

## LINGUISTIC MEANS OF DECOLONIZATION IN DUBLINERS: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Souad KHALAF *Saint Joseph University of Beirut*

Nadine RIACHI HADDAD *Saint Joseph University of Beirut*

### **Abstract**

Language has the power to produce implicit interpretations revealed through deeper analysis of what readers know and what characters say explicitly. Based on many characteristics such as social and economic contexts in which evolve characters in James Joyce's *Dubliners*, different interpretations can be made. These will eventually demonstrate how language can decolonize people through their attempt to change or improve their economic and social status. Knowing such contexts also helps readers understand and learn that what characters say can carry a different meaning. In fact, context reflects what surrounds the characters and to which social or economic class they belong. Hence, the characters' language and what they utter explicitly will reflect their social positions. Additionally, belonging to upper or lower class also indicates colonized and colonizer relationship but does not limit the former's decolonial linguistic attempts. This article will thus prove that the language used by the colonized is a powerful means to achieve decolonization linguistically and that economic and social rank alone do not define nor hinder their capabilities.

**Keywords:** decolonization, *Dubliners*, economic context, social context, explicit, implicit

## INTRODUCTION

Different social classes are clearly depicted in James Joyce's *Dubliners* where we can find the poor, the wealthy, the sad and unsuccessful and the successful but unsatisfied. In *Dubliners* stories, the struggling middle class is predominant, a class that Joyce experienced himself trying to constantly improve his limited finances, while the upper and prosperous class remains slightly presented and the lower or poor class is seen in the background through poor people that characters perceive. Therefore, social class in Joyce's *Dubliners* does not follow the standard definitions of class differences as it becomes an exceptional mixture of different social classes where distinctions are merely the outcome of an age of war, inequality and depression. Social class according to Thompson (2016), "refers to divisions in society based on economic and social status. People in the same social class typically share a similar level of wealth, educational achievement, type of job and income" (para. 1). While this may also be reflective of Dublin's society, the characters do not necessarily feel compelled to blindly accept their class differences especially when they are disparaged by it. In fact, Joyce's characters are not flawless and do not belong to bourgeoisie but "are low enough to shock the genteel and to seem realistic rather than idealized to the largely middle-class mass audience [...] they cannot be patronized" (Brown, 1992, p.4). These depressed middle-class characters, as Brown suggests, may seem trapped in their social class, but they constantly try to escape it through different forms such as seeking decolonization sometimes through language alone. The hope of developing into the upper class, not necessarily materialistically but more importantly linguistically, will become Dubliners' primary goal. Accordingly, this article aims to investigate the importance of context in the process of decolonization and to verify that social and economic status in *Dubliners* may lead to linguistic decolonization. Even though the term "decolonization" did not exist when *Dubliners* was written, using it clearly supports and reflects movements of nationalism relevant to the idea of decolonization. The term actually appeared as Klose (2016) suggests in 1932 in the article "Imperialism" written by the German economist Moritz Julius Bonn describing how colonized states became independent (para. 1). Joyce may have not used the term explicitly but his stories in *Dubliners* reflect ideas and beliefs of sovereignty, nationalism and independence that later came out in the explicit use of the term decolonization. Moreover, explicit and implicit interpretations in the linguistic field are simply reflective of what the characters avow overtly and what they intend to say covertly. Allen (2000) defines implicit meaning as what is "implied rather than directly stated. Present but underlying rather than explicit" (p. 704). Conversely, he defines explicit meaning as "clear and unambiguous [...] graphically frank or detailed [...] fully developed" (p. 489). The use of these terms is vital and suggests a comparison between what the characters say (explicitly), and what they intend (implicitly) to achieve. Although explicit meanings may sound fixed and comprehensible for many,

they also show, through the stories of *Dubliners*, that beneath the explicit, overt, and lucid use of language, is a startling situation of Dubliners who constantly try to find ways to escape this clear representation into what is expressed, implied, and oppressed within their mind and in their inner thoughts. Additionally, Bach (2006) considers explicit<sup>1</sup> utterances also called “explicatures” the “development of logical forms” and implicit utterances “implicatures” “as ‘expansions’ or ‘completions’ of semantic contents” [...] the real differences emerge when the two notions are situated in their respective theoretical frameworks with their contrasting conceptions of what is involved in linguistic communication” (p. 1). Hence, the two terms seem to complement each other and the reader needs to decode implicit utterances that appear explicit at first. Implicit readings cannot happen randomly or subjectively but rather depend heavily on context that surrounds them and the long colonial history that Dubliners experienced. As for the Joycean narrative and linguistic style, it is crucial to understand the author’s meticulous attention to words and language best described by Sukanya (2012):

Joyce, with his true creative impulse imitates a sense of fluid reality and divests words as far as possible of their traditional significance and form. He coins many of them and uses them by sometimes placing them in altogether new context irrespective of their meaning or suitability. The psyche of human beings at times defies logical articulation, so the ideas and sensations are such, which are mostly beyond the grasp of words and images (p.5).

