



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Quiet Existences
The Scandinavian influence in James Joyce's Dubliners

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

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Enskuskor

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Abstract

This essay seeks to establish the Scandinavian influence found in James Joyce's short stories "Eveline" and "The Dead" from his short story collection *Dubliners*. It is comprised of three main chapters. It starts with an introduction to the subject. The first chapter starts with a brief historical look at the use of realism in 19th century Scandinavian literature. For the purpose of comparison between Joyce and a Scandinavian work that employs realism, Herman Bang's *Beside the Road* will be used as an example. Thereafter the connection between Henrik Ibsen and James Joyce will be discussed, both historically and literary, with references to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. In the second chapter, a brief historical summary on *Dubliners* and the reason for the choice of these particular stories from the collection will be given, followed by an analysis of the short stories, comparing them to the two Scandinavian works previously mentioned. The last section contains a conclusion, followed by a bibliography.

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Introduction

James Joyce stated one of the main reasons why he wrote *Dubliners* in a letter to Grant Richards in 1906: "My intention was to write a chapter in the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (Tysdahl 265). As pointed out by Bjørn Tysdahl in his essay "Ibsen's Stories in Joyce's *Dubliners*", the paralysis of the characters in the stories is a main theme and its importance has been the main focus in reading the short story collection (265). However, according to Tysdahl, to focus on how the paralysis is portrayed in the stories is as important as to focus on the motives behind it.

This paralysis in *Dubliners* makes it impossible for the characters to break through their confines, be they personal or social. The inability to act is noticeable in the stories "Eveline" and "The Dead", where numbness and paralysis control the characters, especially the women. The desire to break free from the surrounding environment is one of the main themes in *Dubliners*, and the inability to do so is another main theme. The characters, reduced to be mere spectators of their own lives passing by, are unable to take control and act. They are paralysed both in soul and mind.

This inability to act and to be a spectator of your own life is a theme that is also found in the work of the Norwegian author Henrik Ibsen. Joyce came in contact with Ibsen after studying his plays and writing a review about one of them in 1901 (Bulson 34). Joyce even went so far as to study Dano-Norwegian, which gave him access to Scandinavian literature at that time. Furthermore, it would have given him access to the cultural and literary debate that was going on in Scandinavia, Norway and Denmark especially, at the end of the 19th century. This debate culminated in the literary movement the "Modern Breakthrough" (Danish. *Det Moderne Gennembrud*), an

enlightenment movement that later became known as cultural radicalism led by the literary critic Georg Brandes as stated in the *Danish Democracy Canon*. However, the movement will be referred to in this essay as the “Modern Breakthrough”.

With his social criticism Ibsen was one of the leading writers of the “Modern Breakthrough”. One of the social concerns of the movement was how women were perceived as beings unable to act or perform other duties than were thought suited for them. Women’s rights were one of the main debates at that point in time because it was seen as a contradiction that a woman should show herself to be more moral in her conduct than a man, especially regarding sex before marriage, whereas it was socially acceptable for a young man to gain sexual experience before marriage, or at least for as long as nobody knew about it. Although not everyone, including Brandes himself, saw the double standard as a suitable object for social criticism, it was depicted in many works of the Scandinavian writers that participated in the movement.

Writers such as Herman Bang saw it as his duty to bring up the women’s rights debate, although he did not perceive the literary movement as a political weapon like some of the other participants did (Busk-Jensen et al. 195). In 1886 Bang published *Quiet Existences* (Danish: *Stille Eksistenser*), a collection of his novels, including the novel *Beside the Road* (Danish *Ved Vejen*, my translation), which gives an impressionistic picture of a woman looking upon her life passing by without her being able to participate in it, situated beside the road in a state of paralysis.

This essay will look at the connection of themes in Scandinavian literature and in James Joyce’s short stories “Eveline” and “The Dead” from his collection *Dubliners*. Because of Ibsen’s connection with Joyce, his play *A Doll’s House*, published in 1879 (Danish *Et Dukkehjem*), will be used as an example of a Scandinavian literary work that

belongs to the realism movement. In addition to this work, discussing Bang's work will demonstrate a different approach to the term realism, focusing on the style and form.

The first chapter of this essay examines the Scandinavian literary scene at the end of the 19th century, including Bang and Ibsen's work, the connection between Ibsen and Joyce and the connection to realism. Because of the difference of subject, theme and style found in "Eveline" and "The Dead", the second chapter of this essay includes a separate analysis of them. Furthermore, the chapter examines if and how the Scandinavian connection can be found in these particular stories.

Chapter 1: James Joyce and the Scandinavian influence

This chapter will examine the connection between James Joyce and Scandinavian writers at the time when he was writing *Dubliners*. It is known that Ibsen had a strong influence on Joyce's writing style, especially after he became personally acquainted through correspondence with Ibsen himself: "In his final year at Belvedere, Joyce discovered the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. This discovery cannot be underestimated in Joyce's evolution as an artist. In Ibsen he found a kindred spirit" (Bulson 3). Being familiar with Ibsen's works, it is likely that Joyce also came to know the literary revolution in Scandinavia at the turn of the century because he wanted to look beyond Ireland for literary models: "he [Joyce] was interested in a more cosmopolitan vision for Irish literature that looked outward to European models for its inspiration" (Bulson 3). This chapter will examine if a connection to Ibsen and his influence can be seen in the choice of subject, themes and form in Joyce's stories "Eveline" and "The Dead".

