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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

IMPLIED NARRATIVE IN JOYCE'S DUBLINERS

BY

LORETTA ANGELA DEMARIA-LEIBEL

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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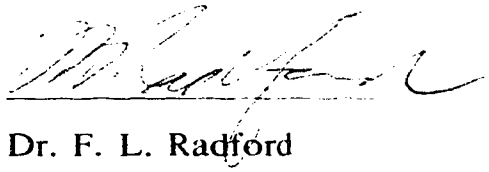

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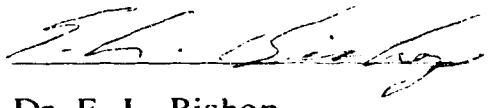

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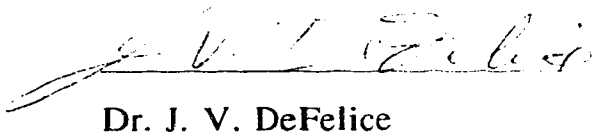

Dr. J. V. DeFelice

September 19, 1992

DEDICATION

FOR

MY MOTHER PIERINA AND MY FATHER GIOVANNI

AND FOR

MY HUSBAND BARTON AND MY SON CONRAD

" . . . *Che fece crescer l'ali al voler mio.*"
Paradiso, XV, 72.

ABSTRACT

Throughout Dubliners, our attention is constantly directed towards the absent or the unspoken. That which is merely thought or intuited rather than directly narrated (by both major and seemingly minor characters) forms the basis for Joyce's innovations with implied narrative. The gnomon, therefore, becomes the apt metaphor for the narrative technique which defines its focus in terms of absence, or couches its main message in a complex code of omissions. The force of Joyce's narrative strategy in Dubliners proceeds from an intricate interweaving of direct statement and implication, of narrative foreground and background, and of language and silence. Through a scrupulous manipulation of devices such as ellipses, the sharp juxtaposition of scenes, and multiple voices and their echoes, Joyce creates a powerful sub-text which the reader must help co-create by imaginatively furnishing the crucial missing details. By providing his readers only with the mere skeletal framework of a complete, causally linked and fully coherent narration, Joyce invites them to join with him in the artist's creative process.

The real stories of Dubliners -- and there exist in embryo far more than the apparent fifteen -- can only be read between the lines of the mainstream text. The sense of latent potential for narrative which pervades the collection creates a type of narrative diffusion, which allows the somewhat paradoxical interdependence of Joyce's

scathing criticism of Dublin institutions and attitudes, and his compassion for its victims. Although it has traditionally only been recognized in the later works such as A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses, Joyce's mastery of an ever-fluctuating narrative perspective is manifest in his fiction as early as Dubliners, in the form of character-specific narration. We must first learn to listen for, and later to interpret the often understated and subtle idiom of narration which permeates Dubliners. Only then can we gain any insight into the complexity and the plurality of a text disguised by its deceptively simple, naturalistic surface. If we are to delve beyond this superstratum, into the very penetralia of Dubliners, we must recognize that the text itself: ". . .teaches us to read *well*, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers" (Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, 5). Like Joyce's later masterpieces, Dubliners ". . . desires for itself only perfect readers and philologists [. . . and urges us to] *learn* to read [it] well!" (Ibid).

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To my first and best teachers -- my mother, who taught me "what the heart is, and what it feels", and my father, who taught me my fractions -- I give my deepest thanks.

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INTRODUCTION

In Dubliners Joyce expands the narrative experience far beyond its traditional dimensions. His use of implied, rather than direct narrative, that is, a kind of reader-generated rather than author- or even narrator-generated narrative, springs directly from his theory of "epiphany" -- or "a sudden spiritual manifestation. . . the most delicate and evanescent of moments" (Noon, 61). The term has also been defined as "a formulation through metaphor or symbol of some luminous aspect of individual human experience, some highly significant facet of most intimate and personal reality, some particularly radiant point to the meaning of existence" (Noon, 70). In the fifteen tales that comprise Dubliners Joyce manages to capture the essence of experience through the saturation of his prose (Ibid). In most of Joyce's stories, it is the reader, not the main character, who experiences the enlightenment. Though few of the major characters involved are able to bear witness to this moment of intense revelation, Joyce clearly expected far more sensitivity and receptiveness from his reading audience. In Dubliners Joyce uses his reader's participation in the text to interweave numerous narrative strands. He does this by refining techniques such as the selective use of ellipses, the sharp juxtaposition of scenes, (both of which force the reader to imaginatively furnish those missing details which complete the truncated narratives), and a third kind of implied narrative, which can best be described as the many echoes or suggestive resonances that filter through from story to story.

In each of the stories, the minor characters that slip in and out of the narrative can often pique our interest just as much as the main characters do, for we are given the distinct feeling that as we pass through the streets of Dublin throughout these fifteen stories, characters appear and reappear in major and minor ways, depending on which individual Joyce chose to foreground. This ever-fluctuating and interchangeable foregrounding and backgrounding gives the reader not only a sense of the author's virtuosity, but also the impression of a multiplicity of perspectives and an expanded sense of vicarious experience. Most importantly, it reveals Joyce's sense of the interconnectedness of all life. It leaves us with the feeling that each person has his or her own "story", and thus expands our capacity for empathy and compassion.

Each Dubliner's story is also linked by a pervasive insistence on absences and voids, on that which is missing, and which could, if present, impart meaning or integrity to life. The unusual term "gnomon" which haunts the young protagonist of "The Sisters" becomes an apt metaphor to describe the lives of all Dubliners, that is, a way of life that is chiefly characterized not by what it possesses, but by what it lacks. Joyce captures this essential incompleteness by drawing the reader into his prose with an invitation to fill in details that are obliquely hinted at rather than directly stated.

In the opening trilogy of childhood, the narrative lacunae emerge primarily because each child-narrator is unable to fill in the blanks for himself or to understand causal relationships. Much like her younger predecessors, Eveline too, offers no explanations and fails to link cause and effect in her own experience. Yet her refusal

to break away from a suffocating life suggests that on a subconscious basis at least, she realizes how empty Frank's promises really are. As a result of her inability to articulate that which she understands on an intuitive level, Eveline's silent story becomes the real narrative focus in a tale otherwise devoid of action. In the stories involving older protagonists, the motivation for narrative omissions changes yet again. As we age, our secrets become much more intentional and deliberate. Those details which are missing from the texts of more mature Dubliners are omitted because those protagonists would prefer not to have to confront unpleasant realities. Both Maria of "Clay" and James Duffy of "A Painful Case" choose not to face the fact that their lives, having been perpetually deferred, have ultimately become meaningless. In the closing trilogy, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", "A Mother" and "Grace", Joyce moves beyond the individual sphere to explore the public conspiracy to suppress truth. In politics, art and religion, the preservation of the status quo is of paramount importance, and consequently, the foundation of lies and deception upon which the status quo is built must be carefully protected. Joyce's exposure of this fact brings us the bleakest view of Dublin yet. But there is a counter-movement back into a cautiously tempered optimism as Gabriel awakens to the life around him in "The Dead", a story which echoes all the earlier stories by subtle variations on the central theme.

And although each Dubliners story is a unique variation on the theme of gnomonified life, the purpose of my study was not to provide an in-depth analysis or explication of each individual story, but to provide readings of a cross-section of stories informed by a

consciousness of the narrative development of the entire collection. Because of this focus, I found it unnecessary to discuss every story. Instead, I have concentrated on a selection of stories that cover the full range of Dublin experience from childhood through maturity and public life. Stories were not selected on the basis of their applicability to my approach, for even those stories which I do not discuss are clearly built upon the principle of implied narrative and invite us to look at what is missing. In "After the Race", Jimmy Doyle lacks the self-esteem necessary to prevent his being taken advantage of by the others. In "A Boarding House", the exchange between Mrs. Mooney and Bob Doran is omitted, for example, but the missing scenario can be filled in very easily. "Two Gallants" also leaves the reader speculating what exactly transpired in the unnarrated interval between Corley and his slavey. In "A Little Cloud", many things are missing from little Chandler's life, including a sense of being valued by his wife and child. In "Counterparts", Farrington must mask the meaninglessness of his existence by drinking himself into oblivion on a regular basis. In these stories, Joyce paints a richer and more complete portrait of the lives of desperation Dublin forces upon her own children as they move through the various stages of life, from youth to middle-age.

Throughout this carefully ordered progression of stories, a very definite metamorphosis of Joyce's narrative technique occurs. The subtlety of the later stories such as the companion pieces "Clay" and "A Painful Case", or the concluding trio of "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", "A Mother", and "Grace" or the powerful coda, "The Dead" is not evident in the earlier stories in which resonances of the more

mature authorial-narrative voice can be heard competing with the young boy's unsophisticated voice. In these later stories, the genesis of a more complex narrative medium, a kind of character-specific narration, which has traditionally been linked to A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and consequently labelled "The Uncle Charles Principle" is already evident. Much refining has occurred from the story "The Sisters", wherein the boy uses a vocabulary far beyond his own, to the conjunctive and simplistic narration of "Clay" which gives us the impression that the character is speaking directly to us without any narrative interpretation to distance her experience from us.

This lack of authorial intrusion in Dubliners allows Joyce to render rather than state the experience and the insight he so vividly conveys. Each story can be said to be, as Allen Tate put it:

> . . . a scene or an incident that achieves a fulness of realization in terms of what it gives us to see and hear. It must offer us a fulness of rendition, not mere direction or statement. Don't state, says James time and again -- render! Don't tell us what is happening, let it happen! (39)

This is precisely what happens in Dubliners. Instead of using language to describe the evanescence of life, Joyce captures this ineffable quality by bridging the gulf between the reader and the primary "experiencer" of the narrative. Because we, as readers, must be the ones to put the various pieces together and to understand the connecting pattern of the experience, we achieve the immediacy necessary for empathizing with each of these very different

characters in turn. As a result, the insight that we gain is a unique blend of criticism of Dublin's suffocating institutions and ideas and compassion for its victims.

CHAPTER I

"THE SISTERS"/"AN ENCOUNTER"/"ARABY"

Dubliners' first story, "The Sisters" continues to intrigue readers by providing a mystifying opening to the collection. William York Tindall suggests that "The Sisters" establishes the relationship between reader and narrative by presenting itself as a riddle:

> Nothing comes quite clear. The nameless boy who tells the story is "puzzled" by hints and intricate questions, and so are we. Raising such questions, teasing us with possibilities, the story provides no answers. The key sentence, "There was something gone wrong with him," comes last. We may guess what has gone wrong and with what and with whom but we never know, and that seems the point of the story. Fascinated with the unanswerable question, Joyce put riddles into all his major works, which, to be sure, seem riddles too. (Tindall, 13)

It is this quality of irresolvability that draws readers back to the puzzles of "The Sisters" over and over again. Because not all the details and causal connections become apparent in the text, we also witness a great narrative economy and concentration which is well suited to the brief genre with which Joyce chose to work. Another strength intrinsic to this form of narration is the clarity and vigour of the characterization. The young boy cannot but withhold the information he does; he does not do so wilfully or purposefully, but rather it is the natural consequence of his own inability to piece all

the information together in a logical manner. Thus, we share his experience of ignorance. Because the identification between reader and narrator can be so close, and because readers must work as hard as the narrator to pull the various strands of the story together -- rather than passively accepting a complete text, there is an intense degree of reader involvement with the text while the authorial presence is diminished. As readers, we therefore adopt an increasingly visible role as co-creators of the text. In "The Sisters," the combination of all these innovative techniques results in a work of singular intensity.

In "The Sisters" Joyce skillfully makes all "those 'cuts,' the new techniques which modern fiction has given us" (Schorer, 25). One of those effective cutting techniques is the sharp juxtaposition of scenes that occurs throughout the story. The very first paragraph which recounts the young boy's anticipation of Father Flynn's death is suddenly abbreviated by the "cut" to the domestic scene with "Old Cotter...sitting at the fire, smoking" (9). Similarly, at the end of this domestic scene, which culminates in the boy's estimation of Old Cotter as a "Tiresome old red-nosed imbecile!" (11), the narrative flow is broken by the boy's cut to: "It was late when I fell asleep" (11). The boy does not, significantly enough, relate what happened during these interludes. This is our first clue to double-voicing of the narrative, which fluctuates between the naive boy and likely the man he grew up to be. Beneath the surface of an apparently haphazard recollection lies a carefully wrought narrative development, or perhaps what could be more accurately referred to as a narrative weighting of events. The boy/man has a clear enough

sense of his story to limit his focus to a narrow range of details centering on Father Flynn's decline. He is able to bring all the pertinent information together for the reader, but cannot establish all the necessary correlations. For this reason, the effect is one of discontinuity, and we are invited to link things as we choose. At times this may give us the impression that our gaze exceeds our narrator's.

We are in effect given the best of both worlds, for we are also invited to enter the mind of the observing child, and thus to witness the rich interplay of memory and imagination. The boy struggles desperately to fit past and present time frames together, but his inability to do this -- as is evidenced by the sharp juxtaposition of scenes -- betrays his youth and his yet unskilled mind. When, for example, he comments: "If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse" (9), he reveals an innocent and undoubting mind, able to accept unquestioningly the teachings Father Flynn had subjected him to as irrefutable religious doctrine. We may ask why "must" there be these two candles? The fact that the boy does not fully explain this apparent necessity enhances the sense of mystery that enshrouds the Catholic dogma to which he is heir.

Although he himself is responsible for these barely noticeable ellipses, the narrator reveals his inquisitiveness through his hyperconsciousness of the ellipses in Old Cotter's speech. When Cotter says: "I have my own theory about it [. . .] I think it was one of those. . .peculiar cases. . .But it's hard to say. . ." (10), the boy

responds by observing that "He began to puff again at his pipe *without giving us his theory*"" (10 -- emphasis mine). In this instance the boy shows himself to be very capable of questioning an adult authority figure. Having had the desire for increased knowledge and greater understanding frustrated, he becomes acutely aware of what is missing; and because of this disappointment, we are given yet another glimpse of his searching mind. Throughout the course of the story h. mind -- like ours as readers -- becomes more preoccupied with what is not said, and thus the implied narrative begins to assume a kind of predominance over the sketchily provided direct narrative. The boy describes himself as having to "puzzle . . . [his] head to extract meaning from his [Old Cotter's] unfinished sentences" (11), and thus the centrality of absent detail is emphasized. It is as though the narrator is himself a reader trying desperately to interpret the signs of a broken narrative, and in this way, Joyce suggests that the art of narrative is, in essence, an attempt to "read" life.

As the boy tries to interpret the world around him, he must first contend with Cotter's fragmented discourse which is so distinctive that it characterizes him as much as the crucial narrative gaps characterize the protagonist. The old man's use of elliptical language -- though frustrating because of its incompleteness -- draws the boy, and readers as well, into the tale he is trying to tell. When he says: "My idea is: let a young lad run about and play with young lads of his own age and not be . . . Am I right Jack?" (10), it is as though he were beseeching his listeners to make the intellectual leap to fill in this blank so that it would not be necessary for him to

have to verbalize it. The dominant impression created by his reticence is not really one of ignorance nor of a paucity of ideas, but rather one of a cautiously preserved secrecy. If the brevity really were due to a lack of thought, Old Cotter's sentences would probably be much less developed than they are, and they very likely would be more loosely structured and digressing, not pointing as they do to an implied conclusion. We get the sense that Cotter is withholding scandalous information while he is in the boy's presence, in an attempt either to protect him from some ugly reality about the priest, or more likely to pique his interest in it.

Naturally the boy rebels against being treated like a child, and does not see protective concern as the possible motivation for Old Cotter's behavior. His representation of the man is so thoroughly negative that he even begins to report Cotter's speech in a choppy manner. Often the sentence spoken by Cotter is severed by a narratorial intrusion. For example, following the stichomythic exchange between the boy and his uncle, we get the slow, interrupted and belaboured speech of Old Cotter. Whereas with other characters we frequently get no narratorial signal, or at best, one that follows after the speech has been completed or to identify a change in speakers, with Old Cotter the narrator often intervenes in the middle of his expression, as, for example, when he says: "I wouldn't like children of mine, *he said*, to have too much to say to a man like that" (10). This double disjointing of the narrative strand creates a sense of anticipation for how the comment will be completed, and invites us, on a much smaller and less apparent level, to fill in the information before it is provided. Thus we get not only

the impression of realistic dialogue, but also the beginning of character-specific narration. Although this technique has gained much recognition in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses, Old Cotter is the first example of character-specific narration -- at least in embryo -- in the early works.

This idiom is also apparent in the aunt's use of elliptical or evasive speech. She is unable to openly articulate anything associated with death, and relies on her listeners to infer meanings she is unable to state directly, as in her timid inquires: "Did he . . . peacefully?" (15), and "And everything . . . ?" (15). These gaps reveal her involvement in an adult world that functions by means of an agreed code of ellipses. Reflecting the universally accepted attitude towards unspeakable yet readily understood topics, the boy's aunt fits well into this private club of assumed understanding.

Eliza also speaks in a fragmentary manner. Unlike the Aunt, she does not seem to be avoiding any idea or word in particular. She is able to face the death of her brother and discuss, to some extent, the nature of his breakdown. The gaps in her own personal narrative seem to occur as she transports herself back into the past in order to reconstruct and thereby understand what happened to her brother. Yet this simplicity and earnestness is judiciously counterbalanced by an uneasiness of discourse. She pauses to weigh her words very carefully before saying anything. Like Cotter, she fears the revelation of that which should be hidden, but unlike Cotter, she does not abandon her ideas in the middle, nor does she consciously invite her listeners to fill in any gaps. Instead, with Eliza, we are made to feel that each hiatus serves as an opportunity for her

to gloss over unpleasant details as is apparent when she explains: "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. But poor James was so nervous, God be merciful to him!" (17). Notice the ambiguity of expression in this passage. There is no certainty or sense of conviction in Eliza's claim that "they say it contained nothing." Rather than being a simple, confident declaration, this comment is weakly attributed to a conveniently anonymous group cryptically referred to as "they."

This is indeed "the beginning of it" insofar as this disclosure is the one which makes the whole narrative turn back on itself. From this point on we begin to re-evaluate all the individual narratives in terms of the one story they all struggle to complete, that of Father Flynn's breakdown. The importance of this narrative crux cannot be over estimated. It is replete with ideological implications, each of which seems equally possible. Though Joyce provides numerous hints and clues, the only reliable information we have is that Father Flynn did drop a chalice and was deeply disturbed by this. We are never certain about its contents. If, as Gifford suggests, Joyce has Eliza make this point merely as "an adaptation of a typically childish question about church ritual: 'What would happen if the priest dropped the chalice after the wine had been transsubstantiated [sic] into the body and blood of Christ?'" (34), why would he make the many revisions he did to emphasize the chalice motif? Gifford further indicates that though this question seems "awe-inspiring" "to the lay imagination" (ibid), the simple answer is that "only the 'appearance' of wine would be spilt, not the body and blood of Christ"

(ibid). Though the answer may seem obvious to any child who has memorized and unquestioningly accepted the lessons of his catechism, for a theologian intelligent enough to attend "the Irish college in Rome" (13) it may [illegible]d betray not a "lay imagination," but rather one acutely aware of priestly powers. Regardless of whether we accept this position or not, it is difficult to deny the fact that the dropping of the chalice is -- in structural as well as thematic terms -- the kernel point of the narrative. From this nucleus proceed two initial possibilities, one being that the chalice was indeed empty, another being that it was not. Either of these ramifications could continue to branch out into narrative possibilities, and thus the potential spectrum of implied narrative increases geometrically ad infinitum. If the chalice was empty, it becomes difficult to see why Father Flynn was so disturbed by the accident, unless he felt guilty for having nullified the sacredness of a consecrated vessel. If, on the other hand, the chalice was not empty, it may have been the contemplation of this fact that precipitated his final madness. Because this consideration results in at least two more avenues of implication, it is easy to see how a man capable of the most intricate analysis and deep reflection, like Father Flynn may have found himself intellectually and emotionally torn between these two polarities. At one pole we can see the potential for complete belief in the powers of a priest to effect the real presence of Christ in the sacrificial wine; at the other pole we can see the potential for complete disbelief which would make it impossible to believe the contents of the chalice were anything but commonplace wine. Though we may search for clues as to which side the priest

gravitated towards, perhaps the best reading is not one of exclusion, but one that recognizes how these dualities exert a force upon one another that binds them together in a relationship of contraposition. The space thus created is a familiar one in Joyce's prose. We find Stephen in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man trapped in the spiritual limbo between belief and disbelief. When discussing with Cranly his dilemma about performing his Easter duty, Stephen insists that he cannot receive communion because he no longer believes in the Catholic church. Cranly very pragmatically points out that if Stephen does not believe, he should appease his mother by receiving the mere wafer which, though considered a sacrament by her, really has no extraordinary value for the young man. And yet Stephen finds himself unable to do this, for although he has been incapable of embracing absolute faith, he is equally incapable of embracing utter disbelief.

