

lunedì 12 febbraio 2024

## James Joyce

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### Life

He was born in Dublin, we are going to find a lot of references to Ireland in his works, it was central in 1882. He was in a catholic big family of 12 children, when he was 6 years old, he was sent in a boarding school, everything was quite prestigious, but he was young, he suffered from home-sickness, insecurity; he used the language in a vulgar way and committed little crimes so he was punished by the priest. He didn't like this school.

When he was away, his father lost his job as collector of taxes, so he started drinking and borrowing money, so his family couldn't afford anymore his education, he came back home and became homeschooled.

He belonged to a lower middle class family, it was not wealthier, the family struggled to survive economically.

He was talented and intelligent but didn't care about marks, he went to university but didn't enjoy what professors wanted him to do, didn't follow the education system.

He loved literature but he read none of the books teachers recommended him, reread only what he wanted.

He graduated with a pass degree (his marks were not real high).

While he was at university, he started experimenting his writings. He started thinking about the epiphanies, that is a moment of revelation and clarity. Unlike his Irish classmates, he was not interested in the fight for the independence of Ireland.

An artist should go abroad in order to get a wider perspective, avoid to get socially engaged to just one reality, one who goes beyond society, should be aloof. (Superuomo di Nietzsche)

In 1902 he left Ireland for the first time and went to Paris and did a little bit of everything, but then his Mother felt ill and he had to go back to Ireland (1903), her passing away affected him for the rest of his life.

On the 10th of June 1904 he meets a woman employed as chamber maid, called Nora Barnacle, who will become his wife.

The 16th of June 1904 they had their first official date, that date was so significant to Joyce that he decided to employ the setting in his most famous novel, *Ulysses*.

Nowadays, it is used to celebrate Joyce himself and *Ulysses*, now it is called "bloom day".

He found Ireland oppressive, it was old and paralysed, he wanted to go beyond national borders, so he left for Europe again with his wife, they visited several places such as Italy (Trieste and Rome-> Joyce disliked Rome). He taught English and one of his students was Italo Svevo.

While he was in Italy, he wrote *A portrait of an artist as a young man* and *Dubliners*, which he published in Ireland, the book was turned down by 15 publishers, he wrote about them in some essays. Publishers were scared to publish that book because described real situations with facts and people actually existed, it was scandalous.

The book, published in 1914, was unsuccessful. He sold 379 copies, of which 120 were bought by Joyce himself.

*Dubliners* caught the attention of Ezra Pound, who was fascist, who embraced the anarchy of modern age, he wanted to experiment new things. The choice of themes embraced by Joyce were new, he was experiment with the language and topics, so Pound liked him and helped him to publish *A portrait of an artist as a young man* and *Dubliners*, at the beginning in instalments, in which there was not a finalised state of the novel, this is very modernist, something that was always open to change.

*Ulysses* was published in 1922 in Paris by a woman who owned a bookshop. This book was controversial, the book started being read by lots of people around the world but it was banned in America because of obscenity laws. Joyce didn't deny it, but the book was indecent because life was indecent.

It is a modern retelling of *Homer's odyssey*, the main characters are Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, Stephen.

Finnegan's wake

It is a mix between reality and dream.

He died in 1940 for a ulcer.

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## Dubliners

It is a collection of 15 short stories.

### SETTING

All the stories are set in Dublin at the beginning of the 20th century. Ireland was not independent but it was a difficult period because at the end of the century a great leader, Parnell, died. All the people fighting for independence didn't have a guide anymore, didn't know what to do. Dublin is described as a defeated city, where people were lost, as a old capital of a concord nation (nation without political future and stability), a center of paralysis, as Joyce said.

People fighting for independence had great aims but, in Joyce's opinion, Ireland would have never been actually independent, would still be linked with Great Britain and the church.

Ireland is a character itself.

They were still paying the consequences of the great famine, which pushed people to move to other countries. In a way, the poverty was still there, they didn't recover.

It brought to alcoholism and economic problems.

### CHARACTERS

We go from hope to disillusionment in each story, at the beginning characters had big dreams and desires they'd like to achieve, but then they start retrieving and all of a sudden they stop doing anything, they realise that they can't change their lives.

Readers starts to resign themselves and feel a sense of frustration and loss, they can relate to the characters.

Characters realise the circumstances they live in through moments of inner truth that we define as epiphanies, literally "to appear visible", that are moments of self understanding, of genuine and intuitive knowledge, moments of enlightenment, of spiritual manifestation: this is psychological process.

Something ordinary all of a sudden causes this mental process.

The first thing would be to change this reality, to solve the problem, but the epiphanies do not do this, the character simply accepts with resignation his condition, not could be done: this is a modernist work.

### TOPE

The tone is quite dark and gloomy, even in terms if colours, everything is dark and black.

Stories usually take place in dusk, it can be placed between the activities of the day and the night. The most profound moments take place at night. In a way, the characters themselves are in a in between state, as they're suspended between life and death, there's a fine line between these two, people who are dead feel like vivid, people who were alive feel dead inside, they can't do anything to make themselves feel alive inside.