The chapter begins by examining Scandinavian literature in the years of the "Modern Breakthrough" and in doing so will look closely at the main themes and writing style within the literary movement¹, using Herman Bang's "Beside the Road" from *Quiet Existence* (1886) as an example. Finally, a closer look will be taken at the Ibsen and Joyce connection and it situated in a literary context, using Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) (Danish *Et dukkehjem*) as an example of to a work belonging to a writer of the "Modern Breakthrough" period.

1.1 Scandinavian literature at the turn of the century

In the late 19th century there arose a literary movement starting in Denmark with a series of lectures called *Main currents in 19th Century Literature* (Danish *Hovedstrømninger*), on the new role that literature should have, held by Georg Brandes

(Busk-Jensen et al. 15). The new role of literature envisaged by Brandes served the purpose of enlightenment. Moreover, it should not just embrace the changes in society; it should also look at the past with a critical eye and seek to take steps forward in modernising Danish literature and society. Therefore, although it was first and foremost a literary movement, it was nonetheless a political movement as well:

Brandes was less interested in the literary side of their books [Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant and Germaine de Staël] than in their will to debate about social problems, which he, in his introduction to his lectures, insisted modern literature should do. Brandes found that Staël's criticism of church and state, power and tradition, marriage and family, was especially similar to his own ideas, and that pointed towards a radical individualism with its freedom to make one's own decisions. Individualism was the core of his program, "the individual's emancipation and freedom of thought" was the intellectual parallel to economical and political liberalism. (Busk-Jensen et al. 19, my translation)

According to the statement above, literature was highly political and not only a statement against the previous literary movement, romanticism; it also initiated realism and naturalism in Scandinavian literature, which meant a change in writing styles. It was argued that literature should have a higher purpose: "The source should be a believable, not idealised reality" (Holmgaard 18, my translation). This demand for a realistic description of the world, un-idealized, gave writers a forum to describe social circumstances as they were and place social problems under debate, and thus giving their works a purpose in itself.

In the wake of great changes in Denmark, such as industrialisation followed by urbanization at the turn of the 20th century, came social problems, such as lack of housing and employment (Scocozza and Jensen 256). In describing a modernised society

the need to modernise literature seemed unavoidable. There was a need to use a realistic approach in describing these circumstances: “The truth was raw and was to be said with plain words” (Stounbjerg 26, my translation). Scandinavian realism in essence was the way to describe a believable picture of reality: “Realism is recognisable characters placed in the world of fiction that imitates reality” (Holmegaard 145, my translation). It was also a fictive representation form “which can have traces of reality” (Stounbjerg 14, my translation). It is these definitions of realism that this essay will consider in the analysis of Joyce’s stories. However, this form of realism is more than a literary movement or a method to promote social change; it is also a certain form of writing style in fictional works: “As a historical pair of writing and reading conventions, realism is a form for a description of reality. It gives a special perspective of reality” (Stounbjerg 14, my translation). Thereby realism can be interpreted as a literary form with a certain choice of subject, an objective third person narrator and a respect for facts, along with being a detailed representation of a slice of reality. Brandes saw realism, as well as naturalism, as a touchstone to what could be considered as good literature. However, it had to live up to his standards: “Modern literature should create true images of human life. – A universal mimetic program” (Jørgensen 59, my translation).

Brandes took the literary scene in Denmark by storm with his statement on what he perceived as good literature in Scandinavia: “their [the writers'] will to put social problems under debate” (Busk-Jensen, et. Al. 19, my translation). Writers of that time who were in agreement with Brandes and his statement that Scandinavian literature was years behind in development, were quick to participate in producing literature set to meet these standards. The writers wanted to cast a critical eye on society: “The only way to improve society, was by opening the people’s eyes to social or other injustice.

Progress and freedom were keywords for new times to come” (Busk-Jensen et al. 255, my translation). This change in what literature should be brought along a change in subject: “Work and everyday life got a place in literature, including the workers” (Stounbjerg 26, my translation). However, not all of these writers were in agreement on the use of literature as having a political agenda, one of them being Herman Bang. He, in his preface to *Lidt om dansk Realisme*“, unfolded his aesthetic program, which was an admission to realism without the political agenda” (Busk-Jensen et, al 195, my translation). Bang saw the duties of a writer of realism to be fully objective. A writer should take a slice of reality and account for it without including himself in his work. In his opinion, literature should not have another goal than to reveal things as they truly are: “The writer of realism sees with the eye of a scientist, and he shall describe what he sees objectively, and without personal comments. The writer is not a photographer, rather a painter“ (Busk-Jensen et.al. 195, my translation).

As the quotation above shows it was the objectivity of the narrator that was imperative in writing in a naturalistic style. Bang's novel collection *Quiet Existences* (Danish *Stille Eksistenser*), which includes his novel *Beside the Road* (Danish *Ved Vejen*), is an example of a naturalistic work, as well as being an example of his need to paint a picture with his words or a “life portrait” (Busk-Jensen 203, my translation).

