

**Treatment, themes & types in Dubliners**

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It is intended to examine in this article a few only of the many aspects of *Dubliners*, which could be examined when considering this multi-faceted work. These few aspects will include some of the themes which occur in these stories, (many of which recur in his later work), the characters, or types, he writes about and the treatment, or texture, of the stories individually and of the work as a whole.

*Dubliners* offers the most logical introduction to Joyce's work as it contains many of the themes and settings as well as some of the characters, (under different names and guises, perhaps), that he was to employ in his later work. Of his books, it is the first written, though not the first published. It was to all intents and purposes finished in 1905 but had to wait another nine years before a publisher was prepared to bring it out, whilst *Chamber Music*, which Joyce was not at all keen to have published, was printed in 1906.

These fifteen stories were written in Dublin and Trieste, that is, just before and immediately after Joyce embarked on his self-imposed exile and when his feelings were most bitter towards the city and land where he grew up. This bitterness and spirit of criticism is visible in nearly all of the stories but in *The Dead*, which was also the last written, it is tempered with sympathy and indulgence. As in all of Joyce's work, the city of Dublin itself figures as one of the principal personages and also, as in the later work, there is an ambiguity of motive and attitude to it. Compare, for example, his attitude in the letter (1) written to the publisher Grant Richards, who kept

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(1) Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*, p. 230. The page references in these notes refer to Oxford University Press edition (1966).

the stories a goodly time without deciding to publish them, even after he had requested the author to make several deletions and alterations, with another letter (2) written some time later to his brother Stanislaus, after Joyce had finished *The Dead*.

The points on which I have not yielded are the points which rivet the book together. If I eliminate them what becomes of the chapter of the moral history of my conuntry? I fight to retain them because I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my conuntry. ...It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely-polished looking-glass.

Here can be seen his didactic intention in writing the stories, as well as the realization that his attitude to and treatment of his countrymen had been harsh, but he is not prepared to change his «nicely-polished looking-glass» so that they should see themselves as he intended that they should be seen. Then, after an unhappy spell in Rome, where he worked as a bank clerk, and where he gathered material for *The Dead*, his attitude to his native city became mire mollified. He felt that he had not been fair; as this letter to his brother suggests:

«Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in Dubliners at least) none of the attraction of the

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(2) *Ibid.*, p. 239.

city for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it, except in Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hispitality. The latter «virtue» so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty; for it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, France, Switzerland, Austria or Italy».

In the last story, *The Dead*, he was to soften somewhat the harsh impression which he wished his earlier stories to create. The characters are more indulgently drawn and a eulogy is made precisely in favour of that «virtue», hospitality, in Gabriel's speech at his aunts' party.

But the motive idea in writing *Dubliners* was a didactic one; «the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country», and the method he used to achieve it was through realistic detail and the description of characters and events as he saw them and chose to select them. More will be said later of his realism, but it is time to look at the formal structure of the book, for Joyce carefully constructed it to represent, as he envisaged them, *Dubliners*, or rather Dublin, in its entirety, «in its childish beginnings as well as in its completion» (3). As was stated earlier, Joyce saw the city of Dublin itself as a character, which would be represented completely by considering its four stages of life: «the first by its children, the last by settled figures» (4). It was his intention to present his city to the world and to give some meaning to the term *Dubliner*, as can be seen by this letter to his would-be publisher, Grant Richards, in 1905 (5):

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(3) *Ibid.*, p. 216.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 216.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 216.

«I do not think any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world. It has been a capital of Europe for thousands of years, it is supposed to be the second city of the British Empire and it is nearly three times as big as Venice. Moreover, on account of many circumstances which I cannot detail here, the expression *Dubliner* seems to me to bear some meaning and I doubt whether the same can be said for such words as «Londoner» and «Parisian», both of which have been used by writers as titles».

The four stages of the life of Dublin were childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. In the book as he at first envisaged it, there were twelve stories: each stage or section having three stories. The childhood stories were *The Sisters*, *An Encounter* and *Araby*; those of adolescence were *Eveline*, *After The Race* and *The Boarding House*; maturity was represented by *Counterparts*, *Clay* and *A Painful Case*, while the stories of public life were *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*, *A Mother* and *Grace*. Later he was to add one story each to adolescence (*Two Gallants*), and maturity (*A Little Cloud*) and write *The Dead*, which would serve as a fitting finale for the whole work.

The sections on childhood and public life were considered complete in themselves; there was nothing further to be added in their respect. They are each represented by three stories. In the first section, each story recounts an episode or experience in the boy's life and in the process of his growing up, while in the last there is a withering criticism of Irish politics, art and religion. One feels that the other sections could be more fully exploited, but as they stand there is a balance kept which with the inclusion of other stories might be lost.

