

*Article history: Received 2 April 2017 Accepted 13 April 2017*

*Article Language: English*

## An Attempt to Survive from Paralysis: Epiphanies in Dubliners

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### Abstract

*Amid the complexity of concern of the modernist literary discourse in Britain, the thematic nucleus of James Joyce's writings is formed by certain basic aspects of life, such as individuality, art, religion, nation, language, and his work shows the two hypostases of the author himself as accomplished artist and Irish citizen. In a troubled period in the history of Europe and of his own country, Joyce grasped the sense and the atmosphere of frustration, alienation, futility, chaos, and confusion. The concerns of Dubliners, his first important book, published in 1914, consist in rendering the political and social life of Dublin, the misery of human condition, the theme of exile, the problems of the individual's existence in an urban background which Joyce saw as paralyzed and, like Eliot, as an expression of a period of crisis in the history of humanity. Joyce intended "to write a chapter of the moral history" of his country, and he chose Dublin as it seemed to him "the centre of paralysis" on different levels which he presented under four aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. All the fifteen stories of the book express life experiences of the characters that are of unpretentious standing, incapable to fulfil inner potentialities and to establish communication with others. At moments they experience relevant epiphanic realisations, seemingly due to some trivial incidents – by which they receive an apparent perspective of accomplishment – and though they attempt to escape the bonds of everyday life and of their trapping circle of existence, all they get is an acute sense of frustration, alienation, and entrapment. To reveal and compare the thematic status of the epiphany in the short stories with regard to various issues of individual existence and to the use of motifs and symbols that create an increasing complexity of ideas and subjective human reactions represents the main purpose and the essence of the content of the present study.*

**Keywords:** modernism; James Joyce; Dubliners; epiphany; entrapment; frustration; alienation; loneliness; paralysis.

### Introduction

Modernism and in particular modernist literature of the first half of the twentieth century represent the late modern experimental and innovative art, and hence the designation of modernism as self-reflection and late modern self-criticism of modernity, or "modernity as an aesthetic concept" (as Matei Calinescu puts it in *Five Faces of Modernity*), that is, the aesthetic modernity. And hence also the contemporary differentiation between the terms modernity

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(modern), modernism (modernist), postmodernity (postmodern), and postmodernism (postmodernist), where the philosophical and sociological contrast between modernity and postmodernity is paralleled by the literary contrast between modernism and postmodernism. As modernism criticises rationalism, reason, realism, tradition, morality, normativeness, prescriptiveness, order, and coherence, some aspects of modernism reappear in postmodern writing which continues the modernist critique and thus often presents itself as “a radicalized modernism and a renewed attack on modernity” (Zima, 2010: 131), and which starts from the late nineteenth century and is inspired by Kierkegaard’s, Nietzsche’s, and Heidegger’s subversion of metaphysics, subject, conceptualization, and truth, as well as by Marx’s critiques of society, or Pater’s promotion of aesthetic hedonism, among others. However, the postmodern literature also rejects the “metaphysical residues of modernity in modernism” (Zima, 2010: 132), namely the modernist notions of truth, form, utopia, autonomy of the individual and of the art, the subject, authorship, the authority of some previous canonical works (to mention just Joyce’s fascination with Homer’s *Ulysses*), and the search for (1) stronger values in a period of crisis in the history of humanity, and (2) new thematic concerns (other than social and moral) and means of artistic expression (other than chronological narration, omniscient point of view, and so on).

Coexisting in the first half of the twentieth century with realism – a trend continuing the Victorian tradition as the art of verisimilitude and implicit simile (for Northrop Frye) – modernism represents a period as well as an umbrella term to name a number of trends and movements which are different, even contradictory, but unified by the rejection of tradition and rules; expression of the innovative, original, experimental spirit; search for new methods of expression to make the text difficult and disturbing, eventually “writerly” (as for Barthes); the concern with remote past, myths and archetype instead of actual period; search for stronger values and grounds, while revealing a challenge to the modern reliance on reason, mind, science, the possibility of truthful representation of reality, the relationship between mind and nature, mind and world; expression of the contemporary sense of urban and cosmopolitan dislocation; and, on the whole, reflection of the contemporary period of crisis and a sense of cultural dead-end on various levels such as social, religious, national, cultural, and above all that of individual experience which is rendered through frustration and alienation as the main features of the modernist character.

Rejecting realism, positivism, tradition, norms, conventional techniques, observable aspects of experience and behaviour, objective reality, social and moral issues, modernism continues symbolism, aestheticism, impressionism, and other avant-garde trends, but also rely on and apply various contemporary developments in social and natural sciences, and in psychology, anthropology, and philosophy, including the ideas and theories by Freud, Jung, Husserl, William James, and others. A real modernist writer would achieve innovation



on both thematic and structural levels by combining original thematic perspectives (such as subconscious or the abstract manifestations of the mind) with original techniques (for instance, stream of consciousness).

The stream of consciousness novel is to the present viewed as the main manifestation of modernism in English literature, but apart from the stream of consciousness technique, there are other devices, methods, strategies, and figures of speech, interrelated or not with stream of consciousness, that make modernism stylistically heterogeneous. Among them, the form of interior monologue and that of the free indirect discourse, the principle of free association, authorial withdrawal, non-linear narration, self-reflexiveness, polyphonism, agnostic narrator, various lingual puns, metaphor and simile, symbol, parody, irony, allusion, polysemy, ambiguity, paradox, parataxis, estrangement, essayism and journalism, collage and montage. The last two are linked to a fragmentary vision of the world, to the fragmentariness of thematic and narrative organization (resulting in multiple voices and co-existence of different perspectives), and especially to the fragmentariness of the self to reveal the demise of the integrated individual subject.

