dead”, Irish social problems.

## Table of contents

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Dedication.....   | i        |
| Acknowledgement.....  | ii       |
| Abstract.....   | iii      |
| Table of Contents.....  | iv       |
| <b>General Introduction</b> .....   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Chapter One: Twentieth Century Irish Literature</b>                            |          |
| 1.1.Introduction .....  | 5        |
| 1.2.Irish Society.....  | 5        |
| 1.3.Irish Literature.....   | 7        |
| 1.3.1.Naturalism .....  | 8        |
| 1.3.2.Modernism.....  | 12       |
| 1.4.James Joyce.....  | 15       |
| 1.5. <u>Dubliners</u> .....   | 17       |
| 1.6.Conclusion .....  | 20       |
| <b>Chapter Two Conclusion: Irish Society Through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”</b> |          |
| 2.1.Introduction .....  | 22       |
| 2.2.Summary of “The Sisters” .....  | 22       |
| 2.3.Summary of “The Dead”.....  | 23       |
| 2.4.Irish Trauma.....   | 25       |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 2.4.1.Spiritual Paralysis.....                      | 26 |
| 2.4.1.1.Silence and Sterility of Conversation ..... | 26 |
| 2.4.1.2.Hopelessness.....                           | 27 |
| 2.4.1.3.Isolation.....                              | 29 |
| 2.4.1.4.Religion.....                               | 29 |
| 2.4.2.Social Paralysis .....                        | 33 |
| 2.4.2.1.Drinking.....                               | 33 |
| 2.4.2.2.Marriage.....                               | 34 |
| 2.4.2.3.Poverty and Materialism.....                | 35 |
| 2.4.2.4.Monotonous Trapped Life.....                | 36 |
| 2.5.Conclusion.....                                 | 38 |
| <b>General Conclusion</b> .....                     | 40 |
| <b>Bibliography</b> .....                           | 43 |

# **General Introduction**

### General Introduction

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed infinite and many rapid changes in politics, art, society, literature and many other fields. It is the outward distress that shaped new norms and ways of thinking. In the field of literature, both Naturalism and Modernism were two main literary movements which are characterised by putting aside the traditional literary style and embracing new techniques that match the non-stop change of the world. This new movements addressed the broken world which is full of pessimism and which is falling apart.

These two literary movements are adopted by many authors. One of these famous writers is James Joyce who wrote a collection of short stories under the name of Dubliners in which he maintained to portray the frustrated paralysed Dublin's life. "The Sisters" and "The Dead" are two eminent stories which shed light upon the dark spot of Irish society.

The motivation behind this piece of writing is to find out and see how James Joyce presented his society to the world and more importantly the drawbacks of Irish society which are very carefully tackled.

The main question of this extended essay is what are the negative aspects of the Irish society found in James Joyce's "The Sisters" and "The Dead"?

Besides the main question, this essay targets many other issues and triggers the following questions:

- How does the literature of the twentieth century portray Irish society?
- What are James Joyce's main concerns of Irish society?

To provide a reliable answer to the main question, this essay is based on critical approach and falls into two chapters.



## General Introduction

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The first chapter is devoted to the twentieth century literature which is characterised by a complete dissociation from the previous writings. This chapter starts with Irish society during this era and how literature portrayed it. To do so, the writers used Naturalism which was an extension to Realism. It was originated in France and quickly spread through the whole of Europe. A survey of Modernism which started as a concept and became a notion, followed by a short account about Joyce's life along with listing his works, especially Dubliners .

The second chapter is devoted to “The Sisters” and “The Dead” which are the first and last stories respectfully taken from Dubliners. It begins with two short summaries of the selected stories in order to provide a clear idea about them. The next step is underscoring the traces of Irish trauma in “The Sisters” and “The Dead”. This phase is undertaken through two main titles that gather many other subtitles, in which the first one is called spiritual paralysis and social ones. The former speaks about the hollowness of Irish spirituality and the latter sheds lights upon the sicknesses of Irish social life. In this essence, from one side this chapter focuses on the exceeding as well as the overwhelming sense of loss that creep down the Irish life and from the other side more importantly it targets the social vices in the Dubliners' life in particular and the Irish society in general.

# Chapter One

## Twentieth Century Irish Literature

1.1.Introduction

1.2.Irish Society

1.3.Irish Literature

1.3.1.Naturalism

1.3.2.Modernism

1.4.James Joyce

1.5.Dubliners

1.6.Conclusion

### 1.1. Introduction

The late 19th and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the eras of free writings. In the European context, there were many movements that tried to be felicitous to the non-stop changes of the world. Many authors sought refuge in literature to express what bothers their conscience and those literary men wrote under the genre of Naturalism which by the rapid flow of time gave birth to Modernism. These two movements gave more opportunity to the writers to express their thoughts and more than ever to make a change. James Joyce is one of those writers who left their traces by their writings and his collection of short stories Dubliners is an example of such deeds.

### 1.2. Irish society

Northern Ireland was colonized by Britain and this led to a cat-and-dog relationship between the countries, though Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. In this context the Irish people “were the first to experience British colonial policy as racism and genocide” (Fields, 1980, p. 2). For this reason “the destruction of the Irish people has proceeded over seven centuries ...has been aptly described as the ‘English Origins of American Racism’ ” (ibid, p. 22).

The Irish people who are “living in the province are animated with principally by cultural identities and anxieties associated with specific ethno-national communities” (Coulter, 1999, p. 62) and moreover the Irish “are apparently the more gifted race” (Gwynn, 2007, p. 24).

In terms of the social context, Northern Ireland is unlike the rest of the British Isles as it is “characterized by less open mobility pattern than other counties” (Clancy, 1995, p. 26). In addition to that the Irish man is naturally gifted with a sense of humor and jokes (Birmingham, 1914, p. 241).

This county has its distinctive parameters and it is typically “a society characterized by substantial and growing material inequalities” (Coulter, 1999, p.

62) and the “Irish are portrayed as [...] having their own distinctive character and culture” (ibid, p. 213).

The Irish society is a divided one among itself as there is two main diverge socio- religiously classes. The first one is Protestant and the second is Catholic ,yet this two major classes have great impact over the society .In this respect there was dark landmarks in the Irish history and the era of the “17<sup>th</sup> century marked the development of serious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics living on the Island of Ireland” (Mc Keown, 2013, p. 3).

Like any other society, the Irish society had many great problems that dwelt deeply in everyday life. Unemployment and Poverty reached their peak “in the late interwar period” (Clancy and Drudy 1995, p. 153) on the one hand. Yet, on the other hand the bread of knowledge is absent from the life of the Irish Peasant as “illiteracy is more frequent among the Irish Catholic peasantry than in any other class of the British Population” (Gwynn, 2007, p. 44). Whereas Birmingham A.George draws a negative image of the Irish Peasant under the umbrella of “a cowardly, bloodthirsty villain who shot innocent men from behind hedges, tortured helpless women” (1914, p. 140).

The religious aspect affected the “low level of social integration between Catholics and Protestants” (Clancy and Drudy 1995, p. 59) and “segregation by housing increased during the troubles” (ibid, p. 80). In this process “inequality has produced ‘alienation’ among Protestants of all classes” (ibid, p. 150) resulting in in a bloody civil war.

By the 1900’s Northern Ireland was suffering from stagnation, its population was overwhelmed by famine, immigration, hopelessness, paralysis in all its forms and its hope was too high for independence from Great Britain.