Inside each section, and in the book up to the public life section, there is a gradual and subtle, though, at times, barely noticeable development in the age and standing of the characters as well as in the implications of their rôle. Thus, though it is not stated, one notices a certain maturing in the boy narrator between the time he tags along with his aunt to the dead priest's house, where he sits timidly in the downstairs room fearing to eat a cream cracker lest he make too much noise, and the suddenly self-aware boy in the bazaar who weeps with anguish and anger as he sees himself «as a creature driven and derided by vanity». Of course the boy had in the meantime passed through experiences like that of *An Encounter*, which served to make him more realistic and aware.

Likewise, in the adolescence section, the characters from Eveline to Mr. Doran of *The Boarding House* are progressively more mature in years, if not in temperament. Adolescence is an appropriate word to describe their attitude. Eveline is «over nineteen»; Jimmy Doyle of *After The Race* «about twenty-six years of age»; Lenehan and Corley, the two gallants, are both described as «young men» though as Lenehan sadly reflects, «he would be thirty-one in November», while Mr. Doran, in the opinion of Mrs. Mooney, «must be thirty-four or thirty-five».

Up to this, the characters have quickly-fading youth on their side with the possibilities that offers and with prospects of getting married, whether they want to — like Lenehan — or whether they don't — like Mr. Doran. In the four stories of the maturity section the characters are fixed in their ways and have very limited possibilities of things ever being very different for them. Little Chandler of *A Little Cloud*, and Farrington of *Counterparts*, are married and stagnating both in their work and home life, though Chandler's position is seen as much superior to that of Farrington. Maria or *Clay*, is a female celibate as Mr. Duffy of *A Painful Case*, is a male one.

Neither will ever get married now, though indications are given that Maria will progress to «taking the veil», but Mr. Duffy, who has rejected love, will remain forever «an outcast from life's feast».

In the succeeding section the interest is not so much on the characters, though some, like Mrs. Kearney of *A Mother*, are penetratingly drawn, as on the exposé of Irish politics, art and religion, illustrated by three separate incidents which the autor does not elaborate and about which he cunningly lets draw our own conclusions, knowing that in each case there is only one possible conclusion to draw. If the book finished like this it would lack the symmetry and roundness that Joyce's other works achieve, hence the inclusion of *The Dead*, which not only counteracts the bitterness and abruptness of some of the other stories but also, in its style of writing as much as in its sympathetic and incisive insight into character, forms a bridge with longer works like *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* and, more especially, *Ulysses*.

It is interesting to note the form of the stories themselves. With one exception, and like all Joyce's works, they cover a brief and well-defined time-span. (When I say all of Joyce's works, I include *A Portrait* along with *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake* and *Exiles*, for I consider *A Portrait* as a series of episodes of limited duration held together by their thematic unity). The time-span of each of the stories in *Dubliners* is generally limited to one day, or part thereof, or one night, as in the case of *The Dead*. Grace, because of its triptychal form, has necessarily a separate, but limited, time-span for each part. The notable exception to this rule is *A Painful Case*, which covers a period of four years, but this divergence from the rule is necessary given the theme of the story.

The result of making these stories conform to certain strictures, or unities, of time and place makes for greater concentration and the eschewing of all unnecessary des-



cription and detail. The episodic effect is avoided also because the incidents are carefully selected and presented in an authoritative manner and the description is cogent and never haphazard. Description is never given for its own sake. It is introduced sparingly and always at the most dramatically opportune moment. For instance, in *Ivy Day In The Committee Room*, it is not until the third page that the room, where all the talk and inaction take place, is described. When it comes, the description is doubly effective for we see it in tenor with the blariness of what has gone before and the drabness of what has to come. It is also very appropriately introduced, as the following passage shows:

«Mr. O'Connor shook his head. The old man left the hearth, and after stumbling about the room returned with two candlesticks which he thrust one after the other into the fire and carried to the table. A denuded room came into view and the fire lost all its cheerful colour. The walls of the room were bare except for a copy of an election address. In the middle of the room was a small table on which papers were heaped». (*Ivy Day In The Committee Room*).

As David Daiches says in *The Novel And The Modern World* (6): «Always the location of particularizing detail is such that it suggests the maximum amount of implication. In *Ivy Day The Committee Room* two features of Joyce's technique are dominant: first every action is symbolic of the atmosphere he wishes to create, and, second, the pauses for description are carefully arranged and balanced so as to emphasize the symbolic nature of the action. The introduction of candles to light up the bareness of the room at the particular

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(6) *The Novel and the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, p. 71.

pint in the story when Joyce wishes to draw the reader's attention to its bareness is one of many examples».

