

Subversion of Conventional Gender Roles in James Joyce's Selected Stories from  
*Dubliners*

The research paper raises an issue of the subversion of conventional gender roles by one of the most popular modernist writers of the twentieth century, James Joyce who challenges the contemporary expectations of the gender roles assigned to each gender. The modernist masterpiece authored by him, *Dubliners* is the compilation of fifteen stories. There have been many discussions and researches on the portrayal of cultural, spiritual and moral degradation of Dubliners as represented by Joyce. It has been approached from the perspective of the leading male protagonists. It has mostly been studied as Joyce's criticism of modernism in the twentieth century Ireland.

However, there has been rare discussion on Joyce's representation of Irish females and their social position in the contemporary Irish society. Little has been discussed as to the changing gender roles that Joycean symbolic representation embodies: "Few critics have sought to provide fresh descriptions of Joyce's female characters" (Henke xi). Being a witness to the contemporary social, cultural, political and religious transformations that were emerging in the Irish movements for Ireland's independence from British colonization, Joyce championed at mastering the literary representation of the changes that were found influencing each and every aspect of the society.

Joyce's *Dubliners* has been widely analyzed to show his attempt to document a history of Ireland, a history where the country encounters the dark realities. Joyce was familiar with the changes taking place in the contemporary Ireland. He was vehemently annoyed by the restrictive values, beliefs and practices as forced by the religious doctrines of Catholic Irish society as well as the loss of original Irish traditions because of modern influences of European countries, especially Britain. Ireland was at a struggle for its emancipation from the British colonization. It would

be freed and would be just born in 1921. However, British thoughts and lifestyles along with Protestant system of teachings continue to disturb the genuine morals of Ireland. The present paper scrutinizes Joyce's observation on the female subjectivity and its perpetual transformation in alignment with the modern changes taking place in the political, social and religious arenas: "Indeed, women's roles in Irish society in the late nineteenth century were affected by still more sociopolitical force" (Henke 13). Since Joyce was in an arch rivalry with the controlling and manipulating ideals of Catholic church, his narration in the selected stories challenges the accepted patriarchal structure of power distribution as promoted by the male-dominated mechanism of catholic church and subversively create a new promising gender roles that refutes the traditional celebration of women's submission, marginalization, domestication and victimization by inculcating the masculine qualities that a male is privileged by the patriarchal propaganda of heterosexuality as Brivic Sheldon observes that Joyce's central female characters all exert "strong phallic powers. . . by having (or thinking of) their own men in opposition to their mates...a will to fix her own identity apart from the role given her by society" (29).

Joyce expresses a strong hatred against Catholic Church, the doctrines which paralyze the wills and desires of each individual. While reflecting upon the degrading status of Dubliners due to the cultural influence of Britain and the religious restrictions upon the individuals, Joyce remarkably represents the miserable conditions of the women whose victimization is induced by the limiting values of the Catholic Church: "One reason for the paucity of female speech in *Dubliners* is obvious: Joyce creates a textual Dublin in which women are often absent" (Marlena 441). However, the paper attempts to probe into the selected stories to explore the newly emerging social phenomenon of the female under the wings of the changing

political, social, cultural and religious revolutions. Joyce experiments with the existing structure of gender roles by subverting it and empowers his female protagonists by representing the influence of the then feminist movement that had already penetrated across Europe the impact of which could be seen in his portrayal of female characters.

Joyce's depiction of changing gender roles on the part of female subjectivity is inspired by the transitional period that shows the conflicting tussle between the long-standing dominance of Catholic Church and its conservative oppression over women's individuality and the unprecedented expansion of feminist movements that generated the gender consciousness among women because of which the liberation of women for their own freedom and independence took a momentum. Its impact was felt in Ireland which Joyce symbolically depicts in the literary form of his female characters who inherit almost the masculine expectations and qualities. In the course of representing the new image of Irish women, Joyce deeply exposes the discriminative Catholic doctrines that limit and confine the individual identity of female Dubliners as Suzette A. Henke argues, "In *Dubliners*, Joyce portrays women in turn-of-the century Ireland accurately, and for the most part, sympathetically. He makes it clear that his female characters are trapped in the limited roles assigned to them by the Church and by Irish society" (17). Joyce was against the pervasive impact of the restrictive Catholic Church upon the Irish individuals. He was a part of the revivalist movement during the nineteenth century when Britain's political and cultural influence still affected the internal values of Ireland. Anglo-Irish Roman Catholic Church and its religious doctrines paralyzed the individuals by discouraging their individual wills and desires in the name of Church values. Everyone was

compelled to be subjugated to the established traditions and values as enforced by the then Catholic Church.

Even though Ireland was trying to be free from British colonization, its social, political and religious life was controlled by Britain's influence. So, most of his characters are seen spiritually, morally and culturally paralyzed because of restrictive Catholic values that disregard their individual interests. Thus, Joyce's loss of faith upon Catholic Church and its paralyzing effects upon Ireland should be the contextual backdrop in order to interpret his depiction of female Dubliners like Jeffrey Hibbert argues:

James Joyce lost his faith in the Roman Catholic Church and its dogma and that the historical conditions of Joyce's loss of faith provide an inescapable context for reading Joyce's works. By attending to the tradition of freethinking writers of the same period, he demonstrates that Joyce's revolt against Christianity was a part of a larger network of anti-religious thinking in literature and philosophy. (196)

Like these lines claim, Joyce's anti-Catholic thoughts are found at his representation of females whose psyche orients towards achieving their own space, individuality and freedom of speech by liberating themselves from the confining walls of the patriarchal Catholic values. He gives them the power of masculine values that the patriarchal distributions of power structures cherish the most.

