

Agoraphobia in James Joyce's —Eveline

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Abstract

Joyce famously declared in a letter to Constantine Curran in 1904 that he intended to call a series of his short stories *Dubliners* in order to reveal —the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city (*Letters I* 55). Not surprisingly, much has been written on this motif in *Dubliners*, which opens with a reference to apoplexy, closes with allusions to death, and in between portrays characters in various states of fatalistic quiescence and passivity in the face of social, religious, and political forces. In this article, I explore a previously unexamined aspect of this theme of medical and spiritual stasis in Joyce's work by revealing the role agoraphobic behavior plays in *Dubliners*, especially in the collection's fourth story, —Eveline.

Keywords: agoraphobia, psychology, —Eveline, *Dubliners*.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus famously declares his intention to fly past the nets of nationality, language, and religion, which are flung at one's soul at birth —to hold it back from flight (*P* 203). Later, in an elaboration of this general aim, Stephen proclaims to his friend Cranly: —I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can (*P* 247). In *Ulysses*, a slightly more mature Stephen meditates further on the

importance of his own self-realization and the intellectual freedom it engenders. Patiently parrying Mr. Deasy's noisome platitudes in the —Nestor|| chapter, Stephen reminds himself:

—Three nooses round me here. Well? I can break them in this instant if I will|| (*U* 25). Later, in the —Proteus|| chapter of the novel, Stephen warily eyes the cocklepickers' dog, thinking: —Respect his liberty. You will not be master of others or their slave|| (*U* 37).

These reflections on personal freedom on the part of James Joyce's youthful spokesperson in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* address what the author maintained to be the central issue of his earlier work, *Dubliners*. Joyce's proposed aim in writing the stories that make up this collection is well-known, having been repeated and preserved in several of his extant letters. In a 1904 note from Joyce to Constantine Curran, we read: —I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city|| (*Letters I* 55). Then, in a letter to Grant Richards, dated May 20, 1906, the author writes: —I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country||

(*Letters I* 62-63). Joyce reiterated this theme in a subsequent letter to Richards: —My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis|| (*Letters II* 134). Paralysis and liberation. What is at stake in *Dubliners* is freedom, and not merely that civil or societal freedom that is allowed, limited, or prohibited by the strictures of Church and State (though Joyce certainly addressed these aspects of individual liberty in the collection), but the personal, artistic, and, more fundamentally, the existential freedom to choose oneself and to manage one's identity in a world where there are others. As Brewster Ghiselin observed in his seminal 1956 essay: —In *Dubliners*, the meaning and movement [of the text] is further complicated by the thematic import of that symbolic paralysis which Joyce himself referred to, an arrest imposed from *within*, not by the _nets' of external circumstance, but by

a deficiency of impulse and power.¹ Warren Beck, writing several years later, remarked that the characters in Joyce's tales are —individuals agitated by their own instability and tending to quiescence ... in a drift toward fatalistic passivity.² Thus we might expect that many of the limits to personal freedom in *Dubliners* are self-imposed, either willfully or otherwise, by the collection's most —paralyzed characters.

Much has been written on the concept of paralysis in *Dubliners*,³ including commentary that examines this theme in the medical context suggested by Joyce's use of the term —hemiplegia in his letter to Curran. Most recently, Vike Plock, in her *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity*, notes that:

What Joyce seemed to be most interested in, in writing *Dubliners*, is a diagnostic approach to the many ailments that paralyze his home town. To that purpose Joyce's first book displays a wide variety of pathologies and illnesses and it is certainly no accident that the collection opens with a reference to the —third stroke.⁴

