

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

English Theses

Department of English

8-12-2016

By the Grace of Joyce, the Brute is Freed: Brutish Bodies, Munificent Minds, and Liberating Language Within Dubliners

Julie E. Fowkes
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses

Recommended Citation

Fowkes, Julie E., "By the Grace of Joyce, the Brute is Freed: Brutish Bodies, Munificent Minds, and Liberating Language Within Dubliners." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2016.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/8867056>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

BY THE GRACE OF JOYCE, THE BRUTE IS FREED:
BRUTISH BODIES, MUNIFICENT MINDS, AND LIBERATING LANGUAGE
WITHIN *DUBLINERS*

by

JULIE ELIZABETH FOWKES

Under the Direction of Marilyn Richtarik, PhD

ABSTRACT

My thesis examines *Dubliners* through the lens of Rene Descartes's mind-body dualism to explain the relationship between contrasting themes in the text and demonstrate how they are connected. In an explication of the three words introduced by Joyce in the introductory paragraph of the first story in his collection, namely *paralysis*, *gnomon*, and *simony*, linking them with their more subtle but equally significant antonymic themes, which I propose are progression, epiphany, and grace, I show that Joyce was as compassionate as he was contemptuous of his countrymen. I propose that recognizing this balance helps us better understand what Joyce may have meant by making no apology for the brute-like spectacle he projects in his nicely polished looking-glass. Moreover, I argue that *Dubliners* serves as a fictional canvas upon which Joyce projects his dream of an Ireland that can transcend the tedium-inducing confines of its past.

INDEX WORDS: *Dubliners*, Contempt, Compassion, Cartesian Dualism, Descartes's Brute

BY THE GRACE OF JOYCE, THE BRUTE IS FREED:
BRUTISH BODIES, MUNIFICENT MINDS, AND LIBERATING LANGUAGE
WITHIN *DUBLINERS*

by

JULIE ELIZABETH FOWKES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2016

Copyright by
Julie Elizabeth Fowkes
2016

BY THE GRACE OF JOYCE, THE BRUTE IS FREED:
BRUTISH BODIES, MUNIFICENT MINDS, AND LIBERATING LANGUAGE
WITHIN *DUBLINERS*

by

JULIE ELIZABETH FOWKES

Committee Chair: Marilyn Richtarik

Committee: Paul Schmidt

Tanya Caldwell

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2016

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who tolerated my demands for quiet and supported my scholarly efforts in any way they could. It is also dedicated to Mike, who almost single-handedly packed up my house while I raced against the clock to meet the deadlines of my submission, my friend Christi for her tough love, and my friend Tanya for being my biggest cheerleader.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Marilyn Richtarik for her guidance and immense knowledge. Her comments encouraged me to focus my research in the right direction. Next, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Schmidt for his insistence on making clear Descartes's relevance to my thesis. His feedback forced me to develop a firm understanding of the theory I applied to my paper. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Tanya Caldwell not only for the time she spent helping me structure my argument and improve my writing style, but also for her encouragement and motivation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Contempt	1
1.2 Compassion	2
1.3 Gnomonic Aspect.....	3
1.4 Descartes and Dualism.....	4
1.5 Descartes and the Brute.....	6
2 DESCARTES: DUALISM AND THE BRUTE	8
2.1 Dualism.....	8
2.2 The Brute	9
3 PARALYSIS AND PROGRESSION	10
3.1 Paralysis	10
3.2 Progression.....	13
4 GNOMON AND EPIPHANY	15
4.1 Gnomon	15
4.2 Epiphany	19
5 SIMONY AND GRACE	23
5.1 Simony	23
5.1.1 Religious Corruption.....	23

5.1.2	<i>Political corruption</i>	29
5.2	Grace	32
5.2.1	<i>Benevolence</i>	32
5.2.2	<i>Women</i>	33
5.2.3	<i>Music</i>	34
5.2.4	<i>Irish Hospitality</i>	34
6	CONCLUSION	36
	WORKS CITED	40

1 INTRODUCTION

The Irish heart where 'er it be
 Is bowed with woe—for he is gone
 Who would have wrought her destiny
 --Dubliners (Joyce 131).

