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An Irish Identity Crisis in James Joyce's Dubliners and Hugo Hamilton's The Speckled People

Identity and Intersectionality in an Irish Society

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Foreword

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Introduction

Identity is a central theme throughout literature. Characteristics and settings are there to help the reader better understand the text. Identity is a broad term and can be hard to define, however it is fair to say that identity is a definition of who we are. Being able to say who we are can be just as difficult to define as the term itself. Culture, in its many definitions and variations, constitutes important parts of our identity. Culture is one of the main relations we have to our identity, and it is our culture that constructs and binds us to one another, by language, religion, history, norms, and ethnicity. Therefore, culture is clearly an essential part of our identity. However, if we look at how and why culture is constructed, we see that history and gender are also fundamental elements in the construction and formation of identity. In literature, identity is to an extent given to the reader through characteristics and personality traits by the author. However, it is the indirect message the author puts forward that gives the reader a better understanding of how and why the characters are formed. These indirect messages are constructed through the actions of the characters, and the setting of the story.

In Irish literature there are many similarities between characters and settings in different literary works, and because of this it is interesting to seek the reason as to why and what makes literature with the same nationality similar or different. According to an article in Encyclopaedia Britannica on Irish literature, history is accountable for the similarity of themes throughout literature. The article argues that:

Ireland's history of conquest and colonization, of famine and mass emigration, and of resistance, rebellion, and civil war etched its literature with a series of ruptures and revivals. Since the 17th century, Irish society has also simultaneously been a colonial one and an independent, national one. That the hybridity has been the source of endless cultural tension in Irish writing, which has repeatedly coalesced around four issues: land, religion, nationality, and language (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2019).

Although it can be said that history has had an effect on many literary works, the Irish concept is a special one because of the colonisation of the country. Where identity was taken from many people in the Irish society. Identity in Irish literature mirrors the country's own confusion of who they are. History is an important part of any identity; it is the ways in which



we have been formed by the past. Ireland has had its fair share of devastation throughout time, from the abolition of The Irish Parliament in 1801, The Easter Rising in 1916, to the *Troubles*, also known as the Irish Civil War from 1968-1998. These events have ultimately resulted in an identity crisis in which Irish citizens were made - among other things- to speak a new language and dissolve Catholicism, thus taking away an essential part of their identity and culture. The Great Famine in 1845-49 had dire consequences for Ireland, (Mokyr 2019) and the country lost half of its population and although they were under British rule, they felt that Great Britain's help was inadequate. This resulted in the Irish people resenting Great Britain, thereafter, leading to the Fenian Rising of 1867, a rebellious act against British rule to gain independence and become an Irish Republic. The Irish language became nearly extinct after The Great Famine; however, the language took a turning point and became declared a national language by interested scholars in the mid 1800s (Mokyr 2019).

Culture is a term with various definitions, ranging from language to values. Margaret Mead (2002) distinguishes a difference between culture and a culture:

Culture means the whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation... A culture is less precise. It can mean the forms of traditional behaviour which are characteristic of a given society, or of a group of societies, or of a certain race, or of certain area, or of a certain period of time (Mead 17).

Mead's definition of culture is how our traditional behaviour is learned and passed down from generation to generation, therefore history and societies are consequences of this process. However, a culture is a broader term, meaning that it can be associated with different groups of societies, race, time period, and or territory.

Religion throughout history has been a key factor in nearly all cultures, therefore being an important element in the construction of identity. According to Eamon Maher (2006), "Catholicism became an extremely potent influence on the 20th century Irish novel. This is not surprising when one considers that the majority religion in this country has historically been so closely bound up with our nationalism, politics and culture" (103). Taking this into consideration religion and Catholicism should also be central themes throughout Irish literature, as well as a crucial part of Irish identity. Catholicism in Irish literature was to an extent plagued by negative connotations and critics often referred to it as "emphasizing how it led to twisted attitudes to sexuality" (111). According to Frances Raday



(2003), Culture, religion, and gender are closely related, “The intersection between traditionalist culture, religious norms, and gender speaks patriarchy. This is amply demonstrated by the empirical evidence, and by the fact that the cultural defence or claims of religious freedom are used to oppose women’s demands for gender equality” (710). Our culture and religion give us belonging to a common society, while history and gender affect the way in which we are constructed and formed by and in society.

This thesis will look at Irish identity in James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (2006) and Hugo Hamilton’s *The Speckled People* (2009). These literary works were chosen due to the significance of identity presented in both works, through cultural, historical, religious, and gendered elements. An important factor to consider is that the works were published over 70 years apart. The thesis will firstly concentrate on the definition of identity in an attempt to distinguish what the analysis will base itself on. I will show how identity has been influenced by history and politics, and how the repercussions of this are expressed through the chosen literature. Thereafter I will seek to define intersectionality as a theory that the thesis will be based on throughout. The thesis will ultimately explore Irish identity in two different texts - published over 70 years apart – and seek to understand the similarities and similarities offered through an Irish voice in literature. The thesis statement is “An Irish Identity Crisis in James Joyce’s *Dubliners* and Hugo Hamilton’s *The Speckled People* – Intersectionality and Identity in an Irish society.



1 Theory

Identity

Identity is a term that can be hard to define, many will identify with their culture, appearance, and or their status in society. Webster's dictionary defines identity as "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual" (Identity). Identity is a question that is asked daily, either by a professional, family member, or oneself. When a person wakes up, they immediately dress to their identity, because clothing like any other personal trait is a part of our identity. Appearance, in general, says a lot about a person, who they are, where they work, or what they are doing that specific day. Judith Butler argues that Identity is not limited to our appearance, it goes beyond what we can imagine, and to the extent that one can assume that our identity is a construction of society (Leitch 2010 2553). We act, say, and perform to what society expects us to. If identity is a construction of society one can assume that people are influenced to a degree where identity is somewhat chosen for us.

1.1.1 Personal Identity

Eric T. Olson uses the term *Personal Identity* as the "Who am I?". Olson argues that personal identity is the form of identity of how we identify with ourselves. However, some problems arise when identifying with ourselves, because we are all different, our definition of what is regarded as important varies a great deal. For some people being for example a professor is a part of one's identity, but the fact that they live in London is not regarded as important, and vice versa. It is stated that "One's personal identity in this sense is contingent and changeable; different properties could have belonged to the way one defines oneself as a person, and what properties these are can change over time" (Olson 2019). This statement clearly argues that although one may have identified oneself with being a professor that over time this may change to be a doctor. As people gradually change their lifestyle over time their identity will to some extent also change.

Mark Burr Woodhouse (1969) makes a clear distinction between traditional theories of personal identity and contemporary theories on the subject. Woodhouse argues that traditional theories on personal identity "have generally turned upon the possibility of making a metaphysical distinction between a subject and its experiences and/or body" (28). Woodhouse continues to explain this as a definition of the self, being put into a category of "nothing more than bundle of impressions and ideas" (28). In contemporary theories,



personal identity is explained as memory and bodily criteria. Woodhouse uses Locke's distinction between "man and person" to form his theory on the subject of personal identity;

The term 'man' denotes a living organism whose identity depends upon "fleeting particles of matter united to the same organized body." The term 'person', on the other hand, denotes a "thinking intelligent being who can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places, which it does only by consciousness which is ...essential to it" as far back as memory can be extended, Locke contends, "so far reaches the identity of that person" (Woodhouse 35).

What can be concluded from Woodhouse's theory is that a person is an intelligent being, which can think for itself and acts out of consciousness. Therefore, personal identity can be defined in simpler terms as a person making decisions based upon their understanding of why and what they do and say, thus connecting this to their own personal identity. In other words, our identity reaches as far as our memories will take us, thus making this a construction of our identity.

1.1.2 Narrative Identity

Narrative identity is an essential part of identity in literature because it focuses on the autobiographical elements of memory and how these memories are formed. Autobiographical memories are constructed through what is called a *narrative identity*, and according to Fivush, Habermas, Waters & Zaman (2011), they "comprise the story of our lives, rich in interactions and relationships, and in a very deep sense, provide a sense of self" (322). Our memories are what and how we define ourselves and our identity. When re-telling our lives, we generally pick the memories in which we want to be defined, but also how we see ourselves. Memories create the conception of ourselves and, consequently, our future identity. Oliver Sacks (1993) argues that, "It might be said that each of us constructs and lives a 'narrative', and that this narrative *is* us, our identities" (Sacks 1993). Meaning that to some degree, people choose their own identity, and how they wish to be perceived in society.

According to Paul John Eakin (2004) autobiographical literature can be understood as the following, "Autobiography is not merely something we read in a book; rather, as a discourse of identity, delivered bit by bit in the stories we tell about ourselves day in and day out, autobiography structures our living" (122). The way in which we remember is subjective,



meaning that even though an experience has been experienced together with more than one person, not everyone would agree on how it is remembered. Therefore, narrative identity can be understood as a combination of retelling chosen memories and structuring these in a chronological order to present how we want to be defined.

1.1.3 National Identity

National identity put in simpler terms can be defined as the identity of one's nationality and or language. Adam Taylor (2017) argues that The Pew Research Centre's findings on *National Identity* are both recognisable and interesting. Researchers found that a high percentage of Americans did not think that a person must necessarily be born in a country to share the national identity of those who are born there, in other words there are other more important factors that bind a nation, for example: language. Taylor says that this is not surprising, in the sense that it would be hard to connect with someone if they did not speak the same language. However, he adds that it is highly likely that things will change, the influences from immigration have already shown that some countries like for example Germany, have opted for a colloquial language for those who speak German, but their native tongue is Turkish or Arabic (Taylor 2017). We should also take into consideration the generational divide, in other words the split between the older and newer generation and how their languages differ. What can be concluded with this, is that language is an important factor when it comes to national identity, it is the way in which we connect and relate with others and society in general. The factor of being born in a country may not be enough to identify with this country as one's nationality, there are other factors that need to be in place for national identity to take form. There are other factors such as being multicultural, where a child may have parents from two different nationalities, should this child then be bound by birthplace as a form of national identity, or are language and family more essential factors? Because we are all individual beings these factors become subjective and can only be defined by oneself, there is not right or wrong answer when defining our own identities.

Intersectionality

An intersection can be understood as a place or something that meets or crosses one another. There are two different ways to look at intersectionality, the first being how people's lives intersect with different positions in society, for example: race, gender and class. The second way understands the process that involves these intersections and their inequalities,



for example how and why are there inequalities in our identities. Webster's Dictionary defines intersectionality as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals and groups" (Intersectionality). Intersectionality is a vital identity theory because it does not simply explain how identity is constructed; rather how having multiple identities can be a burden in society. Berry, Jay and Lynn (2010) define identity and intersectionality as:

Identities are not only multiple and intersecting but also gendered, racial, historical and social constructs (Berry, 2006). We are not only the sum of our parts but also the sum of our experiences. To understand multiplicity and intersectionality of identity means to view the world through multiple and intersecting lenses. In short, nothing is simple (Berry, Jay & Lynn, 2010 6).

