Chapter 1 *Dubliners*

The scheme

In October 1905, when Joyce was twenty-three, he wrote from Trieste to the English publisher, Grant Richards, offering a collection of twelve short stories to be called *Dubliners*. To support his plea for early publication, he claimed that no writer had yet 'presented Dublin to the world', and concluded with a sentence which implied some native rottenness in Ireland:

> From time to time I see in publishers' lists announcements of books on Irish subjects, so that I think people might be willing to pay for the special odour of corruption which, I hope, floats over my stories.[1]

He could hardly have foreseen that keen-nosed printers and publishers would locate the corruption in a few vulgar adjectives and such expressions as 'changed the position of her legs often', and that consequently the publication of his book, so far from being early, would be delayed until June 1914.

The first report of the printer's objections drew from Joyce, besides protests, a statement of what he had tried to do:

> My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard.[2]

After further pressure he submitted to a few minor alterations, but still fought to preserve his original scheme:

> The points on which I have not yielded are the points which rivet the book together. If I eliminate them what becomes of the chapter of the moral history of my country? I fight to retain them because I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country.

[1] *Letters* II, 122–3. [2] *Ibid.*, 134.

Though this belief, he said, might be a 'genial illusion', nevertheless it had served him 'in the office of a candlestick during the writing of the book'.[3]

As characteristic of the young Joyce as the confidence, ambition and lofty moral purpose is the thoroughness of his design. The subject is Dublin, a great European capital not previously presented in literature; the theme, the moral paralysis of Ireland; the purpose, to further the spiritual liberation of that country; the form, a collection of stories riveted together; the structure, a progress from childhood to maturity and public life; the pervading atmosphere, 'the special odour of corruption'; the style, one of 'scrupulous meanness'. Add to this that the beginner had already outlined in his notebooks an aesthetic theory which his work should exemplify, and already he appears, in intention at least, a peculiarly systematic and deliberate artist, believing in artistic forethought and conscious devising, practising what he called 'the classical tradition of my art',[4] and possessing a notion of the social role of the artist worthy of Shelley.

But how could moral paralysis be adequately diagnosed, or a chapter of the moral history of a country contained in a dozen stories, many of them only a few pages long? Could the varied and involved life of a modern city be even sketched, much less evaluated, in so small a compass? If variety were achieved, would it not necessarily be at the expense of cohesion, of the projected formal unity of stories riveted together in a single 'chapter'? Such problems have engrossed the most mature and dedicated of artists, and, like other victims of 'the fascination of what's difficult',[5] Joyce has been accused of an obsession with the mechanics of his art. But the accusation misses the point: it is the intensity of the imaginative pressure, the profundity of the intuition, the complexity of the moral vision which produce the technical problems, as it is the urgency of the creative purpose which supplies the energy and patience to search for and discover the technical solutions. The specific solutions which a writer discovers depend on his peculiar temperament and bent, if only because these determine the way in which he frames his problems. Joyce's predilection, evident in all his work, was for the construction of an elaborate framework of patterns, systems and schemes of relationship, as though he felt that the fertility of his imagination was both disciplined and encouraged by a firm and carefully prepared structure.[6] Certainly it was in such a structure that he found a solution to some of the problems raised by his ambitious intentions – though it might be truer to say that intentions, problems and solutions evolved together.

The elementary organization was the simple succession of 'childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life':

[3] *Letters* I, 62–3. [4] *Ibid.*, 60.

[5] This expression is the first line of a poem by Yeats, but Joyce knew the fascination. He told Stanislaus that, although he thought *Dubliners* 'indisputably well done . . . I am not rewarded by any feeling of having overcome difficulties' (*Letters* II, 99).

[6] Cf. 'For the imagination has the quality of a fluid, and it must be held firmly, lest it become vague, and delicately, that it may lose none of its magical powers' (review of Ibsen's *Catilina*, *CW*, 101).

> The order of the stories is as follows. *The Sisters*, *An Encounter* and another story [*Araby*] which are stories of my childhood: *The Boarding-House*, *After the Race* and *Eveline*, which are stories of adolescence: *The Clay* [sic], *Counterparts* and *A Painful Case* which are stories of mature life; *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*, *A Mother* and the last story of the book [*Grace*] which are stories of public life in Dublin.[7]

For Joyce, 'adolescence' did not refer to a physical stage, but to a state of spiritual immaturity: Jimmy Doyle may be twenty-six, Bob Doran thirty-four or thirty-five, Lenehan thirty, but having failed to reach adulthood they remain adolescents. The original scheme thus consisted of four sections of three stories each, but as soon as he had sent his book to the publisher Joyce saw the possibility of a pattern more functional and more intricate, though equally symmetrical. He warned Richards that two more stories were needed to complete the design, and within a few months had sent 'Two Gallants' and 'A Little Cloud', which introduced new relationships requiring changes in the order of the stories in the two central groups.

The childhood section remained unchanged in number and order, presenting the onset of moral paralysis through the frustration of the boy's increasingly conscious desires to escape from the humdrum of Dublin life. In 'The Sisters', Dublin offers to the developing soul two equally stunting and stupefying ways of life; in 'An Encounter' it undermines the spirit of adventure; in 'Araby' it devalues love and romance. In each story, the child, as well as being frustrated by his environment, is progressively corrupted by it as its values impose themselves on him, until at the end of the third story he is revealed to himself in his corrupted state.

The stories of adolescence now numbered four, formed, by a rearrangement of the original order, into two pairs. In 'Eveline' a timid and simple-minded young girl, and in 'After the Race' a nervous and simple-minded young man long for what they call 'life', and are defeated by the inhibiting fears and prejudices which the city has planted in them. The next two stories retain the male/female contrast but concern central figures who appear not inhibited but unscrupulous, parasitical or predatory: in 'Two Gallants' a male predator and his parasite prey on a woman, and in 'The Boarding House' two women, similarly cooperating, prey on a man. Yet underlying the contrasts within and between the pairs are the same moral disabilities.

The new story added to the maturity group also demanded a re-ordering and a pairing of the stories into two of married life and two of celibacy. Chandler in 'A Little Cloud' clings to the belief that his responsibilities as a family man, coupled with his shyness, stand in the way of his ambition to be a poet: on the other hand, Farrington of 'Counterparts' is a brutal and irresponsible husband and father, yet as deeply disappointed, thwarted, humiliated as Chandler. In Dublin 'marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures', for Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case' steers clear of all emotional ties only to find that his life is barren, while Maria, the old maid

[7] *Letters* II, 111.

of 'Clay', longing vainly for such ties, is, as it were, living a posthumous existence.

Completing the pattern are the three stories of public life, involving the three centres of civic activity: politics, reduced in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' to mercenary triviality and lip-service; art, represented in 'A Mother' by a petty squabble between part-time entertainers; and religion, exposed in 'Grace' as a respectable disguise for the service of Mammon.

This simplification of the content of the stories does at least bring out the central pattern of organization round the theme of paralysis, a pattern worth emphasizing, for it is, as far as I know, an original way of composing a collection of short stories and the reason why the stories are so much more powerful and significant in their context than when plucked out by anthologists. But besides giving extra point to each story through its relationship to the other stories of the group and to the book as a whole, the systematic arrangement suggests that all the chief aspects of Dublin life are covered, permits the metaphor of moral paralysis to emerge implicitly as the common thematic centre of the varied lives examined, and creates the basis of an aesthetic coherence and unity extremely rare in collections of short stories.

Many other relationships rivet the stories together in subsidiary aspects of theme and subject matter. The first story, showing the child's experience of Dublin religion, is related to the last (i.e. 'Grace' – 'The Dead' was a later addition), where the adult attitude towards religion and its role in public life is critically viewed. The political squalor exhibited in its public manifestations in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' is briefly seen from a personal viewpoint in Mr Duffy's political dabblings in 'A Painful Case'. 'Eveline' is linked not only to 'After the Race', but also, as a presentation of a debilitated desire for romance, to 'Araby', and, as a portrait of a woman defeated in life by a helpless submission to family, to 'Clay'. The dream of life 'abroad' operates in 'A Little Cloud' as well as in 'Eveline' and 'After the Race', and, less conspicuously, in 'The Sisters' and 'An Encounter'. Domineering and scheming motherhood unites Mrs Mooney of 'The Boarding-House' and Mrs Kearney of 'A Mother'. 'A Painful Case' very properly concludes the stories of individual lives because Mr Duffy carefully avoids all the snares into which his fellow-citizens fall, and yet through his Pharisaical avoidance of involvement becomes the purest specimen of the moral paralytic. The unity of the book is also sustained by a network of similarity and contrast in image, symbol and formal treatment, and by the recurring elements of the Dublin scene – the shabby streets, the shallow nationalism, and the pathetic dependence on alcohol (in nearly every story drinking or intoxication is somehow involved).

Although these patternings and relationships help create a structural unity and show the pervasiveness of the disease through the apparent variety of Dublin life, they were no more than a partial solution to Joyce's problems. In particular he needed to find some way of avoiding monotony and repetitiveness in a series of related studies of the same disease. To show more or less identical signs in different people and in different situations

would not be enough: moral paralysis is not the measles. There would have to be diverse actions, finely discriminated symptoms and manifestations, distinct and appropriate techniques of presentation, distinct and appropriate styles. Consequently, one is more conscious of the differences between the stories in *Dubliners* than of their similarities, and the focusing of such varied stories on a single thematic centre diagnoses the moral disease and illustrates its diffusion throughout the city much more effectively than could the parallelisms of a homogeneous collection. Whether the story, like 'Counterparts' or 'A Painful Case', approximates to tragedy, or, like 'Grace', is near farce; whether the overall tone is satirical, as in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', or pathetic, as in 'Eveline' and 'Clay'; whether the presentation is in the mode of social comedy, as in 'After the Race' and 'A Mother', or savage and squalid, like 'Two Gallants' – the same sickness appears, and the variations of all kinds contribute to its identification and to recognition of the extent of its contagion.

Similarly, even within the groups, there are elements of resemblance and of variation. First-person narrative distinguishes the stories of childhood: the stories of adolescence share an ironic detachment; the mature are explored more deeply and emotionally; and there is more comedy, as well as a greater dispersal of interest, in the stories of public life. But, on the other hand, every story has an individual character, and a distinctive style (or styles), which makes Joyce's reference to 'a style of scrupulous meanness' puzzling. The context of this phrase was Joyce's resistance to the printer's complaints about certain expressions in his book, and it seems possible that he was merely insisting that the words and phrases objected to were such as might be heard every day in the streets of Dublin; he may have had in mind the commonplace language of the stories rather than their style in the full sense.[8] This is to reject what seems the natural sense of the phrase, but the apparently natural sense is inapplicable to *Dubliners*. 'A style' is even more misleading than 'scrupulous meanness', for *Dubliners* has no one style, any more than *Ulysses* has, and many of the invented styles of the later work are foreshadowed in less extreme form in the short stories.

The simple stylistic distinction between direct and indirect speech is used to mark out the basic structure of 'The Sisters', and in other stories this same distinction is part of the story's total meaning: for instance, in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', with a single significant exception, everything is in direct speech, to present Joyce's vision of Dublin politics, whereas in 'A Painful Case' (this time with two important exceptions)

[8] Joyce's review of the poems of William Rooney (*CW*, 84–7) offers a clue to the meaning of 'scrupulous meanness'. Joyce complains that 'the writing is so careless, and is yet so studiously mean', and says of a quoted stanza, written in commonplace poetical diction, 'Here the writer has not devised, he has merely accepted, mean expressions.' The expressions (e.g. 'the sheltering hills', 'the fiercest-hearted of Erin's daughters') are 'mean' in being stock phrases. Stanislaus Joyce says that he wrote to his brother at the time suggesting 'that studious (that is, careful) meanness can become a positive virtue', and he supposes that Joyce recalled this observation when writing to Grant Richards (*MBK*, 204). If so, Joyce would have been claiming that he had used, for the most part, stock materials, but with a great deal of care.

direct speech is carefully avoided, to present the inturned life of Mr Duffy. But the use of such minor differentiations of style is a comparatively inconspicuous, though not unimportant, aspect of the brilliant and varied handling of diction and rhythm throughout. 'Araby' opens with a sensuous evocation of the children chasing through the streets and lanes in the dusk, and other brief passages of description are equally rich and vivid. The opening paragraph of 'Two Gallants', for instance, with its use of alliteration, assonance, echoings, repetitions to suggest an underlying enervation, is as careful and in its way as economical as anything in the *Portrait* or *Ulysses*.

More important than such set-pieces is the use of style to characterize and evaluate. In 'Clay', what we learn about Maria in the opening paragraphs is not so much what is stated as what the style expresses:

> Maria was a very, very small person indeed but she had a very long nose and a very long chin. She talked a little through her nose, always soothingly: *Yes, my dear*, and *No, my dear*. . . .
>
> . . . She used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to live with. (*D* 110–11)

What is central to the story here is not Maria's reaction to Protestants but the way in which we are told about her. The repetitions, the simple repetitive syntax carry the weight of meaning, and, although they may also suggest the way Maria talked, their prime function is to create an image of what it was to be Maria. Basically the same device is used in *Ulysses* to present Gerty MacDowell: in each case a style is specially devised to verbalize the essence of a woman, and, simultaneously, to comment on her. In 'The Boarding House' Jack Mooney hardly appears, but his coarse and brutal presence has to be felt in the background; a few slangy sentences economically create a verbal equivalent for him. Equally the array of clichés expressing Mrs Mooney's sense of outrage betrays the falsity and only partial self-deception of her mood:

> To begin with she had all the weight of social opinion on her side: she was an outraged mother. She had allowed him to live beneath her roof, assuming that he was a man of honour, and he had simply abused her hospitality. He was thirty-four or thirty-five years of age, so that youth could not be pleaded as his excuse; nor could ignorance be his excuse since he was a man who had seen something of the world. He had simply taken advantage of Polly's youth and inexperience: that was evident. (*D* 69–70)

The strung-out clichés characterize Mrs Mooney, and provide all the psychological and moral commentary that is necessary. Again this use of style is extremely important in *Ulysses*, particularly in the 'Cyclops' and the 'Eumaeus' chapters.

The variety of styles is equalled by the variety of uses made of them. The circling obsessive manner of the pervert's conversation in 'An Encounter' is at once described and reflected, as is the flamboyant romanticism of the boy in 'Araby'. There is propriety of style, but Joyce often goes beyond

propriety towards pastiche and parody, and makes style the medium for conveying the heart of his meaning. Thus there is no need for authorial commentary to balance Mr Chandler's admiration of the great journalist, Ignatius Gallaher, because the way in which Gallaher's conversation is reported sufficiently exposes his pompous vulgarity:

> Ignatius Gallaher puffed thoughtfully at his cigar and then, in a calm historian's tone, he proceeded to sketch for his friend some pictures of the corruption which was rife abroad. He summarized the vices of many capitals and seemed inclined to award the palm to Berlin. . . . He spared neither rank nor caste. He revealed many of the secrets of religious houses on the Continent and described some of the practices which were fashionable in high society and ended by telling, with details, a story about an English duchess – a story which he knew to be true. (*D* 85)

This is not merely reported speech – Gallaher did not say that 'he spared neither rank nor caste' – but the smug journalese fixes and evaluates him. Similarly, though more sympathetically, the style by itself is sufficient to enable us to estimate the nature and potentiality of Little Chandler's poetic aspirations:

> He tried to weigh his soul to see if it was a poet's soul. Melancholy was the dominant note of his temperament, he thought, but it was a melancholy tempered by recurrences of faith and resignation and simple joy. If he could give expression to it in a book of poems perhaps men would listen. He would never be popular: he saw that. He could not sway the crowd but he might appeal to a little circle of kindred minds. The English critics, perhaps, would recognize him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems; besides that, he would put in allusions. (*D* 80)

The two men are differentiated and judged by the styles in which they are presented.

It is difficult to refer to the style of a single story, let alone 'a style of scrupulous meanness' in the whole collection, for within one story Joyce may have varied his styles to evoke atmospheres and scenes, to present fundamental character, to make an implied moral or intellectual comment, and to shape the total structure. Had it not been for that unlucky phrase in the letter to Richards it seems unlikely that the stylistic variety and virtuosity of the short stories could so often have gone unrecognized.

The management of the styles reflects the character of the book as a whole, its precise and economical combining of diverse materials (diversified, that is, within a certain range) into a compact unity. The nature of the unity is difficult to define because so many factors contribute to it – the overall scheme; the common theme of moral paralysis; the manner, consistently detached but embracing many shades and varieties of detachment; the links of imagery and phrasing; and the force of Joyce's conviction that, beneath the differences of personality and circumstance, his fellow-citizens shared generic traits:

> . . . on account of many circumstances which I cannot detail here, the expression 'Dubliner' seems to me to have some meaning and I doubt whether the

same can be said for such words as 'Londoner' and 'Parisian' both of which have been used by writers as titles.[9]

This formal unity in diversity has an unstrained appropriateness to the nature of a city, at least of a city such as Dublin was about 1900. The stories are of particular people in particular situations; the book composes a moral portrait of a particular city: and, although both are in some way expressive of the lives of all men and all cities, the universality is, as it were, a by-product of the book's particularities.

