

Abstract

The essay collects and discusses several reading perspectives of 'The Dead,' a short-story by James Joyce from his collection *Dubliners* (1914). It contends that the story is very much open to creative reading and subjective interpretation, as it may be seen as a platform for various discourses, hidden and unfinished stories, themes, historical testimonies, etc. It argues that 'The Dead' even successfully dramatizes the very event of interpreting a literary text. At the same time, the paper pays attention to how the story is closely tied to its author's personality, life history, and how the whole collection to great extent derives from Joyce's overall scepticism held towards his countrymen in Dublin.

The chapter "A Biographical Reading" discusses James Joyce as an interpretive principle for the story. It reflects on Richard Ellmann's essay "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead'" and notes its positive aspects, but it also acknowledges drawbacks of what is called a biographical method of reading 'The Dead.'

The next chapter, "The *Dubliners* Project," starts by outlining two reading perspectives that don't defy one another, but may rather be seen as mutually enriching. The first sees 'The Dead' as an individual piece of writing, whereas the second as an integral part of the collection. The chapter then focuses on the concept of paralysis pervading the collection, and its impact upon the story. Special attention is paid to the protagonist Gabriel Conroy and the effect the paralysis might have had in the course of his life. The motif of paralysis is later seen as having the form of social constructs. The chapter eventually discusses Gabriel as a victim of such constructs and his epiphanic moment at the end of the story.

The last chapter, "Creative Re-Readings," fully concentrates on why the story provides fruitful grounds for creative interpretations of the story and its message. The creative readings are seen as possible solutions to the central conflict in the narrative structure of 'The Dead' between how much it suggests and how little it actually tells. Throughout the chapter, several readings are listed. The chapter concludes by a discussion of the image of the snow at the end of the story.

Keywords: 'The Dead,' James Joyce, interpretation, paralysis, death, creative reading, Gabriel Conroy