1.2 Herman Bang's *Beside the Road* (1886)

This chapter will examine Herman Bang's *Beside the Road* as an example of a literary work from the time of the “Modern Breakthrough”, both because of his naturalistic writing style, and because there are certain similarities between the use of the theme of paralysis in Bang and Joyce's works. Joyce and Bang wrote a collection of novels where the main theme was the characters' inability to act and their complete passiveness. The

characters seem to be prisoners. They are in a mental prison with restrictions set upon their emotions and their ability to act upon their wants. Thus, by portraying the characters' individual situation, it would reflect the outer world's situation and its restrictions set upon them.

Bang published his novel collection *Quiet Existences* in 1886. However, in 1898 *Beside the Road* was published as an independent novel and became Bang's breakthrough as a writer (Jensen et al, 204). Although Bang did at one point follow the "Modern Breakthrough" movement, he did not agree on the main principles of it, in that he did not see realism as the means to uphold a political agenda. In 1879 he published the essay collection *Realisme og Realister*, where he introduced French naturalism as he saw it to Denmark, not as a political agenda but as a "form" rather than a "tendency" (Fibiger 43). One of the essays from the collection was "Lidt om dansk realisme", in which Bang describes how he interprets realism as a form of how to write: "...Realism is a school of Art. The way how a problem is observed, and the way how that observation is presented, are two separate things" (9, my translation). According to Bang, it is the writer that describes with objectivity and without any personal comments things as they are, and it is the reader's task to draw conclusions from the writer's observations ("Lidt om dansk realisme 12, my translation). It is this objectivity of the writer that Bang believes is the core of realism: "Realism's method makes it difficult to distinguish the writer's personality; the more conscientiously a writer keeps to his assignment, the more he withdraws behinds his picture" ("Lidt om dansk realisme" 7, my translation). Thereby it is not the writer's voice that criticises the community for its social problems or its inhabitants for lack of morality, but rather the conclusion drawn by the reader from the writer's observations about his subject. The objectivity of the writer is seen in the lack of direct comments about the characters and society: "... the writer lets others

speak, he does not, the writer's objectivity explains the apparent lack of morality" (Bang "Lidt om dansk realisme" 12, my translation).

It is the way that Bang presents his objective observations that is similar to Joyce's presentation of the life of his characters in *Dubliners*. In the case of Joyce's writing style in *Dubliners*, an important message lies in the things left unsaid by the writer so that the reader has to draw his own conclusions based upon the information given to him in the text. The reader has therefore to interpret what the writer is pointing out by reading between the lines. The reader is left to conclude what the writer is trying to convey with his narration. This can be seen in both "Eveline" and "The Dead", where the stories' end is left open and unresolved and the reader can only guess what happens next.

Things are not only hinted at through things not said, but the story includes an object that conveys certain image. For example, throughout *Beside the Road* the reader has an image of a woman looking out of a window watching life go by, with a look of sorrow: "Between the flowers stared a pale face, the chin lay in her small, white hands. The young woman did not stir. Silent, with her head in her hands...It was hardly longing that was in her glance...just a quiet resignation, a silent sorrow" (Bang *Ved vejen* 203, my translation). A similar image of a woman looking out on life through a window is drawn by Joyce in "Eveline", where Eveline sits by the window staring out on the approaching evening. It is, however, the way that Joyce describes her as she is sitting there that is significant: "Her head was leaned against the window curtains" (25). He does not say that "she leaned her head" but "her head was leaned" which gives the reader an image of a doll or a paralysed person in a placed position. The similarity between these descriptions is the passiveness of the characters, neither one is a participant in the events surrounding them.

The similarity is not only that of the form of presentation in Joyce's and Bang's works, but also lies in their choice of subject. Bang's choice of subject in *Beside the Road* and the objectivity of his observations on both the characters and their surroundings is within his perception of realism as a writing style. It is within this form of a writing style that the similarity between him and Joyce can be found. In Bang's story the setting is a small provincial town where the main character Katinka lives out her quiet existence. Her social position is that of a woman restricted by a conventional 19th century society, or a woman being "suffocated in tradition's straitjacket" (Fibiger 44). She is completely dependent on her husband who is in control of her life. It is this dependency and the social restraints that make the characters both in *Beside the Road* and "Eveline" seem paralysed and therefore unable to take control. Both Katinka and Eveline are bound with the inability to escape their role as women, and their existence is dependent on them behaving according to the rules of society. Both want to escape their surroundings, Katinka from her loveless marriage and Eveline from her father and her own social status. In the case of Katinka, Bang uses her wedding things as objects to show that Katinka has changed in the duration of her marriage: "In the top drawer under the silver in the bureau lay her bridal veil and the withered wreath of myrtle" (*Ved vejen* 25, my translation). The symbol of the withered myrtle gives the reader an image of a withered virgin, since the myrtle is the symbol of an innocent bride in Danish culture (Politikens Nudansk Ordbog).