1.1 Contempt

Award-winning biographer Brenda Maddox, in her introduction to the 1990 Bantam Classic edition of James Joyce's *Dubliners*, claims its vignettes offer a snapshot of Irish life from childhood, through adolescence, to adulthood. The collection is, she remarks, "no exercise in nostalgia ... Joyce portrays his countrymen as drunks, cheats, child batterers, boasters, gossipers, and schemers: failures all, people who cannot take the chances life offers them and who, as in 'Araby,' prevent the young from taking theirs" (Maddox ix). Many critics concur with Maddox. Since its introduction, *Dubliners* has received much reproach for its exaggeratedly negative depiction of Irish life. This reproach affected the work's path to publication. Seeing Joyce's work as a condemnation of the Irish people, publishers like Charles Elkin Mathews, for example, rejected the collection over a period of nine years for fear of being held liable for obscenity and libel. Mathews wrote that he thought the work "sordid and ... disgusting." Of Joyce's characters he wrote, "Nearly all are physically repulsive" (qtd. in Fairhill 67).

Joyce was unapologetic from the start. He famously retorted, "It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs around my stories." He admitted in a letter to publisher Grant Richards that the style projected a "scrupulous meanness." *Dubliners* is wrought with motifs of oppression and conflict, and has much to say about the brutish state of Irish society – a fair representation, perhaps, given the stagnation pervading Ireland at the time Joyce

began writing his stories. Of particular concern to the writer was the country's failure to reelect Charles Stewart Parnell as the Irish leader in the British parliament. In his vignette "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," Joyce elegizes "The Irish heart where 'er it be / Is bowed with woe-for he is gone / Who would have wrought her destiny" (131). The loss of Parnell was a devastating blow to Ireland since it meant the death of the movement in Parliament for Home Rule. Despite the cost to himself as a writer of the criticism, Joyce believed in the civic function of his stories. To reject *Dubliners*, he famously proclaimed, was to "... retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having a good look at themselves in [his] nicely polished looking-glass" (Joyce, *Selected Letters* 90).

1.2 Compassion

As well as explaining the contemptuous undertones of the text, my thesis will draw on passages that demonstrate evidence of Joyce's compassion. There are two rival schools of Joycean criticism, and Joyce's rejecters are of the pessimistic camp. The optimists recognize that, rather than being a condemnation of his fellow Irishmen, *Dubliners* represents Joyce's attempt to rally his nation's sense of pride. Inspired by a passage in a letter Joyce wrote to his wife Nora exclaiming that he saw himself as "one of the writers of this generation who are perhaps creating at last a conscience in the soul of this wretched race" (Joyce, *Selected Letters* 204), my argument offers a new perspective on the dualistic nature of this text. Joyce's expectation that the course of civilization in Ireland will benefit from seeing the brute-like spectacle he condemns in his polished looking-glass raises questions relating to the true state of Irish society and, in particular, the conscious state of the people who inhabit this society. I contend that, given the lingering oppressive political and spiritual effects on Irish society of England's control over Ireland at the time *Dubliners* was written, Joyce, in *Dubliners*, creates an

image of Ireland as a nation of Cartesian brutes and projects this brute-like image in order to assist his native Irishmen to become thinking beings and realize their potential to break free of the monotonous cycle of oppression within which they are confined.

1.3 Gnomonic Aspect

My entire thesis is structured around an explication of three words introduced by Joyce in the opening passage of the first story in his collection: paralysis, gnomon, and simony (1). They have long been read as the key to the collection as a whole. For Albert Wachtel, these three terms are thematically related because they symbolize something missing. He claims that “paralysis is the state in which functions are missing, gnomon is a form in which a part is missing, [and] simony is a practice in which the proper spirit is missing” (Wachtel 28).

Wachtel’s analysis of these themes supports such contemptuous readings as those offered by Maddox and Mathews, who imply that there is no evidence of Joyce’s compassion.

