



James Joyce

'Poetry, even when apparently most fantastic, is always a revolt against artifice, a revolt, in a sense, against actuality.'

(1882-1941)

Compact Performer - Culture & Literature

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James Joyce

1. Life (1882 – 1941)

- He was educated in Jesuit schools in **Dublin** and went to University College, where he graduated in modern languages.
- He had no interest in movements for Irish independence but was interested in **European culture** and considered himself a European rather than an Irishman.
- He left Dublin when he was 22: he spent some time in Paris, then back in Ireland he met Nora Barnacle and went to live with her in Italy, **Trieste**, where he worked as an English teacher. He became friends with Italo Svevo.



Paris, 1924. The Joyce Family:
James, Lucia, Giorgio, Nora.



James Joyce

1. Life

- With Nora Barnacle he had two children, Giorgio and Lucia. They finally got married in 1931.
- He had financial problems while living in Trieste. Some of his works were considered obscene and published many years after they were written. He left Trieste because of the war and moved to Switzerland, where he died in 1941.



Nora Barnacle and their two children,
Giorgio and Lucia.



Main works

- He first published a collection of poems: *Chamber Music* (1907)
- ***Dubliners***, a collection of short stories, was written in 1905 but published only in 1914.
- 1916: *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a semi-autobiographical novel.
- ***Ulysses***, a novel published in Paris in 1922
- 1939: the novel *Finnegans Wake*.



James Joyce

2. The most important features of Joyce's works

- Although Joyce chose to leave **Ireland**, it is the **setting** of most of his works, especially **Dublin**, seen from the point of view of a European, not of an Irishman.
- He wanted to give a **realistic** portrait of the **life of ordinary people**.
- The lives of ordinary Dubliners represent in general **man's mental, emotional and biological reality**.



Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century.



James Joyce

2. The most important features of Joyce's works

Isolation and detachment of the artist from society.

His task → to render life **objectively**.
So he used different points of view and narrative techniques.

Greater **importance** given to the **inner world of the characters**.

Time → perceived as **subjective**.



James Joyce

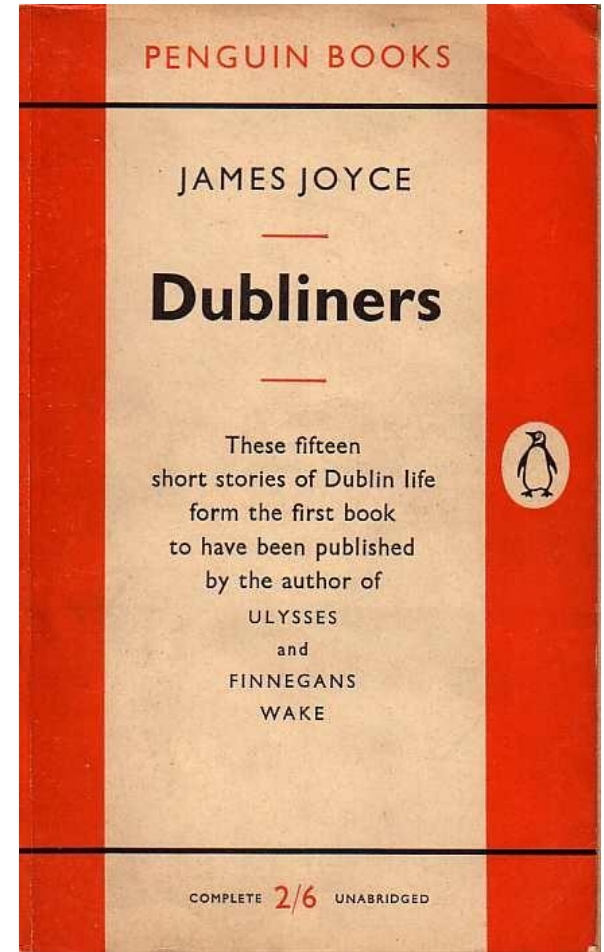
3. The evolution of Joyce's style

Dubliners (1914) was characterized by:

- **Realism**
- **Disciplined prose**
- **Different points of view**
- **Free-direct speech**
- **Epiphany**
- **Mixture of symbolism and realism**

In his later works (***Ulysses***, ***Finnegans Wake***) he gradually developed more experimental techniques such as:

- **interior monologue with two levels of narration**
- **extreme interior monologue (without punctuation)**





James Joyce

4. *Dubliners*

- Published in 1914 in the newspaper *The Irish Homestead* by Joyce with the pseudonym **Stephen Dedalus**.
- Dubliners** are described as **afflicted people**, slaves of their religious, political and cultural habits and of their narrow-mindedness.
- All the 15 short stories are set in **Dublin** → ‘*The city seemed to me the centre of **paralysis**,’* Joyce stated.

They don’t focus an action, but on **moments of intensity (“epiphanies”)**, and lead to a moral, social or spiritual **revelation**.

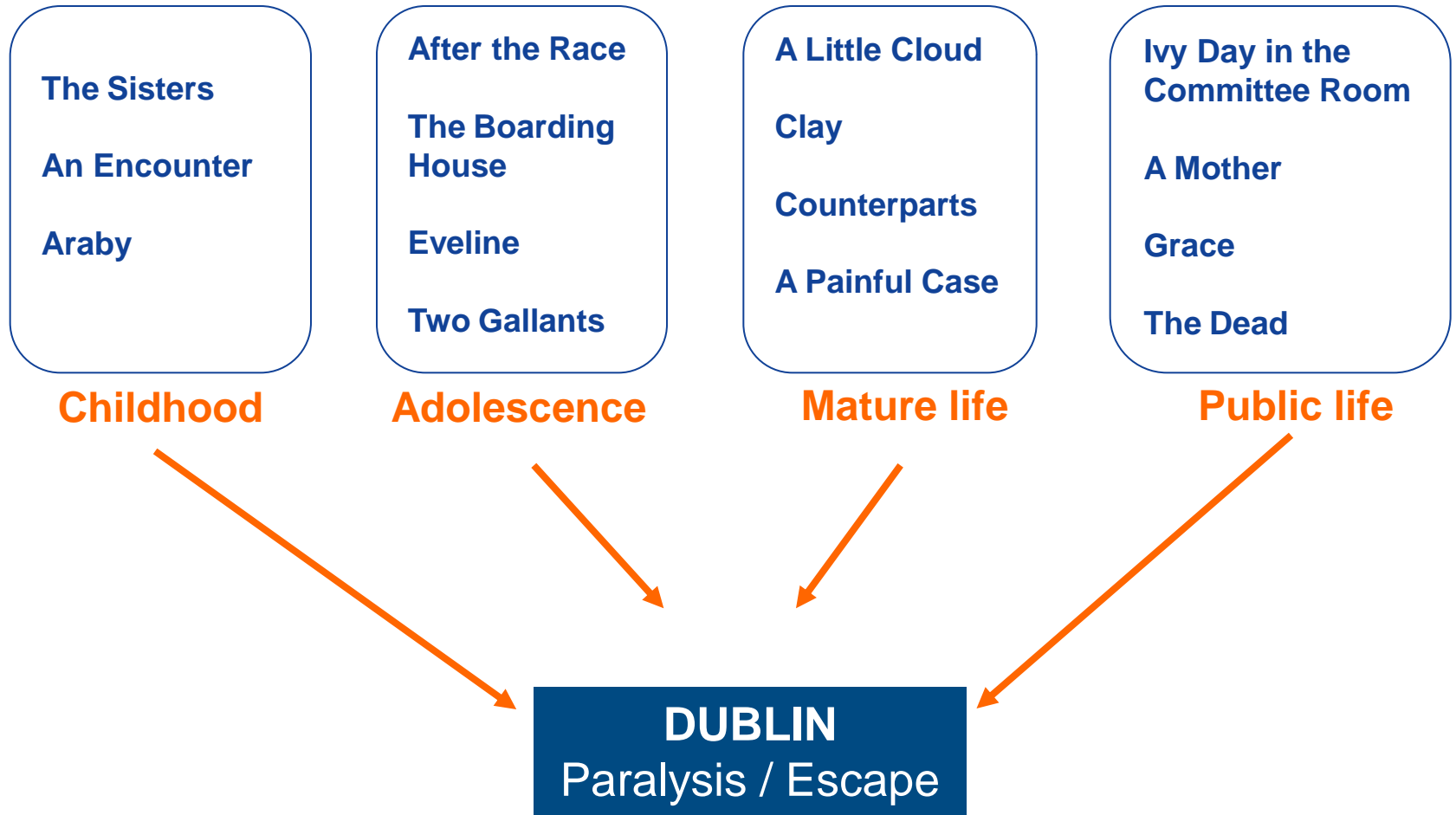
Nassau Street, Dublin, early 20th century.