Therefore, dealing with words within context is crucial to come up with interpretations related to the given context. Means of decolonization come in forms of social and economic contexts which help the readers in deciphering covert messages. Such means become clearer with the study of the choice of words within these contexts. The word “simony” for example, which is further explained under “economic context”, is an important means to understand religious corruption at that time and its effects on Dubliners. Through the use of the term linguistic it is also vital to indicate that language is studied here beyond its syntactic meaning and is rather based on linguistic connotations and implications within the social and economic contexts. It is also important to note here that the term linguistic does not focus on the study of phonology, morphology or syntax of the language but rather focuses on discourse analysis and mainly contextual discourse. As a matter of fact, what characters in *Dubliners* say is studied according to the context in which an utterance has been used and the overall situation (political, social, economic) that lead to it. For instance, when Gabriel in “The Dead” offers money as a gift to Lily (the

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<sup>1</sup> What [relevance theorists] regard as explicit is, in general, not fully explicit but partly implicit. Indeed, this is suggested by their term ‘explicature’, which is a cognate of ‘explicate’, not ‘explicit’. To explicate something is to spell it out, and to spell out the explicature of an utterance would be to make fully explicit what has in fact been left partly implicit [...] [also called] ‘implicature’ (Bach, 2006, p.3).

housemaid), she refuses to take it “Really, sir, I wouldn’t take it” (D<sup>2</sup> 124). Lily’s utterance is also indirectly a response to class difference which urges those of lower class to accept donations. However, Lily’s refusal proves that Dubliners of different social class are not constrained by it. While some believe that the language of the colonized should be suppressed or even abolished, this article suggests that such a notion is questionable and that language may have the power to decolonize the oppressed in colonial environments. If this can be proven, how can those who live in a politically disturbed society that is controlled by the more powerful colonizer achieve so? If Dubliners who use language for decolonization purposes succeed in achieving freedom and autonomy, then language with its implicit and explicit forms can control actions and can be highly influential in colonized societies. Within the framework of this hypothesis, a qualitative approach is conducted to enhance the understanding of the different implicit utterances and to make them more explicit and comprehensible. This method relies on analyzing examples taken from the stories and making inferences from what the characters in *Dubliners* utter. Data, in the form of conversations and discussions that take place between the characters or even in their minds under the forms of dialogues or monologues, are collected and analyzed from many stories. Accordingly, this method focuses on studying behaviors and more importantly linguistic ones to further investigate the characters’ decolonization attempts. And to better understand the connection between context and decolonization, this article will be divided into four main parts. The first will examine the importance of implicit and explicit interpretations specifically in socioeconomic contexts while the second reveals the connection between contextual effects and utterances. These contexts become crucial to understand the implicitness behind each utterance and the characters’ struggle to achieve decolonization through language. The third part will highlight the economic context by which characters are confined and feel the need to escape. Examples that explore such needs are taken from the stories of “The Sisters”, “Two Gallants” and “Clay”. The fourth and last major part of this article further scrutinizes stories in which characters try to overcome social class differences to achieve decolonization as in “Araby”, “The Dead” and “A Little Cloud”. Through the use of annexes also, additional examples of economic and social contexts taken from the stories are presented in terms of their explicit and implicit readings.

## 1. LANGUAGE: IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT INTERPRETATIONS

The scrutiny of some implicit messages framed within social and economic contexts is vital to understand Joyce’s decolonial attempts that he tries to project through his characters. What seems linguistically important in the stories of *Dubliners* is that “whatever things mean, they will always come to mean by virtue of a set of underlying principles [and] a close analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviation: D = Dubliners.

Joyce's language is, indeed, needed to detect the structures that generate the thought behind the meaning of *Dubliners*" (Pyeaam & Salimian, 2012, para. 4). Joyce's choice of words was definitely not random, what he meant through word selection goes beyond explicit interpretations as Kenner (1956) suggests,

Joyce was hardly more word-conscious than his characters were. So the usual criterion of style, that it disappears like glass before the reality of the subject, doesn't apply to his pages. The language of Dublin is the subject; his books are about words, the complexity is there, in the way people talk, and Joyce copes with it by making it impossible for us to ignore the word on the page (p. 12).

Clearly, Joyce does not intend to make language in *Dubliners* rudimentary or effortless to understand; his utmost objective, as Kenner implies, is to make his words more complex so that readers could come up with explicit interpretations and give meaning to every stated utterance with its implicit representation. For instance, when Maria in "Clay" recognizes her financial constraints, she would not mind spending all her money on an evening with the Donnelly's where she feels freer. More examples taken from "The Sisters" and "Two Gallants" that show what the characters say or do explicitly is merely a reflection of their implicit lack and crave for freedom are discussed further under "economic context".

