

EVELINE
James Joyce

SHE sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it--not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field --the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep nix and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word:

"He is in Melbourne now."

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. O course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

"Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?"

"Look lively, Miss Hill, please."

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married--she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead

mother's sake. And no she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages--seven shillings--and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad on Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work--a hard life--but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see *The Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

"I know these sailor chaps," he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying:

"Damned Italians! coming over here!"

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being--that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

"Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!"

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand:

"Come!"

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

"Come!"

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish.

"Eveline! Evvy!"

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

GUIDED ANALYSIS

1) **Joyce:** where was he born? Where did he live? What are his masterpieces?

2) **Dublin:** All Joyce's works express the paradoxical situation of an author who chose to abandon his native land, culture and religion, but for the rest of his life wrote about nothing else. The paradox, moreover, is especially true of his first important work, *Dubliners*, written between 1904 and 1907. It is worth remembering that the stories were composed by a young and inexperienced writer, with great admiration for Flaubert. The young Joyce deliberately wrote about what he knew and had personally experienced. During his life he remained faithful to this precept: *"You must write what is in your blood, not what is in your brain"* and he always wrote about Dublin because *"if I can get to the heart of Dublin, I can get to the heart of all the cities in the world. In the particular is contained the universal."*

While the theme of **paralysis** can't be said to be his exclusive subject matter, it must be acknowledged as being the most crucial and pervading. In 1903 he wrote his brother Stanislaus:

"What's the matter with you is that you are afraid to live. You and people like you. The city is suffering from hemiplegia of the will. I'll call the series "Dubliners" to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city."

In fact, the main thread that unites the stories is Dublin. The choice of Dublin as the common setting for all the stories gives the collection the tight texture of a novel.

Why did he choose Dublin? First of all because Dublin was the city where he had lived and of which he knew everything, the streets, the houses, the pubs, the people.

Secondly, because Dublin was the object of his love and of his hate. Thirdly, because it appeared to him as a perfect product of western civilization and modern life. Being a Dubliner, as he wrote to Grant Richards (15 October 1905), *"seems to me to have some meaning and I doubt whether the same can be said for such words as "Londoner" and "Parisian"*. And he concluded *"I think people might be willing to pay for the special odour of corruption which, I hope, floats over my stories."*

Dublin, therefore, was not only to be a place on the map of Ireland, but a place for the mind, one where paralysis and corruption could be seen and smelled in the very din and noise of modern life. As for his characters, they were to be adequately representative of such a setting. Indeed, Joyce seems to suggest, only the Dubliners could inhabit that “soul of hemiplegia” called Dublin.

The same excerpt indicates the other significant choice made by the author when planning the order in which the stories should be arranged: he would create a sort of diachronical history of Dublin by starting from stories of childhood, continuing with stories of adolescence and of mature life, and ending with stories of public life. What connects all the Dubliners, younger and older, is their fundamental sin against life. They feel that, in order to live fully, they should leave the place of paralysis, Dublin, but they are not determined enough to do so. Their eternal pendulum between escape and resignation, stops them in a frozen gesture, like that of Eveline at the end of the story. All are victims of the self-defeated life of Dublin. What is paralysis? Joyce described the dreariness of Dublin life: what he called “paralysis” is the intellectual, moral and spiritual stagnation paralyzing the town. The word paralysis first appears in the mouth of a child in *The Sisters* as the mysterious description of a disease which is both physical and moral. The old priest’s body is paralysed but his disablement seems to be the externalization of the disease of his soul: the loss of faith. The same paralysis reappears in the final scene of *Eveline* as a form of disease of the will, or perhaps as the impossibility to hope in life.

He himself wrote:

“My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis.”

Moreover, no description has the function of ornament to the story, but each of them is meant to add a tessera to the mosaic of Dublin life, assigning to the landscape the role of another protagonist of the stories. Joyce adopts a very orthodox naturalistic approach in relation to description. His treatment of Dublin follows the criteria of providing an accurate, scrupulous reconstruction of its streets, monuments, squares,... and of guaranteeing an almost scientific documentation of the details of Dublin life. But, as it has already been noted, Joyce was looking also for the universal behind the incidental, the symbolic behind the realistic. Dublin, recreated in its minutest details, becomes a symbol, too. It stands for

the spiritual condition of a whole people that is unable to get rid of the entanglements which have accumulated in the course of centuries: the dependence on the political rule of London, the religious dependence on Rome, the cultural and spiritual paralysis due to a dissatisfaction incapable of reacting. The descriptions of Dublin streets, parks and public places accompany the gestures of the characters, reinforcing the impressions of squalor the latter produce and existing as the cause of new squalor.

