

# A Cultural Ecological Approach to Sustainable Textuality in James Joyce's *Dubliners*

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## ABSTRACT:

*This paper examines ecological and communicative aesthetics in James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) to argue that *Dubliners* is not just a literary work but a sustainable ecocultural form. It represents the aesthetics of ecology and communication, as per Hubert Zapf's conceptual framework of the cultural ecological paradigm. This framework focuses on the interrelationships between nature and culture as a resource of literary creativity and production. To support this argument, the paper draws on Zapf's ideas of communication and ecology as features of culturally sustainable practices and his tools for discovering these practices, such as the triadic functional model of literature as a force of cultural ecology and the transdisciplinary contexts of a literary ecology, such as the biophilic atmosphere. The importance of this exploration lies in Joyce's contribution to sustainable textuality as an aspect of cultural sustainability, in its challenge to ideas such as "Art for Art Sake", and in its reading of the short story genre as a mode of sustainability and *Dubliners* as a model of the relationship between literature and sustainability.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Dubliners, Hubert Zapf, sustainable textuality, triadic functional model of literature, communication and ecological aesthetics*

## Un Enfoque de Ecología Cultural para la Textualidad Sostenible en *Dublineses* de James Joyce

### RESUMEN:

*Este estudio analiza la ecología y la estética de la comunicación en Dublineses de James Joyce para comprender su función en la representación de modelos autorreflexivos a largo plazo de complejidad semiótica eco/bio y en la búsqueda de sostenibilidad en los personajes de Dublín. Se argumenta que Dublineses constituye una forma cultural sostenible en términos de la estética de la ecología y la comunicación, basándose en el marco conceptual de Hubert Zapf sobre el paradigma de la ecología cultural, que se centra en las interrelaciones entre la naturaleza y la cultura como recurso para la creatividad y la producción literaria. Para ello, se exploran las ideas de Zapf sobre la comunicación y la ecología como características de prácticas culturales sostenibles, así como sus herramientas para descubrir dichas prácticas, como el modelo funcional triádico de la literatura como una fuerza de la ecología cultural y los contextos transdisciplinarios de una ecología literaria, como la atmósfera biofílica. La importancia de analizar esta estética de comunicación y ecología radica en su contribución a la textualidad sostenible como parte de la sostenibilidad cultural, desafiando ideas como 'El arte por el arte' y leyendo el género del relato corto como un modo de sostenibilidad, y Dublineses como un modelo de la relación entre literatura y sostenibilidad.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Dublineses, Hubert Zapf, textualidad sostenible, modelo funcional triádico de literatura, estética de la comunicación y la ecología.*

### 1. Introduction

Within a broader society, the fundamental components of sustainability are commonly understood to encompass the environment, economics, and society, while culture is typically excluded from this framework. Ulrich Grober and Cunningham R.'s *Sustainability: A Cultural History* (2012) represents one of the few surveys exploring the cultural components of sustainability. This book provides valuable perspectives on the extensive, yet often underappreciated, historical background of sustainable thought that predates the contemporary discourse on sustainability. Furthermore, promoting cultural sustainability constitutes a key objective within the operational framework of Culture Ire-

land's forthcoming plan for 2022–2025. This initiative primarily centres on the global promotion of Irish arts, considering current global developments and the growing significance of global cultural ties. Its objective is to expand the reach of modern Irish artists to a larger international audience. (Gov.Ie, New Culture Ireland Strategy 2022-2025 to Bring Contemporary Irish Arts to an Increased Worldwide Audience, n.d.).

Cultural ecology and sustainability are strongly interconnected. Cultural ecology focuses on the intricate dynamics between human civilizations and their surrounding environment, particularly on fostering sustainable modes of interaction. In ecocriticism, the shift from natural ecology to cultural ecology effectively uncovers imaginative literature as an ecological force within the broader framework of cultural discourses and as a form of "sustainable textuality". In this respect, Zapf posits a robust thesis statement about literary art as a manifestation of sustainable aesthetic and textual culture (2016b, pp. 21–22). Drawing upon his theory of literature as an ecological force and his methodology of cultural ecology as a transdisciplinary context, Zapf presents communication aesthetics as sustainable practices embedded within literary texts. In this way, literary aesthetics of communication serve as a platform and conduit for sustainable textuality.