The only story which opens with a description of the main character is *A Painful Case*. In all others the description, when it is given, is held back to be delivered, often by implication and suggestion at the opportune moment, or bit by bit as the story progresses. For example, in *The Boarding House*, Mr. Doran, around whom the story is built, is not introduced until near the end and when he is described only details which suggest his agitation and mental turmoil are mentioned, such as his unsteady hand, the scurf of beard on his jaws and his glasses misting over. This device is even more effective in *The Dead* where Gabriel, about whom we learn so much, is only described in part after the Misses Morkan's party has been talked about and Lily, a minor character, is described through Gabriel's eyes. This is done intentionally because the party and Lily, as well as other characters, are the agents through which the change in Gabriel is effected and it is appropriate that we should know about them first. Later, throughout the story, in a technique he was to use extensively in his later work, the author gives brief indications which let us build up a fully composite picture of Gabriel until the last touch is so effectively applied by Gabriel's vision of himself:

«A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ridiculous 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»...  
(*The Dead*).

We have already seen Joyce's effective and symbolic use of description of places, in the example from *Ivy Day*. Other

examples can be found in the opening paragraphs of *Araby* and *Eveline*. In *Araby* things are described in the half shades of winter dusks with an impressionistic technique. Mangan's sister, who causes the riot in all the boy's «foolish blood», is described only as she is seen in the half light or, more often, as caught in the angle of lamplight:

«She was waiting for us her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door» (*Araby*).

or:

«The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over the side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease». (*Araby*).

This image is the one which the boy, now the man narrator, has kept. He does not say, does not apparently care, whether her face is beautiful or what colour her eyes are. She is more a creature of the evening and the night. Her physical presence in daylight is not striking; she is merely a «brown figure» which the boy follows on his way to school.

In *Eveline* and in *A Painful Case* the description of the houses where Eveline and Mr. Duffy live comes at the beginning of the stories and serves to show the kind of dreary and sordid surroundings which they each have a chance to abandon but which by their wilful action they are doomed to inhabit for the rest of their lives.

It is interesting to note how, description apart, Joyce builds up his stories. A setting is selected, an incident is to be portrayed, and a certain effect has to be produced. To portray the incident and produce the effect the materials he uses are

the hard elements of realism, not the garish and flamboyant realism of a Zola, but the minute realism of carefully observed gesture, description, and above all of naturalistic dialogue. In fact the naturalism of the dialogue was one of the reasons for which, laughable as it may seem in these days of freely-used four-letter words, *Dubliners* had to wait nine years to be published. In the stories as originally conceived the word «bloody» occurred seven times in conversation but the reverend publisher objected. In the end Joyce had to make concessions and expunge the word six times, retaining it only in *The Boarding House*, because, as he stated in a letter to Grant Richard (7): «The word, the exact expression I have used, is in my opinion the one expression in the English language which can create on the reader the effect which I wish to create».

Sometimes the expunging of a realistic expression has left a resultant passage less vivid than it had been originally. For example, we can see that Henchy's words about the proposed visit of the King in *Ivy Day*: «Here's this chap come to the throne after his old mother keeping him out of it till the man was grey», are less striking than the original sentence which had «bloody owld bitch of a mother». This realistic dialogue serves to produce an effect of authenticity and is moreover always suited to the characters who use it.

There is in these short stories, as David Daiches states (8): «a quite extraordinary evenness of tone and texture, the style being the neutral medium which, without in itself showing any signs of emotion or excitement, conveys with quiet adequacy the given story in its proper atmosphere and with its proper implications». This «evenness of tone», this refusal to blurt things out or to give way to emotion or lyricism gives many of the stories a certain air of drabness at the first reading,

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(7) *James Joyce*, p. 230.

(8) *The Novel and the Modern World*, p. 66.

at least, which is relieved a little by the implied exoticism of *Araby* or the subtle ironic humour of *Ivy Day* and *Grace*. In the above statement of Daiches, he makes an exception of *The Dead*, which, he says, is written «in a way that implies comment» and where the author «has deliberately allowed his style to surrender, as it were, to that comment, so that the level objectivity of the other stories is replaced by a more lyrical quality» (9).

As well as achieving their effect through the accumulation of realistic detail these deliberately and carefully patterned stories have sometimes abrupt and surprising but always definite and effective endings. At first sight some of the endings appear like the trick endings of many modern short-story writers, where the kick is in the last line or the last sentence undoes all that has been said before, but this is not the case. Joyce chooses an abrupt ending in *Counterparts* or *Eveline* or *An Encounter* because at that point the story had reached its dramatic apex and it would be bad theatre to go any further. For instance, in the first-mentioned of the stories, in the child's repetition —like a broken record— of: «Don't beat me pa !And I'll say... I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you... I'll say a *Hail Mary* for you pa, if you don't beat me... I'll say a *Hail Mary*...», the maximum of horror is achieved and the effect would be lessened if another sentence were added.