Berry et al. (2010) demonstrated in this article that our identities are hard to define; many factors have to be taken into consideration such as race and gender, as well as historical and social background. Although people can identify with themselves by their nationality, they should also consider other factors, for example: are they male or female? What type of social environment have they experienced? How do these experiences construct an identity, and can this be considered as the consequence as to why they are burdened with inequality in society? Given these factors it is easy to see how history has an effect on identity through both racial and gendered elements.

Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) argue that the more subordinate group identities a person has, the more it becomes a disadvantage, it is vital to mention that these subordinate identities are those that are categorised as less valued. The definition of less valued in this context would be gender and ethnicity, although Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach use the African woman as an example, it is likewise substantial to use other ethnicities, for example a German woman living in Ireland, or just women for that matter (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach 2008). Women's oppression and the fact that Germany was to blame for the Second World War, are two factors that give disadvantages in not only an Irish society but society in general. This is where historical and social factors become a problem. Historical and political events through the years have had an effect on what is considered right and wrong in society, this is why having more than one subordinate identity becomes disadvantaged. It is not hard to understand that people ultimately become influenced by the past, when we have already



pinpointed that our culture is something that is passed down from generation to generation. Resulting that the effects of more than one subordinate identity can be a disadvantage, assuming that people with multiple subordinate identities will be subjected to more prejudice and discrimination.

3. *Dubliners*

James Joyce's *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories first published in 1914. According to Margot Norris, who has written the preface for the 2006 version of the collection, it is "Arguably one of the most famous collection of short stories written in English" (Joyce & Norris ix). The collection as a whole is written in chronological order from childhood to adulthood, however it does not follow the same narrator or characters throughout. Each story bases itself on and around one event from the perspective of one narrator or character, it is for the most part written in second person point of view. The collection was, according to Joyce intended to represent "The indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life" (ix). Throughout the text the different narrators and characters go through a process of coming of age and coming to terms with their own identity. This can be seen as the characters become older, and the events that take place in the stories become more mature, and the voices less naïve. The stories also represent cultural, historical, religious, and gendered elements from the perspective of the main characters; thus, these elements also change to some degree to match the correct time period. What this means is, that historical elements are far clearer as the characters become older and more experienced, while the younger characters are concerned with other elements in their lives. Joyce makes this distinction by gradually changing the language in the text, from an insecure and naïve voice to that of an adult.

In Joyce's own words he advocates that his intention for writing *Dubliners* was to "Write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (ix). Paralysis is a term often used by Joyce, either it be the state of paralysis in a character or in the setting of the story. It is in the events that take place that form and construct the identities of the characters. Going from a paralysed society where little or nothing happens, to a single event that changes everything, it is as if Joyce was trying to wake his characters from a deep sleep, his characters in *Dubliners* can be seen as he sees Dublin, paralysed. As earlier concluded 19th century Ireland went through some dreadful experiences, ultimately resulting in a paralysed state by not being able to move



forward, rather stuck in union with Great Britain, and not being able to get the help they needed to move on. This paralysed society has influenced Joyce's characters identities and see them playing their part in constructing Dublin's paralysis.

Joyce wanted to write about Dublin's paralysis and the way in which history affected Dubliners and he chose to express this through everyday mundane experiences. Moral history can be defined in many different ways, in light of Joyce's intention it may be correct to define it as the right and wrong behaviour in the historical events that have taken place in Ireland in the past, and the ultimate consequences of this. Joyce connects history and identity by using what has happened before, and the Irish identity as the repercussions or - to use a better word – consequence of history. What this means is that history has an impact on society, and that people's identities are a construction of society. To add to this, the fact that our identities change over time may be one of the most significant reasons Joyce chose to express himself through various stages of life. In an article for Time Magazine Alexander Aciman presents his reaction to the collection of short stories, and claims that, "The stories convince us that they and their characters are almost unimportant until they kick us in the heart" (Aciman 2014). Joyce's expertise in using every day, mundane settings and events to disguise the actual message that he wants to express through literature, is both fascinating and compelling, and that is why Aciman's argument is fitting. It is not before one analyses the collection thoroughly that we understand the message Joyce wanted to put forward, and he argues in his own words that, "The book is not a collection of tourist impressions but an attempt to represent certain aspects of the life of one of the European capitals" (Joyce ix). *Dubliners* certainly represents some aspects of what life in Dublin was like at the time it was published, some aspects more negative than others. L. M. Cullen argues in *James Joyce in Context* (2014) "Dublin, as seen in Joyce's writing, affords not only an insight into his personal experiences, but a picture of aspects of the social life of the city" (McCourt 173). Cullen's understanding of Joyce's perspective on Dublin is that he uses personal experience and interactions of social life in Dublin to paint a picture of Irish identity in an Irish city. Combined, these experiences give insight into the mind of the protagonists, and their identities and how intersectionality plays a part in forming these identities. We see this in Joyce's characters and how they are plagued by gender and economic inequality, brought on my historical events that have influenced the Irish society and the people within it.

Religion is an important and recurring theme in *Dubliners*. The collection captures Joyce's rejection of Catholicism, as a self-confirmed atheist we understand that he does not derive pleasure from religion. Gert Lernout claims, "Joyce rejected religion early on in his



life...” and that “Joyce did not think of himself as a Catholic...” (340-1). Throughout *Dubliners*, religion is treated with negativity and hostility. Religion is the power of authority and this can also be seen in Joyce’s focus on churches and educational institutions. Lernout argues, “By the beginning of the new century the hierarchy of the Irish Catholic Church had acquired so much power in the cultural, economic and political life of Ireland that it had effectively taken over many of the duties of the civil state” (334). From this we can understand where Joyce’s hostility towards The Catholic Church comes from, and why he has chosen to present it with such negativity in his collection. However, Lernout has other ideas as to why Joyce rejected religion, and it was not politically motivated, “...but when we look at his own accounts of his estrangement from the Church, it is clear that his own crisis of faith had probably more to do with sexual and aesthetic issues than with political ones” (335). Which would give understanding as to why priests and other male characters are given roles that are questionable, in his collection. Religion is the first element of identity to be introduced in *Dubliners*, through the voice of the young boy in *The Sisters* the reader becomes aware of the negative tone. If issues related to sex and aesthetics caused Joyce’s strained relationship to the Catholic Church, it is easier to understand that he may have lost faith in the authority figure of a male priest, signifying a strained relationship to religion as well as men. This strained relationship to the male authority figure should also be considered in light of intersectionality, meaning that being both male and a part of an upper society such as the Catholic Church, you would be considered an advantage in society. Therefore, being a young boy or a female would be considered a disadvantage. Frances Raday (2003) argues in her article *Culture, Religion, and Gender*, “The story of “gender” in traditionalist cultures and religions is that of the systematic domination of women by men, of women’s exclusion from public power, and of their subjection to patriarchal power within the family” (Raday 669). Therefore, it is safe to say that religion and gender are closely connected because of earlier traditional cultures within religious societies.

Gender throughout history has been a vital factor in society and culture, in both fiction and non-fiction. Gender in *Dubliners* can be found in Joyce’s choice of characters, where there are few women protagonists in his collection, *Eveline*, *The Boarding House*, *Clay*, and *A Mother* are among those that feature women protagonists. However, of those characters that do play an important role in Joyce’s collection are mostly connected with having disadvantaged characteristics, such as prostitution, confinement, and being less intelligent or deceitful. Eveline is portrayed as a confined woman while Mrs Mooney is considered intelligent, although very deceitful. With that said, Mrs Ivors in *The Dead* is given



characteristics in accordance with Joyce's claim to hating intellectual women. This claim has been revised and analysed by many literary critics, either criticizing him or defending his statement. Marian Eide writing for *James Joyce in Context*, chapter "Gender and sexuality", argues "Joyce's explicit hatred of intellectual women as recorded by his early biographers may have been a temporary, visceral reaction, but it was also an indication of his acknowledgment that women of his generation were no longer performing their collusion in traditional ways, but were meeting men on equal terms" (McCourt 86). As already established, having subordinate identities such as being female would be seen as less valued in society. Joyce's statement seen in relation to his collection could signify that - although maybe temporary - he did not adapt well to the changes of equality between men and women in society. Therefore, many of Joyce's female characters are portrayed as either weaker or very deceitful characters.

The way in which Joyce portrays men in his collection is not that different from the way he portrays women. He uses characteristics of mostly drunk, violent, and immoral identities for his male characters. Which is how he either characterises males in his own life, or how he identifies with the lower-class and paralysed Dublin. Although not all of his characters bear this resemblance, some are also seen as disadvantaged in society, just like women. When taking intersectionality into the equation, there are many men in his collection that are both discriminated against for their gender, religion and or class. Not only this but to some extent they become inferior to women later in his collection. This could be the indication of where society started to change, and gender equality began. Declan Kiberd (1996) argues, "The fathers in Joyce's *Dubliners* come home to beat their sons, in part as a response to the fact that they are tyrannized in the office. Patriarchal values exist in societies where men, lacking authority, settle for mere power" (Kiberd 91). The identity of the stereotypical male in the early 1900s would be the authority figure of the house, however if this authority was taken away from them in the workplace, it is not hard to assume that any type of authority or power was taken where they could gain it. Gaining authority and power through violence or using authority to gain power is recurring through the text in the male characters. This authority is presented through adult verses children, priests, and alcoholic fathers.

Culture in society is one of the most important factors of how our identities are formed. Mead's claims on what defines culture and a culture, where traditional behaviour and forms of this are what construct culture in a society, it can be said that Joyce has carefully chosen specific locations and focused on class-consciousness as a way of presenting culture



in Dublin. Many of the short stories are set in poor areas or being known for immoral activity, such as prostitution. L. M. Cullen's views on Joyce's choice of geography are, "His descriptions of many parts of Dublin often function as mere scene-setting for the events of the novel and lack intimacy of his accounts of life in the limited stretch of streets around Belvedere College and out to the North Wall" (McCourt 173). Cullen's views mean that apart from a few locations, others are chosen out of mere convenience. However, the chosen locations clearly bare some sentimental meaning or other relation to Joyce himself, indicating that the collection is to some extent written from personal experience. Writing from personal experience is a way of forming a narrative identity, Joyce does this by using locations to express his Irish identity through memory. The chosen locations range from upper-class to poorer areas, which suggests that Joyce uses these locations as a definition of character identity. This is also intersectionality in both a physical and psychological sense. The physical border of class is the separate areas of the locations, while the psychological borders of class is expressed through class consciousness, for example going to a boarding school.