Both women are unable to escape and are therefore unable to avoid the fate that awaits them. Both women are seeking happiness and fulfilment through love. Katinka seeks it through another relationship outside her marriage, Eveline in the man that can take her away from her present life. Furthermore, this can be seen in the character of Gretta in "The Dead" by Joyce, who reminisces about a lost love that she is unable to find

in her marriage with Gabriel. The fate that awaits both Katinka and Eveline is death, in one or another sense of the word and both remember their mothers and the promises they made to them. Katinka is not prepared for what awaits her in her marriage and the demands that her husband makes: "There were so many things that she had not imagined herself, that Bai [her husband] would be so aggressive in many things" (Bang *Ved vejen* 23, my translation). She is still stuck in her childhood and her childish ideas about love and romance. It is not until she gets married that her hopes about love are crushed as the following quotation demonstrates where Katinka is thinking back to happier days from her childhood when she and her friends went out dancing: "the last ticket from the pavilion, when there had been dancing" (Bang *Ved vejen* 24, my translation). She thinks back to her childhood at her parents' home and she wonders about what her mother's marriage was like: "Had they loved each other? The dad that always found fault, sat and got waited upon – and the mother that became so different when he died, like she blossomed again..." (Bang *Ved Vejen* 114, my translation). Both Eveline and Katinka's mothers are described as women that serve their men, and it is not until death that they become free from the duties that the institution of marriage involves: "She [Eveline] would not be treated as her mother had been" (Joyce 26). It is in these half written lines that a hint is given on the social morality that the narrator wants the reader to reflect upon and come to a conclusion based upon the end result.

1.3 The Ibsen connection

Although Joyce was seen as a modernist in his later works, he was a follower of realism when writing *Dubliners*. He saw realism as the means to tell the truth in plain words as the following quotation shows: "It must not be covered over with euphemism, avoided by turning to the 'blue heavens'; the cure was realism...'in realism you are down to facts

on which the world is based” (Johnson xiii). It is in this admiration for the use of the truth for everyday life that the connection to Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright, starts to form. Joyce admired Ibsen for his unrelenting use of realism in his works: “he [Joyce] celebrated Ibsen’s ability to present the drama of everyday life with a stark, unbending realism. Like Ibsen, he believed that art was a confrontation with, not an escape from, reality” (Bulson 3). It was, however, not only the writing style that Joyce and Ibsen had in common, but also the choice of subject for their works: “Ibsen’s plays were famously controversial because they reacted against the strict moralism and parochialism that Joyce identified with his own native country” (Bulson 3).

In *A Doll’s House* Ibsen criticises women’s social inequality to men in the 19th century. The main theme in the play is woman’s position within the institution of marriage and her social status. Nevertheless, the play can also be seen as a paradigm for individualism in the main character’s search to discover who she is as a person, not just as a wife or mother. The play revolves around the marriage of Nora and Torvald Helmer and intervening minor characters. It is apparent early on in the play that Nora, the main character, is treated like a child, both by her husband and others in the play. She is called names by her husband such as “skylark”, “squirrel”, “spendthrift” and “little girl”. Her ability to make sound decisions for herself is also questioned as the following question by Torvald shows: “Hasn’t Miss Sweet Tooth been breaking rules in town today?” (Ibsen 7). Her position in the marriage is clear when she answers her husband: “I should not think of going against your wishes” (Ibsen 7). In the beginning of the play Nora seems to be an immature character, and even more after the minor character Mrs. Linde is introduced:

Mrs Linde. Yes, anyhow I think it would be delightful to have what one needs.

Nora. No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money” (Ibsen 10).

Mrs. Linde is a widow of poor means after the death of her husband, whom she married for money and a secure social position. It is with irony that Ibsen describes her current position and what her husband left her: "Not even any sorrow or grief to live upon" (10). Mrs. Linde can be seen as a symbol for realistic ideas on marriage and life, but Nora as a symbol for more romantic views due to the fact that she ignores that her life and marriage are based upon the conventions of society, and not upon equality.

When an outsider poses a threat to reveal a secret Nora has been keeping, she discovers the truth about her marriage, and her unequal position within it is made clear: "I am beginning to understand thoroughly" (Ibsen 70). It is at this point the tables turn. It is the revelation of Nora's secret that causes her decision to leave her home so that she is able to discover who she is as a person. This scene can be interpreted as an idea of individualism and a person's right to act according to one's beliefs, as well as being a statement on women's rights. As pointed out by James McFarlane in *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, for a mother to leave her husband and children and to portray openly a holy institution such as marriage was too much for 19th century viewers and Ibsen was criticised for this (167).

Nevertheless, it is the hypocrisy of Torvald's words regarding his opinion in women's rights that Ibsen uses as social critique: "Before all else, you are a wife and a mother" (76). Torvald does not see his wife as an individual or as a person, but just as his wife and the mother of his children. In the play's falling action it becomes clear what sort of a man Torvald really is. He changes from being the man who seems to love his wife, into the man that cares more about his social status when he finds out what Nora has done, and when the threat of ruin faces him he says: "No man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves" (Ibsen 78), which shows his list of priorities.

When the outside threat of social ruin is no longer there, the full extent of Torvald's hypocrisy is seen. He changes back into the loving husband he was in the beginning, and declares that he is the man that will protect his wife against everything, just because he knows that there is no need for it anymore: "There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife...It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life" (Ibsen 73). This statement is from the same man that was prepared to separate his wife from her children so she would not infect them with her immorality: "I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you" (Ibsen 71). Through Nora, Ibsen puts focus on women's status in the 19th century, by letting Nora realise that she has never had an opinion that she could call her own, just what has been handed down to her, first by her father, then by Torvald. She comes to understand that she has been treated as a doll and not as a person: "You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as yours...when I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman – just from hand to mouth" (Ibsen 74). Ibsen also uses the couple to convey the difference of values between the sexes. It is the woman who is prepared to sacrifice herself and risk a social scandal in order to protect her family, the man on the other hand seems to be only concerned with how society will react, as can be seen in Torvald's response to Nora on how the society will react to the news of Nora leaving him: "you don't consider what people will say!" (Ibsen 76).