Among these and other figures and devices, of primary importance in the modernist text is the thematic element of epiphany which – just like other figures of speech and new means of literary expression – is employed to represent the main theme – the character’s consciousness and inner experience (psychological, emotional, sensual) instead of objective reality – and to show the futility of existence, the lack of values in a barren and almost absurd world, the existential crisis, the historical dead-end, and, above all, the frustration and alienation of the individual.

### **Epiphany Within and Beyond Literary Practice**

The term “epiphany” comes from the word “epiphaneia” in Greek mythology meaning “appearing” or “appearance” about gods: epiphany “is used usually with reference to the gods, pertaining to their miracles, their accession to Mount Olympus to be with the Greek pantheon, or to their return to earth” (Hays, Duvall, Pate, 2007: 60). Epiphany suggests a phenomenon that emphasizes the reification of a hidden sacred meaning which “can be either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power by which its presence is made known” (Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 1956: 630). As used in the New Testament, “epiphaneia” refers to Christ’s second coming to earth, a second coming, “epiphaneia”, which will be the destruction for the lawless ones; there is also an exception to the meaning (2 Timothy 1:10) in that “epiphaneia describes the first coming of Christ, whose death and resurrection have made more clear the reality of the immortality of the Christian” (Hays, Duvall, Pate, 2007: 50). In Christian tradition, the feast following the twelfth day after Christmas (January the sixth) is also called as “Epiphany”. It is the celebration of the revelation of Christ’s divinity to the Magi (wise men), and the same day signifies another event when St John the Baptist baptized Jesus.

Apart from its theological implications, the mostly widespread meaning of epiphany refers to a moment when a person lives through a realization or revelation in which he or she understands his or her condition. Epiphany as a sudden revelation of the truth about the self is a moment of inner comprehension which should strengthen or change the outlook or the philosophy of life of the person experiencing it.

In literature, although epiphany is generally considered to have been used firstly by modernist writers, as by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, and others, its first instances of textualization go back to romanticism, as in Wordsworth's "spots of time". Barfoot defines epiphany in three "senses" which are the same in essence: the first one is that of "ecclesiastical provenance", which is directly related to divinity; the second one is James Joyce's use of epiphany in "discovering a universal truth in ordinary" as an important discovery; and the third one is to find something that is likened to an epiphanic realization, "alight on the sense of an experience" (Barfoot, 1999: 61). Romantic poets might be in the third sense in that they, especially through nature, attempted to find the essence of living which would provide experiences and realizations for personal growth and development as authors possessing aesthetic individuality.

In the nineteenth century, promoting and advocating the principles of aestheticism with regard to the process of artistic reception and comprehension based on individual response through and by means of personal impressions, Walter Pater, in "Conclusion" to *Renaissance*, indicates a moment in which

While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the sense, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. (...) Great passions may give us a quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which comes naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion – that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

Joyce likewise discusses the experience of epiphany in the context of the individual process of artistic reception through the voice of his protagonist Stephen Dedalus and materializes it in his literary practice in novels as well as in all the fifteen short stories from the volume of *Dubliners*. It can be said that in Joyce, epiphany has become not only a thematic feature or element but also the structuring principle in every of his works, in particular in every story of the *Dubliners*.

Through Stephen Dedalus, in particular, Joyce expresses his personal theory on art, his own ideas on the role of the artist, the form of the work of art, and the reaction of the audience to the work. Joyce disregards the notion of genre,



talking about three conditions of art – lyrical, epical, and dramatic – based on the principle of the distance between the creator and the product of his artistic efforts.

Concerning the reception of art, the apprehension of the aesthetic image, as a psychological act, implies a movement from cognition to recognition and then to satisfaction: this moment of artistic apprehension is called “epiphany”. The stages leading to an epiphany correspond to the three main conditions of beauty by Thomas d’Aquinas, namely *integritas* (wholeness): the apprehension of object in time and place, perceiving its integrity and wholeness; *consonantia* (harmony): the object is analysed in its constituent parts, the rhythm and symmetry of its structure are grasped in a harmonious unity; and *claritas* (radiance): the essential nature of the object is apprehended, also its identity, that is, the object is epiphanized. This moment is a state of delight, spiritual rapture, “enchantment of the heart”.

In *Stephen Hero*, the definition is given: “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech [the dramatic epiphany] or in a memorable phase of the mind itself [the lyrical epiphany]. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments.”

As literalized by Joyce in his work, there are minor and major epiphanies; the major one appears at the end of the chapter where the hero’s realization of some essential truth about himself, about his destiny and the background, takes place; the minor epiphanies illuminate all the stages of the protagonist’s understanding. For example, in the part “Proteus” from *Ulysses*, Stephen consciousness renders his major epiphany as a moment of realization of his loneliness and of the need of relationship: “*Touch me. Soft eyes. Soft soft soft hand. I am lonely here. O, touch me soon, now. What is that word known to all men? I am quiet here alone. Sad too. Touch, touch me.*”

### **Epiphany Disclosing the Condition of the Modern Man in *Dubliners***

The term “epiphany” that was originally connected to the manifestation of Christ to the magi means now a concentrating state of intense revelation and illumination, deep understanding with important symbolical implications. In literature, epiphany is used to express the character’s awareness of himself or herself, as Joyce also does, and especially with regard to the *Dubliners*, the critical tradition focuses mainly on the ways in which epiphany is reflected in the stories, as well as on the traditional and experimental elements in the stories to argue that particularly on the narrative level the short stories disclose features of the traditional fiction, whereas on the thematic level they already reveal important features of Joyce’s later experimental writings.