Dubliners was chosen for this thesis because the collection exposes what life was like in Dublin in late 19th century to early 20th century, told in chronological order of age, which gives significance to how and why a person's identity changes with time. *Dubliners* uses history as a factor of how the city and its people have become paralysed in time, and how certain events that take place can change and form an identity. This thesis will only focus on four of the 15 short stories from Joyce's collection, *The Sisters*, *Eveline*, *The Boarding House*, and *The Dead*. The reason for choosing these short stories is that when looking at identity and intersectionality in literature, the chosen four short stories give a clear indication of adolescent identity, to the young adult identity, and lastly the adult identity. All four short stories are also affected by the main themes of identity; religion, culture, gender and history, which this thesis will seek to explore.

3.1. The Sisters

The Sisters is the first short story in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. This is the way in which Joyce intended to introduce his collection, thus making it highly relevant to include in this thesis. Joyce presents a young boy's thoughts and fears in and around his relationship with a soon to be dead priest, Father Flynn. The story is told from the young boy's perspective and shows a gradual understanding of an innocent mind plagued by immoral issues, that can be drawn out from the dialogue of the adult characters. Religion is one of the



main themes throughout the story and weighs heavily on recurring themes of gender, culture, and history.

Joyce decided to use *The Sisters* as his opening to a collection of 15 short stories, some thought should be given to this fact, essentially the reader can assume that there lies an important factor in doing so. Joyce introduces a young boy and tells the story from his point of view. He does this cleverly by including the dialogue of the adult characters in the story in such a way that the reader understands that this is how the young boy hears and understands the conversations around him. Joyce uses short unfinished sentences to produce a secretive language between the adults, as one would expect adults to use while talking about issues of an immoral nature, in the presence of children. These unfinished sentences - also called ellipses - are recurring throughout the story. The dialogue between Mr Cotter and the boy's uncle are one example of this. Mr Cotter frequently voices his opinions on the soon to be dead priest, “– No, I wouldn't say he was exactly ... but there was something queer ... there was something uncanny about him. I'll tell you my opinion...” (Joyce & Norris 3). The dialogue lacks information created by these ellipses, and although the lack of information causes the young boy some confusion, “I puzzled my head to extract meaning from his unfinished sentences” (5), the reader will ultimately pick up on the nature of the conversation. The boy recognises this language as something secretive, but his innocence only makes him more confused as to what the adults are actually discussing.

Interestingly, *The Sisters* begins with the death of the priest, “There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke” (Joyce & Norris 3). What made Joyce choose this dark beginning can presumably be connected to his hostility towards religion, and religion at this time would have had a common place in Irish society, thus Joyce's choice is a bold one. A relationship between a young boy and a priest is not very uncommon in an Irish society, however, this type of relationship is also haunted by a constant negative association of paedophilia. This argument is strengthened through the dialogue of the adults in the story, and it is this dialogue that will be essential for the reader to fully understand Joyce's reason for writing the story. Joyce himself may have been subjected to an immoral and sexual religious relationship, and this may be why he became an atheist and cut all ties with the Catholic Church. *The Sisters* is a great example of how Joyce experienced the Church in his own childhood, Geert Lernout writing for *James Joyce in Context*, claims “When Joyce refers to the rites, traditions and doctrines of the Catholic Church, he is writing of the church which, like the boy in “The Sisters”, he himself grew up with, and not the Catholic Church of Pope



Benedict XVI” (McCourt 332). Therefore, the hostility he offers towards religion in *The Sisters* can be a consequence of his own experiences.

The relationship between the boy and Father Flynn is not discussed as a sexual relationship, although the boy often relives uncomfortable situations between him and Father Flynn, “– a habit which made me feel uneasy in the beginning of our acquaintance before I knew him well” (Joyce & Norris 7). Although the boy here states that he knew Father Flynn well, he admits later to feeling freedom after his death. However, although Father Flynn is dead, he haunts the boy from the grave, “In the dark of my room I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic” (5). The boy’s imagination scares him until he reasons with himself finding comfort in the knowledge that Father Flynn is dead. Suggesting that he too may have been subjected to something immoral during their relationship, although this is hard to confirm, the boy may be aware of things that have gone on, “...it desired to confess something” (5). This confusing relationship suggests that the boy is either influenced by rumours and talk from others, or he may have become aware of the situation by putting two and two together to make his own conclusion and opinion on the matter. Even if the boy is not quite aware of the immorality of the priest’s intentions, there is the matter of Father Flynn’s illness. The boy’s confusion is recurring throughout, at times he puzzles over his feelings towards events that have made him feel uncomfortable, not knowing why he felt the way he did. This can be described as where intersectionality comes into the text. The young boy is somewhat inferior to all the adults in the story, but especially to Father Flynn. This is confirmed when he discusses his meetings with Father Flynn, where the priest quizzes the young boy on a range of religious facts. This essentially puts the priest in a position of power, not only because he is older, but because he is educated.

The term *Paralysis* in this text is used either as an indication of a state of paralysis as in what the priest is dying of, or it could indicate the space of time standing still between life and death. Paralysis can be related to the sexually transmitted disease Syphilis. The latter would explain a lot of the symptoms that Father Flynn suffers from, shaking and talking to himself are coherent with the disease, and also determines the fact that he would have had to have sex to be exposed to it, and because this is a sin in the Catholic Church, it only confirms his immoral character even more so. The last line of the text Eliza declares that, “so then of course when we saw that that made us think that there was something gone wrong with him...” (Joyce & Norris 11). This indicates that the priest was not sick in the sense of a normal sickness, but something else, something that was wrong. Thus, the theory of syphilis comes to mind and becomes a more plausible reason for his symptoms.



Gender in *The Sisters* does raise some questions in relation to the boy's gender, and that of the priest being attracted to young boys. This can also be seen in light of intersectionality, where the priest is subjected to rumours and talk of his wrong doings. Gender has its disadvantages for Father Flynn, his intersecting identities are prone to stigma from society, however at the same time his position in society is well-respected. This intersection is a major contrast in identity, and although it cannot be confirmed that he was or was not a paedophile there was certainly a lot of speculation, "I wouldn't like children of mine, he said, to have too much to say to a man like that" (4). Mr Cotter makes a statement presumably in relation to the claim that Father Flynn is a paedophile, "– It's bad for children, said old Cotter, because their minds are so impressionable. When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect..." (5). Not only does this statement recognise how sensitive children's minds are, but that eventually this will affect their character, therefore it will also affect their identity. From the dialogue it can be understood that there have been earlier allegations made against Father Flynn, "But still... They say it was the boy's fault. But poor James was so nervous, God be merciful to him!" (11). This statement refers to a broken chalice, which should be considered a symbol for something more than just this. They say that this is what made him later succumb to madness, or it may have been guilt that drove him to this. If the chalice is a symbol of Father Flynn's wrongdoing or of something he is accused of, then it is clear that this would essentially drive him to insanity. The female gender in the text is limited to a few characters, one of which is Eliza, however, she has very few lines in the text, and often says several words wrong throughout her dialogue in the text, this could be because she is less-educated or because she is a woman. Joyce chose to make women like Eliza, less important in the text, this could suggest a resentment to women in general being less important in society at this point in history. Gender in *The Sisters* portrays the male as central characters, who voice their opinions and who are respected in society, however, characters such as Eliza are given a less valuable status.

The fundamental elements of culture, religion, history, and gender in *The Sisters* can all be linked to one another. The cultural elements are linked to the religious elements, meaning that the story is based on and around religion, and the traditional values and rituals that are connected to Catholicism. Religion is a part of our culture, and culture is based on traditions and values. Other cultural elements shown in the text are formed around language, history and gender. One cannot exist without the other. Language is particularly important in this text as it sets the theme and mood of the story and it also shows the divide between children and adults, which also shows intersectionality in the boy's lack of life experience



makes him inferior to that of the adult's language. History in the text is limited to that of a rumoured history connected to the priest. Not only does this portray this particular priest but also a standing rumour in a catholic society. Religion is the main theme throughout this text. It explores all the above themes. The boy is aware of his religious views, this can be seen from the start when he knowingly tells the reader that he would know that the priest was dead if he could see two lit candles in the window. This would indicate a traditional Irish wake.

The boy in *The Sisters* is clearly confused about his own identity, which is not that peculiar at this point in his life, considering his age and the fact that he is still finding his way in life and has yet to experience many things. He feels inferior to the adults in the text and intersectionality puts his age and his nearly non-existent education and life experience into a category of developing identity, prone to discrimination and prejudice. Religion is clearly the main theme throughout, which is not surprising in the early 1900s in Ireland, where Catholicism was a large part of culture and society. The boy is influenced by religious traditions and values brought upon him by Father Flynn and his family, however, because of his developing identity he seeks answers to his many questions about life and religion. As the first story in the collection it is also the first stage in life and may represent the beginning of memories and personal formation in society. Identity in *The Sisters* is revealed through different characters, of a different age, class, and gender, and it is through these different identities intersectionality is demonstrated. Through the inexperience of the young boy and the creation of his identity and place in society, through the women who play less valued roles in his life, and lastly through Father Flynn who not only played a substantial role in his life, and in forming his identity. It is the role of the latter that conclusively demonstrates intersectionality with his superior identity in the shape of religion, gender, and class.

3.2 Eveline

Eveline is Joyce's fourth story in his collection, and interestingly the first story with a female protagonist, Eveline, a young Irish woman who is psychologically confined in Ireland. Eveline's goal is to run away to Buenos Aires with a man named Frank, they are to leave together on a night boat, however, at the last-minute Eveline changes her mind and decides to stay in Ireland. Joyce has chosen to leave the reader in the dark about Frank, giving as little information as possible, offering the reader the possibility to interpret the story for themselves. Many literary critics have analysed *Eveline* and their conclusions vary greatly. Margo Norris claims in *The Perils of "Eveline"*, "By withholding knowledge about Frank



and his motives in courting Eveline. The narration obliges the reader to participate emotionally in Eveline's dilemma in making an agonizing and difficult life decision whose outcome risks disaster for her whatever and however she chooses" (Joyce & Norris 285). Norris' observation leans on the fact that whatever choice Eveline makes she risks disaster, by leaving with Frank she will be judged in likeness to the others who emigrated from Ireland, and if she stays, she risks the burden of her everyday failures in a patriarchal paralysed Irish society.

The beginning of the story sees Eveline staring out of a window, remembering her childhood and thinking about a time that does not exist anymore, "That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes" (Joyce & Norris 25). Although Eveline expresses a changed Ireland, it would be more consistent to claim that Ireland did not change, but the Irish people changed, and moved away, thus leaving Eveline behind in an imaginary state of change. She goes on to say, "Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home" (25), the others she is referring to are that of the many Irish people who emigrated from Ireland at the time. Although the short and precise sentences indicate that Eveline is being very specific as to what she is going to do, and this gives the reader the impression that she is a strong woman who knows what she wants, they can also be interpreted as a calming notion for herself, as if she is memorising a step by step plan of escape. Eveline wants to leave her home, especially now that everyone else has gone, basically she wants to be like everyone else, which suggests that she is impressionable, yet confident in making life changes. It seems that she wants to rid herself of her former identity of being a caregiver for her siblings and father after her mother's death, she wants to become her own identity and not step into her mother's traditional gender role.