It becomes clear that Father Flynn suffered from a similar kind of spiritual paralysis that began with the accident he had with the chalice. Whether he accepts either possible rationalization about the severity of this accident, he is confronted by an unspeakably bleak awareness. If he wishes to minimize his fault, he must minimize the value of the chalice, which will, in turn, minimize his own purpose and value. If, however, he acknowledges a sanctity of the chalice, he consequently magnifies the burdensom and ominous powers of the priesthood. In either case he must assume responsibility for a power that cannot be easy for a man of conscience and sensitivity to accept. If he has the ability to summon God Himself in the form of the Eucharist, he clearly fails in his offices by denigrating the very God

he worships. If, however, he possesses no such ability, then he also fails by duping the multitudes of believers into accepting a philosophical foundation for their lives that is essentially fraudulent. Both possibilities are alluded to in the text by the many references to the complexity of church dogma, as is obvious in the boy's reminiscence of the time he spent with the elderly ecclesiast:

> He had told me stories about the catacombs and about Napoleon Bonaparte, and he had explained to me the meaning of the different ceremonies of the mass and of the different vestments worn by the priest. Sometimes he had amused himself by putting difficult questions to me, asking me what one would do in certain circumstances or whether such and such sins were mortal or venial or only imperfections. His questions showed me how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church which I had always regarded as the simplest acts. The duties of the priest towards the Eucharist and the secrecy of the confessional seemed so grave to me that I wondered how anybody had ever found in himself the courage to undertake them. . . . (15)

From this explanation, several things become obvious. First, the reference to the catacombs is apt, for not only were Father Flynn's lessons extremely convoluted, but it is also a fitting metaphor for the narrative technique itself. "The Sisters" does not follow a strictly linear sequence, instead there is always a myriad of narrative choices for the reader. The one significant clue this passage does

offer us is that the burden of power related to the Eucharist and the confessional is the pivotal point of "poor James' " problem. We are given glimpses of Father Flynn at various intervals in his life, first as a promising young priest attending the Irish college in Rome, then as an unstable mental case who could be found "sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession box, wide-awake and laughing-like softly to himself" (18), and ultimately as the pathetic invalid who "used to uncover his big discoloured teeth and let his tongue lie upon his lower lip," (13). As Florence L. Walzl points out, what happens in between these tableaux remains a mystery:

> . . .in the logic of the narrative [the priest's nervousness and his paralysis] are not linked. One problem is that paralysis is not a disease, but a symptom characteristic of a number of well defined medical conditions, none identified in the story. There is therefore, a vacuum as to the specific cause of Father Flynn's various disabilities.

In this way, we become involved not only in interpreting the text, but also in establishing the boundaries and to some extent the content of the text. Our minds will naturally seek to complete that portion of the narrative that is incomplete. The best reading we can give must be one based on implication, but should not push the implications outside the framework Joyce has provided. After all, we need not look beyond the clues he provides; Joyce has constructed "The Sisters" in a manner of virtual irresolvability. We are constantly drawn back to the text as we can never exhaust all its possibilities, nor can we feel that we have ever truly solved all its riddles.

"The Sisters" continues to appeal to the reader's imagination because the implied narrative allows Joyce to transcend the merely autobiographical tale. Part of his accomplishment is that he succeeds in establishing " a tension between [his] subject matter and [his] perspective on it" (Schorer, 28). Schorer further suggests why this is necessary for a truly artistic representation and why it is so successful for Joyce:

> . . .for as almost every good writer of this century shows us, it is quite possible to be objective about the subjective states as it is to be objective about the circumstantial surfaces of life. . .The second level of reality in no way invalidates the first, and a writer like Joyce shows us that, if the artist truly respects his medium, he can be objective about both at once. (Schorer, 28)

By excluding many of our protagonist's mental operations, Joyce achieves this objectivity while still ensuring a depth of psychological realism. The use of implied narrative allows Joyce to render rather than state the boy's confused condition. This is why Joyce has the boy report his own and others' reminiscences about Father Flynn without adding any narratorial analysis and interpretation. At no time does Joyce directly intervene to enlighten his readers; he leaves that a matter between reader and narrator, regardless of how limited either might be. Yet another indication of Joyce's refusal to involve himself in the narrative transaction is his handling of the subject matter itself. Although the story is filled with opportunities to elicit sympathy for the confused, frightened little boy who is overwhelmed

by the complexity of life and death, Joyce makes no such plea for his characters. Even with one of the best opportunities to make an emotional appeal, (in the nightmare scene) we witness no signs of sentimentality. What we get instead is the following rendition of an intellectual process:

> In the dark of my room I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic. I drew the blankets over my head and tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured, and I understood it desired to confess something. (11)

In fact, there is no sign of an emotional experience here at all. The verbs are primarily ones of intellection ("imagined", "think", "understood"). Clearly the narrator, whether a young boy or the mature man he later becomes, would not want to portray himself as afraid, and Joyce makes that the dominant thrust of this self-presentation. The author, once again, is seen only insofar as he refrains from coming between us and the narrator.

This authorial transparency enables Joyce to offer us, in "The Sisters", what Allen Tate describes as "a fulness of realization in terms of what it gives us to see and hear." Through a carefully crafted narrative that invites and enthrals readers both by what it states and what it only implies, Joyce allows us to share the aesthetic delight of being co-creators of this "complete imaginative job" (Tate, 1).

The same opportunity is extended to us in the next story, "An Encounter" wherein the first person narrator can only sense the perversity which approaches him, although he cannot really explain

or understand it. Like "The Sisters", "An Encounter" is built upon implied narrative in the forms of juxtaposition, resounding echoes, and ellipses.

Though not used as extensively as in "The Sisters", the minimal use of juxtaposition in "An Encounter" links the opening stories in an understated way. The most prominent example of this is the whole sequence of events which necessarily takes place between the formation and the perpetration of the boys' truancy plans. The final greeting among friends before the big adventure is a simple "Till tomorrow mates", after which there is a direct cut to the anticipatory hours before the grand outing: "That night I slept badly. In the morning I was firstcomer to the bridge as I lived nearest." This statement brings back to mind once again the boy from "The Sisters" and his troubled, sleepless nights. In fact, "An Encounter" is replete with echoes of its antecedent. Leo's nickname transports us back to the so-called "idle" words of Father Flynn which in fact foretold his own death. And like the Flynn family, the Dillon family also boasts a candidate for the priesthood in the person of Joe Dillon who is described not as a pious youth, but a boisterous boy who played "too fiercely for us who were younger and more timid" (19). Both past and future clergy are described with rather unsettling images that call into question, in both cases, the appropriateness of the chosen vocation. For neither the "heavy grey face of the paralytic" (11) nor the savage image of the impish Dillon "caper[ing] round the garden, an old tea-cosy on his head, beating a tin with his fist and yelling : "--Ya! Yaka, yaka, yaka!" (19) projects the traditional tranquility and strength associated with the role of spiritual leader.

Joyce also develops the more profound resonances which link the image of Father Flynn to the pervert. The latter is described as wearing a "suit of greenish-black" (24), which hearkens back to the boy's description of Father Flynn as dribbling "little clouds of smoke . . . through his fingers," giving his "ancient priestly garments their green faded look" (12). We are also reminded of the ghastly image of Father Flynn who "used to uncover his big discoloured teeth and let his tongue lie upon his lower lip" (13) when the protagonist of "An Encounter" observes that the pervert "had great gaps in his mouth between his yellow teeth"(25).

These are just the beginning stages of the snowballing effect Joyce will create to suggest how damaging the contact with corrupt authority-figures can be for the naive and impressionable mind. The child's innocence is further emphasized by the master-pupil relationship that emerges, not unlike the one we have already heard about in "The Sisters". The child tells us that the pervert: " . . . described to me how he would whip such a boy as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery. He would love that, he said, better than anything in this world; and his voice, as he led me monotonously through the mystery, grew almost affectionate and seemed to plead with me that I should understand him" (27). Although the young boy cannot logically explain the whole situation, he does describe very accurately the pervading sense of unnaturalness and of the unquiet spirit reaching out in desperation to be understood and accepted in spite of itself.

The third vehicle for implied narrative, ellipses, is not used as liberally in "An Encounter" as in "The Sisters". Ellipses are not

generally used to gloss over unanswered questions, but to delineate character traits in a more understated manner. The first ellipses spring again from the lips of an adult as Father Butler reprimands "Leo the idler" for having chosen to read The Halfpenny Marvel instead of the assigned Roman History. Denouncing the romantic adventure stories of the wild west as "rubbish" (20), the headmaster also threatens the young boy, saying: "Now, Dillon, I advise you strongly, get at your work or . . ." (20). There is no great mystery or secrecy here; the obvious alternative to getting to work is some form of punishment, perhaps whipping, and thus the stage is set for the entrance of another sadist who also seems to relish the thought of inflicting pain upon defenceless victims. The ellipses, therefore, are perceived by the protagonist as a means of asserting power over a weaker subject.

When the protagonist later uses ellipses to inquire regarding his fellow-conspirator's absence: "And his sixpence . . . ?" (22), he is echoing the voice of authority he has just heard. We know that the boy would prefer not to have to come right out and make a direct request about what should be done with the money; this would undoubtedly define him as greedy and aggressive, someone more like Mahony. With characteristic duality, Joyce depicts for us a figure both strong and weak. Although a boy of more sensitivity and refined sensibilities than his companion, our protagonist betrays a predisposition to snobbery in his unstated awareness that (to borrow Gabriel Conroy's articulateness) Mahony's "grade of culture differed from his" (179).

But perhaps what we learn most about the boy comes through the last two examples of ellipses, when we see the naivete behind his dangling, incomplete statements . When he tells us about his expectation to discover sailors with green eyes, he reveals all the romantic notions that motivated this adventurous expedition: "I came back and examined the foreign sailors to see had any of them green eyes for I had some confused notion . . . The sailors' eyes were blue and grey and even black" (23). Here too, the ellipses are easy to complete. The boy implies that he had a "confused notion" that all sailors had green eyes, an idea which points to other narrative realms, as hinted at earlier, that world of "The Union Jack", "Pluck", and "The Halfpenny Marvel" (19). Having read so frequently tales of sailors with green eyes, the boy applies this narrative to the adventure he seeks to live. An older and more experienced Dubliner, Gabriel Conroy will later attempt to do the same thing, resulting in a similar disillusionment.

The last instance of ellipses is really the most emphatic, and it envelopes the story's central mystery: that is, the nature of the man with the "bottle-green" eyes of adventure. Much critical commentary has been devoted to discerning if the man was urinating, masturbating or engaging in some unusual form of exhibitionism. Numerous clues suggest the man is some kind of pervert; he first seems obsessed with little girls as he talks incessantly about their soft hands and hair, and then he seems to be enthralled by some type of sadism as he discusses what great pleasure it would give him to whip young boys. Readers have also noted the signs of sexual excitement he demonstrates in the form of shivers, so clearly it is no

misnomer to refer to him as a pervert; we are expected to infer this from his unusual behaviour.

His enigmatic actions become the main ellipses of the story, as they emanate from the innocent lips of Mahony, who exclaims in response to the man's unidentified actions in the field: "I say . . . he's a queer old josser!" (26). Although even Mahony could wield a kind of authority in these ellipses -- since he actually sees what happens, while our narrator dares not lift his eyes -- he is unaware of it, as he himself clearly lacks the understanding to verbalize the details of the scene he has just witnessed. Although we may share momentarily the boys' ignorance and confusion, we soon see beyond this simplistic description, and thus become temporarily dissociated from the narrative consciousness. Joyce's narrative drop-back manoeuvre may make us feel wiser, or merely more corrupt than the young boy, but in either case, our adult minds solve this riddle of meaning more readily than the boy's, and as this happens, the reader's and the protagonst's epiphanies begin to diverge. Joyce manages to foreground both the disjointed signs with which the boy is confronted, as well as his active struggle to decipher them. The result of this framing effect is an epiphany that reveals how we must first experience the world before we can accurately read it..

In the final story of childhood, "Araby", Joyce continues to emphasize the interplay between innocence and experience. Once again, the many implications or echoes suggestive of other stories create an intertwining effect. At the very beginning we are reminded of "The Sisters" because our narrator lives in a house where "a priest had died in the back drawing room" (29). This

background figure is further described as a "charitable priest . . . [who] left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister" (29). Similarly, we also see the chalice returning as the boy borrows this ecclesiastical image to explain his own romantic fervour. And like the boy of "The Sisters" who found "Old Cotter . . . sitting at the fire . . . when [he] came downstairs to supper" (9), the protagonist of "Araby" descends the stairs only to find "[. . .]Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman" (33). The themes of "An Encounter" are also brought to mind as the literature associated with the pervert, the works of Sir Walter Scott, reappears on the first page of "Araby." And because the protagonist finds it so difficult to concentrate at school, he notes that his master "hoped [the boy] was not beginning to idle," (32) like "Leo the Idler", whose nickname recalls the foreboding words of Father Flynn.

Ellipses, however, have virtually disappeared from this story. Only the young girl who sells her wares at the bazaar is overheard saying: "--O, there's a . . . fib!" (35). This is not, as in the two previous stories, information deliberately or unavoidably withheld. Instead it reveals the girl's flirtatiousness. She probably intended to say: "There's a lie!", but in an attempt to soften the blow of her comment, she opts for a less threatening term that would not ruin her chances of establishing a relationship with the young men. In an understated way, therefore, this solitary use of ellipses serves as the catalyst which precipitates the protagonist's epiphany at the end of this story.

The relative scarcity of ellipses is not the only way in which "Araby" differs from its two antecedents. It is not a story of

enigmatic perversity or of unnatural relationships, but indeed, quite the opposite. It is a gentle story filled with all the warmth of affection, infatuation and sexuality in first bloom. But although the extreme bleakness of the other stories is somewhat mitigated by the enthusiasm of a first love, "Araby" clearly takes place in the same Dublin gloom that pervades the other stories. The initial description of the setting stresses the theme of entrapment in an oppressive environment. Emphasizing the dead-end quality of Dublin life, the narrator describes North Richmond Street not once, but twice as "blind" (29), and the only reprieve from its usual lifelessness and silence occurs "when the Christian Brothers' School *set the boys free* " (29 -- emphasis mine), as if from a despised captivity. The dreariness is further reinforced by the description of the protagonist's home which bears the morbid mark of its former inhabitant's -- the priest's -- death. The surrounding environment is no more inviting as the children play in the dusk, in the street where "the houses had grown sombre" (30). In such a setting even the children's meagre recreation is joyless. Instead of being invigorated by the fresh air, "the cold air stung" (30) them as they roamed from the "dark muddy lanes" (30) to "the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits" (30). The careful attention in describing the setting highlights the dramatic contrast between outer and inner realities, between a corrupt Dublin and an innocent heart. In order to achieve the moral fortitude necessary to survive spiritually in his decaying world, the protagonist creates for himself a sacred -- if unrealistic -- image of his beloved. He has therefore progressed a step beyond the boys of the previous two

stories, as only he is capable of creating a coping mechanism for himself. Although confused and overwhelmed by the novelty of his feelings, he remains acutely aware of the regenerative power of his obsession:

> Her image accompanied me in places the most hostile to romance [. . .] through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers [. . .] these noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: 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 speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. (31)

From this description it appears that all of Dublin is in fact "hostile to romance" and it is no wonder that the boy feels "all [his] senses seemed to desire to veil themselves" (31).

Even the omissions in the narration signal the boy's desire to shut out any unpleasant details of his real quotidian existence that could infringe upon the purity of his fantasy. The two examples of scene splicing not only emphasize the intensity of the boy's

preoccupation with Mangan's sister, but also highlight his idealistic hope to create mentally a world that is physically impossible. When the narrator recalls the appearance of Mangan's sister, her image blocks out the many mundane moments he must endure:

> She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.
>
> Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. (30)

Nothing in between these two tableaux strikes the narrator's consciousness as being nearly as important as his quest for Miss Mangan. He is quite aware of the purpose of this selective consciousness when he reveals what happened after the fatal promise of a gift: "What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening. I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days" (32). Because the "serious work of life" (32) is so oppressive to the boy's sensitive mind, it is not surprising that he perceives that ". . . it stood between [him] and [his] life's desire, [and] seemed to [him] child's play, ugly monotonous child's play" (32).

It is unlikely that either of the previous two protagonists would have been capable of so keen an invective against child's play. The stories' careful ordering reveals the progression of the epiphanies each young protagonist does, or does not experience. The

boy of "The Sisters" would likely have preferred a simple life of child's play to the disturbing and deceiving adult environment he beheld. As readers we may see a society and a religion that places unusual and immense strains on its members, but the boy's eyes, too, are beginning to open to the world in which he is growing up. The awareness builds throughout the story, from the boy's initial resentment for Old Cotter, who suggests so many unpleasant things about Father Flynn, until it comes to a rather quiet, yet nonetheless powerful crescendo for the child in the final scene at the Flynn house of mourning. The boy begins, if ever so slightly to see the distinction between "fancy" and reality as he looks on his dead friend:

> The fancy came to me that the old priest was smiling as he lay there in his coffin. But no. When we rose and went up to the head of the bed I saw that he was not smiling. There he lay, solemn and copious, vested as for the altar, his large hands loosely retaining a chalice. (14)

The world of fancy is that world of gossip and hearsay, old wives' tales and commonly held beliefs. The boy becomes aware of the inherent falseness of this world of "beautiful death[s]", and "beautiful corpse[s]", or a place in which doing "all you could for him", the hope of "a better world" (15) and an "eternal reward" (16) could assuage the pain of loss and can gloss over the agonies of a tormented spirit. It is to this world that the boy responds with his emphatic: "But no." It is also this world -- as it stands represented by the sherry and the cream crackers -- that the boy "...decline[s] because [he] thought [he] would make too much noise" (17). Perhaps he has not yet learned

about exile and cunning, as many of the later protagonists of Dubliners will, but he does use silence as a means of keeping himself quite aloof from the whole network of cliche-ridden hopes and beliefs, telling how: "A silence took possession of the little room, and under cover of it, I approached the table and tasted my sherry and then returned quietly to my chair" (17). It is this distance from his environment that ultimately affords him the clearsightedness of his final commentary. In bringing up the eerie topic of the unbalanced priest's laughter, Eliza creates an expectation in her captive audience, that the ghostly, other-worldly presence of Father Flynn will make itself felt. This implied narrative -- of the ghost-story variety -- is cut short by the boy's growing awareness and refusal to accept the unnamed superstitions of the women: "She stopped suddenly as if to listen. I too listened; but there was no sound in the house: and 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" (18). Though the old woman, like Old Cotter, attempts to draw her listeners further into this implied world, the boy lets the silence stand, refusing to be persuaded by hearsay and rumours. This silence is a victory for the young boy -- a victory over the forces of his degenerating world.

Ironically, it is this same nascent aloofness that will ultimately bring about a sense of defeat for the protagonist of "An Encounter" as he feels "penitent" for having intellectually scorned Mahony. Throughout the story, the boy suggests the various ways in which he is superior to his companion. Mahony is first characterized as a light-hearted, carefree young boy by the way he speaks. Our

narrator tries to justify the dialogue he reports by saying: "Mahony used slang freely, and spoke of Father Butler as Bunsen Burner" (22). Mahony is also described as having "chased a crowd of ragged girls, brandishing his unloaded catapult" which he had brought along for the express purpose of "hav[ing] some gas with the birds]" (22), and as considering it "right skit to run away to sea on one of those big ships". Our narrator, on the other hand, sees, through almost adult eyes, "the geography which had been scantily dosed to [him] at school gradually taking substance under [his] eyes" (23). Later on in their excursion, the protagonist further solidifies his position of superiority when he feels himself called upon to lift his companion's spirits, recalling: "Mahony looked regretfully at his catapult and I had to suggest going home by train before he regained any cheerfulness" (24).

Yet the most emphatic contrast between the protagonist and Mahony is their reaction to their encounter with the pervert. While our protagonist is concerned about concealing his agitation at the man's behaviour, and is overwhelmed by a sudden fear of being seized by the ankles, Mahony's chief preoccupations include chasing a cat and "wander[ing] about the far end of the field, aimlessly" (27). Even the pervert notes the contrast between the two playmates when he categorizes Mahony as one who "goes in for games" (25), and the kind of boy who, being "very rough" (27), "ought to be whipped and well whipped" (27). He tries far harder to establish a bond with the narrator, whom he describes as "a bookworm like [him]self" (25), and seems to "plead with [the boy] that [he] should understand him" (27).

The boy's epiphany is sparked by his realization of the contrast between the simple, genuine comradeship he can share with someone like Mahony, in spite of his own greater maturity, and the anomalous relations the pervert seeks. And so, although he has indeed learned something about the corruption of Dublin, he has also turned his eyes within, to recognize how his need for the fundamental integrity and security of conventional human relationships clashes with his fascination for the unusual and bizzare world of "adventure".