First and foremost, Joyce focuses on the individual psychological experience of the character, his or her inwardness, where epiphany is a kind of discovery for which a journey to the inner world is required, even if in *Dubliners* there is no hint that there is a significant change in the life of the characters, and

epiphany remains a manifestation that is “out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it” (Beja, 1971: 18). Joyce handles epiphany aesthetically, in a secular way by leaving aside its divine connotation.

In Joyce, epiphany rendering human condition in the late modern period is at best revealed within this period’s urban context of crisis and decay. The chronotope of the city in *Dubliners* as conceived by James Joyce reveals a spatial and a temporal dimension characterized by paralysis and devaluation, a background inhabited by subjects, not individuals, unable to establish relations, and, therefore, unable to rise above their pathetic condition. In this case, Joyce’s characters from the stories truly represent modern frustrated and alienated beings. In this respect, epiphany is employed as both a thematic and structural device aimed at offering to the characters the possibility to understand their condition and, above all, to decide on whether change it or not.

In the fifteen stories, Joyce deals with family, national and religious issues, presenting characters as real as in everyday life, and a city of Dublin where paralysis and stagnation run rampant. Ordinary people in an ordinary city experience ordinary situations that are touchstones for them. The reason why Joyce chooses Dublin as the setting is “his intention to write a chapter of the moral history of his country” and he aims to “present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life” (Stuart, Ellmann, Gilbert, 1966: 134).

Portraying epiphany realities in ordinary Dublin life, the uniqueness of James Joyce’s *Dubliners* results from ordinariness. The epiphanies that are used in *Dubliners* are quite vivid for the grounds that they are from everyday life, which makes his epiphanies very similar due to the fact that personal experience of realization comes from the ordinary life, making his characters alive let alone credible; in this respect, Joyce’s characters are panoramic and exponential.

The volume of *Dubliners* is divided into four parts as Joyce himself stated them: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. Although these phases follow each other, it is not the case for the geography of Dublin. The overlap of the movement of characters and the public places that the characters visit, such as church, shops, restaurants, and pubs, reflects the “moments of transition” of Dublin (Bulson in Rabaté, 2004: 55), and the transition of the city intermingles with the transition of moral and national issues.

In some stories the transition of an issue of place is prevalent, whereas in others, “twoness or doubling” is seen, including “the doubles of the absent father, such as the two expected candles in *The Sisters*; the doubled characters of *Two Gallants* and *Counterparts*; the double meanings that pervade the whole ensemble” (Ellmann, 2010: 104).

As far as character representation strategies are concerned, the characters in *Dubliners* are kneaded not only with their intellectual aspects but also with their moral aspects. This means that Joyce’s panoramic characters are not portrayed unilaterally; however, with regard to the moment of revelation, the intellectual



aspect of his characters comes into prominence, and with intellectual completion, the divine aspect of epiphany becomes secular through self-revelation and the deep insight into characters. Through self-realization and insight into individual psychology the term acquires “secular revelation of selfhood” (Hart, 2007: 345), and the characters in *Dubliners* as ordinary people try to escape from triviality of their lives by the help of epiphanies. Their trivial, ordinary lives become momentous through epiphanic moments.

When the epiphanies in *Dubliners* are taken into consideration from the point of view of the reader, it is evident that readers collaborate with the character during this special moment, which becomes a type of integrated experience. In some stories, Joyce leaves the reader alone during the epiphanic moment, which turns into the revelation for the reader as well. When protagonist or reader, or both realize(s) the “moment of truth”, it leads to an anti-climax (Lodge, 1992), and the use of epiphany may weaken the dynamism of the texts (Belge, 1994). In some stories, we witness the descent of certain characters or the devaluation of values to such an extent that the loss of dynamism equals to the stagnation of Dublin. The moments which result in the loss of dynamism, however, provides epiphanic experiences to Joyce’s characters. That is to say, when movement disappears, a revelation of intellectual or emotional aspect occurs, and in this case, epiphany emerges rather as a structural than thematic device enabling to indicate climax and providing flashbacks to the past events, a device which helps integrate or complete the gaps. On the thematic level, Joyce’s stories are symptomatic, and his “epiphanies” are therefore not so much manifestations of the spirit of redemption in mundane and trivial situations as they are occasions for a momentary acknowledgement of the very pathos of mundaneness and triviality.

### **Practical Argumentation**

In the first story, *The Sisters*, from the very beginning, a motionless state prevails, a state which has been caused by the paralysis and which may be linked to the motionless of the city of Dublin where characters move forward to their destinies (Torchiana, 1987). Joyce employs senses to achieve a better comprehension of his characters: for instance, Nannie offers wine and after wine is tasted, it satisfies gustatory perception; with “the heavy odour in the room”, the smell of flowers satisfies olfaction; touching the ground, it satisfies tactile, and hearing stories and dialogues satisfies another sense, audibility. The employment of the senses is important since Joyce presents these senses as paralysed. Concerning the little boy, the perception of death by him is conceived only by seeing, through visibility. Although other senses are also frequently used, the full comprehension of by him truth comes from visual sense. Different from other stories in *Dubliners*, the epiphanic moment in *The Sisters* seems to be a collection of moments rather than just one moment, and “liberation comes clerical and social domination into intellectual detachment” (Beck, 1969: 117). The paralysis in this story is not only confined to Father

Flynn's condition. Apart from motionlessness, it also suggests intangibility and obliteration of senses, especially of the audible one. Regarding the type of epiphany, it is private and the boy tries to comprehend what dearth is.