Although Joyce does not consider extending beyond explicit meaning important to clarify his thoughts, he clearly "leaves his characters free to shift for themselves and allows the reader to peer into their every thought and action, the only authorial expectation being that readers are fully capable of making up their own minds about what they then see" (McBride, 2014, para. 9). Therefore, going beyond the obvious becomes more stimulating for those who seek to discover Joyce's implicit unknown messages. The context and the use of utterances within it is thus divided into two parts, social and economic, in order to prove that what characters say is also reflective of their status. Accordingly, a closer look at the relationship between utterances used in specific contexts clarifies the important linguistic role that these two components have.

## 2. UTTERANCE AND CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS

It is widely recognized that contextual elements play an important role in connecting the linguistic meaning of an utterance with the meaning that the author is trying to convey through his characters. The relationship between context and utterance is best described by Carston (2006) who considers that in certain contexts uttering simple sentences "will be sufficient [...] to get across one's intended meaning, while in another context, it will be necessary to encode a great deal more [...] to communicate essentially the same content" (p. 3). The situation in which an utterance is uttered can affect its

interpretation; however, the reader of *Dubliners* needs to focus not only on the external situation that led to that utterance, but also on what goes inside that character's mind which clearly Joyce presents through inner discourse or internal monologue. Eventually, the author's intention is to carry out different interpretations and to avoid limiting one's interpretation since "[it] was not Joyce's intention to have his work read or interpreted according to only one set of critical orthodoxies [...] the reader ought never be afraid to examine closely what may seem trivial details in order to arrive at some broader conclusion" (Shovlin, 2012, p. 18).

Additionally, Joyce offers his readers a personal insight when reading the stories even though his implicitly presented thoughts might seem satirical and judgmental at times, especially when dealing with colonialism and its effects. Vicki Mahaffey (2011) explains this further when she states that "although readers may feel that the effect of *Dubliners* is satiric, that is not its aim: it was designed, not to condemn its characters, but to expose the mechanisms of denial and dishonesty that prevent readers as well as characters from seeing themselves, and therefore others, clearly" (p.21). Thus, the reader's task is not so simple; it is for the reader to look at contextual clues and specifically those related to economic and social elements to understand the speaker's intentions.

One might be tempted to read the stories with merely explicit interpretations, as they are presented to us, while actually the most important ways to understand the interpretation or meaning in a language is to look at the effects of context on utterance. Interpretation as Davidson (2005) points out requires a kind of 'invention' created by both the reader and the author for "it is Joyce's extraordinary idea to raise the price of admission to the point where we are inclined to feel that almost as much is demanded of the reader as of the author" (p. 156). The context of a given speech or utterance serves in clarifying the author's implied messages but at the same time, this same context along with language can drive someone out of their own language and society through new forms of communication:

Joyce takes us back to the foundations and origins of communication; he puts us in the situation of the jungle linguist trying to get the hang of a new language and a novel culture, to assume the perspective of someone who is an alien or an exile. As we, listeners or readers, become familiar with the devices he has made us master, we find ourselves removed a certain distance from our own language, our usual selves, and our society. We join Joyce as outcasts, temporarily freed, or so it seems, from the nets of our language and our culture (Davidson, 2005, p. 157).

A new meaning can be formed if one gets to know the background under which it has been created and the context from which it has emerged. Similarly, given that there are different interpretations for a single utterance stated by



Dubliners, one should look closer at the context and the background of the information given by the author through them. The meaning which Dubliners intend to convey by means of what they say explicitly will fulfill the hearer's desires, but what they mean implicitly will create a huge gap.

If read explicitly and without scrutiny of language, context and words, Joyce's *Dubliners* is nothing but a mere depiction of Dublin's life as the author claims himself; however, if each utterance is studied according to its social and economic context, the stories' primary intention will be to further trigger decryption of explicit meanings, so that both the implicit and explicit, though different, may interact and affect our readings significantly. Based on such contexts, the reader will recognize that language can decolonize those who have the will to be free no matter their social status. It is through the power of language that some characters who dare to use it become linguistically independent. So, to prove that language is not limited to or restricted by class, context helps differentiate between upper class colonizers who assume their strength against the middle class colonized who believe in their right to be free and express so linguistically. When evaluated against contextual information, *Dubliners* illustrates the need to take various factors into consideration when examining the outcome of utterance interpretation. Indeed, an utterance takes into account many aspects that shape it such as social and economic contextual information which highly affect the outcome of decolonization. Accordingly, the contexts for the interpretation of utterances in *Dubliners* can include explanations, experiences and examples taken from the stories of the characters' financial and social status.