This is characteristic of most good fiction and would not need emphasizing if so much criticism of *Dubliners* did not make an entirely different emphasis – on mythical and symbolic significances. The objection to these interpretations is not that they are too ingenious or too subtle, but that they spread over stories of rich and delicately articulated meaning a coarse membrane of symbolic and archetypal platitudes, or substitute for the author's finely-formed progeny the sooterkins aborted by the critic. Indeed, it is sometimes suggested that the stories would be of little account were it not for the deeper levels plumbed by symbolic analysis;[10] and, in pursuit of such revelations, the simple facts of the stories are often ignored, misconstrued or even invented; such symbols as are present, like the dying fire in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', are exaggerated, distorted and bent to fit some archetypal scheme (usually a simplified derivative from *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*); and arguments are offered which would not be acceptable in dissertations on the Number of the Beast or the Baconian theory. Scientific proof cannot be required of critical interpreters, but it does not follow that free association can pass for literary analysis.

Each story is itself a symbol (in that it represents more than is made explicit, and is not reducible to simple statements) more complex and significant than any symbol it may contain, and in the creation of that greater symbol what is said and done is as important as – usually more important than – what can be identified as symbolic objects or motifs. The apprehension and examination of symbols within a story is part of a critic's task, but it is a part which should be handled with special caution. The symbol-mania which afflicts so many critics of *Dubliners* neglects the whole for the part, and also inflates the part until it deforms or destroys the whole.

Joyce uses symbols in all his works, but, like all other elements, they are subordinated and contributory to the integrated and articulated aesthetic

[9] *Letters* II, 122.

[10] For instance, Marvin Magalaner complains that 'too few have seen the trouble that Joyce took to give more than a surface meaning to his seemingly transparent, harmless stories' (*Magalaner and Kain*, 75). I suspect that few readers have found the stories transparent, and Joyce's contemporaries certainly did not think them 'harmless'. The same critic speaks of 'the fragile narrative' of 'An Encounter' (75) and the 'otherwise trivial narrative' of 'Clay' (71). Similarly, William York Tindall thinks that, if it were not for the symbols he claims to find in them, 'Clay' 'has little point beyond the exhibition of pointlessness' (*Tindall–RG*, 29), and 'A Mother' little to offer beyond a funny story (37–8).

image.[11] In fact, in Stephen Dedalus's account of his aesthetic theory (a theory much in Joyce's mind while he was writing *Dubliners*) he specifically dismisses any general symbolism.[12] Considering Aquinas's term, *claritas* ('that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image'), Stephen says he was for a long time baffled by it:

> It would lead you to believe that he had in mind symbolism or idealism, the supreme quality of beauty being a light from some other world, the idea of which the matter is but the shadow, the reality of which it is but the symbol. I thought he might mean that *claritas* is the artistic discovery and representation of the divine purpose in anything or a force of generalization which would make the esthetic image a universal one, make it outshine its proper conditions. But that is literary talk. (*P* 217)

In *Stephen Hero*, when Stephen says that 'the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany', he certainly does not mean that it could become a symbol of something else; he means that, at the right moment, its own essential nature could be wholly, intensely and instantly apprehended as though brought into 'exact focus':

> By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. . . .
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> . . . First we recognize that the object is *one* integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a *thing* in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognize that it is *that* thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. (*SH* 216–18)

There could hardly be a more emphatic assertion that an epiphany was an apprehension of the thing's or person's unique particularity,[13] and not a symbol of something else. Of course, this uniqueness would have wider

[11] Irene Hendry [Chayes] suggests that Joyce's conception of a symbol approximates to that of the medieval Church: 'a symbol has a specific function to perform in a given situation, and, when that function has been performed, nothing prevents the use of the symbol again in a totally different context' ('Joyce's Epiphanies', *Sewanee Review* LIV (1946), 449–67; reprinted in *Givens*, 45).

[12] Cf. 'Stephen specifically rejects in so many words any aesthetic based on symbolism' (Anthony Cronin, *A Question of Modernity* (London, Secker and Warburg 1966), 66).

[13] Stanislaus Joyce gives a similar account of his brother's 'epiphanies', though in less romantic terms. He refers to them as 'manifestations or revelations', and says that they were 'in the beginning ironical observations of slips, and little errors and gestures – mere straws in the wind – by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal. . . . The revelation and importance of the subconscious had caught his interest. The epiphanies became more frequently subjective and included dreams which he considered in some way revelatory. . . . And I could see what he was driving at: the significance of unreflecting admissions and unregarded trifles, delicately weighed, in assaying states of mind for what is basic in them' (*MBK*, 134–7).

reference: the epiphany of the Ballast Office Clock would include apprehensions of the forces that made it precisely what it was and of the general or urban functions it served, and thus would illuminate the nature of all clocks or of all 'Dublin's street furniture'. But this is a very different matter from seeing it as a symbol. Similarly, the image of the paralysed priest in 'The Sisters', besides being an attempt to express the essence of the man's life and nature, is a point in which certain aspects of the Irish priesthood are focused; and the story of the truancy in 'An Encounter', besides conveying an intense apprehension of a particular experience, crystallizes one kind of childhood dream and frustration. In the stories, it is the particularities of the individual life or situation which are intensely illuminated and reflect light around them; in the symbolic interpretations the assumption is that the particularities must be translated into abstractions before their significance can be understood.

The stories of *Dubliners* are not themselves epiphanies[14] (though they include moments of epiphany for the reader and for some characters) because epiphanies are, by definition, 'the most delicate and evanescent of moments'. The moments which Joyce recorded had to be given an environment – in this case a narrative environment – if they were to be apprehended by a reader:

> the artist who could disentangle the subtle soul of the image from its mesh of defining circumstances most exactly and re-embody it in artistic circumstances chosen as the most exact for it in its new office, he was the supreme artist. (*SH* 82)

The stories are the chosen and exact circumstances in which the apprehended quintessences of Dublin life were re-embodied. Nevertheless, they resemble epiphanies in the mode of their operation, in that they focus the essence of a human life or situation in one specific incident, and attempt to define the meaning of 'the expression Dubliner' through an interrelated collection of such specific incidents.[15]

It does not follow that *Dubliners* is merely a practical exemplification of the esthetic theories boldly asserted by Stephen, although both stories

[14] Joyce's own term for the stories was 'epicleti' (*Letters* I, 55). Peter K. Garrett says that the correct plural is '*epicleses*', *epiclesis* being 'the ritual invocation asking the Holy Ghost to transform the host into the body and blood of Christ' ('Introduction' to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Dubliners'* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall 1968), 11, n. 17).

[15] None of Joyce's surviving 'epiyhanies' (see *Workshop*, 11–51) were used in *Dubliners*, though many were used in *Stephen Hero* and the *Portrait* and a few in *Ulysses*. However, as Warren Beck has suggested, there are moments of revelation in *Dubliners* corresponding to both kinds of 'epiphany' recorded by Joyce: 'as there are in Joyce's early experimental fragments two kinds of epiphany, the naturalistic-objective and the subjective-psychological, so too with *Dubliners*. In some stories the habit-ridden characters may exemplify chiefly their own unresponsiveness, and since for them self-knowledge is largely paralyzed, any epiphany must accrete in the reader's recognitions. In other stories, characters themselves experience a crisis of emotion under stress of a further realization, which they demonstrate' (*Joyce's 'Dubliners': Substance, Vision and Art* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1969), 23).

and theories developed during the same period of Joyce's life. But the manner of the book is illuminated by the theories, and the content confirms Joyce's account of it in his letters: it depends on the exact presentation of essential particularities, and offers a coherent, critical, realistic image of Dublin as seen by an author unwilling 'to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard'. For the young man in Dublin and Trieste, there were two ways of discovering and asserting his own nature – the examination of his own past and of the forces which had shaped him, and the establishment of his own attitudes towards the world about him. His vision of the nature of the artist and his vision of the nature of the city were two aspects of the one being, but, at this point in his career, they are sharply differentiated in manner as well as content. There are no artists among the Dubliners (Chandler hardly qualifies), and Stephen's development is towards escape from the city and denial of the ties which bind him to its citizens. As Joyce matured, the division became less sharp, but to read into *Dubliners* a fragmentary and incoherent Odyssey[16] or symbolic searches for spiritual aid is to blur the course of his development. In *Dubliners*, the subject is a city afflicted with moral paralysis: the artist is present only in the judging eye which looks upon the disease at 'its deadly work'.

Childhood

When *Dubliners* was referred to as a collection of sketches, it was presumably because some of the stories seemed at first glance inconclusive as narratives and unclimactic in form. 'The Sisters', especially, is often discussed as though it presented a situation rather than a process – as though the incidents, such as they are, were designed merely to display the symbol of the paralysed priest. In fact, there is a double process: on the one hand, the boy's response to the priest's death makes him aware of complexities in his own nature which he had not suspected and cannot understand, and, on the other, the initial exposure of the Dublin sickness develops through the conversations. All that happens is that the boy learns of the death of the priest who has been teaching him, and, with his aunt, visits the dead priest's house, where he views the body, and hears from one of the priest's sisters of the accident which led to her brother's breakdown and consequent paralysis. Considered simply in terms of its action, the story would seem to be about an imaginative boy's encounter with death: considered as a symbolic sketch, it is dominated by the figure of the dead priest, representing apparently the state of the Irish Church. But the technique of presentation, while not suppressing either of these implications, emphasizes a different aspect of the narrator's experience. By the use of the elementary stylistic distinction between direct and indirect speech (a distinction used frequently

[16] See Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck, 'First Flight to Ithaca: A New Reading of Joyce's *Dubliners*', *Accent* IV (1944), 75–99; reprinted in *Givens*, 47–94.

and for varied purposes in *Dubliners*) the story is shaped into three parts.

After an introductory paragraph, where the word 'paralysis' is introduced, there follows a conversation in direct speech between the boy's uncle and that 'tiresome old red-nosed imbecile' Mr Cotter, a conversation in which the boy, though present, hardly speaks. Here, by implication, the priest seems to represent the world of the intellect, an alternative to the materialist and mundane family. Then comes a long middle section telling of the boy's dream on the night of the priest's death, his observation the next morning of the notice on the door of the dead man's house, his memories of the priest and of their relationship, and his visit with his aunt to view the body. The account of the relationship begins to raise some doubts about the priest as a representative of the spirit and the intellect. Throughout this middle section direct speech is avoided. Finally, in the priest's home, his sister Eliza and the boy's aunt chat; again direct speech is used, and again the boy is present but silent. This conversation reveals the fear-ridden and frustrated life that lies behind the old priest's teaching and his paralysis. The pattern stresses the importance of the two conversations, the first chiefly between two men hostile to the priest and his influence, the second between two women sympathetic to him. The conversations exemplify the alternative modes of life Dublin has to offer the boy. The two men recommend a mindless physical existence: the boy should 'run about and play with young lads of his own age', 'learn to box his corner', take exercise and cold baths. The conversation of the two women epiphanizes the spiritual life to which the boy has been introduced.

By his anger at old Cotter's stupidities the boy seems to have made his choice between the alternatives, but in dreams he feels himself alarmingly pursued by the priest's heavy grey face, and, next day, when passing the priest's door, is surprised

> at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death. I wondered at this for, as my uncle had said the night before, he had taught me a great deal. (*D* 11)

No direct explanation is given of this reaction which occasions the boy's surprise and wonder; instead, the echoing of the uncle's remark introduces a summary of the 'great deal' which the priest had imparted to his protégé – consisting principally of Latin pronunciation, stories about the catacombs and Napoleon, the meaning of Church ceremonies and vestments, and the consideration of difficult theological questions. The boy had been told of the intricacy and mystery of Church institutions, which till then had seemed simple, and had been impressed with the terrible burden of the priest's duties:

> I was not surprised when he told me that the fathers of the Church had written books as thick as the *Post Office Directory* and as closely printed as the law notices in the newspaper, elucidating all these intricate questions. (*D* 11–12)

In addition, he had been taught to patter through the responses of the Mass. His memories give the essence of the mental and spiritual life opened before

him. Not surprisingly, he had been so stupefied by this régime that in answer to the priest's questions he 'could make no answer or only a very foolish and halting one', as though his state of mind was akin to the priest's paralysis, and resulted from similar pressures.[17] Although the boy cannot understand why the priest's death seemed a liberation, the reason for it is clear: the repetition of the phrase 'a great deal' now seems ironic, and there is further irony in the boy's dream, when in order to escape the priest's pursuing face he draws the blankets over his head and tries to think of Christmas, as though fleeing from the fears engendered by the incomprehensible and oppressive rituals of the religion expounded by the priest to the simple and joyous origins of that religion.[18]

The priest's breaking-point was, significantly, no sin or spiritual lapse, but an accidental breach of ritual. The sister's comment is an epiphany of her tabu-ridden religiosity and of the spiritual life into which the boy has been initiated:

> - It was that chalice he broke. . . . That was the beginning of it. Of course, they say it was all right, that it contained nothing, I mean. But still. . . . They say it was the boy's fault. (*D* 17)

Eliza's soul crawls rather than shines forth in her implied conviction that, if by chance the chalice had contained something, it would not have been all right. This is another side of Dublin religion, for Eliza represents a religiose, submissive, superstitious and ignorant laity, as her brother represents a priesthood obsessed with ritual and theological refinements. The empty chalice, the cause of the breakdown, reminds one that the dead priest's hands are 'loosely retaining a chalice', an object mentioned again at the end of the story:

> I knew that the old priest was lying still in his coffin as we had seen him, solemn and truculent in death, an idle chalice on his breast. (*D* 17)

The breaking of the chalice was a breach of ritual: the emptiness of the chalice, each time it is referred to, symbolizes a ritual from which all spiritual content has been emptied. Only the forms remain, the objects of superstitious fears; religion, like the old priest himself, is paralysed. Perhaps this is what is being suggested by the boy's notion that the word 'paralysis' sounded 'like the name of some maleficent and sinful being', and by his dream:

[17] In view of what we are told of the priest's instruction, I cannot understand those accounts of the story which talk of 'a boy's deprivation of spiritual guidance and support, through the death of his friend the priest Father Flynn' (Brewster Ghiselin, 'The Unity of Joyce's *Dubliners*', *Accent* XVI (1956), 75–88, and 196–213; reprinted in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Dubliners'*, ed. Peter K. Garrett (Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Prentice-Hall 1968), 69–70).

[18] A similar ironic comparison between the spirit of Christmas and the usual attitudes of the Church occurs in *Stephen Hero*. When Mr Heffernan, defending the Church, says 'We have received a commandment of charity', Stephen replies, 'I hear so, . . . at Christmas' (*SH* 249).

> But then I remembered that it had died of paralysis and I felt that I too was smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin. (*D* 9)

Paralysis and simony are associated in the boy's mind only by the strangeness of the words, but there is some dim apprehension of a causal link between the sin and the disease. In what sense has the priest been guilty of simony? It is probable that, to the boy, simony, as he has learnt of it in the Catechism, is a characteristically priestly sin, and, as Father Flynn is a failed priest, the child supposes that he must have committed simony and been punished with paralysis. Yet just as paralysis serves as a metaphor for the state of the Irish Church, and, in the book as a whole, for the moral condition of the Dubliners, so, too, simony may relate to the transference of veneration and devotion from the spiritual aspects of religion to the material ceremonies and their ritual objects – specifically the chalice –, and to the materialism of the Dubliners which, in all the stories, but most directly in 'Grace', is seen as a kind of simony and as one of the main causes of paralysis.[19] (In fact, it seems to me that the three words, 'paralysis', 'simony', and 'gnomon', which are mysteriously sounded in the first paragraph, refer more importantly to the collection as a whole than to 'The Sisters' in particular. As 'paralysis' provides the metaphor for the spiritual condition of the Dubliners, and 'simony' the metaphor for the spiritual offence which has produced that condition, so 'gnomon', in the sense of a pointer 'which by its shadow indicates the time of day', is a metaphor for the indirect and suggestive method of the stories which indicates that paralysed and moribund condition.)[20] The notion of some maleficence associated with Church rituals recurs in the *Portrait*, when Stephen speaks of his fear of 'a malevolent reality' behind the communion services and of 'the chemical action' in his soul which a false act of homage would induce (*P* 247).