Joyce, a prominent figure in modernist literature, was undoubtedly inspired by the cultural trends of his era, such as the Celtic Revival, and he deliberately maintained a discerning detachment from the movement. His works reflect a nuanced and complex engagement with his time's cultural and political issues. Therefore, his relationship with the Celtic Revival was one of both influence and critique. *Dubliners* is a collection of fifteen short stories set during the rise of Irish Nationalism when Ireland sought independence from Great Britain. This historical and political context permeates Joyce's writing, adding another layer of depth to the stories. In *Dubliners*, his critique of the Celtic revival could be exemplified by associating who speaks about Oscar Wilde with decay, as in "An Encounter."

The primary inquiry addressed in this paper pertains to how the ecological aesthetics of interconnectivity, transformation, and evolution as observed in Joyce's *Dubliners*, generate manifestations of communication aesthetics. This analysis is conducted within Zapf's concept of cultural ecology and methodology, which posits literature to promote sustainable textuality.

## 2. Review of Literature

To discuss *Dubliners* as a sustainable text from an ecocultural perspective, previous studies about the dynamic concept of cultural ecology, imaginative literature as a liminal space, the triadic functional model, literature and sustainability, and the ecocritical representation in Joyce's selected work must be highlighted.

The dynamic concept of cultural ecology aligns with the notion of sustainability, discussed in John P. O'Grady's paper "How Sustainable is the Idea of Sustainability?" (2003). In this paper, O'Grady critically examines the prevailing emphasis on economic development and the scientific approach to achieving sustainability. According to O'Grady, the true nature of life and the natural world is not defined by a state of unchanging stability but by perpetual transformation. This is due to the inherent fluidity and ongoing flux within all entities. In this respect, O'Grady's assertion of sustainability as not a static construct, defined content, or prescribed curriculum but rather an evolving objective, a distant aspiration that cannot be permanently attained (2003), highlights Scott Slovic's insistence on the importance of integrating environmental humanities and social sciences with natural sciences in discussing environmental studies (2012).

In cultural studies, nature is a peculiar hybrid category in a liminal space between text and life. It embodies both realist notions and discursive constructs. In creating this liminal space, the power of imagination exists as a transformative force (Zapf, 2012). In a scholarly review of Zapf's triadic functional model that offers literature as cultural ecology, the reviewer elucidates the concept of imaginative literature as a potent ecological force ca-

pable of generating “counter-discourses” that question prevailing unsustainable societal and economic systems. Consequently, it can function as a “medium of radical civilizational critique” (Salovaara, 2017, p. 222). Furthermore, it provides an imaginative space for repressed life energies to articulate themselves (Meklash, 2023).

In this regard, Zapf’s triadic functional model includes three related discourses: cultural-critical metadiscourse, imaginative counter-discourse, and reintegrative discourse (Zapf, 2016b). The first discourse exposes the traumatizing implications of dominant civilization, the second foregrounds the culturally excluded and marginalized symbolically, and the third combines the two discourses as a way of cultural self-renewal. This model, which highlights literature as a sustainable text aligns with Grober’s notion of sustainability (2012), which posits that sustainability emerges from moments of crisis and fosters a heightened awareness of the need to preserve and maintain our planet for future generations, and presents this notion of sustainability, with its distinct functions of deconstruction, transformation/translation, and self-renewal/rebuilding. Besides, these discourses of this model are used to achieve the functions above. In the chapter “Triadic Functional Models of Literature as Cultural Ecology: Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Chopin’s *The Awakening*, Faulkner’s *The Sound and The Fury*, Morrison’s *Beloved*”, Zapf elucidates that this model places significant emphasis on the role of human agency and interpretative activity. This emphasis, however, tends to overlook the systemic dimensions of these interpretations within the broader sociohistorical collectives and discursive formations in which they are situated (Zapf, 2016b)

The connection between sustainability, literary texts, and the transdisciplinary context has yet to be explored thus far. Sustainability has been the focus of a special edition of *American Literary History* (2012). This issue explores the concept of sustainability through various articles that discuss different subjects, including

the relationship between the humanities and the sciences (Philippon 2012). Moreover, the literature by indigenous authors explores the connection between sustainability and environmental justice through the lens of “indigenous cosmopolitics” (Adamson, 2012, p. 146). Furthermore, Jennifer C. James (2012) examines the critical socioeconomic context of sustainability, emphasising the intertwined aspects of race and labour. Michael Newbury (2012) investigates the non-linear modes of imaginative representation of food discourse in film and popular media. Susan Scott Parrish examines the environmental-historical subtext of Faulkner’s novel *The Sound and the Fury*, focusing on the disruptive weather and water conditions depicted in the narrative. In addition, exploratory articles delve into the discourses around sustainability and the various interpretations of sustainability found within different literary works (Johns-Putra et al., 2017).