Social class and economic inequality become the main reasons for Dubliners' internal struggle. This leads on to Joyce's class distinction in *Dubliners* which shows a great variety in people's economic position and inequalities among them which are due to both political impositions on individuals and the country as a whole and can also be the result of individual factors. When it comes to political factors, some characters surrender to their current situation; however, when searching for opportunities beyond oppression, others will find their own ways of escape through hard work, incentive, exile and so forth. Nevertheless, economy will define some character's roles and will become an incentive for them to run away from their poverty. The following part examines the importance of economic context in both religious and social life which drives some Dubliners to express their dreams and potentials to achieve decolonization through language. Some were able to do so both linguistically and physically, while others stayed in Dublin and responded locally.

### **3. ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

The implicitness of the economic context that Joyce uses will show that those who suffer financially will find alternative means to ease their ordeals. Such ways will definitely evolve around language analysis to reveal what

words and utterances related to economy can entail in colonial contexts. Additional expressions that hold materialistic connotations and their use as the characters' decolonization means are further explained in Annex A under Economic Context. It is through dreams of escape, of a fireplace, of a family or simply a meal that characters can face their economic deterioration and express their needs through implicit and explicit language. Each reader of *Dubliners* will lean to some favorite interpretations of the stories; however, what readers are unfamiliar with is that, just like Joyce's characters, they are entrapped within the economic contextual backgrounds that the stories are founded on until, after utterances scrutiny, the implicitness of context becomes more explicit. For instance, in "The Sisters", Joyce's use of the word *simony*<sup>3</sup>, which he associates with the boy's fear of the priest's death, goes beyond catechism. In fact, if seen within an economic context, such a word would tempt an expectation for an ironic utterance. To know the implicit meaning of Joyce's words "the reader, like the boy, is impelled to seek a truth he can never find [...] words neither lead toward illumination nor can they be dismissed as meaningless" (Bloom, 1988, p.41). What the word *simony* entails in a religious context is supposed to be peaceful and fearless but paradoxically, it turns out to be the opposite when considering the boy's feelings in the following excerpt:

He had often said to me: 'I am not long for this world,' and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they were true. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work (*D* 3).

The function of the word *simony* here goes beyond explicit interpretation; the boy's longing to further think about and explore this word similarly meets Joyce's intentions to make his readers curious about its intended meaning. The reader is thus forced to look at the background and the context of the given information since language, as stated by Williams (1997),

"is not always what it seems." As a matter of fact, "Joyce's texts 'speak' politically, for the reader who is forced to stop and consider the function and positioning (or quite simply the meaning) of a word or phrase is potentially also being forced away from the text and

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<sup>3</sup> Simony: buying or selling of something spiritual or closely connected with the spiritual. More widely, it is any contract of this kind forbidden by divine or ecclesiastical law. The name is taken from Simon Magus (Acts 8:18), who endeavoured to buy from the Apostles the power of conferring the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Simony, in the form of buying holy orders, or church offices, was virtually unknown in the first three centuries of the Christian church, but it became familiar when the church had positions of wealth and influence to bestow. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/simony>



(ideally) to a consideration of the function of language in the latest historical moments” (p.87).

Accordingly, the Irish “historical moments” and the economic crisis that Ireland, as many colonized countries, went through reflect greatly the pessimistic interpretation of the word *simony*. In other words, while religion is meant to be supportive, Joyce uses the religious and economic contexts in such words to show poverty, hunger and the materialistic needs of people. This is highlighted through the use of such utterances which are meant to show the opposite of what they mean. Thus, economic context becomes an important feature to understand many utterances that may “sound strangely” for the characters, but in fact, are meant to be dissected by readers throughout the stories.

Intertwining between an economic context and religion here may seem peculiar since the former is purely materialistic while the latter is connected to virtuous deeds and yet Joyce decides to combine them. In choosing his words carefully, “Joyce drew on the language of the Catholic ritual he rejected so strongly” (Brown, 1992, p.3). Therefore, the boy’s use of the word *simony* reminds the Irish of the church’s preference for the commercialism over humanism which is also a reflection of colonialism’s main objective. Though the word *simony* seems perplexing for many, its use as Brown (1992) suggests is “[easy] to apply to the priest, since when he appears to the boy in a dream, it is a ‘simoniac’ that is described, begging to be absolved of his sins. Some kind of guilt at the implications of the Church’s purported transcendence over the commercial seems to be the point” (p. 10). Ultimately, the presence of such expressions in a particular context did not happen randomly and is definitely not meant for literal interpretations. In order to achieve decolonization, such forms are necessary to add up to the reasons why people rejected corrupt economic circumstances. In such a context, the ritual and its failure become an implicit representation of colonialism that drove people to search for decolonization.