Eveline wants more than anything to be free of her violent father, "Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence (Joyce & Norris 28), suggesting that marriage is her only way out, however, she does not want to be treated like her mother, she wants to be respected. So, to her relief she meets Frank, who she describes as someone who will save her, however, she seems to inhabit a fairy-tale-like perspective on what life should be like, "Frank would take her in his arms. He would save her" (31). This gives the impression that she needs saving, but does she see Frank as her knight or just a means to an end? Literary scholar Hugh Kenner's perspective on the text is very much in contrast to what may be perceived at first glance, claiming "The hidden story of Eveline is the story of Frank, a bounder with a glib line, who tried to pick himself up a piece



of skirt. She will spend her life regretting the great refusal. But what she refused was just what her father would have said it was, the patter of an experienced seducer” (Joyce & Norris 284). The tragic result of this would be that Eveline would regret leaving Ireland and blaming herself for not doing so. To the contrary, the last sentence of the story gives the notion that Kenner may be correct in his understanding of Frank, but he could be underestimating Eveline’s intelligence, “her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (32). This could be interpreted as Eveline finally realising who Frank really was, or to the contrary it may be as Norris interpreted the story, as Eveline having to make a decision with a bad outcome whatever choice she made. It is assumed that the choice Eveline has to make is entirely to do with Frank, however, another factor that could alter her decision is emigration. Emigration from Ireland after The Great Famine was seen as being disloyal to your country, Margo Norris refers to Brenda Maddox’s biography *Nora* in *The Perils of “Eveline”*, claiming “In every young Irish mind, the question of emigration is as inescapable as it has been since The Great Famine of the 1840s” (Joyce & Norris 285). Eveline does seem concerned throughout the text as to what others will think of her for leaving, this could end with Eveline never being able to come home again, and this could prove very hard for her to accept. Given what has been established earlier, Eveline wants to marry, and she seems to think that marriage is the only way in which she will be able to leave Ireland, nevertheless she is also conscious over what others think of her. Coming to terms with the fact that she may be leaving causes Eveline to think about old memories of her mother and a promise she had made to her, “her promise to keep the home together as long as she could” (30). It is as though she is already starting to get homesick, later praying to God to guide her through the decision.

Religion in *Eveline* is presented through the patriarchal society in which she lives in, and through the suppression of sexual relations expressed through her father and his opinions on Frank. The fact that Eveline is not married suggests that she is subjected stigma and discrimination from society, it is claimed, “Then she would be married – she Eveline. People would treat her with respect then” (28), this confirms that Eveline sees marriage as a way of gaining respect in society, but she also sees marriage as her way out of psychological confinement. The suppression of sexual relations and women, and religious dogma could cause Eveline to not be able to be who she really is, which many have assumed to be a lesbian. This assumption could explain why her eyes did not give any sign of love or farewell when she left Frank, and it could answer the question of why Eveline needed to marry to gain



respect, and to be able to leave a country plagued by patriarchal structures of Catholicism, where she would never belong.

The identity of Eveline changes throughout the text, from the beginning she can be interpreted as a strong woman, finally wanting to leave the country and people in which she feels unhappy, claiming she too deserves to be happy. She has offered her life to take care of her family due to her mother's death and her father's drinking, she somehow stands out as a heroine. However, as the story goes on the impression, we get is that Eveline is young, impressionable, beaten and confined. The mainstream of intersectionality in Eveline would be that she is a woman, giving her the disadvantage in society that she is not as worthy as men, although this is something, she wishes was not the case. She is the one out of her siblings who stayed and took care of their father, she is the one who took care of the children after her mother's death, and although she is now grown, she still fears her father's violence. Therefore, Eveline does not only possess the identity of being a woman, she is also prone to violence at the hands of a man. The intersection of her multiple identities become a disadvantage for her in the sense that she obtains multiple negative characteristics or identity markers, for being a woman at the time of the story's publication. Because of Joyce's choice of concealing information about other characters in the story, it can be interpreted in many different ways as already discussed. Is Eveline a naïve and impressionable character waiting for her knight to save her? Or is she maybe more calculating than this? It does seem that even though she desperately wants to leave, that she has more respect for herself than to use or be used by someone for gain. Eveline is a complex female identity that resists the powers of patriarchy. She faces a dilemma with unfortunate consequences but resists the temptation of leaving. Is this a tragic love story or is this a one-sided story from the perspective of a naïve and an impressionable girl? Eveline's father forbids her from seeing Frank, claiming that he only wants to seduce her. There could be some truth to this given that the story is one-sided and only seen through Eveline's eyes. Why does Eveline not leave? From the beginning she claims to be tired of her life, saying she wants to be happy, and is persistent in acknowledging that she too has the right to be happy.

Eveline's identity gradually changes throughout the text, where at first she is a sympathetic character, who is lonely after being left behind due to emigration and death, but as she gradually evolves she is presented as someone intelligent who knows what she wants, and will do almost anything to gain respect and a place in society. Eveline can be concluded as a story of a young confined woman living in a society where the intersectionality of her multiple identities, including being unmarried, leaving her feeling left behind from the rest of



Ireland. The story of Eveline is limited in knowledge and therefore gives the reader the choice to interpret the text as they wish, like many literary scholars before, therefore there are many various interpretations of the text, including Eveline using Frank to get away from Ireland, and Frank using Eveline for his own sexual gratification. However, the text is interpreted the historical, gender, cultural and religious elements that Joyce puts forward show a paralysed Dublin through one character, Eveline. Although she has the chance to gain everything she wants, Eveline chooses to stay in the city that does not move forward, she like the city is paralysed by the patriarchal structure in a society where religion suppresses women and sexuality, ultimately suppressing her identity through the marginalised intersectionality of her multiple subordinate identities.

3.3 The Boarding House

Joyce's short story *The Boarding House* is the seventh story in his collection and like *Eveline*, the main character is also woman, Mrs Mooney, the owner and keeper of the boarding house. Mrs Mooney is a divorced mother of at least two fairly grown children, Polly and Jack. Joyce describes Mrs Mooney's character as being determined, and "a big imposing woman" (Joyce & Norris 50). Throughout the story her actions match this description very well and it is revealed that her 19-year-old daughter Polly is having an affair with an older lodger of the boarding house, giving Mrs Mooney a lot to think about. She becomes determined to make the lodger, Mr Doran, own up to his mistake. Realising that Mr Doran is a weaker character than many of her other lodgers, Mrs Mooney is confident that she will be able to convince him that marriage is the only way out. However, there is something about Mrs Mooney's manner that exposes her as a conniving character, not only does she wish her daughter's transgressions to be fairly punished, but she also wants her to be taken off her hands.

The story offers little information about the situation at hand; in known Joyce style, ellipses of information often occur, making it hard for the reader to interpret what is going on. The fact that marriage should be the punishment of an affair can seem a little extreme, however, if Polly should be pregnant that would make more sense. Mrs Mooney confesses to know about the affair long before she eventually decides to speak to Polly and Mr Doran, "At last, when she judged it to be the right moment, Mrs Mooney intervened" (51). This could indicate that Mrs Mooney is waiting for the right opportunity to reveal not only that she knows about the affair, but also that it is too late for Mr Doran to do anything about the



situation. Had this only been an affair then she would not have much leverage other than a he-said-she-said situation, whereas being pregnant would be the ultimate evidence that she needed to succeed with her plan.

Polly is an unmarried - maybe pregnant - 19-year-old girl, with an alcoholic father and a mother who is referred to as a Madame. Polly's subordinate identities of being unmarried, from a broken home, and the fact that she is a woman, are not what one would at this time in society consider as very appealing. Polly does not just inhabit these identities; she is also considered a flirty and not so bright girl by the other lodgers in the boarding house. Polly's character can be concluded as not having any really appealing qualities. The theory of intersectionality would place her in the disadvantaged category. Not only is Polly an unmarried young woman, but she has also undergone an affair with a much older man. To add to the crisis, she may also be pregnant. Mrs Mooney is worried about what others will think, but also what will happen to her daughter. She is quite aware of the fact that this situation is an extreme disadvantage for her daughter, therefore one could easily understand why she would want Mr Doran to make an honest woman of her daughter, by marrying her. Although this shows that being a woman in this situation is categorised as being disadvantaged, in this case Mr Doran is also at a loss. His identity of a Catholic man limits him from doing as he pleases in life, bound by Catholic rituals and sacrament. Religion is a theme that occurs throughout the story, it would seem that the character's views are based on being a good Catholic, especially Mr Doran. With that said, he also confesses "As a young man he had sown his wild oats, of course; he had boasted of his freethinking and denied the existence of God to his companions in publichouses. But that was all past and done with...nearly" (54). This gives the impression that at present he does believe in God, but at the same time the last comment of "nearly" would expose him of not taking it as seriously as he should. Although, when faced with the affair he does accept his sins "...even his sense of honour told him that reparation must be made for such a sin" (55). As mentioned in the introduction, Maher claims "Authority's writ ran from God the Father down and could not be questioned. Violence reigned as often as not in the homes as well. One of the compounds at its base was sexual sickness and frustration, as sex was seen, officially, as unclean and sinful, allowable only when it too was licensed" (111). Mr Doran openly confesses that he knows he has sinned, therefore God being the authority in his life, dictating what is right and what is wrong. Now that he no longer is a young man, he knows he has to repent his sins, probably by marrying Polly, someone he may not even love. The authority that religion has over him goes to the extent of him doing something he actually does not want to do but has to do.



Mr Doran's character shows an emasculated man confined both physically and psychologically. Confined by his religion, the voice in his head telling him that reparation must be had. Then there is the situation with Polly, marrying her would make him have to physically stay with her. A Catholic marriage in the early 20th century prohibited divorce, and only under special circumstances would one be granted a separation, as Mrs Mooney did from her husband. This fact would mean that Mr Doran would have to stay with Polly forever. Not only is he worried about his sins, but also about what his friends and family will think of him, stating that "... The family would look down on her" and "He could imagine his friends talking of the affair and laughing" (54). This immediately makes him question if he actually likes Polly, calling her vulgar and not being able to make his mind up. This calls into question how much influence the people in Mr Doran's life have on him, making it clear that not only is he influenced by religion, but he is also greatly concerned with what others think. With this in mind it is not hard to understand that Mrs Mooney thought him weaker than the others.

As already established, Joyce has chosen to withhold a great deal of information, so it is unclear whether Mr Doran and Polly do get married, or if she actually is pregnant. The last lines of the story like the story itself does not reveal much either, Mrs Mooney calls for her daughter to come down because Mr Doran wants to speak with her, "Then she [Polly] remembered what she had been waiting for" (56). Is this the indication of a plan that has been hatched by both mother and daughter? Polly's unintelligence would not satisfy this claim; it is more likely that Mrs Mooney planned this by herself, making Polly go along with it.