Let us focus on the word gnomon for a moment, however. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a number of definitions, including “A pillar, rod, or other object which serves to indicate the time of day by casting its shadow upon a marked surface” (OED definition 1). A gnomon is also “The part of a parallelogram which remains after a similar parallelogram is taken away from one of its corners” (OED definition 5). Such definitions explain why gnomon often signifies absence in popular interpretations of *Dubliners*, and support Watchel’s reading. Well-known for his creative use of words, however, Joyce likely intended gnomon to symbolize something more complex than simply the idea of absence. David Weir notes that Joyce was familiar with the sixteenth-century philosopher and mathematician Giordano Bruno’s definition of gnomon as “that which, added or subtracted, enlarges or diminishes a figure without changing its form.” Weir suggests that, for Bruno, “the gnomon becomes one more proof of the

paradoxical doctrine of the fundamental identity of opposites or the coincidence of contraries” (Weir 348). This latter definition, a development of the fourth-century philosopher and mathematician Euclid’s axiom of the geometrical term, accords with the suggestion made above that there exists an aspect to the text that demonstrates an equal amount of the author’s compassion. Hence, I not only explicate the themes of paralysis, gnomon, and simony, but I also link them with their more subtle but equally significant antonymic themes, which I call progression, epiphany, and grace. By identifying and linking these corresponding concepts in *Dubliners*, I demonstrate the dualistic nature of the text and show that Joyce was as compassionate as he was contemptuous of his countrymen.

1.4 Descartes and Dualism

Discussing Joyce’s education at Clongowes Wood and Belvedere Colleges (1881-91, 1893-98), Thomas Rice notes the “strong emphasis on math and science in the revised Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* of 1832 [that] insured that Joyce could not escape an extended study of Euclid” (“Paradigm Lost” 417). Indeed, Joyce connects the gnomon with Euclidean geometry in the first paragraph of “The Sisters” (1). Therefore, as well as being familiar with Bruno and his contribution to Euclid’s definition of gnomon, Joyce also probably knew about Renè Descartes, another sixteenth-century philosopher and mathematician who contributed innovative advances to Euclidian geometry. A number of critics have made Descartes a central figure in their study of Joyce’s work. On the matter of Descartes’s contribution to the Euclidean world view of the truth about reality, Rice presents a convincing argument to demonstrate Joyce’s preference for a Cartesian, as opposed to a Euclidean, approach to the search for truth. In his book, *Joyce, Chaos, and Complexity*, Rice discusses the crucial contribution Descartes makes to the Euclidian model of objective cognition. Descartes simplifies and makes more concrete complex and

obscure truths about reality (17-18). He demonstrates Joyce's preference for the Cartesian model in arriving at truth over Euclid's limiting abstract model with textual evidence from *Dubliners*, the most significant of these proofs being the young boy's recollection of Father Flynn's teachings in "The Sisters": "His questions showed me how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church which I had always regarded as the simplest acts" (Joyce 5). The boy's comment should be taken ironically. Joyce's priests are corrupt, so it is possible Father Flynn is using the complex Euclidean model of truth to hide behind his lack of knowledge in spiritual affairs.

Proposing another convincing link between Descartes and Joyce, critic Philip Sicker focuses on the similarities between the thrice-recollected dream sequence in Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Descartes's prophetic tripartite dream, as recounted in Adrien Baillet's *Vie de Descartes (Life of Descartes)*, published in 1691 ("Shades of Descartes"). In both dreams the dreamscape is strikingly similar. Both young men reference a guide with a melon, both are walking through dark streets, and both are surrounded by phantom-like figures. The similarities between the psychological terrain of these dreams is even more impactful. Of particular note is Sicker's observation, "Like Descartes, who sought the key to the unity of all branches of knowledge, Stephen, at twenty-two, is beset with a grandiose but unfulfilled desire to forge the 'uncreated conscience' of his race" (11). Like Joyce, who offers his fiction as a mirror in order to create a conscience in his Irishmen, Stephen, according to Pericles Lewis, "... will play the role of the redeeming hero who by his mystical union with the conscience of the race helps to transform the Irish people" (86).