Just as the boy in "An Encounter" fails to read Dublin life as an adventure story, so too will the protagonist of "Araby" discover that it does not read as a romance either. His ultimate disillusionment, precipitated by the flirting he witnesses at the bazaar, causes him to look at both the nature of the imperfect external world he inhabits, and his own relationship to it: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (35). Here he realizes that his own naivete has contributed to the overwhelming disappointment he now experiences. It is as though the protagonist of "Araby" has moved through yet another rite of passage into maturity beyond the other boys. In "The Sisters," the boy is just beginning to separate himself from the falseness of his society. In "An Encounter," our protagonist's increased understanding of human relationships is evident in his lament for his unduly harsh attitude towards Mahony. The young man of "Araby" must confront a relationship more complex than that between child and adult, master and pupil, or childhood companions. Although he learns that the relations

between the sexes are not always as noble as he had hoped, he is also capable of scrutinizing his own childish wish for an ideal relationship. As the innocence and purity of his desire crumbles under the strain of a real, and inevitably tainted world, the young boy of "Araby" pays a significantly higher price than he expected to gain entrance into the realm of adult relationships -- a realm which will continue to challenge every other Dubliner whose story is yet to be told.

A definite sense of life as "story" is established by the end of this opening trilogy. The three protagonists who struggle to understand their world are learning to read the world of Dublin -- in much the same manner as we learn to read Dubliners -- by interpreting silences, omissions and circumlocutions. Joyce thus reminds us that life must not only be experienced, but also "read" if it is to achieve any significance -- for experience that is not reflected upon is ultimately lost. Meaning -- in the text and the world around us --can be extracted from the murkier depths of experience only if we actively endeavor to see beyond the deceptively simple surfaces of life.

CHAPTER II

"EVELINE"

Much like the intense theological stasis exposed in "The Sisters," Joyce reveals an equally terrifying form of emotional stasis in his first story of adolescence, "Eveline". Appropriately enough for a story replete with references to the heart, Eveline's own heart is suspended in a kind of threshold world, unable to love Frank enough to go with him, yet equally unable to despise the horrible conditions of her pathetic life enough to escape. Through a scrupulous interweaving of Eveline's consciousness and a more distant and objective voice into his narrative fabric, Joyce focuses attention sharply onto both the spoken and the unspoken, and invites us to interpret the dynamic interplay in a way that the protagonist cannot or will not undertake herself. We, not Eveline, are expected to appreciate the profound significance of narrative techniques as subtle as the precise placement of "commas and the minutiae of diction" (Kenner, Joyce's Voices, 81). It is precisely this mastery of fine details that generates the formidable tension that animates "Eveline". In this story the binary forces of presence and absence provide us with invaluable keys to unlock the subtext of Eveline's life. These forces are at work in three main internal conflicts that dominate Eveline's thoughts throughout the story. On one level she is torn between the memories of a past life of putative familial harmony and her hopes for a future life of anticipated marital harmony. On another level she is torn between a sense of duty (which by its very definition, is an absence or a void to be filled) and

of love (a positive, life-giving force). Both of these struggles are made concrete in the opposition of the mother's wish (a gnawing absence; a desire which must be fulfilled) to Frank's promise (the fulfilment of Eveline's desires). Although we may at first expect the narrative to move towards the ultimate triumph of presence -- in the form of love, promise, and future -- the overwhelming power of the absent -- in the form of duty, wish, and past -- maintains its stranglehold on the world of the living.

This is first apparent as Eveline pits the past against the future in an attempt to weigh their respective merits. At the outset of the story, Eveline is lost in reminiscences of the past, and though she readily acknowledges that "everything changes" (37), the power of memory softens the harshness of her troubled childhood:

> One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. . . . The children of the avenue used to play together in that field --the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and s[illegible]. . . . Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. (36)

She chooses to remember the sense of community derived from the children's play, the yet latent violence of her father, and the positive, nurturing presence of her mother. Similarly, she recalls that "when their mother was still alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh" (39). The more recent past is coloured with much the same affectionate shades as she speculates

how: "her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire" (39). However much Eveline may savour these pleasant memories, her random thoughts betray much more disturbing recollections of family violence and instability. But what she introduces, she does not interpret. For as Robert Scholes perceptively notes, Eveline "links associatively the ideas without acknowledging the logical connection between them" (8). We, on the other hand, have no difficulty in perceiving the cause and effect relationships Eveline ignores.

Because her inability to make sense of the past is paralleled by her inability to make sense of the future, she remains suspended, immobile, between these two worlds. A definite symptom of her debilitating condition is her subconscious insistence on perceiving everything -- even the future -- in terms of absence:

> Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its *familiar objects* which she dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would *never see again these familiar objects* from which she had never dreamed of *being divided.* (37 -- emphasis mine)

Her main thoughts about the new life, the future promised to her by Frank, are those of separation from, and absence of, the security of the "familiar". As Scholes notes, "the future as absence ('never see again") is a frightening prospect" (6), and indeed it proves to be far too threatening a threshold for Eveline to cross.

It is this irresistible magnetism of the past and the familiar that compels Eveline to embrace the duty her family thrusts upon her. Eveline's attempt to establish family unity satisfies her need to feel needed. Because she perceives herself as the sole responsible agent capable of carrying out this onerous task, her otherwise empty existence acquires a sense of purpose, albeit an odious one. Consequently, her sense of identity becomes so inextricably intertwined with her sense of duty, that to abandon the latter would necessarily be to dissolve the former. She is concerned about becoming an absence -- just another void to be filled -- as she wonders about the possible results of rejecting her present role in life: "What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement" (37). Even when confronted with the perpetual struggles of home life, it is this vacuum that would be created by her departure that becomes the more terrifying alternative. This snare of fear is ultimately the net beyond which Eveline cannot fly, as she frightens herself into assuming the same role her mother did. The associative circles broaden as the daughter imagines being called a "fool," while the mother is remembered as crying out crazily, with "foolish insistence" (40), the cryptic utterance: "Deveraun Seraun" (40). A perhaps different, though no less debilitating form of psychosis renders Eveline incapable of associating the horrors of her own domestic situation with her mother's (and her own potential) mental collapse, and therefore leads her to justify her quotidian quietism with extremely non- sequitur reasoning:

> She had to work hard to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work -- a hard life -- but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life. (38)

In this familiar tableau, Eveline finds her identity as the "main prop" of the household reassuringly defined. But her self concept wavers as she tries to imagine herself in the role of wife: "But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then *she* would be married -- *she*, *Eveline* " (37 -- emphasis mine). Her desperate attempt to accept herself as the subject of the sentence, reveals her inability to internalize this new identity, as the key actress in a happy narrative.

Why does the promise of this new, rewarding life with Frank not empower Eveline enough to abandon the old, oppressed image of herself? Why can Eveline's story not reflect the proverbial "Amor vincit omnia" principle of all fairy-tale happy endings? It should, according to the popularized romantic notions that permeate Eveline's mind. A brief review of the history of Frank's and Eveline's courtship reveals some significant answers. Surprisingly enough, Eveline apparently never fell prey to any delusions of "love at first sight" or any similar notions that she and Frank were "destined to be together." Instead, she recalls with characteristic ingenuousness, her initial responses to their relationship:

> He took her to see *The Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the

> theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and. when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. (39)

Even Eveline is aware that it is the thrill of the new and unfamiliar that attracts her to Frank, but ultimately the excitement of novelty is not enough to satisfy her fundamental craving for love. Nowhere is this more painfully obvious than when, in her frantic impulse toward escape, she realizes, with equal desperation and lucidity: "Frank would save her. He would give her life. perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms. He would save her" (40). At this time Eveline realizes precisely what she does and does not have in this relationship. Although she may have the opportunity for escape from the imminent threat of domestic suffocation, she does not necessarily have love. Numerous critics have been "right about love being an absent ingredient in this courtship" (Herring, 38). Frank's would be a physical, rather than an emotional embrace.

But this is not the only important lacuna in the text. This significant absence urges us to look more critically at other absences. Thanks to the persistent scepticism of critics like Hugh Kenner, our attention has been justifiedly diverted from the self-conscious text that Eveline indirectly relates, to a powerful suppressed text or

narrative undercurrent that dominates the story. By contrapositioning Mrs. Hill's wish for family unity and Frank's promise of a new life in South America, Joyce stretches his narrative as tautly as he can, as each force vies for control of Eveline's destiny. She struggles against these forces far more valiantly than we have traditionally been willing to acknowledge. Perhaps our myopia has been in part due to the fact that we assume she has been conquered by the forces of absence -- the forces of the past, of duty, and of unfulfilled wishes -- but we must listen more carefully to what is *not* said, if we are to perceive the real absence.

Frank's words, more captivating than anything else she has ever heard, temporarily blind Eveline to the fact that her lover could be best described as ". . . all palaver and what [he] can get out of [her]." Like a spellbound Desdemona, naively oblivious to the potential tragedy, Eveline marvels at Frank's:

> . . .tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allen line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. (39)

The emphasis here is on his "tales" and "stories" as fictions. R.B. Kershner reminds us that this is precisely the stuff which pop-fiction and penny dreadfuls are made of. He could almost as easily have substituted accounts of escapades with "unkempt fierce and beautiful girls" (20) except that these pre-fabricated narratives would probably not impress Eveline. It would diminish the integrity of

Dubliners as a whole if we were to ignore how the other stories in the collection emphasize the concept of discourse as prevarication. Our two gallants, Corley and Lenehan, come immediately to mind, as do Farrington, and Gallaher, just to name a few. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine Frank, as an elderly bachelor, telling stories about the famous Mrs. Cassidy, or about why the ladies are so very fond of him. The procurement of personal gain at the expense of a gullible victim by means of falsehoods is the rule, rather than the exception, in Dubliners. Therefore, the richest possible reading of "Eveline," and indeed any of the Dubliners stories, is afforded to us only through an appreciation of this strong intratextuality.

Consequently, we are obliged to subject even Frank's testimony to a closer scrutiny, especially when it is revealed that:

> He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him. -- I know these sailor chaps, he said. One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly. (39)

This textual crux raises numerous questions, but not without providing several hermeneutic keys. As Kenner has suggested, an incredible weight hangs between the two commas enveloping the words "he said," highlighting the insubstantiality of Frank's story. Kenner also acknowledges the complexity of the reader/character/author interrelationships when he suggests that Joyce:

> must have been both resignedly and cheerfully aware that numerous readers would share Eveline's fantasy, would suppose that a sailor who has "fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres" is credible, one who has bought a house there and is spending a holiday in a rented room in Ireland; who proposes moreover, to take her back as his bride to that South American house, though for some reason not gone into they can't get married till they've gotten there . . . The reader believes such stuff -- most readers seem to -- by accepting as fact what seems to be the narrative base of the story and is really no more than a careful statement of what naive Eveline has accepted. (Joyce's Voices, 80-81)

We must, no doubt, look beyond Eveline's narrow scope of perception, and Joyce takes care to provide us with numerous correctives for this tunnel-vision effect. By temporarily foregrounding Mr. Hill's narrative instead of Eveline's, Joyce allows us to view and interpret the situation from another perspective. Mr. Hill's interference in his daughter's love life may be motivated either by possessiveness, or, at the other extreme, by a natural, protective, fatherly instinct. If we categorize him as completely selfish, information crucial to decoding the narrative is obscured. When he says that he "knows" these sailor chaps, therefore, we should not necessarily attribute the worst motives to him, but at least consider the possibility that age and experience may have made him a better judge of Frank's character than Eveline is.

This innocence/experience dichotomy betrays significant narrative concealment, as we discover that greater secrets exist than Eveline's clandestine meetings with Frank. A mammoth narrative gap emerges from the subtle disclosure that Frank and Mr. Hill had quarrelled about a mysterious "something". Why is this argument so facilely eliminated from the text? Because the narration passes through Eveline's consciousness, we realize that neither Mr. Hill nor Frank have shared the details of the argument with her.

If we choose to interpret the father in the most negative light possible, we might assume that he bears some unreasonable grudge against Frank, making him unwilling to concede the fact that Frank's genuine devotion to Eveline caused this young lover to emerge much more favourably from the argument than the jealous father. If this were the case, it is conceivable that Mr. Hill would be anxious to suppress any incriminating details, but under such circumstances Frank should be doubly eager to disclose the proof of his love. After all, it would only be natural for him to want to affirm the integrity of his feelings. And for Frank, even a verbal victory over Mr. Hill would fit precisely into the quasi-heroic, pseudo-adventurous discourse that he earlier used to direct the course of his relationship with Eveline. But because he fails to turn this conversation to his own advantage, we must fill in the details of an argument which *both* men would want to suppress. Consequently, suspicion is cast most heavily on Frank's true intentions; narrative innuendo suggests that sexual gratification, not marriage, is his real objective. Here Joyce expects that we bring our intertextual background to this reading, recalling that the archetypal pattern, "the abduction of an innocent

girl by a disguised rake who promises marriage, has been a convention of the novel since Richardson" (Kershner, 62). Only this situation would adequately motivate both Mr. Hill's desire to shelter his daughter from an emotionally volatile situation, and Frank's desire to suppress the truth about his non-existent home in Buenos Ayres.

Again and again, the text itself points to this essentially hollow promise for future happiness. Our scepticism is further reinforced by Joyce's careful juxtaposition of various pivotal promises in "Eveline." Intertwined are two other promises for future felicity, namely Eveline's "promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could" (40), and "the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque" (37). But despite Eveline's dogged attempts to provide the external impression of stability, this promise never materializes because the constraints of violence, alcoholism and penury necessarily result in family division. Similarly, the promises made to the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque also assume a grimly ironic quality in the context of Eveline's plight. Here another "hidden text" must be examined more closely, as it not only impinges significantly upon the narrative consciousness, but it also provides us with yet another indication of the real nature of all promises in this story. The promises made to Margaret Mary extend to those who believe in her and her order. Incongruously enough, under the caption "Consecration of the Family to the Sacred Heart", Christ is depicted as promising the following benedictions to all the faithful: "I will establish peace in their families . . . [and] I will bless the house in which the image of my Heart shall be exposed and honoured"

(Torchiana, 72). And so, for Eveline, three images of the patriarchal "father" and "saviour" are superimposed. First, she is faced with her own father who, rather than protecting her from violence, subjects her to it constantly, thus inflicting her with heart "palpitations" (38). On the other hand Frank's description of being "kind, manly, [and] open-hearted (38) recalls Margaret Mary's account of how "on at least one occasion the Lord took her heart and placed it within His own, returning it burning to her breast" (Torchiana,71). Countless critics have correctly identified Frank as a saviour-type, and Torchiana's detective skills have substantiated this by revealing that: "Just as Eveline had first seen Frank before a gate, so Margaret Mary, kneeling before the grille in front of the sacrament on the altar, suddenly felt herself to be invested by the divine spirit" (71). Yet, the comparison is crucial, not because it authenticates Frank's position, but because it exposes the spuriousness of the saviour's.

As a result, all hope for future happiness fades into oblivion. This limbo-like threshold space is rendered visually concrete in the closing lines as the final barrier divides nothingness from nothingness:

> All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart.
> He was drawing her into them: he would drown her.
> She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.
> -- Come!
> No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish!
> -- Eveline! Evvy!
> He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow.

> He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love, or farewell or recognition. (40)

Obviously the problem is not that Eveline denies her impulses toward love and fulfilment, because through the eyes of a more objective narrator we see Frank, not in a gesture of affection, but in one of silent aggression. He did not remain by Eveline's side, but rather he "rushed" beyond the barrier, connoting both urgency and force. This is not the action of a devoted lover, but of someone intent upon coercing Eveline into making a rash decision, a silent rhetoric that speaks more loudly of Frank than any of his words ever could.

It is this gnomon that Eveline instinctively draws back from; it is this emptiness she rejects as she remains paralysed between two equally horrifying and essentially hollow worlds. Although she has typically been viewed as pathetic and cowardly, there is more substance to Eveline than this. For as we leave Eveline thus suspended between two potential lives of quiet desperation, our moment of epiphany is a humbling one, as we see how in spite of our successful interpretation of the subtlest narrative hints, it was Eveline who intuited quite effortlessly the falseness we have struggled to expose.

CHAPTER III

"CLAY" and "A PAINFUL CASE"

Joyce continues to probe beneath the surface of Dubliners' lives of quiet desperation in his companion pieces, "Clay" and "A Painful Case". These two stories reflect the failure of an ideal that is constant in Joyce's work: "the ideal is reciprocity -- neither projection nor passive receptivity, but a working together of both" (Gordon, 4). Maria becomes the very embodiment of passive receptivity, just as James Duffy becomes the embodiment of projection. Through a tight control over narrative voice in each story, Joyce reveals the doomed relationships that result from the antipodean world views of James and Maria -- world views that have consciously or unconsciously resulted in their self-imposed exile from "life's feast" (117). The consequences of passive receptivity are evident in Maria's actions; she remains the empty vessel, waiting to be filled, containing nothing but the void of desire. Duffy's predicament is precisely the inverse; he seeks out the voids in human existence and attempts, not to make contact with another person, but to extend himself into the vacuum of their essential lack of identity. Though these two characters are perfect foils to one another, both of their stories are told, not so much with words, as with the silence of suppressed narratives. Joyce invites us to look beyond the concrete details of the text and asks us "to find [in their untold stories] the missing piece in the geometric shape that is Dublin life" (Herring, 63). For although they approach life from diametrically opposed positions, Mr. Duffy and Maria are

ultimately "both celibates for whose lifes the absence of love has agonizing consequences" (Ibid).

As Maria's life is initially depicted, it bears little or no trace of this pervasive malaise, but it soon becomes apparent -- as countless readers of Joyce have remarked -- that this is because the "narrative speech in 'Clay' is mostly uttered in the language of Maria's desire; it is Maria's desire speaking" (Norris, 207). From the very beginning of the story we notice how a child-like simplicity permeates the narration, thereby immediately suggesting the limited scope of Maria's perception. In fact, the protagonists of the childhood stories relate events to us with more sophisticated thinking skills than Maria seems capable of mustering. This is because, as R.B. Kershner explains, the narration of "Clay" is brought to us through Maria's eyes:

> The quality of Maria's experience is built into the very syntax of the narration, which is overwhelmingly co-ordinative. The sentences conjoin paratactically, with "and" and "but," and "then," and their structure tends to be either simple or compound, and often repetitive. The effect is of a series of unexamined experiences, none of which is subordinated to any other. By implication, Maria appears to be either simple-minded, childlike, or slightly drunk.
>
> (Kershner, 104-105)

To describe Maria's use of the word "and" as overwhelming is a gentle criticism indeed. For within the space of eight short pages, the word is used exactly one hundred and thirty six times. If the pattern

of her discourse in any way parallels the pattern of her thoughts, we may fairly assume that a conversation with her would be as annoying and nerve-wracking an experience as reading about her. This is our first indication that perhaps Maria does not inspire her colleagues and surrogate family with quite the affection she believes. Yet there is a subtle irony in her excessive use of the word "and" because it is a word intended to draw together the disparate and to include. Maria, however, remains perennially excluded from meaningful relationships in spite of her efforts.

It becomes apparent, therefore, that Maria is not an entirely reliable narrator -- although indirectly -- even of her own life. Her relationship to reality is a precarious one, as we slowly discover the many "little" quotidian truths she tries to conceal both from herself and others. She can, with equal ease, minimize the profoundly negative facts of her existence, and maximize the meagrest compliment. Anything which does not conform to Maria's own image of the beloved and revered maternal figure she wishes to be, is either concealed within, or eliminated from the text. She manages to effect this concealment in each of the only two roles she plays in her daily life: that of adopted "godmother" to the Donnellys and as valued laundry employee.

Rather than acknowledging how alien she is in The Dublin by Lamplight Laundry-- being neither a former prostitute nor a Protestant -- Maria prefers to view herself as the "main prop" of this unorthodox household. Under her careful supervision the laundry runs smoothly:

> . . . the kitchen was spick and span: the cook said

> you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the side tables were four very big barm bracks. These barmbracks seemed uncut; but if you went closer you would see that they had been cut into long thick even slices and were ready to be handed round at tea. Maria had cut them herself. (99)

This is but the first example of Maria's many self-proclaimed talents. We learn that "she was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace" (99). This compliment obviously impresses Maria, but the fact that it is delivered in front of an audience including "the sub-matron and two of the board ladies" (99) gives it an even deeper resonance. Without such an audience Maria's special abilities would go unnoticed; even her horticultural skills are only valuable, insofar as they allow her to leave a concrete reminder of herself with her visitors. For what good would her "lovely ferns and wax plants" be if she could not be remembered by her guests for giving away "one or two slips from her conservatory" (100)? This is the Maria of the mainstream text, the generous and nurturing Maria, the Maria whose managerial expertise gives her the distinct honour of "superintend[ing] the distribution of the barmbracks and s[eeing] that every woman got her four slices" (101). But between the lines another Maria emerges; we will only catch a glimpse of her if we become closely attuned to the double entendre that suffuses many of the scenes.