Sometimes the abrupt ending is used for ironic effect, as in *Grace*, where the story ends half way through Father Purdon's sermon. From what we have heard of the sermon so far with its platitudes and its fatuous simplifications we know that it would be a waste of time to hear any more. The ironic ending is also visible in *Two Gallants*. We have followed the worried Lenehan through the streets of Dublin as he

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(9) *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

anxiously awaits Corley's return and we have wondered with him, can Corley «pull it off»? But pull what off? We have no idea but we think it must be something very important to make Lenehan worry so. The last sentence in the story tells us what it is. Merely money Corley has dunned so that he and Lenehan can eat.

*The Dead*, which is so different from the other stories in the collection, is different also in its ending. Here what is sought is not an ironic or dramatic abruptness but a lingering feeling of lyrical intensity to convey Gabriel's change of character and his newly discovered resignation. This is achieved by four longish sentences which terminate the last paragraph and serve as a counterpoise to the five short sentences that go before. The word «falling» tolls faintly through these four sentences, like «yes» in Molly Bloom's soliloquy, wafting Gabriel, like a departing soul, gently down into the dim nether land of sleep and bidding him look deeply and resignedly into his soul. In the rhythm of the sentences with the repetition and juxtaposition of the words it is reminiscent of the ending of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, that is if *Finnegans WaKe* can be said to have an ending.

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A little has already been said in this article of what the stories are about —what the themes are— but it might be useful to develop this aspect, as it will be seen that similar themes occur in various stories as well as in Joyce's later work. It will also be interesting to examine some themes from the point of view of their relation with the author's life and as part of his personal experience. Correlative with this, something can be said about the characters or types who appear in the stories for many of those who feature here, including the author himself and members of his family and acquaintances, were

to feature also in his subsequent books is the same or in slightly altered guises.

Some critics, like Levin and Shattuck (10), have sought Homeric parallels in these stories and argue, sometimes convincingly and sometimes less so, that, like *Ulysses*, they are based on the *Odyssey*. However, it is not the purpose here to try to prove or disprove this theory. It is well known that Joyce drew his inspiration from many sources so it is not unreasonable to imagine that he fell back on Homer in this his first work. The themes which will be examined here, be they Homeric or not, are universal and, what is more important, relevant to Ireland, or Dublin, as Joyce saw it.

The first story is about a death and the last story is *The Dead*. In between, we have the painful case of Mrs. Sinico and a dead man dominating a reunion, as he dominated at that time the feelings and memories of a divided and bitter country. Father Flynn, the dead priest in *The Sisters*, had suffered from general paralysis of the insane, an ailment which Joyce presented as symptomatic of the state of Ireland after the death of Parnell —the dead man who is the most powerful presence in the reunion in the Nationalist Party's Committee Room in Wicklow Street. The boy narrator in *The Sisters* is fascinated by the word «paralysis». He murmurs it softly to himself and though it fills him with fear, he longs to be nearer it «and look upon its deadly work». The Irish people, though they killed Parnell with their bigotry and fanaticism are fascinated by his memory and his legend and will not let him rest. A good example of this theme in Joyce's later work can be seen in the Christmas dinner scene in *The Portrait*.

The dead come back to trouble the living as they do in the terrible vision in the Circe episode of *Ulysses*. Parnell

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(10) James Joyce: two decades of criticism, The Vanguard Press, p. 86.

comes back to trouble the uneasy conscience of his countrymen, as the memory of the dead priest comes in the night to seduce and corrupt the boy:

I drew the blankets over my head and tried to think if Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured and I understood that it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me». (*The Sisters*).

The memory of the dead Mrs. Sinico lives in the mind of the agitated Mr. Duffy as he walks aimlessly through the park on the November night after he had read of her death, troubling his smug and ordered existence and making him realize what he had lost and that he will forever be «an outcast from life's feast»:

«She seemed to be near him in the darkness. At moments he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his. He stood still to listen. Why had he withheld life from her? Why had he sentenced her to death? He felt his moral nature falling to pieces». (*A Painful Case*).

But the most subtly disturbing revenant of all is the ghost of the dead Michael Furey through whose agency «the walled circle of Gabriel's egotism» (11), is finally broken down. After hearing his wife's account of how Michael Furey had died for her, Gabriel, lying beside her in the bed, has a glimpse of a world he had never known, not a smug world of parties and

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(11) *The Novel and the Modern World*, p. 75. Dalches shows here that in *The Dead* the theme is «a man's withdrawal into the circle of his own egotism» and that the incidents in the story serve to break down this circle.



after-dinner speeches, but a world of passion where people died of love. Most devastating of all it is a world in which his wife had all the time been living while he thought she had been living only for him. This glimpse brings him to a realization of himself and a generous understanding of feelings and passions which he in his self-satisfied existence had never experienced:

«Better pass boldly into that other world in the full glory of some passion than fade and wither dimly with age... The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead». (*The Dead*).