Descartes is credited with being the father of modern philosophy on a number of opposing principles, but of particular significance to my thesis is Descartes's mind/body

principle which came to be known as Cartesian dualism: Descartes's reasoning that mind and body are two distinct substances, with the mind being associated with consciousness and self-awareness and the body being simply an extended non-thinking thing—likened by Descartes to a brute. Steven Bond, in his extension of Sicker's argument for Cartesian references, identifies Cartesian dualism in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Bond's emphasis is on that which is consistent with the knowing/known divide that characterizes Joyce's adaptation/adoption of stream of consciousness as a literary device ("Joyce, Beckett"). Like Bond, I also propose that there is an indubitable correlation between Cartesian dualism and Joyce's work, particularly in light of the proposed binary aspects of *Dubliners*.

1.5 Descartes and the Brute

In his sixth meditation, Descartes posits that the body can function without a mind but only in a brute state such that "all those things which [animals] are made to do are merely motions of their fear, their hope, their joy, so that they might do them without thought at all" (95). This brute-like behavior is a recurring motif apparent in the first stories of *Dubliners*, with their nameless protagonists such as those in "The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby," as it is in the last story, "The Dead," with the collection's final protagonist Gabriel. For example, the brute in "The Dead" is Patrick Morkan's horse, Johnny, described by Gabriel as walking mindlessly in circles around the statue of William of Orange, a symbol of English rule over Ireland (Joyce 178). The brute is also Gabriel himself, who imitates the horse's behavior by "pacing in a circle round the hall," and Gabriel's onlookers, who laugh and applaud the brute's likeness because they are not aware of the irony contained within Gabriel's imitation. Examples like these call on the reader's contempt as Joyce portrays his characters as automata, people without active intelligence who resemble Descartes's brute. However, with such epiphanies as

that realized by Gabriel in the final paragraphs of the concluding story, as the character not only recognizes a “pitiable fatuous fellow” in the looking-glass but also feels a sense of shame at the image staring back at him (221), Joyce also demonstrates his compassion as he recognizes his characters’ potential to correct their brute-like behavior.

To achieve my goal of lifting the veil that obscures the binary aspects of *Dubliners*, I make Descartes a central figure in my study of the above mentioned themes in Joyce’s text, drawing on Descartes’s explanation of dualism, as defined in his 1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and descriptions of his brute from his 1637 *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences*. Although others have identified Cartesianism in Joyce’s work, a recognition of the dualistic structure of *Dubliners*, with a gnomonic counterpart holding the key to revealing Joyce’s compassion, offers a new facet to existing scholarship on this text.

2 DESCARTES: DUALISM AND THE BRUTE

2.1 Dualism

Cartesian dualism provides a useful philosophical looking-glass through which to examine the binary aspects of Joyce's *Dubliners*. As will be shown, it helps us see that Joyce's text is equally balanced with as much evidence of his compassion as his contempt. Born from his reflection that "... on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am only a thinking unextended thing, and on the other hand a distinct idea of the body, in so far as it is only an extended unthinking thing," Descartes reasoned that the mind and body are two distinct entities. From this description of disunion, Descartes attempts to explain the connection between mind and body. He observes, "I ... find in myself faculties of thinking which are quite special modes of thinking, distinct from myself, viz., the faculties of imaging and sensing" ("Meditation VI" 71). He knows mind and body are intimately connected because mind is aware when body feels such sensations as pleasure, pain, hunger, and thirst. The mind is also aware that something other than itself causes it to respond to sensations with such emotions as joy, sadness, anger, etcetera. For Descartes, the link between sensation and the passions is imagination: "a certain application of the cognitive faculty to a body which is immediately present to it" ("Meditation VI" 66). Descartes's mind/body principle describes how the contrary ideas imbedded in *Dubliners* are connected. Joyce's projection of contempt is displayed in his characters' inability to imagine something better than their allocated lot. He offers many examples which demonstrate evidence of his compassion, but the ultimate evidence is his fiction—the collection itself, is a display of Joyce's compassion. It is a product of Joyce's imagination, a kind of autonomist statement that envisages a better future for Ireland.

