

## DEATH-IN-LIFE: WOMEN IN *DUBLINERS*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This article analyses three stories “Eveline”, “Clay” and “The Dead” in James Joyce’s Dubliners by focusing on female characters and them being dead souls because of the pressures they have. In the stories, religion and marriage are two important reasons of the oppression that the Irish society creates on women who are victimized and devalued regardless of the fact that they are married or not. The study also claims that the protagonists of these stories, Eveline, Maria and Gretta also meet on the same ground in mirroring each other and showing the same end for all women in Dubliners. In that sense, the reason why these three women are chosen is the possible connection of these women, i.e., Eveline is the younger version of all these women and if she remains unmarried, her older version would be Maria and if she gets married, she would be like Gretta, underscoring the same end for all women. Thus, this article aims to scrutinise the female characters as dead souls in the stories “Eveline”, “Clay” and “The Dead” and how they are silenced to hide their disappointment, frustration and unfulfilled desires by the society which depreciates them.*

Key words: *Dubliners; dead-souls; female characters; patriarchy; entrapment;*

James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914) covers a chain of stories of childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life and thus gives, as Joyce himself defines, “a chapter of moral history” of Ireland and he continues,

My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city 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. (qtd. in Walzl 408)

Thus, at the core of *Dubliners* lies Dublin with its people and Joyce tells various stories of Dubliners to give a better comprehension of the society with its social conventions by extensively portraying their lives. Hence, Joyce not only draws a physical map of the city for the readers, but by talking about

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diverse lives of various characters draws a narrative map. As Pound comments, Joyce

presents his people swiftly and vividly, he does not sentimentalise over them, he does not weave convolutions. He is a realist. [...] He gives the thing as it is. He is not bound by the tiresome convention that any part of life, to be interesting, must be shaped into conventional form of a “story.” [...] He gives us things as they are, not only for Dublin, but for every city. Erase the local names and a few specifically local allusions, and a few historic events of the past, and substitute a few different local names, allusions and events, and these stories could be retold in any town. (Pound 267)

Hence, the characters in *Dubliners* mirror the daily life in Dublin as well as the Irish society with their lifestyles and mindsets. However, the focal point of this article is the female characters in *Dubliners*, who are depicted as women of death-in-life because of many social expectations and constraints which victimize and entrap them, thus they try to reformulate their lives within all these restrictions, however, they become stuck where they are, Dublin. This article will exclusively focus on the female characters Eveline, Maria and Gretta in the stories “Eveline” (adolescence), “Clay” (maturity) and “The Dead” (public life) who are portrayed with their constrained lives and hence, selves in their constrictive society and therefore, these three women are ostracized by the same conventions about womanhood and marriage in the Irish society with its suffocating mind-set. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyse the female characters as dead souls in the everlasting labyrinth of despair in the stories “Eveline”, “Clay” and “The Dead” and how they are silenced to hide their disappointment and frustration by the society and religion they are forced to conform with.

Joyce’s *Dubliners*, with a wide range of characters from different ages and different life stages portrays Dublin in the early twentieth century. Every story in *Dubliners* narrates a piece of life with different characters, with whom Joyce depicts the social norms and mentality. Accordingly, Joyce creates all his characters from the framework of the social conditions and social rules and regulations of the time, that is, the morality of the time dominates all the Irish society (re)shaping the identities of men and women and their viewpoints. However, women in the society are paralyzed and thus victimized much more than men because of the patriarchal structure of the society that oppresses women in many ways. Bonnie Kime Scott suggests that “some of the men of *Dubliners*, who detect the paralysis of their positions through an epiphany, often touched off by a woman”, (for instance Gabriel has an epiphany with the help of women around him, his wife Gretta, his aunts, the housemaid Lily as