Closely linked with the theme of death in *Ivy Day* and *The Dead* is also that of betrayal, which had a morbid fascination for Joyce in his life as well as in his writing. In *Exiles* the conflict in the drama arises from the betrayal of friendship, (Robert Hand betrays Richard), and the suspected betrayal of love, Richard, who «can never know, never in this world», will always have doubts of Bertha's fidelity. In *Ulysses* also, Mulligan betrays Stephen's friendship and Leopold Bloom has all too much proof of his wife's infidelity. In real life Joyce's friendship was betrayed by Oliver Gogarty, the prototype of Buck Mulligan, and by Cosgrave, that of the «reptilian» Lynch in *A Portrait*. During a stage in his life Joyce also was agonized by doubts of his wife's fidelity. On the national level, all Ireland, and especially his closest associates, betrayed Parnell.

In *Ivy Day* also the canvassers for the Nationalist Party candidate betray the ideals of Parnell. They give their support to «Tricky Dicky Tierney», who, in Mr. Hynes' words, «is

looking for fat jobs for his sons and nephews and cousins» and who is prepared to present an address of welcome to the King of England. They condemn Colgan, the other candidate, because he is a working-class man, a bricklayer, and call him a «tinker». As Levin and Shattuck state: «they fail to recognize Colgan as Parnell's true moral heir» (12). In the same story, Mr. Henchy, who is one of the staunchest supporters of Tierney, says with unsuspecting irony when talking about a member of a rival party: «That's fellow now that'd sell his country for fourpence —ay— and go down on his bended knees and thank the Almighty Christ he had a country to sell». In Ireland to this day, thanks to the prolific crop of betrayers in its history, for the traitor is reserved the greatest opprobrium of the people.

Gabriel Conroy of *The Dead* as he listens at first to his wife's account of Michael Furey, feels keenly a sense of betrayal and suspected infidelity. He had been so full of his own feeling of self-content and the anticipation of pleasure that he reflects bitterly: «While he had been full of memories of their secret life together... she had been comparing him in her mind with another». Mr. Duffy of *A Painful Case* betrays, in a sense, the love of Mrs. Sinico, not for another woman but to conciliate his own puritanical principles. Corley of *Two Gallants* makes a profession of betraying women, preferably «slaveys» for the most sordid motives of all, self-gratification and lucre. At the end of the story we see him as a shoddy caricature of Judas with «a small gold coin» in his palm. In the course of the story his companion, Lenehan, calls him «Base betrayer». We can see that the seemingly jocular adjective has a deep significance.

Two things which Joyce was never to get out of his system, however far he strove to distance himself from them, were

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(12) James Joyce: two decades of criticism, p. 82.

Ireland and his Catholic upbringing. We have seen how Ireland, and in particular Dublin, impinges at all points on the themes of these stories. The Catholic religion and its associate themes feature also in most of them.

In stories where religion does not explicitly figure as a theme, its influence is felt as, for example, in *Eveline*, where the yellowing photograph of the unnamed priest is one of those «familiar objects» which dominate the ambience from which the girl is rendered unable to escape. In *Ivy Day* the mixing of religion with politics is shown when the decrepit looking priest, Father Keon, with a face «like a damp yellow cheese» pops into the room. This apparently unnecessary appearance of a clergyman in the story is introduced for one thing to insinuate what Mr. Casey states forcibly in the Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait*; about «the priests and the priest's pawns» who «broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into the grave».

In *The Sisters*, religion, as personified by the old priest, Father Flynn, has an unhealthy corrupting influence on the boy. It is associated in his mind with death and morbidity, while the mention of the word «simony» introduces undertones of venality and deceit. The idea of trickery and deceit is further strengthened when Eliza tells how they had once found her mentally-deranged brother: «sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession-box, wide awake and laughing-like softly to himself».

Joyce chose religion as the theme for one of the stories in the public life section of *Dubliners*. He treated it in *Grace*. Why he chose the title «Grace» for a story which has ostensibly nothing to do with the subject is interestingly explained by Stanislaus Joyce in *My Brother's Keeper* (13). He relates how

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(13) *My Brother's Keeper*, Faber And Faber, pp. 224-5.

his brother had been fascinated by the doctrine of actual and sanctifying grace and how he once vent to listen to a sermon on the subject. The explanation give by the preacher proved inadequate, he had «not even tried to know what he was talking about but assumed that anything was good enough for his listeners». Joyce evidently used the preacher as a model for Father Purdon and his inadequately explained sermon on grace as an inspiration for the comfortable and over-simplified explication of the text on «the mammon of iniquity».