2.2 The Brute

Recalling Descartes's description of dualism – in particular, his assertion the body is an extended unthinking thing – let us turn now to the brute-like image Joyce projects in his fiction.

In supplementary pages to his *Meditations*, Descartes notes that the body, which he adds is nothing “more than a machine which moves of itself,” is comparable to a brute.

Animal brutes, according to Descartes, “imitate or surpass us only in those of our actions which are not directed by thought” (94). For Descartes, these brutes are automata with no intelligence.

Moreover, we must not be fooled into concluding that brutes can think when they display such passions as those described above, since the “movement of our passions ... often arise in spite of us, and, consequently, they may exist in brutes” (“The Automatism” 94-95). “... [I]t is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs ... [as] a clock composed only of wheels and weights can number the hours and measure time” (“Discourse on the Method”).

Descartes's description of the animal brute is significant because it is an image that Joyce's characters resemble, as the next three chapters demonstrate. The animal brute image demonstrates the disunion of mind and body in Joyce's characters. It is synonymous with Descartes's description of the human brute being a body not connected to his mind. This animal brute image helps us better understand the behavior of Joyce's characters as the brutes in *Dubliners* are nothing more than unthinking beings. They are bodies unaware they have minds because they lack the imagination which connects the two entities.

3 PARALYSIS AND PROGRESSION

3.1 Paralysis

Ireland's subordinate status throughout history seems to have inspired writers to pick up on the paralysis motif that crystalizes in *Dubliners*. Jonathan Swift, for example, published a number of major works commenting on the paralyzing effects of English rule over Ireland approximately two centuries earlier. Seeing paralysis on the part of the Irish people as a national problem, he wrote "my intention [with *Dubliners*] was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (Selected Letters 134).

The country's inability to move forward is reflected in Joyce's characters, many of whom project a powerlessness. Turning now to passages from the text, the following excerpt from Joyce's introductory story "The Sisters," captures a young boy's fear of paralysis, and his inability to cognize the fear:

Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (Joyce 1)

The boy appears to sense that paralysis is harmful as it fills him with fear, but his body is drawn to it regardless. He is unable to imagine its deadly work. Descartes warns about relying on the senses without reasoning. He uses the example of how the sun looks many times smaller than the earth when we see it through our senses and larger than the earth when we perceive it

through reasoning (“Meditation III” 44). Without reason, we can still “repel things which harm us” (“The Automatism” 94), according to Descartes, but the boy is clearly destined to follow in the priest’s footsteps. He is powerless to avoid the deadly work for which he has been primed.

Paralysis pervades the whole collection, but “The Dead,” the final story in *Dubliners*, is the epitome of paralysis and stagnation, as its title suggests. The motif of paralysis is manifest in the mindless repetition of a ritualistic party, year in and year out, which has essentially frozen time for the old sisters, the hostesses of a Twelfth-night party. In the opening paragraph, Joyce writes that the annual party Miss Kate and Miss Julia Morkan hold for their guests has taken place “for as long as anyone remember[s].” It “was always a great affair ... Never once had it fallen flat. For years and years it had gone off in splendid style” (149). The repetitive nature of this motionless description is married with as much death imagery. For example, Gabriel’s wife takes “three mortal hours to dress herself.” Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia fear Mrs. Conroy “must be *perished alive*” (150). Even the pictures that hang on the wall above the piano in the sisters’ apartment are images of death. One is that of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the other is of the two murdered princes in the Tower of London (159).