The problem of alcohol is another swelling problem in the Irish society. Larry Harrison (1996) stated that “North Irish study group contained a significantly

higher proportion of ‘heavy drinkers’ (p. 59) for this reason the Irish man is widely known and stereotyped as a heavy consumer of alcoholic drinks.

Far from this vision, the new Irish man is viewed as being sentimental and free from the shackles of illusion (Birmingham, 1914, p. 47) who possesses the power of facing reality, for this reason “Mr. Shaw’s analysis of character of the modern Irish man is justified by experience” (ibid, p. 50).

In this essence many Irish writers used literary materials in their works to deal with those problems along with celebrating their own differences from the rest of the world .

### **1.3. Irish Literature**

After a long period of backwardness and a hibernated stagnation a new wave came under the name of the Renaissance which “encouraged the return to Irish Landscape and the Irish Myth as primary sources for the new literature...a return to legend ,and the emphasis on peasant life and Irish folk life” (Ketsin, 2004, p. 3).

Given the fact that literature is an endless ocean, Gwynn (2007) says that “literature in Ireland...is regarded as a means, not as an end” (p. 8) which gives an opportunity to move a step forward. Irish writers add the taste of the typical Irish life in their works and fill their characters with the ingredients of the true Irish selfhood and apparently the Irish literature “begins with the Drapier Letters” (idem) which is written by Maria Edgeworth. Gwynn also mentions that “Mr Yeats...has declared that modern Irish literature begins with Carleton” (ibid, p. 28), while Birmingham A.George says that “Lever’s novels depict for us the old hard-drinking, hard-fighting reckless Irish man” (1914, p. 26).

In this way, Reformation and the Irish Revival gave a full spiritual blow and an energetic boost to the Irish literature. Through words Irish writers penned endless pieces of writing, investigating Irish identity, culture, questioning the Irish social values among Irish people and referring to a national stagnation in all the fields of life and yielding the birth of Irish literature. This latter “has been permeated by new

novelists and writers who seem to stress the themes of the Irish Environment in modern life including the politics of day, marriage and divorce, loneliness, and other maladies of contemporary life” (Ketsin, 2004, p. 3).

Many themes echoed through Irish literature that are inspired from the reality or invented in order to create other meanings, including “drinking and merrymaking including dance, sentimentality, political rebellion, humor, spirituality, passion, romance, melancholy, nationalism, and pride” (idem). To do so, many authors used literary genres to depict things as they are in reality, yet unlike Realism. This genre is called Naturalism and soon as things had changed, this literary scope left room for modernism.

### 1.3.1. Naturalism

The notion of naturalism varies, and no specific convention is made to it. For this reason it has many definitions. Naturalism was a literary movement and a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the exact sciences sprung off. It originated in France by Emile Zola who was the founder of that stream, as Hemmings (1954) mentions “in the 1870’s Emile Zola, the principal figure of the French school, promoted the terms naturalisme and naturaliste to refer to the tendency and its adherents” (cited in Hill, 2009, p. 1999).

In the novel “*Le Roman Experimental*” the French writer Emile Zola explained that “the aims of the naturalistic novel were formalized...in 1880” (Marriott, 2002, p. 12) and he described Naturalism as a progression rather than a literary genre. Yet, the origins of naturalism are deeply rooted in “Darwinism, positivism, and French philosophy” (ibid, p. 5). Soon, this new genre swept to the whole of Europe, including Britain and Northern Ireland.

Paul Alexis views naturalism as an intellectual process that needs analysis and he mentions that this genre is “a way of thinking, of seeing, of reflecting, of studying, of making experiments, a need to analyze in order to know, rather than a particular style of writing” (Cited in Dan, 1988, p. 14). Its name is taken from

nature, “Naturalism is derived from the world nature. It is the suggestion that art and literature should present the world and people just as science shows they really are” (High, 1986, p. 87).

Goetz and Taliaferro’s point about naturalism suggests that it is “the philosophy that everything that exists is a part of nature and that there is no reality beyond or outside of nature” (2008, p. 6). Whereas Simon Trussler (1968) states that naturalism is unlike realism and asserts that it is able to draw a change;

Naturalism is basically a mode of producing (as distinct from reproducing) reality, than it has a capacity for change in accordance with any topical insight it reality perceived by the dramatist himself (cited in El Fouadi, 1989, p. 44).

Naturalism can portray the real life more precisely and even more accurately than realism. In a way the Glossary of Literary Terms views Naturalism as a literary genre of the nineteenth century and mentions that this literary form

...is sometimes claimed to give an even more accurate depiction of life than realism. But naturalism is not only, like realism, a special selection of subject matter and a special way of rendering those materials; it is a mode of fiction that was developed by a school of writers in accordance with a particular philosophical thesis (Abramas, 1999, p. 261).

There is no such a big difference between the realists and the naturalists, so “like the realists, the naturalists saw sentimental and adventurous fantasy and, behind that, the genteel tradition as the main source of miasma” (Pizer, 1995, p. 21).

Keith Newlin sees it as a movement which focuses on the idea that human beings are controlled by an unseen power and he refers to it as determinism “focusing on deterministic depictions of humanity as the passive pawns of an indifferent world has ... undergone considerable shifting” (2011, p. 3).

The major principal of naturalism as mentioned before is determinism, stating that “a person’s fate is determined solely by factors and forces beyond the individual’s personal control” (Milne, 2009, p. 535).

In the same vein the American critic George J. Becker states that naturalism is just:

No more than an emphatic and explicit philosophical position taken by some realists, showing man caught in a net from which there can be no escape and degenerating under those circumstances; that is, it is pessimistic materialistic determinism (cited in Dan, 1988, p. 14).

In addition to that, the naturalists in the sense of writing production could act as scientists in the field of research. In this context Pizer sees them as equivalent as scientists, in terms of the observation, analysis and the interpretation of the findings from one side and he alluded to the staple of naturalism which are mechanism and determinism.

The novelist functioned like a scientist, observing nature and social data, rejecting supernatural and transhistorical explanations of the physical world, rejecting absolute standards of morality and free will, and depicting nature and human experience as a deterministic and mechanistic process (Pizer, 1995, p. 47).

The naturalists used free style, ordinary settings that makes the reader believe that it is real, the necessary ingredients to make their works life-like the language of everyday and “naturalistic writers were simply depicting social truths as they saw them” (Marriott, 2002, p. 11). The literary men of this movement depict their characters in realistic picture; in a way they portray them like ordinary people, insisting on the animalistic side of human nature “authors in this movement wrote their stories in which the characters behave in accordance with the impulses and drives of animals in nature” (Milne, 2009, p. 534).



## Chapter One: Twentieth Century Irish Literature

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This typical genre of writing takes life and portrays it as it is, without putting or adding a fake rosy-picture to its panorama and it “tends to deny the efficacy of laughter; instead of stating that life is an illusion, naturalism indicates that life is very real by stripping it of illusion” (Dan, 1988, p. 25).

There are two sides of naturalism which are different from each other; the first one has an optimistic view; whereas the second has a pessimistic vision “naturalism can be divided in two streams –one optimistic and idealistic and leading to “progressivism and social radicalism”, the other is pessimistic and deterministic and leading to a mechanistic account of human behavior” (Newlin, 2011, p. 4).

Though the hub of this way of thinking was France, it reached its vertex in the US and there it gained the prestige “although Naturalism was inspired by the work of the French writer Emile Zola, it reached the peak of its accomplishment in the United States” (Milne, 2009, p. 534).