The works by Joyce are now widely recognised for examining the interconnectedness between the physical, social, economic, and spiritual aspects of urban Dublin and its surrounding areas. In the foreword to the recently published *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, Anne Fogarty highlights the significance of Joyce’s “programmatically urbanism” in emphasising the “anti-pastoral elements of ‘dear dirty Dublin’” (Brazeau & Gladwin, 2014, p. xv). The concept of “anti-pastoral”, as introduced by Raymond Williams in his work *The Country and The City* (1975), refers to a genre of literature that rectifies the perceived misrepresentations inherent in the pastoral tradition. According to Terry Gifford, anti-pastoral works portray the authentic depiction of rural life and emphasise the ethical obligations associated with pastoral responsibilities (22). Joyce’s work incorporates a post-pastoral mode, as Gifford identified, which challenges the dichotomy between humans and nature. This mode also highlights the intricate and multifaceted relationships between humans and their urban surroundings in Dublin (26). Moreover, Fogarty’s perspective on Joyce’s literary works as a means of rectifying the pastoral tradition serves as a pivotal

aspect for examining the issues of urban ecology inside *Dubliners*. In a letter to the publisher Grant Richards, Joyce explains that his intention of writing *Dubliners* is a “moral history of [his] country” (Scholes, 1963, p. 146) and explicitly identifies Dublin as “the centre of paralysis” (Scholes, 1963, p. 146). The book *Joyce’s Blindness: An Urban Ecocritical Study of Dubliners and More* is concerned with the urban ecology of Dublin and the exploitation of its poor (Kelly, 2017).

The viewpoints mentioned earlier exhibit significant potential for the advancement of ecocritical theory. Nevertheless, these initial measures primarily address thematic concerns and environmental subject matters rather than delving into artistic and literary aesthetics as a platform for fostering cultural sustainability. Besides, the general concept of cultural ecology comprises other ecologies, such as political ecology, urban ecology or literary ecology. However, these two recent studies on James Joyce’s work focus on *Dubliners*’ urban ecology from the perspective of urban ecocriticism, the Chicago School and the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research methodologies, and their approaches to studying modern cities, respectively. These two recent studies can be categorised as models of social sustainability in Dublin. However, the present study focuses on literary ecology and communication aesthetics as modes of sustainable textuality in Joyce’s work.

### 3. Methodology and Materials

Zapf’s approach to literature as textual energy of ecological and communicative potentials, his triadic functional model and his concern with other ecologies, such as Gernot Böhme’s cultural ecology of the body and his concept of the atmosphere, as a transdisciplinary context of literary ecology, is used as a theoretical and conceptual framework for their relation to the question of sustainable practices in the narrative structure of *Dubliners* and in three selected short stories, “The Dead”, “Eveline”, and “An Encounter”. The selection of these short stories highlights various manifestations of literary aesthetics, such as epiphany,

stream of consciousness, and allusions as well as ecological and communicative aesthetics, such as life cycles, biophilic energy, and elementary forces. As for life cycles, the selected narratives are examples of four distinct chronological categories, as Joyce delineates, encompassing childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. As for biophilic energy and elementary forces, each selected narrative highlights the motifs of paralysis, adventure, and decay as manifestations of the outcomes of the paralysing life of urban Dublin. Thus, "An Encounter" is an example of childhood and the conflict between tradition and modernity, "Eveline" is an example of adolescence and the decision of adventure, and "The Dead" is an example of maturity and evaluating the experience of adventure. Moreover, these three short stories present their characters' different ways of practising communicative and ecological aesthetics, reflecting how Joyce contributes to presenting *Dubliners* as a model of sustainable textuality.

#### 4. Discussion

##### *4.1 A Long-Term Self-Reflexive Model of Eco-semiotic Complexity*

The self-reflexive model can be considered a form of communication as it demonstrates the interconnectedness between individuals and their environment. According to Zapf (2016b), the literary ecology presents dual paradoxical functions of deconstruction and rebuilding. These functions correlate with the transformational and translational forces within the cultural ecology of literature. Furthermore, including the imaginative dimension is crucial to understanding these dynamics. When the literary text assumes the role of a transformative force, it undergoes a metamorphosis into an abstract realm, employing ecological and communicative aesthetics to scrutinise a broader cultural framework. Ecological aesthetics serves as an imaginative counter-discourse, manifested through a self-reflective model of eco-semiotic interconnectedness, thereby establishing a sustainable textual medium for communication.