Apart from rejecting Irish nationalism, Joyce rejected Irish life in toto. Yet at the same time he set all his novels in Dublin, the capital of the land he had grown up in and rejected, and his concern with the particulars of his life there was unflagging and obsessive.

On the one hand Joyce loved his Dublin but, on the other, he hated it as the centre of paralysis. That's why in 1902, having taken his degree, he left Ireland for the first time. His destination was Paris. He made a second trip to Paris a year later. In 1904 he met Nora Barnack, the woman who was to be his lifelong companion, and with her he left Ireland for a **voluntary exile** on the Continent. This exile led him to Trieste, Praga, Paris.

3) **Dubliners**: In 1904, answering the request of the Irish writer George Russell, Joyce wrote a "simple" story for the Irish Homestead. The story in question was "The Sisters".

Dubliners was, however, published only in June 1914, after a number of unfortunate contacts with English and Irish publishers. The difficulty of finding a publisher was due to the supposed "immorality" of certain passages.

When the collection finally appeared, it received some attention, mostly negative, however, owing to the unpleasant contents of almost all the stories and the meanness of style. *Dubliners* is a collection of 15 objective, realistic sketches or short stories, a genre particularly popular in Ireland, presenting with extraordinary clarity aspects of the sordid slums and the daily trivialities of Dublin life, while at the same time embodying human experience as a whole. The stories are arranged in thematic sequence, divided into four sections, each of which represents one stage in life: childhood (*The Sisters, An Encounter, Araby*), adolescence (*Eveline, After the Race, The Gallants, The Boarding House*), maturity (*A Little Cloud, Counterparts, Clay, A Painful Case*) and public life (*Ivy Day in the Committee Room, A Mother, Grace*), plus an epilogue (*The Dead*).

Nine years early, Joyce himself had written about the book in the following terms:

“My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that scene seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard.”

4) Now, tell me the plot of **Eveline**. (in the first part we learn of Eveline's past and present life, a hard one, on account of the poverty, the work, the drunkenness and the brutality of her father. We also hear of her young boyfriend Frank, who has asked her to leave with him for Buenos Aires, as his wife. Still, she hesitates to escape, out of a sense of duty, out of fear of an adventurous future, because her present life is difficult but “*not wholly undesirable*”. The sound of a street organ changes the course of her reflections. On the one hand it reminds her of her promise to her mother “*to keep the house together as long as she could*” (an organ had played the same tune as she lay dying); on the other hand it kindles her revolt against “*that life of commonplace sacrifices*”. Her decision is taken: she will be saved and live. She is ready to elope with Frank. Once at the station, however, she feels completely paralysed and can't follow him).

- Who is Eveline? Joyce's most frequent subject matter is the life of ordinary people. He is interested in every day life. He doesn't face general, metaphysical questions but he focus his (and our) attention on small details and on matter-of-fact things.

- Is there a description of Eveline? What do you imagine about her? What does she look like? Is she young or old? Is she active or passive? What actions does she do? Is she standing or sitting? Is there any actions? Any psychological analysis? Which social class does she belong to? What do we learn about her social status? The portrait of characters is based on introspection rather than on descriptive details. Joyce no longer explains things but he plunges into his characters and show their feelings and thoughts as he feels and thinks. Students should notice that there is no physical description of Eveline. From the narrator we learn only of her feelings and her memories of the past. This implies that the narrator wants to concentrate on the psychological situation of the character.

-What are the impressions you got of this story? Do you like her?

-Do you approve her choice? Why?

5) How many characters can we find? Are they present or absent? Do they act? Who are they? Are they alive or dead? Where do they live now? Are they real characters?

6) Now let's analyse the text: What **time** is it? "*The evening is invading the avenue*". Is this choice fortuitous? the evening is a metaphor for the paralysis, it's like a shadow which gradually darkens the light of the day -life, future, dreams-.