Joyce's choice in two contrasting identities for his female characters in this story is very interesting, because it shines light on two very different forms of intersectionality. Mrs Mooney's character is defined as a head strong and bossy woman, whereas Polly's character is defined as someone less intelligent, but it is these two identities put together that ultimately switch the female gender from being the most disadvantaged subordinate identity in society, to the male gender becoming less advantaged. Mr Doran becomes the identity which has most to lose in society. He has created situations that rank him beneath both the leading female characters. Historically and culturally, Joyce has chosen to use stereotypical characterisation based on religion and gender to perform these subordinate identities within his characters. *The Boarding House* reveals that in many ways our identities in society outweigh one another, and in the case of this story it is when two contrasting identities meet that intersectionality plays its part in defining which identity is the most substantial.

3.4 The Dead

Joyce's last contribution to his collection, is by far the longest story, and an opposition developed from his earlier texts. *The Dead* in contrast to his other stories in *Dubliners*, is what Vincent J. Cheng argues to be a, "model text in the Modernist canon" (Joyce & Norris 324). The text portrays gender and power in accordance with each other and the advancement of a gender-equal society. Cheng continues to express his thoughts on *The Dead*, to be an "attempt to analogize different forms of oppression and of responses to such oppressions plays out (in a fictional field of play) some of the problems facing any study of "minority discourses"" (Joyce & Norris 328). Referring to the marginalised politics in form of cultural, racial, imperial, familial, and sexual elements of society, *The Dead* represents a modern society in which these marginalised groups now challenge authority. Marian Eide writing for *James Joyce in Context* claims;

Joyce portrays a kind of gendered conversation that was spreading across Europe in the early twentieth century. With the entrance of women in the professions and the possibility of universal suffrage, men were beginning routinely to meet women of their private acquaintance on public grounds of near equality. The effects were disturbing if not revolutionary as they altered not only the grounds of femininity but also the assumptions of normative masculinity" (Joyce & Norris 81-2).

The gender element in this context concurs in the way Joyce portrays women, by having them challenge the male figures in society. What can be understood from this is that in a society where women have become equal, men found it hard to find their own place in society, not only were women becoming more and more equal, but this also resulted in women becoming more outspoken and dared to challenge their opponents. Eide also expresses the fact that normative masculinity was disturbed by the revolutionary impact of the equality of genders, what was earlier assumed to be the typical masculine roles of a man, were now being questioned and the fear of losing one's place in society would surely have an impact on one's identity and self-worth. *The Dead* expresses this gender-altered society through the main character, Gabriel Conroy, being continually subjected to political, sexual and nationalistic confrontations with women.



Gabriel Conroy, like the text is also in contrast to the rest of Joyce's collection, is a teacher at the University, a lover of literature, upper-middle class, and married. Throughout the text Gabriel is confronted and put into situations by women that make him feel uneasy. Firstly, his confrontation with Lilly the maid, after asking her a private question, she rejects his question with hostility. Taken aback, Gabriel is obviously not used to this type of response and becomes embarrassed, "Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake..." (154). Later in the story Gabriel engages in an altercation with Mrs Ivors, a woman who he to some extent considers his intellectual equal. It is not until Mrs Ivors reveals that she knows about his secret, a secret that Gabriel has kept presumably in fear that people would judge him negatively if they knew, especially in his line of work. Gabriel has been secretly writing for the Daily Express, "A conservative Dublin newspaper that favoured making Irish nationalist ambitions compatible with British imperial domination" (163), when confronted by this and asked if he is not ashamed of himself, he is called a "West Briton", a term used to describe someone from Northern Ireland. Later Gabriel is quizzed on the fact that he does not want to travel around Ireland, and why he instead wants to travel to other countries, such as France and Germany. Thereafter his language is called into question; Gabriel like Joyce does not consider Irish to be his language, claiming, "Irish is not my language" (164). According to Taylor (2017, our national identity is based on our nationality and our language, which is interesting when taking into consideration Joyce's choice to have his main character not identify with Irish being his language. It is as if Joyce wants to make a statement to his nationalistic peers, that even though Irish is not his language, he can still be Irish because he is bound by nationality.

Molly Ivors is a woman who not only shares a lot in common with Gabriel, she to some extent seems to scare him, by using political motivated facts and ambushes him with the fact that he has written for a newspaper she does not approve of, making him feel ashamed, but at the same time Gabriel is proud to be an intellectual. After being pushed to the brink, Gabriel becomes tired of feeling like he is being cross-examined, "O, to tell you the truth, retorted Gabriel suddenly, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (165). Gabriel obviously tired of endlessly having to defend his choices, makes a statement that may or may not be entirely true. He may well be sick of his country, taking into consideration the perpetual talk of Irish Nationalists, such as many of the party guests. Gabriel's outburst can surely be put down to the fact that he is dissatisfied with his identity being continuously challenged by women in his life.



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Like in many of his earlier stories in *Dubliners*, Joyce uses the intersection between life and death as a symbol of transformation in society, when one thing dies another is born. In *The Dead*, gender is central in the birth of women's rights, as they become more accepted in society, Gabriel feels like his own rights are slowly dying. During his speech, Gabriel says that people should not "linger on the past and the dead but live and rejoice in the present with the living", however, after hearing about his wife's first love, he understands that one cannot divide the living and the dead, their memories still live on even after they are gone. This intersection between life and death sets the mood for the ending of the story, and Joyce uses snow as a symbol for the way Gabriel now sees death, it is a white sheet that lays on graves just as it lays on the living, and the entire country. The snow lays itself down on the ever-paralysed city of Dublin, like the party itself with the same people every year, a paralysed state of routine. On the topic of routine, *The Dead* bares many similarities to the Joyce's first story *The Sisters*, the character Gabriel may have been the young boy in *The Sisters*. Although this is not confirmed there are other characters such as his aunts to support this theory. This would also coincide with the chronological time frame, from childhood to adulthood, and the historical time frame which sees the gradual development of important historical movements through time, and the intersecting line between life and death that is presented in both stories. It is not only these two characters that bare resemblance to each other, but the character Gabriel and Joyce himself have many similarities that should be addressed, they are both writers and they also express an admiration for literature and uneasiness towards outspoken women, so it could be speculated that Joyce has based the character of Gabriel on himself.

The Dead is a story which outlines the beginning of a new Ireland, where women and men are becoming equals in society, the earlier stigma women would have endured was slowly fading away and making way for a modern society, where not only gender stood central, but other minorities were becoming respected and heard. The story uses a character which holds resemblance to both Joyce's personal experience and to a very real historical movement of women's rights. The identity of Gabriel allows him to be formed but his own intersecting and now subordinate identities of being a man, which at this point seems to put him in the disadvantaged category. Mrs Ivors easily pushes him to a point in which he allows his true opinions and values to be heard, which she sees her challenge him in a way he has never been subjected to or allowed earlier. There are many intersecting aspects in the story, from the beginning we are introduced to the intersection between genders, but as the story goes on, we are presented with the power struggle between Gabriel and Mrs Ivors, where he



his identity is not only challenged by gender, but through language and culture as well. The switch in gender dynamics clearly shows that identity can be developed and adjusted to fit the political time frame. The switch is also a presentation of exploring intersectionality in relationships plagued by sexuality, politics, family, culture, and race, and how they adjust to a new environment in modern society. The factor of having the last text connect with the first text shows Joyce's way of expressing a full circle of an ending to the beginning and how time has changed society.

3.5 Conclusion

The four short stories taken from Joyce's collection vary greatly in characteristics, but they also share many intersecting identity markers in relation to society. *Eveline* and *The Boarding House* possess many similarities that can be seen in Joyce's short stories, ranging from alcoholic and abusive men, to young impressionable women.

Gender in Joyce's collection gradually changes as the characters become older, presumably because Joyce himself experienced this change in his own life. Later in the collection women become a factor, firstly *Eveline*. The confined young woman plagued by religious sexual suppression and a fear of leaving her country. Then the stories start moving towards a more equal woman in society, where Mrs Mooney's character shows a strong-willed woman, who would do almost anything to get her way. Although her daughter Polly bears resemblance to *Eveline*, both being unmarried, 19-year-old girls on the verge of marriage, their fate may not be so similar. It is unclear what happens to both girls, there is no evidence to support that any of the young women got married or not. In the last story we meet Mrs Ivors, a woman seen as an equal in society. Not only does she work at the same institution as the main male character, she also questions him and his values, as though he is her equal. This is undeniably the way Joyce himself experienced this type of gender role change in his own life. Thus, comes his statement of hating intelligent women. Religion is a constant underlying theme throughout the stories, although *The Sisters* and *The Boarding House* are more affected by religion overall than the other stories. This can be seen in the form of traditional values, and the young boy in *The Sisters* grows up in a Catholic society, where values and traditions are based on religion, and *The Boarding House* is based on religious traditions and values in form of marriage because Polly is pregnant.

Joyce's collection bases itself on and around the intersection of life and death, from the beginning we are introduced to death in *The Sisters*, and the ending to the collection is *The Dead*, a final chapter in life and to the collection. Joyce presents life and death



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symbolically in the form a circle, where there is life there is also death, meaning that although something is ending, there is also something beginning, like Polly's pregnancy in *The Boarding House*, and Eveline's life in *Eveline*. The circle of life is also symbolic to our identities, we are born, and we die, and through our lives we experience many stages of life, like the individual stories in *Dubliners*. The culture in the chosen stories from Joyce's collection is a shared Irish culture, although it has been established that much of this is related to religion and gender, we also see geography as a vital cultural factor, where Joyce has chosen for example different areas in Dublin to represent class-consciousness, and he also uses popular emigration countries to represent the historical emigration-movement in Ireland. This type of culture serves as the forming of character's identities, and also explores intersectionality within them. Although some character's identities are very similar, like Polly Mooney and Eveline are both young women aged just 19, and on the verge of marriage. However, their differences are clear in the way in which the characters lead up to their fate, reminding the reader that our personal identities are chosen not only by us, but by our heritage and the society which we live in.

4. *The Speckled People*

On the topic of identity, Hugo Hamilton's novel, *The Speckled People* (2009) provides similarities and contrasts to Joyce's *Dubliners* (2006). Both Joyce's collection and Hamilton's novel focus on the theme of identity and intersectionality, however in contrast to *Dubliners*, *The Speckled People* presents this theme through one single family living in Dublin in the 1950s, whereas *Dubliners* is set some 70 years earlier and focuses on various characters and families. *The Speckled People* explores the fundamental aspects of history, culture, religion, and gender through a multicultural family trying to find their place in society. Hermione Lee (2003) writing for *The Guardian* in a review of the novel asserts that "It does not subtitle itself a memoir (though the blurb calls it one), and it's not a straightforward reminiscence. More like the early stages of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, it's shaped like a fiction, told, as if naively, in the language of a child" (Lee 2003). The comparison made by Lee, between Joyce's and Hamilton's writing presents many similarities of the authors. Not only are they both Irish but both have produced works from a child's perspective. This is an important factor for both works, because it explores the beginning of identity and the forming and construction of identity from childhood. Joyce and Hamilton also explore the gradual coming of age, therefore changing identity, and how the events that take place during one's life affect their identity. The claim that they are told "naively", is based on the fact that both authors are retelling the events from memory as an adult but have chosen to do so in the form of a child's memory. This adds authenticity to the stories.