Maria's self-professed role of peacemaker is a definite example of this subtle, double-voiced narration. In order to understand when

we are told, in Maria's voice, that "Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria" (99), we must not forget that when she listens to Joe's humorous anecdote form work, she mistakenly responds with sympathy:

> He told her all that went on in his office, repeating for her a smart answer he had made to the manager. Maria did not understand why Joe laughed so much over the answer he had made but she said that the manager must have been a very overbearing person to deal with. Joe said it wasn't so bad when you knew how to take him, that he was a decent sort so long as you didn't rub him the wrong way. (101)

Here Joe has inadvertently articulated Maria's exact problem: she *does not know how to take people* ; she takes everything extremely seriously and does not understand any adult level of humour. When we do see Maria laugh it is out of insecurity and exclusion, not from collusion. This is the case with Ginger Mooney's hollow praise, for, as Warren Beck maintains:

> Maria could scarcely have prevented it had Mooney "always" or ever have been bent on a real assault, rather than the facetious abuse manual workers sometimes affect to lighten monotony. Here the common game has an added filip. It is a repeated jest for Mooney to declare she is about to batter another inmate, and the dummy at that, and the jest is crowned by pretence that only timid, self-

effacing little old Maria has power to prohibit it.

Maria accepts that fiction, with wistful belief. (207)

This kind of mocking exclusion is not an isolated incident, but a way of life for Maria, who remains on the margins of the adult world because of her obtuseness.

With another narrative masterstroke Joyce skilfully juxtaposes the story of Maria's apparently unquestioning and clouded mind with that of the inquisitive and lucid mind of James Duffy. Duffy is depicted as an individual more concerned with ferreting out great ideas than his way through crowded Dublin streets, as is apparent in his choice of a dining establishment. He chooses "an eating house in George's Street where he felt himself safe from the society of Dublin's gilded youth and where there was a certain plain honesty in the bill of fare" (108). His disdain of pretence and his insistence upon honesty are carried over into more important areas of his life as well, including his dealings with Emily Sinico. After having had only three clandestine appointments with her, Duffy forces a shift in the pattern of the relationship by insisting that Mrs. Sinico openly invite him into her home because "he had a distaste for underhand ways and [resented the fact] . . . that they were compelled to meet stealthily" (110). His rectitude comes to its brutal climax when he refuses to carry on a relationship because it could not equally meet the expectations of both partners. He offers no glib excuses for his decision, but states bluntly that "every bond is a bond to sorrow" (112). His aim, as misdirected as it may initially be, is to see the world more clearly and to understand life more completely. In trying to lift the veil of deceit that obscures one's view of reality,

Duffy stands in complete opposition to Maria, who tends to retreat behind the security of familiar falsehoods.

But just as Maria finds comfort in the concealment of certain facts, so does Duffy find a similar comfort in the concealment of particular emotions. Because he fears being mastered by inexplicable passions, Duffy maintains his self-control by ignoring them completely. It is as though he unconsciously believed that if one refuses to acknowledge something intellectually, surely it must cease to exist. Consequently, he tries to intellectualize even the most sensuous of situations, even his first encounter with Mrs. Sinico:

> Her face, which must have been handsome, had remained intelligent. It was an oval face with strongly marked features. The eyes were very dark blue and steady. Their gaze began with a defiant note but was confused by what seemed a deliberate swoon of the pupil into the iris, revealing for an instant a temperament of great sensibility. The pupil reasserted itself quickly, this half-disclosed nature fell again under the reign of prudence, and her astrakhan jacket, moulding a bosom of a certain fulness, struck the note of defiance more definitely. (109)

The dominant impression, as filtered through Duffy's consciousness, is not purely an aesthetic or a physical one, but a mental and moral one. Ultimately, Duffy responds more readily to the defiance of her demeanour than to either the beauty of her face or the shapeliness of her physique.

He maintains this pose as their relationship progresses from acquaintance to intimacy. During this time, his assumed indifference to Emily's inner radiance and outward desirability is rigourously challenged. For although every indication suggests the blossoming of romance, Duffy refuses to acknowledge these signs. In this instance, Duffy -- in spite of his superior intelligence -- resembles Eveline, who could not see the cause and effect relationship between her father's brutality and her mother's subsequent insanity and death. He does not see how their ever-deepening intimacy will inevitably lead to the arousal of powerful feelings and desires. It is as though he believes that by not hiding the incriminating evidence, it will cease to be incriminating. We, however, recognize the familiar narrative of illicit romance when we learn that their late evening meetings always took place in "the most quiet quarters" (109) and that Mrs. Sinico's "husband was often away and the daughter out giving music lessons" (109), thus liberating the two companions to go "often to her little cottage outside Dublin . . . spen[ding] their evenings alone" (110). They must share the responsibility for creating this sultry atmosphere when they both "allowed the dark to fall upon them, refraining from lighting the lamp. The dark discreet room, their isolation, the music that still vibrated in their ears united them" (111). When Emily responds with "unusual excitement" (111), only Duffy is surprised by this natural outcome to the situation. In passionately clasping Duffy's hand and pressing it to her cheek, she crosses the first of many fatal lines. What appeared to be an open palm of friendship extended across the void of isolation was in fact the protective drawbridge of Duffy's vulnerable emotional nature,

that is instantly withdrawn at the slightest suggestion of invasion. Once their relationship progresses beyond the entanglement of thoughts, Duffy retreats even further within his cognitive fortress in order to maintain his affective imperviousness. Consequently, like Maria, he is a complete failure at human relations; the intellectual scrutiny he subjects them to is both reductive and destructive.

Just as Duffy metonymically reduces people to their brain waves, Maria reduces them to their heart beats by approaching relationships with an unrealistic sentimentality. Her relationships with other people are always described in the blandest terms. Her fondest recollections are that Joe "was very nice with her" (104), and that the "colonel-looking gentleman" "was very nice with her" (103). The whole narrative is cast in this uninspiring idiosyncratic tone. She experiences her greatest reverie thinking about how "she had never seen Joe so nice to her as he was that night, so full of pleasant talk and reminiscences. She said that they were all very good to her" (105). In such vagueness, Maria finds room to manipulate an otherwise unpleasant reality. Unlike Duffy, she feels no urge to look beyond the smooth surface of her relations with others; she remains content to ignore the turbulence below. She experiences the world through emotions, rather than ideas, as Duffy does. The verbs used to describe Maria on this particular day, -- with the exception of the evening festivities -- best illustrate this fact. Very few of the words denote conscious analytical thought, except for those used to describe her brief shopping excursion, for which Maria must "arrange in her mind all that she was going to do" (102). She manages to arrange no more than "a dozen mixed penny cakes" (102) at a time though, for

as soon as she exits Downes's cakeshop, she must resume conscious planning about what else to buy. While Duffy may occupy his mind by devising his own theories about an Irish social revolution, Maria troubles herself over sweets; after all, "it was hard to know what to buy and all she could think of was cake" (102). These are about the weightiest thoughts we ever see entering Maria's mind, at least on the surface of the text. For the most part, Maria is not described as thinking about things, but as "look[ing] forward to" (99), being "very fond of" (100), "hop[ing]" for (100), "lik[ing]" (100), "[not] lik[ing]", "looking with quaint affection" (101), being "glad" (102), being "delighted" (104), "[being] surprised" (105), and "laugh[ing] at" things. These are the primary feelings that Maria chooses to share with others.

She often rejects verbal communication in favour of the nonverbal communication of facial expressions and gestures whenever she finds herself incapable of conveying her feelings. This proves to be yet another key to understanding the hidden text in "Clay," for as Margot Norris points out, the silences that Maria hopes will conceal suppressed desires, reveal the powerful hold unfulfilled dreams have over the little old maid: "Maria's fears can utter the negative version of her life only in silent semiologies; a wince, a blush, a lost object, a moment of forgetfulness, a mistake. The narration becomes a psychological *mise en scene* in which desire is attacked from within" (208). All the nervous laughter that reverberates throughout Maria's story points decisively to this tendency. For example, when Lizzie Fleming suggests that Maria will get the ring, Maria cannot prevent her real feelings from surfacing, in

spite of her contradictory words: "Maria *had* to laugh and say she didn't want any ring or any man either; and when she laughed her grey-green eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness and the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin" (101 -- emphasis mine). Although recounted in the third person, this description comes directly from Maria's innermost being. For although any observer could repeat what Maria said and did, only Maria feels the burden of *having to* laugh and say she did not want a husband. In keeping with a sense of social decorum, Maria feels she *must* deny desiring what she does not and cannot have. The "disappointed shyness" of her eyes reinforces the unspoken message.

At numerous points throughout the text Maria's hyperself-consciousness renders her altogether speechless. The mammoth manoeuvre of purchasing plumcake renders her mute. When asked: "was it wedding cake she wanted to buy" (102), Maria can only "blush and smile at the young lady" (102). Though she would never admit to her secret wish of a wedding of her own, she is powerless to prevent her face from giving away the truth. This same spectacle is repeated three times during her evening with the Donnellys, allowing both Maria's conscious mind and subconscious desires to be defined with greater precision. When she first realizes that what was to be the crowning glory of her socially integrative talents, the gift of the plumcake, has been absent-mindedly forgotten on the tram, she "colour[s] with shame and vexation and disappointment" (103-4). We learn much about Maria not only from the fact she blushes, but also from the three particular shades. When the narrator pinpoints her response as one of shame, we realize that the initial reaction

results not from the actual loss of the plumcake, but from the manner in which she lost it, for what she is really experiencing is "the painful emotion arising from the consciousness of something dishonouring, ridiculous or indecorous in one's own conduct" (The Oxford English Dictionary, 618). Maria becomes aware not that it was indecorous for her to misplace an object, but that it was ridiculous to become so flustered in the presence of an attentive man as to lose all powers of concentration. It is only in retrospect that the real, suppressed version of the encounter is disclosed. At the time, Maria seems pleased with her own social graces, thinking "how easy it was to know a gentleman even when he has a drop taken" (103). As she recalls "how confused the gentleman with the greyish moustache had made her" (103), Maria realizes her failure to interact positively with a member of the opposite sex. And when she colours with "vexation" it is not only mental distress she endures as a result of her error, but also "grief" and "affliction" (OED, 618) that are implied in one stroke. She may grieve over the loss of her purchase, but her affliction has far greater ramifications than this; it is the burden of solitude and spinsterhood that afflicts her. Yet perhaps the most precise term used to describe Maria is "disappointment," for not only is she "dispossessed" or "deprived," so to speak, of her plumcake, but she also faces each day the "nonfulfillment of expectation and desire" (OED, 618) in her solitary life.

Her nervousness resurfaces in a similar fashion while she is blindfolded for the divination game, for she "laughed and laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin" (105). In part, these chuckles are a very natural response to the uneasiness at

being made vulnerable and dependent through blindfolding, but her laughter reveals a more frightening vulnerability than this. Though she does not articulate it, we suspect she, too, is aware that her "inappropriate inclusion in the game -- she is, after all, an adult and she already has a life -- betrays the way a sexually unmarked life, a life negatively marked as virginal, is treated by her society as a life perpetually deferred" (Norris, 207). Although it may be difficult to accept that a woman who "feels a soft wet substance" (105) without wondering what it might be, understanding only "that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again" (105) could be capable of the insights just mentioned, it is possible that much of her obtuseness has developed as a defense against a grim reality. After all, it is much simpler for her to pretend she does not understand the jokes of which she is the butt, than to deal openly with such cruelty. Mental absence, achieved through freely chosen ignorance, is the only means by which Maria can survive in the unsympathetic environment of Dublin.

A similar mental lapse protects her from the uneasiness of singing the Balfe aria. Again, Maria must colour the situation in a positive way. Although we realize that the Donnellys are likely giving Maria a less than subtle hint that it is time for her to leave when they ask, "would she not sing some little song *before she went*" (105 -- emphasis mine), Maria chooses to focus on the more flattering details including Joe's nostalgic request for "one of the old songs" (105), and Mrs. Donnelly's apparent eagerness, ("Do, please, Maria!) as well as her careful priming of the audience (she "bade the children be quiet and listen to Maria's song [105]). With the public

spotlight on her. Maria is no doubt "arranging in her mind" what she should sing, and it is not unusual, therefore, that the very thought of the Balfe aria, replete with its references to romantic love, courtship and fulfilment of desires, causes her face to flush and her voice to quaver. Obviously, as a plethora of critics note, Maria omits the second verse and repeats the first one twice because of the nervous excitement of the situation, and because the absence of such love in her own life is too painful a reality to openly acknowledge.

Mr. Duffy also finds means of circumambulating painful topics, but rather than feigning ignorance, he chooses to insulate himself from the world of feeling by withdrawing into his intellectual fortress. But he is just as guilty of reducing human relations through oversimplification as Maria. Both Maria and James attempt to hide the narratives of their own desires and vulnerabilities, but in doing so leave clues so conspicuous that they cannot but undermine their conscious efforts. In "A Painful Case," this erosion is a gradual process that casts a sympathetic light on an otherwise unsympathetic protagonist. In the earlier part of the story, verbs used to describe Duffy emphasize his tendency towards strong-mindedness and painstaking analysis. At the very beginning of the story his decision to live in Chapelizod is highlighted as the product of assiduous deliberation: "Mr. James Duffy lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern and pretentious" (107). Duffy is immediately characterized by his critical gaze, which -- although not essentially remarkable -- is distinct in its peculiar self-reflexiveness. This is first evident in the description

of his diary, which bears on its front page "the headline of an advertisement for *BILE BEANS* " (108). Such statements can only spring from the "ironical moment[s]" (108) of self-distance characteristic of Duffy. Even when emotionally loaded terms such as "abhorred" creep out of the narrative, their affective impact is mitigated because of their specific reference to "anything which betoken[s] physical or mental disorder" (108), again emphasizing Duffy's meticulous self-control. This mental discipline is also manifest when, with the most insouciant abandon he is capable of, Duffy "allow[s] himself to think that in certain circumstances he would rob his bank" (109). His thinking processes are bereft of spontaneity as even the wildest notions he entertains must be "allowed" by his logical self. His predilection for "compos[ing] 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" (108), also speaks volubly of the remoteness he maintains from his own self. This inner schism causes him to live "at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side glances" (108), most unlike his counterpart, Maria, who "looked with quaint affection at the diminutive body which she had so often adorned" (101). Maria cannot emotionally break away from herself; Duffy cannot emotionally connect with himself.

This handicap creates considerable obstacles to his attempts to connect -- even spiritually or intellectually -- with other people. He subjects Emily Sinico to the same brutal mental scrutiny of which he himself is his own willing victim. This is why, upon first meeting the charming woman, he does not try to imbibe her beauty, or enjoy her

vibrant personality, but rather, he tries "to fix her permanently in his memory" (109). His constant analysis is evident in his quickness to interpret Mrs. Sinico's "remark as an invitation to talk" (109), and from his estimation that she was "a year or so younger than himself" when "he learned that the young girl beside her was her daughter" (109). His finely honed perspicacity reappears when he coolly notes: "She alluded once or twice to her husband but her tone was not such as to make the allusion a warning" (110). In "A Painful Case" the reader receives every piece of information thoroughly digested by Duffy's active cognitive system. Because of this narrative idiosyncrasy, when a relationship begins to develop between Duffy and Mrs. Sinico we are not told that they *felt* uncomfortable about it, but that "neither was *conscious* of any incongruity" (110 -- emphasis mine). And when their relationship flourishes it is not because of exchanged kindnesses or moments of deep feelings, or -- heaven forbid -- because they were "nice" to each other (as Maria might report), but because "he lent her books, provided her with ideas, [and] shared his intellectual life with her" (110). It is clearly Duffy's consciousness that portrays the lady as the unworthy beneficiary of his cornucopian learning. At the zenith of their friendship, we do not witness, as we may come to expect, a complete surrendering of each to the other, but a markedly dispassionate entanglement of thoughts.

Yet even at this point there is little, if any, reciprocity; he approaches Emily with less regard than a master approaches his apprentice, with the expectation of pouring esoteric knowledge and wisdom into the eager recipient's vacant mind. Duffy searches for the perfect human satellite to shine by his reflected light. He never

demonstrates any appreciation for Emily as a valuable individual in her own right. Indeed, his entire social life is marked by this perfunctory handling of interpersonal relations, of which Duffy prides himself:

> He had neither companions nor friends, church nor creed. He lived his spiritual life without any communion with others, visiting his relatives at Christmas and escorting them to the cemetery when they died. He performed these two social duties for old dignity's sake but conceded nothing further to the conventions which regulate civic life. (109)

Here, as in all instances of social contact, Duffy remains in control of himself, of the situation, and of others. For Emily Sinico this means being allowed to play the role of "confessor" with the illusion of reciprocity, but without substantial exchange. He lets her believe she is drawing forth the hidden man, but it is always Duffy who determines how much of himself he divulges. The only recognition he gives her is a token one, acknowledging, not that she shares her own ideas or insights with him, but that "Sometimes in return for his theories she gave out some *fact* of her own life" (110 -- emphasis mine). This comment points to yet another hidden text. We never really know what Mrs. Sinico discusses; we only know that it is so insignificant to Duffy that he eraces it from his memory. Yet she, as ideal audience, is expected to revere his "theories" about an Irish revolution and the details surrounding his involvement with the Irish Socialist Party. If, however, his opinions are actually as perceptive as he intimates, why does he react so violently to her

innocuous inquiry, "why he did not write out his thoughts" (111)? Could it be that he is intimidated by the thought of any audience less passive than an isolated housewife? His scorn may act as a defense against the possible ridicule of "phrasemongers incapable of thinking consecutively for sixty seconds" or the "obtuse middle class which entrusted its morality to policemen and its fine arts to impresarios" (111), but it ultimately betrays a fundamental insecurity in Duffy. Because of this, he gravitates towards the tabula rasa of Mrs. Sinico's mind, unaware that it is not quite as blank as he would have liked. While she remains in a state of mental subservience to him, he is only willing to acknowledge her value insofar as she caters to his intellectual needs:

> Her companionship was like a warm soil about an exotic . . . This union exalted him, worn away the rough edges of his character, emotionalized his mental life. Sometimes he caught himself listening to the sound of his own voice. He thought that in her eyes he would ascend to an angelical stature; and as he attached the fervent nature of his companion more and more closely to him, he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: We are our own. (111)

Text and subtext merge here, contradicting each other. Can we believe that he has genuinely undergone an emotionalization of his mental life when, in the same breath, a "strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own" cautions him against any real

closeness with Emily? A man who decides to break off a relationship because, in a moment of excitement, a woman presses his hand to her cheek, has not been "emotionalized". Because Mrs. Sinico proves to be altogether more substantial of an individual than Duffy had anticipated, she cannot provide him with the kind of echo chamber he seeks in a relationship. Up to this point he believes that the crucial absence of both daughter and husband which "had created a vacuum into which Duffy allowed himself to be drawn" (Benstock, 523), entitles him to project himself, in the form of his thoughts, into this ideal void. By being prepared to accept only a selfless companion, and by rejecting Emily when she reveals any independentmindedness, Duffy creates his own gnomonic pattern of existence. He cuts himself out of her life when he bids her a hasty goodbye during their cold, autumn encounter, unaware of the profound absence he invites into his own.

The dramatic juxtaposition of this scene of immanent emotional collapse with Duffy's complacent return to the status quo four years later powerfully reinforces the feeling of absence. Especially telling is an inscription in Duffy's diary, dating back to two months after his last meeting with Mrs. Sinico, that reads: "Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse" (112). According to this reductive world view, love is relegated to the world of the impossible, as is friendship, and therefore, both of these positive human values are negated absolutely. In both cases, sexual intercourse -- the pinnacle

of human communion -- is viewed as foul and repulsive regardless or whether it is homo- or heterosexual.

As a result of his persistent denial of love, Duffy, too, enters the realm of ultimate negation, as he becomes aware of how his presence will never be reflected upon the mirror of anyone's memory: ". . . he realized that she was dead, that she had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory . . . His life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory -- if anyone remembered him" (116). In many ways, this is the bleakest moment in all of Dubliners, as Duffy knows he is doomed to become even less than a memory, for no one will remember him.

Maria too, chooses (though on a smaller scale), a similar life of little, daily self-negations. "Clay" is replete with Maria's unsuccessful attempts to assert her identity as a lovable, elderly aunt figure, and to shed the image of outcast and isolated old maid. But contrary to Duffy, she remains a void in search of fulfilment. She constantly allows her "little" presence to be lost, rather than felt, under the hostile gaze of large groups of people. She disappears in the bustle of Downes's cakeshop for it "was so full of people that it was a long time before she could get herself attended to" (102). When someone does notice her in the Henry Street cakeshop, it is with the negative recognition of annoyance, for Maria "was a long time in suiting herself" (102). She can reasonably anticipate the same treatment on the Drumcondra tram, and is surprised when an inebriated "gentleman" notices her and offers her a seat. The harsh sting of the cakeshop clerks is soon eased by the congeniality of his conversation, but with chronic passivity, Maria cannot even reciprocate the

pleasantries of small talk. She articulates no opinions. The only reprieve from the stranger's monologue is Maria's awkward interposing of "demure nods and hems" (103). This whole discourse of silence on Maria's part betrays a powerful, not limited, imaginative scope, for she uses it to convince herself that she has interacted meaningfully with another human being. She virtually gloats over her accomplishment when she marvels at the ease of their conversation. In her own mind, Maria's experiences are as plastic as she is to the outer world, and for the time being she can see her failure as a success.