Such distribution of masculine qualities in his female characters introduces his new philosophy of gender roles that subvert the traditional structure of heterosexual celebration. By this subversion of traditional roles, he seems to suggest the liberation of Irish women through his imagined liberated female characters in stories like "The

Boarding House”, “The Dead”, “The Painful case”, “A Little Cloud” and “Eveline” as McGrory observes:

Each story in *Dubliners* slightly shifts the roles and appearances of the female characters, with each providing another piece to the whole puzzle of women’s lives. Indeed, in each section of the chronologically structured *Dubliners*, Joyce includes a story permeated with the impact of the rigorous Catholic doctrine on the lives of the women of Dublin...Finally, at the end of the collection, Joyce takes a new turn in his criticism by offering an example of a female character in “The Dead” who has the potential for psychological liberation from the constraints of the Irish-Catholic-Victorian culture of Dublin. (24-25)

Since Ireland would recently be released from the cage of British colonization, the society was still governed by the Victorian discourse of patriarchal dichotomy between masculine and feminine being. Victorian hegemony of heteronormativity created the gap between the existence of male and female. The conventional celebration of heteronormativity continued to privilege the male with more freedom and public life while it always undermined the female counterpart. The male-dominated discourse of patriarchy emphasized on the division of power distributions. Here, patriarchy is used “in the original sense of the word, as the intimate power of men over women, a power which is historically exercised within the family by the male as the breadwinner, property owner, or armed defender of women and children” (Ehrenreich 284) which looked down women as the machine for bearing and rearing the children. Women were considered to be the caretaker of the family values and objects of sexual satisfaction for the males.

The practice of heteronormativity as designed by patriarchal institutions assigned the particular roles to males and females on the basis of cultural privileges and powers. It instigated the politics of binary gender positions in which being male was considered to be the superior being in comparison to being female: “We have defined heteronormativity as the uncritical adoption of heterosexuality as an established norm or standard. Heterosexism is the system by which heterosexuality is assumed to be the only acceptable and viable option and hence to be superior, more natural and dominant” (Perlesz et. all 183). In the light of this definition, we can understand that heteronormativity is the cultural construction of gender assumptions that assume it to be naturally given. Such constructed gender roles in which being woman is characterized as submissive, conformist, dependent, nurturing, silent and serving is culturally executed in such a way that it looks very natural and given. Critically analyzing and deeply unfolding the internal politics of patriarchal heteronormativity and its hegemonic division of roles for the superiority of the males over females, Lois Tyson identifies:

*Traditional gender roles* cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, they cast women as emotional, (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities, which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership, and decision-making positions...Patriarchy is thus, by definition, *sexist*, which means it promotes the belief that the belief that women are innately inferior to men. This belief in the inborn inferiority of women is a form of what is called *biological essentialism* because it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women. (85)

In these lines, Tyson seems to vehemently attack upon the constructed difference between male and female. She peels off the politics behind the working of the dichotomy between masculine and feminine roles as imposed by the patriarchal tradition. The traditional roles as masculine and feminine are more discriminative and manipulative for Tyson because it places the male on superior position with all privileges in their hand and women are marginalized at the domesticated space of the family. Such created differences are only the result of patriarchal dominance that functions as the institution and enforce the gender roles as the cultural essence to keep women submissive. Within such institutionalized structures of patriarchal society, the role of women is to subscribe themselves to the interest of the male's expectations. It takes away women's natural right to freedom and individuality. The conventional role of women as highlighted above by Tyson was the tragic reality of the Victorian society that persisted until the rise of the feminist movement in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Lois Tyson's exposition of masculine and feminine dichotomy occupies the central mission of the theoretical movement known as *Gender Studies*. In the world of academia, history and Arts as well as Literature, the birth of *Gender Studies* found its germination in the 1970s after the success of feminist movement that came into spotlight in the aftermath of suffrage movement during the 1920s:

The concept of gender, as we now use it came into common parlance during the early 1970s. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line of demarcation between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviors and competencies, which are then assigned as either 'masculine' or feminine'. The purpose of affirming a sex/gender distinction was to argue that the actual physical or mental effects of biological difference

had been exaggerated to maintain a patriarchal system of power and to create a consciousness among women that they were naturally better suited to 'domestic' roles. (Pilcher and Whelehan 56)

These lines give us a historical account on the rise of *Gender Studies* and clearly explain the purpose of it. Gender Studies as a literary theory pays a serious attention to the gender discourse of the patriarchal society that celebrates the dichotomy of the two sexed bodies: male and female. It makes a critical adventure into disclosing the male-dominated politics of demarcation between male and female under the guise of two gendered subjects and thus, assigns the roles that privilege man with more power and render woman as inferior being. The discursive division of gender roles as highlighted by Tyson above is sharply dismantled and disestablished by the different feminists and female activists by questioning the validity of the term 'Gender'. *Gender Studies* came into being with the major question upon the authenticity or ambivalent position of the word 'gender'

*Gender Studies* is the byproduct of the long historical struggles of the feminist movement that underwent a series of movements marking the beginning in 1920s when the suffrage movement reached the peak with the demand for the equal voting rights of women. It went on witnessing the production of various feminists' works that demystify the mysterious mainstream representation of women's subject in the patriarchal society. Judith Halberstam's groundbreaking concept of 'female masculinity' challenged the long-held celebration of heteronormativity that combined the sex and gender together defining womanhood in terms of their domestic identity. Judith Butler's *Gender Troubles* raised a sharp question over the existing definition of 'gender' and differentiated it from sex. She problematized the historically accepted understanding of 'gender' and redefined it to contend that one's gender identity is



culturally constructed but is determined by how one performs. Halberstam and Butler's rediscovery of gender concept opened a gateway to the introduction of new gendered subjects known as female masculinity and male femininity. Such concepts refigure the existence of the woman and man who can have the body embodying the either of the gender qualities which can be seen being reflected in Joycean female and male characters. His characters do not conform to the traditional demarcation of masculine qualities for male and feminine qualities for female. But rather their subjectivity is imbued with the interchangeable quality of female masculinity and male femininity. Such indeterminacy of absolute of gender in his characters illustrates the subversion of traditional gender roles in his representation of the Dubliners in the face of the modern Ireland.