well as Miss Ivors) however, “the women of Dubliners are denied such illumination” (qtd. in Baccolini 21) because they are “functional instruments for men’s growth and awareness” (Baccolini 5) mainly because they have no other choices other than being a wife and mother, an already-constructed idea that defines the traditional gender role for women. That is, the place of women is specified in terms of marriage and religion (the dominant Catholic fate) and therefore, women are confined to marital and religious limitations, making them paralyzed, entrapped and “dead”. The reason why the abovementioned stories are chosen from different facets of life is to depict women from different stages of life and to make a connection between them. That is, each woman, Eveline, Maria and Gretta, mirrors each other and in one way or another they all show the same end for all women in *Dubliners*. Moreover, another reason to choose these three stories is the possible relationship between these women. That is, Eveline is the younger version of all these women and if she remains unmarried, her older version will be Maria and if she gets married, she will be like Gretta, showing the never-ending cycle for women. Accordingly, each woman holds mirror to a different age, social and marital status, and it is also understood that the life for women designed according to the expectations and restrictions of the society is invariable.

As abovementioned, marriage and religion are two important factors that influence women most. Marriage is significant to define the higher status of a woman in the society. Therefore, marriage becomes a way of escape for women since to be unmarried and moreover, to be both unmarried and old, devalues women in the society and they commonly become the targets of the jokes and insinuation. Therefore, what was/is expected for women is to be wives, mothers, fiancés or lovers, viz., a woman is defined and thus exists with a man. However, including the married ones, none of the female characters in *Dubliners*, is happy and they are all drown in a world of disappointment. That is, they do not have a say for themselves, and they become instruments for men to be used for different purposes such as caretaking of the house and doing the household chores as well as continuing the bloodline. Similarly, religion is also of great significance not only in terms of restrictions imposed to women but also in terms of underlining the values such as chastity and virginity for women, another limitation and oppression created on women. Accordingly, Joyce criticizes the Catholic Church’s role in expanding social and moral rigidity as women are both defined and then subjugated with religion reducing womanhood to virginity and chastity with its limitations on moral, gender roles and social expectations.

In the story “Eveline”, the protagonist is a young lady and the youngest of all women among the others and she tries to make a decision about her life.

The story is about her innermost feelings, conflicts and thoughts and there is no action throughout the story, however, with her thoughts, the reader expects her to act at the end and leave Dublin with her lover Frank. Nonetheless, the story ends with Eveline's decision to stay, and she not only says goodbye to Frank, but also to her dreams about her future. The story despite it lacking any action which can also be associated with the passivity of women, gives an in-depth analysis of Eveline who represents (unmarried) women like her. Although she is a young lady, she has the burden of her family on her shoulders as well as the society, and she feels worn-out. Since her mother is dead, she has the responsibility of her drunk and abusive father and her siblings and thus, she undertakes the role of the mother and tries to keep the family together, which is her mother's will before her death. Thus, she is entrapped in her family and cannot break the chains to free herself. However, she wants to "Escape!" because "she must escape! Frank would save her!" (Joyce 41). Another reason of her inability to leave is her oath since she, in religious terms, cannot break the oath she gives to her mother before her death. Henceforth, when the setting is considered in the story, the picture of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, a saint as the reminder of religion, on the wall of her room depicts the religious pressure she has and makes her remember the oath given to her mother. That is to say, Eveline is victimized by the pressure of the patriarchal Catholic family structure, and she cannot escape for her freedom. However, ironically, it is again the picture of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, viz., religion, that cannot protect Eveline from her abusive father and the life in which she is victimized. There is also another picture on the wall creating a contrast with the picture of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, a man's picture, a school friend of her father, who "is in Melbourne now" (Joyce 38). Although Eveline does not know this man, the picture and the man become the symbol of freedom as well as an escape from the restricting Catholic Irish society. When the two pictures are considered, Eveline's inner conflict becomes more concrete as the picture of the saint represents religion, family and her home that she cannot leave while the other picture represents Frank, a stranger for Eveline, the possible saviour (a man, Frank) for whom she can leave her home, that is restrictions and freedom, the two choices for Eveline. However, the yellowness of the picture of the man also foreshadows her passivity in escaping with Frank very similar to her yellowish desire to leave home and to be happy outside her home. Therefore, she is in between and has the burden of making a decision for herself and her life.