It is a similar 'chemical action' in the soul which has broken the old priest and oppressed the boy; as the latter tries to escape in his dream by thinking of Christmas, so the priest has longed to revisit the scenes of his childhood, before he took up his intolerable burden. There is a further

[19] In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen refers to 'diplomatic' marriages as simony ('surely what they call the temple of the Holy Ghost should not be bargained for!'), and compares his own situation as a poet expecting reward from the public: 'I do not swear to love, honour and obey the public until my dying day.' He thinks that 'Simony is monstrous because it revolts our notion of what is humanly possible' (*SH* 206–7). This would seem to imply that the mere taking of priestly vows is a form of simony. A more ordinary form of it is suggested by the priests, who, in the passage immediately following, are seen trying to win Stephen over by offering to free him from 'the entanglement of merely material considerations' (*SH* 208–9).

[20] This interpretation of 'gnomon' is not what the word means 'in the Euclid', where it means 'that part of a parallelogram which remains after a similar parallelogram is taken away from one of its corners' (*SOED*). To the boy, the significance of the word (like 'paralysis' and 'simony') is in its strangeness rather than in its denotation. However, Gerhard Friedrich points out that the two meanings of the word are not inconsistent, and may both be relevant ('The Gnomonic Clue to James Joyce's *Dubliners*', *Modern Language Notes LXII* (1957), 421–4). Since in a geometrical gnomon the whole parallelogram is implicit though not visible, it may suggest Joyce's technique of making a part imply a much larger whole.

irony in the contrast between Eliza's attitudes to her brother's condition at the time of his breakdown, and to his appearance in death. The corpse lies solemn, grey and truculent, but she declares that 'He had a beautiful death', and made 'a beautiful corpse': on the other hand, it was when the priest was found 'wide-awake and laughing-like softly to himself' that something wrong was suspected. Eliza repeats the phrase in the last sentences of the story, so that it stands as a conspicuous epiphany:

> - Wide-awake and laughing-like to himself. . . . So then, of course, when they saw that, that made them think that there was something gone wrong with him. . . . (*D* 17)

The spiritual life offered to the boy seems to be one in which grimness and death are beautiful, and laughter indicative of 'something gone wrong'. However, this is to harden and make explicit what operates as suggestion; and the same can be said of a number of plausible interpretations of details. Thus when the boy, just after describing the priest's educational regime, tries to recall his dream, it is all very hazy:

> I remembered that I had noticed long velvet curtains and a swinging lamp of antique fashion. I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange – in Persia, I thought. (*D* 12)

This could be a reflection of his inner sense of Dublin religion as a kind of mysterious magical ritual, as though the priest's death has released him from a world 'where the customs were strange'; yet also, and more probably in view of the part played by the East in other stories, the dream suggests the boy's desire for escape from the world in which he finds himself. The word 'Araby' later was to 'cast an Eastern enchantment' over him (*D* 32), and Chandler contrasts unfavourably his wife's ladylike eyes with the 'dark Oriental eyes' of Jewesses. These references are no more specifically Oriental than the Turkish Delight which Mrs Kearney eats in large quantities 'to console her romantic desires' (*D* 153); they are crude symbols of the exotic for those oppressed by diurnal drabness.

Such minor aspects of the story thicken the atmosphere and relate suggestively rather than literally to the central drift, but that drift is marked out precisely and clearly enough. A small stylistic differentiation outlines the three-part structure; the structure underlines the two contrasting conversations and the two views of life they represent; this contrast raises the question, 'Why did the boy feel liberated?', and round these central materials are placed the irony about Christmas, the epiphanic remarks of Eliza, and the images of the paralysed priest and the empty chalice. The two conversations are as significantly alike as they are contrasting: in each the boy sits silent while his elders exchange their superstitious platitudes. Both what pretends to be the world of the intellect and the spirit and what claims to be the world of healthy activity are paralysing influences.[21] By

[21] Cf. 'individual initiative is paralysed by the influence and admonitions of the church' ('Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages', *CW*, 171).

placing the word 'paralysis' so prominently, and presenting the priest's sickness so emphatically in his first story, Joyce puts in the reader's mind the appropriate metaphor for the moral and spiritual state of Ireland, and the character of the whole book is a drawing near to and a close examination of the disease at 'its deadly work'.

'The Sisters' illustrates the careful interrelating of parts in the *Dubliners* stories. What happens, what is said, and the form of presentation, always constitute a clear significance, enriched and coloured by style, symbols, images, epiphanies; there is no need to invent esoteric mysteries. This is certainly true of 'An Encounter' where the refinements of criticism have discovered elaborate archetypal myths. What the story is explicitly about is the boy's longing for an escape from a routine environment into adventurous activity, and the frustration of his desire partly through the nature of that environment and partly through his own inner weakness. Again there is a three-part structure: first, the awakening in the boy of 'a spirit of unruliness' and a longing for adventure, which eventually demands more than the sensations stimulated by reading and 'the mimic warfare' of children's games; then, the truancy, which gradually palls until the two boys are bored and jaded; and, finally, the real and alarming encounter with the pervert.

In the opening section the narrator's substitutes for adventure are found disappointing even by his timid soul. Always on the losing side in siege and battle, and frightened by the fierceness of Joe Dillon, he has banded together with the others fearfully, as one of 'the reluctant Indians who were afraid to seem studious or lacking in robustness', so that even these mock-adventures are motivated by cowardice. The Wild West books, too, contained adventures 'remote from [his] nature'; their recommendation was that 'at least, they opened doors of escape.' Thus from the beginning he is vainly seeking escape in pursuits alien to him, and afraid to be different from the others, although by culture, constitution and temperament he *is* different. He is torn between his nature and his desire to conform.

His submissiveness to the dominant figures about him is again shown at school, when Father Butler's sneer at *The Apache Chief* 'paled much of the glory of the Wild West for me'; but, away from school, he still hungers for 'wild sensations': 'I wanted real adventures to happen to myself'. Because he believes that such adventures 'must be sought abroad', he joins in the plan to play truant. Yet the escape into adventure never materializes, initially through the discrepancies in culture and temperament between him and Mahony, the very differences he has been trying to conceal. The docks temporarily revive the boys' interest as, watching the ships, they dream of travelling, but the narrator's confused notion associating sailors and adventure with green eyes is found not to tally with the facts when he observes the crew of the three-master. From this point even the illusion of adventure fades. They tire of watching the discharging of the ship: the bright day turns sultry: they wander through squalid streets sedulously eating musty biscuits; despite the brief chase of a cat by Mahony (unaccompanied), they are bored, and finally their projected visit to the Pigeon House is abandoned:

> The sun went in behind some clouds and left us to our jaded thoughts and the crumbs of our provisions. (*D* 23–4)

The story would not have been without completeness had it ended there, having traced the slow dimming of the boy's desire for adventure through the workings of impulses which make him seek escape in activities foreign to his nature and, at the same time, restrain him from any full participation. The same divided self produces, on the one hand, his thirst for adventure stories and, on the other, his response to Father Butler's contempt for 'such stuff'. The embryonic moral paralysis grows in the divided nature; in other stories (notably 'Eveline', 'After the Race', 'The Boarding House', 'A Little Cloud' and 'The Dead') a similar immobility derives from similar uncertainty. The encounter with the pervert concentrates the implications of the story in a single incident which evokes in the boy a brief and shaming self-awareness. The narrator, who in the company of other boys was afraid of seeming studious, pretends to have read every book the pervert mentions; he does this in order to distinguish himself from Mahony, and is anxious that his superiority should be recognized:

> Of course, [the man] said, there were some of Lord Lytton's works which boys couldn't read. Mahony asked why couldn't boys read them – a question which agitated and pained me because I was afraid the man would think I was as stupid as Mahony. (*D* 25)

Set against this fear of being thought stupid, which leads to an implicit alliance against Mahony, there is a growing fear of the pervert, from which Mahony is entirely free. Although Mahony is apparently unaffected by the old man's obsessed, circling remarks about his liking for young girls, the narrator, while regarding these views as liberal and reasonable, dislikes the words in the man's mouth and wonders why the man shivers. The boy listens without raising his eyes; he neither looks up nor speaks when Mahony remarks on what the 'queer old josser' is doing; he suggests they adopt false names, and is considering whether or not to go away when the man returns. He is overwhelmed by unidentified fears, whereas Mahony, untouched, runs off to chase the cat again.

The extraordinary change in the character of the man's obsessive talk, from his liberal attitude about sweethearts to his declaration that he would whip any boy he found talking to girls or having a sweetheart, presumably indicates that the spectacle on which Mahony remarked was an act of masturbation, releasing the excitement built up by the talk, but there is also the suggestion that in the presence of Mahony, who had claimed three 'totties', the old man was trying to ingratiate himself by a generous attitude, while, in Mahony's absence, he wants to win over the narrator by denouncing boys who, like Mahony, were rough and went with girls. There is, too, a barely concealed threat in his observation to the boy who has denied having a sweetheart that 'if a boy had a girl for a sweetheart and told lies about it then he would give him such a whipping as no boy ever got in this world'; yet his voice 'grew almost affectionate and seemed to plead with me that I should understand him.' The irony is that this alarm-

ing appeal is a recognition of common ground which the boy has earlier invited; but now, through the monologue, the boy, save for an involuntary glance of surprise, is afraid to look up. At last his fear of the old man overcomes his fear of disapproval, and he stands up, his heart beating, pretending to be calm. The note of 'forced bravery' in his call to Mahony, and the feeling of guilt ('And I was penitent; for in my heart I had always despised him a little') repeat his pretence of robustness in the Indian games and his prick of conscience at seeing Leo Dillon exposed to Father Butler's scorn, but the sense of guilt is also a partial and immature self-revelation.

The whole story thus relates to 'The Sisters' in its presentation of a sensitive and imaginative boy nervously hesitating between the rough games of the other boys and the pseudo-culture represented by Father Butler and the pervert, with his enthusiasm for Moore, Scott and Lytton. The bewildered stupidity of the narrator of the first story as the old priest revealed the awful mysteries of the Church is recalled in the boy's silent panic as he listens to the secretive voice of the pervert, talking 'as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery'; while the pervert's apparent plea for understanding recalls the dream-figure of the priest trying to confess. I am not suggesting that the second story is designed to parallel the first; but rather that the second is a step further into paralysis and into consciousness of paralysis. In both stories the boy moves uncertainly between two worlds, two ways of life, to neither of which he belongs although each of them demands from him some kind of submission; but whereas in 'The Sisters' his resentment against Mr Cotter and his sense of liberation on the death of the priest show that he has not as yet been broken in, in 'An Encounter' he has already submitted fearfully, on the one hand to the 'rough' boys and on the other to the sterile adult life represented by Father Butler and the pervert.

There are sudden but unemphatic illuminations: the boy's unspoken answer to the pervert – 'I was going to reply indignantly that we were not National School boys to be *whipped* as he called it' – exposes how deeply he is committed to conformity by its echo of Father Butler's cheap sneer at National School boys; and his half-formed association of the adventurous life with green eyes finds a sinister fulfilment when he is listening to the pervert enthusing about 'a nice warm whipping':

> I was surprised at this sentiment and involuntarily glanced up at his face. As I did so I met the gaze of a pair of bottle-green eyes peering at me from under a twitching forehead. (*D* 27)

Partly this implies that the alarming encounter is all the adventure that Dublin holds out to the boy, but it may also suggest that this is, in effect, his adventure, an adventure which frightens him back into conformity. The Dublin disease has already eaten into him, and he hurriedly retreats into the welcome safety of the familiar. Adventure and escape for him, as for the adult characters of the later stories, can never be more than dreams, not merely because of a squalid environment but because of the weaknesses developed in the soul. The pathos of the situation lies in the incompatibility

between his dreams and his true self, and in his occasional glimpses of his own feebleness; Mahony, a simple boy, is untroubled by the routine, because for him the routine safety-valves – using slang, playing at Indians, chasing animals and other children, riding in a train – are sufficient. Mahony is unconscious of his condition: the narrator is sensitive enough to feel it and hate it, but is fixed by his fears – fear of being thought studious and fear of being thought stupid, fear of mimic adventure and fear of real adventure, fear above all of loss of approval through not behaving in the way expected of him.[22]

The glimpse of self-knowledge in the last sentence of 'An Encounter' prepares for the bitterness of the self-revelation at the end of 'Araby'. Once again the structure is basically tripartite: an evocation of the childish experience of a dingy environment, the romantic attachment to the girl, and finally the visit to the *Araby* bazaar – but this time the whole story builds up to the passionate and rhetorical last sentence where the boy's sudden insight into himself marks the end of childhood.

The brief opening colours the commonplace scene with the emotions and sense-awareness of childhood. The 'imperturbable faces' of the houses, the musty enclosed air of the littered rooms, the rusty bicycle-pump, the children playing during the dark winter evenings like a separate race from 'the rough tribes from the cottages', and hiding from the adults who would call them indoors – all belong to the shared world of childhood, imaginatively separate from the 'real' world of the adults. The sight of Mangan's sister, outlined against the light of the door as she calls her brother in for tea, plucks the boy out of this energetic, sensuous, hidden childishness, and puts him in an equally secret, but unshared and secretive, isolation. The religious intensity of his love elevates the diction, the imagery, the rhythm of the sentences: all become high-flown and romantic: 'her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood'; in the flaring gas-light of the streets, jostled by the noisy crowds, 'I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes':

> Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires. (*D* 31)

In the silent house he even adopts the posture of prayer:

> I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: *O love! O love!* many times. (*D* 31)

[22] There is so much emphasis on the narrator's timidity that S. L. Goldberg's reference to his 'unruly, romantic, adventurous spirit' (*Joyce* (London, Oliver and Boyd 1962), 37–8) seems to place quite the wrong emphasis, and his assertion that the boy's 'courage wins him his freedom' is to me incomprehensible in terms of what happens in the story.

Through the brief conversation with the girl about the bazaar and his promise to bring her something from it, the name 'Araby' becomes a symbol for his passion, filling him with a hatred of the tedious life of school. As the crowds in the street now seem to him alien, the school, representing 'the serious work of life', seems 'child's play, ugly monotonous child's play'.

But the elevated style and imagery do not show that this passion is, as one critic puts it, 'an almost spiritual love'.[23] Certainly Joyce seems to be recalling the *Vita Nuova*, as in 'Grace' (written at about the same time as 'Araby') he recalled the *Divina Commedia*; but in both stories the Dantean reference is ironic. For despite all the spiritualizing diction and imagery, Joyce insists on the sensuous, physical origin of the boy's emotions. Apart from 'a few casual words' he has never spoken to the girl: it is 'her figure defined by the light' which at first captivates him as he watches her: 'Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.' When she speaks to him about the bazaar his attention is fixed on 'the white curve of her neck', her hair, her hand, and 'the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease'. So vividly does this physical image fill his imagination that later, looking at her dark house, he stands for an hour

> seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress. (*D* 33)

It is his blood which responds to the mention of her name, his body which responds to her words and gestures like a harp. The extravagance of his imagination converts the physical response into a pseudo-spiritual love just as it derives from the name of a bazaar 'an Eastern enchantment'. The coarse contrast of the reality – his uncle's belated and drunken homecoming, the delay at the station, the passage of the deserted train among 'ruinous houses', and finally the half-closed bazaar where he hears the inane flirtation of the salesgirl with the young men – leads to a disillusion affecting his feelings for Mangan's sister as well as his dreams of Araby:

> Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger. (*D* 36)

This is the kind of epiphany which in *Stephen Hero* is called 'a sudden spiritual manifestation . . . in a memorable phase of the mind itself' – a boyish equivalent of Gabriel Conroy's humiliation in 'The Dead'. As in the presence of Father Flynn the boy had been silent or halting, as before the pervert he was silent and unable to look up, so, although he regularly sees and follows the girl, he never speaks to her, does not know whether he would ever speak to her, and when she does address him briefly is at first too confused to answer. The timidity and inhibitions coexist with the dreams of adventure and romance; and the gulf between what is desired and what is dared, the first beyond possibility and the second far short of it, is characteristic of the Dublin disease. The point of the story is not the

[23] *Magalaner and Kain*, 78.

accident of the boy's late arrival at the bazaar and consequent disappointment, but the whole course of his fantasy and his rejection of 'the serious work of life', which disrupt his personality and bring eventually a perception of the vanity of his self-inflating dreams.

The three stories of childhood exist in lively and coherent thematic relationship; they are held together by the varied tripartite structures and the common central figure, as well as by such minor ties as the boy's thrice-repeated state of tongue-tied fear. Moreover, only these stories are told in the first person, because in this way Joyce can represent the child's growing self-consciousness, in the first story surprised to find in himself feelings he cannot explain or understand, in the second beginning to be conscious of his difference from the other boys and occasionally shamed by his alternating contempt for and dependence on them, and, in the third breaking free from the child's world only to achieve a devastating self-revelation. The narrative mode enables the closing in of the environment to be experienced from the inside as the boy's hopes and dreams of a fuller life and more intense experience are cramped and mortified. The dreams of escape in subsequent stories are doomed from the start because the characters are already paralysed: in the boy the creeping paralysis spreads as the frustrations of the environment impel him to dream-escapes and consequently to further and more withering frustrations.