But a dissonant reality impinges upon her day-dream world when she enters the Donnelly household. From beginning to end of her visit, Maria will be given ample opportunity to demonstrate her verbal ineptitude and her malleability. She speaks very little here, and when she does, it is usually with disastrous results. Anything more assertive than her characteristic nods and smiles creates a new antagonism toward her, whether open or covert. This first happens with the children, whose hearts she hopes to win through the gift of pennycakes. But in her frenzy over the lost plumcake she offends them profoundly, if unintentionally, by asking: "had any of them eaten it -- by mistake, of course" (103). The last phrase, added in hopes of softening the accusational blow, not only shows her utter lack of diplomacy, but also the nervous, self-effacing backtracking she resorts to in any confrontation. Unable to handle herself, Maria relies on the adults of the situation to intervene; Mrs. Donnelly declares "it was plain that Maria had left it behind her in the tram"(103), and Joe diverts attention away from her embarrassment

when he "said it didn't matter and *made her* sit down by the fire" (104 - emphasis mine), changing the subject to one Maria does not understand.

When another virtual calamity threatens to erupt over the lost nutcracker, Maria tries to fade into the woodwork by saying "she didn't like nuts and that they weren't to bother about her" (104). When a similar crisis occurs shortly after, over the offer of a social drink, Maria's "veritable" peacemaking strategies change from self-denial to complete dirigibility. In order to please everyone and avoid a row, Maria allows the others to project their desires onto her. A perfect example of this occurs when "Joe asked would she take a bottle of stout and Mrs. Donnelly said there was port wine too in the house if she would prefer that. Maria said she would rather they didn't ask her to take anything: but Joe insisted. So Maria let him have his way" (104). Buoyed by her Lilliputian peace-keeping efforts of suppressing everything and doing nothing, Maria ventures to express her own views on the more volatile topic of intrafamilial relations, again with cataclysmic repercussions: ". . . they sat by the fire talking over old times and Maria thought she would put in a good word for Alphy. But Joe cried that God might strike him stone dead if he ever spoke a word to his brother again" (104). Much like Mrs. Sinico, Maria is punished for daring to think for herself. Joe's outburst clearly delineates for Maria the passive role she is welcome to adopt in the Donnelly family, one on the very fringes of their affection. She retreats again from the threat of exclusion by retracting her opinion and saying "she was sorry she had mentioned the matter" (104).

Pseudo-normality is restored as the narrative of family conflict and "break up" is subsumed by the larger narrative of pretence upon which the Donnellys build their home life. The empty rhetoric which hails Maria as "proper mother" does not empower her to adopt this maternal, guiding role in real life. It is Mrs. Donnelly who emerges as a mother-figure, a role she must play not only to her own children and to the neighbour's children, but also to her husband and even Maria, ultimately usurping Maria's role as putative peacemaker.

Maria, on the other hand, emerges as an almost willing victim, whose real autonomy is sacrificed to the aggressive desires of those around her. Although in a rather specious way she appears to be the leading actress of her own narrative, she relies entirely upon external sources for her stage directions and cues, which often lie between the lines and in the invisible margins of "Clay." Unable to act from her own volition, Maria allows herself to become a "proper" puppet when the children "*insisted* on blindfolding" her (105), when "Joe *made* [her] take a glass of wine" (105), and when she "*had to* get up and stand beside the piano" (105 - emphasis mine). She can only obey the command "Now, Maria!" with her own silent blushes and the gnomonic words of someone else.

Maria's repetitive rendition of "I Dreamt that I Dwelt" precipitates the story's enigmatic ending. As in "A Painful Case", the text of the main narrative functions synergistically with the inserted text of the Balfe aria, and "each text depends on the other for completion, each frames a missing gnomonic segment" (Herring 68). Although it has been traditionally assumed that a more objective and distanced narrative voice is responsible for the final disclosure, we

are obliged to re-examine the idiosyncratic flavour of "Clay's" conclusion:

> But no one tried to show her her mistake; and when she had ended her song Joe was very much moved. He said that there was no time like the long ago, and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; 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. (106)

Although related to us in the third person we have already come to realize that with Joyce, this is no assurance of objectivity. As some critics maintain, this could represent a major shift in narrative awareness to Joe, who perceives the error, but moved to tears by the pathos of the situation, says nothing about it. But if so, why does he speak in the same childish, conjunctive voice that Maria did, after so much care had been taken in isolating her consciousness from the others'? Ultimately the emphasis is on the awareness, and conscious ignoring of the mistake. Again Joyce forces the narrative to its dichotomous head, for we are also given the impression here that the narrative is still being filtered through Maria's eyes. This is what gives the story its powerful self-reflexiveness, for once we realize that Maria *is aware* of much more than she lets on to -- that she is indeed conscious of subtle incongruities, omissions, absences and exclusions -- we are forced to reread and reevaluate her story from this perspective. Ironically, our epiphany as readers reveals that Maria herself is not as incapable of her own epiphanies as we, and

the rest of her acquaintances, had so unquestioningly assumed. Under this light, each line of the story becomes saturated with a newly found and more deeply experienced understanding of Maria's pain. As a result, we look upon her with a more complex combination of compassion and criticism.

This same consummate artistry is evident in Joyce's ending of "A Painful Case". Through a careful manipulation of the gnomonic text within a text, Joyce effects the ultimate triumph of feeling at the end of the story. In this case it is not a song with a missing verse, but a newspaper article with missing explanations, motivations and causal links. The article proves to be an excellent narrative manoeuvre, for it provides the very echo chamber Duffy had earlier sought in Mrs. Sinico. His own objective, uninvolved and unconcerned voice booms back out at him from across the void of his self-absorption.

Much critical attention has been devoted to commenting on the selfish and meanspirited manner in which Duffy receives the news of Mrs. Sinico's death, and rightfully so, for he cannot be exonerated for his egocentric reaction to his former companion's demise. Nonetheless, we reciprocate his coldness if we ourselves refuse to be "ever alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others" (108), even in Duffy. Because his "spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus" (A Portraitof the Artist as a Young Man, 252) has been temporarily disarmed by the suddenness of the tragedy, Duffy does grow to experience a world beyond the confines of his own mind. After the initial shock of the news gradually dissipates, Duffy is described less and less in terms of thinking, and more and more in terms of feeling.

The transition, however, is not an easy one, as his first reactions suggest:

> The whole narrative of her death *revolted* him and it *revolted him to think* that he had ever spoken to her of what he held sacred. The threadbare phrases, the inane expressions of sympathy, the cautious words of a reporter won over to conceal the details of a commonplace vulgar death *attacked his stomach.*
>
> (115- emphasis mine)

Though the vestiges of conscious analysis remain, Duffy is slowly beginning to experience the loss on a visceral level. This is the first step towards uniting that distant, critical self, with his vulnerable, emotional self. The process continues when: " . . . his memory began to wander and he thought her hand touched his. The shock which first attacked his stomach was now attacking his nerves" (116). Although he is still engaged in complex mental processes, his thoughts begin to revolve around touch, the silent communication of tenderness he now longs for. We might have expected the shock to attack his brain instead, but it works its way, significantly enough, through his nervous system, the internal mechanism that receives and transmits messages to and from the brain, joining it in perfect harmony with the rest of the body. A real awakening is taking place, as he finds that mentally he can evoke her image, and logically he can accept that she was dead, but emotionally, he cannot escape feeling "ill at ease" (116). Ironically, for a man who struggled all his life to gain insight through logical thought, he gains the most profound understanding only at the end of the story, when emotions

and intellect become one. His final awareness is inextricably linked to his acceptance of culpability, as he is ultimately able to examine the painful subject of his treatment of Emily, and his introspection causes him to wonder: "Why had he withheld life from her? Why had he sentenced her to death?" (117). In retrospect, he can also appreciate the rare and fragile beauty of their relationship: "One human being had seemed to love him and he denied her life and happiness: he had sentenced her to a death of ignominy and shame" (117). It is only after he accepts his share of the responsibility for Mrs. Sinico's tragedy that he is genuinely able to learn, in the story's closing silence, "what the heart is and what it feels" (A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 252-253):

> He began to doubt the reality of what memory told him. He halted under a tree and allowed the rhythm to die away. 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.
>
> (117- emphasis mine)

Duffy's fervent desire for haunting introduces an eerie tone to the story's conclusion. But as ghastly as a ghost-story ending might have been, Joyce conjures one of far more horrific proportions. No spirit descends (or ascends) offering either consolation or condemnation; no voice is heard; no touch is felt. Duffy is placed in the ultimate crucible of solitude, but the suffering he feels is by no means a defeat. Because of -- not in spite of -- his anguish, he is

finally able to experience his first genuine emotion. For not only does he comprehend that he has lost a friend and possibly a lo but he *feels* -- deeply and intensely, the whole condition of h - that he "was alone."

Only because they feel the powerful hold of solitude do James and Maria exit their respective narratives with hearts and minds more aware of their bleak situations than we ever could have imagined. Because Maria proves to be far more thoughtful than she superficially appears, and Duffy displays a capacity for feeling far greater than ever seemed possible, we, as readers, have learned to look very differently at the deceptive surfaces and hidden depths of Joyce's dense prose. We also discover that the transaction that takes place between reader and narrator as mediated by text is much like the ideal in Joyce's work, or in human relations. Joyce does not merely *tell* us about the two extremes of projection and passive receptivity, he *shows* us -- through a scrupulous management of indirect discourse and silent lapses -- exactly how this principle operates. For in order to glean the richest meaning from the text we can neither project limitations onto the characters, nor can we passively expect that any profound message will proceed from the story without our active participation. Thus, Joyce's use of implied narrative in "Clay" and "A Painful Case" leads us to experience the ideal of reciprocity as we attempt to uncover the missing pieces in the geometric shape that Joyce delineates as Dublin life.

CHAPTER IV
"IVY DAY" / "A MOTHER" / "GRACE"

What Joyce originally intended to be the culminating chapter in the moral history of his community forms the trenchant trilogy of public life, comprised of the stories "Ivy Day in the Committee Room", "A Mother", and "Grace". In this grouping, Joyce exposes the blights attacking Dublin politics, art and religion respectively. Because the focus shifts from the private to the public sphere in these three stories, the dynamic of implied narrative functions very differently. Dialogue replaces narration, and thus the narrative gaps in these stories can no longer be attributed either to juvenile ignorance, nor entirely to the individual suppression of personal secrets. Instead, as Kershner rightly points out:

> . . . the general movement of Dubliners is toward the hegemony of public rhetoric. While language is foregrounded throughout the volume, during the stories of "maturity" dialogue gradually supplants narration. . . . On the mimetic level, this may simply suggest that as Dubliners age life becomes increasingly a matter of conversations; but from a dialogical perspective the inference is unavoidable that the more "natural" categories of thought, perception, and action are yielding to the mediated category of public speech. Put another way, internality is giving way to externality. (Kershner, 95)

The individual perspective, therefore, is obscured by those very nets which bind the Dubliner fatally to a stagnant society. As Stephen will later learn, the nets that have been reinforced by generations of "palaver", cliques and foolishness -- nets that, cocoon-like, are self-generated -- can only be escaped by means of silence, exile, and cunning. In this grouping then, we are afforded a bird's eye view of the vast network of conspirators that promotes the concealment of reality, the suppression of truth, and the dissemination of glib falsehoods. The preservation of the status quo is guaranteed by the unspoken pact of prevarication that so potently binds Dubliners together. In each story, our attention is again carefully directed towards absences and voids. Although these stories lack the obvious bias of subjective narration, a collective bias replaces it, and so we must extend our gaze once again beyond the literal confines of the text if we are to read the silent heiroglyphics of Dublin life.

Our first clue to the significance of absence is in Joyce's acknowledgement of the source of inspiration for "Ivy Day in the Committee Room". Anatole France's story, "The Procurator of Judea", which recounts Pontius Pilate's reminiscences of the highlights of his career, captured Joyce's imagination and served as a springboard for experimentation with his own innovative narrative style. At the climax of France's story, when asked about Jesus, Pilate can only wonder aloud: "Jesus? Jesus of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind" (Hodgart, 51). Ironically, the apparently insignificant detail just beyond the grasp of Pilate's memory is the same one which has entrenched his own name in the consciousness of countless generations over the past two thousand years. Joyce masterfully

utilizes this foregrounding / backgrounding inversion no less than France, in "Ivy Day" as it is the absent Parnell who is apotheosized, thus reminding us that "the absent are more powerful, both politically in real life and symbolically in the story; and [that] the dead are more powerful than the living" (Hodgart, 51).

The inability of the living to positively shape the present is the kind of gnomonification Joyce highlights in "Ivy Day". In this Dublin *tranche de vie*, Joyce explores the immense power of language to mold reality, concentrating primarily upon destructive or invalid forms of language such as gossip. Earlier stories in this collection have taught us how great a capacity the individual has for distorting the truth in order to facilitate his or her own world view; these three stories reveal how this ability increases geometrically on a collective level. Having focussed on his first target, the political establishment of Dublin, Joyce cunningly crafts his subtle yet penetrating critique of the many social foibles to which we often fall prey.

Contrary to the assumption that the natural impulse of any group should necessarily be towards unity and solidarity, the dynamics of the committee room tend towards fragmentation. Henchy demonstrates this principle through his constant allusion to vaguely esoteric knowledge, which, while conferring a privileged status on the bearer, must necessarily exclude the uninitiated. He achieves a position of putative authority over his less informed counterparts by using language that is equally capable of either revelation or concealment. Comments like: "Did you never hear that?" (123) threaten the addressee by intimating exclusion and humiliation, thus giving the speaker at least temporary power over

the listener. This kind of language, subverted into mean rumour, temporarily cloaks the void at the heart of political life. For example, the "private and candid opinion" (124 & 125) of Mr. Henchy, which cannot be substantiated by anything more convincing than mere rumour, is primarily used to generate antagonism first towards Hynes in particular, by suggesting that the latter is a "a man from the other camp" (124) and a spy, and secondly towards the "hillsiders and fenians" in general, otherwise referred to as those "little jokers", half of whom he claims are "in the pay of the castle" (125). The hearsay that Henchy engages in -- or indeed fabricates -- is a gnomonified version of language, for gossip can never really tell the entire story about anything. By ignoring crucial factors of the situations he is describing, Henchy reduces and oversimplifies complex relationships in order that he may master both the kind of truncated information he disseminates, as well as his audience.

This reductive attitude is evident when Henchy enters the committee room. The very first words that come out of his mouth are complaints about Tierney's lack of financial commitment to his canvassers, followed by a more intensive tirade against "Tricky Dicky", otherwise referred to as the "mean little tinker", and a "mean little shoeboy of hell" (135). In the twenty pages of the story his comments comprise a catalogue of Dublin political gossip ranging from Tierney to Hynes, to an anonymous "certain little nobleman with a cock-eye" (137) who is said to be able to "sell his country for a fourpence [. . .] and go down on his bended knees and thank the Almighty Christ he had a country to sell" (ibid). Moving swiftly onto

his next victim, Father Keon, Henchy meanders into the following stichomythic exchange with O'Connor.

> -- What is he exactly?
>
> -- Ask me an easier one, said Mr. Henchy.
>
> -- Fanning and himself seem to me very thick. They're often in Kavanagh's together. Is he a priest at all?
>
> -- 'Mmmyes, I believe so . . . . I think he's what you call a black sheep. We haven't many of them, thank God! but we have a few . . . he's an unfortunate man of some kind . . . .
>
> -- And how does he knock it out? asked Mr. O'Connor.
>
> -- That's another mystery. (126)

As limited as it is here, gossip becomes both medium and message; it is not only a complex vehicle for social collusion, but also a valuable commodity to be bartered in exchange for more of the same. This cautiously guarded discussion proves that in Dublin, even rumours are not free, for O'Connor must offer his own assumptions about Fanning and Keon before securing any information from Henchy, perhaps hoping that his bait -- of falsehood or otherwise -- would indeed catch the proverbial carp of truth. This apparently harmless conversation briefly unites Henchy and O'Connor in the pursuit of a common interest, albeit at the expense of Father Keon's reputation. Henchy, to the very end of the story, continues to engage any willing ear in a friendly little game of gossip. He eagerly listens to Jack's gossip about the mayor, and even joins right in with the old man's insinuation about the boy who delivers the stout being an obvious candidate for chronic alcoholism in adulthood. The single bottle of

stout the boy consumes is immediately labelled as the ominous "thin edge of the wedge" (129). Moreover, there is a keen irony in the fact that this criticism proceeds from the very source that offered the boy the refreshment, underlining the hypocrisy of small-time politicians such as Henchy. Henchy's hypocrisy is also obvious in his criticism of Crofton, his own canvassing partner, who he insists is "not worth a damn as a canvasser. He hasn't a word to throw to a dog. He stands and looks at the people while I do the talking" (129). Here again Henchy becomes intentionally myopic solely for the sake of appearing superior to his peers, for as we look more closely at the subtle clues, it becomes obvious that a staunch conservative like Crofton could have little to say in favour of a nationalist candidate. His silence speaks of more sincerity than all the rest of the discussion combined, and yet the very action most worthy of praise elicits only condemnation from the narrow-minded Henchy.

Finally, Henchy and his cohorts find it equally appealing to condemn Parnell, the figure who completes the pattern of gossip and backstabbing established in "Ivy Day". Although Parnell has loomed over the events of the story since the title, he surfaces most powerfully at the story's close, when Henchy mentions his approval of King Edward VII's proposed visit to Ireland because of the potential economic benefit that could be gleaned. It is at this point, perhaps more than at any other, that we see exactly how Henchy serves as the prism through which facts and opinions about other characters are refracted (ie: bent, twisted or perverted). He manages to distort thoroughly two diametrically opposed views, O'Connor's and Lyons', thus revealing that he supports no particular

political ideal, but rather any political manoeuvre that could result in the injection of capital into the Irish economy, and perhaps into his own pocket as well. Because of the nature of his motivation, therefore, Henchy refuses to really listen to O'Connor's objections to an address of welcome, and prevents the latter from completing the statement: "But look here, John, said Mr. O'Connor. Why should we welcome the king of England? Didn't Parnell himself . . ." (131). The only thing Henchy can find worth saying about Parnell is that he "is dead" (131). Ironically enough, although he has nothing positive to say about Parnell, presumably because of the scandal which ultimately destroyed the politician by calling his moral integrity into question, Henchy refuses to acknowledge how equally -- if not more -- questionable the moral integrity of Edward VII is, if measured by the same standards. So although arguments are made under the veil of so-called "morality", the real impetus behind many of the loyalties we see unfolding on the "Ivy Day" stage is the thirst for "spondulics".

This realization automatically brings the reader back around to the comments made about Tierney's monetary betrayal of his canvassers. "Ivy Day", like other Dubliners stories, operates on a principle of circularity, which forces us to read not only from beginning to end, but also from end to beginning, for as soon as we come to the closing discussion of Parnell, we are immediately redirected first to the discussion about Tierney, and then, in turn, to the comments about Father Keon. Although Tierney is criticized on virtually all sides for being "tricky" or deceptive, and for leaving his canvassers "in the lurch" (121), he does prove his critics somewhat wrong by remembering to send them the case of stout. As

insignificant a gesture as this may appear, it does remind the reader of the collective bias of the story. Can Tierney really be faulted for his statement: "O, now, Mr. Henchy, when I see the work going on properly, I won't forget you, you may be sure" (123), when it is clear from the very beginning that not all his canvassers are doing their work properly? O'Connor, for one, is described as having "spent a great part of the day sitting by the fire in the Committee Room in Wicklow Street with Jack, the old caretaker" because "the weather was inclement and his boots let in the wet" (119). Is Tierney really the ruthless politician he is reputed to be simply because he hesitates to pay a man who does nothing more than sit in a committee room, chatting, smoking, and even using Tierney's own business cards as makeshift matches? By casually inserting these apparently inconsequential details, Joyce ensures we see alternative narratives behind the story's surface.

The case of Father Keon is no less complex. Another seemingly unimportant figure, Keon briefly emerges into the foreground to serve as a crucial key to interpreting the rest of the narrative. We can only fully appreciate the significance of Father Keon after we have come full circle through the text, and return to it for a re-reading, for it is only then that we become aware of how Joyce involves us most directly in the dynamics of implied narrative with this particular character. By omitting major details about Keon's mysterious life, Henchy allows O'Connor -- and Joyce allows us -- to fill in whatever sordid details we choose. As a result, we likely begin to think much along the same lines as Henchy. We are able -- and perhaps even eager -- to imagine some tale of corruption in keeping

with the preceding parade of perverse priests that has passed through the pages of Dubliners. As our imaginations pursue this suggestion, Joyce involves us directly in what is happening in the committee room, for we participate, at least intellectually, in the victimization of absent and therefore defenceless targets. We accept and multiply the very worst about others, even if only in our own minds, and thus have been seduced by the very malice we would otherwise criticize. In this understated way, Joyce reminds us that we are all, potentially, the Dubliners whom we are so quick to condemn for being narrow-minded. Yet again, Joyce counterbalances each lesson in criticism with an equally effective one on compassion. It would not be enough for Joyce to describe how gossip can destroy someone, instead, he creates the circumstances that allow us to actually experience what it feels like to cast one of the stones. By juxtaposing Parnell's story (as the main victim/saviour figure) to that of the average person (ie: Tierney and Keon), we can no longer dissociate ourselves from his political betrayal on the grounds that it is historically or socially removed from the scope of our direct experience. Very quietly yet very incisively, Joyce reminds us of how easily the kiss of betrayal can be bestowed.