Furthermore, Eveline wants to escape because "[t]hen she would be married- she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then" (Joyce 38). So, she would not be like her mother and would not "[fee] herself in danger of her father's violence" (Joyce 38). However, she also thinks about the rumours

if she leaves as she expresses her thoughts as “what would they [the society] say of her in the stores when they found out she had run away with a fellow?” (Joyce 38). To put it in another way, she has the burden of the societal norms, and she thinks about the gossip if she goes with a man. Hence, the all-embracing pressure of religion, family and society make her suffocate and she tries to “weigh each side of the question” (38) whether she should go with Frank whom she little knows but with whom “she would be married-she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then” (Joyce 38). However, the weight of the pressure she feels is so immense that she tries to find excuses to stay as she thinks “sometimes he [her father] could be very nice” (Joyce 41). The conflict Eveline has is about herself because she is so paralyzed with her and her life that she cannot take action. She is well aware of her abusive father, her hard work to keep her family together and her trying to be the mother figure in the house, however, she also knows that she is not happy, and it is not what she wants from life. Although “she [stands] up in a sudden impulse of terror” to escape, the story ends with her decision not to go with Frank who is a stranger (Joyce 41). Her dreaming a happy life even with a man whom she does not know remains as a dream, nevertheless, it is also ironical that even in her dreams, she is with a man, which shows the societal pressure on her as a woman who should be married. The only way for a woman to gain respect is a man. The story ends with her saying goodbye not only to Frank but also to her dreams of having a happy life and “she set[s] her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal” (Joyce 43) not a woman and an individual.

Another entrapped and invisible woman is Maria in the story “Clay”, who can be thought as the older version of Eveline, also stated by Edward Brandabur as

a grown-up Eveline [...] just as the Virgin Mary is regarded traditionally as a ‘new Eve.’ Maria is a projection of what becomes of the lower-class Dublin woman frustrated in love by her own inhibitions and that of course describes her precursor, Eveline. (67)

Owen underscores the title of the story and its relationship with Maria as

clay can be considered to symbolize Maria’s sharing with us a common substance, or alternatively, to represent her personal malleability, for although the immediate folkloric context presages no more than her imminent, physical death, Joyce allows us to take it also as a symbol of her spiritual barrenness: she is one of Dublin’s living dead.” (344)

It is underlined that Maria is also one of the women-in death in Dubliners, pointing out all the women in Irish society belittled and devalued due to the social and religious pressures. Maria is a middle-aged woman working in a laundry at the Dublin by Lamplight which is described by Joyce to Stanislaus as a place

run by a society of Protestant spinsters, widows, and childless women—I expect—as a Magdalen’s home. The phrase Dublin by Lamplight means that Dublin by lamplight is a wicked place full of wicked and lost women who a kindly committee gathers together for the work of washing my dirty shirts. (qtd . in Stallman and Backus 133)

Accordingly, Maria is also a “wicked and lost” woman and as a spinster, she works and lives in this laundry and as she is not married, and she does not have a home and although she has the desire to live with Joe and his family, she “had become accustomed to the life of the laundry” (Joyce 111). It is also ironical that the laundry is the home of prostitutes and other wicked women and Maria as an unmarried woman also lives there with the role of a nun, helping other women. Thus, religiously speaking, although she has the burden of the Catholic Church, she tries to survive by doing religious activities. Besides, her name also suggests a religious connotation as she is “a woman who will never “marry” and whose name is ironically “Maria” as paronomasia insists throughout the text on foregrounding marriage while thematically demonstrating its sclerosis” (Raynaud 341). Moreover, she “used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to live with” (Joyce 111). Thus, Maria’s religious conflict is obvious as she has the burden of the Catholic religion, and it also offers her being a nun as an unmarried old woman by helping other “wicked and lost” women (Joyce 111). Furthermore, Maria, throughout her life, never has the control of her life, but it is controlled and dominated by others since she does not have a space for herself. She must play her role as a subservient middle-aged woman, who is always invisible in the society due to her marital status and age. Accordingly, she has to play the role that is created by the society, and she must conform the expectations of the society as a single, old and religious woman and accordingly, she is successful in playing her role as “[e]veryone was so fond of Maria” (Joyce 110), underscoring her struggle to survive as a victimized woman just because of her marital status and age.