Another economic contextual effect that reflects poverty and conditions of the destitute of characters is most starkly and more explicitly voiced in “Two Gallants”. Deprived economic conditions track the relationships of discontented characters, like Lenehan, with their situation and country. Having a meal for Dubliners could be something to boast about; Lenehan’s hunger and extreme satisfaction with food is evident when he stared at the food in the shop,

He paused at last before a window of a poor-looking shop [...] a cut ham was exposed on a great blue dish [...] He eyed this food earnestly [...] He was hungry for, except some biscuits [...] he had eaten nothing since breakfast time. He sat down [...] opposite two-work girls and a mechanic [...] How much is a plate of peas? he asked. ‘Three halfpence, sir,’ said the girl. ‘Bring me a plate of peas,’

he said, 'and a bottle of ginger beer.' [...] He ate his food greedily and found it so good that he made a note of the shop mentally (*D* 36-37).

Economic distress in this context shows that as Dubliners get to have meals occasionally, their satisfaction with the least is somehow exaggerated. This is merely to show that while people suffer financially, their life is greatly affected that one sees them wandering on the streets searching for hope. A plate of peas can be sufficient not only to satisfy Lenehan's hunger, but it also becomes a thing to boast about and which places him among people who are able to buy food like the two girls and the mechanic. Indeed, and unfortunately, buying food or having a meal for Dubliners becomes heroic which is also reflective of the colonial economic conflict where "the structural capabilities of the colonial power allowed it to penetrate and exploit those in the periphery; the gap between the haves and the have nots increased as the power asymmetry magnified relationships between the colonizer and the colonized" (Byrne, 2017, para. 4). Consequently, and in response to such economic inequalities, characters like Lenehan were urged to find alternatives to what they lack and implicitly reject their colonial life.

Moreover, Lenehan reflects through his inner discourse and implicit words the aforementioned economic conditions when "[a] vision made him feel keenly the poverty of his purse and spirit [...] would he never have a home of his own?" (*D* 37). A close analysis of Lenehan's state of mind and what he avows implicitly detects uncertainties and makes what is implicit clearly explicit. What Joyce is trying to show here is that in his characters' lives poverty prevails and they just feel better when they can eat their fill, as Lenehan: "felt better after having eaten than he had felt before, less weary of his life, less vanquished in spirit" (*D* 37).

Although Joyce does not show explicitly Lenehan's incapacities, when compared to his fellow Corley and with the exposition of his thoughts and hopes, his economic condition becomes clearer through inner discourse to the reader. The importance, therefore, remains in Joyce's linguistic attentiveness and his meticulous choice of words in addition to social and individual linguistic aspects which Saussure (1983) describes as, "[language] has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the other" (p.10). Hence, Joyce's language portrays the individuality of his characters and reflects the social aspects as well; both needed to produce complete meaning. Accordingly, Lenehan's situation is similar to many other characters whose economic conditions control their life and whose simple dream is to have a house and a meal to satisfy their body and soul.

While Lenehan in "Two Gallants" represents the controlled self-defeated Dubliner, Joyce implies that weakness can result from such economic conditions and a quite meek satisfaction resides in people's basic right, "food". Although Joyce, through his characters, may seem to say little, part

of his narrative technique consists of delivering small pieces of information which are evocative enough to illustrate his intended meaning, therefore the reader can shape his own images with the accumulation of almost insignificant references. The author was actually accused of being economic in his words which, according to Booker (2000), is a reflection of *Dubliners*' continuous but short conversations since "Joyce's *Dubliners* talk constantly but say little, mouthing mostly clichés" (p. 62). Commodification and the reduction of language use goes beyond explicit representations. Economy for Joyce is double-edged producing double interpretations; first, saying little but meaning more becomes one vital technique to go beyond mere explicit utterances and second, conciseness is also symbolic of the missing and the absence of substantial economic conditions in Dublin's life.

Among other stories that explore the severe life conditions portrayed through an economic context is that of "Clay". In this story, Maria, the main character, represents the economic calamity that Dublin suffered from through what she says and does. Actually, it is through Maria's size and job that the reader gets to interpret her situation within an economic context. Describing Maria as "very, very small and talking a little" is merely representative of the lack of prosperity in Ireland, and her job in the laundry also reflects her constant shortage of money. Maria is so conscious about how much money she has for she preplans on how to spend it when she goes to the Donnelly's. Accordingly, it is important to note here that the characters' implicit fear related to financial status and how much they earned can best be described in Mahaffey's (2011) definition of the word "economy"

The word economy derives from the Greek *oikos* (house) and *nemein* (control); it therefore designates quite literally a form of "home rule," [...] The first meaning of economy is management of a house, especially with regard to household expenses [...] As individuals, there is no need for economy in everything we do: the reckless waste of resources may mean not only bankruptcy, but dissipation of energy and even life (p.21).

This connection between economy and the "reckless waste of resources" made characters like Maria more conscious about where and when to spend their money and to appreciate more what they possess. Maria was "very fond of that purse [and] in the purse were two half-crowns and some coppers. She would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare" (*D* 66). Joyce points to economy in this description as an important factor to understand what his characters are going through covertly. Moreover, owning something becomes as significant, when seen from a wider economic context, as losing it at some point, and this is evident in one unfortunate incident that Maria faced after she reached the Donnelly's house.