Plock argues, however, that drunkenness rather than apoplexy was the predominant disease in Dublin in the early twentieth century, and that alcoholism is the predominant pathology in Joyce's —moral history of [his] country.⁵ Readers will note, though, that apart from the paralysis suffered by Father Flynn in the collection's opening tale, —The Sisters, nowhere is the loss of physical mobility more evident in *Dubliners* than at the climax of the book's fourth story, —Eveline, where we find the tale's titular protagonist frozen in panic at Dublin's North Wall dock —like a helpless animal (*D* 41). Edward Brandabur has stated that of all Joyce's stories, —Eveline is the one that most characterizes the —spiritual paralysis that the author set out to depict in *Dubliners*. —The conflict in the story, wrote Brandabur, —between [Eveline's] wish to escape an unbearable environment and her attachment to that environment is resolved by the paralysis which stems from neurotic

involvement with the past.⁶ Although drunkenness certainly plays a role in —Eveline‖ —the young woman's father was —usually fairly bad of a Saturday night‖ (*D* 38)— it is not this malady that induces Eveline's paralysis at the story's conclusion for, as far as we know, Eveline herself does not drink. Rather, as I will contend over the following pages, it is an ailment more psychopathological, more neurotic in nature that manifests itself in Eveline's panic attack at the North Wall station, for Eveline seems to be exhibiting symptoms of incipient, or even long latent *agoraphobia* in her mental and physiological crisis at the dock. Moreover, this hypothesis serves as an implicit, if not explicit medical metaphor for the plight of several of Joyce's *Dubliners*, who find themselves severely limited —from *within* ... by a deficiency of impulse and power,‖ adrift —toward fatalistic passivity,‖ or —as Tommy Chandler puts it in his own grim epiphany in —A Little Cloud‖— —prisoner[s] for life‖ in their Irish homes.

Christened by Carl Westphal in the early 1870s,⁷ agoraphobia refers to an abnormal fear of open and/or public spaces of various kinds, particularly certain streets or squares. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, knowledge of and theories concerning the disease had become quite common among psychologists. George Gould and Walter Pyle wrote in 1900 in their *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* that: —Agoraphobia is dread of an open space.‖ Further:

In agoraphobia the patient dreads to cross a street or into a field, is seized by an intense feeling of fright, and has to run to a wall or fall down, being quite unable to proceed. There is violent palpitation, and a feeling of constriction is experienced ... [often with] pallor and profuse perspiration.⁸

The disorder appears also in Fulgence Raymond and Pierre Janet's 1898 work, *Névroses et idées fixes* (*Neuroses and Obsessions*), a text with which Joyce may have been familiar

given his brief enrollment in medical school in Paris in 1902-1903, nearly two years before the initial publication of —Eveline! in the *Irish Homestead*. Raymond and Janet describe *l'agoraphobie* as —a pathological fear, a state of delirious emotion that seizes [the sufferer] when he finds himself alone before a great, empty expanse.¶⁹ One of their patients —whenever she feels herself alone in the street, staggers, feels smothered by a horrible anguish; she experiences a great dizziness, senses a veil passing before her eyes and her thoughts become clouded as if she is about to faint.¶¹⁰ Another patient relates that in his attacks: —I'm afraid I'm going to fall, afraid I'm going to die; it's the empty space that seizes me by the legs, or my legs become empty and it's a horrible feeling and it seems that I'm going to faint from terror.¶¹¹

Though more extensively articulated, descriptions of the basic symptomology of agoraphobia have remained fundamentally unchanged over the years. According to the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (or the *DSM*), the —essential feature of

Agoraphobia is anxiety about being in places or situations from which escape might be difficult (or embarrassing) or in which help may not be available in the event of a Panic Attack.¶¹² The *DSM* ascribes the following clinical indications of such an attack:

A discrete period of intense fear or discomfort, in which four or more of the following symptoms developed abruptly and reached a peak within ten minutes:

1. palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate
2. sweating
3. trembling or shaking
4. sensations or shortness of breath or smothering
5. feeling of choking
6. chest pain or discomfort
7. nausea or abdominal stress
8. feeling dizzy, unsteady, lightheaded or faint

9. derealization (feelings of unreality) or depersonalization (being detached from oneself)
10. fear of losing control or going crazy
11. fear of dying
12. paresthesias (numbness or tingling sensations)
13. chills or hot flushes.¹³

While we have no evidence to suggest that Joyce knew about agoraphobia *per se* as a medical condition, it is not unlikely that he witnessed such public panic attacks, for as we know from the accounts of Gould, Pyle, Raymond, Janet, and others, manifestations of the illness were frequent enough at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century for the pathology to warrant inclusion in contemporary medical manuals. And as we shall see, this symptomology clearly describes the panic that Joyce's protagonist experiences at the conclusion of *Dubliners*' fourth tale.