7) Where is Eveline? She is at home, "*a little brown house*" with a view on the street. The colour brown is often used to indicate paralysis.

8) What is she doing? She is watching people passing, her head is leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils "*was the odour of dusty cretonne*": what does this odour symbolise? It's a metaphor of stagnation. "*Dusty*" indicates decay, something falling into pieces. The environment, the atmosphere permeates people, entering and paralysing them.

9) What kind of sensations do we have? How does Joyce describe the scene? Is it a vivid scene or a soft one?

10) What does she **remember**? "*One time...her father coming*". It's a flashback to the past: there is the repetition of "*used to*". What do we learn about her past life? Was she happy? Does she regret her past life?

How does Joyce use this narrative technique? Can we find a chronological order in Eveline's thoughts? Think about the time: is it real or is it an inner time?

Eveline remembers her family: her mother, brothers, father. What do we learn about them? Are they still alive or are they dead?

11) At once she thinks that "*everything changes*". Joyce leads us back to the present: "*Now she was...*". There is the repetition of the word "*home*" and we have a brief description of the room and the "**familiar objects**" (twice). What are these objects? A yellow (=colour of paralysis) photograph, a broken (=decay) harmonium and a print of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque (=Catholicism).

What do we learn about the whole set? What impressions do you get? How do you imagine this house?

12) Now there is a flashback to the past “*An yetto leave her home*”. She decided to leave but she wonders “*Was that wise?*”. She knows that “*in her home anyway she had shelter and food*”, even if it’s a hard life and at work she is often humiliated.

Now she could begin a new life: Joyce uses the Conditional as future in the past, because Eveline thinks about her possible future.

“*But in her **new home**....it would not be like that*”. She would be treated with respect. “*But*” is at the beginning of the sentence to create a contrast between Eveline’s present life and her future one. There are three levels of actions: the actual moment, the past and the future.

13) We have a lot of temporal passages: “*even now*” (present), “*when*” (past), “*but latterly*” (present), “*and now*”(present). She thinks about her father and their **quarrels** on Saturdays. At the end of her reflections, she realizes that “*it was a hard work, hard life but now....*”. Now she is about to “*explore*” a new life with Frank. What do you think about the choice of this verb? “Explore” makes me think something dangerous, dreadful, like a jungle, something which can hide some risks in itself. The feelings connected with her recollections are fear and affection. Her feelings seem to be contradictory but as she approaches the time of departure, the violence of her father becomes of secondary importance.

14) Eveline thinks about **Frank**, about the first time they had met, their love and so on. Who is he? Which social class does he belong to? What do we learn about their relationship? What does he like doing? He likes music, singing, telling stories about his journeys. What happened then? Her father had found out their affair and had forbidden her to meet with him.

What is her attitude towards going away with him? How would you describe her feeling for Frank? How would you describe the dilemma Eveline is facing? One of reality vs dream? Prison vs liberty? Have you got any other opinions about that?

15) Another passage to the present: “*the evening deepened the avenue*”. Eveline has two **letters**. Who are they addressed to? One is for her father, the other for her brother. Why does the white of the letters grow indistinct? It’s a metaphor: the letters represent her decision to leave, but the letters gradually disappear in the dark of the evening, and in this way we can foresee that she won’t go away.

We can find here another passage to the past: “*not long before...*”, “*another day*”.

16) The atmosphere of the house weighs her down and prevents her from leaving: “*her time was running out but...*”. She doesn’t take a decision, she is sitting passive and motionless, but at once she hears **a street organ** playing: what does it remind her? It reminds the promise to her mother to keep the house together as long as she could. She remembers (the verb is repeated twice) the last night of her mother’s illness and “*that life of common....*”. Her mother’s life can be seen as Eveline’s future life in Dublin: it represents the life of a woman in Dublin and if Eveline doesn’t leave, she will have the same life as her mother. “*A life of sacrifices closing in final craziness*”. This makes us learn about the condition of women in those times. But her sense of duty to her elderly father and her promise to her dying mother are the main factors that stop her from leaving.