James Joyce

5. *Dubliners*: structure and style





James Joyce

6. *Dubliners*: narrative technique and themes

- Joyce uses realistic, concise, **detailed descriptions**.
- But his **realism** is combined with **symbolism** → **double meaning of details**.
- He wants to take the reader beyond the surface of reality and he does it by using the technique of the **epiphany** → **‘the sudden spiritual manifestation’** of an **interior reality**.



James Joyce

6. *Dubliners*: epiphany

Joyce's aim → to take the reader beyond the usual aspects of life through **epiphany**.

It is the **special moment** in which a trivial gesture, an external object or a banal situation or an episode **lead the character to a sudden self-realisation about himself / herself** or about the reality surrounding him / her.

Understanding the epiphany in each story is the key to the story itself.

The epiphany is a moment of revelation both for the reader and the character.



James Joyce

6. *Dubliners*: paralysis

The main theme of *Dubliners* → **paralysis**.

Physical

paralysis

caused by
external forces

Moral paralysis

linked to religion,
politics and
culture

The climax of the stories → the coming to awareness by the characters of their own paralysis.

Alternative to paralysis → **escape which always leads to failure.**

W.F. Osborne, *In a Dublin Park, Light and Shade*, ca 1895.
Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland.





James Joyce

6. *Dubliners*: narrative technique and themes

- Each story opens in **medias res** and is mostly told from the perspective of a character. There is no omniscient narrator!
- Use of **free direct speech** and **free direct thought** → direct presentation of the character's thoughts, with limited mediation of the narrator.
- **Different linguistic registers** → the language suits the age, the social class and the role of the characters.
- Absence of a didactic and moral aim because of the **impersonality** of the artist.



James Joyce

7. *Dubliners*: Eveline

CHARACTERS

- **Eveline** → passive, influenced by her family's mentality
 - **Her father** → a violent and strict man → **her fear**
 - **Her mother** → conservative → **her duty**
 - **Frank** → Eveline's fiancé, a very kind, open-hearted and brave boy → **her unknown future**
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- **Antithesis** between Eveline's house and her new one in Buenos Aires → **Paralysis/Escape**



James Joyce

7. *Dubliners*: Eveline

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

- The story opens **in medias res** → *'She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue'*
- **Third-person narrator** but **Eveline's point of view**.
- **Subjective** perception of time: continuous shifts from past, to present or future.



Henri Matisse, *The Girl with Green Eyes*, 1908. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



James Joyce

7. *Dubliners*: Eveline

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

- **Epiphany** → a street organ which reminds Eveline of the promise she made to her dying mother.
- **Symbolic words** → **dust** = **decay**, **paralysis**
sea = **action**, **escape**

Themes →

- **struggle between one's happiness and one's responsibility**
- dream vs reality
- action and inactivity
- **paralysis and the failure to find a way out of it**



Joyce and Svevo

Joyce and Svevo met in Trieste. Joyce was working as an English teacher and Svevo asked him to be his private tutor. They soon became friends and their narrative techniques have many similarities.

They both used the interior monologue, adopting an internal point of view.

Svevo was one of the first Italian novelists to apply psychoanalytical discoveries to literature. He adopted forms of narration and a treatment of time that definitely made him an avant-garde novelist. To him, writing was therapeutic for all sorts of “diseases”, real or imaginary, from cigarette smoking to senility. Most of his writing is to a large degree autobiographical.