However, with her deepest thoughts and feelings, it is understood that she is disappointed, frustrated and not happy to lead that kind of a life, but she

has very limited options as a woman. Very similar to Eveline, she is always reminded of her marital status by other women including those in her workplace. The story takes place on the evening of All Saints Day, Hallow Eve, which is also the former name of the story. W. T Noon points out the importance of the time of the story and its religious importance as “All Hallow Eve, or Hallowe’en has a spiritual core of meaning in Catholic countries like Ireland” (Noon 93), and as Cólín Owens states it is “the end of the Celtic year, the crossing-over time between old and new years” (Owens 338) and

[s]ince it marks coincident death and birth, it is disordered: ‘At Hallowe’en the elimination of boundaries, between the dead and living, between the sexes, between one man’s property and another’s and, in divinations, between the present and the future, all symbolize the return of chaos’. (Owens 338)

insinuating the chaos Maria has in her life and mind, that is, her “confusions, misapprehensions, maskings and unmaskings” (Owens 334). During the preparations of the barmbracks, she becomes the target of other women as an unmarried and elderly woman when “Lizzie Fleming said Maria was sure to get the ring” (Joyce 112). Maria tries to stay calm and ignorant, but her eyes reveal her disappointment. Then, she is again offended by “the stylish young lady behind the counter” in the store where she goes to buy some plumcake to Joe when the young lady asks her if it was the “wedding cake she wanted to buy” (Joyce 114), a malicious statement deliberately made. So, Maria becomes the target of verbal abuse of the young lady in the store just because of her marital status and age, showing the restrictions and pressure of the society in terms of marriage and women. Later, on the tram Maria has to sit next to an elderly gentleman whom she sees as “a colonel-looking man” (Joyce 112) who is very nice to her, restoring her image in her eyes but in a different reality, which still makes her feel good as a woman. When she finally arrives, she is welcome by Joe and the children but as she forgets the plumcake because of “the gentleman with greyish moustache” (Joyce 115), she again loses the chance to find the ring (marriage-family-happiness-respect) in the game prepared by the children this time. She is “coloured with shame, vexation and disappointment” (Joyce 115) when she realizes that she forgets the plumcake on the tram because of the gentleman who makes her feel a woman. Although nobody knows what she feels and what happens on the train, she feels ashamed and guilty but at the same time valued and liked by the man. Nonetheless, Maria’s disappointment is more evident when she forgets/ does not sing the second line of the song “I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls” from *Balfe’s Bohemian girl*, which is “I dreamt that suitors sought my hand / That knights upon bended knee” (Joyce 118). The reason for her

discontent is that there is no one to kneel. In that sense, Maria's situation, viz., being victimized by the society, especially other women, depicts the pressure she feels as a woman and how she must suppress her desires and struggle with it.

When compared to Eveline, there is action in "Clay", however, the story is also mainly about Maria's thoughts and innermost feelings, her challenges, dreams and disappointment. As a woman who is supposed to be a wife and mother according to the social conventions, she becomes an outcast, which makes her question her life. She used to be the nanny of Joe and his brother, so to some extent she fulfils the desire to be a mother, however, she is not married, and she is entrapped in her loneliness and silence to hide her frustration and despair. Moreover, the people around her always tease her, making the burden of these social pressure more unbearable, thus victimizes her more and more.