17) At once “**she stood up**”: this is the first action Eveline has done from the beginning of the story. What does she decide to do? She must run away from this life. The way out is Frank: “*Frank would save her*”. Joyce uses future in the past. “*He would give her life*” as if she were dead now. In this moment it seems that Eveline has decided to leave.

18) In fact now there is a change in the scene and time: Eveline is at the station at **North Wall**. What is she doing? Why is she here? “*He held her hand*”: who is he? What can Eveline see around her? There are a lot of soldiers, then she can see the boat, a black mass (this refers to something frightening). What does she think about? Does she want to leave or not? Why does she feel nausea?

19) Then “**a bell clanged...**”: she is frightened, she prays asking God for an answer. Frank tells her to follow him but suddenly “*no, no, no! It was impossible!*”. We can see her hands, hear her cry, we can imagine her pale face, her frightened eyes, but now her reflections and thoughts seemed to stop. In this final passage the paralysis of action is accompanied by a kind of physical paralysis. Eveline finds herself unable to make a decision to leave, her body undergoes a gradual physical paralysis. In contrast to Frank, who is described with verbs like “*steaming*” and “*rushed*”, about Eveline we learn that “*she stands*” and “*she doesn’t move*”. In the final image, the paralysis is total, since even her eyes have grown numb “*no sign of love or farewell or recognition.*”

Her final renunciation of her dream is a striking example of Dublin's paralysing effect on its inhabitants. The portrait of Eveline is vivid, realistic and moving, and the language is simple but effective.

20) **Escape:** escape is the opposite of paralysis and originates from an impulse activated by the sense of enclosure that many characters experience. A sense of claustrophobia is often implicit in the small, cramped, stuffy rooms or houses where the Dubliners spend their lives, for example Eveline's relationship of love and hate with her house. To Eveline escape would mean marriage and social respect. She sees marriage as an escape from her dreary life. She likes Frank but she doesn't seem to be in love with him. She considers him the means of escape.

Almost all the Dubliners aspire to escape, but no one of them is destined to succeed, not even the few ones who have materially been able to. They live as exiles at home, unwilling to admit a resemblance with their fellow-citizens but also unable to cut the bonds that tie them.

Joyce himself escaped from Dublin: let's think about his voluntary exile.

21) **(Escape from) Religion and Family:** A claustrophobic element is present also in the description of the Irish family in that it tends to enclose and imprison its members, hindering the realization of their hopes. The fathers or the men, in particular, tend to paralyse any effort of the younger members of their families. Eveline's father quarrels with Frank and compels Eveline to plan a secret elopment with her lover. At the same time he can create such a sense of guilt in her as to convince her to renunciation.

Degenerate fatherhood is not always accompanied by an equally negative vision of motherhood. The mothers may be over-protective or so much neglected as to end their lives in "final craziness" like Eveline's mother.

Marriage is not a guarantee of happiness and stability either, as one can easily infer from many of the stories. It is a social necessity for both men and women, but often turns out to be a hell.

As for religion, the influence of the Church permeates all the stories, as is logical in a strictly observant country as Ireland was at the beginning of the century. In *Eveline* we can find some references to religion: the print of Blessed Mary Alacoque; her final prayer when she vainly tries to get help from God about her decision.

Let's remember that in 1898, at the age of 16, Joyce enrolled at University College, Dublin. He had been contemplating entering the Jesuit Order but then he decided against it in favour of another and stronger vocation, that of art as a way to self-fulfilment. By this time he had become something a rebel and nonconformist.

22) **Symbolism:** like other writers, Joyce found himself involved in the controversy concerning the two most influential literary currents of the time, realism and symbolism. He always refused to be classified in either movement, since realism and symbolism often combined in his work. *Dubliners* is often said to be written in perfect adherence to the principles of naturalism then dominating. As we have read, Joyce intended to describe Dublin life in objective way and he also felt the need to document the verisimilitude of his fictional world. Yet his total acceptance of naturalism is accompanied by a subterranean search for symbols, which emerges in self-revelation between the lines of *Dubliners*. In the stories the real and the unreal are blended, symbolic levels creep into everyday descriptions and events. Joyce's use of symbolism is apparent in several areas.