The joining of such ideas as paralysis and death is analogous to the effects of British colonialism on Ireland, particularly if we recall that Ireland did not achieve independence until 1922 (several years after the publication of *Dubliners*). The Misses Morkans resemble Descartes’s brute in so far as they have “no rational soul” (“Discourse”). They are numb to their guests’ inability to identify with their tastes. They are blind to the fact that Mrs. Malins is not engaged in the party. She is present in body, but her mind is elsewhere, in Scotland (162). The Misses Morkan’s choice of music is of no interest to the younger generation of guests. Gabriel “could not listen while Mary Jane [whose tastes are more sophisticated than those of most of the

guests] was playing her Academy piece ... [it] had no melody for him" (158). At the end of the piece "the most vigorous clapping came from the four young men in the doorway who had gone away to the refreshment-room at the beginning of the piece but had come back when the piano had stopped" (159). Mary Jane is one of the new generation Gabriel refers to as "hypereducated" in his after-dinner speech (174). Her Academy piece, while clearly technically brilliant, may lack a certain grace for Gabriel's taste. In his closing remarks, Gabriel toasts that his aunts, wishing that they may "long continue to hold the proud and self-won position" as hosts of the annual Christmas party. The subtle suggestion here is that the Misses Morkan will continue, like the horse that was drawn to walk in circles around the statue of King Billy, their mindless pattern of behavior.

Joyce, once again, shows that while paralysis cannot be cognized, its effects can be felt. A sense of paralysis triggers Gabriel's restless behavior. His "discomposed" state and his desire to be outside rather than inside the "dark, gaunt house" indicate that Gabriel feels suffocated by this stagnant world (149, 151-52). The house resembles a tomb, and Gabriel is trapped. He feels entombed because he no longer recognizes his place in Irish society. He is deceived by his sense of self-importance, a point illustrated by Gabriel's sensitivity to class distinctions. He notes the "indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles" (152). He even denounces his Irishness when Miss Ivors asserts that he knows "nothing of [his] own people and [his] own country" (162).

Although clearly endowed with the organ of speech, Gabriel is unable to communicate effectively with his own people. Descartes remarks, "there are no men so dull and stupid, not even idiots, as to be incapable of joining together different words, and thereby constructing a declaration by which to make their thoughts understood" (*Discourse*). This is how we may know

the difference between men and brutes, according to Descartes. At this point in the collection, Gabriel still resembles Descartes's brute, as the following examples demonstrate:

Embodying the idea of a brute not being able to make its thoughts understood, he offends Lily (the caretaker's daughter and housemaid to the Miss Morkans with his expectation that she will soon be married, since she is finished with school (151). Lily is of the new generation, and based on her sudden retort that "the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you," she is likely not interested in being supported by a man (151).

Attempting to communicate a response to Miss Ivors's suggestion that he should keep in touch with his own language and visit his own land, Gabriel delivers a bitter retort, "I'm sick of it," (161-62). Gabriel's abrupt and rude response to Miss Ivors is indicative of his inability to recognize himself as Irish. He even misunderstands his own wife. Destitute of reason for most of the story, Gabriel fails to recognize that "while he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had apparently been comparing him in her mind with another" (188). This point is illustrated with his wife's response to Gabriel's question, "what about the song ... [made] her cry?" Gretta replies, "I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song" (187).

3.2 Progression

Countering the theme of paralysis, Joyce demonstrates his compassion by weaving throughout the collection a number of opportunities for his characters to move forward. Glowing in the malaise of hopelessness are motifs that symbolize hope. These include light, fire, mirrors, transparent windows, etc. The ability to see hope amid so much pessimism, however, is beyond almost all of Joyce's characters, though. Their brute-like state inhibits their ability to imagine

anything outside of paralysis. For reasons that will become clear, only for Gabriel is Joyce willing to remove the haze.

For Descartes, “truth lies in the mind and not in the body since we perceive external objects through the contents of our mind” (qtd. in Harwood 71). Accordingly, when Gabriel experiences a “dull anger” in the back of his mind after he determines that Gretta’s passionate flame for her ex-lover is still very much alive, he reaches a new understanding about himself (187-88). With the aid of a mirror, Gabriel is able to see himself through the contents of his mind. As a result, “the smile [passes] away from [his] face” as he recognizes, in the mirror, the vulgarity of his own form (188). The man staring back at him is a “pitiable fatuous fellow.” The truth reflected in the mirror is so ugly that Gabriel is compelled to hide the “shame that burned upon his forehead,” and he steps back into the shadows for a moment (189). He emerges recognizing how “poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life” (190).