But the story *Grace* has other implications as well. As was stated above, it has a tripartite formation —one of the first examples of the use of a pattern in Joyce's work. The pattern is based on the *Divine Comedy*, that is, on the after-life states of heaven, hell and purgatory as taught by the Church. Hell is the underground lavatory in a pub where Mr. Kernan falls injured, purgatory, the room in his house where the patient lies in bed convalescing, and heaven the transept of the Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street where Mr. Kernan is taken by his cronies to make a retreat. Apart from the mockery implied in the pattern, the spiritual exercise of the retreat has no validity, it is merely «a businessmen's club organized to secure God's approval upon businessmen's expediency» (14).

Even in stories without an ostensible religious motif, religious imagery and symbolism are used, as they are in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*. This is very noticeable in *Araby*. To the boy, Mangan's sister represents an untouchable ideal such as the Virgin Mary for the devout or the lady in her bower for the courtly lovers. When the boy, overcome with emotion, murmurs. «O love! O love!», it is as one would utter a prayer before a shrine. Ecstasy and not passion is the ruling emotion. «Her image», he says, accompanied him «in places the most

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(14) *James Joyce: two decades of criticism*, p. 86.

hostile to romance». More than a mental picture, «her image» becomes something tangible like a statue or sacred vessel to be guarded against sacriligious profanation «I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises...» When he goes to the bazaar it is as if to a place of worship. The darkened hall is filled with a silence «like that which pervades a church after a service» and the church image is carried further when he describes the men «counting money on a salver».

As the atmosphere of *Dubliners* is so stifling and repressive, it is not surprising that the characters seek avenues of escape. This is generally sought in two ways: a longing for the exotic and through drink, of which the latter is the more effective, though more brutalizing. Sometimes a search for the exotic has ironic consequences, as is *An Encounter*. One of the things the boy in that story hopes to encounter in the course of his adventure is a sailor with green eyes. The only person with green eyes he meets, however, is the repulsive elderly pederast, whose eyes are «bottle-green» In *Araby*, the boy goes to the bazaar expecting to find the exoticism of the East and encounters only the banal — two men counting the day's takings, and three persons carrying on an inane conversation in English accents.

In *A Little Cloud*, Chandler, whose imagination is fired by the brash Ignatius Gallagher's account of his experience among the flesh-pots of Paris and Berlin, longs also for the exoticism of the East. He thinks of what Gallagher had said about rich Jewesses. «Those dark Oriental eyes, he thought, how full they are of passion, of voluptuous longing!» This longing for Oriental exoticism, personified by Jewesses, is found also in Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom. Farrington of *Count-erparts*, who is a much less refined character than Little Chandler, is also attracted by the foreign. His ideal of the exotic however, is not very demanding —an artiste with large

brown eyes and a Cockney accent Finally, Mrs. Kearney of *A Mother*, who had «romantic desires «in her youth, was able to satisfy them easily and practically «by eating a great deal of Turkish Delight».

In Ireland, drink mixes easily with politics and religion and, as everywhere, it turns people sentimental or brutal. In *Dubliners*, Farrington is one of those drink renders brutal; it fills him with a need for violent action. In the story this possibility is thrice presented to him. It occurs first after his boss, Mr. Alleyne, has given him a wiggling. He looks at the man's polished egg-like head, judging its fragility», but chokes back his rage. The next time he has a chance to indulge the need, in a bout of physical prowess with the young Weathers, he is bested. When he is finally able to vent his drunken rage on someone, it is on his own son, whom he beats mercilessly with a walking stick. Joe Donnelly of *Clay* is so affected by drink and sentimental songs that he can't find the corkscrew, while drink makes Mrs. Sinico of *A Painful Case*, pathetic and tragic.

Joyce in his home life had many ready examples of the effects of drink. His father regularly came home drunk and turned mawkish or violent as the mood took him. Stanislaus Joyce, in *My Brother's Keeper* recounts how once, when he was a child, his father came home in a drunken fit and tried to strangle his wife (15): «he ran at her and seized her by the throat, roaring that 'Now, by God, is the time to finish it'». James Joyce himself was a heavy drinker for a period in his life. He was introduced to it, strangely enough not by his father but by Oliver Gogarty, who saw in this a way «to break Joyce's spirit» (16). Luckily, Joyce was able to overcome

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(15) *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 74.

(16) *James Joyce*, p. 136.

this weakness though he always retained a taste for absinthe and white wine (17).

Drink is mixed amusingly with politics and religion in the stories *Ivy Day* and *Grace* respectively. In the first story, the canvassers for the Nationalist Party are quite as much interested in the arrival of the promised case of drink as they are in getting the vote out for their man or in their discussion on Parnell. In fact, their talk on Parnell and Joe Hynes' verses on the leader's death are fittingly punctuated by the «pok» of corks flying from heated bottles of porter. Drink is here mixed with religion also when Mr. Henchy says referring to Father Keon's brief appearance: «God forgive me... I thought he was the dozen of stout».