In Joyce's *Dubliners*, metadiscourse serves as a means of criticizing the marginalisation of biophilic energies and the aesthetic experiences associated with communication and ecology within the moral history of urban Dublin. Furthermore, within the context of Joyce's *Dubliners*, the city of Dublin serves as a conceptual realm that elicits a profound aesthetic encounter with notions of interconnectedness and interpersonal exchange. These concepts align with the discourse of ecocultural sustainability and anticipate the intricate patterns of relationships depicted in *Dubliners*. The textuality of *Dubliners* can be seen as sustainable, echoing the complex nature of natural and cultural processes within an ecocultural system. For example, "The Dead" establishes an imagined realm where nature and the fictional character converge, generating a perpetually replenishing source of creativity through the dynamic interplay between natural and cultural ecosystems.

In Joyce's short story "The Dead", Zapf's triadic functional model is utilised to revise and rectify the sensory and aesthetic perceptions of the snowfall within Gabriel Conroy's mind. From his perspective, the issue is perceived as problematic and debilitating, lacking introspection and effective communication. In the chapter titled "Literature and Sustainability", Zapf elucidates that literature, when seen through a functional lens, reestablishes the link between cultural elements and the biophilic aspects of human existence, facilitating an ongoing rejuvenation process. Communication aesthetics can be understood as originating from literary texts that function as dynamic spaces for discourse, characterised by a high energy level. This energy is derived from the reciprocal interaction between natural and cultural systems, resulting in a constant renewal of creativity. Gabriel Conroy's epiphany can be understood as an energy of imaginative resistance against the marginalisation of sensory experiences. The reintegrative interdiscourse is seen in Conroy's process of self-renewal. In the denouement of the "Dead", Conroy attains an awareness of the nature of affection between Gretta and her

deceased paramour. Conroy posits that the sentiment above can be identified as love. He explains that “such a feeling must be love” (1917, p. 202).

#### *4.2. Literary and Ecology Aesthetics: The Narrative Structure of Dubliners and the Structure of Life Cycles*

Adopting an ecological perspective necessitates a shift in the perceptual framework through which we understand the world and our existence (Kegan, 1982). At the heart of this transformation is a change in emphasis, wherein there is a departure from self-centred and human-centred thinking (individuality) in favour of incorporating notions of unity, consciousness, and comprehensive understanding (interdependence). According to Mark DeKay (2011), the cognitive challenge at hand is not a simple one but a component of our evolving human capacity.

The narrative structure of *Dubliners* can be considered a structure that embodies the principles of ecological thinking. In Joyce’s short stories, some tropes exhibit a cyclical and evolving pattern akin to that observed in natural ecosystems. For example, blood circulates as a recurrent trope in the collection, linked significantly to desire and language, respectively: the name of Mangan’s sister acts “like a summons to all [the narrator’s] foolish blood” in “Araby” (Pietrzak & Widger, 2008, p. 13) and the concluding section of “The Dead” showcases Gabriel’s longing through rhythmic metaphors that pulsate: “The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous” (1917, p. 192), and “[The]thin stream of blood trickl[ing] from the corner of [Kernan’s] mouth” forms a “dark medal” on the floor in “Grace”(1917, p. 129). Besides, the concept of circulation regulates the overall symbolic economy of the collection. It has been frequently observed that the titles of the initial and final stories, namely “The Sisters” and “The Dead,” may be interchanged. However, the cyclical structure of commencing and concluding is much more remarkable: the narrative of *Dubliners* begins with a little kid directing his gaze towards

an illuminated window, seeking confirmation of the demise of the elderly clergyman, and culminates with a mature individual peering out of a dimmed window, engrossed in the contemplation of a deceased young person. In furtherance of the prevailing theme of circularity, it is noteworthy that several characters from Joyce's *Dubliners*, such as Lenehan and Corley, reappear in his later work, *Ulysses*. Similarly, the character Kathleen Kearney from the short story "A Mother" is reintroduced in the concluding story "The Dead". Moreover, a multitude of significant themes and motifs that were previously explored resurface towards the end, exemplified by Lily's acerbic response to Gabriel's light-hearted conversation about marriage: "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (1917, p. 158).