In the British context “as Naturalism develops in the British novel, it is expressed on an interior and exterior basis specifically through Gothicism” (Dodworth, 2013, p. 207). The milestone of gothic writing is the emphasis on the “the ugliness of human nature... degeneration, decay, danger... fear... repulsion, and distress” (ibid, p. 219) and this genre is characterized by mysterious killing which is full of suspense and gory. Yet, Simon Joyce (2015) says that Naturalism crossed also Northern Ireland and he mentions that “according to Emer Nolan, naturalism came “to dominate the Irish novel in the twentieth century... ‘the banal and ugly ‘realities’ of Irish life, primarily as a way to critique the crowd mentality that formal religion, especially in its Roman Catholic version, supposedly nourished,” as well as a focus on “minutely detailed recreations of the sordid environments in which the demoralized victims of social and historical circumstances are forced to live” (p. 84).

In this flow, Brendan Prunty asserts that the works of Lawless and Moore are characterized by “naturalism which both writers use to depict a harsh, unremitting reality also signals a break from the socialising tendency of

conventional realism and has a lasting impact on subsequent twentieth century Irish writing” (2009, p. 15).

This artistic style of writing is “an adaptive genre, changing its contours over the course of times” (Newlin, 2011, p. 5). It went on a non-stop progress till it gave birth to a new literary genre which is called Modernism. This latter acts up to now as a vast ocean which no one is able to control or to reveal its far-fetched bundles of mysteries.

### **1.3.2. Modernism**

By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the two major literary movements in European literature, Realism and Naturalism, had reached their peak, a new out flooding wave of literary style emerged.

In the beginning this movement was known as “avant –garde” and it had a wider denotation restricted to military concept and it “had a shorter provenance in the language and literature of art” (Orton and Pollock, 1996, p. 141). Yet, by time the term was narrowed down to “signify an idea about the way in which art develops and artists function in relation to society” (idem).

Soon, the term avant-garde was replaced by Modernism which can be regarded as a time bound concept and this new term was initially produced by Jonathan Swift who “coined the term modernism on 23July 1737” (Eysteinnsson and Liska, 2007, p. 321).

The term modernism describes the set of changes that occurred in Western society at the turn of the century. It was a revolt against the former literary movements, a rejection of tradition and it “questioned the artistic values of an emergent world order in which classical values were being overturned” (Marriott, 2002, p. 6).

Another broad definition is given to Modernism, in which it “means the ruffling of the realistic surface of literature by underlying forces; the disturbance

may arise, though, from logics solely aesthetic or highly social” (Childs and Fowler 2006, p. 145).

In the religious context Modernism is “not the modern expression of science, and consequently its condemnation is not the condemnation of science...It rejects all revelation imposed upon the conscience (Mercier, 2014, p. 23).

Some thinkers see it as “a mere reflection of the reification of late nineteenth-century social life” (cited in Sheppard, 2000, p. 23). In the same vein, others view it as “a decline of bourgeois culture” (Eysteinnsson and Liska, 2007, p.15) and “an ideological signifier” (idem). Whereas Rachel Potter asserts that “modernism is a word which relates to developments in visual arts, music and architecture...writing” (Potter, 2012, p. 12).

Yet, as any preceding literary movement Modernism is seen as a literary movement which brought with it something unacquainted with, regarding it as “a historic-literary term as any other literary movements which brought ‘novelty’ or ‘renewal’ of art and literature” (Eysteinnsson and Liska, 2007, p. 15). This movement targeted the society and it “opened a window to the social world” (ibid, p. 111).

At the beginning Modernism had its impact European literature. It “influenced the evolution of literature in countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the nineteenth” (ibid, p. 15). It was a particular attitude towards the new chaotic environmental panorama of the fin de siècle disorder that hit the right string of the after-math Naturalism period and established new concepts.

Within the realm of literature, Modernism “challenged the basic assumptions of naturalism, moving away from scientism toward a mythic/symbolic base, substituting cyclical for linear time” (Pizer, 1995, p. 66).

Though the first spark of Modernism remains unrevealed, it is widely agreed that the period of depression of modern age in all field of life gave birth to that way of thinking, referring to the prelude and “the first point of modernism is the crisis of

belief that pervades twentieth century western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration and the shattering of cultural symbols and norms” (Eysteinnsson and Liska, 2007, p. 15).

The modernists sought to be free from the old wide spread visions that reigned the former eras and which stopped in some extent the ink of change from writing down new chapters. Modernism from one side is unlike realism in terms of portraying reality, in a way “modernism is associated with attempts to render human subjectivity in ways more real than realism” (cited in Person, 2008, p. 14). It insists on “...freedom from realism, materialism, traditional genre and form, with notions of cultural apocalypse and disaster” (Childs, 2008, p. 2). Whereas from the other side the “modernists writers have a developed sense that reality as perceived and structured by the Western bourgeois consciousness” (Sheppard, 2000, p. 43).

According to Cordell D. K. Yee (1997) “for the modern writer...everything is inclined to flux and change” (cited in p. 56).As anything on the earth ,the writer is bound to cope with the transformations and change to outfit needs of the world since new issues are subject of debate and clarification.

Potter in 2012 stated that “in the 1920’s, the centre of modernist activity was in Paris. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* were published in 1922, and they alerted the status of modernism” (p. 76).

As any literary movement, Modernism tends to mend social problems by inspecting and revising the past “the modernists shifted through the shards of the past looking for what was valuable and what could inspire construction of a new society” (Milne, 2009, p. 495). The aim of this tremendous wave is “to present consciousness, perception, emotion, meaning and individual’s relation to society through interior monologue, stream of consciousness, tunneling, defamiliarisation, rhythm, irresolution” (cited in Pearson, 2008, p. 14).

The modernists emphasized on the importance of humanism, symbolisms, expressionism, Dadaism, “stream of consciousness narration and illusiveness”

(Milne, 2009, p. 495), surrealism , the theatre of the absurd , cubism and realism. They also invented many literary techniques within their writings such as “interior monologue and poetic fragmentation, [which] were developed to depict urban experience” (Potter, 2012, p. 80).

As the society was in a state of flux, the modernist writers portrayed their settings and characters real-like accurate ones and “many modernist texts locate their action in streets of cities” (idem).

Through time many modernist writers exposed their vision whether through poetry or prose. Those prominent writers surrendered to their free unleashed expressionism of real issues. Such vast modern literary movement holds lightly the works of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barner, Mina Loy, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Dorothy Richardson, D. H. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, Mary Butts, Wyndham Lewis, Laura Riding...etc. In this way, the “twentieth-century British and Irish writers invent[ed] ways of seeing the human psyche in a more subtle and complex manner than prior writers had” (Schwarz, 2005, p. 20).

They endeavoured to understand the surroundings and to find answers of the questions that puzzled them by going back into the past and trying to anticipate the future “modernist authors revised the past and expected the future. Authors like Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and T.S Eliot adapted narrative structure, fragmented narration and disrupted syntactical order (Childs, 2000, p. 13).

James Joyce was one of those leading figures who left traces in the modern world of literature in general and the British Modernism specifically.