Adolescence

Compared with the stories of childhood, those of adolescence or immaturity are, with one exception, less subtly conceived, less complexly presented, more conventional in character, and, although brilliantly executed, make their point more obviously. 'Eveline', in particular, the story of a girl longing to escape from a wretched life but frightened by the opportunity when it comes, is almost a demonstration. The imaginative strength of the story is in the use of the girl's physical immobility as a visual metaphor for her predicament. The first two sentences fix her attitude:

> She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. (*D* 37)

Thus she remains, thinking and sentimentalizing about her past and present existence and dreaming of a life of happiness she will share with her sweetheart in South America, until, towards the end, the opening sentences are recalled:

> Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. (*D* 41)

The exact verbal echoes underline her motionlessness – until the sudden

panic when she recalls her mother's 'life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness':

> She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? (*D* 41–2)

This sudden movement does not erase, in the total image of the girl, the prolonged vision of her motionless vigil, thinking of her home and family, and of 'the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque' (a saint in whom self-torture produced paralysis and whose life was given over to self-mortification), and reviewing all the familiar objects and memories of her domestic prison. The brief conclusion, when, despite Frank's appeals, she is 'passive, like a helpless animal', is inevitable. The long unstirring, indecisive sitting while evening deepens and time runs out is emblematic of the theme of the story and of the collection.

The irony of the story is rather obvious and 'literary', perhaps because it plays, not without pity, round the traditional and particularly Victorian theme of a girl torn between love and duty who finally makes the heroic sacrifice of happiness at the call of home and religion. But Joyce conscientiously demolishes sentimentality. Eveline is hardly a girl in love: marriage for her means that 'people would treat her with respect then', and her affection for Frank is far from passionate: 'First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him.' The love is casually tacked on as a secondary condition in her vision of their future ('He would give her life, perhaps love, too') and, when finally he goes, 'her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.'[24] She seems as incapable of love as of movement, and, as no overpowering passion is drawing her away, so the dutifulness which holds her back is drab and halfhearted. Her life is spent between the job she would not be sorry to leave and keeping house for a father who frightens her with his threats of violence and who will give her little money for housekeeping. Nevertheless, she persuades herself that her father will miss her, and recalls two trivial occasions when he had been 'very nice'. Even the memory of her promise to her mother 'to keep the home together as long as she could' is marred by the vision of the mother's pitiful life and final craziness. For all her prayers 'to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty', there is no real fight between love and duty inside Eveline: these are merely the conventional disguises for a feebler struggle between conflicting fears.

Explicitly it is fear of sharing her mother's fate that makes her long for escape, for life, for happiness. But even more powerful is the fear of change:

> Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided.
>
> ... In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. (*D* 38)

[24] Clive Hart observes that 'Dublin has so paralysed Eveline's emotions that she is unable to love, can think of herself and her situation only by means of a series of tawdry clichés' ('Eveline', *Hart–Dubliners*, 51).

The fear of the unknown finally conquers, and makes her imagine Frank, who till now has seemed a saviour, as one who is luring her to her destruction:

> All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. (*D* 42)

The contesting fears elicit from her a cry of anguish, but paralyse her. She is a victim of those idols whom Stephen Dedalus declares he will not serve – home, Fatherland and Church – and, unlike him, cannot say, 'I do not fear . . . to leave whatever I have to leave' (*P* 251). The paralysis of the will, the undermining of the soul, which Joyce consistently presents in terms of a longing to escape or a nostalgic inflation of the past coupled with an inability to act, is perhaps most simply and straightforwardly presented in 'Eveline' and, although the thematic point is rather blatantly evident, the nature of the fears which immobilize the girl are sensitively explored and the superficial disguises of love and duty are stripped off to show the real inner forces which will prevent her from ever achieving 'life'.

Jimmy Doyle, in 'After the Race', is also concerned with 'life', though for him it is to be something to be seen. He had been sent to Cambridge 'to see a little life', and during the party on board the yacht he feels that 'this was seeing life, at least'. Unlike Eveline, however, whose poverty and family are encumbrances, Jimmy has money, the support of his father, and foreign friends. The world seems open to him and yet he, too, at the end of the story, is defeated in spirit. The story is about money and the first paragraph establishes the theme, as the racing cars speed towards Dublin:

> through this channel of poverty and inaction the Continent sped its wealth and industry. Now and again the clumps of people raised the cheer of the gratefully oppressed. Their sympathy, however, was for the blue cars – the cars of their friends, the French. (*D* 44)

This extends the paralysis into social and economic fields; the poor, inactive Irish are pictured as so feeble-spirited that they cheer their oppressors, perhaps represented by the English cars, although the context suggests rather that Joyce is thinking of the poor as victims of the rich.[25]

Jimmy Doyle's difference from the other young men who hilariously fill Ségouin's car is marked from the beginning. 'Ségouin was in good humour', 'Riviére was in good humour', 'Villona was in good humour': Jimmy, however, 'was too excited to be genuinely happy.' The nature of this excitement is analysed. Behind Jimmy stands his father, who had abandoned Nationalism as he became a prosperous 'merchant prince' through police contracts. Like his father, Jimmy has learnt what to value: at university 'he had money and he was popular', and now he is pleased with Ségouin's company since the latter 'had seen so much of the world

[25] Cf. Joyce's complaint that *Sinn Féin* 'is educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred whereas anyone can see that if the Irish question exists, it exists for the Irish proletariat chiefly' (*Letters* II, 167).

and was reputed to own some of the biggest hotels in France.' All Jimmy's evaluations, like his father's, are similarly determined by cash values:

> Such a person (as his father agreed) was well worth knowing, even if he had not been the charming companion he was. Villona was entertaining also – a brilliant pianist – but, unfortunately, very poor. (*D* 45–6)

The implications of the phrase 'worth knowing' are economic, and Jimmy's excitement is defined in terms of its origins: 'Rapid motion through space elates one; so does notoriety; so does the possession of money' (*D* 46). Jimmy has been seen publicly mixing with these Continentals, and 'as to money – he really had a great sum under his control.' It might not seem much to Ségouin, but Jimmy has inherited from his father 'solid instincts' and knew 'with what difficulty it had been got together'. Previously his bills had been kept to 'the limits of reasonable recklessness': he has a keen perception of 'the labour latent in money'; and it is 'a serious thing for him' that he is about to invest the greater part of his money in Ségouin's business. 'Reasonable recklessness' sums up the struggle in Jimmy between the desire for a wild life and financial prudence, and his feverish mood is directly related to the conflict between this prudence and his hopes of making money from a prospective investment which has his father's backing. Even the car in which they are riding has to be priced ('Jimmy set out to translate into days' work that lordly car in which he sat') and Jimmy himself is similarly valued by his father who, seeing his son's gentlemanly appearance in evening dress, 'may have felt even commercially satisfied at having secured for his son qualities often unpurchasable.'

I have emphasized the repeated monetary reference of this story,[26] because without recognition of the way Joyce dwells on money, it is hard to perceive what lies beneath Jimmy's final mood. For it is his sober sense of the importance of money that prevents him from enjoying his escape into 'life'. He joins in the superficial gaiety, but when the card-playing begins his customary respect for money reasserts itself. While the other men are 'flinging themselves boldly into the adventure', Jimmy is conscious that he is losing and grows confused about his cards and his IOUs; once again money excites him, though now not the possession, but the loss of it. His excitement is always uneasy, and leaves the hangover of the closing paragraph:

> He knew that he would regret in the morning but at present he was glad of the rest, glad of the dark stupor that would cover up his folly. He leaned his elbows on the table and rested his head between his hands, counting the beats of his temples. The cabin door opened and he saw the Hungarian standing in a shaft of grey light:
>
> – Daybreak, gentlemen! (*D* 51)

It is the grey dawn of his usual life, where the consciousness of the cash-values will return in full strength to reproach him for the recklessness of his

[26] Zack Bowen points out that 'the word *money* is used nine times in the first four pages of the story, as well as a liberal sprinkling of such terms as *rich*, *wealth*, *sum*, etc.' ('After the Race', *Hart–Dubliners*, 57–8).

temporary fling at what he thinks of as life. Like the boy in 'An Encounter', like Little Chandler in 'A Little Cloud', Jimmy cannot abandon himself even to an inadequate and foolish dream; he is hamstrung by an inbred absorption in money.

Despite the insistence on the financial prudence inhibiting Jimmy's pleasures, 'After the Race' is a less direct and explicit story than 'Eveline', though few, I imagine, would rank it high among the stories in *Dubliners*, mainly because Jimmy Doyle and his companions are, by Joyce's standards, not fully realized. Certainly the next story, 'Two Gallants', is a far richer invention. Both 'Eveline' and 'After the Race' are given a denser texture by the ambiguity of the author's attitude towards the central figures, where critical irony is qualified by pity. But in 'Two Gallants' this ambiguity is more extreme and disturbing, for Lenehan is the most contemptible figure presented by Joyce, and also the most pitiable. The situation of Corley and his parasite preying on the servant girl is a more vicious conception than the stupidities of the earlier stories, and Lenehan's unscrupulous sycophancy drags him even lower than the brutal Corley; yet from the beginning, mixed with the contempt, there is an element of pity. Lenehan, ingratiatingly flattering Corley and adopting an expression of amused interest and a youthful manner, is prematurely aged; he is a boon companion but isolated: 'his adroitness and eloquence had always prevented his friends from forming any general policy against him.' He is said to be insensitive to discourtesy but the strain of his sycophantic role and his parasitic dependence is apparent, even before Corley leaves him and the surface gaiety is discarded. He is listless and morose in the crowd, tired of the need to amuse. Even the passing relief which comes to him when he has had his wretched meal of peas and ginger-beer produces only flabby daydreams to succeed his despair:

> In his imagination he beheld the pair of lovers walking along some dark road; he heard Corley's voice in deep energetic gallantries and saw again the leer of the young woman's mouth. This vision made him feel keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit. He was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues. He would be thirty-one in November. Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own? He thought how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to. He had walked the streets long enough with friends and with girls. He knew what those friends were worth: he knew the girls too. Experience had embittered his heart against the world. But all hope had not left him. He felt better after having eaten than he had felt before, less weary of his life, less vanquished in spirit. He might yet be able to settle down in some snug corner and live happily if he could only come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready. (*D* 62)

When Lenehan envies Corley he sinks beneath the level of contempt; when he looks at his own way of life and despises it, he rises above his smug ally. The very nature of his vision of blissful escape is symptomatic of his inability to overcome his moral disabilities: he is tired of being a parasite, but even his dream of comfort, with a girl possessed of enough money for

him to live off her and sufficiently simple-minded to allow him to do so, is parasitical.

Because we are taken into Lenehan's mind and not into Corley's, the latter remains an unsympathetic figure, crude, conceited, grotesque, animal, and his attitude to women, coupled with his air of a 'conqueror', makes him so repellent a figure that even the mercenary Lenehan has a note of mockery in his voice when he calls this brute 'a gay Lothario'. The heart of the story is in Lenehan's nature and predicament, for if, like Corley, he had been seen only from outside, the whole emotional interplay of pity and contempt, and the complexity of mood that makes every humiliating submission arouse greater sympathy as well as greater scorn would have been lost. The desperate state of Lenehan's mind is finally revealed when, taunted by Corley's silence about the success of the scheme, his anxiety gives way to bafflement 'and a note of menace pierced through his voice'. That all this anxiety and wretchedness is about a paltry plan to cadge a sovereign from a servant-girl defines the depths of Lenehan's 'poverty of purse and spirit'.

Except in the stories of public life, where Joyce is not primarily concerned with private misery, the satire is tempered with pity, the pity controlled and prevented from corrupting to sentimentality by the satire, and on this depends the emotional density of the stories. From the start the love-hate relationship that existed between Joyce and his fellow-Dubliners was already present and manifest. Both pity and contempt are strongly present in the last of the stories of immaturity, 'The Boarding-House', though here, as in 'Eveline', the stock anecdote (the trapping into marriage of a feeble young man) limits Joyce's exploration of character. Although Mrs Mooney and Bob Doran are drawn sharply enough, they are closer to caricatures than is, say, Lenehan. But the conventional story is enriched by the social implications of an unholy alliance between the forces of religion and society and those of hypocritical immorality. The priest tells Bob Doran he must marry the girl; his Catholic employer will, he fears (and Mrs Mooney counts on it), sack him, and, besides, Mrs Mooney, who has connived at the whole affair, is able to depend on 'all the weight of social opinion'. Joyce darkens the picture with other touches: Mrs Mooney, the ostentatiously respectable, churchgoing, butcher's daughter, who 'dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals with meat', is referred to by her lodgers as '*The Madam*', and her house is 'beginning to get a certain fame'. (These suggestions are expanded and fulfilled in *Ulysses*, where Bob Doran appears as a drunken wreck, while the behaviour of his wife and mother-in-law is common gossip: in *Finnegans Wake* the matter is summed up, in the paragraph which runs over all the titles of the *Dubliners* stories, by the modification 'boardelhouse' – *FW* 186). Of all the characters in the book, Mrs Mooney is the one against whom Joyce shows most animus. Her energetic determination, the cunning and firmness with which she runs the house, her petty frugality, her policy with regard to her daughter, and her calculations about Bob's situation are manifestations of a greedy egotism approaching malevolence. Her own wretched marriage makes an ironic background for her determination to get her daughter married off. Respect-

ability is the screen behind which Mrs Mooney operates, a screen which she keeps up even in her own thoughts, though a sudden change in style betrays her inner vulgarity, as the cliché-ridden thoughts which conclude that 'for her only one reparation could make up for the loss of her daughter's honour: marriage' abruptly switch to more practical considerations and a coarser vocabulary:

> She knew he had a good screw for one thing and she suspected he had a bit of stuff put by. (*D* 70)

Mrs Mooney's dominant personality may hide the importance of her daughter's part. Polly relies on her mother's intimidation to get her what she wants, as Lenehan depends on Corley's conquering manner. Polly is no mere tool in her mother's hand. Her appearance, 'like a little perverse madonna', exactly corresponds to the mixture in her behaviour of innocence and ruthlessness. She understands her mother's silent complicity, and her distraught performance in Doran's bedroom is as well calculated to force his hand as her earlier appearance there had been to seduce him. Once he has gone from the room, she is quite unperturbed and waits patiently, almost cheerfully. It is significant and ominous that though her thoughts turn to 'hopes and visions of the future', these apparently do not specifically include marriage to Doran, for it is not until her mother calls her to come downstairs to receive Doran's proposal that 'she remembered what she had been waiting for.' For her, as for her mother, marriage is merely the attainment of a social position, and if her slyness is less repellent than her mother's moral coercion it is perhaps only because she is less thoroughly exposed.

For both women, words are a means of concealment, and, consequently, Joyce makes repeated ironic use of the 'market-place' meanings of words to express the debasement of the things they stand for (as in 'Two Gallants' the word 'friends' is used). The word 'frank', for instance, is repeated and then shown to be indistinguishable from 'deceitful':

> Things were as she had suspected: she had been frank in her questions and Polly had been frank in her answers. Both had been somewhat awkward, of course. She had been made awkward by her not wishing to receive the news in too cavalier a fashion or to seem to have connived and Polly had been made awkward not merely because allusions of that kind always made her awkward but also because she did not wish it to be thought that in her wise innocence she had divined the intention behind her mother's tolerance. (*D* 69)

Equally ironic is the reference to Bob Doran, just after he has been longing to escape to another country, as 'the lover'.

Despite the obvious reversal of the sex of predators and prey, the penetration into Bob Doran's state of mind prevents 'The Boarding-House' from being too barely parallel in its general scheme to 'Two Gallants'. There might have been less sympathy to spare for Lenehan if the feelings of the 'slavey' had been explored: here, such pity as is available goes to the victim, though, in accordance with the book's general theme, Bob is as much at the mercy of his own feebleness as of the two women. He is as subservient to appearances and respectability as Mrs Mooney herself, and the landlady

well realizes this: 'She did not think he would face publicity.' The embarrassment of confession and the fear of his affair being talked about dominate his mind. The endemic poverty of spirit is Bob's downfall – fear of losing the position his diligence had earned, fear of his family's scorn, fear of being 'had' and of being laughed at, fear of confronting 'the implacable faces of his employer and of the Madam', and fear of the threatening brother. Bob's helplessness, inability to shave, misting glasses make him pitiable, but essentially he is caught because of his unquestioning acceptance of the nets which trap him: it is his 'sense of honour' which over-rules his instinct for celibacy and tells him that 'reparation must be made for such a sin.' (Unknowingly he uses the very catchwords which Mrs Mooney called on to exalt her self-righteousness.) Conformity paralyses him; respectability is the cloak of his pusillanimity as it is of the Mooneys' ruthlessness.