Since Joyce belonged to the era that was dominated by the patriarchal structures and institutions, analysis of his subversion of gender roles by rupturing the prevalent gender structure of heteronormativity requires a historical review upon the patriarchal organization of Dublin in early twentieth century Ireland. Such a historical revisiting for the purpose of relocating the historical truth lies at the core of the theoretical project contextualized gender studies. This project questions at the historically accepted central truth and seeks for the alternative accounts in order to account for the actuality. Thus, contextualized gender studies reading for the present paper aims at figuring out the actual position of female Dubliners within the context of catholic expectations of women and it further inquires how Joycean writing contributes to relocating the placement of female position in the transitional phase of Ireland under the growing social, political and cultural transformations . The central essence of historically aware gender studies deals with the fact that the historical truth is manipulated by those in power. The powerful ones create the discourse through

which they enforce the norms in ways that look natural and given. The inquiry in the present research paper will dig into how patriarchy as a male-constructed discourse of Catholic Church subjugated the position of female Dubliners in the twentieth century. The discourse of patriarchy and its politics of heteronormativity ruled granted much power and privilege to men over women. Like the discriminative system of heterosexualism that penetrated at the backbone of social and cultural system across the world during twentieth century, Dublin society was no exception:

The dominant base of societal construction throughout history has been patriarchal at its core; the Dublin society of 20<sup>th</sup> century is no exception. The masculine is the dominant and dominating entity. Masculinity though is certainly not a concrete, easily definable concept; it is instead a fluid, ever changing, protean, and often ambiguous construct constantly being reconfigured by social interactions and social institutions.” (William 5)

In these lines, it is stressed that Dublin society was structured by the institutionalized values of the patriarchal system in which essence of feminine was placed as subordinate gender. It was the society under the dominance of the patriarchy governed by the masculine institutions. One of the prevailing masculine institutions that imposed the hegemonic system of heteronormativity promoting the gender roles as the natural reality was the ruling of Catholic Church. Attacking at the fundamental nature of the then Catholic Church and its anti-feminist doctrines of heterosexualism, Suzette L. McGrory argues, “But the doctrines and dictates of the Church were especially rigorous for women, who were expected to model themselves after the Blessed Virgin Mary, the ultimate paragon of a strictly prescribed “femininity” (9). Here, the lines expose the Catholic Church’s expectation of woman as submissive, nurturing and silent ideal beauty as the essence of being female.

Contextualizing the historical picture of gender biases and religious doctrines of Catholic Church in promoting the gender difference between male and female in relation to the Victorian politics of gender treatment, McGrory further identifies:

While Victorian British and middle class cultural assumptions stymied the progress of Dublin's women, the Catholic Church dictated the specific roles women could assume, creating and controlling their lives, making them perform roles as de-sexualized and subservient handmaidens to male power and male desire. Thus, the text of *Dubliners* offers a specific of the ways women were oppressed and consumed by the Catholic superstructure which established their roles within the society. (2)

However, breaking away from such conventional expectations of Catholic Church through the exploitative discourse of patriarchal heteronormativity, James Joyce uses his artistic power in order to experiment the subversion of gender roles for decentering and dismantling the long-held hierarchical distribution of gender powers that ruled under the mechanism of heterosexuality and heteronormativity. As a free writing thinker, Joyce discloses his sharp indignation towards the Catholic Church and its patriarchal treatment towards women.

The masculine tradition of gender understanding is destabilized by Joyce through the invention of female characters that embody the masculine qualities, social roles and cultural behaviors which always ensured the respectable position for male in the society for centuries. Since masculinity is a fluid and ever-changing socially constructed concept, it is subjected to changes along with the evolution of societal transitions. Joyce's portrayal of women within the frame of men's quality relocates and reclaims the reconsideration of historical practice of masculinity and it aims at subverting the traditional gender roles. Such portrayal is, on the other hand, is inspired

by the emerging phenomenon of movement for women's liberation in the U.K and America and also the revivalist movement in Ireland that protested against the dictation of Catholic Church into the individual freedom.

The rise of new woman as the new social image of women also seems to influence Joycean depiction of female characters in the new frame of masculine roles. Exploring Joyce's relocation of women's traditional roles within the frame of men's roles in the pages of *Dubliners*, Marilyn French points out, "[W]omen frame men's lives by acting generally as caretakers of their society" (267). Therefore, the paper takes a deep inquiry upon the masculine portrayal of Joycean female characters in the selected stories to show how Joyce, as a writer, empowers women by subverting the dominating structure of patriarchal division of gender roles. Joycean female characters in the selected stories are presented in the form of self-asserting, independent, nonconformist, modern and free-willed individuals who takes charge of life without being subjugated to the expected traditional ideals of the exploitative patriarchal discourse of Catholic Church.

"The Boarding House" is a story in which Joycean subversion of traditional gender roles is clearly transparent. Mrs. Mooney, the protagonist, is married to a man who used to be the foreman of her father during his business of butcher. After the sudden demise of her father, she was married to him. But her marital life with him did not last longer. He began to drink a lot and physically abuses her. On the top, his drinking and violent behaviors started affecting the business. He would sell the sale meat to the customers and mess up with her before the customers. It defamed the reputation of the business and it declined in a loss. He would come home heavily drunk and attack upon her with any weapon around. She struggled a lot to safe herself from his attack. She had to take shelter in the neighbors' house for avoiding his brutal

treatment. She had a daughter. He was ignorant of everything. He turned violent and aggressive each day passing by. Eventually, she divorced from him and opened the business called 'The Boarding house' and led an independent life without being submissive and conformist or self-sacrificing ideal woman as defined by the masculine Church. Her strong will and determination to break from him as well as his patriarchal boundaries and emerge out for the public space where she can cherish her own individual freedom and fulfillment evidently reflects her act of resistance against the pre-existing gender structure for the rise of women's emancipation. Relating to Mrs. Mooney's feminist attempt to liberate her from the hegemonic behaviors of Mr. Mooney who represents the masculine superiority of the contemporary Irish male-dominated cultural values, McGrory further claims "Joyce not only examines the role of the "dominant" mother in Dublin society, but the text also reveals the disparate outcomes of women trying to cope within the boundaries established by their cultures and trying to manipulate the codes of conduct and moral values toward their own empowerment" (48-49). Here, Joyce's representation of female characters like Mrs. Mooney showcases the rising standard of women's position in the Ireland.