There also seem to be different views in the play concerning the laws of society and individual sense of what is right. The law do not take into account the human factor. This can be seen in the play when Nora says that she does not understand how the law can punish her for trying to save her husband's life and sparing her dying father the burden of finding out that she is in need of money: "I am learning, too, that the law is

quite another thing from what I supposed; but I find it impossible to convince myself that the law is right. According to it a woman has no right to spare her old dying father or to save her husband's life" (Ibsen 77). The answer that she gets from Torvald is: "You don't understand the conditions of the world in which you live" (Ibsen 77), meaning the male dominated world at that point in time. In this dialogue the inconsistency between law and personal morality is shown. It shows that the law has little to do with humanity, or at least does not take it into account.

This portrayal of marriage and women's inequality to men in a male dominated world can be seen as Ibsen's answer to the "Modern breakthrough" movement's demand that literature should serve a purpose by foregrounding social problems and thereby make them the subject of debate. Although Joyce uses a different approach, his motives are parallel to what Ibsen wanted to achieve. Joyce wanted to bring to light the paralysis that he thought was endemic to Ireland, thereby foregrounding the social problems facing the lower-middle-class in Ireland: "My intention was to write a chapter in the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (Tysdahl 265). It was by using unembellished words and describing the situation as it was that Joyce saw fit to wake his fellow countrymen up to reality: "By reading *Dubliners*, Dubliners' scales would fall from their eyes, they would recognize their paralysis, that recognition would stimulate movement, a first step towards freedom, towards civilisation" (Johnson xii). Joyce wanted to foreground the main forces that he believed were the cause of many of the social problems he addresses in *Dubliners*. These were the British Empire, with Ireland still being a colony, and the Roman Catholic Church. It was the influence of these forces that Joyce saw as the reason for the paralysis: "If the Catholic Church had the souls of Dublin in its grip, then the British Empire had forced these same souls into political and economic submission"

(Bulson 33). It is from the paralytic state of mind that Joyce wants Dublin to wake up by portraying in black and white the stories of Dubliners such as Eveline, who wants to escape from it all, but nevertheless falls back into her state of paralysis: "She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal" (Joyce 29).

Although the tone in *Dubliners* is harder because it is less sympathetic towards the characters and more directly to the point than in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, both Ibsen and Joyce share the same vision. They see their society blinded by either social conventions or by religious and political life and act accordingly by portraying the raw, direct truth of everyday life. Their subjects are people of the middle or lower-middle-class in their everyday life, forced to act when confronted with reality. In the case of *A Doll's House*, Nora leaves with nothing but the conviction that she has lived her whole life like someone's doll and needs to discover herself as a person. In contrast, in Bang's *Beside the Road* and in "Eveline", Katinka and Eveline are left to face their destiny, with one dying and the other paralysed. Furthermore, if the character of Gretta Conroy from "The Dead" is compared to Ibsen's Nora, their situation is similar. Both are married to husbands who control them, except that in the end Nora escapes, whereas Gretta does not develop further: "this doll's house has a passive Nora" (Tysdahl 58). Bang, on the other hand, takes a close look at the woman's status within the marriage, both socially and by law, whereas Ibsen points the looking glass at the position of an individual within marriage as an institution, and Joyce confronts Dubliners with the unwavering truth with descriptions of a paralysed society, governed by others than themselves. These writers have a common goal: by using realism as their writing style they foreground what they saw was needed to make people recognise their society and react.

Joyce's knowledge on Ibsen was extensive, as Bjørn Tysdahl points out in his studies on the Ibsen and Joyce connection. It is known that Joyce wrote essays on many

of the Ibsen plays, including *A Doll's House* (Tysdahl 266), which gave him an insight into what was happening in 20th century Scandinavian literature, with realism taking over the literary scene. Although there is nothing that suggests that Joyce ever came in contact with Herman Bang or his works, they were both, along with Ibsen, followers of realism. However, there is a difference in their writing style. Bang leans more towards the impressionistic way of relating his stories, as he paints a picture for the reader. Furthermore, Bang, like Joyce, uses ellipsis where he wants the reader to seek out the message from what he is saying: "Its [impressionism's] worth lies in that it stirs the ground of things left unsaid" (Bang, my translation). On the other hand, Joyce sought new ways of describing his setting. Joyce uses the emotional status of his characters as a description for what is happening in the outer world, as in the opening scene in "Eveline", where there seems to be a person who is not in control because of the way she seems placed, like a doll or a corpse. Furthermore, it is in realism that Joyce finds the tone to describe his subject, *Dubliners*. The focus is set on the forces that he believes are the reasons for his characters' paralysis. It is the numbness and the paralysis that describes the social situation of the characters. On one hand Joyce agreed with the "Modern Breakthrough" movement and Ibsen, that by writing a realistic work and casting a critical eye on society with the use of conveying reality as it really was, it could lead to social improvement. On the other hand, if the purpose of the literary work is put aside and the writing style is analysed the similarities between Bang and Joyce becomes apparent.

