

Journal 2

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Reflection on *Dubliners*

MR. JAMES DUFFY lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all the other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern and pretentious.

The first sentence of the story *A Painful Case* reflects Mr. James Duffy's complex relationship with his identity as a "Dubliner". Being a Dubliner implies a certain cultural and social affiliation with the city, its system, its people, and its way of life. However, Duffy's decision to live as far away as possible from the city suggests a deliberate detachment from the typical Dubliner lifestyle which he criticizes as mean, modern and pretentious. This spatial distance becomes symbolic of his emotional and psychological distance from the societal expectations and norms associated with being a Dubliner. What's more interesting is his decision to remain within the Dublin area while choosing a location like Chapelizod, the suburb of city, the margin of city. Despite seeking a physical separation from the center of the city, Duffy does not completely sever ties with Dublin. It seems to me that this choice indicates a desire for a middle ground - a place that allows him to maintain a connection with the urban and cultural aspects of Dublin while still enjoying a certain degree of isolation and distance. It reflects his attempt to navigate a balance between his need for solitude and his acknowledgment of the city as a part of his identity, ultimately choosing a compromise by residing in a suburb that aligns more with his preferences and values. And this kind of "middle ground" and "compromise" also foreshadows Duffy's relationship with Mrs. Sinico. His choice of living mirrors his approach to intimate relationships (this way of writing is very brilliant, which is also a reason why I like this story so much!). Duffy's romantic entanglement with Mrs. Sinico involves a delicate balance as well - a compromise between his desire for emotional connection and his inclination towards a more reserved and detached lifestyle. It seems to me that this is the fundamental reason of his loneliness.

[...]as he attached the fervent nature of his companion more and more closely to him, he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognised as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own.