The protagonist of the story is a female whose successful journey from the gender segregation of male-dominated world of her manipulative husband to the world of her emancipation for her own independent life exemplifies the demolition and decentering of the conventional concept of masculinity. One of the masculine characteristics as Tyson highlighted above is being protective, independent, breadwinner and property owner. However, the female protagonist of the story, Mrs. Mooney embodies all these masculine qualities and ultimately accomplishes to live a life without counting on her male counterpart. Instead of subscribing herself to the expected feminine roles as an ideal, submissive, tolerant, conformist and dependent

woman, she chooses to fight against all the patriarchal obstacles and strive further for the materialization of her own wills and desires. The story revolves around her struggles to exercise all the powers and privileges that male have been enjoying since centuries. Mrs. Mooney breaks her silence and moves on for her own empowerment that happens to counter all the conservative assumptions about female. Through the images of nonconformist, independent, self-willed and emancipated female protagonists, Joyce seems to claim the potential of the Irish female in resisting back to the Church and patriarchal values. Mrs. Mooney in “The Boarding House” is an epitome of Joyce’s emancipated female character who challenges status-quo and takes courage to live an independent life. She rises from the walls of silence and sufferings and fights back to the violent and oppressive behaviors of her husband. She divorced her husband and liberates herself by leading an independent life with her own business.

Unlike the patriarchal expectation of woman as subordinate being to male, Mrs. Mooney refuses to be subordinate to her drunkard husband’s dominance but rather decides a life that gives her own authority. Looking at Mrs. Mooney’s anti-patriarchal action as masculine will, San Juan argues:

She embodies a masculine will in her determination to survive, to triumph despite the strict impositions of a world ruled by men. Her husband representing the negative masculine principle here, breaks pledges and ruins her business, separation ensues. A surrogate for a male guardian and protector, Mrs. Mooney sets up a boarding house in which she establishes a semblance of matriarchy; she decrees the laws of totem and taboo. (103)

These lines evidently content that Mrs. Mooney is an example of Joyce’s modern woman who seeks for her personhood, individuality and freedom by rebelling against

the restrictive doctrines of the patriarchal society. She starts an independent life by initiating her own business which shows her presence in the public world where women were not allowed to be a part during the period of patriarchal heteronormativity. In fact, her courage to break boundary of marriage and chose her own world crashes the conservative practice of patriarchal society that privileges men more power than women. She dismantles this absolute chain of men's power and makes it more dynamic by exercising her power like McGrory claims, "Mrs. Mooney is trying to gain some power or control in a culture that denies her any real autonomy (in the public sphere)" (53). Like this line claims, her act of resistance in attending to her own authority and fulfillment depicts her as an example of New Woman.

New woman refers to the newly emerging social image of modern woman who is self-willed, determined, independent, self-asserting, demanding and nonconformist. It was an outcome of the widespread movement of feminism across the Europe and America that generated the massive gender consciousness among women. The movement aimed at questioning the established gender values and attacked its polarized politics between feminine and masculine. It raised the question about the proper placement of women within the structure of gender relations. The movement went on dismantling the existing definition of gender and diffused it as the mere social construction for the monopoly of the male over female:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power. That is, the inferior position long occupied by

women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced.

(Tyson 86)

Feminist movement came into existence in order for claiming equality between male and female following all the privileges and powers in the mainstream. The movement is for the liberation of women from the domesticated walls of private space and for their empowerment to engage into the mainstream political, economic and social affairs so that they can live an independent, fulfilling, meaningful and self-serving identity unlike the traditional roles that degenerate their being as secondary gender. Such noble image of woman as an independent, nonconformist, self-asserting and modern being is what became the emerging subject of the twentieth century literary works. The emergence of new woman created the crisis of gender because it dissected the traditionally accepted roles and introduced the new set of gender thoughts and practices.

Defining the quintessential characteristic of new woman in the light of liberation and empowerment in the backdrop of feminist movement, Janice H. Harris takes new woman as “[a]ctive, willful, independent, intellectual, she seeks for her own satisfaction and submits to no one and nothing” (523). Joyce, being a modernist writer who witnessed the expansion of feminist movement across the Europe, incorporated the changes that were seen in the lives of Dublin society. His female characters do not conform to the traditional pattern of feminine behaviors and actions or thoughts. They challenge traditional pattern of life like a new woman: “[New Women] challeng---the pattern of thinking in hierarchically organized binary opposition that pits men against women” (qtd. in McGrory 7). His female character, Mrs. Mooney evidently exemplifies the image of new woman whose set of actions from being a submissive, innocent, silent, nurturing, tolerant, conformist and



dependent to being an independent, self-asserting, defensive, breadwinner, self-protective and strong-headed masculine traits vehemently subverts the existing patriarchal structure of the distribution of powers and privileges between two sexes.

“The Dead” is another story where Joyce challenges conventional gender roles. Although the story revolves around the death-in-life of the male protagonist named Gabriel, but feminist reading of the story offers an alternative picture of Joyce’s treatment of female characters. The story shows the paralysis of the original Irish values and traditions through the depiction of its main hero whose deep inclination towards western culture with the strong indignation at the original values of Ireland symbolically represents the declining state of Irish culture. “The Dead” presents its protagonist, Gabriel, as self-centered, egoistic, individualistic, ignorant of his own Irish culture under influence of western values and more western in attitudes. In fact, Gabriel’s sense of superiority comes from the privilege that he inherits as a male from the male-dominated society. His authoritative attitude and undermining perspective towards woman reflects a great deal of his psyche that is conditioned by the masculine celebration of traditional roles. His encounters with female characters like Lily and Ms. Ivor disclose his masculine superiority which Joyce artistically diffuses through the new woman persona of the female characters. He has high opinion of himself just because of his western thoughts that he regards as superior to Irish lifestyle. Later, a couple of humiliations and abuses like Lily’s insulting dialogue at his feeling of being high class male, Miss Ivor’s punch at his crisis of nationalism in life, his wife’s memory of her ex-boyfriend and his image of Michael’s death with snow falling forces him to the extreme realization of his death in living.