### **1.4. James Joyce**

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was born February 2, 1882, in Rathgar which is situated in south of Dublin. He opened his eyes upon the world into “a comfortable middle-class catholic home” (Fagnoli and Gillpse, 2006, p. 3). Joyce was the son of “a failed distiller, Jonathan Stanislaus Joyce, and pianist Mary Jane Murray Joyce” (Snodgrass, 2010, p. 137). As time went by, he put his feet upon the

## Chapter One: Twentieth Century Irish Literature

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doors of future life as “he was sent to Clongowes Wood college” (Fargnoli and Gillpse 2006, p. 3).

He was a good student, being interested in poetry, theatre and Latin languages. After a couple of years he left school as “his family could no longer afford the cost of his tuition” (idem).

As he grew up, there was a great intimacy between him and his brother Stanislaus, but he rebelled against his family and church; after a religious depression Joyce “abandoned his catholic faith” (ibid, p. 4).

James Joyce studied at the University College and in 1900 he wrote an essay entitled “Drama Life”, followed by writing a paper in 1902 under the name of “James Larence Mangan”. Soon after, he gained a fruitful “acquaintance of Dublin’s major literary figures” (ibid, p. 6), such as George Russell, Lady Gregory and Yeats.

At the age of twenty, Joyce left Dublin in 1902 heading to Paris in order to study medicine. By April of the next year, he returned back home because of his mother’s sickness and he remained there until she “died of cancer in August of that year” (ibid, p. 7).

A short time after the death of his mother, he began writing stories “that would later appear in Dubliner’s –“The Sisters”, “Eveline” and “After the Race” (ibid), and soon he published them in the agricultural journal “the Irish Homestead” (idem).

In the meantime he met Nora Barnacle; the woman whom he would marry later on .Yet in 1904 he eloped with her to Zurich, in the hope of finding a job as an English Language teacher, but all was in vain and after a couple of blown hopes in Trieste, they travelled to Poland. Once again the couple could not cope with the new life, soon they came back to Triesty where he was delivering “lectures of William Shakespeare and began composing an autobiographical work of fiction published in 1916 as A Portait of the Artist as a Young Man (Snodgrass, 2010, p. 157).

As any writer, Joyce had many setbacks that were put before him. Those setbacks summarized in not finding a publisher. Yet this problem by time dwindled as Joyce's writings attracted many publishers.

In 1905, James tried to publish Dubliners, but he could not until 1914 and in 1907 he wrote an essay which was named "Ireland at the Bar".

James Joyce won a well-respected reputation after the publication of The Egoist in 1916, Exiles in 1921 and Ulysses in 1922, and then the next novel was named Finnegan's Wake in 1939. He died in Zurich in 1941 after an abdominal operation.

One of James Joyce's well-known writings is Dubliners which unlocked the big gate of the Irish society, by making a direct access to the core of the unseen Irish social tumors along with a reference to major themes that thundered over the sky of Northern Ireland.

### 1.5. Dubliners

Dubliners is a collection of fifteen short stories. The former was written between 1903 and 1907. Yet some of those stories were published individually in journals and in newspapers before the final publication as a whole in 1914.

James Joyce through his artistic vision cast light upon the swelling paralysis of his country and he claimed that he is calling the series "Dubliners" to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city" (cited in Parrinder, 1984, p. 34).

That writer depicted a vivid picture of the Irish middle-class inhabitants' daily life and he managed to portray his city with "its (Dublin's) idiom, its people, its streets, and its little houses" (Cited in Melloti, 1975, p. 3).

As mentioned ditto, Dubliners' main concern is Irish society which suffers from the quagmire of the morbid gloomy social paralysis and here Joyce's stories

target those paralysis and shed light on a possible reconsideration of the events or a giving-up the whole bundle of things.

In other words, Joyce's Dubliners

Deals with people who find themselves in a trap or a "box"...who plan to escape...But nothing happens, or at least nothing happens as they planned...To mention Joyce's main characters is to establish a gallery of thwarted escapes: Farrinton, Eveline, Gbriel, Little Chandler, the boy in 'An Encounter', and Polly Mooney's husband (cited in Melloti, 1975, p. 28).

Randall Stevenson claims that these short stories are "fairly conventional in their realistic, sometimes satiric, portrayal of drab lives in a city Joyce shows suffering from paralysis of will, energy and imagination" (cited in Bloom, 2009, p. 191). For this reason "with the Dubliners stories, Joyce breaks with "classic realism" (Yee, 1997, p. 20) and through this process "Joyce is referring to a paralyzed reality" (ibid, p. 32).

The author mentioned that this collection served as mirror in which the Irish people can see themselves through as plain as they can see their faces in the mirror and he considered it as "a nicely polished looking-glass in which the Irish people might see themselves" (cited in Mahaffey, 2012, p. 8).

To Joyce the thorny truth of his stories was a necessary evil to portray the reality of the Irish human nature at that time and through this reality the Dubliners could see themselves in what Joyce called "looking- glass". This mirror reflected the hidden side of the Irish people and the stories of Dubliners were written down under the pressure of the Irish identity crisis in order to open an eagle eye upon the Irish society which seemed to him the centre of morbid illnesses that needed a cure.

In a letter Joyce explains the aim that lies behind the writing of the short stories and he says that:



I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world. It has been a capital of Europe for thousands of years, it is supposed to be the second city of the British Empire and it is nearly three times as big as Venice. Moreover . . . the expression “Dubliner” seems to me to have some meaning and I doubt whether the same can be said for such words as “Londoner” and “Parisian” both of which have been used by writers as titles (cited in Bulson, 2006, p. 32).

Yet, because of its glaring truth no one accepted to publish it until Grant Richards approved it and published it. Joyce himself said in a letter to the English publisher Grant Richards that “My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that seemed to me the centre of paralysis” (Bradbury, 2001, p. 127).

Nash mentioned what the collection of the short stories shouldered within its lines, stating that “Dubliners registers a modern ennui as the symptom and cause of the conditions, it describes: poverty subservience, confusion” (2006, p. 30) and pictured the modern world as it is as the “the world capital of boredom” (ibid, p. 41).

Seamus Deane claims that the short stories of Dubliners are “accommodated within the tradition of English or British literature, international Modernism, the plight of humankind in the twentieth century” (cited in Bloom, 2009, p. 192), whereas Peter Childs asserts that Dubliners is overwhelmed with the heavy characteristics of modernism . Such characteristics are deeply rooted in the form and the content of this collection.

‘uncertainty, particularly in the stories’ endings, symbolism, linguistic intensity, an aesthetic rather than a moral focus, linguistic experimentation, a drive to throw off the old in favour of the new, and an interest in the internal workings of the individual mind as much as a shared external reality’(idem).

Each of those stories is an independent story which “deals with some virtue or sin” (cited in Ingram, 1971, p. 30), gathered under one umbrella and present a given stage of life. In this way they are categorised into four parts of sequence life from childhood to public life and James Joyce says that “I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life” (cited in Fagnoli and Gillespie, 2006, p. 47).

The first three stories which are “the Sisters” written “in 1904 and first published that same year under Joyce’s pseudonym Stephen Daedalus” (Fagnoli and Gillespie, 2006, p. 46), “Araby” and “An Encounter” in 1905 presented the theme of childhood. Yet the next four stories “Eveline”, “After the Race” (both composed in 1904 and first published in that year in the Irish Homestead under the name Stephen Daedalus)” ( ibid, p. 47), “Two Gallents” written in 1905-1906 and “The Boarding House” in 1905 were under the division of adolescence. Then the fourth division had the name of maturity (adulthood), gathering “A little Cloud” in 1906, “Counterparts” in 1905, “Clay” and “A Painful Case” in the same year.