In the four stories of immaturity Joyce traces the various symptoms of paralysis – in the poor and oppressed, in the well-to-do and 'free', in the parasite, predator and victim – with insight and understanding, though the cutting ironies in the treatment of Jimmy Doyle, Mrs Mooney and Bob Doran lack the psychological complexity of the vision of Lenehan's wretchedness. Excepting 'Two Gallants', these stories, without being grossly didactic or bluntly over-simplified, have something of the flavour of 'moral tales': they are good of their kind, but the kind does not give the fullest scope for Joyce's subtlety in apprehension of human nature and behaviour, or for his gift of perceiving in the common events of daily life an aesthetic shape and a meaning. Yet a collection of short stories, thematically unified, requires some variety of plot and treatment, and the acerbity of 'The Boarding-House' and the wry simplicity of 'Eveline' interact sharply and effectively with the resonant suggestiveness of the stories of childhood and 'Two Gallants'. The pathos of the child's predicament needed to be balanced by the more acid detachment with which Joyce regarded those who had failed to grow up, and the dominant theme had to develop from the frustrations of childhood to the exchange of the spiritual values of love and friendship for respectability, material security, status and money – the sin of simony for which the Dubliners pay with moral paralysis.

Maturity

The stories of maturity present contrasts of manner as marked as those in the stories of childhood and of adolescence. 'Counterparts' is direct and energetic; 'Clay' works almost entirely by implication. The latter may seem more characteristically Joycean, but the robustness in the handling of 'Counterparts' is an expression of the subject itself, as the paler and more delicate tones of 'Clay' and 'A Little Cloud' reflect the personalities of Maria and Little Chandler. Joyce is ranging not only over typical Dublin situations, but also over the social and cultural levels of the city. As Eveline and Jimmy Doyle are linked in a frustrated desire for life and contrasted in

social and financial position, so, although both Chandler and Farrington are men who feel shackled in marriage, their stories belong in the one case to the intellectual life of Dublin, such as it is, and in the other to the amusements of the bar-flies. The same contrast is later made in *Ulysses* between, on the one hand, the groups in the newspaper office and the National Library, and, on the other, those in Davy Byrne's and Barney Kiernan's. In 'A Little Cloud', as in *Ulysses*, Dublin's literary culture is represented by journalism and the fringes of the Celtic twilight, and in both works Ignatius Gallaher figures as the great journalist; Farrington's first port of call after pawning his watch is Davy Byrne's and there he meets, as does Bloom in *Ulysses*, Nosey Flynn and Paddy Leonard, the regulars.

The comedy of 'A Little Cloud' lies in the contests in Chandler's soul between admiration and envy of his friend, between the melancholy sensitivity on which he prides himself and the assertive vulgarity which fascinates him. The end, when he is repelled by the cold and ladylike prettiness of his wife and the prim and pretty furniture of his house, seeing them as foreign to his poetic soul, recalls the opening description of Little Chandler with his small white hands, frail frame, quiet voice, refined manners, carefully-tended hair, discreet perfume, and perfect nails and teeth. Chandler's longing to escape from prim prettiness is a longing to escape from his own nature, and even his cultivated melancholy is a self-indulgent retreat from life, which is immediately humbled before the coarse temptations represented by Gallaher. The invitation to Corless's fills him with 'a present joy'; 'he knew the value of the name.' He flushes with pride when he remembers Gallaher's bold light-heartedness, and, in this reflected glory, 'for the first time in his life he felt himself superior to the people he passed.' This survives his perception of Gallaher's vulgarity: he still finds 'the old personal charm':

> And, after all, Gallaher had lived, he had seen the world. Little Chandler looked at his friend enviously. (*D* 84)

Similarly Lenehan envied Corley whom he scorned. Again, the paralysis of Dublin manifests itself in an inability to affirm one's own nature. Chandler's questions about the immorality of foreign cities betray a secret hankering after the gaudy and vulgar, and the influence of the drinks and of Gallaher's stories upsets 'the equipoise of his sensitive nature'. The attempt 'to assert his manhood' against his patronizing companion by declaring that Gallaher will marry one day leads him only to self-betrayal, when by his repetition of Gallaher's phrase he shows that he too feels that in marrying he had put his 'head in the sack', and the humiliation is completed by Gallaher's boast that when he marries it will be to some rich woman, a German or Jewess. The course of Chandler's mood from admiring joy to envious depression is carefully plotted from the early references to Gallaher's 'travelled air' and 'fearless accent' to the perception of something unpleasing in the accent and gaudy in the manner; from the recognition of Gallaher's talent as 'a brilliant figure on the London Press' to a depreciation of 'tawdry journal-

ism'; from the belief that Gallaher 'had deserved to win' to a feeling that his success was somehow unjust; from an affectionate pride in Gallaher's friendship to a realization that he, Chandler, was being patronized. The hesitations, waverings, contradictions in Chandler's changing mood are beautifully caught in the worn but unobtrusive poeticisms of the style, and do not make him entirely ridiculous, for, however absurd his poetic ambitions may be, he is a sensitive person compared to Gallaher, though his sensitivity and cultural aspirations are spread over an underlying acceptance of the Dublin ideas of life and success; their prime function is to conceal from himself his failure. His ambivalent attitude to his native city and his country colours everything; he dreams of being a poet with the distinctive Celtic note of melancholy, but chiefly to impress the English critics; he thinks it a pity his name is not 'more Irish-looking' and seems excited when Gallaher speaks of the French liking for Irishmen, and yet feels that 'you could do nothing in Dublin.' His comparison of the cold eyes of his wife with those of the passionate and voluptuous Jewesses Gallaher had spoken of, the resentment against his life and the desire to 'escape from his little house', his recognition that marriage has made him 'a prisoner for life', all stem from his fear that it is 'too late for him to try to live bravely like Gallaher.' However shoddy Gallaher's life may be, it seems exciting and desirable compared to his own insipid delusions. Even the poem which begins to replace 'dull resentment' with his familiar self-deceiving melancholy is conventional Byronic sentimentality, covering the reality of his domination by his sharp-tongued wife with a feeble vision of a lamentation over a dead woman. The choice of poem does not indicate that Chandler wishes his wife were dead, but it does suggest that he would relish the situation of being a grief-stricken mourner. Poetry of this kind is for him an anaesthetic, for repetition of it produces a soothing sadness and the dream of writing it provides the imagined possibility of flight from Dublin: 'If he could only write a book and get it published, that might open the way for him.' The interruption of the crying baby destroys even the escape of illusion, and, by forcing him back into his envy of Gallaher's freedom, re-awakens his resentment. The uncharacteristic violence with which the quiet and delicate Mr Chandler shouts 'Stop!' into the baby's face is a measure of his frustration, and marks the extreme of his revolt. The subsequent shame and remorse demonstrate that the balance, disturbed by the meeting with Gallaher, is restored; Little Chandler has temporarily purged himself of the longing for a wild life by the one rebellious act of shouting at the baby.

For all the mockery of his melancholy, this is one of the most melancholy stories in the book; sympathy for Chandler's predicament balances the sharp satire of Dublin's literary life, perhaps because one feels that in Chandler there are signs of decency and sensitivity, subdued by feebleness of spirit: even the shout at the baby, trivial, pathetic, momentary, comically inadequate as it is, is one of the few gestures against paralysis in the book. (Some critics have thought, plausibly enough, that the title of the story is a reference to the 'little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand' in the *First*

Book of Kings (xviii, 44).[27] But the biblical cloud is the forerunner of the rain which comes to end the famine in Israel, and one can make this apply to Joyce's story only by taking it as an irony, and a rather clumsy one at that. I think it more likely that the title refers to the transient resentment and outburst – no more than a small and passing cloud over Chandler's resigned 'equipoise'.)

Chandler feels imprisoned by his ties as husband and father; Farrington, his opposite number in 'Counterparts', is conscious of no such responsibilities. Both men are clerks, both find their work tiresome, both long for a freer, less drab life, but while Chandler is small and delicate, a mild and gentle dreamer, Farrington is tall and bulky, a man of savagery and violence.[28] 'The equipoise of [Chandler's] sensitive nature' is the antithesis of Farrington's explosive state: 'the barometer of his emotional nature was set for a spell of riot.' Chandler is remorseful for having shouted at his baby son; Farrington beats his son viciously and without mercy.

As the title suggests, there is something diagrammatic about 'Counterparts'; Farrington is abused and threatened for his inefficiency by Mr Alleyne and forced to apologize for his unpremeditated witticism, and, in turn, threatens and beats his son, forcing out of him an abject plea to be let off. The parallel between Alleyne and Farrington is maintained during the pub-crawl: as the former is disappointed in his attempt to impress Miss Delacour, and is humiliated when he tries to triumph over Farrington, so Farrington is embittered by his inability to get the woman he sees in Mulligan's and humiliated by Withers in the trial of strength. Joyce avoids a mechanical symmetry mainly by the gradual development in Farrington of a murderous rage and violence against the world. Nowhere else in his work (not even in the noisy and threatening old Citizen of *Ulysses*) does Joyce approximate to the character of Farrington, a man with 'a hanging face', wine-dark complexion and bulging eyes, like a tormented bull. The impulse to murder is felt as he looks at Alleyne's bent egg-like head 'gauging its fragility', and later, when he realizes he cannot finish his copying in time, his mood is one of undirected, indiscriminate destructiveness:

> He felt strong enough to clear out the whole office single-handed. His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence. All the indignities of his life enraged him. (*D* 100)

The connection between his violent temperament and his need for alcohol is soon established ('A spasm of rage gripped his throat for a few moments and then passed, leaving after it a sharp sensation of thirst'), and his longing for the gaslight and noise of the bars is a desire to escape from 'the dark damp night'. Thus when he arrives home 'full of smouldering

[27] E.g. *Tindall–RG*, 26–7.

[28] Robert Scholes remarks perceptively on the stylistic device of repeatedly referring to Farrington, in simple declarative sentences, as 'the man': 'Calling him "The man" emphasizes both his dullness and his plain brutal masculinity. And the repetitious sentence pattern drums into our heads the dull round of the man's workaday existence which has certainly helped to brutalize him' ('Counterparts', *Hart–Dubliners*, 97).

anger and revengefulness', feeling thirsty again and not even drunk, to find the place in darkness and the fire out, the destructive energy which he has been restraining with difficulty all evening has to explode. This is what makes the last incident so savage: it is not merely a father beating his son but the unchaining of a murderous anger which has been boiling up throughout the story. The closing sentences of the story are boldly placed:

> – O, pa! he cried. Don't beat me, pa! And I'll . . . I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you. . . . I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you, pa, if you don't beat me. . . . I'll say a *Hail Mary*. . . . (*D* 109)

The boy's terrified plea for mercy comes near to melodrama, besides risking a shift of attention from Farrington's own wretched state to the pitiable terror of his son, but the pathos is soured by the irony that, in a world inhabited by savages like Farrington, the child has been led to believe that the oppressor can be bought off by a promise of a prayer. This is an epiphany not only of the boy and his father but of the *mores* of their society, where drunkenness and savagery co-exist with religious practices reduced to a kind of witchcraft.[29] The almost over-pathetic, almost tear-jerking, close to a harsh story is the point to which everything has been moving: the vengeful frustrated world of Farrington, with its animal escapes and satisfactions, is the essential context, the 'artistic circumstances', in which a boy's thrice-repeated promise of a prayer is an epiphany of a society.

Of all the stories 'Clay' has the most individual style, serving both as an expression of Maria's personality and as a means of creating a pervading irony. Maria is the only central character in *Dubliners* who appears satisfied with her lot. Yet this is mere appearance: her insistence that everything is 'nice' hides fundamental frustration. She recalls Joe often saying, 'Mamma is mamma, but Maria is my proper mother' because the maternal role is one she would like to have played; but the fact is that she is not a 'proper mother'. Her suppressed disappointment occasionally peeps out; when Lizzie Fleming says that 'Maria was sure to get the ring' (the promise of marriage) in the Hallow Eve games, Maria laughs and says she does not want 'any ring or man either', and yet, in laughing, her eyes sparkle 'with disappointed shyness'. Her denial and her later self-congratulation on being independent are part of her concealment, from herself and others, of her disappointment, but any careless remark can penetrate the screen. When the shop-girl impatiently asks if she wants to buy wedding-cake, Maria blushes, and she allows the drunken gentleman on the train to assume that the bag contains things for her children, favouring him 'with demure nods and hems'. Her epiphany comes when she is called upon to sing *I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls*. Despite her poverty and her humble position in the laundry, she sings of marble halls, vassals and serfs, riches and a high ancestral name, but when she comes to the second verse, she sings the first

[29] Stanislaus Joyce, recording the incident in his uncle's family which suggested this climax, wrote in his diary, 'Such appalling cowardice on both sides nearly made me ill' (*Diary–SJ*, 37–8).

one over again. As Hugh Kenner has pointed out, 'the song should have gone on to treat of marriage':[30]

> I dreamt that suitors sought my hand;
> That knights upon bended knee,
> And with vows no maiden's heart could withstand,
> They pledg'd their faith to me.
> And I dreamt that one of that noble host
> Came forth my hand to claim.
> But I also dreamt which pleas'd me most,
> That you lov'd me still the same.

Maria's instinctive avoidance of the painful spot is a silent epiphany, while the concluding sentence of the story is an epiphany 'in the vulgarity of speech' of the man who speaks of Maria as his 'proper mother' but nevertheless allows her to live in servitude and confinement: he is sentimentally moved by her quavering song,

> and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was. (*D* 118)

Maria is a less melancholy figure than Little Chandler, but only because she has more successfully subjugated her dreams and surrendered her spirit. I find the attempts to trace in Maria the Blessed Virgin, a witch or the Poor Old Woman quite unconvincing, contributing nothing to the story and demanding further tortuous explanation; yet the title 'Clay' is itself clearly symbolic. The original title of the story was 'Hallow Eve', which points in much the same direction. Hallow Eve is the time when ghosts walk, and spirits rise from the ground, and Maria's visit to the Donnellys' is indeed like the brief return of a ghost. The title 'Clay' points even more directly to Maria's death, though what the clay in the saucer symbolizes for her is not real death, but a return to the place to which she has been removed out of the circulation of life. To this extent 'Clay' foreshadows the replacement of paralysis as the metaphor for Dublin life by the image of living death which is fully registered in 'The Dead'. Maria's existence is in the past: outside her place of interment she is incompetent and at a loss. Her instinct in declining Joe's offer that she should come and live with him ('she would have felt herself in the way') was right: she no longer belongs in the world where the family has broken up and Joe and his brother will never speak to each other again; she has no real part to play, even as 'a veritable peacemaker'.

The sterility of Maria is paralleled by that of Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case', though his self-conceit is set against her humility, and his voluntary choice of celibacy contrasted to her involuntary deprivation; she is excluded from life, he excludes himself. Mr Duffy has not succumbed to his environment, but rejected it. He lives at Chapelizod,

[30] *Kenner*, 58.

> 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. (*D* 119)

His uncarpeted and pictureless room is furnished with a minimum of functional furniture; his books are arranged 'according to bulk'; the papers in his desk are neat and tidy: 'Mr Duffy abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder'. He is detached, even from his own body, is inclined to watch himself dubiously, and invents brief impersonal sentences about himself. Above all Mr Duffy is determined to avoid the pitfalls into which the characters of all the other stories have fallen. Paying no heed to 'the conventions which regulate the civic life', he will not submit tamely to accepted moral standards ('He allowed himself to think that in certain circumstances he would rob his bank'); in all things he preserves his intellectual pride. His refusal to allow the free play of his mind to be hampered by conventional material or emotional bonds saves him from the follies of his fellow-citizens. Even when Mrs Sinico's casual remark at the concert leads to a relationship, his rectitude, his 'distaste for underhand ways', makes him insist that they meet at her house. The relationship is intellectual; nevertheless, this is the first adventure in a life which has been 'an adventureless tale' and Mrs Sinico's 'fervent nature' has its effect on him:

> Her companionship was like a warm soil about an exotic. . . . This union exalted him, wore away the rough edges of his character, emotionalized his mental life. (*D* 123–4)

Ironically, Mrs Sinico's affectionate solicitude only nourishes the growth of his egotism, while the same exaltation which lifts him higher above her draws her into a more passionate attachment: the image of the warm soil feeding the exotic plant which grows above and away from it has the right connotations. He thinks that 'in her eyes he would ascend to an angelical stature' and expatiates on 'the soul's incurable loneliness'. He listens to the sound of his own voice: 'We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own.' The consequence is that when, moved by his words, Mrs Sinico presses his hand passionately to her cheek, he is both surprised and disillusioned, and quickly breaks off the relationship, telling her that 'every bond . . . is a bond to sorrow.'