The novel retells Hamilton's childhood memories from the perspective of a child named Johannes; gradually he becomes older throughout the novel, ending in adulthood. Hamilton, an Irish German, gives an account of his life as the child of an Irish Nationalist father and a loving German mother. Throughout the novel Hamilton shares crucial memories of his everyday struggle with his multiple identities. Johannes' identity crisis bases itself on and around mainly language, culture and society. Meaning that his struggles with his own identity derive from being an Irish German, which in an Irish society left him feeling the need to choose one nationality. In an interview with Kouadio N'Duessan, Hamilton admits to believing that "your memory keeps changing...when I was a teenager, I didn't know what to remember, I didn't know what was important to remember...It's only later on that when you start looking back, you know what you want to remember" (N'Duessan 2013). Given



Hamilton's description of how he remembers his own life, it is not hard to understand the way in which he has chosen to write his novel. The novel in itself is a combination of everyday life experiences displayed in chronological order, with the exception of his mother's flashbacks to her earlier life in Germany. Hamilton's views on identity are put forward in his readings on *The Speckled People* at *Villanova's 14th Annual Literary Festival* (Hamilton 2012) where he claims that the confusion between nationalities plagued his childhood. He tells the audience that he tried to be as Irish as possible all his life, but only when he visited North America did, he actually feel Irish. Interestingly he does not feel Irish enough in Ireland, he puts this down to the fact that he is half German, making it hard for him to be fully Irish even though he grew up in Dublin. In the interview with N'Duessan, Hamilton admits that because of his complex upbringing he feels like speaking English is "Almost like a fictional language" (N'Duessan 2013). This being the result of his strict upbringing where he was forbidden to speak English, something that he continually relives throughout the novel. So, it is fair to say that language is an essential part of Hamilton's novel, which is also one of the most fundamental aspects of identity and intersectionality.

Hamilton quotes famous author Elias Canetti in the epigraph at the start of his novel, "I wait for the command to show my tongue. I know he's going to cut it off, and I get more and more scared each time" (Hamilton 2009). Canetti is a German-language author who bares quite the resemblance to Hamilton, both having grown up in multilingual homes, written memoirs of their childhood, both are concerned with language as identity, and both use their mother's personalities throughout their works. The quote Hamilton refers to is from Canetti's memoir, *The Tongue Set Free* (1977). The title of this memoir and the quote in itself gives the reader a slight preview into Hamilton's novel, giving the impression that language and identity are highly important themes. Hamilton uses language as a barrier both physically and psychologically throughout his work. What this means is that language can build a barrier between languages and people, to be understood we need to have a common language. It is also the common ground for belonging to a society. If you do not speak the language of your society, you will ultimately be an "outsider" so to speak. Hamilton presents this throughout the novel by presenting different places and areas as different countries, the house is Germany, and the outside is Ireland, and neither place is it permitted to speak English. Therefore, crossing these barriers means having to speak the appropriate language for this area. This presentation of nationalities and identity demonstrates even more clearly that the novel is told from a child's perspective, although observant, he does not fully understand the concept of being multicultural, therefore he christens the different areas according to the



accepted spoken languages. With that said, he does have the ability to understand how multicultural is defined in simpler terms. From the beginning of the novel the reader is introduced to the word *breac*, meaning spotted or speckled, like the title *The Speckled People*. This is how Johannes sees himself and his siblings, “So we are the speckled-Irish, the brack-Irish. Brack home-made Irish bread with German raisins” (Hamilton 7). Although Johannes is confident in saying that he is of multicultural descent, he goes on to say, “But I know it also means we’re marked” (7), showing that he also has knowledge of this fact. He claims that they will never be Irish enough, that they are like aliens in society. This descriptive acknowledgment indicates that the atmosphere in Dublin at the time was both hostile and unwelcoming. But the question is whether it is because they are German and this is taking place just after The Second World War, or is it because they are made to speak Irish and forbidden to speak English? Declan Kiberd (1996) answers this question when he discusses the exile of the Irish from Ireland, and their homecoming, “For all these persons, nationalism evoked an idea of homecoming, a return from exile or captivity, or what Anderson elegantly calls a “positive printed from the negative in the dark-room of political struggle”” (3). This argument bases itself on the famines of the 1840s, and the Irish republican insurrection against British Government in Ireland in 1916.

Multicultural identity is however that of an intersectional aspect, in *The Speckled People* it gives the children a disadvantage in society. Not being able to speak English creates a barrier between Johannes and the rest of Dublin, taking into consideration that at this time Ireland was dominated by the English language. Intersectionality in this sense is Johannes’ language and culture, the result of this can be understood with the bullying he and his brother endure throughout their childhood, “We have speckled faces, so it’s best to stay inside where they can’t get us. Inside we can be ourselves” (Hamilton 8). Fearing the outside world Johannes and his brother do everything to survive in public, even defying their father by speaking English where they know it will help. However, this is also met with the fear of their father finding out, which nearly always resulted in violent consequences. These volatile consequences likely shaped Johannes’ identity in the sense that he as a child was inferior to his father, the authority figure. This also created an anxious identity in which Johannes feared his father.

Johannes’ parents are speckled too, their mixed marriage is plagued by two different historical backgrounds, culture, language and of course gender. His mother would in terms of intersectionality truly be put into the disadvantaged category, being foreign, unable to speak the correct language, and the simple fact that she is a woman. Not only is she



disadvantaged in society but also in her marriage. Ironically, she moved to Ireland for a better life and to learn English. However, she married a man that forbids both her and their children from speaking English. She, like her children, also fears Johannes' father, although it may not be apparent because she disguises this well. There are times when Johannes is unsure of his parents relationship, "My father was laughing and blinking through his glasses and my mother had her hand over her mouth, laughing and laughing at the sea, until tears came into her eyes and I thought, maybe she's not laughing at all but crying" (1). This observation from Johannes confirms his naïve manner, however it also suggests that his mother tries hard to mask her feelings.

Another important identity factor Hamilton presents in *The Speckled People* is the significance of names. A name is the way in which we introduce ourselves, it is who we are and how others refer to us. A name is how we identify with ourselves and how we identify others. A name can determine gender, place, ethnicity, and sometimes even class. Merriam-Webster defines a name as "a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing" (Merriam- Webster, 2019). Throughout the novel Hamilton continually illustrates how both names of people and places are critical to one's identity. Of the many names of people and places, the ones that stand out more than others are those that have a negative connotation, such as Johannes connecting to the name Eichmann, the German Nazi lieutenant. The importance of names is connected to his father's attempts to "De-Anglicise Ireland" from British rule. "He says six counties in the north have been confiscated and are still controlled by Britain" (Hamilton 46). Johannes' father is referring to the divide between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Therefore, he makes the assumption that by changing for example street names, he will bring back Ireland's identity.

The term homesick is continually used by Johannes throughout the novel, this is interesting because he uses it for various meanings. He is presumably too young to formulate and articulate his understanding of feelings, therefore he benefits the term homesick as a replacement, for example, "Instead he changed his name and decided never to be homesick again" (37). This is in reference to his father's feelings about his past, Johannes distinctly recognises that this is something his father does not want to miss or think about at all. Later he refers to society being homesick, "One day there will be only one language and everybody will be lost. The world will be full of homesick people" (162). This is in reference to his father's idea of language being your country, and without a country you will be lost in society. Johannes' definition of the term is expanded to represent everything that he understands to be experiencing a longing for something, he does not limit this to one's home.



The only place where homesick is actually used correctly is in reference to his mother's homesickness for Germany, "They know that my mother is homesick. They see it in her eyes. They could see her dreaming again that morning" (198). Hamilton uses this term as an identity marker to define weak feelings, being homesick is seen as something negative. In the form of intersectionality, it can be seen as being an outsider in society, if you are homesick where you are, then you do not feel that you are home, or that you belong.

Intersectionality in Hamilton's novel is firstly presented through the father authority figure and his power over his family, however in contrast to this authority he lacks the same control outside of his home, which suggests that his identity is not accepted by the Irish public. Secondly it is shown through his mother's subordinate identities of gender and ethnicity. Thirdly, Johannes' identities are constantly at a colliding intersection. Mead's definition of culture and identity, is that our identities are defined by our behaviour and politics, passed down from generation to generation. This is why I have chosen to focus on the narrator, Johannes, his mother, and his father to analyse in this chapter, for the sheer reason that these are three very different characters that demonstrate identity in various ways. Although, as a family they should share the same values and belong to the same society, interestingly they do not.

4.1 Father

To get a better understanding of the main character, it is important to establish some background information on both the character and the story. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin with an analysis of Johannes' father. Hamilton's portrayal of Johannes' father is that of an Irish nationalist and his harsh and violent punishments are feared by both his wife and children. It may be right to assume that this was his way of gaining authority because he felt helpless in forcing Dublin to become more Irish. His nationalistic and persistent behaviour can be seen through the change of his name, of disowning his own father, and the petition to replace street names in Ireland to Irish, and most of all, the way he takes control of his homelife. The misfortune of his actions in making Ireland more Irish seems to drive him to control the only thing he feels he can control, his family.

Johannes' father changed his name from John, to Seán undoubtedly to become more Irish, and almost certainly to rid himself of his own father's name, which was also John. Hamilton's insistent presentation of the importance of names throughout, is without a doubt a repercussion caused by his father's endless theory that a name is what makes you who you



are, “Your name is important. It’s like your face or your smile or your skin” (Hamilton 108). Hamilton recalls memories of his father’s stubbornness in connection with names through an event of a simple letter being addressed to a John Hamilton, when he worked at the electricity supply board, “One day at work, my father refused to answer a letter because it was addressed to John Hamilton... He pretended that there had been a big mistake... My father didn’t care if the whole country was left in darkness” (116-117). His character is not only stubborn, but also juvenile, this could also be one of the reasons why he was not taken seriously in his bid to “save” Ireland, which may have fed his addiction to nationalism in the sense that he always felt that his work was not finished.