The last division took the name of public life and contained “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”; “A Mother”, “Grace” in same year of 1905 and “The Dead” between 1906 and 1907.

### **1.6. Conclusion**

The literature of the twentieth century is marked by a complete disassociation from the traditional writings and through this form writers managed to express their thoughts. Dubliners is one of such type of writing and the two short stories “The Sisters” and “The Dead” which are the prelude of Dubliners and the finale seem to be the best examples.

# Chapter Two

## Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

2.1.Introduction

2.2.Summary of “The Sisters”

2.3.Summary of “The Dead”

2.4.Irish Trauma

2.4.1.Spiritual Paralysis

2.4.1.1.Silence and Sterility of Conversation

2.4.1.2.Hopelessness

2.4.1.3.Isolation

2.4.1.4.Religion

2.4.2.Social Paralysis

2.4.2.1.Drinking2.4.2.2.Marriage

2.4.2.3.Poverty and Materialism

2.4.2.4.Monotonous Trapped Life

2.5.Conclusion

### 2.1. Introduction

The short stories “The sisters” and “The Dead” are the best illustration of Irish social ills that can be divided into two parts .The first one is social problems. It gathers drinking and materialism .The second one is spiritual problems and it gathers silence, destruction of human happiness, hopelessness and devastation, living-dead, isolation of the individual, and uncertainty.

### 2.2. Summary of “The Sisters”

It was supper time when an unnamed boy comes down to dine. He sees his uncle sitting with Old Cotter on the table and his aunt is serving them porridge. The new comer, Old Cotter tells the family that the boy’s friend and tutor; Father James Flynn have just died after “the third stroke” (p. 1).

Yet the boy pretends that the news “had not interested” (idem) him as he continues eating his dinner.

After that the two men shares the opinion about the drawbacks of the friendship between the boy and the deceased priest, stating that “it’s bad for children” (p. 2).Instead of this, the boy should have been playing with “lads of his own age” (idem).

Soon after the boy gets angry as Old Cotter alludes to him with ambiguous unfinished words.

Later on in bed, the boy tries to understand what Old Cotter have just meant as he endeavours to “extract meaning from his unfinished sentences “(idem) .Then he goes into a reverie where he sees the old priest “the paralytic”( idem) who is trying to “confess something “(idem)to him.

The following day, the boy goes to Great Britain Street, exactly to a shop of Drapery that belongs to Old Flynn’s two sisters, where he a card clinging to the door-cknocker and he reads “The Rev.James Flynn[... ] R.I.P” (idem).Yet the boy instead of finding himself mourning over his friend, he feels “a sensation of freedom” (p. 3) and he dares not to knock upon the door.

By the evening the boy and his aunt go to pay their respects in the mourning house. In this latter Nannie Flynn takes the two guests to see the corpse of her brother, where the “boy pretended to pray” (p. 4). Then Eliza Flynn and the boy’s aunt chatters for a while and the host says that her brother was suffering from a mental breakdown as “there was something queer over him” (p. 6) and that he sounded “too scrupulous” (idem).

The sister also mentions that the clerk, the priest and Father O'Rourke are looking for her brother everywhere, but they cannot find him. Soon they find him in confession-box along with his mouth “wide-awake and laughing-like to himself” (p. 7) and they assume that “something wrong went with him” (idem). The opening of Dublin life is called “The Sisters” foretells and anticipates the conclusion which is given the name of “The Dead” which continues into the on-going forward of public life.

### 2.3. Summary of “The Dead”

Around Christmas time, the Morkan Family is holding a party in which “everybody who knew them come to it” (p. 111). The two sisters, Julia and Kate, are waiting on for the coming of their only nephew; Gabriel and his wife Gretta as it “was long after ten o’clock” (idem).

Yet another issue troubles the Morkans, which is the coming of Freddy Malins who “might turn up screwed” (idem) and it is snowing outside when the Conroy’s couple gets in. The wife goes upstairs and her husband speaks with Lily who comes along with Gabriel to the pantry. It is in this place he receives the first slap that initiates the inward-self reconsideration journey.

That incident would soon affect him as he is about to deliver a speech and here he is ill-at-ease, unable to whether to quote lines from “Robert Browning ... Shakespeare or from the Melodies” (p. 113).

The aunts and Gretta finish the female business upstairs and soon they get down to have a word or two with Gabriel. This latter has decided to book in a hotel since last Christmas “Gretta caught a dreadful cold” (p. 114).

By now the Waltz is ended and Julia announces to her nephew that Freddy Malins is so and that “he’s screwed” (p. 115), so she requested from Gabriel to handle that awkward situation as the party is pell-mell downstairs and a lots of people moving around,dancing or laughing.

Sometime after, the Quadrilles are announced while Mr. Browne is trying to refresh Freddy Malins with “a glass of lemonade” (p. 117) and Mary Jane is playing on the piano, but apparently the only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary ... and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page”(p. 118).

Far advancing in the story, Mr Conroy finds himself forcibly dancing with Molly Ivors who calls him “West Briton”(p. 119 ) writing for the Daily Express ,using nom de plume. Later on, this lady offers for Gabriel a tip to Connacht, yet the gentleman answers her back by “I’m sick of my own country, sick of” (p. 120).

The next moment Jane plays and her Aunt Julia sings along and after they finish the singer expresses her indignation about the pope who discarded the “Women out of the choirs” (p. 123).The table is loaded with a whole bunch of different kinds of foods and Gabriel starts carving the goose .The people are speaking about dead people ,monks and things of that sort while dessert is passing from one hand to the other.

When dinner ends the spokesman raises from the table and begins his speech about the “hospitality of certain good ladies” (p. 129); referring to his aunts and his niece. By the closing up of the party, everybody gets ready to go home and Gabriel is waiting for his wife to come downstairs at the threshold ,where he tells Mr Browne ,the Malins ,his aunt and his niece about his grandfather’s horse which ”came in sight of king Billy’s statue :and whether he fell in love... anyhow he began to walk round the statue”(p. 132),consequently everybody laughs heartily .

By now, a cab arrives in which Mr. Browne, Mrs. Malins and her son mount in .Once they settle down on it, the two gentlemen try to guide the cabman who is perplexed as he is not knowing which way to take, meanwhile

Gabriel comes indoors and finds his wife taking away by a song which is called “The Lass of Aughrim” (p. 135) by Mr.Darcy.

After the business of farewells is done the couples head to the hotel room where Gretta is no more herself and says that “I am thinking about that song, The Lass of Aughrim “(p. 139).That song some time ago a boy called “Michael Furey ....He was very delicate “(p. 140) has used to chat it to Gretta who confesses that she feels guilty of his death as about winter time she “was going ...to the convent ...he was ill”(p. 141).Yet despite his sickness he has come to see her “at the end of the garden shivering”( idem) and soon the poor fellow dies.

At this moment of truth , the ashamed Gretta bursts into tears and soon she falls asleep ,but her husband remains awake ,thinking about the man who “had died for her sake”(p. 142 ) and goes into a reverie, imagining the funeral of his aunt Julia. It is by the windowpane he sees that snow is” falling faintly” (p. 143) covering “the living and the dead “(idem).

Through the two short stories; the epilogue and the prologue of Dubliners many implicit modern drawbacks of Irish nation are tackled and handled in a particular way, yet by the use of new techniques and methods that belongs to modernism.