Chapter 2: *Dubliners*

As mentioned by Jeri Johnson in his introduction to Joyce's *Dubliners*, Joyce's goal with his collection of short stories was to open the eyes of the Irish, by presenting them with

a realistic and historical description of Ireland at that time. With his stories he wanted to “civilize its citizens” (Johnson ix). He wanted to “write a chapter of the moral history” of his country (Brown xxxi). As the means to do this he took a “nicely polished looking-glass” (Johnson xi) and examined his fellow Irishmen like specimens in a jar, the jar in this case being Dublin. He explained that he chose Dublin, because the city for him was the center of where he considered his nation’s illness lay: “I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis” (Brown xxxi). The cure for the illness was “realism” in the form of telling the truth: “euphemism..., distortion, evasion, held Ireland back and stunted the growth of the moral” (Johnson xi-x).

The reader is brought to the setting which is Dublin, as in all of Joyce’s works, in the early years of the 20th century. The focus is on the inhabitants who are imprisoned either by outside circumstances or by themselves and are all trying to escape: “The prison house is the whole town and its environs” (Tysdahl 265). Joyce’s choice of characters is to demonstrate that the paralysis was not limited to a certain social class; therefore there is a cross section presented of the inhabitants of Dublin. The reader is presented with the lower-middle-class, being what became a characteristic feature for works of realism: “It is clear that the realist thought an artist should concern himself with the here and now, with everyday events, with his own environment and with the movements (political, social, etc.) of his time” (Cuddon 730). This meant the common man, going about in his everyday life as it was and, that the everyday life included things that were not embellished before being addressed. The grittiness of everyday life sets the tone in *Dubliners*, with the centre of attention on alcoholism, poverty and other such social problems.

In this chapter the focus is on the analysis of two chosen short stories from *Dubliners*: “Eveline” and “The Dead”. The reason for choosing these two particular

stories from the collection is based on the distinction between them. The difference makes it possible to foreground the different aspects of the society that Joyce wants to address, and that shows Joyce's position is not limited to one part of society, but rather that his social criticism concerns all aspects of it. The range of both social status and personal circumstances of the characters in these stories shows that the paralysis Joyce wants to portray is not limited to a certain class or type of character. The analysis of the stories seeks to foreground the paralysis in them, which is presented in different ways in the stories. Furthermore, the chapter looks at realism as Joyce's means to disclose the problems that he believes are the reasons for this paralysis, as well as focuses on how the inner portrays the outer.

2.1 Analysis of "Eveline"

From the start there seems to be something amiss with the protagonist of Joyce's story "Eveline". The story begins with a description of her sitting by a window in her home in a complete state of passiveness: "Her head was leaned against the window" (Joyce 29). In this scene Eveline is placed by the window like a doll or a paralysed person, she is not active in the sense that it is not she who "leans her head against the window". The only thing that indicates that she is alive, is that she is unable to act or even prevent a smell penetrating "her nostrils" (Joyce 29) due to her apparently paralytic state. She is watching the life outside her window; however, she is not participating in it. Immediate impressions fly through her mind, as if she has no control over her own thoughts. In these passages many of the verbs connected to Eveline are in a passive verb form, e.g. "being divided" (Joyce 31) and "was leaned" (Joyce 29). This further suggests her inability to act on her own.

In the passages where Eveline's mind wanders off, Joyce gives the reader an insight into the social circumstances of the lives of young women in Dublin at the end of the 19th century:

“Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business...Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds...She had hard work to keep the house together (Joyce 26).

By mirroring everyday life, although a bleak one like Eveline's, Joyce gives a realistic description of what is preventing Eveline from acting upon her yearning to escape. Being about 19 years of age, and a working-class shop worker, Eveline has little means of establishing her own life without getting married. She is stuck in the social circumstances she is born into. She earns little money and the little she earns she gives to her father, who squanders it. Foreshadowing Eveline's fate is when she hears an organ playing as she is about to embark upon a new life. She remembers the organ playing at her mother's funeral, which suggests that Eveline will not succeed in escaping: “Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing...Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother” (Joyce 28).

Nearing the story's end Eveline is on the verge of running away. However, there are signs that something is holding her back, such as the use of the expression “she had consented to go away” (Joyce 31). The word “consented” here has a passive connotation in the sense that it suggests that she is not the agent of the idea of running away. However, her need to “escape” (Joyce 33) suggests that she feels imprisoned and running away with Frank is her only hope of survival. This is nonetheless impossible because she is unable to go back on her word to her mother. By promising to take care of the family after her mother's death, she imprisoned herself and forced herself to follow

in her mother's footsteps. Eveline is trapped because of her social circumstances: her "duty" to her family (Joyce 33), as a woman in the society of that time, as a Christian praying to God "to direct her" (Joyce 33) and as someone bound to inherit her mother's fate. At the end of the story, just before Eveline is about to board the ship, she becomes "passive, like a helpless animal" (Joyce 34). Eveline has become the same paralysed person that she was in the beginning of the story with no means to escape: "Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (Joyce 34).