In other stories from *Dubliners*, paralysis is also often pervasive through the senses. In the second story, *An Encounter*, which is about childhood, Joyce's little boy in the *The Sisters* goes to school now. The perceptions of the boy seem to have changed a lot. Although he is only receptive and refrains from speaking in *The Sisters*, he is involved in conversations in *An Encounter*. The story is narrated by the student, Mahony, and with Leo Dillion they want to escape from the ordinariness of life and they plan to go to the Pigeon House, "formerly a fort, now the Dublin electricity and power station, located on a breakwater that projects out into Dublin Bay as a continuation of the south bank of the Liffey" (Gifford, 1967: 36). This encounter, which gives the title to the story, leads to a revelation for the narrator, the boy. Revelation comes from this moment as he is active now by making fake names to trick the old man. After calling Mahony as Murphy, he feels a sudden revelation. In the story, the aspects of paralysis are frustration, isolation, and failure to communicate, which lead to a private epiphany. The protagonist feels the inescapability. The epiphanic moment is blurred with the guilt, as the guilty feeling towards Mahony results in sudden spiritual manifestation, a memorable phase of the mind.

*Araby* is an "introspective" story with "unnamed" narrator, as in the case of the first two stories (Fagnoli and Gillespie, 1995). The story begins with a description of the street given by the boy. He uses the word "blind" two times in the first paragraph and in the next paragraph, he speaks of a dead priest, who reminds of the dead father Flynn in *The Sisters*. "Blind" is also used in the first paragraph of *The Sisters*. "Blind" also makes the reader consider the existence of the paralysis. In *Araby*, the protagonist reads "The Abbot", "The Devout Communicant", and "The Memoirs of Vidocq". When compared to the previous two stories, we clearly see the intellectual development of Joyce's characters. The boy is doubtlessly older now and is interfering in love affairs. While the boy is only a listener in the first story, in the second one the boy is involved in dialogues at the end the story, now he slips out of a situation, which means that he is extroverted; in a sense, in the childhood phase, Joyce's character struggles for the first time. The darkness of the most part of the hall in the bazaar sets a parallelism with the hope inside him as it is dim but not lost. However, soon he hears a voice saying that the light will be out. He finds himself in sheer darkness which symbolizes his hope that he has lost. With these sentences the epiphany emerges in his inner world: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger". He realizes his position against external world and he deeply feels helplessness against the dynamism of life. His eyes establish a sharp contrast with his situation in darkness. His inner, deep frustration leads to his revelation of the external status and his standing in this world. The





protagonist feels nonfulfillment and frustration, and with his private epiphanization, he comprehends inevitability.

Joyce steps into the adolescence phase in *Eveline*. Eveline is the narrator, who has lost her mother and is now responsible for all the household and working in stores. Along with these duties, the lack of communication with her father and change in his attitudes towards her expose that her life is burdened with hardships. Joyce here again draws a portrait of Dublin from a perspective that women are entrapped and they have almost no voice, but a deep desire to escape. The dust is like a coverlet wrapped everywhere, every memory, it is too overwhelming, and therefore the only way is to escape: she thinks that going far away would rub down all the dust that embedded her life; she is desperate to find a solution that would save her from this stifling atmosphere. For her, Frank seems to be saviour. He wants to take Eveline to Buenos Ayres, and to provide her with a life that she is lacking. It is clear that the aim is to escape and Frank seems to be only a mediator: “the issue of how free Eveline is to leave home is a textual manoeuvre. Awareness of such manoeuvres draws the reader away from an immediate involvement in Eveline’s dilemma” (Luft, 2009: 48). However, till the end of the story the Eveline’s dilemma is inevitable, and her dilemma deepens by the remembrance of her mother through a street organ. The heroine’s epiphanic moment intermingles with her physical and emotional paralysis, which prevents her from getting on the boat. The paralysis now captures her body after it has done so with her thoughts. She cannot go, as if she has been struck, and the motionlessness leads to her frustration. With her private epiphanic moment, she understands the inescapability. The epiphany in *Eveline* differs from other stories in that it does not hold “transformative” and “restorative potential”, but rather it is “inefficacious” or “catastrophic” (Khan, 2013). Although Eveline’s paralysis keeps her from setting out her long journey, it allows her the possibility to perform an inner journey to her own self.

In *After the Race*, the main concern is alienation and loneliness that the modern man lives through. Man is so entrapped in the triviality of the day that he cannot realize his condition. Unlike in other stories, Joyce expresses epiphany in this story by using time itself, so the importance of the moment is realized by rendering the moment as universal. Joyce’s epiphanies are for everybody, promoting a sudden realization of a truth. In *After The Race*, we have portraits of afflicted persons with class distinction and national issues. Triviality, alienation, and powerlessness are their common characteristics, and they are also portraits of people losing their memories.