For the first time in his collection, Joyce allows a brute-like character the gift of imagination. Gabriel’s ability to interpret his fatuous reflection and imagine a better future for himself and his wife is an example of progression as it demonstrates the author’s vision for a better future for the people of Ireland. As the mirror liberated this final character, Joyce’s looking-glass—*Dubliners*—is a mirror for Irish society as a whole. It has the potential to liberate the Irish brute of the real, rather than fictional, world.

4 GNOMON AND EPIPHANY

4.1 Gnomon

For Descartes, error is not a “pure negation; it is a privation, i.e., the absence of some knowledge” (“Meditation IV” 55). Descartes’s understanding of error is reflected in Joyce’s *Dubliners* in the second of the three key themes in his collection, *Gnomon*. Throughout his collection, Joyce crafts metaphoric blindness with such recurring motifs as avoidance, shadows and blinds, darkness, secrets and aposiopesis. Joyce’s characters, like Plato’s prisoners who perceive shadows as forms, do not challenge what they see to be anything other than truth because they do not realize they are being deceived. Until the mirror is made available, truth is veiled.

With the exception of Gabriel, none of Joyce’s characters is able to criticize their situation. As a result, they live in ignorance, blind to truth. In “Araby,” Joyce’s protagonist, a young boy, blames himself for his failure to buy a gift for Mangan’s sister with whom he is infatuated. He sees himself “as a creature driven and derided by vanity” (24). He does not recognize the fact that his own family prevented him from forming an attachment with the young girl he fanaticizes about. His failure at the bazaar and lost chance of romance are linked to the dysfunctional environment of which he is a part. If the boy’s uncle had not disregarded his promise to be home early, the young boy would not have been too late for the Bazaar.

Lost opportunity is also the theme in “Eveline.” In Eveline’s case, however, it is the protagonist who fails to take the chance life offers her, rather than an antagonist preventing it. A young girl who is about to run away with her lover, Frank, sits at a window, “watching the evening invade the avenue” (25). The darkness closing in is symbolic of her vision becoming increasingly blurred, and she begins to fear leaving that which is clearly oppressive. Eveline

fears the unknown because it is unfamiliar. Her fear gradually intensifies until it consumes her: the “swaying crowd,” the feeling of being in a “maze of distress,” and the “nausea” that awakes in her body describe a consciousness tormented by fear. Eveline is unable to see that, while a new life offers no certainties, by not taking a leap of faith into the unknown world she is condemned to the certainty of the same path as her mother: a “life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” (28). Unlike Eveline’s father, who was violent toward her brothers and oppressive toward her mother, Frank is “kind, manly, and open hearted” (27). However, Eveline holds onto that which is familiar. Gripping “with both hands at the iron railing,” Eveline avoids what she comes to perceive as danger. “All of the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. [Frank] was drawing her into them: he would drown her” (29). Without the faculty of imagination, Eveline chooses the difficult life she knows over an unknown life that might have been better.

Fear of the unknown also affects the young boy and faithful disciple of Father Flynn in “The Sisters.” But, unlike Eveline, this young boy is drawn to it. Dark imagery surrounds Joyce’s description of the priest, Father Flynn. This imagery suggests the priest might have taken an ugly secret with him to the grave. One example includes Joyce’s description of the priest residing behind the “blackened blind” of a window on the dark side of the street. Another includes the priest’s sudden appearance to the boy in his dream trying to confess something (3-4).

Certainly, the image painted by one of the priest’s sisters, Eliza, with her description of how, after a long search for the priest (he had wandered off), she and others found Father Flynn “sitting up by himself in the dark of his confession-box, wide-awake and laughing-like softly to himself” is a disturbing one (9). Perhaps the priest was amusing himself with memories of past

confessions. Maybe Joyce, with this image, is urging his readers to look beyond the confessional.