After buying the surprise plum cake for Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly, Maria realizes that she has left it behind. "At the thought of the failure of her little surprise

and of the two and four-pence she had thrown away for nothing she nearly cried outright” (D 69). Not only did she lose the cake and ruined the surprise, Maria also realized how much the cake cost her and implicitly expressed her loss through sadness and nearly through weeping.

Maria considers herself an independent woman having her own job and always “thought how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket” (D 68). Explicitly, this is merely an overt interpretation of what Joyce offers here; independence to many Dubliners can be achieved financially; however, since Maria owns very little, her financial status cannot be considered as that of an independent character with limited assets.

The aforementioned short stories and many others exceed considerably the explicit interpretation of characters and events; it is through context and contextual clues that the reader gets to know Joyce’s conscious concealed representations of those oppressed characters through economic or even social class context. This is to prove again that decolonization can be highly dependent on language and its many forms related to utterances based on contextual effects. Context remains after all, a disguise for Dubliners in order to achieve linguistic decolonization and to free themselves of any domineering force through that very same language that Joyce embeds in their mind implicitly or for the readers to make explicit through different contexts. What follows is another thorough examination of social context through which characters of different social classes reflect the colonized and the colonizer’s roles’ differences which force the colonized to reject the idea of decolonization’s eligibility based on status or occupation.

#### 4. SOCIAL CONTEXT

Many people tend to think that the colonizers belong to the upper classes and the colonized to the lower classes. Conversely, in *Dubliners*, language shows that such perception is not a fixed one and that language as a decolonial means is not restricted to or limited by social class or certain occupations (See Annex B for Social Context and for additional interpretation of the characters’ social status and its implicit significance). Joyce’s presentation of social class in Dublin mostly focuses on middle class families, which Joyce belonged to, like in the story “Araby”, in comparison to stories that depict the upper class like “The Dead”, while the lower or poor class often serves as background like in “A Little Cloud”. Social context and background, as presented in *Dubliners*, examine the characters’ common subjugation despite their different social classes. Perhaps the context of social class in Dublin can best be revealed through Joyce’s experience and attitudes toward middle class affairs. In a letter to his wife Nora, Joyce puts his relationship with home and social class as the following:

How could I like the idea of home? My home was simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits which I have inherited. My

mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father's ill-treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked on her face as she lay in her coffin – a face grey and wasted with cancer – I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim and I cursed the system which had made her a victim (qtd. in Seidel, 2002, p.42).

Frequently in *Dubliners*, Joyce signals to readers that there is a need to associate characters' life and utterances with the social class context he has in mind. This does not only reflect the author's rejection of his current situation as he stated in his letter; class insulence does not show differences but rather how *Dubliners* can be equally imprisoned in them.

In the light of Joyce's social class contextual elements, the (middle class) boy in "Araby" seems to display experiences of social class difference, which he is unaware of, when he falls in love with Mangan's sister (upper class), a love he thinks might free him. Dreams of escape occur to the boy through his innocent love of a girl to whom he promises to get a gift from the bazaar, in an attempt to fulfill his desire of escape or decolonization on a wider scale. Social class difference in this short story "stand[s] in sharp opposition with the echoes of a romantic quest [...]. The romantic quest as an emancipation is an escape from Dublin's harsh reality" (Pyeam & Salimian, 2012, para. 7). Explicitly, the story envisions a simple display of a childish love while when seen through a social context, implicit interpretations reveal the harshness of the social order especially when the boy's quest ends in failing to bring the girl a gift from the bazaar.

Joyce implies through his description of the girl that social class differences can be explicitly perceived through physical look and behavior,

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, [...] She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease" (*D* 18-19).

Through the physical description of the girl, the reader gets to know the implicit depiction of social class. Despite his extreme ignorance of that difference, the boy's utterances seem to make Joyce's implications easier to interpret when the boy says "all my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times" (*D* 18). Covering what the boy feels is a product of societal conventions that prohibit him, though implicitly, from reaching his goals. Similarly, the same social limitations can be perceived when the boy states "I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play"

(D 19). Following this statement, another utterance appears to mark the boy's struggle in reaching his goals. He apparently does not take things seriously for when he does, life seems to treat him unfairly and will stand between him and his love. Accordingly, Joyce reminds us that what society imposes on Dubliners can never be achieved through their disillusionment or indifference. The characters' linguistic attempts to escape which are shaped and controlled by contextual effects become important factors to overcome the limitations of social conditions and achieve decolonization.