—Eveline‖ opens with the story's title character gazing out the window of her home, wearily —watching the evening invade the avenue‖ (*D* 36). She recalls nostalgically a nearby field in which she used to play as a child with her brothers and other neighborhood children until her father —hunt[ed] them in‖ with a blackthorn stick. —Still,‖ Eveline reminisces, the family —seemed to have been rather happy then‖ (*D* 36). Eveline is about to elope with a sailor named Frank, whom she perceives to be —very kind, manly, [and] open-hearted‖ (*D* 38). They plan to depart that very evening on a boat bound ultimately for Buenos Aires, where Frank claims to have a —home waiting for her‖ (*D* 38). More precisely, Eveline has —consented to go away‖ with Frank (*D* 37; my emphasis), a performative gesture that implies agreement, though with overtones of acquiescence, rather than any real enthusiasm. Staring out the window the young woman is trying, as the narrator puts it, to —weigh each side of the question‖ (*D* 37): does she really wish to leave the safety and familiarity of her home, even though, since the death of her mother and one of her brothers and the departure of another brother, there is no longer anyone to protect her from

her alcoholic, abusive father —a father who —had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother’s sake|| (*D* 38)? Eveline certainly would not miss her job in retail, where she feels she is treated disrespectfully. Moreover, she dutifully hands over all of her wages from the Stores where she works to her father who, professing that she would only —squander the money|| otherwise, refuses to give her funds to buy food for Sunday dinner until Saturday evening, when —she had to rush out as quickly as she could to do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions|| (*D* 38). Nonetheless, Eveline tells herself that although her life is hard, —now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life|| (*D* 38). The sound of a street organ in the avenue reminds her of the last night of her mother’s fatal illness, when Eveline promised —to keep the home together as long as she could|| (*D* 40). She recalls as well the words of her mother’s final dementia, spoken with —foolish insistencel: ——Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!|| (*D* 40). At this point, Eveline rises —in a sudden impulse of terror,|| thinking: —Escape! She must escape!|| (*D* 40).

Following an interruption in the story —marked textually by an ellipsis spanning the width of the page— we find the tale’s protagonist standing —among the swaying crowd|| at the dock, waiting to board the night-boat. She is abstracted, unable to take in something that Frank is saying over and over again about their upcoming voyage. Her cheek is —pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty|| (*D* 40). Eveline has clearly changed her mind about running away with her lover, but she can’t bring herself to —draw back after all he [has] done for her|| (*D* 41). Eveline’s —distress awoke a nausea in her body,|| and she felt that —[a]|| the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. [Frank] was drawing her into them: he would drown her|| (*D* 41). She gripped the iron railing —in frenzy|| and —[a]|| mid the seas she sent a cry of anguish|| (*D* 41). It is time to board and

Frank calls plaintively to her. But Eveline only —set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition‖ (*D* 41). Joyce's story ends there.

Eveline's behavior at the conclusion of Joyce's tale is demonstrably symptomatic of the kind of panic attack often associated with agoraphobia. Although her crisis does not occur in a street or public square typical of Westphal's earliest characterization of the condition, the North Wall station is certainly a public space and is filled with a —swaying crowd‖