The story begins with a party organized by Gabriel's aunts who look forward to welcoming the invitees. One of the invited guests in the list was Gabriel and his

wife, Gretta. Lily, the caretaker of the house, is assigned the task of extending receptive welcome and helping guests out for joining the party. There is snow falling outside. It was the celebration of Feast of epiphany. In the meantime, Gabriel enters with Gretta. Throughout the party, Gabriel enjoys with a single thought that he is educated professor and is better than anyone else in the party. Wherever he goes, he dominates the conversation. Even though he is married to Gretta but he treats her as his possession. For him, she is a property that belongs to him. There is a lack of emotional feeling of oneness between them. Gabriel's idea of self-centeredness, self-indulgence and egoism distances him from building a spiritual attachment with his own wife. As the party is on, Gabriel arrogantly declares to give a speech of thankfulness. He regards that he suitable for giving speech because of education in west and has more knowledge. When his old colleague and a history teacher, Ms. Ivor proposes a trip to the western countryside of Ireland, he declines to accompany them for he considers Irish tradition and heritages as inferior to western values.

However, he comes across with a number of encounters that enlighten him and rescue him out of the illusive world. The first and formative awakening force that he suffers is his interaction with Lily, the maid. Gabriel's attitude towards Lily was very inferior because of his class and patriarchal attitude. He assumed that he could taunt any fun against Lily as he held a higher position. But Lily's response haunted his mind. When he condescends to the young girl by saying he will be going to her wedding of these days, Lily's reply makes their conversation more confrontational: "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you." Gabriel colored, as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his galoshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes" (129). Gabriel even tried to cover up his feeling of high class by alluring her with a tip

because he thought he could silence her with his money. Such superior complexity of him was smashed down by Lily's reactive voice. He felt humiliated and struggled to forget it. It haunted his core of egoistic feeling: "When Lily says "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.", Gabriel realizes his own patronizing treatment of the maid with its attendant palaver, and tries to buy her indulgence. Gabriel goes upstairs conscious of his own ineffectuality and of his forthcoming annual insincere hyperbolic speech and his false role at party and in life" (Zack 108). Later on, his conversation with Ms. Ivor further intensifies the fall of his individualistic and west-centric celebration of life.

"The Dead" presents two female characters whose attitude, tone and language is more masculine at its nature. They are Lily and Mrs. Ivor. Both of them are portrayed as outspoken, nonconformist, self-willed and psychologically liberated who speak out against any injustice. Lily, the caretaker, is more outspoken and very brave at her approach. Unlike traditional expectations of women as silent, submissive, and shy, Lily is opposite at her personality. Her nonconformist attitude can be seen at her confrontational dialogue with Gabriel, the male protagonist whose masculine ego and superiority look down upon Lily about her marriage. But Lily reacts very directly taking the strong position. One of the qualities of new woman is to take full charge of one's own authority and sustain one's individuality. Her reaction to Gabriel's funny remark that offended her sense of being makes her sound more combative, protective, defensive and reactive like male are expected in heteronormative structure of society. Comparing her to silent and guilt-driven Eveline who, despite wanting individual freedom, returns to be subjugated to her father's patriarchal world, McGrory argues, "Unlike naïve, guilt-ridden Eveline, Lily's attitudes toward men reveal some experiences and some cynicism in this young women of marriageable age, she

explains to Gabriel early in the story, with great bitterness: “The men that is now only all palaver and what they can get out of you?” (69). Here, Lily’s tone is more confident and self-assertive. She remains very reactive towards Gabriel’s fun at her.

Another female character that Joyce invents for the subversion of traditional roles is Mrs. Ivor. She is Joyce’s role model for the masculine inculcation of feminine roles. At a time when the patriarchal discourse of Catholic Church confined women’s position within the corner of the walls, Joyce through Mrs. Ivor gives the potentials of female to take on the masculine roles. Mrs. Ivor is a history professor, a profession in educational field that was generally understood to be men’s profession. She is very intellectual, social and confident. Analyzing her independence and self-reliant lifestyle, Craig Werner calls her “feminine energy [which] escapes containment” (100). She symbolizes the revolution that breaks all the patriarchal boundaries that set the taboos against women’s individuality and emancipation. Very tactfully, Joyce places her in an equal opposition to Gabriel in order to equate the intellectual power of men with women. Joyce gives more masculine traits to his female characters in the story. In fact, Mrs. Ivor is a self-asserting woman who outruns the so-called masculine pride of Gabriel. She uses logics to attack upon his valorization of western life tagging him as “West Briton”. It strikes Gabriel’s illusive mind. Taking her as exceptional women, McGrory asserts, “This female character, who holds her own with a male both intellectually and socially, embodies the possibility of exceptional women capable of asserting themselves with the patriarchal culture” (70). So, Mrs. Ivors stand as Joyce’s self-asserting women whose wills and desires for individual freedom and social position are not paralyzed by any catholic doctrines.

Looking at the sharp failure of Gabriel's masculine superiority due to the competent encounter by two female characters with equal intellectual power, Marilyn French observes:

Lily's failure to maintain socially dictated manners, and the opposition of his mother. Worse yet, the attack is intellectual, made by a woman, and a woman who is his intellectual equal. Molly Ivors' attack on Gabriel is honest and direct, but he cannot respond honestly or directly. His inclination is to retreat into intellectual superiority-"literature was above politics"- but he "could risk" such a posture with her. The encounter emphasizes the falseness of Gabriel's attribution to his intellect of his disconnection from the other people. When he meets opposition from someone on his intellectual level (and it is probably significant that that person is a woman), he is even more discomfited than he was by Lily. (468)

Mrs. Ivors and Lily embody the masculine roles because of their independence, reactive, self-defensive, self-willed, liberated being, nonconformist interactions and social engagement. Their changing image from typical traditional image of women resonates with feminist ideas of Judith Butler whose idea of gender as performative act suggests that the word *gender* is a social construction. This construction is based on the patriarchal division of male and female following their biological differences.

Masculine and feminine roles have been designed by the male-made social institutions in order to make sure that men always hold the high power over women. In her theoretical venture *Gender Troubles*, Butler rejects the conventional definition of gender that marginalizes the female gender as an inferior one. She redraws the understanding of gender as an outcome of one's performativity. She asserts that no one is born to be masculine or feminine. One's gender is not a natural entity nor it is

something that can be formed by the cultural imposition but it is attained by one's set of acts. The doing determines the gender identity of any individual as Butler explains, "Gender proves to be performative...that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (33). Here, Butler's understanding of gender clearly contradicts the conventional celebration of heterosexual identity. It gives a stress on the way one performs for the identification of the gender. It claims that gender is not fixed and absolute as it is claimed to be by the patriarchal construction of gender roles. She states that the traditional categorization of being 'masculine' and 'feminine' bears cultural character which holds no truth. For her, the categorization is unstable because the idea of gender is fluid and changing according to how one performs in everyday life. Butler further clarifies, "It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way" (527). In these lines, Butler seems to suggest that the set of acts we perform everyday may follow the expected roles for a particular gender or it may challenge the long-held roles. This is where she sees the gender to be in trouble. What Mrs. Mooney does is a masculine act that was not expected from female being.