Inevitably the news of her death four years later, as a result of an accident while drunk, merely produces a revulsion in Mr Duffy's superior soul, to think that he had ever revealed 'what he held sacred' to a woman capable of such a squalid vice and such a vulgar death, and he congratulates himself on having broken with one who was 'unfit to live'. But even Mr Duffy's inhuman egotism cannot sustain this attitude. From self-approval he moves to self-defence as he tries to assure himself that 'he had done what seemed to him best', and the picture of her loneliness shows him his own: 'His life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory – if anyone remembered him.' Now, in the darkness of the park, instead of hearing his own voice, he seems to feel her hand, to hear her voice asking, 'Why had he withheld life from her? Why had he sentenced her to death?'

He feels 'his moral nature falling to pieces'. The final irony is that his epiphanic self-revelation comes from seeing lovers lying in the shadow of the park wall:

> Those venal and furtive loves filled him with despair. He gnawed the rectitude of his life; he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast. One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness: he had sentenced her to ignominy, a death of shame. He knew that the prostrate creatures down by the wall were watching him and wished him gone. No one wanted him; he was outcast from life's feast. (*D* 130–31)

The nature of this revelation is beautifully judged: the upright and incorruptible man, who had refused to meet Mrs Sinico 'stealthily', now feels inferior to and rejected by the 'prostrate creatures' enjoying their 'venal and furtive' sexual encounters. But despite his sense of deprivation, the terms in which he refers to the lovers indicate that there is no fundamental change in his way of regarding human relationships, and we are not, I think, intended to take his devastating experience as promising a transformation of Mr Duffy. It arises from his memory of Mrs Sinico, and from his intense feeling of her presence with him in the darkness, but this presence is like that of the train, the noise of which seems to reiterate her name. As it passes from sight and hearing so he begins 'to doubt the reality of what memory told him':

> He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone. (*D* 131)

The epiphany is a transient perception of what is lacking in the cold, dark, silent world of his isolation.

The technique of presentation is exactly devised: Mr Duffy's egocentricity is reflected in an inward-turned, self-regarding style which avoids all direct speech,[31] save for two brief but important exceptions: the first is the casual remark with which Mrs Sinico, seated next to Mr Duffy at a concert, breaks into his self-centred existence, and the second consists of the few words describing the moment of the death which, temporarily at least, shatters his self-approval:

> A juror—You saw the lady fall?
> Witness—Yes. (*D* 127)

The effectiveness and point of this technique is increased by the contrast with the next story where an entirely opposite verbal strategy is used.

'A Painful Case' is, structurally and thematically, one of the most important stories in the book. It has, of course, a particular relationship with 'Clay' as another view of celibacy, and, as the last of the stories of maturity, the portrait of a man who has not really lived at all has a special poignancy. But also this last story of private life affects our understanding

[31] This has a special appropriateness for the story of a man given to composing 'in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense' (*D* 120).

of all the stories which precede it and of the three stories of public life which follow. For Mr Duffy is a man who has carefully preserved himself from all the follies which have been the downfall of the other Dubliners. Unlike the sisters in the first story he is attached to no Church or creed; unlike the boy in 'An Encounter' he is satisfied with a life like 'an adventureless tale'; he does not hanker after the romantic as does the boy in 'Araby'; he is not, like Eveline, bound by family ties, nor attracted, like Jimmy Doyle, to the society of 'gilded youth'; he despises such 'venal and furtive' affairs as are presented in 'Two Gallants' and 'The Boarding House', and could neither be trapped into marriage like Bob Doran nor shamed by his own poverty of spirit like Lenehan; he scorns the Irish literary world of which Chandler dreams, and abhors the disorder and drunkenness of which Farrington is a victim; and, unlike Maria, his celibacy is voluntary. Equally his contempt for the timorous materialism of Irish politics looks ahead to 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', his reference to a city where the arts are entrusted to impresarios foreshadows the musical world of 'A Mother', and, unlike the men in 'Grace', he lives 'his spiritual life without any communion with others.' Mr Duffy's rejections include all the central follies, all the private and social forces which contribute to the paralysis of his fellow-citizens, and thus his story comes to have a special centrality and significance. For in Mr Duffy's scrupulous avoidance of all the traps – religion, family ties, love, friendship, marriage, politics, art and the rest – he avoids, as well, life itself. Joyce does not reject these modes of experience. In Dublin they are all corrupt or decaying, but, though none of them provides a way of escape, neither does Mr Duffy's Pharisaical lifting of his skirts to avoid contamination by the muck of the city. The irony is that the only two figures in the book who have presented to them opportunities to escape from their paralysed condition, Eveline and Mr Duffy, miss, through spiritual timidity, the chances which love offers to them, Eveline submitting feebly to false emotional ties, Mr Duffy frightened by the possibility of forming such a 'bond to sorrow'.

Thus, 'A Painful Case' besides rounding off the stories of private life serves, too, as a transition to the world of public life, where the theme of paralysis is treated not in relation to the particular problems of individuals but as manifested in the corporate life of the city. Moreover, this story, with its vision of the ultimate barrenness of the superior soul who painstakingly sterilizes all his human contacts, points directly ahead to one of the controlling themes of the later work. In a sense Mr Duffy makes the same error that Stephen makes in the *Portrait* (the error from which he is to be rescued by Bloom), the difference being that for the young artist the mistake is a necessary portal of discovery, whereas for Mr Duffy it is a final withdrawal into a dead end.

Public life

The transition from the stories of maturity to those of public life is marked

by a technical contrast, for whereas in 'A Painful Case', with two meaningful exceptions, direct speech is avoided and the whole drama enclosed in Mr Duffy's mind, in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' there is (with a single exception) no reported speech at all, nor (again with a single exception) do we ever enter the characters' minds. We are told only what these scroungers and hangers-on did, how they looked, and, in direct speech, what they said. The combined effects of these two techniques, one a matter of style and the other of point of view, are multiple and significant. Most obviously, they detach the reader from the scene as though he were present merely as an observer; more importantly they suggest the atmosphere of gregarious superficiality and inanity, as though nothing goes on beneath the surface behaviour; finally, they are formally relevant, on the one hand preparing for the ironic climax of the verses on Parnell's death, which are also given verbatim and without authorial comment, and, on the other, marking the beginning of the 'public life' section of the book by excluding the personal thoughts and feelings of the characters. Both the exceptions reinforce these effects, and both involve Mr Crofton, the outsider in the group, expressing his priggish withholding of himself. On the only occasion when we are taken into a character's mind, it is to find nothing there:

> He was silent for two reasons. The first reason, sufficient in itself, was that he had nothing to say; the second reason was that he considered his companions beneath him. (*D* 146)

Similarly his refusal to associate fully with the others is brought out by the last sentence, the first sentence in reported speech, when, after the others have received enthusiastically the Parnell poem, 'Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing.'

From beginning to end the story is one of unprincipled meanness of mind, petty backbiting, and mercenary calculations of the most trivial kind. The men gathered in the Committee Room are, with the exception of Joe Hynes, employed to canvass on behalf of Mr Richard J. Tierney, but they show no confidence in or devotion to their candidate. Mr O'Connor, for instance, has spent much of the day sitting by the fire, and is now chiefly occupied with the question of how soon he will be paid. Mr Henchy, obviously in some position of authority, presumably as agent, calls the candidate, for whom he has been canvassing, a 'mean little shoeboy of hell', refers to his 'little pigs' eyes', blasts his soul, tells about Tricky Dicky's disreputable father, and suggests the candidate is engaged in some murky financial arrangements with the City Fathers. It is true that when the bottles of stout arrive Mr Henchy's view of his candidate improves slightly ('Ah, well, he's not so bad after all. He's as good as his word, anyhow . . . He means well, you know, in his own tinpot way'), but hardly to match the picture which he had presented to the electorate of Mr Tierney as '*a respectable man . . . in favour of whatever will benefit this country . . . a prominent and respected citizen.*' This is politics totally devoid of political thought, principle or concern – politics for a few bob and some free beer. Even Joe Hynes with his ivy leaf in his lapel, his defence of the working-

class candidate, his poem on Parnell and his contempt for Tierney is present only in the hope of a free drink.

The only political issue raised is whether the Dublin Coporation should present a loyal address on the visit of King Edward VII. Joe Hynes asserts that the other candidate, Mr Cogan, would not vote for such an address: Mr O'Connor is sure that the Nationalist, Mr Tierney, will also refuse to support it, but as soon as Hynes queries this, Mr O'Connor concedes the point and returns to more important matters:

> —By God! perhaps you're right, Joe, said Mr O'Connor. Anyway, I wish he'd turn up with the spondulics. (*D* 136)

Mr Henchy is in no doubt about it: Mr Tierney, Nationalist or not, will support the address of welcome because the King's visit 'will mean an influx of money into this country.' He rudely brushes aside the question of what Parnell would have done and recommends the King as 'a jolly fine decent fellow . . . an ordinary knockabout like you and me . . . a bit of a rake . . . a good sportsman.' He cannot understand Mr Lyons's objection that having rejected Parnell for immorality it would be strange to welcome King Edward. On this anniversary of his death Parnell is merely a name to pay lip-service to and sentimentalize over, but, as soon as his views are raised, they are dismissed: '—Parnell, said Mr Henchy, is dead.' The old man's comment when, early in the story, Joe Hynes observes that if Parnell were alive there would be no talk of an address of welcome implies the truth about the present state of Dublin politics:

> —Musha, God be with them times! . . . There was some life in it then. (*D* 136)

There is certainly none now. In this context of feeble hypocrisy, double-dealing and petty greed, Joe Hynes's poem 'The Death of Parnell' has a touch of naive sincerity, despite its laboured rhetoric, and makes a curiously complicated impression. Joe Hynes, though a scrounger, has some genuine feeling for the '*Uncrowned King*', and his poem combines maudlin and real grief in a way which is both ludicrous and moving. Yet the applause and Mr Henchy's admiration for the poem show no awareness that in this committee-room Parnell has been betrayed again, and even Mr Crofton, who belongs to the anti-Parnell Conservative party (though now he is dead the party respects him 'because he was a gentleman'), feels free to admit that the poem was 'a very fine piece of writing'.

Joyce never shook off his own childhood attachment to Parnell, and this story, with its symbolic dying fire, shows Irish politics without Parnell as paralysed, if not dead. The sentiment for the past, though kept under control by the critical view taken of the two men who most present it, Hynes and Old Jack, blends with the satire: apart from 'The Dead', this is the only story which suggests the city's longing for its own past. But satire and sentiment are mingled with Joyce's comic view of the civic life of Dublin: he sees it as squalid but funny. Mr Henchy is a comically unprincipled, mercenary, two-faced politician, energetic and mischievous like

a morality Vice, but Joyce seems still too angry about the Parnell affair to laugh very heartily at the corruptions and betrayals of the committee-room, and the bitter tang is only partly mollified by the extraordinary device of placing at the end of the story the poem about Parnell. As Stanislaus Joyce remarked, it 'strikes a faint note of pathos and saves the story from being cynical.'[32] The whole story is so beautifully managed, with everything adjusted to the total composition – the style, the point of view, the symbolic dying fire, the dank evening, the drab scene, the entirely convincing dialogue – that one can easily understand Joyce's preference for it.

According to Stanislaus, of the stories in *Dubliners*, only 'An Encounter' and 'A Mother' were based on personal experience;[33] though, in another sense, every story in the book was clearly based on such experience. Yet 'A Mother' seems one of the least autobiographical of the stories, largely because Joyce confines himself for the most part to the point of view of Mrs Kearney. This seems a strange tactic, as it tends to localize the centre of interest in Mrs Kearney's personal situation rather than in the public life of the city, and the story, as a result, lacks something of the icy detachment of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'. The justification may be that the spectacle of Dublin's musical life is more ridiculous than pernicious, more to be laughed at than to be lashed, and the full comedy can be realized only by perceiving that the city's artistic affairs are a pallid reflection of the petty concerns of private life. The Celtic twilight appeared to Joyce, even when a student, as an association of feeble cultural pretensions with posturing and parochial nationalism; through Mrs Kearney he is able to present them as an insubstantial froth on the surface of a life motivated by respectability and money – a froth quickly dissipated when the underlying preoccupations are disturbed.

The brief biography of Mrs Kearney is thus directly relevant. As a young girl she is admired for her ladylike manners and accomplishments, but, after 'trying to console her romantic desires by eating a great deal of Turkish Delight in secret', she marries a middle-aged bootmaker who is 'sober, thrifty and pious':

> After the first year of married life Mrs Kearney perceived that such a man would wear better than a romantic person but she never put her own romantic ideas away. (*D* 153–4)

In this Jane Austenish way, Joyce presents a woman shrewdly aware of the sober values of respectability and financial stability, and reserving her romantic inclinations as a secret luxury. The Irish Revival and her daughter's musical talents allow her to indulge her taste inexpensively; she is happy to give her attention to the proper organization of the *Eire Abu* Society's

[32] *MBK*, 206.

[33] *MBK*, 79. J. S. Atherton has questioned Stanislaus Joyce's statement on the grounds that many of the stories relate to incidents or relationships in the Joyce family ('The Joyce of *Dubliners*', *James Joyce Today: Essays on the Major Works*, ed. Thomas F. Staley (Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1966), 39). But Stanislaus is talking of first-hand experience of the incidents used.

concert, and even to buy some material to improve her daughter's stage-appearance:

> It cost a pretty penny; but there are occasions when a little expense is justifiable. (*D* 156)

The expression indicates the strict limits within which her romanticism is allowed to override her financial prudence: it is reminiscent of Jimmy Doyle's 'limits of reasonable recklessness'. But just as the young men from whom she had hoped for romance proved to be ordinary, so the reality behind the artistic and nationalist dream proves to be disillusioning. The *artistes* are poor, the small audience gets smaller, and Mrs Kearney begins to regret the money she has spent. Then the Friday night concert is cancelled, and Mrs Kearney returns from romance to the solid realities. She insists that the original contract still holds and that therefore her daughter must be paid for four concerts, and, getting little satisfaction, is tempted to mimic sarcastically Mr Fitzpatrick's accent:

> But she knew that it would not be ladylike to do that: so she was silent. (*D* 158)

Already she is tempted, by the threat to her financial dues, to strip off her respectable demeanour as well as her illusions, and the abandonment of these last is signalled by the fact that she takes her husband, whom she respects 'as something large, secure and fixed' to the Saturday night concert. For this, all the real talent has been reserved to give 'the music-loving public' a treat. The quality of this talent is exemplified by the bass, Mr Duggan, a hall-porter's son who has become 'a first-rate *artiste*' – that is to say, he substituted one night for an opera singer in the part of the King in *Maritana*, and was well received by the gallery –

> but, unfortunately, he marred the good impression by wiping his nose in his gloved hand once or twice out of thoughtlessness. (*D* 160)

The humour here is like that of the remark about Mrs Kearney's resort to Turkish Delight, or the descriptions of Madam Glynn, the ageing soprano who looked 'as if she had been resurrected from an old stage-wardrobe', and of Mr O'Madden Burke, who found the room where the drinks were 'by instinct', and whose 'magniloquent western name was the moral umbrella upon which he balanced the fine problem of his finances.' All of these are in the manner of social comedy and have a tone distinct from anything else in *Dubliners*. Clearly 'scrupulous meanness' has no relevance to this precisely humorous style, which gives the whole story its characteristic flavour.

In Mrs Kearney, money finally outweighs social etiquette. Forgetting her former avoidance of unladylike behaviour, she mockingly imitates Mr Holohan:

> —I thought you were a lady, said Mr Holohan, walking away from her abruptly.
>
> After that Mrs Kearney's conduct was condemned on all hands: everyone approved of what the committee had done. (*D* 168)

After the Kearneys' departure, Mr Holohan paces the room: '—That's a nice lady! he said. O, she's a nice lady!' Very properly in a social comedy the catastrophe is a breach of polite manners. Nationalism and music are forgotten when Mrs Kearney fears that two of the promised eight guineas – she insists on reputable guineas, cannot be fobbed off with commonplace pounds – will not be forthcoming, and her passion leads her into social error, for what unites everyone against her is not a lack of loyalty to the movement or a mercenary attitude towards art, but a piece of unladylike behaviour. Thus the story establishes the values which are truly respected by Dublin cultural society. If, as Mr Duffy thought, Dublin had 'entrusted . . . its fine arts to impresarios', 'A Mother' shows us the kind of impresarios in charge: the muddle-headed Mr Holohan, who is most congenially engaged with Mrs Kearney's decanter or in taking the newspaper man away for a drink, and Mrs Kearney, who indulges her romanticism only to the point where it challenges her sense of what really matters – money, however small the amount involved.