Hamilton also presents names of places as an essential symbol throughout his work. A name being a statement of our identity it is important to see what connections a name has to a place, something Hamilton consistently addresses in his work. Not only was changing his own name enough for Seán, he also wanted to change Dublin, by starting a petition to replace the street names to their Irish form, “He had them all changed into Irish, one by one. Royal Terrace became Ascal Ríoga, because money and profit were not everything, he said” (114). His reasons for doing so were based on his theory of taking back his country and nationality which had been lost in the colonisation of British rule, he claimed, “When the names of people and places all over Ireland were changed into English, all those poets and Irish speakers lost their way and suddenly found themselves in a foreign land. He told us how they all went blind overnight, stumbling around in the dark with no language. And now it was time to change the names back to Irish, so the people knew where they were going again” (114). It is as if Johannes’ father was ignorant to the fact that most of Ireland were by this time English speakers, and those who could speak Gaelic did not use their language. Therefore, enforcing Irish nationality through the public, would not be enough to win his war on language. To gain a society that would take back the Irish language, he would have to convince the majority to stand by him and use the language daily, Ben Kelly writing for the Independent claims that although Irish became the official language in Ireland in the 1920s, “Attempts to revive the mother tongue to its former glory have always struggled” (Kelly 2018). He continues by claiming that, “less than 2 percent say they use it daily outside the education system” (Kelly 2018). Although it could be said that Johannes’ father’s attempts were honourable, his language journey was not.

Johannes’ father was deeply concerned that the English language had taken over the Irish language, therefore he enforced a strict regime at home, ordering both his children and his wife to only speak German or Irish, “It’s forbidden to speak in English in our house. My



father wants all the Irish people to cross back over into Irish language so he made a rule that we can't speak English, because your home is your language, and he wants us to be Irish and not British" (Hamilton 12). He did not consider the difficulty of only being able to speak German or Irish in an English-speaking society, would be for his family. He set them up for a difficult start in life, eventually creating deprived identities for his wife and children. His family was already at an intersection of a marginalised group in society, therefore the language rules that were applied, only made them more discriminated against.

The autobiographical past of Johannes' father is not something he speaks highly of. He considers his own father a traitor to the Irish country, because he fought with the British in WWI. Plagued by the thought that his own father was a traitor he chose to pretend that a lot of things did not exist, "My father pretends that England doesn't exist. It's like a country he's never even heard of before and is not even on the map" (37). Seán's love and respect for Germany after The Second World War makes him marry a German woman and starting a family, he does this with the idealistic theory of building his own army of Irish-German children, to win his personal war on Ireland, "But in the end of it all, you would be starting a new republic with speckled Irish-German children" (40). His mission to bring back his language and nationality, by making Ireland more Irish ironically only makes him lose his family. His journey forces him to die alone, with no family, no legacy, and an unfinished Ireland.

Johannes' father's identity does not just change with time, but he consistently makes changes to himself, by either choosing not to be someone or pretending that some parts of him do not exist. His nationalistic insistence makes him both juvenile and volatile, in the fear of not gaining respect from his family he punishes his wife and children both physically and psychologically. Plagued by his disappointment of Ireland he feels that he must rid Ireland of the British and make Ireland Irish again, and he does so by building his own army of Irish-German children, thinking that his legacy will be carried on through them. However, his actions fail and leave his wife and children only feeling relief and freedom after his death. His identity ultimately becomes something that is feared and not respected, he becomes inferior to his family, and the public. So, because his identity does not change, he slips into a marginalised category of people who do not evolve at the same rate as society evolves and changes.



4.2 Mother

Johannes' mother, Irmgard Kaisa, is in contrast to Irish immigration, a German woman who emigrated to Ireland after The Second World War. Irmgard wished for a better life in Ireland after living through dreadful conditions under Nazi rule and the war, where she was subjected to abuse and rape. Ironically, she came to Ireland to learn English, however, she met Johannes', Seán, the nationalist who forbid her from speaking English. Eventually they married and had children. Some thought and consideration should be taken to the fact that Hamilton's novel is written from the first person perspective of Johannes, the significance of this being that, the characterisation of Irmgard is subjective, however Hamilton provides some insight into his mother's past through flashbacks in the form of her diary entries. Irmgard's paradoxical emigration is not the only contrasting identity marker she possesses, she is the absolute opposite to her husband, they differ in language, values, culture, and gender.

Irmgard does not speak Irish which creates a barrier between her and her children, and her and the public. Although the children are allowed to speak German, no one is allowed to speak English. Meaning that Irmgard is also forbidden to speak English, therefore isolating her from being a mother and a wife. Irmgard tries to learn Irish, "Sometimes in the evening after dinner, she went back to the school on the bus to learn Irish and then we had to help her with her homework. But she can't be Irish. It's too hard" (76). This would also be a defeat to her identity, she is desperately trying to fit her husband's criteria, but ultimately fails. Not only is language a barrier for Irmgard, but also culture is an element that demonstrates how she is isolated from her family. Values and identity are two fundamental aspects that are explored in the novel. Irmgard is proud of her heritage, and openly dresses her children in German clothes and serves them German food. Although the aspect of values is hard to distinguish between culture and nationality, it can be said that Irmgard's values are to protect and be there for her children, they are her first priority, so she stays, and she tries for the sake of her children.

Hamilton presents Germany in contrast to Ireland, as a warm and safe place to be, this suggests he is mirroring Irmgard's identity through the characterisation of her nationality, "Inside our house is a warm country with cake in the oven" (43). Johannes is referring to his mother as Germany and the inside of their house, where it is safe, while he mirrors the outside to his Irish father, "outside our house is a different place" (44), because the public is Ireland and he connects this to his father. Throughout the novel, Irmgard is continually



portrayed as the warm and nurturing mother despite her secret identity, which she tries hard to disguise, but she is seen by her children using a typewriter to let out her thoughts and feelings;

The letters fly out and hit the page faster than you can speak. She's lettetetting and lettetetting because there's a story that she can't tell anyone, not even my father. You can't be afraid of silence, she says. And stories that you have to write down are different to stories that you tell people out loud, because they're harder to explain and you have to wait for the right moment. The only thing she can do is to write them down on paper for us to read later on (Hamilton 68).

This indicates that Irmgard has a deep secret that she can tell no one; instead she types her thoughts and feelings down. What can be understood is that at some point in her life she has been abused by a man named Stiegler and this abuse has resulted in the person she has become and is presumably also one of the reasons for why she moved away from Germany. Irmgard describes these events in her life as "...how I got trapped in Germany" and "...when I was afraid" (68), which ironically coincides to some extent with the new life she is living with her husband. Her life in Ireland like her life in Germany is at the hands of abusive and controlling men, Johannes' father, Stiegler and Hitler confine Irmgard to her gender, both physical and psychologically, and her only way out is by writing everything down. Irmgard was trapped in one country and now in another, she is trapped in her marriage, in her home, and in her language, she is ultimate the confined woman. After an altercation between Johannes' brother, Franz and his father, Irmgard packs hers and her children's bags ready to leave. However, when her husband sees this, "He closed the front door and said she was married now, so she sat down on the suitcase and cried" (32), an action that defines their marriage and a moment that shows that she is defeated. The scene, combined with her confinement, abuse, language-barrier and gender, she inhabits a range of subordinate identities within intersectionality which makes her highly disadvantaged, not only in her own home, but in society. Irmgard is unmistakably more disadvantaged than the typical Irish woman, her German heritage, on top of her gender and language barrier further complicates her identity to the extent where she is finally defeated and confined in her gender role.

Irmgard is consistently portrayed as a dreamer throughout the novel, a term her son identifies with her, "My mother is a dreamer and sometimes she just sits and stares, hoping that she will still find a way out, something she can say, some clever way that she can escape



even now” (204). She is plagued by her confinement and is always dreaming of her escape, although she tries to hide her misery, she cannot hide the physical consequences of her homesickness, Johannes claims, “I know how far away Germany is by the way my mother sometimes has shadows around her eyes” (9), suggesting that he can tell by her appearance of how much she misses Germany. This could also suggest that it is not Germany she misses but her freedom, which would be more likely with the last sentence in the novel, “She said she didn’t know where to go from here. We were lost, but she laughed and it didn’t matter (298), this indicates that as long as you are free then it does not matter where you.

Irmgard’s identity can be interpreted in many ways, according to her children she is the warm and loving, daydreaming mother, however, through her own eyes she is a captive in her own identity, trapped inside her gender, heritage, and language. Irmgard’s multiple identities are in the intersectional position, which is burdened in society, she is less valued because of her gender and ethnicity, but also because of her language. Irmgard is only finally free after her husband’s death and after her children have grown.

4.3 Johannes

Hugo Hamilton chose to write a narrative novel of his life starting with the perspective of a young boy, named Johannes. In doing so he presents a narrative identity, in which he has chosen to retell essential autobiographical elements and memories in different stages of his life. Hamilton introduces the novel with the words, “When you’re small you know nothing” (Hamilton 1). Interestingly by doing so, Hamilton creates the basis for this being told from where his memories first began. This beginning is also the first indication to the novel being told by someone who has yet to experience life. The first chapter continues with recurring proclamations of not knowing anything, “You don’t know where you are, or who you are, or what questions to ask” (2). Hamilton’s way of introducing the novel and Johannes is done in parallel with each other, signifying that at this point in the novel, he does not have an identity, “When you’re small you’re like a piece of paper with nothing written on it” (3). Johannes’ character and identity are like this piece of blank paper, ready to be written on, because it is from this time in his life that his memories begin, and his identity is formed.

Johannes’ identity starts its formation already in the first chapter, beginning with his description of how he is of multicultural descent, although he has yet to understand the events that take place, putting them forward as something funny his parents did. Hamilton admits that it was only later when he looked back on his life, he could pinpoint the most important



factors. He does this by using his main character's innocence in certain situations. The part where Johannes experiences being "Irish on top and German below" (2) would not seem significant to a child, but as an adult looking back on his childhood, he ascertains this as a highly important factor in his upbringing. However, it could be said that at this point Johannes was aware of something, but he would be too young to understand the eminently nationalistic behaviour of his parents. Johannes' character is clearly at an intersection from the first pages of the novel, physically in the form of clothing, and psychologically in the form of his awareness of having more than one nationality. His multiple identities ultimately give him a disadvantage in an Irish society, and the intersection of time between boyhood and adulthood.

Johannes is aware that being German at home is different from being German in public, this is presented when he claims; "In the shop we ask for the ice pop in English and let on that we don't know any German. We're afraid to be German, so we run down to seafont as Irish as possible to make sure nobody can see us" (5). This statement indicates the three identities Johannes and his brother possess, German, English, and Irish. Johannes feels comfortable being German only in the comfort of his home, the home he calls Germany. Although he lives in Dublin, speaking Irish is not common at this time in Ireland, therefore Johannes and his brother speak English in public. This demonstrates that he is observant to his surroundings in a way that exposes him as a child, because he fears the consequences of what should happen if he speaks the wrong language in the wrong location. His trilingual identity is at an intersection of consequences from his father. He knows that according to his father he is not permitted to speak English; however, he is aware that to be "normal" he needs to speak English when he is out in public.