Furthermore, in *Dubliners*, Joyce imitates the human life cycle and the evolutionary process of the ecosystem and translates them into aesthetic textual forms through the divisions of the short stories into stages of human life. This is achieved by the strategic organisation of the stories, divided into distinct stages that mirror the many phases of human existence. The representation of the stages of human life can be observed inside the inner structure of Joyce's literary work, *Dubliners*. Several studies, such as Sangam MacDuff's "Scrupulous Meanness," Joyce's Gift, and the Symbolic Economy of *Dubliners*" (1906), have demonstrated *Dubliners* to have an organised inner structure. The narratives are organised into four distinct chronological categories, as Joyce delineates, encompassing childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. Each type prominently features the motif of paralysis as a prevailing symbol. The 1905 edition exhibited a notable degree of symmetry, featuring an initial triad of narratives centred around individual children ("The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby"), followed by a quartet of stories exploring the experiences of young men and women ("Eveline," "After the Race," "Two Gallants," and "The Boarding House"). The collection then proceeded with another quartet of tales that depicted characters in their maturity ("A Little Cloud", "Counterparts", "Clay", and "A Painful Case").

### 4.3. *Ecology Aesthetics and the Production of the Text*

In “Connecting Patterns and Creative Energies”, Zapf explains that the reflexive interactivity between nature and culture constitutes one of the most characteristic sites and sources of literary creativity (Zapf, 2016b, p. 161). In his chapter titled “Literature as an Ecological Force within Culture”, he posits that the creation of a literary work resembles the natural processes observed in the environment. The literary text possesses a relational nature, exhibiting transforming qualities and harbouring a distinct force referred to as “textual energy” (Zapf, 2016b, p. 29). As mentioned earlier, energy serves as a crucial mechanism for maintaining sustainable texts, facilitating the dynamic exchange of meaning between many elements, such as symbols, physical entities, cognitive processes, individual identities, and surrounding ecosystems. This energy permeates all these components, representing the essential interplay between cultural constructs and the natural world.

In Joyce’s collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, epiphanies stimulate biophilic and linguistic energies. Zapf’s triadic functional model provides a self-reflective framework for understanding the interconnectedness between ecological and semiotic phenomena. Joyce’s concept of an epiphany refers to a quick and profound spiritual manifestation that can be observed in various forms, such as vulgar speech, gestures, or remarkable phrases originating from the mind. As a writer, he believed that it was the intellectuals’ responsibility to meticulously document these moments of sudden realisation, known as epiphanies, with great caution to preserve them for future use. These moments are inherently fragile and fleeting in nature (Joyce, 1996). Moreover, they can be a crucial aspect of spiritual sustainability.

Furthermore, Martin Brick’s analysis of epiphany, viewed through the lens of cognitive psychology, posits that it can be understood as a form of “intermental activity”. This approach aligns with the notion that epiphany is responsive to sustainability prin-

ciples. According to Brick, the intermental epiphany portrays personal despair, isolation, and immobility while implying an acknowledgement and a yearning for resolution (Brick, 2017, p. 164).

The characters' inner thoughts in Joyce's *Dubliners* can be interpreted as a self-reflective framework for the interconnectedness between ecology and semiotics. In the context of the literary ecology of "The Dead", the dynamic interplay between Gabriel's thoughts and the snow is characterised by the influential processes of transformation and translation. The phenomenon above gives rise to an environment characterised by biophilia and complex eco-semiotic relationships, which serve as cultural practices promoting sustainable textuality. The creative efficacy of "The Dead" is achieved by skilfully transforming natural phenomena, such as snow and its fall, into the domain of language, culture, and aesthetics, imbuing them with communicative and self-reflective qualities.

#### *4.4 Ecology Aesthetics: The Aesthetic Experience of Sense-Making*

According to Böhme's "Ecological Aesthetics of Nature" (2016a), the objective of a forthcoming eco-philosophy is to restore and reinvigorate essential manifestations of aesthetic encounters, such as the concept of "atmosphere", in response to the extensive manipulation and systematic marginalisation of these encounters within contemporary consumer society. Böhme proposes a comprehensive ecological aesthetic of nature that encompasses an ethical dimension to accomplish this objective. This approach involves reassessing the body, perception, and emotion concerning an essentially rational and utilitarian culture. In Zapf's triadic functional model, the imaginative counter-discourse presents a similar objective. The author elucidates that this discourse emphasises experiences inside an ecocultural system that are typically overlooked or marginalised.

In the short story "Eveline", Joyce presents the body as a psychosomatic encounter with Böhme's concept of atmosphere.