### THEMES

- Lack of action

- Lack of communication: *The Dead*, wife and husband seem not to know each other.

- Death

### LABELS

Dubliners is a landmark of realism, which is why publishers turned it down, the places and the language were too realistic.

It could also be defined as “naturalist”: it dealt with gross details, pessimistic tone, it deals with the environment and society could shape a person’s life.

These descriptions are not just descriptions, are not reproductions of a slice of society, they have a symbolic value that needs to be deciphered, the artist is the only one who can do this.

### MODERNIST CHARACTERISTICS

Style: he doesn’t really follow the typical structure of English novels (reassuring stories with a positive ending), he believed in no stability, he couldn’t use the typical storyline. He places the conflict right at the beginning, without an introduction, the story starts in medias res, we do not have a ending, it is open, there is no resolution. Stories have a circular structure, nothing really changes from the beginning, the end reconnects to the beginning.

Narrator: is omniscient and in third person, who exploits interior monologue, indirect impersonal speech and characters’ words, he challenges the idea of the typical victorian narrator, who didn’t takes sides or sympathises, he doesn’t guide the reader, he doesn’t make distinctions between good and evil characters. It makes you interpret and question about.

Language: it is accessible, coherent, more or less grammatically correct. It is the only work in which he uses the quotation marks. It changed the tone and the register of the language according to the characters and to its social background. Joyce adapted the language to the character.

### EVELINE

The story begins in medias res, there is no introduction, we have to guess many things about the character. She is a 19 years old woman who works in a Dublin shop. The story begins with Evelin in her home sitting by the window, she watches the evening descend, she starts thinking about her childhood, surrounded by objects. She comes up with sweet memories, emphasising how depressive her present is, her father, who in her past was the one who made her laugh the most, didn’t care about his children anymore and has forgotten about his family, the tone is dark, the room with objects are covered in dust and it conveys a sense of claustrophobia and suffocation. There is a broken armonium, it could be a symbol of a lack of harmony in her life.

She thinks about her childhood and about people who were not in her life anymore, she thinks about leaving with Frank, a man who wants to take her to Argentina, it seems to be better to leave (she didn’t like her job, her father was abusive, she was poor, she’s burdened by responsibilities because of the death of her mother), but then she starts thinking that going away to a different place could be dangerous, she’s afraid for her reputation, she was leaving with a man without being married. She never really mentions anything about her feelings or her love for Frank, he’s openhearted and kind, but he is only an opportunity to explore (sense of danger) and escape.

There is the first epiphany: there is the sound of a street organ, it acts as a trigger, reminds her of the last moments of her mother, a street organ was playing but her family payed him to go away, she thinks about her mother and about her mother’s life. She decides to accept Frank’s offer, this is just the first epiphany and, when she is at the port ready to leave, paralysis comes and is afraid of dying, she’s pale and couldn’t move, she felt guilty and felt the burden of all the responsibilities behind, even the sound of the ship is described as a .... the ship becomes a death symbol, she’s afraid of dying. We don’t know if she takes the ship or not.

It is the first short stories of the second division, it is the first story focused on a female character and the only short story with a proper noun used as a title. Eveline makes us think of Eve, the first woman, Eveline becomes a symbol of the condition of women in the world. This universal dimension is emphasised by the choice of the narrator, the first three stories were told by a first person narrator (one point of view), whereas this story was told by a third person narrator (more universal, external narrator). The omniscient narrator tells the story of this young woman. The narrator has the flexibility of this point of view being external, but on the other hand he can get close to Eveline’s thoughts, so we get to know Eveline’s mind. There’s more freedom in not letting Eveline explain her feelings, in this way he can tell objective things that Eveline doesn’t know, he’s omniscient, but he mixes Eveline’s words with his own thought, the narrator is the one who uses Eveline’s words so we don’t know if we can trust him or not. The majority of information that we get is from Eveline’s point of view.

#### Themes:

- Claustrophobia related to family → room is dark and things are covered in dust
- Catholic church considered responsible for the paralysis
- Death
- Paralysis
- Family
- Circular structure
- Mixed temporal dimensions
- Suspension, in between state
- Vivid dead characters, dead inside alive characters

#### **GABRIEL'S EPIPHANY**

Introduction page 257

The passages that are actually underlined are realistic descriptions of objects. The underlined sections highlight the narrator within the character's mind, different colours for time dimensions. She feels like a stranger to him, he doesn't recognise her anymore. One thought leads to another, there are thoughts wondering, we are disoriented within his mind. Joyce uses all these objects as symbols.

He starts thinking about death and feels empty, he didn't know love.

Snow can cause paralysis, but it can also be a symbol of pureness.

Journey westward= symbol of journey in death, but also of exploring journey

Acceptance with frustration, he accepts this situation.

Churchyard is mentioned, memory of the dead (Michael), snow is seen as an equaliser, Gabriel

realises that living and dead are all connected, snow doesn't cover anything: Michael in greta's heart is more alive than him.

Gabriel= the one who told Mary her destiny (epiphany, revelation).

Michael= the one who led the angels' army in the fight against Satan (passion).