In the meantime, Mrs. Mooney's sole act for her independent identity life also embodies what Judith Halberstam calls 'Female masculinity'. In her theoretical work called "Female masculinity", Halberstam introduces the new form of gender identity that does not conform to the conventional identification of masculine and feminine. She comes up with the concept of female masculinity by which she means to contend that a man is not perfectly man and a female is not perfectly woman. All the masculine virtues constructed by patriarchal culture are not masculine properties per

se. She claims that these masculine traits can be found in female subjectivity as well. There is no absolute male subjectivity and female subjectivity but the mixture of them. It suggest that a male can have feminine qualities and a female can have masculine traits. Characterizing her concept of 'Female masculinity', Halberstam clarifies, "female masculinity is a way of representing oneself in a manner that challenges the dominant discourse on gender and sexuality, according to which men should be masculine and women should be feminine; it also shows the constructedness of masculinity" (Halberstam 1-2). Here, Halberstam argues that the category of masculinity and femininity is just a false construction of male-oriented cultural discourse. She demeans it as a form of construction which the patriarchal society naturalized for the dominance of men over women. She further states that her concept of 'female masculinity' is a form of social rebellion or what she claims to be "sign of sexual alterity" (9). Her critical discussion about the new subjectivity of women as a female masculine resonates exactly with Mrs. Mooney's act of challenging her husband's hegemonic exploitation and began a struggle to regain her own independent individuality that equips her the masculine power as self-authoritative subject who can exercises all the powers and privileges without being subordinated Other. Mrs. Mooney's paradigm shift from dependent, submissive, passive and subordinated other to an independent being with one's own identity reflects what Halberstam poses as the constructedness of masculinity. Lily and Mrs. Ivors' actions challenge the expected roles that were culturally conditioned to be performed by female. Thus, gender is the matter of one's performativity that decides one's gender identity unlike the externally imposed identification of gender of an individual nor the gender can be confined within the parameter of absolute subjectivity. Rather gender is fluid and ever-producing term that keeps changing

historically, socially, culturally and behaviorally. Joyce's invention of these female characters also creates a gender trouble by the set of their acts that subvert the traditional gender roles.

"The Painful Case" is another story where Joycean version of gender trouble can be realized. The story is basically about a female protagonist named Mrs. Sinico whose extramarital attachment towards another male counterpart, Mr. Duffy seems to break the traditional imposition of marital boundary that restricts woman's individual fulfillment and self-willed life. Although the end of the story deals with the consequences of her act of resistance towards the imposed patriarchal mechanism of marriage and family, but the story moves on due to her daring act to challenge the restrictive rules that prevent her from fulfilling her individual desires. Joyce places her character in arch opposition to her male counterpart Mr. Duffy in order to draw the difference between the two and highlight on her masculine exposition as compared to Duffy's feminine submission to the established Catholic Church.

Mrs. Sinico is a married woman with a daughter but she develops adulterous relation with Mr. Duffy. Her husband is an officer and has to go away in course of the official work. He has hardly any time to spend a romantic time with her. She encounters a pleasant meeting with Mr. Duffy who is more intellectual and educated. He is more absorbed into his private world. He is morally upright and well-disciplined gentleman. However, they come closer because of their frequent encounters. Their intimacy grows stronger. Despite being married with a daughter, Sinico seems to be longing for a life outside the boundary of marriage. Duffy becomes a source of her public freedom. Sinico's adulterous relation was a sinful act for the patriarchal Ireland. But she broke the boundary and listened to her individual wills which reflects her new woman lifestyle. Unlike her, Duffy was more conservative and very afraid of



the existing sexual moralities imposed by the church. Mr. Duffy's subjugation to the Church values against the adulterous sex reduced her to a stereotyped woman as the narrator argues, "For the sake of love and personal affection, Mrs. Sinico is willing to challenge religious sanctions against adultery. But the moment she gives vent to her feelings, she reduced in James Duffy's mind to a stereotyped temptress. Duffy abandons Emily in pursuit of the moral superiority" (17). Henke here stresses on the fact that Mrs. Sinico was being nonconformist towards the imposed gendered values of the Church that undermine the personal wills and desires of the women. She desired her own individual fulfillment without any external force.

But Duffy's patriarchal sense of morality refuted her individual wills as an immoral choice. Finding it hard to live the life of her choice and after being reduced to a negative level, she takes her own life at the end. Mrs. Sinico represents what Butler terms as gender trouble. Her personality troubles the general expectation of masculine society from the man. Those masculine traits that place men in the superior position over women are proven to be dysfunctional and contested if Mr. Duffy's response is analyzed from the critical point of view: "Gender is fragile, provisional, unstable, the sum total of its appearances rather than the expression of a unifying core. Masculinity or femininity come in many transient guises, all of them in some measure unfinished or incomplete" (Glover and Kaplan 18). Here, Glover and Kaplan observe that the masculinity and femininity are never complete in themselves. They remain incomplete and unfinished in one way or another way. Masculine can possess the quality of feminine and thus, suffers incompleteness at its expression of masculinity and the same goes in case of the expression of femininity. Kaplan's concept matches quite relevantly in the character of Mr. Duffy who, despite being a male, fails to act in a masculine manner that privileges him the power and authority. His failure to break

the preconditions of Catholic Church for the fulfilling and meaningful life reflects the incompleteness of his masculinity which ironically is displayed by his female counterpart Mrs. Sinico. Her bravery and rebellious action to transgress the limited boundary of marriage for the formation of her individuality depicts what Halberstam posits as female masculinity.