The last invisible woman is Gretta in "The Dead", the last story in *Dubliners*. Gretta, unlike Eveline and Maria, is a married woman, however, she is equally unhappy and disappointed. She is depicted as an obedient and invisible wife of Gabriel who always speaks on behalf of her. In the very beginning of the story, she is like a doll, Mrs. Conroy, with whom Gabriel plays his marriage game, however, through the end of the story, Gretta becomes the centre of the story who helps Gabriel to have an epiphany, but she cannot have any self-understanding as Baccolini states

unlike men, women in *Dubliners* do not seem to reach a recognition about themselves and an understanding of their identity. Therefore, women in Joyce's stories tend to be important not as much for what they do but rather for what they stand for or what they stimulate. (5)

Gretta can also be thought as the married woman version of Eveline and Maria since as a married woman Gretta is the ideal woman who does what the society expects from her, having a higher status just because of her marriage. However, at the end of the story, Gretta breaks her silence and reveals her hidden past/ memory of Michael Furey to Gabriel by experiencing an emotional catharsis due to the song which makes her remember her past and ex-love. In other words, she takes action unlike Eveline and Maria, maybe for the first time in her life, an outburst of her silence, entrapment and desolation, that is, she speaks and resists in her own way. Although at first she hesitates to tell the reason of her sadness to Gabriel when she hears the song *The Lass of Aughrim*, she says "I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song" (Joyce 250). Then she calmly tells the story about



Michael Furey who is dead now and adds that he “was very fond of [Gretta] and he was such a gentle boy. [They] used to go out together, walking, [...] He was going to study singing only for his health. He had a very good voice, poor Micheal Furey” (Joyce 252). The broken words she uses and her calm but hesitant way of speaking also reveal that it is difficult for her to break the chains of the image created by the society and Gabriel, yet she determinedly tells her ex-love in bits and pieces, showing her resistance and self-expression.

Gabriel, being unprepared for such a confession and resistance from Gretta, understands that he knows very little about his doll-wife and starts to compare himself with the dead lover and Gretta’s memory about him. Here is the moment of his epiphany for Gabriel, which changes him and his life and shatter what he believes and “for the first time he recognizes, with the force of a revelation, that his life is a failure” (Ellmann 250). As Baccolini argues that

[m]emory, in fact, is functional only to men in Dubliners; Joyce’s women, on the other hand, are figures of memory for men, functional instruments for men’s growth and awareness but otherwise incapable of reaching an understanding about themselves and attaining the status of subjects of their own lives, whether they are the center of consciousness of a story or not. (5)

That’s to say, although Gretta shares her sad memory about the dead lover with Gabriel, she is unaware of both creating an awareness in Gabriel and showing her power as a silent woman. In that sense, Gretta is seen as a strong woman emotionally and psychologically. As Baccolini claims, she is a tool for Gabriel’s growth and epiphany and she becomes the centre of the story as a critical figure not only for Gabriel but from a broader perspective, a critical figure for women in *Dubliners*, who can speak up in the patriarchal world she is entrapped in (Baccolini 5). That is to say, her confession is an inundation of her frustration, disappointment and her invisibility in/during her marriage, however, it breaks her “obedient wife” image for Gabriel who creates it by himself and for himself by underestimating and ignoring her as an individual. The time when he really sees her wife is depicted in the story as

A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terra-cotta and salmon-pink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. But he could hear little save the noise of laughter and

dispute on the front steps, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man's voice singing. (Joyce 239-240)

As soon as he realizes his wife, he feels something strange, unfamiliar about her. Maybe it is always there but Gabriel has not seen it before. He can see that his wife is thinking very deeply and this song makes her remember a significant memory because “[t]here was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something” (Joyce 240). Although Gretta is again silent and not joining the conversation the other people have, Gabriel is suspicious about his wife's silence for the first time and thus he has an observant eye on her and he sees her red cheeks and shining eyes (Joyce 242). So, for the first time, Gabriel sees her wife Gretta, not the image he creates in his mind.