(*D* 40). It is also a place —from which escape might be difficult (or embarrassing). —Her cold cheek‖ indicates chills; she is experiencing nausea; she imagines herself already —amid the seas‖ and feels that —all the seas of the world‖ are tumbling about her heart —signs of derealization and cardiac stress; she fears that Frank will drown her —that is, she experiences a fear of death through a kind of smothering; she grips the dock's iron railing —in frenzy,‖ implying a fear of loss of control; and finally, Eveline's failure to understand Frank's speech and her blanched, passive look of a —helpless animal‖ indicate depersonalization, a condition in which, according to psychopathologist Isaac Marks, —one feels temporarily strange, unreal, disembodied, cut off or far away from immediate surroundings.‖¹⁴ Thus, although Eveline is physically in the company of Frank, she is at the moment of her attack emotionally alone before the —great, empty expanse‖ of the Irish Sea and the great unknown of her immediate future. Her anxiety is not the paradigmatic agoraphobic —dread to cross a street or into a field‖ that Gould and Pyle described, though Eveline does break down before a —barrier‖ between the station and the ship, beyond which Frank —calls to her to follow him‖ and where the night-boat is set to make the *crossing* between Ireland and England (*D* 41).¹⁵ We don't know if Eveline —senses a veil passing before her eyes‖ or if —her thoughts [have] become clouded,‖ as one of Raymond and Janet's patients described her own experience of agoraphobic depersonalization, but Eveline's —passive‖ look and eyes that

communicate —no sign of love or farewell or recognition to Frank suggest this possibility.

If we accept Brandabur's conjecture that Eveline's paralysis —stems from neurotic involvement with the past, what are the circumstances that could have led the story's protagonist to her present condition? According to Marks, agoraphobia:

often develops after a major upheaval in a person's life; for example, serious illness in oneself or a relative, acute *danger* or discomfort, *leaving home, the death of a loved one, engagement, marriage, pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth*; or it may begin after an *unpleasant scene in a shop, street, or bus*.¹⁶

Eveline clearly fits this profile, given the deaths of her mother and one of her brothers, the danger posed by her abusive father —who used to chase her with a stick in a —nearby field (an open, public space) when she was younger and currently threatens her with similar treatment, —if only for her dead mother's sake— her desire to leave home and elope with Frank, and unpleasant scenes in the shop where she works. Moreover, we know she finds her hurried Saturday night forays into the busy marketplace unsettling (and recall here that the Greek *agora* refers specifically to a marketplace), and that she would hold —her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds. Interestingly, in her 2003 monograph, *Phobic Geographies*, social geographer Joyce Davidson cites a self-help video for agoraphobics that opens with a scene of a woman walking through a crowded shopping area, who suddenly stops and grips her handbag tightly, looking profoundly uncomfortable. The voiceover informs viewers that the woman feels —faint, sick, and dizzy, is breaking out —in a cold sweat, has trouble breathing, experiences tightness in her chest, and feels —absolutely rooted to the spot.¹⁷ The narrator in Joyce's tale does not tell us

whether Eveline suffers all of these physical symptoms of agoraphobic distress as she rushes through the busy and threatening marketplace on Saturday night, clutching her purse tightly, but we do know that she exhibits the more complete symptomology just a short time after recalling these stressful weekly errands on the evening of her intended departure with Frank —this time in a different crowded public space where the existential stakes are even higher.

As the early characterizations of agoraphobia that I've cited a few paragraphs above imply, and as we know more explicitly and definitively from recent case studies, agoraphobia sufferers often perceive their homes as places of sanctuary, experiencing these confined, but familiar spaces as the only area over which they have control. According to Davidson, agoraphobic panic often arises from the subject's feeling that she does not belong in the public space where she finds herself and from which the —only option is to run, usually *homeward*.¹⁸ Marks observes that after the initial, paralyzing force of a panic attack diminishes, the agoraphobic —may just want to run to a haven of safety —a friend or one's *home*.¹⁹

Tellingly, the word —home‖ occurs nine times in Joyce's six-page story, and we know that Eveline is very attached to her family's residence, in spite of her father's menacing presence.

And while the *idea* of leaving her home to run off with Frank is appealing, she has rationalized her life in Dublin as not

—wholly undesirable,‖ and Eveline is, in fact, unable to face the *reality* of her plan to leave home without severe anxiety. Even her recollection of the garbled dying words of her delirious mother subtly resonate with panicked ambiguity as Eveline attempts to face and resolve her dilemma. Epifanio San Juan, Jr. has suggested that the gibberish that is Eveline's mother's terminal cry —represents an anagram of the prolonged sounds of —_drown' and _sea'‖²⁰ and that —the recurrent image of drowning, or of being engulfed ... in the last scene, literally muffles her into anguished paralysis.²¹ We might also read Eveline's mother's words —at least as they appear in the written text of the story— as a near perfect anagram of the warning,