James Joyce once stated that *Two Gallants* is among his most favourite stories. Although his publisher wanted him to omit it from the volume, Joyce resisted at the risk of thwarting the publication of the book. The events in the story, like in many stories in the book, take place in darkness, from evening to night. As in other stories, the characters are left in the darkness, and they are again ordinary Dubliners. The title is then used ironically with regard to the main characters, Lenehan and Corley, that are stuck into narrowness not only

in vicinity but also in their thoughts. Lenehan admires Corley for his craft in chatting up with girls, and in the story Corley seems to be dominant, where “Corley moves from being Lenehan’s puppet to becoming his messiah” (Leonard, 1993: 125). The story reveals “futility”, “insensitivity”, “hypocrisy”, and “bitterness” (Fargnoli and Gillespie, 2006: 56), and apart from these themes, another important one in the story is betrayal. When Joyce himself left Dublin, it might have been seen by many of his contemporaries as betrayal, and his staying in Trieste and other cities only further aggravates this feeling let alone alleviate (Litz, 1996), and the feeling of betrayal receives its thematic representation in the story. It seems also that Joyce’s selection of the title along with the inner world of the characters exhibit his frustration. Ellmann argues that Joyce’s stories mostly represent “distinction between victim and victimizer”, names slavery as an “obvious victim”, and concludes that “in Dublin the exploited exploit each other in a world reduced to debt and doubt” (Ellmann, 2010: 112). Victims and victimizers are intertwined in *Dubliners* as victimizers become victims in other standpoints. Although the young slave in *Two Gallants* seems to exploit Corley, she is at the same time exploited by him. Using universal themes and his ordinary Dubliners to burden universal issues, Joyce renders the epiphanic moment in the story to signify the loss of human values which results from betrayal, triviality, alienation, failure to establish relationships, and the loss of moral values. Although the reader is driven as “two gallants” are focused on the relation between the slave and Corley, it is clear that their main concern is to benefit from the slavery. Bulson draws attention to the circle of the coin: “the coin is also a circle that many readers have seen as a symbol of Irish paralysis and self-betrayal. “Two-Gallants” is a story filled with such circles. The solitary Lenehan walks in circles around Dublin” (Bulson, 2006: 43-44).

*The Boarding House*, the last story about adolescence, portrays how Polly’s life is led and determined by her mother Mrs. Mooney. When *Eveline* and *The Boarding House* are compared, Eveline, despite being with her father, seems to be cast away and is somehow alone, whereas Polly is accompanied by her mother who spins her future. Joyce portrays here, and, in a sense, compares the roles of men and women. While Eveline seems to be lost, Mrs. Mooney determines her daughter’s future, and unlike Eveline’s father, Polly’s mother predestines her future. Mrs. Mooney realizes that Polly flirts with Mr. Doran, whom she thinks as a suitor for her daughter despite age and educational differences. Mrs. Mooney views their affair as spiritless and emotionless, and she compares it to meat. As feelings have turned into a lifeless meat, cleaver is now at work. Her dealing with the affair resembles a butcher dealing with meat using cleaver. From Joyce’s use of cleaver emerges the image of Dublin that lost its soul. As for the epiphanic moment, Mr. Doran’s realization regards his entrapment by the conventions of the society. When Mr. Doran and Polly realize their situation, it is too late for them to escape the swirl of moral issues. Mr. Doran is entrapped within the range of the values of society, and his



dimmed glasses point to a paralysis of the visible, which prevents him to see the consequences.

*A Little Cloud* is the first story on maturity in Little Chandler as protagonist, questioning his decision about choosing his wife, is thirty-two. As he is trapped in Dublin, he wonders about the outside of his circle, yet in order to comfort himself, he is obsessed with the belief that the other places are immoral. Although Little Chandler is very inquisitive about lands where he has never been to, he is stuck in this existential cycle. He likes poetry, but his “shyness had always held him back” when he intended to read poems to his wife. It shows the paralysis of voice as he never reads poems aloud. He regrets his choice of marrying Annie, and is allured with the notion of escaping. Other characters in *Dubliners* also want to escape from the constraints of their situation, but the case of Little Chandler is more profound in its existential perspectives regarding self-revelation. The moment in which Little Chandler realizes that he cannot change his life results in a private epiphany. He cannot speak although he wants to, which signifies the paralysis of voice. The tears coming from his eyes represent the solid and bitter evidence of his understanding of a truth which cannot be changed.

The second story on maturity, *Counterparts*, portrays a man, Farrington, who is not even called as a “Mr.” at his workplace where he is a clerk copier. Farrington is a lower middle class man, whom the reader observes at work, in pubs, and finally at home, and understands his failure in his both social and family life. Using again the motif of darkness that expands and fills out everything and swallows any kind of hope, Joyce creates a setting for the epiphanic moment to occur for Farrington while he is waiting for the tram. The protagonist deeply realizes his frustration: an unsuccessful career, trivial friends, and no attempts to change his life result in a sense of frustration which captures him altogether. His revelation is the acceptance of the truth about his life, and he lacks the ambition of doing something in order to change it. Joyce also shows how the oppression in social life results in a similar one in private life by representing a chain of victims, where a victim finds another victim for abuse: Farrington is a victim for Mr. Alleyne, his boss, and Tom, his son, is a victim for Farrington.

*Clay* is the third story about maturity and whose protagonist is an elderly maid, Maria, who gives the impression that she is happy and who can be defined as “the pathos of a blameless human inadequacy to surmount natural limitation” (Beck, 1969: 201). The story begins towards evening and continues the next morning. Joyce rarely uses morning as the setting in his stories, since the daylight may suggest hope, and like other entrapped characters she is in darkness until she has a revelation. In the story, Maria touches clay, which results in silence and this her unintentional selection stands for death: “Within this narrow cell reclines her clay (...). / That clay where once”. These lines are taken from Byron’s poem *On the Death of a Young Lady Cousin to the Author, and Very Dear to Him*. Joyce reinforces the meaning of clay as death; from another

perspective, when Maria touches the clay, she cannot comprehend it, which signifies the paralysis of the tactile. The realization of her situation prompts a revelation: upon loosing plumcake and choosing clay she is now hopeless, and the epiphanic moment is her comprehension of reality with its blatantly obviousness as well as of her lack of love.