The story is not by coincidence the last story of *Dubliners* in terms of the depiction of female characters in the story, i.e., Gretta, Lily, Miss Ivors as well as Gabriel's aunts, Kate and Julia Morkan, are portrayed as strong women who in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously break the social conventions and restrictions that imprison them. Lily, for example is the young maid of the house who welcomes Gabriel and Gretta, and she is courageous enough to talk freely to Gabriel, even in a sarcastic way. Gabriel, feeling superior both as a man and upper class person to talk about Lily's marital status, says “I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?” but Lily gives an unexpected and brave answer “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” with a glance back at him over her shoulder, making Gabriel perplexed (Joyce 202) because for Gabriel, marriage is the only dream Lily can/should have and what is expected from her as an unmarried lower-class woman. Lily as the maid of the house challenges Gabriel as an upper-class man, which is an attack to his authority. Thus, the clash of the classes as well as the sexes is disturbing for Gabriel who believes that as an upper-class man, he has the right to make any comments about Lily, the maid. Accordingly, in the story, the first woman breaks the traditional image of woman is Lily, and this conversation is also of great importance as it foreshadows the upcoming events as well as Gabriel's epiphany through the end.

Similarly, Miss Molly Ivors is the only educated woman among others and also the only woman Gabriel avoids in the party since she always teases Gabriel with her statements and questioning attitude. She also disputes Gabriel's authority by criticizing Gabriel's working for an English and Protestant journal and being ashamed of his Irish identity and calls him “West Briton!” (Joyce 214). Not being able to cope with her bitter statements and

criticisms threatening his superiority, Gabriel finds the solution by talking behind her by mocking with her physical appearance and (un)femininity (also depicted clearly with her description as “Miss” Ivors, a reference to her marital status), which shows his mindset which is formulated by the traditional understanding of the society. Accordingly, it is of great importance that the crucial point of Gabriel’s conversations with both Lily and Miss Ivors is the marital status as well as femininity, showing his narrow-mindedness about women which is only being a wife and mother in a marriage, the only choice for all of them. This is also the same with his wife Gretta as for Gabriel the main purpose of a woman is marriage and thus a woman exists only with a man through marriage and that’s why he tries to rebuild his authority as a man to both Lily and Miss Ivors in that way.

Lastly, the aunts, Kate and Julia Morkan, who are described as “two small, plainly dressed old women” (Joyce 204) also worth mentioning because they are the hosts of the annual Christmas dinner. In other words, they are responsible for Gabriel’s epiphany thanks to the dinner they give in their house. Thus, the setting in that sense is important because apart from representing old age for women, the aunts are the ones whom Gabriel trusts more due to the being the only nephew of the aunts. Although they make Gabriel feel superior by inviting him as the most honourable guest, when they arrive, the aunts do not seem to care him much with their ignorant behaviors and talks. That is, they are not interested in Gabriel or his job so much, on the contrary, what they care is only the annual Christmas dinner, which is obvious with their hollow talks with Gabriel who gets prepared for the party meticulously. Here, the time of the annual Christmas dinner is also of great significance in underlying the importance of the Catholic Church on the characters, especially on the Aunts because as Cowart underscores that “[t]raditionally, the Feast of Epiphany concludes the Christmas season, and attentive readers of ‘The Dead’ have always known that its setting is not a matter of accident” and the party “takes place during the Christmas holidays and apparently towards their end” (Cowart 499), viz., the story takes place on the Day of Epiphany, January 6, a religious day, the commemoration of the first manifestation of Jesus Christ by the Magi. When the timing of the dinner is taken into consideration, the Aunts’ ignorant attitude toward Gabriel is more obvious since they care the dinner much more than Gabriel’s coming or having a speech, underlying the importance of religion on the characters, especially on women yet it is also interesting that the Aunts question the pressure of the church on women at the same time when Kate Morkan, as the victim of the religious pressure, challenges the Church when she talks about women’s (including Julia Morkan’s) being dismissed from the church choir as

[Aunt Kate] turned fiercely on her niece and said:

“I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it’s not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it. But it’s not just, Mary Jane, and it’s not right.”