Böhme places significant emphasis on the atmosphere, which encompasses both a psychosomatic meeting and a trans-corporeal aspect of reality, as described by Stacy Alaimo (2010). In "Eveline," the protagonist anticipates embarking on a journey to Buenos Aires alongside Frank the following day. Her profound emotional pain and overwhelming dread led to a physical manifestation of sickness while simultaneously engaging in the act of silently mouthing sincere prayers. The narrator posits that "her distress and sense of fear-induced nausea, and she continued to move her lips in silent, earnest prayer." (2008). Eveline's psychosomatic experience is evident in her maintenance of intersubjective forms of perception, even while she silently moves her lips in prayer. Catherine Rigby's assertion of the primacy of somatics over semantics in her work "Gernot Bohme's Ecological Aesthetics of Atmosphere" finds resonance in Joyce's exploration of Eveline's psychosomatic encounter (2011, p. 141). In this respect, the portrayal of sensory perception in Joyce's work reinforces the importance of the biocultural context in studying the cultural ecology of literature, which promotes a heightened recognition of the human body's capacity for creating the meaning and the mood of the text.

#### *4.5 Communication Aesthetics*

##### *4.5.1 A Sensitivity to the Multi-layered Forms of Relationality between Mind and Life*

Zapf argues that an awareness of the intricate interconnections between mind and life represents an essential aspect of sustaining textuality, wherein the faculty of imagination plays a crucial role. To Lawrence Buell (1995), marginalising the faculty of imagination contributes to the environmental problem. Concerning sustainable discourse, the significance of imaginative power emerges as a crucial factor in examining sustainability. According to Lynn Keller, literature enables individuals to envision the potential hazards associated with their actions. It can evoke a comprehensive and far-reaching perspective on sustain-

ability that may be difficult to conceive otherwise. Additionally, literature can captivate and involve readers through narrative or poetic language. This can be seen as a form of literature that does not directly embody sustainability but serves as a means to indicate or allude to sustainability (2012, pp. 581–582).

By the end of “The Dead”, the portrayal of snow functions as a dual entity, embodying a tangible manifestation of solidified water and a symbolic representation of the formidable force inherent in the natural world. Furthermore, the eco-semiotic bond formed on this snowy evening presents an intriguing intermetal activity. The presence of snowfall might be regarded as a sign of Böhme’s theoretical concept of the atmosphere. In the concluding sequence, Gabriel directs his gaze towards the window, contemplating the ongoing snowfall. During this introspective moment, his thoughts turn towards Gretta’s former paramour, the now-deceased Michael Furey. Despite being interred and concealed behind a layer of snow, his existence persists within Gretta’s memories and influences her current circumstances. Gretta’s emotional detachment and aloofness catalyse Conroy’s realisation of the existential emptiness that pervades his everyday existence. Upon entering a state of slumber, the individual deeply introspects over the character of Michael Furey, leading to a heightened awareness of their inadequacies. Through the use of mental imagery, Conroy enhances Furey’s attention with the assistance of Gretta. While observing her slumber, Conroy contemplates Furey’s viewpoint and endeavours to envision the sight of the captivating seventeen-year-old, “for which [he] had braved death.” (1917, p. 202). The essence of his own life, expressed most clearly when he feels a strong affinity with the deceased and perceives his reality in “a grey impalpable world” (1917, p. 202), becomes evident as he establishes a link between Gretta and Furey. The protagonist envisions a moment of intimate gaze exchanged between the youthful individuals, a recollection that Gretta retained over a prolonged period. This prompts his contemplation that “he had never felt like that towards any woman,

but he knew that such a feeling must be love" (1917, p. 202). A logical individual would recognise that Furey is operating under advantageous circumstances. The genuine experience of a long-term relationship, with its mundane aspects, cannot be equated to a teenager's understanding of love, combined with the heightened emotional impact of an untimely demise.

To Gretta, snow, winter, season, and coldness are signs related to some memories in the past. These elements and cycles of nature create multilayered forms of relationality, complexity, and a sense of textual ambiguity. At the same time, snow eco-semiotically represents the biophilic atmosphere and acts as a transformative energy that translates Gretta's love for snow into a symbol of her past life. It embodies her feelings of sadness as well as love. Her feelings of sadness are associated with the winter season as a cause and a site of her past lover's death. Also, it is a symbol of true love, emotions, and sacrifice. At the story's beginning, Joyce represents Gretta and Conroy's different perspectives on snow, foreshadowing their different biophilic energies. Conroy is also related to the natural world and snow. But he imagines it as a symbol of the frozen emotions between him and Gretta, despite his attempts to reduce the tension in their relationship. This is reflexively expressed through the cultural ecology of the body. The candle in the hotel symbolises his hot feelings towards Gretta, but they are transformed into coldness. These inner feelings are reflected when he looks out the window and observes the snowfall after she tells him about her past love. In this final scene, Conroy's epiphany manifests as self-renewal. He starts to think critically of his concept of love in comparison to Gretta's dead lover.