—Eva undersea – Run!! This reading both reinforces San Juan’s argument that Eveline’s memory of the garbled words contributes to her terror of drowning at the conclusion of the tale, while at the same time evoking in her a sense of engulfment and a sudden, strong urge to flee at the moment she first recalls her mother’s cry.²² In any case, Eveline interprets her recollection of her mother’s dying utterance —regardless of what her mother might actually have been trying to say— as an exhortation to escape, though given her ambivalence about whether to stay home or flee with Frank, it is not clear which option she most wishes to escape from or escape to.

Phenomenologically speaking, the panic that is often associated with agoraphobia —is experienced as an unbearable attack on one’s sense of self in space, constituting an unmitigated existential threat.²³ Moreover, agoraphobia may represent less of a threat to the subject from the Other than what the subject fears —she herself might do in the Other’s presence.²⁴ Marks observes that for agoraphobics trapped in an uncomfortable place or situation, the —panic can become so intense that the sufferer will be glued to the same spot for some minutes,²⁵ echoing the observation of Raymond and Janet’s patient almost a century earlier, who described this loss of motility as —the empty space that seizes me by the legs. Quoting Kierkegaard’s *Concept of Anxiety*, Davidson characterizes this agoraphobic paralysis as the subject’s attempt to deal with the dizzying sensation of the world’s spinning by grabbing —hold of finiteness to support [herself].²⁶ Eveline’s grip on the North Wall’s iron railing and her existential paralysis in the face of the profoundly life-altering choice she must make constitute a textbook illustration of this symptom. Marks reminds us, however, that although this sort of panic —is often cited as a precipitant of phobias,²⁷ it is rather —an early sign of phobia.²⁷ What we may be witnessing, then, at the conclusion of Joyce’s tale, is the manifest onset of a condition that has been previously developing in Eveline and which may henceforth paralyze her for some time to come.

Paralysis and liberation. If Kierkegaard was right in declaring that —anxiety is the dizziness of freedom,‖²⁸ then it is no surprise that Joyce assigned agoraphobia a prominent thematic role in his collection of stories to present a —diagnostic approach to the many ailments that paralyze his home town.‖ As Freud remarked in his classic —Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy,‖ the purpose of phobias if often —to impose a very great measure of restriction upon [the sufferer's] freedom of movement.‖²⁹ And what better phobia through which to depict —the soul of that ... paralysis which many consider a city‖ than precisely a *spatial* phobia —that is, a condition the effect of which is to keep the city's inhabitants *at home*, literally and spiritually, and an arrest that Dubliners impose on themselves —from within,‖ which leaves them unwilling, rather than truly unable, to fly past the nets of —external circumstance‖?

Although the climax of —Eveline‖ represents the apex of agoraphobic panic in *Dubliners* and thus distinguishes the shop girl's breakdown as the most emblematic instance of the —spiritual paralysis‖ Joyce sought to convey in his project, it is not the only intimation of agoraphobia as one of the —wide variety of pathologies and illnesses‖ that inform Joyce's collection of short stories. There are at least three other stories in the book that suggest aspects of this particular manifestation of —paralysis,‖ including a possible etiology for the ailment within the context of the collection, and further symptoms and effects of this spatial phobia as characteristic of the —fatal passivity‖ of the Dubliners Joyce sought to portray. These are: —An Encounter,‖ —A Little Cloud,‖ and —A Painful Case.‖