"The Dead" opens the way again to social class context through the character of Gabriel Conroy and Lily. Through Gabriel and Lily's conversations, Joyce makes it quite clear that the upper class dominates the middle or working class similarly like the oppressor controls the oppressed. Though implicitly stated, social status clash can be perceived clearly when Lily shows anxiety and excitement at the same time while waiting for Conroy's arrival:

Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also (D 122).

With the focus on Lily's occupation, and taken within the context of social class, the above excerpt presents how occupations are also class-based. As a caretaker, Lily's job indicates that she belongs to the working class who, implicitly, will be satisfied serving someone of a different class for whom she waits impatiently. With the appearance of Gabriel, Joyce puts forth a display of class distinction and of the existing hierarchy in Irish society. As a matter of class exploitation, the following conversation between Gabriel and Lily shows the relationship of working/upper class as one of constant conflict in which the duty of the upper class is to maintain implicitly power over lower class.

'Tell me, Lily,' he said in a friendly tone, 'do you still go to school?' 'O no, sir,' she answered. 'I'm done schooling this year and more.' 'O, then,' said Gabriel gaily, 'I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?' The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness: "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.' [...] Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket. 'O Lily,' he said, thrusting it into her hands, 'it's Christmas-time, isn't it? Just...here's a little...' [...] 'O no, sir!' cried the girl, following him. 'Really, sir, I wouldn't take it.' 'Christmas-time! Christmas-time!' said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in depreciation (D 124).

In staging the conversation between two characters from different social classes, Joyce makes it clear that for the working class, education becomes



secondary and that characters earn their position through occupation or probably escape their ordeals by getting married. Some girls' only means of escape is through marriage to which Lily responds "I am done schooling" followed by Gabriel's "I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?" (*D* 123). Either a maid or a wife can be Lily's escape which both define her social status and her means of escape as well. *Dubliners'* struggle, therefore, is that of a search for a good job that shapes their social status but, unfortunately, limit their capabilities. In other words, Joyce's characters lack the freedom of choice when they are confined in a certain social class that they cannot escape or change. Lily's self-improvement through education is discouraged and Gabriel encourages her to get married (the only salvation for her status).

Furthermore, Gabriel is eager to distinguish himself according to his social class, he does so by offering money to Lily as a Christmas gift which also shows his financial superiority. However, Lily's effort to return the money 'O no, sir!' 'Really, sir, I wouldn't take it' shows through Joyce's contextual effects that the working class can earn distinction through work and maybe achieve individual independence. This can also be significant when the reader perceives it as a master/worker relationship where the real oppressed turns out to be, surprisingly, the master whose actions are sometimes rejected; 'Christmas-time! Christmas-time!' said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in depreciation (*D* 124). Eventually, social class context and Joyce's interest in it are not so simple to reveal and can be completed through the reader's awareness of the characters' social status according to occupation, education and many more factors.

As a matter of fact, an individual's social place in Joyce's *Dubliners* depends highly on his social status, those with a poor rank worked hard to survive their harsh reality. Chandler's life in "A Little Cloud" reflects the unfortunate's when he compares his own situation to his friend Gallaher's, who obviously leads a better and wealthier lifestyle beyond Dublin's borders. Chandler's poverty is also projected in the background description of the story. It is fascinating how Joyce uses language even indirectly to reflect his characters' situations implicitly; the author also depicts poverty and the lower social class in the following scene

[As Chandler] walked swiftly down Henrietta Street. The golden sunset was waning and the air had grown sharp. A horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the thresholds. Little Chandler gave them no thought. He picked his way deftly through all that minute vermin-like life and under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in which the old nobility of Dublin had roystered (*D* 47).

Poverty prevails in this story not only through Chandler's own life but also through Joyce's description of those poor children invading the streets like "squatted mice", a scene that seems ordinary and familiar to Chandler for he shows neither sympathy nor concern to it when he gave those children "no thought". While such scenes become easy to perceive on the streets representing the standardized reality of everyday life, Ingersoll (1993) points out that "these details of Chandler's appearance and his milieu are metonymic<sup>4</sup> representations of the world in which by the end of this narrative Chandler feels himself 'a prisoner for life' [and] it is from such a world that poetry, or even Gallaher's writing, promises 'escape' if he can find the means of 'traveling'" (p.117). Those metonymical glimpses of poverty that may be unnoticed by some readers in the stories serve in fact as a solid context for scrutiny of the social life in Dublin. Contextual effects of social class function here as Joyce's attempt to show the relation between the characters' current class state and the desire to change it.

Class proved vital as a means by which the Irish social class identifies its individuality through Joyce's combination of these classes, "[Dubliners] are neither the idealized peasantries nor the leisured ascendancy class typical of nineteenth-century Irish fiction nor the war-torn urban proletariat O'Casey's Dublin" (Brown, 1992, p.4). Taking Brown's point further, it is interesting to notice the presence of a variety of social classes through Joyce's characters and the effort that the author makes to associate those class differences with Dubliners' perception of their life and current situation: a life they tend to escape through the language they use within that social context.