### **2.4. Irish Trauma**

In the modern age, life has completely changed and the city has become a modernized one. This latter is the epitome of such change that has a great effect upon the modern life, bringing with it the trauma and frustration of modern failure. In this way, by the turn of the century Northern Ireland has become an arena of stillness and stagnation .Due to many factors such as the English pressure and the atrocities of the modern era great changes have altered the stream of Irish society, leading to spiritual void as well as social paralysis.

Dubliners tackles the glaring sunbeams of that era and tries to denote and “portrays the soul of that city, chronicling the decay of its morals and of its spiritual life by focusing on emotional paralysis of its inhabitants. (Taglieri 1996, p. 7).

### 2.4.1. Spiritual Paralysis

The messy spiritual breakdown of modern society declines the chances of spiritual stability and increases disorder of once life. Irish society suffers from spiritual sterility that conducts their life and inflicts the Dubliners’ behavior. Such conduct deprives them, making them preys of a superficial world full of delusion and seclusion.

Joyce’s Dubliners is “a spiritually famished prisoner serving time in a barren cell to which there seems to be no key” (Lowe-Evans 1989, p. 46).

#### 2.4.1.1. Silence and Sterility of Conversation

Dublin is the city of silence which threads its way through the lives of the Dubliners, for this reason Joyce’s characters are presented in a silent state. Such silence denotes the sterility of communication and the absence of the art of conversation.

Right from the beginning when Nannie offers the crackers to the boy, he refuses eating them since he is thinking that he “would make too much noise eating them” (p. 4) as a whole veil of silence camps down every now and then. In the second story, there is sickness in conversation as when one of the character speaks, the listener does not care of what the speaker is saying. For example in the Morkans party, when Mr.Browne is speaking and he “did not finish his sentence, but, seeing that Aunt Kate was out of earshot “(p. 115).

Later on in when the couple is in the hotel room Gabriel does not find proper words to start a conversation with his wife, though they are married for so long and they have children. The husband cannot ask his wife directly and after hesitation and thinking twice the male decides to speak with Gretta.

"By the way, Gretta!"

"What is it?"

"You know that poor fellow Malins?" he said quickly (p. 138).



## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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Furthermore, in *The Sisters* because there is nothing common between the guests and the hosts a total “silence took possession of the little room”(p. 6) in which no one is able to kindle up a thread of conversation .The guests “waited respectfully for her to break the silence”( p. 6) and the boy also “ too listened; but there was no sound in the house “(idem).As they are there but not really there , since their bodies are on land but their souls are roaming elsewhere , trying to find a suitable place.

Most of Dubliners ‘characters are portrayed as having the ability of verbal activity and they can speak ,yet in most cases this ability fails them and they become tongue-tied .The only way which is left for them is speak in sotto voce or in a whispering voice .

Though Gabriel is an eloquent university teacher, he is unable to defend himself before Miss Ivors .He instead “murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books” (p. 119).In “*The Sisters*”, the unnamed boy in the bed sees a spirit which is willing to confess something, yet it “confess to me in a murmuring voice” (p. 2) but he fails to decipher what it is saying as the spirit cannot utter correctly because of the spiritual paralysis.

Another issue foretells the absence of words which is full of gaps, it is called the ellipsis which refers to missing parts of speech, it suggests untold articulation which is followed by silence .For example when Old Cotter is speaking about the priest, he says that “No, I wouldn't say he was exactly... but there was something queer... there was something uncanny about him. I'll tell you my opinion....”(p. 1).This missing parts of speech suggest that he is unable to give an accurate perception and he does not find words to convey his idea.

This miscommunication overspreads desperation among the modern individuals in society which encourages pessimism and helplessness.

### **2.4.1.2. Hopelessness**

From the very beginning the first word in “*The Sisters*” forecasts what is coming up and tells the true image of Dubliners’ life when the boy says “there was

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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no hope for him this time” (p. 1) .The writer presents a whole horizon of desperation that overwhelms the Dubliners . Focusing on specifically the state that there is no hope for Father Flynn who fails in his spiritual role and dies from the third stroke, but symbolically speaking and in a larger sense the writer through the priest draws and alludes to the real state of the Dubliners hopelessness because of the paralyzed monotonous life that encourages stagnation and promising a tomorrow which like the other day.

In “The Dead” after Gretta confesses willingly to her husband her previous adventure with the late Furey, Gabriel realizes that he does know his wife no more. The whole world seems to him a mirage and not worth living, for this reason he becomes devastated and unable to hold on optimistic and because of hopelessness he goes on a reverie imagines the funeral of his aunt and how things would be in that gloomy day .

He would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon. (p. 142).

After a cloud of pessimism rains over the head of poor Gabriel, he succumbs to his dark thoughts and he imagines he himself and all the others “one by one, they are all becoming shades” (idem).

In this lonely inward journey isolation is a fraternal friend to brood over and consider the matters that bother the mind. The whole world is lifeless and a place the individual seclusion of modernized society.

### 2.4.1.3. Isolation

The theme of isolation is part of the life of Dubliners' characters that are living a secluded life far from the populous one. This seclusion promises a life of imprisonment, shallowness and the draught of the springs of life.

In *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850*, Thomas Flanagan says that “in the years which followed 1850, the despair was universal ....the island accepted passively the nightmare of its history “(cited in Lowe-Evans 1989, p. 41).

By the beginning of the story the spirit of the recently deceased priest comes willingly to the unnamed boy to unburden its shoulder and the boy “imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic....It murmured; and I understood that it desired to confess something.”(p. 2) this passage reveals Father's Flynn's spiritual isolation and soon he is found alone "Wide-awake and laughing-like to himself”(p. 7) in the confession box. In the same level, but in a different layer Gabriel is in a crowded place, yet he is alone trying to figure out the past events and he thinks over the coming ones. Soon he longs to be elsewhere rather than being there and with his “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, first along by the river and then through the park! (p. 122).

These characters need a faith in their life in order to go on and to fill the empty cup of the spiritual sensation.

### 2.4.1.4. Religion

Religion is omni-present in Dubliners, yet the religious people who are supposed to be pious, they instead do awful things and they consequently suffer from their individual choices.

The three words in “The Sisters” which are written in italics are the seeds of the paralytic spiritual Dublin of the twentieth century life and the power of these three words has a great spiritual effect on the Dubliners. The very sound of the world

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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paralysis casts a morbid fear on the boy as he “Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism” (p. 1).

The paralysis is “the inability of physical movement, but it is also a spiritual, social, cultural, political, and historical malaise” (Bulson 2006, p. 36) i.e. it does refer to the inability to function correctly and in Dublin’s context, it suggests the Dubliners who are naturally paralyzed and they are living a paralyzed city. Whereas the Gnomon is “the stylus of a sundial that marks off time with shade and the remainder of a parallelogram after a similar parallelogram containing one of its corners has been removed, but it can also be stretched to refer to the missing detail of a story (of which I will say more)” (idem).

In other words the gnomon denotes the missing parts of the Dubliners’ life which is incomplete. While the third word; Simony speaks about a sin of selling spiritual things for temporal one in this way it is both “the selling of material goods for spiritual benefit, but it is also the vulgarization of religion, romance, and the intellect” (idem) and it is “the crime consisting of a trade of holy or spiritual things” (Salvagno 2012-2013, p. 3).