#### *4.5.2. Communication Aesthetics: Double Orientation on Past and Future*

In the chapter "Literature and Sustainability", Zapf posits that adopting a dual focus on past and future perspectives constitutes a sustainable cultural practice (2016a, p. 12). He elucidates that

the process entails a delicate balance between the forces of transformation and persistence. The simultaneous focus on the past and the future involves a dual sense of uncertainty. Although reflecting on the past can sometimes hinder progress and impede growth by indulging in nostalgic fantasies, it is also essential in cultivating durable and adequately nuanced viewpoints for the future. The absence of a sufficiently intricate understanding of past events can result in impractical solutions when envisioning the future. However, exploring new possibilities and opportunities following previous disasters is equally crucial.

In the short story "Eveline," Joyce portrays a dual perspective focusing on the past and the future. The narrative revolves around the fundamental dichotomy of change versus stability. The author used the stream of consciousness to depict Eveline's interaction with her deceased mother, effectively highlighting the traditional gender roles that emphasise women's nurturing responsibilities towards their families. Eveline refuses to accompany Frank on his journey, ultimately opting to depart from Dublin. In this context, Eveline demonstrates her inability to escape her stagnant existence, thereby rejecting the symbolic rite of passage represented by the voyage across the sea, which may emancipate her spiritually and as a woman. The protagonist's aspiration for a new existence is effectively communicated and represented through an act of transgression. This transgression involves crossing a boundary and transitioning from stable land to the vastness of the sea. The unfulfilled crossing of this barrier signifies a sense of detachment and departure, emphasising the notion of movement and change. The port quay and the unknown sea represent two distinct physical sites that serve as contradictory endpoints within an unsuccessful dialectic. The passage can be considered the central concept in this context. It refers to the desired journey the two individuals in love yearn for, symbolising the transition from childhood to adulthood. However, Eveline finally decides against embarking on this voyage, as evidenced by her refusal to join Frank on the sea the next

day, despite their prior arrangements and the booking of their passage. Frank, Eveline's fiancé, initially began his career as a deck boy and is depicted in the text as having a solid connection to life at sea. However, the sea, portrayed as an indistinct and overwhelming body of water, is the pivotal picture responsible for triggering a state of paralysis and overwhelming fear within this young individual from Dublin. Eveline's emotions of fear and distress, which are noticeably intertwined with sexual unease, transform the Dublin quay into a symbolic representation of the mainland. This transformation signifies a pivotal moment that will propel Eveline into uncharted territories, metaphorically referred to as "all the seas of the world" (Joyce, 1917, p. 29). Contrary to being a potential gateway to a fresh start, this leap into the unknown ultimately reveals itself as a foreboding plunge into uncertainty. Remarkably, the body of water that causes her great distress is the Irish Sea, followed by the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean.

Hence, a distinct contradiction becomes evident between the urban environment as a familiar and arid entity and the vast expanse of the open sea as an enigmatic and unfamiliar realm. Consequently, like numerous other individuals depicted in *Dubliners*, Eveline finds solace in the mundane nature of the familiar since it is deemed more desirable than the apprehension induced by the unfamiliar. In this regard, the portrayal of the sea and aquatic elements appears to be initially characterised by explicitly negative and menacing connotations in the collection of short stories titled *Dubliners*. Water, particularly seawater, is a metonymic representation of movement, change, and progression (Wondrich, 2006).

In "An Encounter," Joyce uses another practice of double orientation on past and future or the tension between tradition and modernity. This narrative is about two boys who deliberately choose to traverse the river and liberate themselves from the stagnating existence they endure in Dublin. There, they encounter an elderly individual who inquires whether they are perusing

literature on Wilde and other writers from the Celtic tradition. In this short story, this encounter with the old man, who exhibits peculiar and unsettling behavior, can be seen as a critique of the Celtic Revival. The old man's monologues, which include references to Wilde, are depicted as disturbing and morally questionable. This could be interpreted as Joyce's critique of the Celtic Revival, suggesting that an uncritical embrace of Irish heritage (represented by figures like Wilde) might lead to moral decay or stagnation.