The comedy of 'Grace' is nearer farce, although as the centre of interest shifts, first from Tom Kernan to his circle of friends and their attitude towards religion, and then to the priest, the tone changes from the charitable spirit of the *Inferno* section, to the laughing satire of Kernan's *Purgatorio*, and finally to the contemptuous satire of the *Paradiso* in the priest's sermon.[34] This suggests an inverted *Divine Comedy* in keeping with the irony of the title. For the word 'grace' occurs only three times in the story, and the first two occurrences have sardonic reference to the last. We are told of the commercial traveller, Mr Kernan, that he was never seen in the city without silk hat and gaiters: 'By grace of these two articles of clothing, he said, a man could always pass muster.' This is the only kind of grace with which the Dubliners are concerned: Tom Kernan's fall is not spiritual, but a fall from social respectability, symbolized by his filth-smeared clothes and the dinged silk hat which has rolled away from him, and his ascent is back into the fold of respectable business men as he sits in the church with his 'rehabilitated' hat on his knee. (The symbolic equivalence of 'grace' and 'silk hat' is confirmed by Mrs Kernan's memory of her husband at their wedding carrying 'a silk hat gracefully balanced upon his other arm', and by the attention paid to the welfare of their hats by Kernan and the other gentlemen in church.) The second reference to grace, again identified with the commercial value of social approval, concerns the 'modest grocer', Mr Fogarty, who believed that his manners would ingratiate him with housewives: 'He bore himself with a certain grace, complimented little children and spoke with a neat enunciation.' Both of these occurrences of the word

[34] Joyce's use of the three-part scheme of the *Divine Comedy* was first suggested by Stanislaus Joyce ('Ricordi di James Joyce', *Letteratura* V (3) (1941), 23–35; translated in *Hudson Review* II (4) (1950), 487–514), and treated more fully by Stuart Gilbert (in *Writers of Today*, ed. Denys Val Baker (London, Sidgwick and Jackson 1946), 43–57; reprinted in *Givens*, 450–68), and by Stanislaus Joyce (in 'The Background to *Dubliners*', *Listener* LI (1954), 526–7).

look forward to its use by the priest in the penultimate sentence of the sermon which concludes the story. The priest chooses for his text,

> *For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Wherefore make unto yourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity so that when you die they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.* (*D* 197)

He does not relate this text to its context or indicate in any way that this is Christ's ironic comment at the end of the parable of the unjust steward (*Luke* xvi, 8–9), a comment which ends with the declaration 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' Instead, after observing that it is a difficult text to interpret properly, a text which might seem 'at variance with the lofty morality elsewhere preached by Jesus Christ', he offers the extraordinary gloss that it seems

> specially adapted for the guidance of those whose lot it was to lead the life of the world and who yet wished to lead that life not in the manner of worldlings. It was a text for business men and professional men. (*D* 197)

Christ, he says, with his understanding of human nature, realized that the religious life was not for all men, and that 'by far the vast majority were forced to live in the world and, to a certain extent, for the world.' Without the New Testament context, the reader may miss the full force of this epiphany: Father Purdon is arguing that most men not only can, but must, 'to a certain extent' serve God and mammon. He adds that, in the text, Christ is 'setting before them as exemplars in the religious life those very worshippers of Mammon who were of all men the least solicitous in matters religious.' Taking his cue from this, Father Purdon, having reassured the congregation that he has no terrifying purpose but speaks as 'a man of the world', introduces his business metaphor: he wishes his hearers to examine the books of their spiritual life to see whether they tallied with conscience. If they find their spiritual accounts in good order, they should say so; if there were some discrepancies they should admit them:

> *Well, I have looked into my accounts. I find this wrong and this wrong. But, with God's grace, I will rectify this and this. I will set right my accounts.* (*D* 198)

The irony of this is crushing. To appeal to this congregation to model their spiritual affairs on their conduct of their financial affairs is ludicrous: Mr Kernan is socially declining and in debt to Fogarty, Mr Power has inexplicable debts, Mr Cunningham's wife has pawned the furniture six times, M'Coy borrows without repaying, Mr Fogarty has already failed once in business, and among the company in church are Harford the moneylender, Grimes the pawnbroker and 'poor O'Carroll . . . who had been at one time a considerable commercial figure.' That these men conduct their spiritual accounts on the same principle as their business affairs seems only too likely. In his determination to make friends out of the mammon of iniquity the priest illustrates rather than interprets the parable of the unjust steward called by his master to give an account of his stewardship. The steward, certain of losing his job ('I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed'), decides to insure against dismissal by making friends with his master's

debtors – 'that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses', and, summoning the debtors, he considerably reduces the debt of each of them. The lord commends the man's shrewdness, and there follows the comment given in the text. This is precisely the wisdom of the priest. The spiritual debtors who appear in the church know what to expect from the priest ('He won't be too hard on us') and from the Jesuit Order ('The Jesuits cater for the upper classes'), and they get what they expect. What being 'straight and manly with God' means to them has already been exposed:

> —So we're going to wash the pot together, said Mr Cunningham.
> A thought seemed to strike him. He turned suddenly to the invalid and said:
> - Do you know what, Tom, has just occurred to me ? You might join in and we'd have a four-handed reel. (*D* 184)

The metaphor comically places the mood in which the men approach what Mr Cunningham airily calls 'just a little ... spiritual matter', and when Mrs Kernan acidly pities the clergyman who will have to listen to her husband's confession, the latter leaves his attitude in no doubt:

> —If he doesn't like it, he said bluntly, he can ... do the other thing. I'll just tell him my little tale of woe. I'm not such a bad fellow— (*D* 194)

Mr Kernan will not find much amiss when he looks into his spiritual accounts, nor will Father Purdon's 'friendly talk' inflame the consciences of his hearers. Indeed the presentation of the sermon in reported speech, after the garrulous exchanges round Kernan's bedside, is expressive of the absence of any real impact: Mr Kernan may have 'presented an attentive face', but the words indicate the depth of his attention. The priest's worldly wisdom, like that of the steward, is commended in the praise of his order:

> If you want a thing well done and no flies about it you go to a Jesuit. They're the boyos have influence. (*D* 184–5)

The same point about the Jesuits is made in the *Portrait* when Stephen thinks that they 'had earned the name of worldlings at the hands not of the unworldly only but of the worldly also for having pleaded, during all their history, at the bar of God's justice for the souls of the lax and the lukewarm and the prudent' (*P* 195). As always, compromising religion disgusts Joyce. The squalid accident of the first section is relieved by the Good Samaritanism of the young man in the cycling-suit and Mr Power: the friendly help held out in the second section is benevolent though less substantial, and the blandly ignorant and stupid conversational exchanges are good-naturedly ridiculed: but in Father Purdon's smug and ingratiating address there is something nauseating, a flavour of corruption, strengthened for the few readers who recognized the contemptuous allusion in the name. Purdon Street was in the brothel quarter of Dublin, and is named in the 'Circe' chapter of *Ulysses*. Stanislaus Joyce, who pointed out this allusion, also recorded the fact that his brother had attended a sermon on the doctrine of grace 'and had come away angry and disgusted at the inadequacy of the exposition':

> He said the preacher had not even tried to know what he was talking about, but assumed that anything was good enough for his listeners. It angered him that such shoddy stuff should pass for spiritual guidance.[35]

Some of that anger can be felt beneath the surface of 'Grace', which exposes the role played by religion in Dublin's public life, as the first story, 'The Sisters', exposes its role in the formation of the individual.

In the stories of public life, anger and laughter are mixed more plainly than in the earlier stories, if only because there is no longer the qualifying pathos of individual wretchedness. The poverty of spirit displayed in politics, culture and religion might have seemed pitiful had there been a little more of the feeble sincerity of the Parnell poem, but everywhere a smear of bonhomie and patriotism conceals a shallow corruption. Hypocrisy is hardly the word for the public behaviour of the Dubliners, for they are as self-deluded as deceitful, but the overall appearance of trivial falseness makes these three stories the most consistently satirical of the collection.

In Joyce's original scheme there was thus a progression in attitude, from the sympathetic presentation of childhood to the detached satire of public life, matching the progress of the disease: the frustrated and intimidated boy is succeeded by the adolescents deprived through internal weakness and paralysis of the escape they dream of, by the adults fettered even more securely in family and habit, and finally by the general infection of the corporate life of the citizens for whom the only saving grace is social acceptance and respectability. In the book, as originally planned, there was little to balance the general repudiation of all that Dublin stood for and prized, and this has sometimes led to the objection that *Dubliners* is negative in spirit. But there is nothing negative – except by way of gesture – in the exposure and repudiation of the forces in society which stunt the growth and stifle the free existence of men and women in their personal and social lives. If *Dubliners* truthfully uncovers what is wrong, the author is under no moral or literary obligation to declare what is right, other than by the general implications of his criticism. That he was aware from the beginning that mere contempt for and hostile withdrawal from life was no answer is apparent in 'A Painful Case', for Mr Duffy is the most wretchedly paralysed of all the Dubliners, and in many of the stories sympathy and pity modify the satire. Although Joyce later decided he had done insufficient justice to his city and his country, this belief, whether right or wrong, did not prevent him from publishing the stories: he merely added to them. Even the deeper understanding shown in *Ulysses* does not in any way invalidate the short stories; the picture of the city is at least as critical as in *Dubliners*. It is only if one supposes that there was or is available a complete, entirely just, omniscient view of a city or a country, or indeed of life itself, that one can accuse the view implicit in *Dubliners* of being negative. If, on the other hand, one believes that in this, as in everything else, there are opposed, but equally valid, viewpoints, necessary to each other and potentially valuable only insofar as they retain their integrity, then the attitude expressed in

[35] *MBK*, 225.

Dubliners is not so much negative as limited. Yet it is no more limited than the pervasive attitude of the *Portrait*. Within their own clearly defined positions both books speak truthfully and consistently: they complement each other. That Joyce came to see that the opposites, without surrendering their integrity, without coalescing into a neutral state, had to come into relationship and interact is not in any sense a rejection of the earlier books in which the seeming incompatibles were bluntly and unequivocally defined.

'The Dead'

To emphasize the coherence and direction of Joyce's original plan, I have so far ignored, save for a few passing references, what is certainly the finest story in the book. 'The Dead' is different in kind from the rest: it is on a different scale (roughly twice as long as the longest of its predecessors and about eight times as long as some of them), it was written about a year after the others had been finished, and it originated in a different and almost contrary impulse. While printers and publishers were still delaying over his manuscript, Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus:

> Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in *Dubliners* at least) none of the attraction of the city for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it except in Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty: for it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, Switzerland, France, Austria or Italy. And yet I know how useless these reflections are. For were I to rewrite the book as G.R. suggests 'in another sense' (where the hell does he get the meaningless phrases he uses) I am sure I should find again what you call the Holy Ghost sitting in the ink-bottle and the perverse devil of my literary conscience sitting on the hump of my pen. And after all *Two Gallants* – with the Sunday crowds and the harp in Kildare Street and Lenehan – is an Irish landscape.[36]

Joyce's affection for the city is more evident in the stories than he implies: the passage in 'Two Gallants' is not the only brief evocation of a Dublin landscape or scene, and several stories are expressive of 'ingenuous insularity'; but the story which he decided to add does emphasize those qualities to which Joyce felt he had not done justice, without weakening the severity of his criticism. The dominant image becomes that of a city moribund rather than paralysed; while Dublin hospitality is represented by the annual dance given by the Misses Morkan and praised in Gabriel Conroy's after-dinner speech, the deadness of the city and its inhabitants is chiefly perceived through the relationship between Gabriel and his wife. Thus the private and the public worlds of *Dubliners* here unite and interact, so that even the hospitality appears eventually to Gabriel as a spectral survival from a livelier past, while it is the music of the party which sets

[36] *Letters* II, 166.

in motion the process by which the emptiness of the Conroy marriage is revealed.

Poetic imagery and symbol are more prevailing and assertive than in the earlier stories. The snow falls steadily and symbolically throughout, and Joyce untypically underlines one symbolic scene, when Gabriel Conroy, waiting for his wife at the food of the stairs, sees her standing near the top, listening to a man's voice coming from a nearby room:

> He stood still in the gloom of the hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his wife. 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. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter. (*D* 240)

This explicit pointing to a symbol is not an unaccustomed clumsiness in Joyce, but an aspect of Gabriel's mood – a mood of sentimental poeticizing reflected also in the laboured and pawky style. To choose such an absurd medium for what is vital to the story is typical of Joyce's ironic indirection: he had paid homage to Parnell in a piece of posturing hack-verse; he later expounded his aesthetic theories through the mouth of a pretentious undergraduate; and later still the love which lifts Leopold Bloom above the level of his fellow-citizens is expressed ludicrously and incoherently in a pub-argument. The self-conscious artiness of Gabriel Conroy is used to establish the central '*Distant Music*' symbol of 'The Dead', as well as to suggest the first movements of Gabriel's sentimental-sensuous feeling for his wife.

Once the symbol has been established and labelled, Joyce repeats and extends it, first in a fuller account of the music which has frozen Gretta Conroy on the stairs:

> The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:
>
> *O, the rain falls on my heavy locks*
> *And the dew wets my skin,*
> *My babe lies cold . . .* (*D* 240)

These sentences faintly sketch what will later be filled in and particularized – the nature and origin of Gretta's immobility, an emotional climate of plaintive grief, a figure standing in the rain, death. Distance in time as well as space is suggested by the mention of 'the old Irish tonality', and the half-forgotten words. Yet, Gabriel's response to the experience which has transfixed his wife is to feel, when he sees her eyes shining, 'a sudden tide of joy'. As they walk home his emotional awareness of her intensifies, and the symbol recurs, this time to express his mood:

> A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fire of stars moments of their

> life together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illumined his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers. Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls' tender fire. In one letter that he had written to her then he had said: *Why is it that words like these seem to me so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name?*
>
> Like distant music these words that he had written years before were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with her. (*D* 244–5)

The ironies are manifold. The words 'distant music' are now specifically related to a distance in time, but whereas, in relation to Gretta, they have been associated with grief, wetness, cold and death, for Gabriel, they are associated with warmth, fire, moments of ecstasy and tender physical contact. The mention of 'moments . . . that no one knew of' incidentally prepares for the revelation of the great moment in Gretta's life which she had so long kept secret, a revelation which will obliterate all the memories in which Gabriel is fondly indulging.

Music, heat and physical desire become even more intensely associated when Gretta leans on her husband's arm:

> after the kindling again of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust. (*D* 246)

The word 'lust', intruding on the vague romanticism, is precisely judged: through the link of the musical image it fixes the equivalence between Gabriel's reminiscential sentimentality and the physical excitement burning in his veins, and foreshadows the moment of self-revelation when Gabriel, having heard the story of Michael Furey, who used to sing the song which had called up the symbol of '*Distant Music*', and of whom Gretta can say simply, 'I think he died for me', suddenly recognizes his idealizing sentimentality for what it is. Thus in the symbol, so awkwardly introduced, and variously developed with reference to husband and wife, all the central motifs of Gabriel's situation are focused.

But it is equally relevant to, indeed springs from, the more general theme developed in the party scenes. The party itself with its dances, performances and songs is a survival, and it is not accidental that the two old ladies and their niece are all teachers and performers of music. Music is a basic metaphor: young women laugh 'in musical echo'; Gabriel thinks of Browning's poetry as '*thought-tormented music*', and imagines the people outside, excluded from the party, as 'standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music.' This last fancy is itself a figure for a world where distant music represents a lost realm of light and warmth, and, in Gabriel's after-dinner speech, music is even more clearly placed at the very heart of the theme of nostalgia for a past when things were better. The superiority of the past to the present is a recurring topic, from Lily's bitter comment – 'The men that is now is only

all palaver and what they can get out of you' – to the rhetorical flourish Gabriel plans to use in his speech:

> *Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack.* (*D* 219)

Here, of course, Gabriel is merely praising his aunts in order to score off Miss Ivors, but the topic is treated with more conviction by others and given a gradually deepening musical colouring. Aunt Kate complains about the new order in church choirs, and the conversation at the supper-table centres on the decay of singing. Mr Browne recalls the great Italian singers of the past:

> Those were the days, he said, when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin. . . . Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, *Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia*? Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why. (*D* 227)

These remarks bring the general nostalgia into a specifically musical scheme of reference, and, in Gabriel's speech, the whole dream of the past is linked to music:

> But we are living in a sceptical and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age: and sometimes I fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day. Listening to-night to the names of all those great singers of the past it seemed to me, I must confess, that we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days: and if they are gone beyond recall let us hope, at least, that in gatherings such as this we shall still speak of them with pride and affection, still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die. (*D* 232)

As Gabriel's laboured poeticizings are, a little later, called on to introduce the central symbol of '*Distant Music*', so here his insincere rhetoric (for he has already doctored his speech to suit an audience whose 'grade of culture differed from his' and economically transformed his phrase about Browning's '*thought-tormented music*' into 'a thought-tormented age') is employed to clinch the definition of the city's condition in terms of music and the singers of the past. Thus the musical images and allusions connect the public and private aspects of the story: the central actions, the central themes and emotions, are all given musical expression to create the story's peculiar plaintiveness, like a song 'in the old Irish tonality'.