While the second story deals with the Catholic Church from another angle through which James Joyce believes that “the real sovereign of Ireland [was ] the pope”( cited in Taglieri 1996, p. 6).In the dead Julia Morkans expresses her indignation about the pope who has decided “ to turn out the women out of the choirs “(p. 123).Such decision is unfair on the behalf of females who have singing voices. In “The Sisters” the one can see that though Father Flynn is a priest, he fails in his religious duties and he presents the real state of Irish Church. Clearly enough, Father Flynn symbolizes the paralyzed Catholic Church and its drawbacks on the individuals, especially children. Yet the old priest teaches the boy great deal of things.

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, asking me what one should do in certain circumstances or whether such and such sins were mortal or venial or only imperfections. His questions showed me how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church which I had always regarded as the simplest acts (p. 3).

The priest wants the boy to be just like him .The boy learns so far about catechism and the world of religion.

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; and I was not surprised when he told me that the fathers of the Church had written books as thick as the Post Office Directory and as closely printed as the law notices in the newspaper, elucidating all these intricate questions. Often when I thought of this I could make no answer or only a very foolish and halting one upon which he used to smile and nod his head twice or thrice (idem).

But the priest influences the boy’s way of thinking and faith and he encourages the boy to learn by heart as the religious man” had made me learn by heart. Consequently, this little creature believes that has committed simony, causing the unnamed boy repeating everything the world paralysis. In addition to that, religion has consequences even on the priests themselves .For instance in the case of Father Flynn “the duties of the priesthood was too much for him. And then his life was, you might say, crossed.”(p. 6).

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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Soon enough, though there is no exact explanation of what has clearly happened to the priest and what really causes his mental disintegration, the reader knows about the priest from a second hand source and his sister Eliza tells the aunt and the unnamed boy that everything goes bad after her brother breaks the chalice. After this incident the priest has become “odd” ,though the broken chalice “contained nothing” .Significantly Father Flynn’s hold of the chalice symbolizes “his insecure grasp on spirituality and his failure as a priest”(Taglieri 1996,p. 18) and consequently he “cannot offer communion and an empty chalice lies on his breast in death” (Beja 1973 ,p. 109 ).

The emptiness of the chalice does not enable the clergyman to fulfill the rituals of the Last Supper. In this essence, the void chalice symbolizes the hollowness of Catholicism as a failed institution. Though Eliza is acquainted with the Catholic rites, she offers her guests the sherry and the crackers which symbolize bread and wine. But the unnamed boy refuses to take some and he symbolically he refuses to be part of the ceremony of communion.

Using Joyce’s allusion, the Catholic Church is good-for-nothing and Father Flynn represents «”the corrupt features of Irish Catholicism,” turning spirituality into a burden and torture »(cited in Taglieri 1996, p. 18).In addition to that Paul Dubois believes that “ the true cause of the increase in mental disease is Roman Catholicism”(cited in Lowe-Evans 1989,p. 40).

There is a kind of contrast between the religious men of the west of Ireland and Dublin, where brotherhood and the consideration of the other in “Mount Melleray ...How hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny-piece from their guests” (p. 127). In this place “most people give some donation to the monastery when they leave” (p. 128) says Mary Jane. ”I wish we had an institution like that I our church “says MR. Browne.

The sickness of the spiritual matters affects the social norms and provides an incurable disease in society. This latter becomes helpless and disorientated from its path.

### 2.4.2. Social Paralysis

Irish society suffers from swelling vices which are deeply rooted in the Irish subconscious. Finally they become part of their daily life and no one questions them or dare to point them. Until James Joyce chooses to speak about those vile customs and dares implicitly allude to them.

The Irish society is «weakened by centuries of useless struggle and broken treaties “where “individual initiative is paralyzed» (cited in Taglieri 1996, p. 7) and the whole rain of problems pelts heavily on the individuals.

#### 2.4.2.1. Drinking

In the first story, Father Flynn is a priest who should only care about religious affairs, yet apparently he has a great knowledge about distillery and who would speak over and over again about wine.

Old cotter is talking about the priest and says that he “soon grew tired of him and his endless stories about the distillery. In this sentence there is the very first implicit hint to drinking with a strong link with Catholicism, whereas in the second story there is an explicit link between the two. For instance Mr. Brown who “is from the other persuasion”(p. 124) ;a catholic person through the whole Morkans party drinks a lots and he “filled out of himself a goodly measure of whisky”(p. 116). While doing so he sees that two men are gazing at him, he says “it’s the doctor’s orders”(idem). Soon once again he “poured for himself a glass of whisky (p. 117) and he gives his audience in the party an excuse by telling them that “ when we are thirsty we are also quarrelsome “(p. 124) .

The second character who is the true embodiment of drunkard is called Freddy Mallins who is a young man whom " his poor mother made him take the pledge on New Year's Eve”(p. 117) . Yet as every year he does not fulfil his pledge and each year he drinks a lot. He is invited to the Christmas party, but the Morkans are afraid of him as he “might turn up screwd... under the influence... sometimes very hard to manage him” (p. 111). Far advanced in the party Freddy becomes an *ivre-mort* who

is unable neither to walk and Gabriel”piloting Freddy Malins across the landing” (p. 117) or to speak correctly in a convenient way.

This social symptom can generate other incurable inflictions that threaten the future of Irish society and decrease the faith of building a family or even for thinking over marrying. In other words it increases the spirit of caring about life from its dark side which by hook encourages remaining single.

### 2.4.2.2. Marriage

The pillar of societies is marriage and yet apparently Irish society does not pay attention to this issue. In the modern era, marriage rates are low and rarely people do marry. For example the two sisters; Eliza and Nannie in “The Sisters” are single women who are living with their brother who has just died. These two sisters have not think over marrying and building a family, they just care about their brother whom Eliza says about him that “he was no great trouble to us. You wouldn't hear him in the house any more than now. Still, I know he's gone and all to that....” (p. 5).

Though the party is overwhelmed with couples, there are no married couples in the true sense except the Conroys or Mrs Mallins’ daughter who “lived with her married daughter in Glasgow”(p. 121) .Lily is a young girl, she has no room for the other sex and she has a total bad image about ”the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you “(p. 112).The next character is called Freddy who is “a young man about forty”(p.117).He cares about nothing but drinking and having fun and the idea of marriage does not cross his mind.

The problem of marriage in this country is due to historical events which have forced the people to remain single. One of these events is known as the Great Famine which encourages stagnation and fuels the spirit of living-dead. Kennedy views that “the patterns of late marriage and celibacy have been maintained in Ireland, not for religious reasons ... but for economic ones “(cited in Lowe-Evans 1989, p. 9).



## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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The birth control is an outcome of this calamity and it has participated in the dissolution of the Irish Family.

Gabriel’s aunts are grown enough, yet they are not married and in the story there is reference to them as being married. The two aunts are

two ....old women. Aunt Julia was an inch or so the taller. Her hair....was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face. Though she was stout in build and stood erect, her slow eyes and parted lips gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going. Aunt Kate was more vivacious. Her face, healthier than her sister's, was all puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, and her hair, braided in the same old-fashioned way, had not lost its ripe nut colour. (p. 113)

This absence of marriage from the course of life is due to extroverted problems which determine the way of living and shape the norms of urban modern societies.

### 2.4.2.3. Poverty and Materialism

By the turn of the century social circumstances in Northern Ireland were tough due to historical events, such as Irish potato famine and the British rough ruling of that area are two main factors. The Irish are “economically paralyzing “(Lowe-Eavans 1989, p. 34) .This has given the birth of conflicting ideologies which mark the Irish society.