This realization is further reinforced by the ending of "Ivy Day". If we have absorbed even part of Joyce's message, Crofton's somewhat fallacious closing comment as misguided as it may seem, makes perfect sense. First of all, we must keep in mind that Crofton does not volunteer his opinion, but rather, is harassed by Henchy to the point that he is obliged to "throw a word to a dog" so to speak. Numerous critics have noted the incongruity of Crofton's appraisal of

the poem, labelling him as an inferior literary critic who has no sense of what fine literature really is. If we adopt this view towards Crofton, then the negative attitudes that have festered throughout "Ivy Day" have infected us too. Do we, like Henchy want to feel superior in some way to Crofton, and therefore take delight in recognizing his failure? Do we possess some esoteric, insider's knowledge that Crofton lacks, and consequently feel smug that we can recognize weakness where he perceives strength? We know it is not a fine piece of writing. It may be a genuine or sincere expression of political feeling; it may even be an effective piece of propaganda, but it is not a fine piece of writing. Although his estimation of the poem's worth may seem an outright lie to our minds, if we have really come to understand anything about these people and their motivations, we should see beyond the superficial appearance to realize that for Crofton, the technique of the poem is the only possible feature he can find worthy of praise, because of his obvious opposition to the sentiments expressed. The compliment he pays to Hynes is the only thing he can possibly say with any degree of sincerity, and for this he should be applauded. He should be applauded too, for introducing words of appreciation into the committee room setting, and thereby breaking the cycle of negativity that has been propagated throughout the rest of the narrative. Clearly we should not come to the end of "Ivy Day" with criticism of Crofton for failing as a would-be literary critic, for then we are merely picking up where the Henchys of the world leave off. This is our Epiphany -- if we choose to behold it.

But the cycle of negativity is set into motion yet again in the second story of this trilogy. "A Mother" also highlights the importance of language as a pivotal point of social interaction, especially as it binds together the closely knit artistic community of Dublin. The story centres on the interplay between two omnipresent variations on language, gossip and silence. By reading the elusive gaps as well as the direct statements in this story, many alternative narrative doors are opened to us, as we come to see the collective heart of greed that hides beneath the singular face of art.

The surface of the narrative is riddled with countless, unexplained chinks which force us to make numerous imaginative leaps in order to make sense of the whole story. Gossip captures our attention early, in fact from the very first description of our title character. We immediately discover that Mrs. Kearney is who she is because of the powerful force of gossip which led the former "Miss Devlin [to] become Mrs. Kearney out of spite [. . . for] when she drew near the limit and her friends began to loosen their tongues about her she silenced them by marrying Mr. Kearney, who was a bootmaker in Ormond Quay" (136-137). Allowing her very identity to be molded by the fear of gossip, Mrs. Kearney's only hope of establishing her own autonomy is by silencing the perpetrators of this verbal violence. Inevitably, however, her struggle for freedom from these forces only tangles her further in the nets of self-negation. Although her female acquaintances were the first to inflict the pain of gossip onto Mrs. Kearney, she suffers yet again at the end of her story, as the victim of the male committee. In this way, "A Mother" is carefully framed, both by the destructive force of gossip,

and also by the male focus at beginning and end. For although the title may indicate the story is to be about a woman, the opening paragraph draws our immediate attention to Hoppy Holohan, the assistant secretary of the Eire Abu Society, who is depicted as "walking up and down Dublin for nearly a month [. . .] arranging about the series of concerts" (136). He appears to be the main interest in the story until the very last statement of the introduction, which is spoken very clearly in the room of our protagonist: " . . . in the end it was Mrs. Kearney who arranged everything" (136). Mrs. Kearney's wedging of her presence and personality into the forefront of a primarily male organization is an arduous and short lived business indeed, devoid of the recognition and prestige for which she had hoped. But, with Joyce's trademark circularity, it is only upon a rereading of the story that we realize how very ironic this early statement is.

Much of the story is filtered through Mrs. Kearney in this way, and, upon first reading, we come to see her as she would like others to see her, as an astute manageress of all things, including not only her own life, but also the lives of others. There is a conscious, if understated, pride suffusing the description of her iron-clad control, especially in her expedient choice of a husband who "would wear better than a romantic person" (137), and who could be readily trained to pay into a dowry fund for his daughters, to send Kathleen to a good convent, to send his wife and daughters on a yearly holiday, and to recognize his wife's unspoken eyebrow-raising cue indicating it was time to withdraw from a socially awkward situation. She treats her daughter Kathleen in much the same fashion, virtually

viewing her as an extension of herself, and raising the girl to sit, much like her mother, "amid the chilly circle of her accomplishments, waiting for some suitor to brave it and offer her a brilliant life" (136). Mrs. Kearney also navigates her daughter's life very adroitly along each crest of the Irish Revivalist wave, ensuring that all the "appropriate" things be done (ie: bringing an Irish teacher to the house and encouraging her daughter to exchange Irish picture postcards with her friends). Her portrait then is that of an opportunist who takes care to involve herself and her daughter with the right crowd and the right movement, not because of any sincere belief in its goals or ideals, but because she perceives in it the possibility of personal advancement. Even with her own plangent narrative voice sounding in our ears we cannot but see this arbitrary foreman of family life as a henpecking and manipulative shrew, for whom no real sympathy is initially elicited. Later on, when she becomes the self-appointed organizer of the concert series, and tries to use the same coercive techniques on a social level with Mr. Holohan that she uses with her family, she continues in this unfavourable light. Even her attempts to be hospitable are marred by an undercurrent of aggression, as we learn that she "brought [. . . Mr. Holohan] into the drawing room, *made* him sit down, [. . .] advised and dissuaded [. . .] helped him [. . .] and *pushed* the decanter towards him" (138 -- emphasis mine).

But in spite of Mrs. Kearney's domineering nature, Joyce understatedly depicts the other, more vulnerable side to Mrs. Kearney as well. This premier bully will ultimately be outbullied by an uncontested male majority. Although she may be content to roll

along with this status quo as long as she is perceived as an expert on such matters of social decorum as the drawing up of contracts, the wording of handbills and the arrangement of the concert's program, she later rebels against the establishment by insisting upon her "rights" when she becomes its victim.

This entire struggle for power is the direct result of the conspiracy of silence with which Mrs. Kearney is consistently met. Her first encounter with evasion occurs when she asks Mr. Holohan to clarify certain comments of Mr. Fitzpatrick's, only to be told that he did not know what was meant, but that the four concerts were to be reduced to three. When Mrs. Kearney sees the implications of this reduction, she begins to panic and defensively resorts to "buttonhol[ing]" (140) Mr. Holohan to ensure that the payment stipulated in her daughter's contract would in no way be altered. Unable or unwilling to give her a straight answer, Holohan "advised her to speak to Mr. Fitzpatrick", as he " *seemed* to be in a hurry" (140 -- emphasis mine). The apparently innocuous little word "seemed", perhaps indicative of Mrs. Kearney's scepticism towards surface appearances, is Joyce's way of alerting his readers to the double-vision of the narrative. Consequently, we are immediately suspicious of Mr. Fitzpatrick also "seeming" rather than being when we discover his response to the anxious Mrs. Kearney on the topic of remuneration; he "did not catch the point at issue very quickly, [and] *seemed* unable to resolve the difficulty" (141 -- emphasis mine). In refusing to commit himself to a concrete answer, Fitzpatrick accentuates his unreliability, and his promise of bringing the issue up before the committee rings hollowly even in Mrs. Kearney's ears.

After this , Fitzpatrick passes the problem of the volatile Mrs. Kearney to Mr. Holohan, who, in turn, uses silence and non-answers to exclude her from the Committee's cozy little clique. From the moment she begins any serious questioning of the "Committee's" dealings, Mrs. Kearney finds it impossible to get any attention whatsoever. Because of the nuisance she creates, she is universally avoided and shunned, which forces her to go "all over the building, looking for Mr. Holohan or Mr. Fitzpatrick. She could find neither. She asked the stewards was any member of the Committee in the hall and, after a great deal of trouble, a steward brought out a little woman named Miss Beirne to whom Mrs. Kearney explained that she wanted to see one of the secretaries" (141-142). The pattern of unfulfilled quests or absent objects of desire in Dubliners is continued, therefore, in Mrs. Kearney's pointless search for secretaries and their financial commitment, for even when she does finally spy "Mr. Holohan in his limping and devious ways" (144) the latter insists that Mr. Fitzpatrick had charge of issuing payment and that "it wasn't his business" (144). From this point on, it becomes increasingly evident that no one on the committee has any intention of honouring this contract, although they engage in ample lip service expostulating about the integrity of their pledge. In her desperation, therefore, Mrs. Kearney attempts to take advantage of the only leverage she feels she has, and hopeful that time is on her side, she delays the concert's opening by refusing to allow Kathleen to perform until she is paid. This manoeuvre proves reasonably successful as Mrs. Kearney receives at least half of the payment due, even though much more than half of Kathleen's services had already been

rendered. Mr. Fitzpatrick may assure the irate mother that Kathleen "would get the other half at the interval" (146), but murmurings to the contrary begin soon after the first part of the concert is over, even though neither Kathleen nor her mother has done anything further to aggravate the committee. The hitherto silent moral majority rears its ugly head in the figure of O'Madden Burke who ignites the "hive of excitement" (147) by insisting that "it was the most scandalous exhibition he had ever witnessed [. . . and that] Miss Kathleen Kearney's musical career was ended in Dublin after that" (147). Although she was given every reason to believe that she would be paid the remaining four pounds eight at the interval, Mrs. Kearney is offered nothing more than an ever-protean story, presently promising "that the other four guineas would be paid after the committee meeting on Tuesday" (148). This perpetual stalling clearly suggests that the funds neither are, nor will be, forthcoming. Why then, should it seem so thoroughly unreasonable that Mrs. Kearney, sensing very definitely the deceit with which she is being treated, insists that Kathleen "will get four pounds eight into her hand or a foot she won't put on that platform" (148)? Perhaps we see an undue obstinacy in the apparently exorbitant fee Kathleen is collecting (Gifford, 98-99), and perhaps Mrs. Kearney is completely ignoring the unspoken code of ethics which dictates a performer wait until the end of a series to receive his or her fair share of whatever profits (if any) are available (ibid). Perhaps, but not likely.

All of this might seem perfectly reasonable were it not for several barely perceptible suggestions Joyce raises, that should cause us to see, and sympathize somewhat with Mrs. Kearney as victim.

Again, Joyce uses minor characters to reveal a major issue of the story; in this case it is Mr. Bell and the baritone who emphasize the stark vulnerability of Mrs. Kearney. The character of Mr. Bell, the "fair-haired little man who competed every year for prizes at the Feis Ceoil" (142), widely accepted as Joyce's self-portrait, unassumingly voices the opinion that Mrs. Kearney "had not been well-treated" (148). This view is silently corroborated by another character who communicates much more by saying nothing than so many other characters do through all their loquacity. We learn a great deal about Dublin's artistic life from the baritone's hesitancy to enter into the conversation, and from his admission that: "He did not like to say anything. He had been paid his money and wished to be at peace with *men* " (147 -- emphasis mine). Both peace and payment prove to be exclusively male commodities in this setting as the custom seems not to have been to wait until the concert series' conclusion to be paid, nor does it seem that there was any genuine scarcity of funds, for even the small portion Mrs. Kearney received was paid from among "a few banknotes [that Mr. Holohan held] in his hand" (146).

This visual metaphor suggests that it is man who holds the power, and woman can only hope to have doled out to her whatever is arbitrarily deemed her fair share. In "A Mother", Mrs. Kearney's fair share is passive, subservient silence, a role she clearly oversteps throughout the story because of her openly vocal nature. The members of the Committee constantly try to redirect Mrs. Kearney's energies back within appropriately feminine boundaries by invoking the code of "ladylike" behavior, and their success can be measured

by how readily propriety and the status quo smother her attempts to secure fair, equitable treatment. For example, when Mrs. Kearney insists that she is merely "asking for [her] rights" (148), she is sharply reprimanded to have "some sense of decency" (148). Undoubtedly this is the same sense of decency that compelled her earlier in the story to avoid asking the sharp question: "And who is the *cometty*, pray?", for she has subconsciously internalized the awareness "that it would not be ladylike to do that: so she was silent" (141). Social pressures remind Mrs. Kearney that to be a "lady" and to be silent are synonymous. And, as language is our chief means of asserting our identity, woman, becomes the gnomon of Dublin art.

The final disengagement begins when, after being called "a great fellow fol-the-diddle-I-do" (149), Holohan lashes out opprobriously against Mrs. Kearney saying: "I thought you were a lady!" (149). In the end it is the reiteration of this masculine expectation of silent, ladylike submission expressed by Holohan's refrain: "That's a nice lady [. . .] O, she's a nice lady!" (149) that rouses the rabble to re-convene and pronounce the post mortem on Mrs. Kearney. It summons most rapidly Mr. O'Madden Burke, who once again speaks in favour, not of justice, but of propriety, as he reassures his companion by saying "You did the *proper* thing, Holohan, [. . . as he stood] poised upon his umbrella in approval" (149 -- emphasis mine). In one simple statement, O'Madden Burke effects the final exclusion as he helps extricate the problematic parallelogram of the Kearney family from the larger one of Dublin's virtually impenetrable social network.

Just as we have witnessed the absence of true political ideals in "Ivy Day" and the absence of true artistic ideals in "A Mother", so too do we find a telling absence of genuine spiritual ideals in "Grace". In each of these three stories Joyce implicitly directs our attention to the fact that economic ambitions replace the loftier ideals that should direct public life. Here we see how the real substance of politics, art and religion has been eroded to the point that the surface appearance of these institutions becomes not only an individual preoccupation, but also a collective one as well. Symptomatic of this pervasive malaise is the deterioration of language into galimatias and prevarication. This infirmity is manifest in each of the three main settings of "Grace", that is, the pub's lavatory, Mr. Kernan's bedroom, and the Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street. As a result, interpersonal relationships cannot but suffer dramatically as both family and friends seem not so interested in communication and sharing, but rather in "palaver and what they can get out of you" (178).

The initial image, of a man alone and "helpless" (150), lying paralysed on the lavatory floor, emphasizes the isolation of the individual vis a vis his social environment. Even before we know his name we are alarmed by the tableau of the person "curled up at the foot of the stairs", "his clothes [. . .] smeared with the filth and ooze of the floor on which he had lain, face downwards" (150). This opening description of Mr. Kernan, initially pathetic yet ultimately ironic, proves to be the key to understanding not only the title, but also the crux of the entire story, for in the particular attention paid to minute external details, we learn far more about Mr. Kernan's physical appearance than we do about either his identity or the

precise circumstances of his accident. The description of concrete details continues as those helping him -- from the constable whose profession is defined by glove and helmet, to the anonymous good Samaritan, known only as "the young man in the cycling suit" -- unfasten his collar and loosen his necktie before sending him off with "a tall agile gentleman of fair complexion, wearing a long yellow ulster" (152). Comforted by the presence of his "battered silk hat" (152) and "the collar of his filthy coat [pulled] across his neck" (153), Kernan finally divulges the first carefully guarded titbit of information -- his name -- to the young man in the cycling suit, although he had remained mute to the manager's and the constable's repeated inquiries of who he was and who was with him, or what his name and address were. In spite of his impaired condition, Kernan is still astute enough -- or at least accustomed enough -- to know that silence and evasion were the most prudent means of handling a difficult situation. As the story progresses, however, we discover that this is in fact the only means of interaction that these Dubliners can master. That is why even in this opening bar room sequence no direct answers are ever given. "No one knew" (150) who the man was or who his companions were, and when Kernan finally regains consciousness his hollow refrain is "Sha, 's nothing" (151). This obscuring of the truth is indeed epidemic, as is evidenced in the onlookers' facile circumvolution of major issues. For example, when Power questions Kernan about "How [he got himself] into this mess", the addressee remains circumspectly silent, allowing the unnamed cyclist to reply that: "The gentleman fell down the stairs" (152). Although real questions are being asked here, only the vestiges of

real answers are offered in return, as is the case with the inspection of the scene of the accident. Although the manager and the constable "agreed that the gentleman must have missed his footing" (152-153), neither man looks beneath the surface to discover why this occurred. That is left for the reader to deduce, and we realize long before Mr. Cunningham openly acknowledges it, that "it happened that [he was] peloothered" (160).

Nevertheless, Kernan persists in his unsuccessful attempts to cover up the real problem of alcoholism, or deeper sense of failure, by adopting the ludicrous attitude that "by *grace* of [. . . a silk hat of some decency and a pair of gaiters] a man could always pass muster" (154 -- emphasis mine). Of course, in his present situation, neither hat nor gaiters lends him sufficient "grace" to 'pass muster" now. But Kernan encounters little opposition from his associates, all of whom tend to skim over the surface of life, and especially religion, contented if only external appearances are suitably convincing.

Even in the brief interval when we get the opportunity to learn more about Mrs. Kernan, we see that she too confuses surface with substance, believing as easily that intimacy with her husband can be renewed by waltzing with him, as she can believe "in the banshee and the holy ghost" (158). Remembering her groom of twenty five years earlier, she recalls not so much the man he was, as the way he looked. Her "vivid pleasure" is aroused not by the wedding ceremony itself, nor by the conferring of the sacrament of marriage that apparently took place inside the house of worship, but rather by the recollection of "how she had passed out of the Star of the Sea church in Sandymount, leaning on the arm of a jovial well-fed man

who was dressed smartly in a frock-coat and lavender trousers, and carried a silk hat *gracefully* balanced upon his other arm" (156 -- emphasis mine). She recalls only the visual impression she expects to have made on someone who may have, like herself in later years, "hurried to the chapel door whenever a wedding was reported" (156). This subtle sketch implies that it did not take twenty-five years for religion to become nothing more than "a habit" (157) for Mrs. Kernan.

In the hopes of encouraging the "habit" in her husband as well, Mrs. Kernan readily agrees to any plot Mr. Cunningham can devise and carry out with the help of Mr. Power and Mr. M'Coy. When the three men enter their friend's bedroom, with a definite plan for redeeming the drunkard, they discover Mr. Kernan looking "at them a little proudly, with a veteran's pride" (157), thus revealing his fundamental attitude towards alcohol, that is, his sense of accomplishment, rather than embarrassment at his extreme over-indulgence. Not only is the problem of alcoholism never directly addressed, it is actually glorified as being the trademark of a "man of the world". Is it any surprise, then, that Mrs. Kernan's has become conditioned to offer stout to the gentlemen, and to fall prey to her husband's whining pleas of "And have you nothing for me, duckie?", "Nothing for poor little hubby?" (162). Even Mr. Fogarty, governed by the same sense of decorum, and being "not without culture" (166), brings Kernan a gift of "a half-pint of special whiskey" (166). It is not only Mrs. Kernan who "accept[s . . .] frequent intemperance as part of the climate" (156). This story of public life, more than either of the others, reminds us that living in community with others in

Dublin inevitably means suffering -- whether directly or indirectly -- the effects of the omnipresent over-abundance of "spirits" of the material world. As R. B. Kershner notes, "alcohol is an emblem of the unmentionable central subject, everywhere present and nowhere acknowledged" (131).

It is only Mr. Cunningham who, from time to time, raises his voice in opposition to this conspiracy of subterfuge. On three separate instances he challenges his companions' attitudes towards drinking. First, as he listens to Kernan's complaints about "want[ing] to retch off" (158), Mr. Cunningham states the obvious "firmly" by responding "That's the boose" (158). But not even so blunt an accusation can penetrate the network of prevarication that protects Kernan, for not only does he insist he "caught a cold" (158), but Mr. M'Coy also comes to his rescue by diverting attention from the real problem with the pretence of being a medical authority on such complex phenomena as mucus in the thorax. As he manipulates the conversation in this way, he looks at "Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Power at the same time with an air of challenge" (158), implying that they should not dare to break the unspoken code of circumlocution. Yet this intimidation tactic fails to affect Cunningham because he continues to needle Kernan with direct questions like "Who were you with?", "And who else?" (159). Similarly, he refuses to be put off by blatantly evasive answers like Kernan's: "A chap. I don't know his name. Damn it now, what's his name? Little chap with sandy hair . . . ." (159) that trail off into deliberately ambiguous ellipses. Cunningham's own barely verbal response of the "moral" "Hm" (159) silences his audience immediately because it conveys much meaning

simply through its tone and the well established reputation of its speaker. Whether Cunningham is voicing disapproval of "Mr. Harford's manners in drinking" (160) or outright disbelief in the story Kernan may be concocting, may never be known. In any event, Kernan's credibility, even among his so-called friends, is undermined, allowing us a brief glimpse of the real fabric of public life.