The names of certain characters are symbolic: Eveline makes us think about Eve, the first woman, symbol of the whole female condition. Colour symbolism is also to be found, with brown and yellow frequently suggesting the pervading theme of paralysis. Then we can find the sea in *Eveline*: it is both the way towards a future of salvation from a squalid destiny but also the symbol of the danger she imagines to exist outside her house ("*All the seas of the world tumbled over her heart*")

23) **Epiphany:** the style of the book is essentially realistic with a scrupulous cataloguing of detail. However Joyce wanted to go beyond the mere reproduction of a slice of life and we can find remarkable moments of sudden insight, which are one of the characteristics of Joyce's art. He called these moments of insight "Epiphany". The original meaning of the term is the showing of Jesus to the Magi: but Joyce adopts this expression to signify a sudden revelation, the moment when a sudden spiritual awakening is experienced in which all the petty details, thoughts, gestures, objects, feelings, etc, come together to produce a new sudden awareness. In other words, there is an epiphany when details or moments buried for years in one's memory, suddenly surface in one's mind and, like old photos, start a long, often painful mental labour. His theory of epiphanies suggested the search for something existing under the surface of things and events. His stories possessed the same character of revelation of an inner truth hidden under the

seemingly transparent forms of reality. An epiphany is not signalled by a special presentation on the part of the narrator. It consists in the description of common gestures, objects and situations, suddenly acquiring the value of an intense experience of truth. Whether an epiphany is activated by a song, by a cry of a baby, it always has the essential function of indicating a crucial issue to the character. An epiphany is obviously preceded by the narration of a case or of a situation. *Dubliners* contains stories organized in a variety of combinations of the phases of a short story. One of the most common features is the “in media res” opening, by which the reader is immediately immersed in a situation while the antecedents to it are gradually communicated through various techniques.

In *Eveline* the information about the past passes through the minds of the characters, mingling memories with thoughts of the present or the future.

The stories have simple plots: the present trivial episodes of everyday life. Most of them propose closed endings, even if no authorial comment or final summing up is added to confirm the reader’s impression. The characters, in fact, do not appear liable to any change or improvement for the future: they are what they were at the beginning. Their cases are closed.

24) Narrative techniques

-The narrator: It is easy to infer that Joyce employed straightforward and everyday language, for naturalistic purposes. In so doing, he endeavoured to achieve complete fidelity to nature and to create realistic settings by apparently casual accumulation of accurate yet seemingly unrelated details. Following Chechov’s methods, nothing interesting or exciting or important happens in the development of the plot resulting in a demonstration of the uneventful and paralysed life of a modern city.

Joyce, like many of his contemporaries, wished to escape from the use of an omniscient narrator, who knew everything and commented on his characters’ lives and behaviour. At the beginning of the 20th century, the vision of consciousness, time and knowledge was such that writers and artist could no longer accept a single truth. A single point of view, therefore, proved unacceptable.

In *Dubliners* we can find a third-person narrator with some clearly identifiable characteristics. First of all he never interferes with the narration of events by commenting on them explicitly and rarely commenting on them implicitly through the use of adjectives, similes and metaphors. Secondly, the narrator does more than tending to objectivity, he tends to disappear as an autonomous voice by entrusting most of the narration to the

dialogue or the narrated monologue, and by narrating what happens from the point of view of the protagonist and, sometimes, also of other characters. Narrated monologue, in the form of indirect thought and often of free indirect thought, is widely used in all the stories and is especially employed in *Eveline*. It consists of the presentation of the protagonist's thoughts through the limited mediation of the narrator who adopts the language style of his characters, with their idiosyncrasies, their colloquialisms and, in the case of *Eveline*, even the banal clichés of the reader of sentimental literature. This technique enables the reader to get an intimate and direct knowledge of the character, minimizing the narrator's interventions in the story. Joyce creates an effect of intimacy with the character.

In *Eveline* the passage is told from her point of view by a third narrator who tends to disappear through the use of indirect thought into Eveline's interior monologue. According to Joyce, a work of art must be impersonal and the poet is not a speaker. In the case of "Dubliners" Joyce remains essentially outside the tales. The narrator tells the tale from her point of view: he knows Eveline intimately and is intent on revealing her thoughts and feelings to the reader. At the same time the narrator doesn't merge completely with her. The reader can also intuit Joyce's attitude to her: what is his attitude to her? Sympathy? Why?