*A Painful Case* is the last story on maturity, which is inspired by a real life experience of James Joyce's brother, Stanislaus Joyce. Mr. James Duffy is a cashier in a private bank on Beggot Street. From the beginning, it is obvious that he is a solitary person isolated from the rest of the world. His daily life is like a circle of routine events beginning at home and continuing at work, later at lunch, dinner, and again at home. We have the impression that Mr. Duffy's loneliness is a matter of personal choice rather than fate. Meeting Mrs. Sinico, Mr. Duffy breaks the circle by starting to see her, and, as an intellectual being, he shares his fund of knowledge with her. In this respect, of all the characters we have examined so far it can be said that he is the closest character to Little Chandler when their intellectual level is taken into consideration. Both Mr. Duffy and Little Chandler are fond of romantic poets. Little Chandler reads a poem by Lord Byron, Mr. Duffy has a book by William Wordsworth. Joyce also shows a parallelism between Wordsworth and Mr. Duffy as they have long walks. Unlike other characters in *Dubliners*, Mr. Duffy is aware of his existence and the self-assumed mode of existence, an ordinary life with no social networks. The origin of Mr. Duffy's epiphanic experience is the learning of Mrs. Sinico's tragic death when she, while "attempting to cross the line, was knocked down by the engine of the ten o'clock slow train". From disgust to a sense of guilt, from anger to pity, and finally to his being rejected in the park by a couple, Duffy "felt that he was alone", this last phrase in the story revealing the acceptance of a truth. This time the epiphany is the realization that people are all alone. Joyce expresses epiphanies through the experience of ordinary people, where the background of the character is rarely neglected. The epiphanies of his characters are ornamented with regard to their personal comprehension. In this story, Mr. Duffy has a revelation of the nature rather than a situation, and in his case the paralysis is a paralysis of senses, in particular of the audible, as he "cannot hear anything", and of emotions, since he cannot love or let anyone enter his life, where his epiphanization represents a process leading to the accumulation of knowledge: "Mr. Duffy is to go one more step, form an empty epiphany to a kind of paralysis" (Beck, 1969: 235).

*Ivy Day in the Committee Room* is the first of the four stories on public life and is among Joyce's favourite stories. The "Ivy Day" is the anniversary of the Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell, celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October when his retentive followers commemorate him by wearing ivy leaves. The action in the story takes place in a committee room where a campaign for election is held. It is a cold day and people working for the campaign gather in this room. Old Jack, complaining about his son, is presented as following Mr. O'Connor, who works for Richard J. Tierney. As a reminder of the importance of the day, Mr.



O'Connor and Mr. Hynes wear ivy leaves. In the story, Joyce focuses on family, national and religious issues of his period, and with regard to nationalism, the paralyzed city Dublin is now presented through the people gathered in the committee room to remember the day but who have forgotten about the importance of it. The epiphanic moment in the story is when the people in the committee room listen to Mr. Hynes' recitation. Joyce's use of epiphany differs from the previous stories in that the epiphany in this story as well as in the other stories on public life is a revelation for the public rather than for an individual person. It seems that the voice coming from Mr. Hynes' beer bottle accompanies the revelation of the essence of ivy, which is "symbolic of regeneration" (Gifford, 1967: 57).

The second story on public life, *A Mother*, is different from *Ivy Day in the Committee Room* in that it mostly focuses on one character and presents the delusion of the individual in the background. Although it is a story about public life, as Joyce himself stated it, the focal point is Mrs. Kearney, revealing Joyce's choice of mother as archetype, where Mrs. Kearney's attitude towards her daughter is protective, caring, and prudent until she loses her control. Mrs. Kearney, as Kathleen's mother, is represented as very dominant as well as very determinate from the beginning of the story: "when she drew near the limit and her friends began to loosen their tongues about her, she silenced them by marrying Mr. Kearney, who was a bootmaker on Ormond Quay". Lacking a "voice" to express his personality and standing in the world, Mr. Kearney has no even the right to choose, as he has been chosen by his wife and not having chosen her. He is much older than Mrs. Kearney who resembles Mrs. Mooney in *The Boarding House* since they are both trying to spin their daughters' fate. The last part of the story is a kind of revelation for the reader in its summarizing of the characters' traits: Mrs. Kearney is ordering, Miss Kearney consents "meekly", Mr. Kearney does what he is told. The most important epiphanic moment for Mrs. Kearney is when she has a revelation of defeat although she thinks that she has the aces. The epiphanic moment signifies actually her defeat. The decision is taken, and what Mrs. Kearney has done is not acceptable, which Mr. O'Madden Burke approves with his umbrella, "the moral umbrella" (Ellmann, 2010).