[and continues]

“O, I don’t question the pope’s being right. I’m only a stupid old woman and I wouldn’t presume to do such a thing. But there’s such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia’s place I’d tell that Father Healey straight up to his face...” (Joyce 221-222)

Despite being the victims of the religious and societal pressure as old and unmarried women, the aunts, especially Kate Morkan resist the oppression and questions the authority of the Church, i.e., religion by plainly expressing her thoughts in front of everyone. As Aytül Özüm comments “the pope [representing the oppression of religion] performs his authoritative power over Julia, a female artist. Kate is not afraid of being punished when she challenges the pope’s so-called incontrovertible decision” (78).

Gretta is the most noticeable one among the other female characters in the story and when she is compared to Eveline and Maria, she breaks the traditional image of women created by the patriarchal society. In that way, she becomes more visible by calmly resisting the restrictions when she tells her hidden past story about her ex-lover. Unlike Eveline and Maria who are oppressed due to being man-less, Gretta oppresses Gabriel by telling Micheal Furey and thus, depicts that she does not care what Gabriel would think about her or their marriage. Moreover, her talking about Micheal Furey can also be thought as an outburst of her feelings and thoughts about the pressure she has in her marriage and life. The dinner is also a turning point for her and especially the song has a triggering role in revelation and realization of herself. From the very beginning of their arrival to the house, her shadowy existence and Gabriel’s talking on behalf of her can be considered to be a foreshadowing of her outburst after the party. Hence, Gabriel has the epiphany and realizes that the image of her wife in her mind is not the same with the real Gretta and “[h]e did not question her again for he felt that she would tell him of herself” (Joyce 252), but he starts to question himself, his marriage and his life. Hence, he realizes that he does not know Gretta and her innermost feelings and her

past. Accordingly, Gretta who seems to be a traditional wife for Gabriel is the one challenging the societal norms. Despite her resistance, very similar to Maria and Eveline, Gretta does not take action physically like leaving Gabriel (most probably), but her resistance is only verbal and as a traditional wife, it is what she can do yet much better than not taking any action.

To conclude, the women in the above-mentioned stories with their conflicts, disappointments and dreams depict the morality and the mind-set of the society in terms of the position of women and the significance of religion in Dublin. Women are victimized by the social conventions and are entrapped within the strict restrictions regarding marriage and religion. Joyce by portraying these women of death-in-life, demonstrates their silence, discontentment and frustration. Eveline frees herself by dreaming to leave and find happiness with Frank but ends up staying with her tyrant father and siblings. Maria, full of desires and dreams, ends up with her silence, playing the role of a happy middle-aged woman, who seems to be content with her life. Gretta, the most courageous of all women, talks about her ex-lover, however, she takes action in the past, not in present. Her keeping her past as a secret for years showcases that she has been thinking about Michael Furey for years, also an indicator of her disappointment with her life and marriage. In that sense, all these three women are not only entrapped within the social conventions, but also within their memories and dreams and although they are aware of their positions and what they desire in their lives, they cannot take action. The society's paralysing effect on women shows itself on Eveline and Maria as their inability to give up their habits in terms of family (the drunkard father and siblings for Eveline and Joe and her visits and job for Maria) and religion (her promise to God and mother for Eveline and her workplace and job for Maria). For Gretta, the paralysing effect of the society shows itself as her being obedient on the surface but a dead soul in the hands of her marriage with Gabriel. She plays the role of the woman the society expects, however, she is living in her memories, an escape from the reality she lives in. All women take action in their dreams and memories, however, in their lives their attempts to free themselves from the norms and rules of the society become futile and they become dead souls of the society.

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