- the structure of the text: the classical English novel (18th century) was a novel in which facts had a chronological development and in which there was a main character whose life and adventures were told from the beginning (childhood). In the modern novel, on the contrary, the writer abandons the sequence of episodes, takes the hero as he is, in the precise moment, and the analysis of this instant carries the full psychological knowledge of the character.

As a result of his interest in experimentation, Joyce created a new kind of *dream language*, a mixture of existing words, inventive word combinations and non-existent words, to provide a dense multi-layered prose that can be read on endless levels of significance. Syntax is disordered, punctuation non-existent, in this immense river of words.

In *Eveline* we can find that the structure changes as the narrator goes inside her mind. Sentences become shorter and more broken as if the sentences reflected her reflections and thoughts; the language becomes simpler and more colloquial as if she herself were speaking.

-cinematic techniques: other devices used by Joyce include the cinematic ones like montage, flashbacks, fade-out, slow-up, the overlapping of images and other devices such as the story within a story, the use of similes and metaphors or a particular use of punctuation (parentheses, dashes, ...).

25) The stream of consciousness

The following personalities, outside the field of literature, had an important influence on Joyce.

- **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939) was the founder of psychoanalysis, that is the scientific approach and methods to treat such mental disorders as neurosis, depression, hysteria, etc. He had posited that the subconscious, that is the submerged part of our psychic life, conceals our fears and wishes in a state of repression, from which they emerge, from time to time, in distorted forms like dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes and, sometimes, diseases. He had come to this conclusion after examining tens of cases of people all belonging to the middle classes. This had led him to conclude that middle class morality and norms of life were responsible for the unhappiness of the great majority of people.
Joyce's early concept of epiphany, with its intuition of the existence of something underneath the opaque appearance of the most ordinary things, seemed to be in tune with Freud's investigations. Probably Joyce didn't know Freud's works while he was in Ireland, though he knew them when he lived in Trieste.
- **Nietzsche** (1844-1900): Joyce knew the great philosopher. In his works, N. had proved the inconsistency of the principles on which the middle classes had laid the foundations of their society: morality, democracy and education. He had proclaimed the death of God, proposed amorality "beyond good and evil", and the theory of Superman, who lives in absolute separation from the mass. His concept of the artist certainly influenced Joyce's one: his definition of the amoral disposition that the artist must have in relation to reality is the same that Joyce advocated for the artist who must see life in all its aspects with detachment and impersonality.
- **William James** (1842-1910) the American psychologist spoke of the endless flux and infinite change of the inner life, so that reality can't be objectively given but is subjectively perceived through consciousness. He wrote: "*Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up in bits...but flows.... A river or a stream are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us*

call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.” As a consequence, the present doesn’t exist; the real specific event is the individual with his consciousness where past and future constantly flow into each other. The term “consciousness” indicates “the entire area of mental attention, from pre-consciousness on through the levels of the mind up to and including the highest one of the rational communicable awareness.” In other words stream-of-consciousness fiction is concerned with the area which is beyond communication. There are, in fact, two levels of consciousness: the speech-level, which can be communicated orally or in writing, and the pre-speech level, which has no communicative basis and “is not rationally controlled or logically ordered.” An easy metaphor is that of an iceberg: the novelist has to explore the part of the iceberg that is submerged, that is he has to explore what starts and constitutes the mental process (memories, dreams, sensations, ...) and analyse how this process works (through associations of ideas, symbolizations, ...).

- **Henri Bergson** (1859-1941): his conception of what he called “*la durée*” or duration flux, according to which inner time has a duration that eludes conventional clock time, had turned the old conception of time from a sequence of separate points into a flowing continuity.

The basic and most prominent method to depict consciousness is the use of the *interior monologue*. Though the term is often confused with “stream of consciousness”, there is a distinction between them, since stream of consciousness is the psychic phenomenon itself, while the interior monologue is the instrument used to translate this phenomenon into words. To do so, the interior monologue often disregards logical transitions, formal syntax and even conventional punctuation, so as to reflect the apparently disconnected and chaotic sequence of thoughts.