The third story on public life, *Grace*, deals with religious issues, one of Joyce's favourite subjects. The story is divided into three parts. In the first part, Tom Kernan is represented as a fallen man; the second part starts when his friends pay a visit to him and talk about religious subjects, and the third part shows them going to Jesuit Church for purification. The story begins with a pitiful incident in which a drunken subject, Mr. Kernan, falls in a lavatory. The character is presented in desperation, which continues until the end of the story, just like most characters represented in *Dubliners* are sunk into problems such as poverty or disillusionment. What Mr. Kernan wants while drinking is to forget. The attempts of the characters to forget by drinking do not meet their intent but rather worsen the situation. A quick look at his family shows the

helplessness which now passes to his children by his irresponsible behaviour. On the whole, the Dubliners are “economically beset, culturally restricted, liable to domestic discord, dependent on drink and masculine fellowship” (Beck, 1969: 277-278). Joyce shows the decline with its result which is ascent, where a person’s decline at work means ascent for another one. Also, when he falls in the lavatory, he bites his tongue, and the consequence is his verbal paralysis. In the second part, when Mr. Kernan’s friends pay him a visit at home, their conversation develops around religious matters. Mr. Kernan was a Protestant, but later he converted to be a Catholic. His friends’ words lead to a point that they planned, namely to bring him to Jesuit Church for purification. Mr. Kernan keeps quiet at first, then accepts the offer, where the Jesuit training is “rigorous and thoroughly intellectual” (Gifford, 1967: 69). Having persuaded Mr. Kernan, in the third part they are at the Church, where, unlike Father Flynn who is presented in paralysis in *The Sisters*, here Father Purdon is presented in power. Concerning the epiphanic moment, Mr. Kernan lives through it when the words by Father Purdon reach deeply his inwardness and determine his self-evaluation leading to self-realization.

The first part of the story when Mr. Kernan falls is “Inferno”; the second part when his friends pay a visit is “Purgatorio”; and the last part shown as purification is “Paradiso” (Fargnoli and Gillespie, 1995).

The last story of the book, *The Dead*, represents in the context of the volume the completion of the cycle. The first story in the volume starts with death; however, the little boy cannot name or perceive it. On the contrary, Gabriel, the protagonist of *The Dead*, knows and feels it. In *The Sisters*, Joyce shows the paralysis leading to death of Father Flynn and through all the other stories, paralysis is extended in thought and senses. *The Dead* is the longest and the most elaborated story whose main themes are paralysis, love, frustration, triviality, defeat, and entrapment. The doors to the dead are opened by Lily, who does household work for Julia and Kate Morkan, hosts of the party. The action of the story takes place at night, as in many other stories in *Dubliners*, but this time not only darkness marks the characters but also snow prevails with its harshness. Unlike the other stories in *Dubliners*, poverty is not rampant, and the characters are from upper class, just as the protagonist Gabriel Conroy is an educated man who teaches and writes literary reviews: “Gabriel is not a great artist but a less exceptional and only partially alienated figure” (Parrinder, 2005: 67). Critics share the opinion that he is Leopold Bloom from *Ulysses*. Upon his arrival, his dialogue with Lily meets with blush on his face, and he avoids answering or commenting on Lily’s claim that men are “palaver”. It is clear that his dialogues are mostly with women, he is not seen much talking to men. With regard to Joyce’s choice of the name, it is assumed that Joyce borrowed it from Bret Harte’s novel *Gabriel Conroy* (Gifford, 1967). At the end of the story, Gretta Conroy’s, Gabriel’s wife, dead lover is disclosed. Meanwhile, in the dance event, Joyce’s use of music is important in that if “we listen as well, we notice that the text includes more than acute perceptions of musical sounds; the narrator also



pointedly characterizes the tone of spoken words to indicate nuances of meaning (Avery in Scholes and Litz, 1969: 409). Also, the dominance and lasting effect of music result in both Gretta's and Gabriel's epiphanies. The conversations are ceased according to it and applauses are far from appreciating it. Also, throughout the story, Gabriel experiences the paralysis of the audible as he does not hear and appreciate the music.

Concerning the epiphanic experience, it is again a process starting from the moment of remembering the song to the end of the confession, representing what can be called as Gretta's epiphany. The story takes place just before January the 6<sup>th</sup>, the time of "Epiphany". Joyce reinforces his use of epiphany by intersecting the religious day of epiphany with the role of epiphany as a literary device. With regard to the protagonist's epiphany, it comes just after "generous" tears run from his eyes. The word "generous" is transcended from his wife's statement for him upon her learning that he has lent some money to Malins, and transcendence on the whole persists within the stories: "Gabriel is released from the fate of the boy in *The Sisters*, the original fate of the priest spelled out by three old women" (Torchiana, 1987: 252). After Gretta falls asleep, it is possible that epiphany transcends to Gabriel who also lives through a revelation. The movement of snow symbolizes his move from the hotel room to spiritual lands as "wanderings of a mind falling asleep", which resembles Ibsen's dramatic catastrophe (Parrinder, 2005: 67). Gabriel realizes the truth in the most delicate and evanescent of moments, which is that of epiphany, feeling that even dead, Michael Furey is much more important than he is to Gretta, and as Furey turns alive, he turns dead.

## Conclusion

Apart from stream of conscious technique and the form of interior monologue, epiphany is another element that makes Joyce unique in the world of fiction, as he engraves his epiphanies with pregnant artistic comprehension and wide ranging thematic perspectives. Joyce renders epiphany in relation to the individual sense of frustration and alienation for which he employs the motif of paralysis that is not only confined to spiritual universe or to ability to move, but also to obliteration of senses.

As used by Joyce, epiphany reveals the author's departure from realism and conventions manifested in his concern with inner individual consciousness, the psychology of the individual subject, and Joyce, like Woolf and Lawrence, "looks within" and "examines the mind". But it is also out of question to assume a modernist writer who is deaf to his or her period, in particular as Joyce reflects in his work the family, national, and religious issues of his period, and in such a way that, as Joyce himself claims, he would achieve almost the impossible: "I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book". Joyce develops a picture of Dublin through the inner world of his characters. In *Dubliners*, the characters express alienation, frustration, and lack of

communication, which is typical for people living in Dublin and in other cities in general, and for the late modern condition on the whole, and which alludes to the modernist sense of urban cultural dislocation. Joyce also claims as it follows: “I’ve put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality.”