The first episode of Dubliners gives some hints about poverty, when Eliza says "God knows we done all we could, as poor as we are” (p. 5).While in the final episode focuses on the materialistic world which neglects caring, altruism and helping the other. Gabriel is the embodiment of the Irish materialistic modern man who does neglect everything but the material world. This world is governed by money and dehumanization. This character does a mistake to Lily and instead of trying to mend the situation by clearing the clumsy things of that awkward moment,

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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he thinks that money can fix everything and buy which he tries to buy acceptance .In deed he goes too far while he ”took a coin rapidly from his pocket” (p. 113) and buries is into Lily’s palm.

Despite the fact that Gabriel is teacher he also “wrote a literary column every Wednesday in The Daily Express, for which he was paid fifteen shillings” (p. 119).His life is dedicated and shaped under the patronage of materialism and money greediness. He becomes slave of money as his pocket is full of money, but his soul is poor and all his speech is about ephemeral matters of life. This awkward hero of the night starts a conversation with his wife by talking about materialistic terms as tells her about Freddy Mallins who “gave me back that sovereign I lent him”(p. 138).

Soon when he knows about Gretta’s ex-boyfriend, he does not care about her feeling or what she is going through .To top it all Gabriel instead of asking her about who is he , he asks the question of “what was he”. When she tells him that he is a gas boy, a shroud of relief pauses on his soul and his curiosity is quenched by this term which convinces him that Michael Furey is not rich or at least he does not belong to Gabriel’s social class.

“The sisters” alludes to the materialistic life that boosts the thirst of the Irish society for hollowness and rigidity. This society does care about money and the readiness of give upping everything for ephemeral purposes. This story is about Simony which is the sin of selling something spiritual for economic purposes.

Though these characters are poor or rich, they do not have the key of the free life that it is full of change and innovation.

### **2.4.2.4. Monotonous Trapped Life**

Notwithstanding the priest is dead from the very beginning of the story, he still controls the life of the living ones. As an example, the boy and the two sisters are bound to the priest and their daily life turns around him, yielding to both a

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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monotonous routine and a trapped life-like in the cob-web of the priest that rule and dictate their life.

The boy uses to visit Father Flynn each day and soon it becomes a repeated habit which traps his daily life which has been transformed to a monotonous one.

Had he not been dead I would have gone into the little dark room behind the shop to find him sitting in his arm-chair by the fire, nearly smothered in his great-coat. Perhaps my aunt would have given me a packet of High Toast for him and this present would have roused him from his stupefied doze. (p. 3).

The two sisters are also trapped by the priest who has taken their time "God knows we done all we could, as poor as we are—we wouldn't see him want anything while he was in it."(p. 5).They could have a happy life ending with marriage, yet they choose to devote their life to their only brother without a shadow of complain.

In “The Dead “the whole characters are bound to the annual Christmas party which is held in the Morkans house. Gabriel says that:

it is not the first time that we have gathered together under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients- or perhaps, I had better say, the victims – of the hospitality of certain good ladies. (p. 129).

From Gabriel’s words the one can see that this annual party traps the guests’ life .In the speech, the spokesman regards the attending guests as “victims” of his aunts who share this anniversary with their beloved relatives and friends. There for these characters “are merely caught up in the seasonal routine. Although they gather together to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, which marks the visit of the Magi to the newly born Christ, there is a conspicuous absence of any religious rituals” (Bulson 2006, p. 44).

This circular mechanism that rules the Dubliners’ life suffocates the social consciousness which lies dormant in a deep hibernation.

## Chapter Two: Irish Society through “The Sisters” and “The Dead”

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Gabriel at threshold shares with the others a story of his late grandfather Patrick Morkan's horse, Jonny which has used to pull on the starch mill. The horse gets a habit to turn over the mill again over and over again, until one day the old man decides to go for a ride .Once the horse “came in sight of King Billy's statue: and whether he fell in love with the horse King Billy sits on or whether he thought he was back again in the mill, anyhow he began to walk round the statue." (p. 132).

Apparently this anecdote tells a story of an animal, yet deeply inside between the lines it carries a heavy meaning. The horse symbolizes the Dubliners who get used to specific things which by hook or crook become part of their life and the statue symbolizes Britain.

The horse has used to turn around the mill and when it is freed from this routine, Jonny comes across the statue and it cannot help it but turn around the statue. Within this deep meaning, the Dubliners cannot live or survive without the Mother Land who holds a tight grasp on their life. Going a step further the Irish people are like fish which are living in an aquarium and they are satisfied with this life. They do not take the risk of going out of the glass and when they are freed (the case of Jonny) they stick to something which is just like the one they are used to.

### **2.5. Conclusion**

“The Sisters” and “The Dead” are written with a symbolic language to fit in the needs of the modern age .Certain themes are baked within a literal mould that target the Irish society and maintain to point out the social vices .To do so, James Joyce chooses Naturalism, Modernism and the labyrinth of words to convey his heavy meanings which are hard to discover.

# **General Conclusion**

### General Conclusion

The wind of the modern age blew away the aroma of tranquillity and replaced it by a scent of gloomy problems that camped down over and shrouded the citizens of the modern world in general and on Dublin in particular. This change affected the writing which tried to portray the daily problems and tasks of life in prose and poems. It was the duty of authors to put these problems into the infinite sea of words.

To do so the writers chose an implicit mode of writing under the roof of Naturalism and Modernism to speak their minds. These two modern literary movements are considered as a turnabout in the history of literature in general and Irish literature in particular.

Northern Ireland was stumbling in the quagmire of modern age and this county needed an artist to draw a real picture of herself. For this reason writers tried to draw a posture of her; yet no one could fully do so until the “enfant terrible” of his time became a writer and dared to draw the real truth of Irish society.

James Joyce is among the eminent writers of the modern age with his style which is described in his own words as “scrupulous meaning” one and the stream of conscience. This quality enabled him first to have an idiosyncrasy and secondly to win an international reputation, especially with his work Dubliners. This latter gathers fifteen short stories which targets the vices of Irish society.

The first story and the last one of this collection are called “The Sisters” and “The Dead”. These latter are written in a particular way in order to point out the social problems that are exceeding the boundaries and threaten the stability as well as the future of Irish society .

Joyce endeavoured to shed light upon the dark swelling Irish social ills which are common in this place. He gave his readers a social mirror that permitted them seeing their ugly posture and showed them implicit ingredients of happy social life.

This writer insisted on the Dubliner's modern life, their way of living which is lifeless by the word of mouth and he mentions that the Irish people are not living at all, but they are just not dying. He shepherded his Irish readers their thinking over the missing pieces of their inner soul and he prescribed them a social remedy to cure out the contagious Irish sickness.

The Irish society had a vacuum space inside the rosy statue of Northern Ireland and nothing was doing its duty as it should be. Consequently many social problems sprung off nowhere in everywhere, where the Irish people found themselves in front of a gigantic hurricane which was ready to blow them away.

These social illnesses became something normal as the Irish society got used to; a habit which became a killing routine. Though it *vexed* them deeply inside, they did not complain or try at least think over the source of the vicissitude of their social life. For this reason, the creator of the collection tried to plant hope on the surface of the Irish people's heart and at the same time expected a change in his people's behaviour and showed his Irish society that there is hope for change if they work on themselves with an introverted look upon their way of life. Yet, the Irish people are not only suffering from the social obstacles, but they are also victims of political shackles that keep them prisoners of liberty.

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