Johannes' identity is constantly changing, not only does his identity change, but also his location changes in conjunction with his languages. Johannes' father states to his children that "...your language is your home and your country is your language and your language is your flag (3). This statement clearly signifies how Johannes has become confused about his nationality and identity. Johannes' identity crisis continues beyond confusion when he familiarises with being Eichmann, "I am Eichmann, I said to my mother one day" (4). This is presumably Adolf Eichmann the German Nazi. Again, this shines light on his naïve and childish demeanour. Johannes inhabits this identity without knowing who this person actually is. We can assume that he connects this Eichmann and himself through the sheer knowledge of knowing that he is also German. Some thought should be given to the fact that he lives in Ireland, a country that at this time had gone through countless revolutions and civil wars. A



country that had been split into two separate countries, just like Johannes' identity. It is as if the physical barrier between Ireland and Northern Ireland, or that of those who speak Irish and those who do not, create a psychological barrier between Johannes and his identities. Johannes' languages ultimately put him in a country within a country.

Johannes claims, "Inside our house is a warm country with cake in the oven" (43). Signifying that his house is also a country, a warmer country than Ireland, presumably Germany, as it relates to his mother's character, whereas everything Irish is more volatile, like his Irish father. "It snowed right through the night and by Christmas morning, when I woke up and looked out the window, I could see Germany" (137). This is a parallel to the beginning of the novel when he looked out of the window and saw, Ireland. However, because the weather has changed to snow, he makes the assumption that this is now Germany, because he connects snow with Germany. It is not hard to understand how Johannes' confusion has been created, throughout the novel many of the adult characters use nationality in connection with acts that are performed, this can also be seen when Johannes' teacher is angry with him, "He bangs his stick on the desk and asks me what blasted country I'm in at all. Germany? So, then he has to come down to my desk and drag me back home to Ireland by the ear" (122). This only adds to Johannes' fear of being German in public. The teacher has given the impression that physical borders are not needed to distinguish what country they are in. Therefore, making Johannes believe that not only is it possible to be in more than one country at a time, but also that being German is a weakness.

As Johannes gradually ages throughout the novel, his identity also changes. He becomes more aware of right from wrong, he claims; "When you're small you know nothing and when you grow up there are things you don't want to know" (254). This claim is made in relation to knowing what his father was really like and being aware that not only did he not agree with his values, but that he was embarrassed by this. However, this is not your typical child feeling embarrassed by their parents, this is a more serious matter, "I don't want anyone to know that my father wanted Jewish people in Ireland to speak Irish and do Irish dancing like everyone else. I don't want people to know that he was foaming at the mouth. That the Irish language might be a killer language, too, like English and German. That my father believes you can only kill or be killed. It's the hardest thing to say that you're wrong" (254). Johannes has at this point finally understood the actions and proclamations of his father. Towards the end of the novel he sees his father, but does not recognise him at first, and when he does, he does not say anything, "I didn't move. I didn't run after him. I knew I was doing the same thing as he had done to his own father the sailor" (255). Johannes' epiphany in ends



with him concluding that, “I watched his limp and his briefcase swinging, as if I had never seen him before in my life” (256), this may have been his last meeting with his father, and he like his own father pretended that he did not exist.

Johannes is a complex character because he is the result of two contrasting characters, his warm and loving mother, and his nationalist and volatile father. His multiple identities made him prone to discrimination in society, something that he may have blamed his father for, given their last meeting. Although he starts his life being a confused young boy torn between his multiple identities, and between his parent’s personal war on language and home, and his own conflict in public, he eventually decides to become his own person and tears himself from his father’s Irish grip.

3.4 Conclusion

Language, culture, history, and gender are recurring themes throughout Hugo Hamilton’s novel *The Speckled People*. Language is the central theme put forward in Hamilton’s novel, it is the barrier between all the characters, and it is their main identity marker, which is also explored through intersectionality. Irmgard is German, Seán is Irish and their children are the German Irish children, the speckled and marked children in society. They are all prone to discrimination and indifference in a society where English is the main language. Not only does this separate them from society but it also builds a barrier between them as a family. Their different languages leave them less valued in society for not speaking the public language, which ultimately pushes them to be outsiders. Johannes and his siblings are prone to bullying and prejudice, leaving them feeling subordinate in Dublin. Gender in *The Speckled People* lays heavily on Johannes’ mother, Irmgard, and being female puts her in the ultimate disadvantaged identity category, as well as her culture and nationality of being German. Johannes experiences his mother’s confinement through a naïve perspective, only later does he know that these experiences are important to his own identity and society. Although history plays a large part in Johannes’ childhood, Hamilton portrays this through Johannes’ sincere and childlike identity where he identifies with unpleasant historical figures, like Adolf Eichmann, through the sheer knowledge of them being German. This is surely Hamilton’s intention to present to the reader that Johannes is enduring an identity crisis.



5. Parallels in *Dubliners* and *The Speckled People*

There are many similarities and parallels in James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Hugo Hamilton's *The Speckled People*. Joyce and Hamilton both essentially introduce identity, culture, language, history, religion and gender in very similar ways. The Irish culture is a dominant theme throughout both works by Joyce and Hamilton. The works of Joyce show an Irish culture through an Irish perspective, while Hamilton exposes the culture through a multicultural background. However, although different, both works express culture through the perspectives of gradually aging persons. Religion is far more important in *Dubliners* than it is in *The Speckled People*. This is presumably the result of the works being published over 70 years apart. While Catholicism was and still is an important part of an Irish identity, as it is in any identity and society. *The Speckled People* in contrast to *Dubliners* focuses more on the importance of nationalism, but as *Dubliners* comes to an end, we see that nationalism becomes a more central theme, and this is presumably due to society changing and the age gap between the works becoming smaller. Hamilton and Joyce have produced works of literature that are similar in structure and chronological order of childhood to adulthood. Also, although both authors have grown up in Dublin, they are torn between languages that give them belonging to their country.

Hamilton connects Ireland's identity with his strict and volatile father, likewise, we see that Joyce chose a somewhat similar approach by presenting characters like Eveline's father and Mrs Mooney's ex-husband as volatile drunks with absent morals. These parallels are what Declan Kiberd argues to be a way of gaining power in a society where they are not respected, their only way to gain control is by abusing their wives and children. The volatile men in the texts are also often connected to paralysis, a constant underlying theme throughout both works and is most often referred to in connection with Dublin being a paralysed city. When Joyce refers to Dublin as being paralysed, he is essentially referring to the fact that Dublin as a society cannot move on from the past, which in parallel to Johannes' father is the truth for him as well. Seán's character distinctly possesses the identity markers of a person who does not adjust well to change, however instead of accepting things for what they are he creates an imaginary war against Ireland. This can also be seen in Joyce's characters in *The Dead*, who are dedicated to their Irish heritage. They, like Johannes' father are not ready to move forward, rather paralysed in their state of stubbornness.

Young Johannes and the young boy from *The Sisters* are equally unsure, both boys do not know how to understand the adults in the texts. Young Johannes asks, "how do you know



what...” (Hamilton 1) often in the beginning of the novel. Indicating that he struggles with identifying with adult emotions. We see the same in *The Sisters* when the young boy does not know how to react Father Flynn’s emotions. In likeness to each other we see both these characters become grown, Johannes at the end of Hamilton’s novel and the young boy in *The Sisters* as a man in *The Dead*.

Gender is something that is both similar and different in both works. Although there are very few women characters in *The Speckled People*, limited to Irmgard, Aine, and Johannes’ younger sister, the similarities between the works are more or less very alike. *Dubliners* focuses on the confinement of Eveline, while this same type of representation can be seen in Irmgard’s character. Both women feel the need to escape their lives, escape from men, and escape from their indifference to men and in society. The representation of gender roles in society have not much changed in the time gap between the works. Expectancies of women to stay home and take care of the children are still considered to be the role of women. However, as both stories come to an end, we see a gradual development in women’s rights being introduced into society, although Irmgard does not feel free until her husband’s death, she does come to terms with this as her escape, she sees his death as a result of karma. Again, because Eveline is a complex character it is hard to define whether she actually is confined to her home in Ireland or if she chooses to stay there due to her own free will or input from society. Joyce’s *The Dead* can also be largely connected with both these works, in light of gender equality in Ireland, and also in Europe.

The Irish culture in both works is plagued by religion, gender, and history. Gender and religion are closely tied together by Catholicism in the sense that for example, Eveline, Polly Mooney, and Irmgard have close ties to marriage, whereas the young boy in *The Sisters* is formed by his catholic upbringing and close relation to a priest. Although, *The Speckled People* is not riddled with religious elements, the family do attend church, and it could be speculated that one of the reasons Irmgard stays with her husband is because she is a catholic. Language plays a central part in both texts, but what both texts inhabit as their parallel is the Irish language, we see this consistently in *The Speckled People* as being the main theme, and their main tie to their identity, but we also see this when Mrs Ivors confronts Gabriel in *The Dead* about his language. The nationalism in the characters manner is very alike and can suggest that some Irish people that stayed in Ireland felt a bond to their nationality more so than ever in language.

The historical aspects of Ireland is by far the most central theme for both works and by far the most important, it is our history that forms and creates our identities, passed down



from generation to generation, we are affected by the historical events that have taken place in society. *Dubliners* portrays this through an underlying symbolic theme throughout of emigration and the switch in gender dynamics, while *The Speckled people* shows this in Johannes' father's nationalistic behaviour and bitterness for Great Britain. There is a strong paradoxical connection between the works in light of The Famine and civil wars in Ireland that has evidently produced an Irish nation that has felt a loss of identity, therefore such aspects as language, religion and culture have become crucial elements in Irish identity.

6. Conclusion

This thesis sought out to find similarities and differences with focus on identity and intersectionality, in two different works of Irish literature. James Joyce's *Dubliners* (2006) and Hugo Hamilton's *The Speckled people* (2009) have consistently shown throughout this thesis that they bare extensive resemblance to each other in light of historical, religious, cultural, and gendered elements. The historical elements in both works lays heavily on the repercussions of Ireland's ill-fated past with Britain. Both works present history as one of the most important factors in forming one's identity and taking into consideration Ireland's colourful past it is not hard to assume that both Hamilton and Joyce have been unintentionally coloured by their own past which, affectively is mirrored through their characters.

The thesis has used three different definitions of identity, personal, national and narrative, and throughout both works these definitions of identity have been central, both in light of the characters and in historical aspects of identity in an Irish society. Intersectionality has been shown through the subordinate identities of many of the work's characters, although mainly seen in the women characters, gender in Irish literature has shown many similarities, this is closely connected to the historical and cultural elements, however, the similarities between the female characters stands out a great deal, not only are they subjected to stigma and criticism in society but they are also subjected to volatile men in their homes. Many of the women characters in both *Dubliners* and *The Speckled People* are forced to feel confined in their own lives, however, both works show progression and we see an evolving modern society forming where women are becoming more and more equal. The identity crisis shown in *Dubliners* and *The Speckled People* is mainly constructed through historical events that have taken place, and the consequences of such factors that have lead to emigration from



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Ireland, leaving behind destruction in the paralysed city of Dublin, and an Irish identity crisis as a result of this.



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