## CONCLUSION

Economic and social contexts offer a valuable context for understanding the background behind each utterance stated by Dubliners. Additionally, and within a more political context that predominates many of the stories, characters continue to battle the impediments of a colonial past through words and actions that reflect their economic and social status but do not necessarily limit their potentials. Consequently, Joyce offers a lucid description of the different classes that lie between the intentions of some characters to give in to that social and financial order and those who attempt to escape it and achieve decolonization.

Ultimately, when tracing the economic and social contextual effects, it becomes clear that Joyce's language in *Dubliners* goes beyond the mere presentation of the Irish daily life and that Dubliners mean a lot more than what they simply say. Language in these stories is implicitly loaded with concepts

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<sup>4</sup> A figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (such as "crown" in "lands belonging to the crown") (Merriam Webster. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metonymy>).

of decolonization (freedom, rebellion, autonomy, social and economic equality) through different forms but most importantly through language that describes the relationship between the characters' finance and their social ranks. Economic and social facts of many characters, therefore, are also reflective of their constant attempts to achieve linguistic decolonization. *Dubliners* eventually know their financial capabilities but do not surrender to their ordeals and believe that language is an equal right for everyone who wants to lead a decolonized life. Even though such contexts may offer explicit evidence of the characters' status, their implicit efforts to become as autonomous as those who belong to upper class prove that language is both socially and economically unrestricted.

Finally, language suggests that its power lies equally in what is stated and what is also covert. Hence, while context (economic or social) becomes one of the linguistic paths towards decolonization, other forms of language that are found in *Dubliners* may also lead to similar outcomes. Further investigations possibly based on more literary elements will serve as a continuous incentive to reveal the importance of language as a decolonial means.

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## Annex A

### Economic Context

This annex highlights the economic context of characters in the different stories of the book and explains their financial status in relation to their success or failure in achieving decolonization. The highlighted stories are further analyzed in the article.

Story	Explicit Financial Expressions	Implicit Interpretations
The Sisters	Simony	Expressing the church's implicit economic corruption from which the boy tries to escape and achieve decolonization
Araby	"Can't you give him money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is" ( <i>D</i> 20).	The boy's financial dependence on his uncle limits his potentials and decisions. His only means of escape is by reaching the bazaar which eventually cannot be done without money.
Two Gallants	"He was hungry [...] he had eaten nothing since breakfast time [...] [he felt] keenly his own poverty of purse" ( <i>D</i> 36, 37).	Lenehan's poverty reflects his lower status and expresses his need for financial decolonization which for him can be attained simply by having a home and a meal.
A little Cloud	"He felt how useless it was to struggle against fortune [...] children populated the street [...] like mice upon the thresholds" ( <i>D</i> 46, 47).	Both Chandler and the scene he passes by seem to belong to the poverty of the Irish society. Such scenes inspire characters to hope for better lives and Chandler does so linguistically when dreaming of achieving escape like his friend Gallaher.
Eveline	"the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably" ( <i>D</i> 23).	Eveline's financial fears also forced her to look for better alternatives and to hope for a decolonized life achieved with Frank abroad.
Clay	"In the purse were two half-crowns and some coppers. She would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare" ( <i>D</i> 66).	Maria's meticulous calculations also reflect her limited cash which she prefers to spend in her quest for a better life (at the Donnelly's).



## Annex B

### Social Context

This table explains the relationship between colonized and colonizer based on the former's lower and the latter's upper class. It also highlights the implicit significance of the selected social class. The highlighted stories are further analyzed in the article.

Story	Social Status/ Occupation	Implicit Class Significance
Araby	The boy (of lower class) Mangan's sister (of upper class)	The conflict takes place between the boy and the girl that he tries to impress just like a colonized trying to please his colonizer.
The Boarding House	Doran "had money enough to settle down on" Polly "her disreputable father and then her mother's boarding house was beginning to get a certain fame" (D 23).	Although Doran's social status is superior to that of Polly, it will prove that her mother, Mrs. Mooney (of lower class) is more powerful in taking decisions on his behalf.
Counterparts	Farrington (the employee) Mr. Alleyne (the boss)	Trying to constantly offend Farrington, Mr. Alleyne forces his employee to explicitly respond and reject his colonization ignoring the social differences.
A Little Cloud	Chandler (a poor clerk) Gallaher (a successful London journalist)	Status disparages Chandler who tries to respond to his friend's arrogance implicitly by criticizing his bad habits to supersede his success.
The Dead	Gabriel Conroy (a successful university teacher and a writer) Lily (the housemaid).	Gabriel highlights Lily's lower class when giving her some money as a gift which she tried to give back but failed to do so. Based on social class difference, the scene is typically similar to that of colonized/colonizer and relationship and class-based occupations.