2.2 Analysis of "The Dead"

In Joyce's story "The Dead", the use of certain words underlines the symbol of death and paralysis. It begins with the mentioning of "darkness" and "death", an "organ", "mortal hours" and a "caretaker" on the very first pages (Joyce 138-139). Pat, the Morkan sisters' brother, has passed away and they have to face social decline in moving to a "dark gaunt house" with "dark stairs" (Joyce 139). Through the use of language the connotation with death is firmly established in the beginning of the story. For example, the word "dark" is found four times and the word "pale" two times on the first two pages of the story. Also there is the introduction of Lily, who is the caretaker's daughter, in the beginning of the story. The reference to "death" is both found in her father's occupation and her name "Lily", which is a funeral flower. In addition, the sisters' surname, Morkan, underlines the story's gloominess and is used as a symbol. Being a devoted fan of Ibsen and a language enthusiast, Joyce could have come across the word "mørke", which is a Danish/Norwegian word for "dark", and a Scandinavian reader would certainly associate the word with darkness. Furthermore, the association with darkness is also found in the story's setting, with the story taking place after ten o'clock on a cold

winter's night. Moreover, the title strongly indicates how the characters should be perceived.

With the title of the story being "The Dead", there is a clear suggestion that its characters are in one way or another dead. This could also be interpreted as a symbol for paralysis; that the characters are paralyzed in their state of "death". Firstly, Gabriel, the story's protagonist, is sure that this will be his last visit to the Morkan sisters while they are both alive. When Gabriel and Gretta arrive at the sisters' house, Gabriel notices how old his Aunt Julia is: "Her hair...was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face" (Joyce 141). At the end of the story Gabriel is sure that he will soon be at her funeral: "She...would soon be a shade..." (Joyce 175). In addition, he feels that "One by one they were all becoming shades" (Joyce 175), suggesting that they are all about to become "dead" in some sense of the word. Some characters are both old and dying, while others are dead in the sense of being paralyzed mentally. The story seems to be filled with characters that are paralyzed in "body, affect and will" (Brown xxxvi). It is the symbol of death that is a ruling element in the story. It seems that death is a force that can even bring the dead into the realm of the living, like it does with Gretta as she stands on the stairs listening to *The Lass of Aughrim* remembering a lost love of hers, who used to sing that song (Joyce 172).

The paralysis which Joyce wanted to portray with his short stories is not only found in the language and symbolism of "The Dead" and "Eveline", it is also found in the main characters. For instance, both Gabriel and Eveline suffer from paralysis, even though they could not be more apart in the social ladder. Gabriel is a man of public life and belongs to the upper middle class of Dubliners. He is educated at the Royal University and writes for *The Daily Express*. Although Gabriel belongs to another class than Eveline, who is a working class shop assistant, he is nevertheless psychologically

paralyzed. He is unable to experience real affecting emotions. In the scene where he sees his wife standing on the stairs, he sees her at a distance and in a romantic vision: "He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude.... *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter" (Joyce 165). His emotions are on the surface, he is captivated by the image that he has of his wife, but he only thinks of his own emotions in that scene. He looks at himself as the creator of the image. In further evidence of his emotional shallowness is his opinion of the other characters. For example, he speaks of his old aunts as "only two ignorant old women" (Joyce 151). Furthermore, what suggests Gabriel's arrogance is his doubt that the people at the party will understand the quote in the speech that he has prepared for the evening: "He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers" (Joyce 141). Even imagining his Aunt Julia's death does not touch his emotions deeper than making him see himself as the one comforting his Aunt Kate, not as a mourner.

Controversially, Gabriel seems very anxious about his own character and being called out as can be seen in the scene with Miss Ivors. He is very conscious that others are hearing her talk about him being a "West Briton" (Joyce 149), when she asks him why he goes abroad on holidays instead of visiting his own country: "She [Miss Ivors] had tried to make him ridiculous before people, heckling him" (Joyce 150). This self-consciousness seems to further indicate that something is amiss in his character. In addition, the end scene of the story can be interpreted as the ultimate display of his emotional paralysis. His grief in finding out that his wife has loved, and still loves another man, is a portrayed emotion: "Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes" (Joyce 176). The word "generous" in this sentence, as Johnson points out in his introduction: "leads

to interpretation difficulty....might be seen as providing the breathing room necessary for irony to operate" (xxxvii). The question is therefore why Joyce chose to use that particular word and what connotations the word "generous" has? It is suggested by the previous struggles that Gabriel has had throughout the story, that he is a person who sets himself above everyone else and therefore does not need to shed a "grieving" tear. Nonetheless, the use of the word "generous" here is in keeping with the interpretation that Gabriel has an epiphany in the end scene. In that paragraph where the word can be found, he is crying because he realizes that he is not capable of such love as the young man Michael Furey who had died from his love for Gretta. Gabriel realizes his emotional paralysis, as well as realizing that "One by one they were all becoming shades" (Joyce 176), which he wants to fight against: "Better pass boldly into the other world...than fade and wither"(Joyce 176).

Though belonging to a higher social class than Eveline, Gabriel suffers from the same paralysis of will and action as she does. He goes on holiday to the continent because he is sick of his country: "O, to tell you the truth, retorted Gabriel suddenly, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (Joyce 149). However, he never truly leaves and his wife Gretta makes fun of his galoshes purchased on the continent (Tysdahl 270). This talk of Gabriel not being a true Irishman and his trips to the continent and working for an English newspaper suggest a struggle. If the story is put into a historical context then Ireland would have been an English colony, which meant that the Irish did not have control over the dealings of its country, which Joyce saw as one of the forces causing paralysis among its people: "Ireland's ills had a source in English domination of the country" (Brown xxxix). With the removal of political power from the Irish nation, the Catholic Irish were powerless. This suggests that a part of the paralysis of Gabriel's character is also due to cultural circumstances. The colonial effects are visible when

Gabriel, talking to Miss Ivors, says that Irish, his native tongue “is not my language” (Joyce 149). Here Gabriel is denouncing his native tongue for an acquired one.