However, Sinico's tragic death seems to suggest the failure of Joyce's artistic power to empower women with their full empowerment. There are critics who attack upon Joycean female characters for being unable to perfectly liberate themselves.

McGrory points out, "However, since no female characters in the stories of *Dubliners* achieve social liberation or even a complete grasp of her own cultural conditioning, Joyce may *appear* to reveal himself less as a subversive than a product of his time"

(5). I do not agree with this conclusion because it is a generalized analysis. We should not forget the historical context of the Irish society under its transitional period. With the changes taking place around in the process of transitional development, it is not wise to expect the literature to imagine the complete change of society while it is supposed to reflect the actuality of the society. Although Joyce is the product of the male-dominated Catholic governed Irish society and thus his female portrayal of women may be influenced by the societal biasness, his female characters like Lily, Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Sinico seem to have at least envisioned the life of liberation beyond the limited social constraints of the patriarchal Dublin. Empowering his female characters with the vision of freedom and individual identity without being subjugated to the established gender roles is an artistic expression of Joyce's subversion of gender roles against the prevalent patriarchal structures. He had to capture the wide range of female lives in which some succeed in going beyond the patriarchy whereas few of them got entangled into the trap of patriarchal cast.

However, his female characters are awakened to embrace the phallic powers for their individual being. Joycean subversion of roles also point out the dysfunctional nature of culturally constructed value of masculinity which we saw in Mr. Duffy's effeminate reaction towards his societal norms. Such contested concept of absolute masculinity is also dictated in his next story "A Little Cloud".

The story "A Little Cloud" revolves around the domesticated life of its protagonist named Little Chandler who is placed in opposition to his friend Gallaher. Little Chandler and Gallaher used to be the friends at school and college level. Chandler had the passion to become the famous poet. After his marriage, he was confined with the family responsibilities. He worked as the clerk in the office in his countryside. However, Gallaher started visiting the outside environment. He visited the European countries and established himself as the popular journalist. The story moves around the reunion of these two friends which turns out to be the nerve-wrecking meeting for Little Chandler who begins to compare his life with that of Gallaher's popularity.

Little Chandler has a family with a wife and a small baby. He is always driven by a dream that he will become a great poet one day. He was a daydreamer. But his location in the domestic walls of family and countryside limited his scope and potentiality. His days are spent into caring for the baby and fulfilling the household chores. On the other hand, Gallaher has been a successful journalist who has the knowledge of the outside world. When they get reunited at a hotel, Little Chandler finds himself in the pool of tears and remorse "tears of remorse started to his eyes". He realized the meaninglessness of his life within the boundary of marriage and family. He developed the feeling of self-pity and laments that he should have gone far from the private space of the marriage and family for the fulfillment of the dreams he had

set “There was no doubt about it, if you wanted to succeed you had to go away” (83). He is filled with the feelings of remorse but he knew “He can’t do anything” (95). He started feeling so weak, passive and marginalized that he could not do his duty as father. He became someone who had no compassion for other, not even his own son. He would be unable to take care of the baby when it is crying. While holding the baby on his lap, he would feel “arms trembled with anger” (95). He would be scolded and howled at by his wife constantly and he could only remain silent and tolerate it. He felt that “he was a prisoner for his life” (95).

Here, Little Chandler’s timid, passive, domesticated and coward feelings towards his life express his feminine qualities. He becomes a fantasized man with the daydreaming but still confined within the four walls. While critically revisiting the practice of sex roles as determined by the society in order to redefine the concept of masculinity, Rachel and David argue:

The very idea of a “role” implies a recognizable and accepted standard, and sex-role theorists posit just such a norm to explain sexual differentiation. Society is organized around a pervasive differentiation between men’s and women’s roles, and these roles are internalized by all individuals. There is an obvious common-sense appeal to this approach. But the first objection to be made is that it does not actually describe the concrete reality of people’s lives. Not all men are “responsible” fathers, nor “successful” in their occupations, and so on. Most men’s lives reveal some departure from what the “male sex role” is supposed to prescribe. (105-6)

Here, the lines expose the limitation of the long-standing celebration of masculinity. Like the lines contend, not all men can live the expectations of society for their masculinity because it is just a culturally imposed. Little Chandler’s failure to become

a responsible father and a successful man like that of his friend reveals the inherent contradiction within the masculinity. Rather, Rachel and David come out with the view that further expands the definition of masculinity from its psychodynamic dimension: “The global subordination of women is consistent with many particular situations in which women hold power over men, or are at least equal. Close-up research on families shows a good many households where wives hold authority in practice. The fact of mothers’ authority over young sons has been noted in most discussions of the psychodynamics of masculinity” (111). Here, masculinity from its absolute hegemonic celebration in which it is associated only with men is rejected. Masculinity is rather looked at from its psychological perspective suggesting that there are women holding the power and authority over the men. The families under the authority of mothers testify a great deal about the shifting space of masculinity. From this point of view, Little Chandler’s wife embodies the female masculinity because she takes over the authority on him and the son. His tears and cowardice before her sharp observation shows her power and authority of the family placed on her shoulder. His inability to develop the masculine passion for public life and identity like that Gallaher reflects his feminine quality of submissiveness and domesticated life. Through his failure, Joyce shows the failure of the heteronormative practice that divides the gender as masculine and feminine. His male protagonist in the story displays what Butler defines as the gender trouble. Her definition of gender as the byproduct of one’s performativity is justified by Chandler’s feminine life. His lack of masculine passion for public life, domesticated life, inability to perform masculine heroism, feelings of weakness and passivity etc. portray his feminine identity. Thus, in the light of Butler’s gender as performativity, Little Chandler’s

feminine role despite being male is where one can see Joycean subversion of conventional gender roles.

“Eveline”, on the other hand, reflects Joycean exploration of female subjectivity in the Dublin city. It involves Joyce's efforts to raise the hidden realities of the female Dubliners. Eveline is more pessimistic for it shows the protagonist accepting the world of patriarchal domination despite having wills for freedom. Joyce depicts how women's wills are paralyzed by the restrictive doctrines of Catholic Church that confine them within the family walls. Despite her consciousness about her right to freedom and happiness, Eveline gets ready to conform to the patriarchal life. Her flow of experiences from childhood to present crisis changes her state from a fearful girl to the voice for emancipation and then again back to the world of subjugation. When she encounters first epiphany, she was a brave girl to fight for her own freedom and not get subjected to domesticated life as lived by her mother. But psyche is seized by the patriarchal doctrines that she returns by losing her new subjectivity. Such transformation in Eveline is Joycean style to force her experience the ultimate truth of her domesticated life. By getting her back to patriarchal world, Joyce does not suggest female Dubliners to bear the oppression but tries to teach them how their own lack of strong wills is the reason for their own suppression.