It is in *Grace*, however, that the themes of drink and religion are more obviously mixed. The excuse for the retreat is the regeneration of Mr. Kernan, who has suffered his accident while drunk. The people who come to visit him while he is convalescing are served with bottles of stout by the wife and as they begin drinking they also begin to talk about religious topics. Later, they are joined by Mr. Fogarty, who brings the offering of a bottle of whisky and as the talk goes on to the infallibility of the Pope, he pours a measure into each of their glasses. «The light music of whisky falling into glasses made an agreeable interlude». Obviously drink does not count among the «works and pomps» of the devil, which they are planning to renounce.



Echoing a phrase of Flaubert, Stephen Dedalus tells Lynch, in *A Portrait*: «The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible,

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(17) *Ibid.*, various references.

refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails» (18). Joyce followed this dogma and, though he put a lot of himself into his different books, it is a fictionalized self, objectively described and coolly observed by the artist-God at his impersonal task of creation. It is not the intention here to examine very closely how the material is fictionalized, but merely to observe how at some points the real and the fictional converge in some of the characters in *Dubliners*, both as regards Joyce himself and people he was immediately connected with. Other characters who appear in these stories will be briefly dealt with, especially if they feature in other works of the author. We can also see how Joyce got the material for some of the stories.

The three stories in the childhood section of the book are ostensibly the most autobiographical, being recounted in the first person. One would imagine therefore, that the stories are based on recollections of the author's childhood. However, Stanislaus Joyce says that only one of these stories, *An Encounter*, is based upon «actual personal experience» (19). The other boy in this story, then, Mahoney, would be Stanislaus because the latter states, referring to the story, that he accompanied his brother on the day's miching when they met the stranger. If this is so, the portrait of the younger brother is not very flattering: he is described as «rough», «pert» and «stupid». The author's opinion of him is shown in the last sentence of the story, where the narrator, eager to get away from the stranger, calls his companion. «He ran as if to bring me aid. And I was penitent, for in my heart I had always despised him a little». In their life together in Dublin and later in Trieste, Stanislaus was called on many times to bring aid to his brother. James' nature was aloof and he looked down

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(18) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Modern Classics, p. 215.

(19) *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 79.



on his solid but less brilliant brother. It is human nature often to despise those on whom we most rely.

The character of the narrator of these first three stories corresponds at many points with the young James Joyce. Joyce was fascinated by words and the young boy in *The Sisters* repeats softly to himself the word «paralysis» and «gnomon» and «simony» for their euphonious effect. In the same story, the young boy's interest in recording minute detail corresponds to that of the grown author. Kneeling in the dead priest's house, he notices «how clumsily (Nannie's) skirt was hooked at the back and how the heels of her cloth boots were trodden down all to one side». Referring to his own interest in recording details, Joyce said to his friend Frank Budgen: «I have a grocer's assistant's mind» (20).

The boy in *An Encounter* pretends to the stranger that he has read every book that the latter mentioned and the stranger calls him «a bookworm like myself». Throughout his life Joyce read avidly and widely. The idealized love of the boy for Mangan's sister in *Araby* is echoed in Joyce's idealized and platonic *affaire* with Signorina Popper in Trieste, recorded in the *Giacomo Joyce* notebooks. In *The Sisters* and *Araby* the boy lives with his uncle and aunt. The uncle in both stories is a convivial happy-go-lucky type, not very reliable but with a stock of witty and memorable phrases and, in *Araby*, at least, with the traits of a drinker. This corresponds fairly closely with the character of John Joyce, the author's father, who appears as Simon Dedalus in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*. As these stories were written before Joyce broke with Ireland, it is probable that he made the character an uncle to save his father's feelings.

It is in *The Dead* that a character with more of Joyce's traits appears than in any of the other stories. Gabriel Conroy

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(20) *James Joyce*, p. 28.

is James Joyce —as he would have been if he had not left Ireland. There are many similarities between the two. Gabriel was educated at the Royal University of Ireland and is a teacher of languages; Joyce took his degree there in English French and Italian. He taught English for many years in Trieste. Miss Ivors twits Gabriel as a «West Briton» because he wrote a book review colum for the Daily Express. Joyce wrote a book review column for the same newspaper while he professedly studied medecine in Paris. Gabriel Conroy seeks his cultural heritage on the Continent as Joyce did.

Gabriel's wife, Gretta, comes from Galway, as did Joyce's wife, Nora Barnacle. Gretta is considered «country cute» by Gabriel's aunts; Nora Barnacle was looked down on by Joyce's friends as a «culchie» because she came from the conuntry. In the story, Gretta remembers the young ailing Michael Furey whom she used to go out with before she met Gabriel and who «died for her sake» after having stayed one rainy night under her window hoping to see her. Nora Barnacle was courted by a youth, Michael («Sonny») Bodkin, who stole out of his sickroom in rainy weather to see her and who died shortly afterwards (21). She was first attracted to James Joyce because he resembled Michael Bodkin.