Moreover, this could also be interpreted as Gabriel’s desire to escape. Throughout the story he is searching for a means to become free from himself and his surroundings, both the people around him and his country. As mentioned above, he goes on cycling tours to the continent and does book reviews for an English newspaper, because he believes that “literature was above politics” (Joyce 148). During the party at the Morkans’ house, he consistently wants to escape: “How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone” (Joyce 151). He does not participate in the conversation over dinner, but thinks of the pure air outside when he is about to begin his speech. There are many events that diminish Gabriel’s ego during the night. It starts right in the beginning when he gives Lily the maid a coin, which she tries to refuse, and then with his wife making fun of his bother with the galoshes, then with Miss Ivors and her accusing him of not being Irish enough. These sore defeats culminate in the end scene with his wife declaring that he is not her true love.

The symbolism of snow is apparent throughout “The Dead” and plays a vital part in Gabriel’s development as a character. Firstly, when Gabriel arrives at his Aunt’s house, he is covered with snow: “snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat” (Joyce 139). With allusions to the snow outside throughout the party there is a suggestion that this symbolism is connected to Gabriel and could suggest his personal state of paralysis. However, in the end scene Gabriel admits that “the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland” (Joyce 176). This further suggests that it is not only Gabriel that is burdened by the snow, but everyone, so the symbol refers to the entire population of Ireland. In addition, the snow has fallen upon “all the living and the dead” (Joyce 176), underlining that the living are as helpless against this paralytic force as the dead are.

Nevertheless, in the end scene, as pointed out by Bjørn Tysdahl, Gabriel's position has changed. Thus far, Gabriel has been "covered" with the snow, yet in the end he has risen above the situation of his country (Tysdahl "Ibsen's Stories in Joyce's *Dubliners*" 271), and is able to set himself apart from it.

What causes this paralysis in Joyce's stories is never spelled out by the narrator, it is merely hinted at with the overwhelming need of the characters to escape, in which none of them succeeds. It is the objectivity and the lack of explanations that give the reader the opportunity to dwell upon the matter and look more at it closely.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to establish the Scandinavian connection to Joyce's use of realism in the short stories "Eveline" and "The Dead" from *Dubliners* and the different issues being addressed with its use, both in Joyce's stories and works of the Scandinavian authors discussed in the essay. For example, the literary movement the "Modern breakthrough" saw realism as means to address certain social issues and bring them to the foreground so that it would create a debate and a reaction. Henrik Ibsen, a known follower of the movement, had with his use of realism as means for social criticism, great influence on Joyce. Joyce agreed with Ibsen, and saw an opportunity, in the use of realism, to confront his fellow Irishmen with issues concerning the Irish nation at that point in time. As mentioned in the essay, Joyce wanted to seek literary models for inspiration for his work in Europe and it is safe to presume that he saw the Scandinavian approach to realism as a way to foreground certain aspects of the community that he wanted to address. Joyce wanted to point out with his stories that there were certain aspects concerning his nation, which were causing paralysis of the soul and mind of his fellow countrymen. As mentioned above Joyce wanted to confront his fellow

countrymen by forcing them to reflect upon their own community by telling them stories from their own environment and time, and by doing so make them realize the overall paralysis of the nation.

As pointed out in this essay Ibsen and Joyce both employed realism as a writing style for their work, as did Bang also. The similarities between these writers is mostly found in their choice of theme and the way they present a certain form of paralysis, either due to social restrictions such as women's rights criticized in *A Doll's House*, Bang's *Beside the Road* and in Joyce's "Eveline" , or emotional restrictions like in the case of Joyce's Gabriel. The portrayal of the paralysis can be found by looking closely at the use of language, symbols and images. For example, in Joyce's short stories the use of language and symbols such as "death" and "darkness" can be seen as connotations for paralytic forces causing immobility and fear in the characters. However, the form of paralysis is also conveyed through the characters of the story, especially through Eveline and Gabriel. Eveline is paralyzed by fear and it renders her unable to act. Gabriel is an emotionally paralyzed character and not capable of action, rendered helpless by the paralytic forces of a powerless nation carrying the burden of "snow". Joyce, as Bang, employs symbols, imagery and ellipsis to place a certain image in the addressee's mind, whereas Ibsen is more to the point in making his characters directly address the problems that he is foregrounding in his work. However, the passiveness of the main characters in the chosen works discussed here is apparent. Katinka, Nora, Eveline and Gabriel are all trying to escape from something, both boundaries made by society or by other characters. In order to achieve this they have to make great personal sacrifices, like Ibsen's Nora. Most of them do not succeed in escaping and continue to live their quiet existences in a state of complete paralysis.

Note

1. The chapter on Scandinavian literature is somewhat based on my previous findings for my bachelor essay “Det modern gennembruds realismekrav til samtidens litteratur“, from 2010 at the University of Iceland.

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