

# Parallel between the dead by james joyce and the snows of kilimanjaro by ernest h...

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



“ The fastest way to kill something special, is to compare it to something else.” - Unknown

James Joyce, an Irish novelist and Ernest Hemingway, an American novelist are two of the most important authors in the 20th century, being representatives of modernism.

James Joyce's works are based on the stream of consciousness, a narrative method that seeks to illustrate the essential happenings of the mind and Ernest Hemingway, belonging to the Lost Generation, and he writes more about the experiences in World War I, the years following it and the lifestyle of the rich people.

The Dead by James Joyce is a novella which appeared in 1914 in the collection Dubliners; The Snows of Kilimanjaro is a short story written by Ernest Hemingway which was published in 1936 in Esquire magazine.

The title “ The Dead” represents the death that lies in the soul of the main character, Gabriel. People tend to put behind them the ugly truth, forgetting who they are and come up with a better alternative to life, a false truth. This false truth can take by force everything that stands in front of you, and erase not only what you see, but also what you think. The realization that life is not what it seems, that there is more beneath what it is and what actually happens, is illustrated in the last sentence of Hemingway's work: “ His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”

There is a slightly semblance between the title of James Joyce's work and the one on Ernest Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. The title represents also a spiritual death, but a death related more to the inability to do what you aimed to do in life. Compared to *The Dead*, where the conclusion is the end of life in a metaphorical way, in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, the author inserts an element that is related to immortality, the mountain. In many of the world's mythologies (Mount Olympus in Greece, Mount Sinai in Egypt and Mount Fuji in Japan), the "mountain" symbolizes a sacred place, the crest of the mountain being the nearer spot to the divinity. The name "Kilimanjaro" means the "House of God", where only the ones who are worthy can go and if you want to reach the top, just as in life, you need to overcome some obstacles. Harry is doomed to die, the image of snow highlights this (a symbol of death, but also a symbol of a lost innocence and the nostalgia of a purity that people dream of), but he also has an escape hatch which can be seen in the story: "[...] and there, ahead, all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro. And then he knew that there was where he was going."

"Real people are made out of a whole lot of things - flesh, bone, blood, nerves, stuff like that. Literary people are made up of words." - Thomas C. Foster

There is always a moment in our life when we realize that this is all we can obtain, there is no more progress, only an illumination of thoughts, a fear of death and an awakening to life: this is all I have accomplished, not more, not

less; a turn of events: the future no longer belongs to the past, the past belongs to the future.

The main characters of this two authors (Harry - The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Gabriel - The Dead) are more or less similar. Love represents one of the similarities. Both have experienced a strange love. Gabriel, after years of marriage, considers Gretta no longer his wife, and he soon realizes that "[...] he and she had never lived together as man and wife." Over years, he becomes overprotective, always watching her like a child, insisting on putting on her galoshes even if she does not want that. He is concerned about her health, her appearance, her thoughts, but he does not really understand her. Even though he considers her no longer beautiful, he has urges: (" catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear."), even though these thoughts are triggered by the memories of a younger Gretta. Some small events from his life continue to remain on his mind so he clings to them. He is happy that she is still by his side and that he owns her. He finally realizes that the love they had was, from beginning to the end, incomplete. On the other side of the road stands Harry...Harry a cold and violent temper. He likes hurting his wife, Helen, and even though he keeps on apologizing to her after he offends her, he continues to lie, telling her he loves her. " If he lived by a lie he should try to die by it." He considers Helen a good-looking woman, talented, but not pretty. He knows that his command is her obedience and that she has not the power to leave him even though he speaks to her in an inappropriate way. He blames himself for not taking iodine for his wound and that all the

things Helen has built will fall apart because of his irresponsibility. He understands he is not alone in his misery, that he has Helen who wants his well-being and who is happy when he is happy, and he also knows she is there to support him to pass life's obstacles. He is conscious that their love is a lie and that only Helen shared her care and worries with him.