Despite such statements, some thematic aspects are obvious; in particular, the paralysis is a thematic element that is prevalent from the first story to the last one. Starting with a physical paralysis in *The Sisters*, Joyce goes on with the paralysis of senses in other stories. For instance, in *The Boarding House*, Mr. Doran reveals a visual paralysis; in *Counterparts*, Farrington does not hear his son, which suggests the paralysis of the audible; in *Clay*, when Marry touches the clay, she cannot feel it, which signifies the paralysis of the tactile.

Apart from the paralysis of the senses, the moral, religious, family, collective, and national values are paralyzed, and above all the individual inner existence, the individual spiritual universe is paralyzed.

Epiphany is a kind of alternative to paralysis, its antithesis, a kind of solution, a kind of door open to the character who realizes his or her condition and might consider ways to escape from it or to change it.

Characters in the stories live through moments of epiphany which are either personal or collective about a truth that they cannot truly comprehend because of the paralysis by which they are afflicted. What makes epiphanies unique is the illumination moment – which we may also refer to as self-realizations or revelations – of the characters. However, the epiphany does not necessarily mean or imply that it would result in or determine the change, improvement, development, or accomplishment of the character.

In this respect, we believe that a table about the epiphanies of all the characters from all the fifteen short-stories would be mostly revelatory. This table shows the aspects of the condition of modern man and those of paralysis in a period of crisis in the history of humanity and the relation of these aspects to epiphany and as being under the impact of epiphany.

Also, the following explanations are needed concerning the terms used in the table, and which represent, we believe, our own attempt at defining epiphany and providing critical assumptions from the Joycean perspective as revealed in his short fiction:

(1) by “aspects of paralysis” we mean the problems, failures, and, on the whole, all the negative aspects of existence of the modern individual;

(2) by “epiphanization” we attempt, actually, to define “epiphany” in Joycean sense: we use the term “epiphanization” because we consider epiphany to imply a movement, an action, and, in this respect, it means the experience of epiphany (epiphanic experience); the epiphanic experience is both a process and an outcome, where the process is a temporal reality involving the life of the character leading to the outcome, that is, the moment of realization and revelation, and which consists in deep and strong spiritual, emotional and





psychological understanding about the personal status; finally, by “type” we consider a twofold perspective as collective and private;

(3) by “acquired understanding” we mean the truth that the character discovers and learns about himself/herself in the process of the epiphanic experience, and which contains a symbolical significance for the whole existence.

**Table 1.** The condition of the modern character as revealed through the epiphanic experience.

Story	Levels of existence	Aspects of paralysis	Type of epiphanization	Acquired understanding
<i>The Sisters</i>	Childhood	Motionlessness, intangibility, obliteration of senses (audible)	Private	Death
<i>An Encounter</i>	Childhood	Frustration, isolation, failure to communicate	Private	Inescapability
<i>Araby</i>	Childhood	Nonfulfillment, frustration	Private	Inevitability
<i>Eveline</i>	Adolescence	Motionlessness, frustration, lack of communication, obliteration of senses (voice)	Private	Inescapability
<i>After The Race</i>	Adolescence	Triviality, alienation, loneliness, powerlessness, obliteration of senses (taste in a metaphorical sense, that is, “taste of life”)	Private	Unawareness
<i>Two Gallants</i>	Adolescence	Betrayal, triviality, failure to establish relationships, moral values, alienation	Private	Loss of human values
<i>The Boarding House</i>	Adolescence	Hypocrisy, powerlessness, lack of communication, obliteration of senses (vision)	Private	Entrapment in the values of society
<i>A Little Cloud</i>	Maturity	Alienation, frustration, obliteration of senses (voice)	Private	Inescapability
<i>Counterparts</i>	Maturity	Oppression, frustration, obliteration of senses (audible)	Private	Victimization
<i>Clay</i>	Maturity	Frustration, forgetfulness, obliteration of senses (tactile)	Private	Lack of love

**Table 1.** Continued.

<i>A Painful Case</i>	Maturity	Alienation, frustration, failure to communicate, failure to establish relationships (love), obliteration of senses (audible)	Private	Loneliness
<i>Ivy Day in the Committee Room</i>	Public life	Collective memory loss, political failure, nationalism, alienation	Collective	Memorisation
<i>A Mother</i>	Public life	Hypocrisy, artistic failure, frustration, delusion, obliteration of senses (voice)	Collective	Defeat
<i>Grace</i>	Public life	Frustration, failure, religion	Collective	Self-evaluation
<i>The Dead</i>	Public life	Artistic failure, nationalism, frustration, delusion, obliteration of senses (audible)	Private and collective	Death

Paralysis is infused in all the fifteen short stories, representing their dominant thematic element, and transcending from one story to another; the characters are overwhelmed by it, its aspects being frustration, alienation, national and religious issues, obliteration of senses and obstruction of thoughts and the ways of expression, and above all of the spiritual drives, which make it difficult for the characters to realize the truth. Epiphanies yet allow the characters to comprehend their situation in personal, or in family, or in public life, but this revelation does not necessarily lead to fulfilment, or change, or development, leaving the characters instead to remain bound to their inescapability in a background and in a period of crisis in the history of humanity.

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