At the same time, there is a sustained irony. Nostalgia is mingled with insincerity. The readymade syntax and phrases of the after-dinner orator betray the falseness of Gabriel's speech even if we did not remember his earlier outburst – 'I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!' – or his thoughts about his aunts being 'only two ignorant old women'. He wobbles uncertainly between sentimental affection and contempt. But his praise of Irish hospitality is a parody of the letter in which Joyce expressed his

consciousness of having failed to do justice to this quality, while, as Richard Ellmann has remarked, the fragment of an old love-letter which Gabriel recalls, employs phrases which Joyce had addressed to his wife,[37] and Gretta's romantic attachment to her dead sweetheart, Michael Furey, is based on a similar episode in the life of Nora Joyce, which caused some marital disquiet. Some critics have suggested that Conroy is a portrait of Joyce as he feared he might have become had he stayed in Dublin; perhaps it would be truer to say that Conroy is a representation of Joyce as he was – that is, when he was not an artist. The ability to recognize in himself incompatible selves, each with its own kind of self-deception, vanity, triviality and false emotions was part of Joyce's gift. He did not spare himself in the *Portrait* or in *Ulysses*, and in *Finnegans Wake* is everywhere and everyone, not only that 'low sham', Shem the Penman, but also Shaun the Post, and all the other figures which compose the one complex personality of 'Here Comes Everybody'. In the letter to Stanislaus, Joyce seems conscious of his divided selves – of the part of him hankering after Dublin and desiring to do justice to its attractions and virtues, and of that part of him which was his literary conscience and lay in wait in ink-bottle and on pen. In 'The Dead' he allowed the former to operate, but only under the severe control of the latter. He could no more deny the validity of that part of him which was nostalgic for Dublin, wrote sentimental and lascivious love-letters, became jealous of his wife's dead lover, than he could reject the self which saw, with detachment and even hostility, his native city, regarded sardonically the lover's pose, and insisted, like Richard Rowan, that marriage should be free of imposed bonds. In 'The Dead' the opposed selves are not separately incarnated, but the story is seen through the eyes of Gabriel Conroy, who, in turn, is seen through the cool gaze of the artist, the two uniting in Gabriel's vision of himself, comparable to the boy's experience in 'Araby', but deeper and more shattering:

> A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. (*D* 251)

This is not the whole truth about Gabriel; it is Shaun seen by Shem; the severely self-critical eye is as much part of Gabriel as the figure it condemns. The emotional richness of 'The Dead' is a product of such interplay – Gabriel's love and hatred of his city and its people, his sentimental tenderness and crude physical appetite for his wife, his desire to impress and his scorn for those whom he wishes to impress, his conceit and self-contempt, and, permeating all these, the author's detached yet sympathetic presentation of him. The irony, that the mood in Gretta which stirs and inflames Gabriel's love for her is a rejection of the whole of their life together, is not merely a local effect but an image of the general irony that in Ireland the shadowy dead are more vital than the living.

The fiery stars of the moments of ecstasy which Gabriel had longed to

[37] *Ellmann–JJ*, 255.

recall to his wife are extinguished by the memory of a death: compared with the dead boy, Gabriel is a shadow, and even Gretta's face, now she has aged, is 'no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.' The dead, the vital past, still lived in the experience of Dubliners: Mr Browne could be moved by the memory of the singers of bygone days as Gretta was by the memory of Michael Furey, and from this the closing image of Dublin as a city of the spiritually dead, briefly lit up by the memories of the physically dead, develops. Such life as there is resembles distant music – whether of Gretta's dream of romance, or Gabriel's memories of past joys, or the echo of a tradition of hospitality. But the romance is preserved only because the boy died; Gabriel's attempt to recapture for the present his past excitement inevitably fails: Aunt Julia will die 'very soon', and join the shades of her father and his horse. Dublin is a city living only in its past.

The intuition of some mysterious threat to his existence had come to Gabriel when he heard Gretta say, 'I think he died for me', and he had felt terrified as though 'some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world.' Now his perception begins to become clearer as he prepares for sleep: 'One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age.' The metaphor of paralysis, which had suggested 'some maleficent and sinful being' in 'The Sisters', is being replaced by that of death, present in life as 'some impalpable and vindictive being', a development from the suggestions of premature death in 'Clay', and of a past when 'there was some life in it' in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'. Gabriel's vision is of a world where all that really lives is the memory of the past, where all the activities of the 'living' are as shadowy and purposeless as those of the dead:

> His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling. (*D* 255)

The famous closing cadence which follows has been much praised and not infrequently abused for its calculated verbal music, although the alert functionalism of the style throughout the book should make one hesitate before supposing that Joyce has suddenly gone dreamy-eyed. The manner is highly rhetorical, with a profusion of soft alliteration and assonance, repetitions and inverted repetitions, parallel constructions – in fact with a whole repertoire of hushed and narcotic verbal effects. But this is not merely a purple passage; it is the close of a complex story and plainly related in every line to that story. It echoes confusedly Gabriel's experiences during the evening. 'The time had come' has been suggested by words his wife has used – 'when it came to the time'; 'his journey westward' recalls the trip to the west of Ireland which Miss Ivors has tried to persuade Gabriel to join; Mary Jane has mentioned that according to the newspapers 'the snow is

general all over Ireland'; in his after-dinner speech he has spoken of the living and the dead, and his last thoughts were of the dead boy and himself; his wife has named to him the place where Michael Furey was buried; and 'their last end' is a phrase picked up from Mary Jane's account of the monks who slept in coffins 'to remind them of their last end'. At the literal level, then, the paragraph suggests the melting together of Gabriel's thoughts and memories as his consciousness dissolves into sleep. The reference to a 'journey westward' must be metaphorical, for Gabriel has made it plain to Miss Ivors that he has no intention of undertaking such a journey. Yet Gabriel does not merely think that it is time to set out on this journey: he does set out on it in this paragraph as his mind traverses the snow-covered country towards the Shannon and Oughterard. In Irish mythology the journey westward was to the Isles of the Blessed or of the Dead, the mythical islands out in the Atlantic sometimes identified with the Aran Isles. Miss Ivor's trip is to be to the Aran Isles literally, but it is for her a symbolic journey, expressing the backward-looking nationalism and language revivalism which Gabriel has rejected. For Gabriel's mind, losing consciousness, the journey westward is an acquiescent drift towards 'that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead.' In refusing Miss Ivors he has refused to join in the past-seeking death-wish which seems to him to dominate his contemporaries in Ireland: but his self-confidence has been shattered, and now, in his submission to the figure of the dead Michael Furey, his recognition that all are becoming shades, his loss of a sense of identity, he, too, in his own way, is acquiescing in death, the common burial of all the living and the dead.[38]

The suggestions of William York Tindall and Richard Ellmann that, at the end, Gabriel is, as it were, turning to the realities of life seem to me alien to the mood of the story. Tindall recognizes that 'going west means dying', but, on the grounds that the love between Gretta and Michael Furey represents the reality which Gabriel has not experienced, argues that the closing paragraph offers two meanings, 'for Gabriel, facing reality at last, goes westward to encounter life and death.'[39] Ellmann contends that, although 'the cliché runs that journeys westward are towards death', in the story the west is 'the place where life had been lived simply and passionately'; he sees Gabriel's final half-conscious thoughts as 'a concession, a relinquishment', but takes this as 'a silent tribute' to 'a part of the country and a way of life that are most Irish. Ireland is shown to be stronger, more intense than he.'[40] This is to romanticize the West, very much as

[38] In *Ulysses*, westward motion again symbolizes the inevitable movement towards death (*U* 44/60).

[39] *Tindall–RG*, 46.

[40] *Ellmann–JJ*, 258–9. Some critics go much farther than either Tindall or Ellmann. J. Mitchell Morse, for instance, says, 'The story seems to me Joyce's most optimistic work; and beyond the story is Gabriel's journey westward, during which he is to redeem himself by dying for others. He is to become a Christ figure' (*The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism* (New York University Press 1959), 110). One difficulty about accepting these 'affirming' interpretations of the last paragraph is that the language makes plain that the supposed visionary is dropping off to sleep.

Miss Ivors did, and to read into the Michael Furey–Gretta relationship far more than is realized in the story. The emphasis placed by the story is that the relationship belongs to the dead and to the past, and was preserved by Furey's death before the glory of passion had faded and withered with age. The real point of Gabriel's acquiescence is that as a result of his wife's story he has given up the dream of reviving his marriage, of making Gretta forget 'the years of their dull existence together': he has had to recognize that, contrary to his earlier excited conviction, the years have 'quenched all their souls' tender fire.' He accepts nonentity ('His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world') and the drift towards death, and if he (temporarily perhaps) submits to Ireland, it is not to a living primitivism but to a cold lifelessness. The story is, however, complicated by the snow which, falling almost throughout, takes on more and more symbolic force. Ellmann remarks:

> It does not seem that the snow can be death, as so many have said, for it falls on living and dead alike, and for death to fall on the dead is a simple redundancy of which Joyce would not have been guilty.

In consequence, he sees the snow as representing 'mutuality', the necessary connection of the dead and the living, 'a sense that none has his being alone', and the whole story as presenting Joyce's 'lyrical, melancholy acceptance of all that life and death offer.'[41] But this argument too easily dismisses the idea of 'snow' as a kind of death. No-one would suggest that the snow represents physical death, and, if it represents slow spiritual fading-away, then it can represent this as properly with regard to the dead as to the living. The life is dying in those like Gabriel who are technically alive, but it is also slowly dying in the memories of the past. Even the memory of Michael Furey has been only temporarily resuscitated by a song. The snow, falling alike on Dublin and on the graves, is like the drift of time, slowly obliterating the past, so that both the living and the dead are finally 'dissolving and dwindling' into non-existence, awaiting 'the descent of their last end' as they pass not only from human existence but also from human memory. Gabriel had tried to fend off this symbolic drift: as his solicitude for his wife's health has caused him to buy her goloshes to fend off the real snow, so in his plan to recall to her their moments of ecstasy he has hoped to wipe away their dull years of marriage and restore a pristine, burning passion. But this can no more be recaptured than can Gretta's beauty as a girl. The party, too, with its traditions is, as Gabriel hints in his speech, an attempt to hold back the passage of time; the nostalgia it arouses contributes to Gabriel's mood, as he becomes animated and sexually excited by the appearance of his wife. Like old Patrick Morkan's horse, so indoctrinated to walking in circles to drive his master's mill that when harnessed for a drive he walked round and round the statue of William III, Gabriel has been so accustomed to the routine of Dublin hospitality that, despite his

[41] *Ellmann–JJ*, 260–61.

initial cynicism, he succumbs to its influence. It is true that the cold air outside the heated rooms suggests the bracing, stimulating life which Gabriel misses at the party and feels as he follows Gretta through the street, and there is a similar suggestion when Gabriel, preparing for the love scene, which will be as though they had 'run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure', refuses a candle, so that the only illumination is the light from the street. But it is all illusory: while Gabriel looks out from the party and thinks of the pure air outside, he imagines people standing in the snow fascinated by the light and the music: the light which penetrates the hotel bedroom is 'ghostly'; and, so far from enjoying an invigorating walk, he wraps himself up against the elements and seizes the first opportunity of taking a cab. Earlier, he has exclaimed that Gretta, if she were allowed to, would walk home in the snow: obviously for him walks in the snow are merely to be contemplated.

The snow, the cold, and the darkness contribute importantly to the story's significance, but by suggestion and not as a kind of code: they contribute to the general bearing, and influence and reinforce the image of Dublin as a moribund city, where warmth and romance belong only to the memory of the dead who are buried, and the potentiality of life is avoided by the living-dead who still inhabit a ghost world. Neither the snow nor Gabriel's meditations express any mutuality between the living and the dead; the image is consistently of a people who have allowed their lives to be annexed by the dead.

So far from presenting a 'lyrical, melancholy acceptance of all that life and death offer', 'The Dead' fulfils the image of paralysis with which *Dubliners* begins. Joyce's notion of life was hostile to melancholy acceptance. In *Stephen Hero* he wrote of Ireland under 'the plague of Catholicism':

> They obscured the sun. Contempt of human nature, weakness, nervous tremblings, fear of day and joy, distrust of man and life, hemiplegia of the will, beset the body burdened and disaffected in its members by its black tyrannous lice. Exultation of the mind before joyful beauty, exultation of the body in free confederate labours, every natural impulse towards health and wisdom and happiness had been corroded by the pest of these vermin. . . . He, at least, though living at the farthest remove from the centre of European culture, marooned on an island in the ocean, though inheriting a will broken by doubt and a soul the steadfastness of whose hate became as weak as water in siren arms, would live his own life according to what he recognised as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid and unashamed. (*SH* 198–9)

There, despite the rhetoric, one can see the Ibsenish positives that Joyce had to offer: not a feeble acquiescence but an eager, active, affirming life. The closing paragraph of 'The Dead' does not present in Gabriel a vision of reconciliation but of swooning surrender, and everything in it contributes to that conclusion. So far from being a loosely emotive purple passage, it is a precise, sympathetic but critical evocation of resignation to spiritual death – shaped by echoes of and allusions to the conversations which have left their mark on Gabriel's mind, and suggesting by sound, syntax and image

the dull melancholia, the death-in-life, which is creeping all over Ireland.[42]

'The Dead' is in every way an astonishing achievement for a man still in his twenties, and not the least astonishing thing is that it should have been tacked on so successfully to an already complete work of art. Joyce's original scheme of fourteen stories composed with tight artistic economy a complex symmetrical structure: it would seem artistic suicide to add a story of different proportions, on a different scale, with a different central image and a different tone. Yet perhaps it is because of these obvious differences that 'The Dead' does not disrupt the original scheme. Its size and scope enable it to stand by itself, supplementing the other stories rather than being numbered among them. Public and private life are drawn together as the personal predicament of the Conroys is related to the public sociability and nostalgia of Dublin: the element of pity and sympathy in the earlier stories is greatly deepened and enriched until it dominates in the plaintive music of the last paragraph. New aspects of Dublin life are introduced without destroying the original vision and, instead of fusing with the other stories, 'The Dead' serves as an epilogue, qualifying the book as a whole by a modifying retrospection.

Set against the differences are numerous resemblances: the two old sisters suggest the first story; Gabriel's dream of 'a new adventure' and his shocking self-revelation are adult reflections of 'An Encounter' and 'Araby'; the regret for a time when there was some life in it and the political argument with Miss Ivors echo 'Ivy Day', as the musical and nationalist background echoes 'A Mother'; Aunt Julia's song, 'Arrayed for the Bridal' is as inappropriate as Maria's in 'Clay'; Lily's complaint of men only interested in 'what they can get out of you' recalls Corley and Lenehan, and there are many similar and varied links, mostly faint, like the mention of Kathleen Kearney, but all helping to hold 'The Dead' into the book, almost as a new dimension or a new angle of vision, fuller, more responsive, more understanding, with a more general view of public life and a deeper penetration into the soul of the individual Dubliner.

In 'The Dead', the methods of the preceding stories were complexly combined; and all the literary devices and techniques which Joyce invented or adapted or borrowed for *Dubliners* were developed, refined, extended in his later work. The method of allowing the theme to emerge by revealing its track through a series of apparently unimportant incidents; the thoroughgoing adaptation of form and manner of presentation to the particular theme, incident or person; the modifications of style, not merely for the sake of propriety but to express something far in excess of what is overtly

[42] Florence A. Walzl summarizes the various interpretations of 'The Dead' and draws an interesting conclusion: 'The context in which "The Dead" is read affects interpretations of the story. For the reader who approaches "The Dead" by way of the preceding fourteen stories of frustration, inaction, and moral paralysis, this story is likely to seem a completion of these motifs, and Gabriel's epiphany a recognition that he is a dead member of a dead society. But when "The Dead" is read as a short story unrelated to *Dubliners*, the effect is different: the story seems one of spiritual development and the final vision a redemption' ('Gabriel and Michael: The Conclusion of "The Dead" ', *JJQ* IV (1) (1966), 17).

stated; the enrichment of meaning with epiphanies and symbolic objects, settings and even poses; the use of allusions to other literature; the interaction of satire and sympathy through a shift of perspective or tone – all these were carried further and found their fullest and most adventurous development in *Ulysses*.