Eveline is presented as the female Dubliner in the time of transitional Irish society when women were split between the traditional life and rising image of modern life. Such dilemma is seen in Eveline's confusion between her father's world that represents patriarchal Catholic world of Ireland and Frank, her fiancé, who represents her promising freedom of life. Her father is a drunkard who violently threatens her at times. Her mother had already died who lived a very commonplace life within her father's limited family space. Her brothers are far for their jobs and are

busy at their life. Eveline wishes to seek for her new life away from the domesticated life. Her lover, Frank, proposes her to start a new life. After being flooded by the thoughts, she eventually decides to run away with Frank and leave behind the world of domestication and suffocation. In his review regarding the operation of patriarchal discourse upon Eveline through the symbolic hegemony of her father, Hazal Burcu Kislak argues:

Indeed, Dublin's paralysis is mainly caused by the patriarchal discourse of Dublin, which as we shall see, is also connected to Eveline's mental deterioration, her experience of the oceanic feeling, along with its related consequences. The patriarchal discourse in Dublin is apparent, firstly through the authority of the patriarchal father figure, Eveline's tyrannical drunk father who reduced the life of Eveline's deceased mother to one of the lifelong servitude. (6591)

Like these lines illustrate, Eveline is entrapped within the patriarchal values of her father's violence and domination. Joyce awakens her with the vision of freedom and emancipation that her mother could not achieve. He sends Frank in her life as a gateway to breaking the stereotyped identity of women as silent and submissive. Her realization for liberated and emancipated life outside the patriarchal boundary is sensed at the line "Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her" (*Dubliners* 41). It echoes Joycean envision for the liberation of women in his female characters' lives.

However, he also reveals the hardships and confusions that woman had to undergo as the consequence of breaking away from the Catholic doctrines. She undergoes a handful of confusions when the idea of choosing a new life with Frank strikes her mind. She fears she would be condemned by the society if they get to learn about her elopement with Frank "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” (*Dubliners* 35). This fear of social condemnation reflects how her psyche has been chained by the restrictive Catholic Church that prohibits women’s freedom to choose her free-willed life. Her return to home even after deciding to run away for her freedom and independent life might show the working of patriarchal privilege in the form of his social biasness. But it should be noted that he had to portray the reality of the lives of the women in the then Ireland society. Unlike Eveline, Mrs. Mooney, Lily and Mrs. Ivors mark the successful completion of Joyce’s subversion of gender roles since they broke the boundary of stereotyped roles and lived masculine lives in terms of their actions, behaviors, social standing, independent living and self-asserting identity which were then considered to be the masculine roles.

In this way, in *Dubliners*, he created the space for the breakdown of the long-held tradition of gender roles. Being a witness to the contemporary changes penetrating at all aspects of Irish society, Joyce saw the gradual transformation in the position of female Dubliners in the face of transitional period. Holding anti-Catholic doctrine that was driven by the influence of the British colonial power structures, Joyce captivated the emerging social image of female Dubliners at a time when the feminist movement for liberation of women for their individual freedom and equality in the mainstream was gaining the momentum. His female characters reflect the essence of the feminist movement for they dare to refuse the conventional imposition of roles in the patriarchal name of masculine and feminine. Feminists like Judith Butler dismantled the gendered roles which render women as a being characterized by submissiveness, nurturing, silent, tolerant, dependent, subordinate, and self-sacrificing. Butler’s idea of gender as an expression of one’s acts allowed the



possibility of masculine roles to be performed by female too. It did not limit the phallic powers within male gender. It empowered women to take on the roles traditionally assumed to be phallic only. The rise of women with the masculine roles introduced the image of new woman who is defined as a woman who thinks not in a traditional pattern of thinking, behaviors, and actions but in masculine manners. New woman is free-willed, independent, self-asserting, self-defensive. She is her own breadwinner, owner of her property and the authority of her own wills and desires. Such image of new woman deconstructed the traditionally institutionalized roles of gender between male and female.

The selected stories from *Dubliners* exactly reflect Joycean vision of new woman in his female Dubliners. Mrs. Mooney's rejection to subscribe herself to the exploitative and manipulative behaviors of her husband and her successful journey from an innocent, dependent, tolerant, submissive wife and an independent owner of the business, authority of her own choices and her social standing subverts the traditional gender roles of woman. Her acts of resistance and struggle for independent life creates her gender as the masculine like Butler claims that one's doing form the gender identity of an individual. Likewise, Lily's indifference towards the socially accepted roles as a servant and silent woman during her encounter with Gabriel's phallogocentric attitude as well as Mrs. Ivors' social standing as an independent history professor counters the general assumption of woman as a caretaker of family values and the object of satisfaction for male's gaze.

Mrs. Sinico's desire for an extra-marital life regardless of being married woman breaks the patriarchal politics of marriage as a parameter for sexual morality imposed upon woman. She seeks for her individual fulfillment without caring for the cultural expectations from her. Joyce seems to, however, give an alternative picture

of some female Dubliners who failed to materialize their passion for free-willed life despite working hard to break away from the patriarchal discourse of Catholic Church.

Eveline is awakened about the domination of patriarchy over her individual being but she ultimately submits herself before it. Yet, Joyce enlightens the female Dubliners through her for fighting back to restore their place in the society. Maria is an image of few female Dubliners who preferred to stay an ideal woman and be ruled by the Catholic rules. Joyce, through a wide range of women's lives living within the frame of men's lives, dismantles the traditional gender roles as institutionalized by masculine structures of the Ireland society and invents the new emerging image of female Dubliners who subvert the traditional gender roles and take on the masculine roles through the exercise of the phallic powers and privileges in the male-dominated world of twentieth century Ireland.



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