Ultimately, the characters who people the pages of "Grace" remain more individuals, interested primarily in their own benefit, than community, interested genuinely in the welfare of others. For this reason, almost everyone in "Grace" carries the burden of his or her own narrative of victimization. Mr. Cunningham is the victim of his wife, "an unpresentable woman who was an incurable drunkard . . . [and for whom] he had set up house . . . six times; and each time she pawned the furniture on him" (157). Mr. Power is victimized by Mr. M'Coy who "had recently made a crusade in search of valises and portmanteaus to enable Mrs. M'Coy to fulfil imaginary engagements in the country" (160). M'Coy has undoubtedly been using his friends in a well-documented scam that consists of borrowing luggage only to pawn it, later claiming it had been lost in transit. Mr. Fogarty too is the victim of Kernan's, and likely countless others', financial abuse in the form of a "small account for groceries [yet] unsettled" (166). Mrs. Kernan and the Kernan children are subjected to a difficult, unstable and at times violent life because of Mr. Kernan's drinking. And finally Kernan himself is an unconscious victim, not only of Mrs. Kernan's pocket-emptying habits (155), but also "of a plot which his friends [. . .] had disclosed to Mrs. Kernan in the parlour" (157). Thus Joyce proves false the old adage about the friends who pray

together staying together (except perhaps to drink together). Instead they lie to, take advantage of, trick and trap each other.

What better method therefore, can the three conceive for hooking Kernan onto their little scheme, than the same kind of evasive tactics that Kernan himself uses to pique their curiosity about his own mysterious escapades of inebriation? By feigning concealment of that which they truly wish to reveal, Cunningham, Power and M'Coy use silence and glaring omissions to ensnare their victim. They take turns dropping morsels of bait, waiting for Kernan to leap at an appealing one. Detail by detail, Kernan learns that on Thursday night the friends are meeting at M'Auley's, at half-seven, and that they must not be late "because it's sure to be crammed to the doors" (162). But Kernan is a fairly shrewd player of the game, allowing a short silence to pass before casually asking "What's in the wind" (162)? Cunningham continues to tantalize his audience with his "evasive tone" (162) and the delicious pause of perfectly timed ellipses when he says: "[. . .] it's just a little . . . spiritual matter" (162). Power, on the other hand, lacking this finesse and perhaps concerned that the silent pauses may work to their disadvantage, blurts out in a manner uncharacteristic of Dubliners: "To tell you the truth, Tom, we're going to make a retreat" (162). Whereas evasion draws Kernan further into his friends' plot, an apparently forthright approach automatically breeds aloofness in him, as he remains instinctively silent and "took no part in the conversation for a long while, but listened, with an air of calm enmity, while his friends discussed the Jesuits" (163).

If the earlier emphasis on clothing betrayed a preoccupation with surface rather than substance, the men's ramblings about church history reinforce the idea that it is far preferable to tell a story well than it is to tell it accurately, for almost all the anecdotes recounted are twisted or abridged in one way or another. From the erroneous concept of papal mottos, to the history of the declaration of papal infallibility, and everything else in between, these fellows are far more intent on listening to or confabulating a dramatic story than a dully realistic one. That is why they recall, with special relish, not so much the subject of Father Burke's memorable talk, but rather the fascinating manner in which it was delivered, as Kernan reminisces: "-- I heard him once [. . .] I forget the subject of his discourse now [. . .] I forget now what . . . . O yes, it was on the Pope, the late Pope. I remember it well. Upon my word it was magnificent, the style of the oratory. And his voice! God! Hadn't he a voice!" (165). Because this eloquent ecclesiast clearly had the gift of tongues, or perhaps more aptly put, the "gift of gab" -- parodied in Kernan's own ironic lack of "a minute piece of [. . .] tongue" (153) -- no one seems overly troubled by the fact that "he wasn't much of a theologian" (165) or that "he didn't preach what was quite orthodox" (165).

In fact both of these descriptions prepare the way for the Gardiner Street sermon, because of their direct applicability to Father Purdon. In this final setting of "Grace" we see how completely and how deeply the public hegemony of periphrasis has been entrenched in the collective consciousness of Dubliners. Even in this supposedly spiritual sanctuary, the focus is strangely secular and superficial.

The initial description gives us no impression of the mood or the atmosphere at this retreat, but again a visual impression of the congregation's attire, as the apparently objective camera eye view of the proceedings relates that:

> The gentlemen were all well dressed and orderly. The light of the lamps of the church fell upon an assembly of black clothes and white collars, relieved here and there by tweeds . . . The gentlemen sat in the benches, having hitched their trousers slightly above their knees and laid their hats in security. (172)

To further emphasize the "public" feeling of the scene, Joyce fills the Gardiner Street Church (earlier mentioned as the one frequented by the Dillon family of "An Encounter") with an assortment of characters from other Dubliners stories, thus suggesting that this will be a cultural experience typical of the average Dubliner. Mr. Harford, the moneylender, bridges the immediate gap between the religious retreat and the earlier action of the story. Mr. Fanning, accompanied by "one of the newly elected councillors of the ward" (172) reintroduces the full range of political echoes associated with "Ivy Day in the Committee Room". "Michael Grimes, the owner of three pawnbroker's shops" (172) may remind us of Farrington's dealings in Terry Kelly's pawn shop, as "Dan Hogan's nephew, who was up for the job in the Town Clerk's office" must bring to mind the unfortunate fate of "little Peake" (92) whom "Mr. Alleyne had hounded [. . .] out of the office in order to make room for his own nephew" (92). Finally, Mr. Hendrick's presence suggests the scenario

of "A Mother". When Father Purdon makes his grand entrance then, it is as though we might just as easily have seen him with his "massive red face" (173) crowning the "bulk" of his body in Corless', O'Neill's, Davy Byrne's, Callan's of Fownes Street, Mulligan's in Poolbeg street, Butler's in Moore Street, M'Auley's, the Scotch House or the Black Eagle, as in any church. He certainly strikes us as more of a "man of the world (164) like Kernan and the rest, than a real spiritual guide. It certainly is not the "lofty morality" of Jesus Christ that Purdon is preaching, but his own base expediency, as is evident in his questionable exegesis of the parable of the unjust steward.

Although Purdon is right in saying that the parable "was one of the most difficult texts in all the Scriptures [. . .] to interpret properly" (173), his insight ends there. His choice of scripture for elucidation is a rather unusual one, about an unjust steward, or manager -- or perhaps we could even say *accountant* -- who cheats not only his master, but also his master's patrons by deceiving both parties about the fees he is extracting from debtors, and thereby increasing his own profit margin with a well padded commission. (Stuhlmueller, 149). Realizing he is about to lose his position because of this gross mismanagement of his master's accounts, he immediately tries to ingratiate himself with his master's debtors, by cancelling large portions of their debts. In this way, he hopes to make friends with those who will remember his "kindness", and reciprocate it when he is unemployed. It is clearly neither loyalty to his master, nor concern for "friends" that motivates the steward, but rather a self-serving shrewdness that encourages him to project his future needs and plot a strategy that will enable him to fulfil them.

What is most surprising, however, about this piece of scripture is the master's ultimate encouragement of his servant's corruption: "For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Wherefore make you unto yourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity so that when you die they may receive you into everlasting dwellings" (173). The morality advocated here is definitely at variance with the traditional attitude of self-sacrifice emphasized throughout the rest of the New Testament. Yet it is not the sole example of inconsistent scripture which fails to withstand a specifically Christian -- or in this case, Catholic -- scrutiny. Why then does Joyce choose this particular selection from among many others? It proves to be an apt extended metaphor for what Joyce saw happening in the church, the dominant institution governing Dublin life, at the turn of the century.

In order to read the metaphor correctly, we must first identify each role in this miniature mise en scene. The master in the parable is to be read, as always in the scriptures, as God the father, and it is an extremely unorthodox image of holiness that is conveyed in this description. Purdon's "friendly talk" seems to be a variation on the line of the Lord's prayer that says "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors", only in this case, the priest, in extending a gracious forgiveness of debts on behalf of his Master, follows faithfully in the footsteps of his parabolic predecessor. At no point does he illuminate any kind of spiritual ideal, nor does he point out positive means of improving wayward lifestyles; instead, he massages many a bruised conscience by insisting that:

> Jesus Christ, with His divine understanding of every

> cranny of our human nature, understood that all men were not called to the religious life, that by far the vast majority were forced to live in the world and, to a certain extent, for the world: and in this sentence He designed to give them a word of counsel, 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. (174)

If this interpretation of a problematic passage does not surprise his Dublin audience, surely it surprises readers who likely expected a more circuitous navigation around the main difficulties of the text, much like the earlier avoidance of Kernan's real problem with alcoho or the corruption of the Catholic Church. Shocking in both its directness and implication, Purdon's praise of a world view that is not even generally humanitarian, let alone specifically Christian, shatters any traditional images of the church as a loving and sheltering community. It is as though, for the very first time, we have been admitted behind closed doors to an exclusive insiders' club which we had heretofore only seen from the outside and about which we speculated ad infinitum. Joyce here exposes the Church as perhaps the largest clique yet -- where members reunite periodically to encourage and support one another, with no regard whatsoever for moral integrity. What kind of credibility can there be then in Purdon's pretence to "spiritual accountant" who asks "each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they tallied accurately with conscience" (174)? He ironically suggests that his audience "be straight and manly with

God" (174) and "with God's grace" to "set right [their] accounts" (174) after having lauded the ultimate falsification of records.

The precedent is clearly set by the scripture itself in which craft is prized far above honesty. The spiritual accountant himself -- as well as the entire institution he represents -- proves to be as unjust as the fictional steward, for he too cancels half of the debts owed to his master by suggesting that: "Jesus Christ was not a hard taskmaster. He understood our little failings, understood the weakness of our poor fallen nature, understood the temptations of this life" (174). Thus Purdon diminishes not only the debts owned to his Master, but the whole value of spiritual life, for when he encourages a "proper" interpretation of the scriptures, he is not encouraging the "right" interpretation, nor even an enlightened interpretation, but the kind of interpretation that is distinctive of the individual, or as the Oxford English Dictionary suggests, "special, particular, restricted or private" (2327). The implication, therefore, is that the "proper" way to interpret scripture is to be able to justify one's own life by it, no matter how much manipulation of the "figures" is required. This degeneration of ideals shows us very clearly how Joyce perceived the real meaning -- if any -- to be severed from the institution of the Church, leaving it too, more of a hollow convention or an external shell of appearance than a spiritual force. Rather than witnessing a transmutation of the quotidian into the sacred, we see the transubstantiation of the sacred into the "proper", suggesting the ultimate aloneness and fragmentation of a society that operates on the principle of each man for himself. In allowing us to experience the paradox of solitude in the midst of such

a community, Joyce reveals perhaps the greatest gnomon yet exposed.

As the degree of bleakness and lack of faith in human kind intensifies throughout this closing trilogy, it reaches its nadir in "Grace", the most pathetic of all the Dubliners stories, in which even the most sacred of relationships is prostituted to the self-serving desires of a decaying society. This final grouping becomes for Joyce his own apologia for the necessary flight of the artist past the restrictive nets of a world saturated in palaver, cliques and foolishness. But it is a concluding commentary about dear, dirty Dublin that Joyce will ultimately abnegate in the writing of "The Dead".

CHAPTER V
"THE DEAD"

Though distanced in time from the rest of the Dubliners tales, (having been written in 1906-1907 , Joyce's ultimate story, "The Dead" is laden with a host of shadows and voices from earlier stories. It is both similar to, and different from the preceding accounts of other Dublin denizens. As Thomas Loe points out, "many critics believe that during this period Joyce's attitude toward Ireland mellowed and that his more tolerant views are integrated into the story" (486), and indeed a gentler eye does view the events in "the dark gaunt house on Usher's Island" (176). But in spite of this warmer narrative stance, Dublin is still revealed as an eerily ghost-ridden city where the dead place their chilling grasp on the living. Throughout the story, the gulf between these seemingly opposite poles of existence is gradually bridged until the two finally merge. Joyce accomplishes this by utilizing a kind of floating or ever-fluctuating narrative perspective which creates an effect of extreme open-endedness. Not only does this prevent us, as readers, from becoming locked into a single dominant perspective, it also enables us to hear the myriad of echoes of the previous stories, as well as of those stories that have not yet been told.

"The Dead" is a story about telling stories, all of which remain somehow incomplete or truncated. Again, as in other Dubliners portraits, our attention is immediately drawn to the lacunae of the many stories we hear. Almost everyone in "The Dead" engages in some form or other of story-telling at the Misses' Morkan annual

holiday festivities. Indeed, talk seems to flow as freely as the drinks or music. But discourse becomes far more than an outward flourish of social activity; as Garry Leonard argues (after Lacan), "the successful seduction of the Other through speech, permits the subject to authenticate his own subjectivity because, for the length of time that he is speaking, his belief that the audience believes in him allows him to believe in himself" (451). In other words, we talk to one another, or share our own personal narratives in order to affirm our fragile sense of identity. This is clearly the case with many of the characters in "The Dead", from the apparently background figures like Freddy or Mrs. Malins or the servant girl Lily, to the main characters such as Gabriel Conroy himself. A true narrative chorus is masterfully orchestrated as each character raises his or her own voice to tell a unique story.

Although throughout most of "The Dead", it is Gabriel's consciousness the reader becomes attuned to, we are also given little glimpses into the secret lives of less dominant characters. Freddy Malins, for instance is first brought before us as he is eagerly in the middle of recounting a story. After having shared his story with Gabriel on the stairs, he "crossed the room on rather shaky legs and began to repeat [it] in an undertone" (185) to Mr. Browne. We are never privy to the actual content of the story, but are more struck by the vivid image of the story-teller himself, as he revels whole-heartedly in the act of telling. Freddy is described as having "exploded, before he had well reached the climax of his story, in a kink of high-pitched bronchitic laughter [. . .] repeating words of his last phrase as well as his fit of laughter would allow him." (185-186),

keeping the reader in some suspense as to the specific details, if not the general nature, of what Freddy is relaying to his listener. But this boisterous, inebriated individual, who is likely sharing an off-colour joke with a chum (for he breathes no word of the infamous "story" to the Misses Morkan as he greets them), is not the only side of Freddy Malins we meet. Though we are likely to dismiss him as a mere drunk, we find that there is a greater depth to him than this early episode leads us to believe. He demonstrates his empathy for the unlikeliest of subjects throughout the evening. His praise of Julia's singing is genuine if excessive, as is his defense of the negro singer, who is relegated to "the second part of the Gaiety pantomime" (198) probably because of his race. And his attempt to explain "as best he could [. . .how] the monks were trying to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world" (D 201) reveals a capacity in Freddy to experience vicariously the hardship of others. He is acutely aware of the fact that we all must endure our own private narratives.

Mr. Browne is also introduced as a teller of tales who tries to "authenticate his own subjectivity" by explaining to Aunt Kate why the ladies are so fond of him. But his audience, having failed to confirm the identity he seeks to project, (as Aunt Kate walks away), forces Mr. Browne to abandon this story, as soon as "Aunt Kate was out of earshot" (182). He continues to "tell stories" in the form of his bantering joke about his whiskey consumption being the "doctor's orders" (183), followed by the anecdote of the "famous Mrs. Cassidy, who is reported to have said: 'Now Mary Grimes, if I don't take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it" (183). Having chosen the wrong

form of discourse for his particular audience, Browne receives little encouragement from the young women who move on to other topics of conversation. As a result, he turns "promptly to the two young men who were more appreciative" (183). Perhaps this is because even the demure little creatures he is trying to captivate with his "low Dublin accent" (183) and a little too much confidentiality intuitively know that Mr. Browne's type "is only all palaver and what [he] can get out of you" (178).

The figure of Gabriel Conroy, on the other hand, strikes quite a contrast to Malins and Browne. His arrival is not dreaded, as is Malins', nor is his company shunned, as is Browne's. Instead, his aunts await his entrance with anxious anticipation not only because "he was their favourite nephew" (179), but also because he would prove to be the "main prop" (176) of the festivities. It is precisely in this light that Gabriel views himself, as master of ceremonies and master orator, whose "superior education" (179) distinguishes him from "his hearers" (179). He calls to mind the boy of "An Encounter" whose sense of innate superiority to the rougher Mahony, will ultimately lead him to penitence. Armed with this preconceived notion he confronts not only the other guests at his aunts' party, but also his wife when the two retire to the privacy of their hotel room. Both the public Gabriel and the private Gabriel seek an audience who will believe in him the way he would like to believe in himself. But much to his alarm, all the familiarly comfortable images of himself will be shattered by his three encounters with Lily, Molly and Gretta, respectively.

His aunts seem to be the only t omen who confirm Gabriel's sense of himself, doting on him as though he were the very centre of their world. Feeling buoyed up by their warm reception, he engages in what proves to be a regrettable conversation with Lily. We know very little about this "caretaker's daughter" (an epithet curiously applied twice) except that she is an exhausted and disillusioned young girl. The story's introduction is told from her perspective, as we realize that it is Lily's idiom that tells us she is "literally run off her feet" (175) when it is only figuratively possible. It is her fatigue that relates to us how "she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest" (175). It is Gabriel, however, who sees her as a "slim, growing girl, pale in complexion and with hay-coloured hair." (177). Because he cannot imagine that it is fatigue that drains the colour from her face, he suspects that it is "the gas in the pantry [that] ma[kes] her look still paler" (177). Thus the same picture is described from two different perspectives, giving the reader a somewhat more compassionate insight into the plight of this young slavey. It is likely her first comment to him when they are alone in the pantry that awakens his condescension, for when she asks the question "--Is it snowing again, Mr. Conroy?", after he enters with "a light fringe of snow l[ying] like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes" (177), Gretta's question "--Is the fire hot, sir?" (212) is mirrored. The silliness of both questions allows Gabriel to categorize both speakers as thoughtless, childlike individuals, capable of virtually no depth of thought or feeling. That is why he adopts a patronizing attitude towards Lily when he says, "gaily", ". . . I suppose we'll be going to

your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?" (178). Lily's biting response that "-- The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (178) shows Gabriel that she is far more insightful than he had originally imagined. As Bruce Avery notes,

> . . . the narrator characterizes the tonal quality of Gabriel's speech: a friendly tone, gaily spoken. Gabriel wants to communicate a mood, a feeling, to Lily by saying any old thing in a nice tone. But he loads this feeling onto a set of words that, in this context, will not carry it. Lily responds to the literal meaning of the words . . . (475)

Lily, like each of the other women Gabriel confronts, seems to care little for form or manner, but instead focuses on the substance of what is said. The sincerity of her response, while betraying an unsophisticated honesty in her dealings with others, is extremely unnerving for Gabriel, as this self-perceived master of locution is undermined by the artless words of a mere housemaid. In an attempt to re-establish his superiority he thrusts a coin into Lily's hand, accompanied by the less than eloquent: "Just . . . here's a little . . ." (178) Not only do we fill in these ellipses with what we suppose Gabriel intended to say, but the whole scenario, involving the exchange of the coin invokes the betrayal of the slavey in "Two Gallants".

Consequently, when Aunt Kate exclaims: "There's that Lily, I'm sure I don't know what has come over her lately. She's not the girl she was at all" (181), we may well feel we know her story more

thoroughly than any of her mistresses do. Gabriel would like to believe that there is something "wrong" with Lily, for that would explain her rough reply, but he is prevented from "ask[ing] some questions on this point" (181) by the unwelcome arrival of Freddy Malins.

In any event, Lily's incomplete story has sparked Gabriel's preoccupation with his own "story" -- the evening's speech. He wonders

> . . about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation they might recognise from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better. The indelicate clacking of men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure. (179)

Just as Lily has left out the explanation for her bitterness towards men, and Aunt Kate leaves out the details of Lily's peculiar behaviour, so does Gabriel contemplate omitting a significant section of his speech. His motives reveal much about him, for he never once considers that his audience might feel intellectually embarrassed by being talked "at" above their heads. Instead, he remains obsessed

with his own image and how *he* may appear ridiculous. In an act of deliberate evasion, Gabriel does not even refer to Lily by name, instead he describes her as "the girl in the pantry", reducing her to innocuous anonymity. He underestimates his error by believing that it was not so much *what* he said to the girl as *how* he said it to her, thereby avoiding any unnecessary pangs of conscience.

But lest we accept Gabriel's self-estimation too completely, the narrator takes another step back from our protagonist and sets up a glass where Gabriel could, if he chose to, see the inmost part of himself. Mary Jane, whose musical artistry rivals Gabriel's gift for words, provides us with the opportunity to see how Gabriel behaves when he is a member of the audience, rather than the star attraction. Although he feels his audience would betray their ignorance by not enjoying or understanding his discourse, he fails to recognize that he responds in precisely this way to Mary Jane, as his mind wanders:

> Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing room. He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners though they had begged Mary Jane to play something. (186)

He thinks no less of his own grade of culture for being unable to appreciate the "difficult passages", or for preferring more obvious "melody", and yet in his earlier self-analysis he points an accusing finger at his prospective audience precisely because they would not comprehend the difficult passage from Browning and might prefer

something from the "Melodies". Through this narrative drop-back technique we see how very myopic Gabriel is, and how each apparently insignificant background character in this book is also the main player in the foreground of his or her own life. Had Gabriel recognized that he too drops into the background of other people's narratives, the clash between his image of himself, and the images others have of him may have proven less devastating.