Regarding Zapf's triadic functional model, I think crossing the river is an imaginative counter-discourse to the Celtic revival. The river can be seen as a symbolic boundary that the boys cross, moving from their familiar world into a new and unsettling one. This crossing could be interpreted as a metaphorical journey into the cultural and ideological terrain of the Celtic Revival, represented by the old man and his views. However, the two boys' disagreement with him represents Joyce's point of view about cultural self-renewal. In other words, the double orientation on the past and future can be the integrative discourse for such cultural self-renewal. By presenting the boys as critical and independent thinkers, Joyce suggests that a genuine cultural renewal requires a critical engagement with the past, rather than an uncritical embrace of it. In this sense, the story of the boys' encounter with the old man can be seen as a microcosm of Joyce's time's broader cultural and political dynamics. It reflects Joyce's unique perspective on the challenges and possibilities of cultural self-renewal in the context of the Celtic Revival and other prevailing cultural movements of his time.

#### *4.5.3 Communication Aesthetics: Cultural Memory and Cultural Creativity*

In "Sustainability and Literature", Zapf explains that cultural memory and cultural creativity are sustainable cultural practices (2016b, p. 25). To him, artistic creativity is based on the long-term survival of cultural and natural ecosystems as interdependent

realities enabling the continuation of life on the planet. Moreover, he translates Hans-Peter DÜrr's concept of sustainability as "a playing field where one can experiment" (Koltermann, 1996, p. 175). In this respect, Joyce is renowned for his innovative employment of language and his investigation of novel literary techniques, including the inclusion of allusions. These allusions are derived from collective recollection and customary practices within literary culture. As an illustration, Joyce employs allusions in his literary works for different purposes according to the contexts of his stories. For example, to provide a platform for discussing forbidden topics that he preferred not to address explicitly, in the story "Eveline," Joyce presents a subtle narrative that alludes to the theme of incest, drawing a parallel to a specific section from William Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*. In "An Encounter", he evokes themes, such as the conflict between tradition and modernity related to Wilde and the Celtic literary revival.

## 5. Conclusion

The conclusion shows that *Dubliners* can be a form of sustainable textuality for three reasons: First, Joyce's use of epiphanies, stream of consciousness, and allusions highlight communication aesthetics, such as relationality between text and life as in "The Dead", double orientation on past and future as in "Eveline" and "An Encounter", and culture memory and culture creativity as in "An Encounter". Second, the narrative structure of *Dubliners*, similar to the ageing process, explains how literature as cultural ecology can translate the ecosystem's evolutionary process into textual forms. In this way, *Dubliners* presents a sustainable text to natural ecology. Third, Joyce's presentation of the aesthetic experiences of sense-making through focusing on the body, as in "The Dead" and "Eveline", reinforces the biocultural context in studying the cultural ecology of literature and the literary text as textual energy. In this respect, the biocultural approach and the notion of a biophilic atmosphere in the literary text seem ef-

ficacious in exploring the textual representation of sustainability in Joyce's *Dubliners*. They investigate the biocultural ecology of the human body, confirming the potential convergence of literary-cultural and bio-ecological viewpoints. This investigation encompasses the contemplation of internal sensations, including physical discomfort, emotional distress, and subjective experiences, and examining the external environment's influence on this introspective analysis. This capacity for constructing meaning might be conceptualised as a literary practice embodying textual sustainable principles.

Additionally, utilising Zapf's triadic functional model as an analytical method to examine the aesthetics of ecology and communication in *Dubliners*, incorporating three distinct types of discourses—metadiscourse, imaginative counter-discourse, and reintegrative interdiscourse—combines to reflect Joyce's resonance with Zapf's concept of sustainability as a cultural phenomenon and with O'Grady's concept of sustainability as a dynamic programme and to highlight the absence of ecoculture aesthetics among Joyce's characters as an aspect. Regarding Zapf's concept of sustainability as a cultural phenomenon, *Dubliners*, viewed as a discursive construct, can potentially serve as a sustainable form of bio/ecosemiotics. Moreover, the model's dual paradoxical function of deconstruction and reconstruction uncovers Joyce's character's bio/eco semiotic practices through the reliance on tangible bodily perceptions and emotions, as well as the influence of elemental forces and natural cycles, such as water and the winter season, as depicted in the stories "Eveline", "An Encounter", and "The Dead." The other function of the model is related to his characters' attempts at self-renewal through epiphanies, stream of consciousness or allusions.

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