In *Dubliners*' second story, —An Encounter,‖ we read about the events that ensue from a young boy's decision to —break out of the weariness of school-life‖ (*D* 21) by playing hooky with his friend, Mahony. The two boys plan to make the long trek to Dublin's Pigeon House —the site of —an armory on a tip of land stretching into a bay once full of packet ships, historic comings and goings, and many a sea adventure, battle, military landing, or native departure.‖³⁰ Although the boy

suspects that the —real adventures‖ for which he longs —do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought elsewhere,‖ he still hopes to nurture the —wild sensations‖ he desires by spending the day by the harbor at Dublin’s eastern extreme (*D* 21). Although they fail to reach the Pigeon House, the boys do in fact experience an adventure of sorts, though not at all the kind of adventure they anticipated. After *crossing into a field*, they encounter a —queer old josser,‖ (*D* 26) whose sexual innuendo the young boy / narrator finds vaguely threatening. When he rises to begin the journey *homeward*, the boy’s heart —was beating quickly with fear that [the old man] would *seize me by the ankles*‖ (*D* 28; my emphasis) – recall here Gould and Pyle’s association of crossing into a field as a typical scene for the onset of agoraphobic anxiety and the account by one of Raymond and Janet’s patients of —the empty space that seizes me by the legs.‖ Is this the kind of —neurotic involvement with the past,‖ the determining moment of trauma that will later precipitate agoraphobic behavior in the young adult protagonist of Joyce’s collection? *Dubliners*’ narrator has discovered that escape from the strictures of religion and school and wandering even a short distance from his home are risky endeavors that may lead to —unbearable attack[s] on one’s sense of self in space‖ and, on a still latent level perhaps, fear of what he might himself —do in the Other’s presence.‖ Thus, Joyce prepares his readers for the anxious ambivalence Eveline will experience on the North Wall by introducing in the collection’s second story some potentially minatory consequences of running away from home, as well as the cultural circumstances that home embodies.

In the collection’s eighth story, —A Little Cloud,‖ Tommy Chandler, like Eveline Hill, is discontented with his life in Dublin: his tiresome job, his dull home life, his hectoring wife. Chandler’s old pal, Ignatius Gallaher, with whom he shares a couple of drinks at Corless’s tavern, seems to have thrown off the shackles of —dear dirty Dublin‖ (*D* 75) and achieved some success in London, not to mention having seen Paris in the bargain. For Chandler, London and Paris

represent the promised land, the open space beyond the seemingly walled enclosure that is his colonial home town, the place where Chandler fears himself a —prisoner for life‖ (*D* 84). —There was no doubt about it,‖ he maintains, —if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin‖

(*D* 73). Apart from his overt timidity, we do not know why Chandler has chosen to remain in Dublin, but we do know that he is uncomfortable outside his place of work and his home where, like Eveline, he is unhappy. Chandler is especially anxious when walking alone *in city streets*:

It was his habit to walk swiftly in the street even by day and whenever he found himself in the city late at night he hurried on his way apprehensively and excitedly. Sometimes, however, he courted the causes of his fear. He chose the darkest and narrowest streets and, as he walked boldly forward, the silence that was spread about his footsteps troubled him, the wandering silent figures troubled him; and at times a sound of low fugitive laughter made him tremble like a leaf (*D* 72).

Did Chandler, too, once stand at the North Wall station, ready but unable to board the night-boat that would have taken him to England? Joyce doesn't tell us, but if we read *Dubliners* as a unified project in which the author intended to portray Dublin and its citizens in a state of physical and spiritual paralysis, such a conjecture would not be incongruous. For whatever reason, Chandler has been unable, or at least unwilling, to leave Dublin.

Like —Eveline,‖ the eleventh selection in *Dubliners*, —A Painful Case,‖ opens with a description of the tale's protagonist, James Duffy, in his home in Chapelizod, a Dublin suburb. Duffy is older than Eveline Hill, however, and significantly more settled, both mentally and environmentally, in his home. In fact, Duffy —abhorred anything which

betokened physical or mental disorder^{||} (*D* 108) and, as we discover, his routine is well-established, and he seldom deviates from it. While he is better able to negotiate public spaces than both Eveline and Chandler, Duffy's life outside of work and home seems almost scripted:

He had been for many years cashier of a private bank in Baggot Street. Every morning he came in from Chapelizod by tram. At midday he went to Dan Burke's and took his lunch – a bottle of lager beer and a small trayful of arrowroot biscuits. At four o'clock *he was set free*. He dined in an eating-house in George's street where *he felt himself safe from the society* of Dublin's gilded youth and where there was a certain honesty in the bill of fare. His evenings were spent either before his landlady's piano or *roaming about the outskirts of the city*. His liking for Mozart's music brought him sometimes to an opera or a concert: these were the only dissipations of his life (*D* 108-109; my emphasis).