In England this narrative technique was pioneered by **Virginia Woolf** (1882-1941) who used a more repetitive style and the so-called *indirect interior monologue* (i.e. a monologue introduced by such clauses as “he thought”, “he decided”, ...) which provides more rational links for the associations of ideas. Virginia Woolf tried to compress the mental processes using a variety of techniques. This techniques show “her endless search for the novel-form which would substitute the single time unit of the instant”. In her need to shift back and forth in time and intermingle past, present and future, like Joyce she used two methods which are analogous to film montage: the subject can remain fixed in

space and his consciousness can move in time (time-montage); time remains fixed and it is the spatial element that changes (space-montage).

Joyce went further and deeper in his experimentation by using the *direct interior monologue*, whereby he shifted abruptly from thought to thought, without any apparent connection of verb, subject or even punctuation.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) turned to soliloquies (long passages recited by one person who addressed the audience in general) into a monologue, the so-called *dramatic monologue*. This monologue is in Browning a complete lyrical poem; he introduces a third person, a speaker who introduces himself or someone else; there are "silent listeners"; his monologues are dramatic in the sense of theatrical (they are dramas with characters) and crucial (the speaker is caught in a moment of crisis); he uses blank verse inside which punctuation respects the logical thread of thoughts; his monologues are set in a historical past time. The monologue has been defined as the "visible part of the iceberg whose submerged part is both psychologically and historically defined".

26) **Joyce's life:** while Joyce was born on 2nd February 1882 in Rathgar, a suburb south Dublin, the city which was to leave an indelible mark on all his writings, in 1904 he left Ireland to spend the rest of his life as a self-imposed exile, staying for long periods in Trieste, Zurich and Paris. His case is that of an Irishman whose native Anglo-Irish culture was a mixed one, who wrote in an English which was heavily marked by Irish. Joyce's childhood and adolescence were unsettled since his restless father never stayed in a job or a house long enough for the family to feel at home. Joyce received a sound Catholic education from two Jesuit colleges: from 1881-91 he attended the Catholic preparatory school in Ireland, Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare. Joyce's talent as a writer revealed itself quite early in life: in 1891, to commemorate the death of Ch. Parnell, the nine-year-old Joyce composed a poem. In 1892 the family experienced serious financial difficulties and moved to Dublin. Joyce resumed his Jesuit schooling at Belvedere College, from 1893 to 1898. At the age of 16, he enrolled at University College, Dublin, where he read Italian, French and English. He had been contemplating entering the Jesuit Order but decided against it in favour of another vocation, that of art. By this time he had become something of a rebel and nonconformist and his examinations were not brilliant. In 1902, having graduated from University, he began his wanderings abroad with a trip to Paris where he studied medicine for a brief time before returning to Dublin. In 1904 he started work on *Stephen Hero* as well as on *Dubliners*. He fell in love with Nora

Barnacle, who proved a significant inspiration for his work. On 13 August he published the first story of *Dubliners*, "The Sisters" in *Irish Homestead*. In 1905 he was appointed to a teaching job in Trieste where he continued with the composition of *Dubliners*. In 1906 he was in Rome working in a bank, a job and a city he disliked intensely. In 1907 he moved to Trieste. The next six years were marked by the beginning of his eye's troubles which were to leave him almost blind in his maturity. In 1914 *A Portrait of the artist as a young man* was published. In 1915, during the First World War, he moved to Zurich. After the war, in 1919, he returned to Trieste and in 1920 he left for Paris where he remained for twenty years. In 1933 Nora and Joyce married in London for testamentary reasons. By 1933 he was nearly blind and had to be helped to read by friends. In 1936 *the Collected poems* were published. In December 1940 they fled from France to take refuge in Switzerland. Joyce died on 13rd January 1941 in Zurich from a perforated ulcer.

While in Trieste, Joyce met Ettore Schmitz, who wanted to improve his English. He had already written *Una vita* and *Senilità*, but these works had few success.

Assessment

- Now the students are asked to answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you think that Joyce's choice of the girl's name has any particular value?
- 2) What picture of Eveline's father does the story convey?
- 3) How is the opposition change and no change, between action and immobility?
- 4) Make a note of what is told in the narrator's voice and in Eveline's one.
- 5) What main attitude towards Eveline in your opinion, does the story leave us with: detachment; irony; pity; indifference; sympathy?