Why are most people sad? It is simple. They are all caught in their own story, a story which follows a plan, a good plan or a bad one. Nobody stops to wonder if their life turned out to be the life they have always dreamt of. The crucial moment appears only by surprise in the most bizarre way possible. Harry and Gabriel have similar personalities with small differences. Gabriel, even though he is at a party, he only thinks of his speech and how he could be more pleasant in the eyes of his family and acquaintances. He has to maintain his reputation of an intelligent professor and he has to prove that he gained his education for a purpose. He has no connection with what happens next to him, lost in his thoughts, only with his consciousness. He doesn't take in consideration what Gretta wants and he refuses to travel to the West of the country even though his wife is insisting on. He does not care if he offends someone, as a result Miss Ivors leaves the party because of his remark: " I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" He thinks of the past to the extent that it can only bring happiness to him. Gabriel, even though he knows his limits, he aspires for more. Only when he sees Gretta listening so passionately a song, he starts putting questions to himself, but he misjudges her feelings. " Perhaps her thoughts had been running with his. Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him [...]" He starts to get jealous in

the moment he understands that the song was designed for another man whom she has loved in the past.

Harry is a self-centered person, who, even in love, thinks of how he could make his life easier, therefore, he marries with a “ rich bitch”. He is a kind of person who revives every morning with less and less usefulness which he is aware of. As he is conscious he will die, he strives hard to write one more story, as if he expects his efforts to be recognized, his geniality to be discovered at the last moment. “ There wasn’t time, of course, although it seemed as though it telescoped so that you might put it all into one paragraph if you could get it right.” Some small events from his life instead to be erased immediately, they continue to grow, word by word, detail by detail. He is disappointed with his life and with his choices, and though one of the choices was Helen, in a way he loved her, but he did not want her. “ Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.” - Norman Cousins. He doesn’t care about Helen and tries to blame her for his destroyed talent which he soon realizes that he is his own destroyer. “ He has destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in, by drinking so much that he blunted the edge of his perceptions, by laziness, by sloth, and by snobbery, by pride and by prejudice, by hook and by crook.”

“ Life asked death, ‘ Why do people love me but hate you?’ Death responded, ‘ Because you are a beautiful lie and I am a painful truth.” -

Unknown

The two writings have similar endings. Both of the main characters experience the concept of death. In *The Dead*, it is highlighted the diagnosis of unhappiness: the death of the spiritual self. It is discovered slowly, with Gretta's gestures (There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of.), with unanswered questions (" Why did she seem so abstracted?", " Was she annoyed, too, about something?"). Gabriel is disappointed and humiliated by the idea that Gretta compares him with another man, he expects love, but he receives a deep terror, he continues to cheer himself, but he understands that he can not give Gretta the same feelings as her past dead lover did (" I think he died for me."). He considers himself to have brought little impact in his wife's life. Death is brought into discussion also with Gabriel's image of his aunt Julia being dead. (" One by one, they were all becoming shades.") He becomes aware of the fact that he loves Gretta, but also that he no longer considers her the same. He feels that he has no longer a purpose and that everything he has lived was a lie. He experiences an absence of life and he considers that he has lived in deception. His soul is no longer a soulmate to his wife and even himself starts to disappear. It appears the image of snow, the last paragraph of the writing being dedicated to the overwhelming snow (" It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves.") Snow represents a manifestation of Gabriel's emotions and every snowflake is a step toward, as he says, " his journey to westward". Snow symbolizes the death of an old Gabriel with all

his hopes and dreams, and maybe also the end of the relationship between him and his wife.

In "The Snow of Kilimanjaro" it is illustrated not only a spiritual death, but also a physical death. The spiritual death is emphasized by Harry's realization that he did not do anything greater with his life ("Now he would never write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them all."), that he took the easiest way through life with no struggle for more than richness. The physical death is announced by Harry himself "Don't be silly, I'm dying now.", he, most of the times, feels how death is near him "[...] he felt death come again." There are some animal symbols which represent death. The leopard ("Close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard.") represents strength, desire and dignity, three qualities that died inside of Harry. Hemingway's work ends with the following sentences "Outside the tent the hyena made the same strange noise that awakened her. But she did not hear him for the beating of her heart." Hyena is a symbol of voracity, the same greed and hunger that is highlighted in Harry's character. It is an animal of deception and scavenging. Snow appears once again to foretell death and with death, failure.

"Done with the work of breathing; done

With all the world; the mad race run

Through to the end; the golden goal

Attained and found to be a hole!"

Squatol Johnes