Unlike Chandler, Duffy seems comfortable enough in a public —eating-house^{||} and —roaming about the outskirts of the city,^{||} and does so alone. However, he has applied strict limitations to the personal, social, and geographical scope of his life, even after the hour at which he —was set free.^{||} Duffy makes every effort to control the events of his life and, unlike the boy in —An Encounter,^{||} has no desire for adventure: —his life rolled out evenly —an adventureless tale^{||} (*D* 109). Although late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century psychologists did not apparently link the two, the more recent *Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties* notes an increased frequency of obsessional symptoms among agoraphobic subjects.³¹ We also know that Duffy —lived at a little distance from his body^{||} and that he —had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to

compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense‖ (*D* 108), a striking example of depersonalization.

In spite of Duffy's attempts to maintain obsessive control over —his sense of self in space,‖ he somehow —found courage to make an appointment‖ with a married woman, Emily Sinico, who shares his interest in music (*D* 110). They meet several times, but Duffy eventually breaks off the affair after Mrs. Sinico —caught up his hand passionately and pressed it to her cheek‖ (*D* 111) —an unbearable transgression of

Duffy's personal space, likely —constituting an unmitigated existential threat.‖ We don't know as much about Mrs. Sinico's life and lifestyle, nor how she reacts to Duffy's rejection, but four years later a newspaper report reveals that Sinico, who was —rather intemperate in her habits‖ and —in the habit of going out at night to buy spirits,‖ has stepped in front of a moving train and been killed (*D* 113-114). Interestingly, alcoholism (as Plock observes, the predominant pathology in

Dubliners), also —plays a significant role in the lives of many agoraphobics.‖³² Further, Raymond and Janet wrote in 1898 that agoraphobia sufferers fear they will perform reckless acts, such as —*throwing themselves under railcars.*‖³³ One of their patients remarked that: —I can no longer read the newspaper, they talk about crimes and suicide and I have the urge to do something like that, that scares me.‖³⁴ These symptoms are common enough that late-twentieth century commentary on the condition still includes them: —Some agoraphobics fear that they might jump from heights or in front of an oncoming train.‖³⁵ Clearly, although agoraphobic behavior is not manifested as explicitly in these later stories as it is in

—Eveline,‖ the aftermath of Eveline's crisis and its association with a pathological —arrest imposed from within‖ still resonates in the lives of other adult *Dubliners* in Joyce's book.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922) —Joyce's major works following the publication of *Dubliners* in 1914— another *Dubliners*, Stephen Dedalus,

makes clear that he does not intend to remain a —prisoner for life in his home town, nor be tangled in the cultural nets that are flung at the Irish soul at birth and —hold it back from flight. In other words, he vows to escape or overcome that —hemiplegia or paralysis, from which other *Dubliners* suffer. Stephen walks confidently and comfortably along the nearly empty expanse of beach in —Proteus, reflecting on himself, the world around him, his —sense of self in space, without feeling threatened by anyone or anything other than the cocklepickers' dog —a cynophobia that both Stephen and Joyce shared. Moreover, Stephen *will not return home* that night, not even to the Martello Tower where he shares temporary space with Buck Mulligan and the Englishman, Haines. Stephen is, in fact, last seen in *Ulysses* taking his leave from Bloom outside the latter's residence at 7 Eccles Street, walking away in the wee hours of the morning of June 17th, 1904 through Dublin's dark, empty, and silent streets.