It is just such a clash with Molly Ivors that derails Gabriel's self-confidence and changes the direction of his after dinner speech. Garry Leonard rightly asserts that she is ". . . sounding the central question of this story, or anyone's story" (461) when she asks " -- Who is G.C.?" His difficulty in answering this question , as well as his inability to defend himself verbally against her charges of being a "West Briton" (188) suggest that Molly successfully topples the intellectual pedestal upon which Gabriel has placed himself. He weighs his words far more carefully with Molly than he did in his exchange with Lily, because of his esteem for his audience:

> He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books. (188)

Gabriel, caught off his guard by Molly's intellectual equality or perhaps even superiority, becomes painfully aware of the lameness

of his answer and how foolish he must appear to her, murmuring, blinking his eyes, and trying feebly to smile. For as Florence Walzl maintains, in order for Molly's career to be parallel to Gabriel's in turn-of-the-century Dublin, as a woman she would have had to work much harder and display even more brilliance than a man, because of the scarcity of opportunities for women outside the realms of marriage and child-rearing (like Gretta), domestic duties (like Lily), or music instruction (like the three Misses Morkan). Perhaps aware of this reality, Gabriel realizes that he cannot dupe Molly into accepting essentially empty, though high-sounding rhetoric as an explanation. Sophisticated style without substance would fail to impress Molly, even more than it had "failed with the girl in the pantry." Her persistent questioning disarms him of the only "weapon" he has at his disposal -- words.

Thus it is a vulnerable and exposed Gabriel who plans his retaliation against his prey, whom he visualizes "staring at him with her rabbit's eyes." (190). He clearly flatters himself into thinking that through a clever arrangement of words he can secretly manipulate the feelings and conscience of his victim. It is Gabriel's obsessive imagination rather than Molly's genuine intentions that causes him to worry about her "looking up at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes [. . . as she hoped] to see him fail in his speech" (192). Although he plans to address her specifically as the "new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us" (192), she denies him the satisfaction of his revenge by her overly hasty departure, rendering even these words impotent. In fact, the thought of Molly lingers on in Gabriel's

memory long after her physical presence has disappeared, for the mystery surrounding her sudden farewell becomes the gnomon that generates a plethora of unanswered questions for Gabriel and us, as he wonders not only if she was sincere in her praise of his review, or if she had ". . . really any life of her own behind all her propagandism" (192) but also if he were the "cause of her abrupt departure" (196). Yes, yes and no, the respective responses to Gabriel's three quandaries, made evident by Molly's laughing exit, deliver the final blow to his conceit. We are given the impression that as she walks out of this particular Dubliners story, she could be walking right into another one, perhaps her own.

Gabriel, however, remains incapable of moving forward, as is evidenced in his lugubrious lashing back at the absent Molly for the public humiliation he believes he endured, causing him to do exactly that which he claims to avoid, namely to " . . . linger on the past [. . .and] to let . . . gloomy moralising intrude upon us here tonight" (204). Filled with confidence by the thought that ". . . Miss Ivors was not there and that she had gone away discourteously" (203), Gabriel omits the Browning passage which might have appealed only to Molly, and proceeds to attack the "sceptical and [. . .] thought-tormented age" (203) in which they live. Gabriel feels once again in a position of power when he extols the "spirit of good-fellowship" (204) that Molly has apparently rejected by leaving before dinner, and for the first time his audience seems to reaffirm his position. The "applause and laughter" (204) as well as the smiling faces encourage Gabriel to reveal at least a little of what he believes to be his "superior education", by concluding his speech with the flourish

about having to judge among the three graces. But by confusing the story of Paris' judgement of the three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite with that of the three graces who "can hardly be said to have any legends of their own" (Rose, 124), he fails again to tell a proper story because he appropriates the stories of others, including his aunts, for his own self-centred purposes.

But his audience, as himself, is oblivious to this fact, and even the invasion of the "piercing morning air" (206) does not deter him from entertaining eager and unquestioning listeners with another tale from the past, the story of the "never-to-be-forgotten Johnny" (207). Not unlike his earlier oration, this anecdote also has significant details omitted or transmogrified for the sake of aesthetic effect. It can also be likened to those accounts of the history of the papacy told in "Grace", valued not so much for accuracy as for enjoyment. Gabriel alters the facts of his grandfather's story in order to render it more comical, and his verbal artistry more obvious. This is why he describes his grandfather as a glue-boiler rather than a starch miller, and as living in Back Lane rather than only working there. Both times Aunt Kate gently corrects his editing. But the definite highlight of his story comes at its climax with Gabriel's dramatic re-enactment of Johnny's stupidity, as he ". . . paced in a circle round the hall in his goloshes amid the laughter of others" (208). This cannot be narrated from Gabriel's perspective because of the unusual attention to the specific detail of the goloshes. Gabriel would not mention anything that could make his overly cautious nature seem ridiculous. This little detail detracts from the foolishness of Johnny, only to focus on the foolishness of Gabriel --

yet another example of a narrative distancing from our protagonist, which, in its reflexiveness carries us back to Gabriel's initial entry, casting it in a new, and gently comical light.

Without this distance the powerful message of the final sequence between Gabriel and Gretta would be lost. Their private story begins as Gabriel watches Gretta listening in rapture to Bartell D'Arcy's singing. Viewing her from an emotional as well as a physical distance, Gabriel muses how:

> There was a 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. (210)

Gabriel is struck immediately by the intellectual and aesthetic impact of this visual image, still perceiving himself in the role of artist. And whether he is painting her or naming her, Gretta remains chiefly an object of admiration for her husband, a mere abstraction rather than a living human being. It is as though she were his creation, or at least his possession, to be displayed as a sign of his accomplishment. "A sudden tide of joy [goes] leaping out of [Gabriel's] heart" (212) when he believes that he is the sole cause of Gretta's radiance. Is he not casting himself as hero and Gretta as just a background character when in disclosing his secret fantasy he reveals how he longs ". . . to

run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear [. . .and] to defend her against something and then to be alone with her" (212)? Is he not thinking still of himself when he feels ". . . proud and happy then, happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage" (215)? He can only see Gretta as a reflection of himself, and as an affirmation of the man he wishes to be. That is why he seems to be so thoroughly at ease playing the role of the master script writer, who also directs and stars in the following love scene with his wife:

> He longed to be alone with her. When the others had gone away, when he and she were in their room in the hotel, then they would be alone together. He would call her softly:
>
> -- Gretta!
>
> Perhaps she would not hear at once; she would be undressing. Then something in her voice would strike her. She would turn and look at him . . . (214)

His daydream trails off into delicious ellipses that leave little doubt in the reader's mind of how he intends to complete this passionate scene, always remaining in complete control of his leading lady.

When it comes to the real thing, however, Gabriel falls far short of this ideal. The only similarity between the two scenarios is the artificiality with which Gabriel approaches each. Though in his daydream sequence, Gabriel knows just what to say and how to say it to seduce the object of his desire, the real Gabriel awkwardly and inappropriately brings up the subject of his loan to Freddy Malins "in a false voice" (217) because Gretta failed to respond as he had hoped

when he called her name. By not responding to her cues, Gretta angers her husband so much that he must strive "to restrain himself from breaking out into brutal language about the sottish Malins and his pound [because h]e long[s] to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her" (217). But no passionate outpouring is forthcoming from the cautious and rational Gabriel. Instead, the gross disparity between his inner reality and his outer reaction is evident when, though in this "fever of rage" (217), he suppresses all his feelings to answer Gretta's question about when the loan was given by saying, with complete calmness: "-- O, at Christmas, when he opened that little Christmas-card shop in Henry Street" (217). This cold logic applied to intensely emotional situations allows us to see Gabriel as a married version of the celibate Mr. Duffy of "A Painful Case". Even the intimate relationship between husband and wife is marred by Gabriel's egocentric need to perform according to his own established script. What he does not realize, though, is how much of a fiction his whole life has become, especially in comparison to Gretta's spontaneous and intense experiences.

Similarly, he does not realize that the very way in which he tries to bring Gretta nearer to him merely places a greater distance between them. When she does not mouth the words he longs to hear in response to his question "-- Tell me what it is Gretta. I think I know what is the matter. Do I know?" (218), he is consumed by a "dull anger [that] began to gather at the back of his mind" (218). He then begins his mocking and ironic inquiry into the person from Gretta's past who usurped his position of dominance in his wife's

thoughts, as the "dull fires of his lust began to grow angrily in his veins" (218). This infernal imagery is aptly applied to a man so intent on causing his wife pain and suffering. He hopes to lash her conscience -- just as he had hoped to do with Molly -- with a whip of words. He therefore batters her with questions such as: "What about the song? Why does that make you cry?" "Why, Gretta?" "And who was the person long ago?" (218). Expecting to close in for the kill, he delivers the final blows when he asks: "Someone you were in love with?", "O then, you were in love with him?", and ultimately, "Perhaps that was why you wanted to go to Galway with that Ivors girl" (219). His last statement attempts to link the two women who have chipped away at his fragile self-concept, in a sinister liaison designed to undermine him. In casting himself in the role of their innocent victim, he can feel exonerated from any blame for the failure of his plan.

With this armour of self-righteousness Gabriel meets Gretta's inquiry of "--What for?" (219) with the chilly response: "--How do I know? To see him perhaps." (219). Only after learning that Michael Furey has died does Gabriel finally feel "humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead" (219). But instead of showing any compassion towards his wife, Gabriel is once again consumed by a sense of his own foolishness at not being the only man to occupy his wife's thoughts:

> While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed

> him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a penny-boy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. Instinctively he turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead. (219-220)

He does not think much about Gretta's story -- indeed, he does not think about much except his own sorry state -- until Gretta's climactic statement: "I think he died for me" (220).

At that point, he can no longer visualize the enemy that assaults his ego, as he fears a force against which he is powerless to retaliate: "A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world" (220). It is as though Gabriel finds himself in an eerie limbo-like state somewhere between life and death, not unlike the threshold experience which very possibly drove Father Flynn of "The Sisters" into madness. Gabriel, however, survives this experience having gleaned a lesson that will probably alter him forever. At this point he begins to move outward from his preoccupation with himself as he realizes that in comparison to Gretta's overwhelming narrative, none of his attempts to play the craftsman of words has resulted in a story as powerful and true as hers. Yet it is not only his professional experience that he suddenly sees as a void; his whole life is called into question as he marvels at the fact that: ". . . she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly

pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife" (222). He is justly troubled by the thought of this intense romance, and wonders if the revelation he just heard has been gnomonified in some way, while he focuses on these minute details: "a petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side" (222) and thinks "perhaps she had not told him all the story" (222). This focus on naturalistic detail while experiencing a moment of intense feeling recalls how the young boy's attention in "The Sisters" is drawn to Nannie's clumsily hooked skirt and her worn-down cloth boots even though he is trying to confront the difficult issue of death. This technique reaffirms Joyce's belief that epiphanies emanate from the most mundane and apparently inconsequential little details of everyday life. For the first time Gabriel seems genuinely interested in someone else's story. Although his natural reaction may be to suspect that the relationship was more than an innocent friendship and was sexual in nature (Weir, 354), he does not wallow in feelings of self-pity or jealousy. Instead he opens himself up to contemplate a wider range of experience, painfully aware of the fact that all words are essentially "lame and useless" (222) in expressing the deepest truths of life.

This is the necessary prelude to the epiphany which reveals to him two very important insights. First he learns about his own life, that he must not let it dwindle feebly like Aunt Julia's. Although he knows that "one by one they were all becoming shades", he realizes that the gloom of death can be mitigated if we can only ". . . pass

boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, [rather] than fade and wither dismally with age" (223). And only when he is finally able to empathize with another human being, to share, if only imaginatively in another person's pain, does he transcend the barriers of his own egotism. Gabriel's real epiphany occurs when:

> He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live. [. . .] He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. (223)

Understanding something he has not directly experienced is Gabriel's first step towards regeneration. He experiences a kind of mystical union with all humanity when he describes how:

> 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. (223)

Ironically enough, Gabriel is far more real at this moment, as his identity fades into impalpability, than at any other time. Mourning and hope are intermingled in this final description, for although Gabriel feels a morbid affinity with the dead, he finally experiences

the kind of kinship with others that he had only ever talked about before.

Why does Joyce use heavily Christian imagery to describe so serious a moment, when throughout the rest of the Dubliners stories, it was never introduced without a mocking hint of irony? Garry Leonard provides a convincing argument when he suggests that the narrator's " voice merges with Gabriel's before they both quietly subside" (478), because, ". . . having raised the issue of elitism and judgement, the narrator abandons his satiric relationship with Gabriel lest he too be condemned" (481). It is as though Joyce is indeed attempting to abandon his own scathing sarcasm, lest he too be condemned, making as his peace offering to Dubliners not so much a retraction of his earlier criticism as an acknowledgement of the necessity of the expedients by which they validate their lives. The thick tears welling up in Gabriel's eyes, borne of a "strange friendly pity" for his wife, like the thick drifts of snow that outline the "crooked crosses", spears and "barren thorns" remind us of truths that transcend religious orthodoxy. Thus this Dubliner abandons his bitterness to tip his hat (rather than bow his head) to the Nazarene who first taught us that whosoever shall lose his life -- or become freed from the suffocating preoccupation with self -- shall ultimately gain it.

The manner in which Joyce conveys this message in "The Dead" renders this story truly musical. Joyce achieves what Walter Pater describes as the condition to which "all art [is] constantly aspir[ing]" (106), namely, that of music, wherein the medium and the message become one. Once again, Joyce does far more than merely tell us that

we must abandon the burdensome preoccupation with ourselves in order to experience (vicariously at least) someone else's narrative -- his narrative technique provides the concrete embodiment of this message. Joyce's mastery of the ever-fluctuating narrative perspective, provides his readers not only with a deeper insight into the struggles of others, but also with the potential for the same kind of cathartic, liberating experience that Gabriel undergoes. In this final story, both reader and protagonist share the full impact of a single, powerful epiphany.

CONCLUSION

Yearning for a kind of intellectual, moral and spiritual freedom from the oppressive hold of the dominant cultural institution (the Catholic church), and possibly as a result of the many difficulties he encountered trying to publish Dubliners, Joyce needed to develop a narrative methodology that would soar beyond the nets of narrowmindedness which hung over Dublin at the turn of the century. And faced with the threatening influence of the censor, Joyce devised an intricate code of omissions and absences, which became, in essence, a new narrative language, and one which would establish the foundation for him to achieve even greater levels of artistic innovation in his more mature prose works.

Implied narrative became the vehicle for this literary leap. The use of ellipses and the sharp juxtapositioning of disjointed scenes forces the reader to become actively involved in reconstructing (or indeed co-constructing) the story that the author only intimates. Because of the complex patterning of recurring motifs and echoes that bind these fifteen stories together thematically as well as stylistically, Dubliners can be construed as an elaborate cryptogram for the reader to decipher. Reading, therefore, becomes a conspiratorial transaction, in which both writer and reader may communicate about otherwise taboo topics. Reading also becomes, to a great extent, a matter of rereading, and of being constantly aware of the interconnectedness of each person's story. None of the Dubliners narratives exists in a vacuum, isolated from, and

unaffected by the others. Instead, as we have seen, the players on the stage of Dublin life are constantly shifting in and out of the foreground and background. The ease and fluidity of transition between one focal point and the next encourages readers to co-create the text; for only if we become very closely attuned to the subtlest nuances of change in emphases and omissions will we learn to read Dubliners in much the same manner that Dubliners learn to "read" or interpret the world around them.

It becomes obvious, therefore, that when Hugh Kenner describes Ulysses in the following manner, he could just as easily be commenting on Dubliners:

> Part of the business of Ulysses, especially in the earlier sections, is teaching us to read what we are reading; to master the complex notation for voices and viewpoints, distinguish between the spoken and the unspoken, what is thought and what is narrated, what is told and what is sometimes not told. (Kenner, "The Rhetoric of Silence", 382)

Implied narrative is precisely that which remains unspoken, merely thought or never told, and although it may reach a new level of complexity in Ulysses, it is nonetheless the powerful, and indeed typically overlooked force that animates Joyce's work as early as Dubliners.

Joyce also shows us as early as Dubliners, that we must penetrate the deceptive surfaces of life if we are to glean any genuine understanding of our human condition and insight into potential means of healing ourselves. And because regeneration is

only possible after having taken a close and honest look at ourselves -- perhaps in the nicely polished looking glass of Dubliners -- Joyce uses implied narrative to teach us how to open our eyes with a new and more productively critical gaze. Consequently, reading Dubliners, like reading any of Joyce's prose, forces us to look again, and to look more closely at the little details, and to atune our hearing more carefully to the crucial silences that form the powerful subtext of the work. It is most often that which is m ely thought, or the ominous narrative gaps, that draw our attention to the unspoken messages of the text. Dubliners itself becomes an elaborate gnomon, for it is always that which is omitted which gives definition to the apparently incomplete story. If we blink even for a moment, we run the risk of missing that moment of intense revelation -- Joyce's epiphany -- which is not the product of spectacular circumstances, but rather, is born of the the most apparently inconsequential moments. Only the most circumspect readers will catch those seemingly insignificant details that will prove to be the keys for unlocking the puzzles of the mainstream text.

One method of tapping into the secrets of Dubliners is to listen very carefully to the multiple-voicing of the narrative which allows us to learn about the same situation from more than one perspective. Because a single event can be transmuted into as many stories as there are story-tellers, the floating perspective which develops opens windows into the worlds of a fascinating cross-section of humanity. Dubliners is itself framed by windows, with the young boy of "The Sisters" gazing up into a lighted window at the beginning of the collection, and Gabriel Conroy looking out of his darkened window at

the end. The window, therefore, becomes representative of Joyce's narrative achievement in Dubliners, especially when we view it in the same spirit as Charles Baudelaire's prose poem entitled "Windows", which could be a description of Dubliners' effect on its readers:

> Looking from outside into an open window one never sees as much as when one looks through a closed window. There is nothing more profound, more pregnant, more insidious, more dazzling than a window lighted by a single candle. What one can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind a window pane. In that black or luminous square life lives, life dreams, life suffers. Across the ocean of roofs I can see a middle-aged woman, her face already lined, who is forever bending over something and who never goes out. Out of her face, her dress and her gestures, out of practically nothing at all, I have made up this woman's story, or rather legend, and sometimes I tell it to myself and weep. If it had been an old man I could have made up his just as well. And I go to bed proud to have lived and to have suffered in some one besides myself. Perhaps you will say "Are you sure that your story is the real one?" But what does it matter what reality is outside myself, so long as it has helped me to live, to feel that I am,

and what I am? (77)

Although Joyce and Dubliners have come a long way since the more self-indulgent purple prose of Baudelaire, there is a definite overlapping of ideas, for reading Dubliners is much like looking into a random selection of windows all across Dublin, and making up -- or making out -- stories from only a few carefully selected details.

Both "Windows" and Dubliners speak to us about the profoundly therapeutic value of imaginatively entering into the life experiences of another human being. Understanding this, we become aware that Joyce's often cutting criticism of Dublin and its institutions is much more than a mere exercise in invective. Paradoxically enough, Joyce's condemnation is the very instrument by which an element of hope is introduced into an otherwise hopeless environment. The potential for redemption is adumbrated in the very technique of these stories; the medium becomes the message when we realize that the only way to gain a clearer insight into the depths of human experience is to detach ourselves from our own limited perspective. Real epiphanies happen, in Dubliners, as in life, only when we lose our preoccupation with self enough to fully absorb someone else's pain. Regeneration can only happen when we let go of ourselves and of the institutions that circumscribe our identities, enabling us to see through eyes other than our own.

The expanded sense of vision Dubliners affords its readers attests to the fact that it is ultimately much more of a compassionate work than a strictly critical one. Not only did it serve Joyce as an invaluable workshop in which to experiment with the complex narrative voicing of Ulysses, but it also allowed Joyce to work

towards the prototype of the Bloom/"Everyman" figure who embodies the pattern of redemption through empathy. Yet even this element of compassion remains constantly tempered by the critical gaze Joyce casts towards stifling and self-encapsulating attitudes. Dubliners affirms all that is best in life, obviously not because it provides a blandly optimistic or idealistic view of life, but because it dares to prune away the outward flourishes of falseness that choke out the potential for transcendence. If we listen carefully to Joyce's criticism, we cannot misconstrue Dubliners as a completely cynical commentary; instead, we cannot but recognize its value as a "skeptical epistemolog[y]", ennobled by both by its means and its ends, which are, respectively, to "develop . . . our interpretive capacities" in order to "enrich . . . the prospects of human experience" (Valente, 88).

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