Joyce put a little of his brother and of himself into the chief character of *A Painful Case*. The portrait of Mr. Duffy is based on Stanislaus, as his brother imagined him to be in middle age (22). «His face, which carried the entire tale of his years, was of the brown tint of Dublin streets. On his long and rather large head grew dry black hair, and a tawny moustache did not quite cover an unamiable mouth». As Stanislaus recounts, James based the story on an entry he

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(21) *Ibid.*, p. 252.

(22) *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 165. Stanislaus says that the portrait has «the grim Dutch touch».

had read in his brother's notebook about a chance meeting with a youthful woman at a concert. Mr. Duffy has been given quite a few of Stanislaus's traits, such as «an intolerance of drunkenness, a hostility to socialism and the habit of noting short sentences on a sheaf of loose pages pinned together» (23). Mr. Duffy is also given some of the author's traits, such as an interest in Nietzsche and Hauptmann, as Stanislaus suggests, «in order to raise his intellectual standard».

The name of the woman in the same story, Sinico, is taken from that of Joyce's music teacher in Trieste. In fact, Joyce sometimes gave the names of people, he did not like to somewhat unpleasant characters in this and other books. For example, Mr. Alleyne, the irascible dwarf of *Counterparts*, has almost the same name as a Henry Alleyn, who absconded with money that Joyce's father had invested in a company (24). Other characters with unpleasant characteristics who feature under their own name are the loud-mouthed insensitive types—of the same calibre as Malachy Mulligan and Blazes Boylan in *Ulysses*—Corley in *Two Gallants*, also a policeman's son in real life, and Ignatius Gallagher, of *A Little Cloud*, who was also in real life a newspaperman in London.

The names of some of the characters have a symbolic significance. The predatory landlady of *The Boarding House* is called Mrs. Mooney, a name which is only one vowel different from «money». In *A Mother* the name of the shifty, devious limping organizer of the concert is Mr. Hoolohan, which is similar enough to «hooligan». In the same story, the squabble between Mrs. Kearney's daughter Kathleen and Mr. Hoolohan represents the mercenary division in Ireland between the different factions after Parnell's death. One of the old names for Ireland as a mother symbol and the subject of a

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(23) *Ibid.*, p. 165.

(24) *James Joyce*, p. 14.

play by Yeats, written shortly before, was Cathleen ni Houlihan. This story is the only story, apart from *An Encounter*, which Stanislaus Joyce admits to be based on «an actual personal experience» of the author —a concert at which he performed with John McCormack.

Some of the characters in these stories also feature briefly, or at greater length, in *Ulysses*, under the same name or with a different appellation. One of Farrington's drinking cronies is Nosey Flynn, whom he meets in Davy Byrne's pub, just as Leopold Bloom came across Nosey Flynn in Davy Byrne's in *Ulysses*. Tom Kernan, Jack Power, M'Coyle and Martin Cunningham, with the dipsomaniacal wife, who appear in *Grace*, all feature in the Hades episode of *Ulysses* with the same names. Lenehan, «the leech», with his yachting cap and all, appears both in *Two Gallants* and in *Ulysses*, in the Aeolus section. The confrontation between Bloom and Myles Crawford in the same section of *Ulysses* parallels the meeting in Corless's pub between Little Chandler and Ignatius Gallagher in *A Little Cloud*. As Levin and Shattuck state (25), Chandler is like Bloom confronting the windking Gallagher/Crawford. «Both are timid and embarrassed in the situation and soft-voiced in their beseechings».

In all of these stories, as in his later work, Dublin itself is one of the most important characters. It comes alive for us whether we wander through its streets with Bloom and Stephen Dedalus or follow the anxious steps of Lenehan or Farrington's frantic pub crawl. The characters with their many defects and few virtues are products of these streets. They form an immortal part of his ambience and could never be imagined in another.

*Dubliners* portrays them as they are, though one feels that fifteen stories are not sufficient to do them credit. We know

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(25) James Joyce: two decades of criticism, p. 71.

that Joyce had planned to add more stories to the book but was discouraged by the delays in publication. Speaking of this, perhaps the most famous story in *Dubliners* is the one that was not written. It was to be about a Jew called Hunter who was rumoured to have an unfaithful wife and Joyce planned to call it *Ulysses*.

Much more could be said, and has been said and better than I could hope to do, about the aspects of *Dubliners* treated here. However, if one has been brash enough to start, one must also be sensible enough to know when to finish. It could be argued that the end could have come long before, or better still, the beginning never attempted. Against this must be pleaded the respect and enthusiasm however poorly directed, of one of the millions who admire the work of the master of twentieth-century literature.