Margot Norris has written that the conclusion of —Eveline illustrates well the —phenomenology of emigration, the fear that often overcame the would-be Irish emigrants and, consequently, the great courage required to abandon the harsh conditions of early twentieth-century Ireland to face the unknown elsewhere.³⁶ Joyce met Nora Barnacle on June 10, 1904 and eloped with the twenty-year-old on October 8th of that same year. Nora, like the nineteen-year-old Eveline Hill, came from a family in which both her mother and a brother had died, and which was dominated by an abusive male figure (her uncle Tom Healy). Joyce, then, may have meant his story to serve as a kind of cautionary tale to those who, unlike he and Nora, could not bring themselves to combat the —paralysis that, in Joyce's mind at least, characterized the —moral history of his country. *Dubliners* is filled with such fables, and what better symptomology for a presentation of spiritual or existential paralysis than that of agoraphobia, a fear of what one might oneself do under the gaze of the Other to the point of avoiding —places or situations from which escape [to one's home] might be difficult —a fear that Joyce himself, with

Nora, managed to overcome. Joyce may or may not have known about agoraphobia *per se* as a clinical condition, but he was bound to have recognized its characteristic indicators as the pathological manifestation of a conflict of will leading to an inability to transcend one's condition, either by fully accepting or escaping it, a form of spiritual paralysis or —arrest imposed from within‡ which Joyce maintained was so prevalent among his fellow Irish, as he himself prepared to depart with Nora Barnacle from Dublin's North Wall in the autumn of 1904.

Notes

¹ Brewster Ghiselin, —The Unity of *Dubliners*,‡ in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Dubliners": A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Peter K. Garrett (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 59; my emphasis.

² Warren Beck, *Joyce's "Dubliners": Substance, Vision, and Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969) 41.

³ A keyword search on the terms —joyce dubliners paralysis,‡ performed in the *MLA International Bibliography* on October 7, 2011 retrieved 19 entries – *MLA International Bibliography* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2010). This list does not, of course, include commentary on the theme of paralysis that appears in passing in other articles and monographs on *Dubliners* or on the individual stories.

⁴ Vike Plock, *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010) 25.

⁵ Plock 25.

⁶ Edward Brandabur, *A Scrupulous Meanness: A Study of Joyce's Early Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971) 58.

⁷ Carl Westphal, —Die Agoraphobie: Eine Neuropathische Erscheinung, *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 3:1 (1872) 138-171, 219-221.

⁸ George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1900) 877.

⁹ F. Raymond and Pierre Janet, *Névroses et idées fixes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1898) 84; all translations from this text are my own.

¹⁰ Raymond and Janet 85.

¹¹ Raymond and Janet 87.

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- ¹² *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed., text revision (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 2000) 432.
- ¹³ *DSM* 432.
- ¹⁴ Isaac M. Marks, *Fears, Phobias, and Rituals: Panic, Anxiety, and Their Disorders* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 342.
- ¹⁵ Although Joyce does not explicitly state this in his text, the night-boat is almost surely bound for Liverpool—see Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for “Dubliners” and “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 50.
- ¹⁶ Marks 78; my emphasis.
- ¹⁷ Joyce Davidson, *Phobic Geographies: The Phenomenology and Spatiality of Identity* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003) 125.
- ¹⁸ Davidson 101; my emphasis.
- ¹⁹ Marks 84; my emphasis.
- ²⁰ Epifanio San Juan, Jr., *James Joyce and the Craft of Fiction: An Interpretation of “Dubliners”* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972) 76.
- ²¹ San Juan, Jr. 72-73.
- ²² Jim LeBlanc, —More on _Derevaun Seraun! *James Joyce Quarterly* 35:4-36:1 (1998) 849-851.
- ²³ Davidson 3.
- ²⁴ Davidson 76.
- ²⁵ Marks 84.
- ²⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Oriented Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte, in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) 61; cited in Davidson 58.
- ²⁷ Marks 329.
- ²⁸ Kierkegaard 61.
- ²⁹ Sigmund Freud, —Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy, *in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 10, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955) 139.
- ³⁰ Donald T. Torchiana, *Backgrounds for Joyce’s “Dubliners”* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986) 42.
- ³¹ *The Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties*, 2nd ed., ed. Ronald M. Doctor and Ada P. Kahn (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2000) 21.
- ³² *The Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties* 22-23.
- ³³ Raymond and Janet 85; my emphasis.
- ³⁴ Raymond and Janet 85.
- ³⁵ *The Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties* 24.
- ³⁶ Margot Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Joyce’s “Dubliners”* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 65.