Albert Watchel suggests the priest's secret was related to his awareness that he was not perfect, and that he tried to warn the boy that the priesthood makes impossible demands on a man (28). Watchel's suggestion would explain the apparent deterioration of Father Flynn's mind, a point indicated by Eliza when she states that her brother was "too scrupulous always ... the duties of the priesthood was [*sic*] too much for him ... his life was, you might say, crossed ... there was something gone wrong with him" (7-8). While Watchel's explanation is sound, there is strong evidence to suggest that the priest's secret is connected to something darker and more threatening.

When Father Flynn was alive, he proposed three levels of sin varying in severity: "mortal, venial and only imperfections" (4). Any one of these sins can be pinned to the priest. The first is implied by Mr. Cotter, the house guest of the young boy's family. He avows he "wouldn't like children of [his] to have too much to say to a man like that" (2). This statement, is coupled with the narrator's allusion to the priest violating the boundary where a young boy should feel the safest. In the darkness of his room, the boy sees "the heavy gray face of the paralytic." Drawing the blankets over his head, the boy explains, "I ... tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me ... I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me" (3). The priest stalks the boy in the darkness of his room, follows him under the blankets, and penetrates his dream" (3). Joyce creates more ambiguity with the boy's recollection of how the priest used to smile at him. The boy paints an almost antichrist-like image with his description of the priest's "big discoloured [*sic*] teeth and ...his tongue [lying] upon his lower lip" (5). Perhaps the stains that will not brush

away from the priest's teeth or his ancient garments symbolize a secret that can never be absolved (4).

A minor imperfection can also explain the priest's apparent secret. He was unable to fulfill his duty as a teacher because he lacked certain knowledge in spiritual affairs. He put "difficult questions to [the boy]," accepting the boy's lack of response or "very foolish and halting" responses with a smile and a nod of his head, as if accepting as correct whatever the boy offered as a response (4). The priest's inadequacy as a teacher is also conveyed by his being unable to carry out the most basic of priestly acts of carrying the chalice. Eliza tells the boy's aunt that Father Flynn broke the chalice because he was "too nervous" (8).

In the middle of the hierarchy of sins is venial sin. The priest's apparent control over his sisters, Nannie and Eliza, would fall into this category. They are "wore out" with servitude, as "The heels of [Nanny's] cloth boots ... trodden down all to one side" suggest (5). Even in death, Father Flynn's oppressive presence can still be felt: Eliza "wouldn't hear him in the house [when he was alive] any more than now" (7). Eliza's observation suggests that the priest's death will not change anything. The sisters will continue to serve the Church with selfless passion in spite of their brother's departure.

The unresolved mystery behind the severity of the priest's sin suggests that one must question that which presents itself as truth. The seeds of corruption are deeply embedded in Joyce's text, and they are particularly apparent in those stories that feature a priest. The priest takes his secret to the grave because the secret is not essential to the meaning of the story. The truth not realized by the main character in this story is that religious doctrine is not as untarnished as one might expect it to be.

4.2 Epiphany

Countering the gnomonic theme in *Dubliners* are a number of epiphanic moments. In Christian theology, the word *epiphany* means the revelation of Christ to the Magi. Joyce adapted this idea of epiphany, incorporating his version of it in his fiction to represent “sudden spiritual manifestation[s], whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself” (“Epiphany”).

Epiphanies occur in all fifteen stories, but they are almost imperceptible since they take the form of everyday moments. Bernard Bernstock explains that Joycean epiphanies occur as “minute anecdotes or observations, an overheard conversation or a recorded dream sequence” (82). When considered in the frame of Cartesian dualism, these epiphanic moments imply a search for selfhood. Therefore, they represent potential. In the wider context of the text, Joyce’s use of this literary device demonstrates the potential he saw in the Irish people to free themselves from oppressive and corrupt power structures, but this is not immediately apparent.

While the epiphanic moments trigger a flash of recognition in the minds of Joyce’s protagonists in the first fourteen stories, they do not affect the static characteristic of their being. This is because all but one of Joyce’s epiphanies are reader-based, rather than, as is usually the case, character-based. The young boy in “The Sisters,” for example, who is expected to enter the priesthood overhears a conversation between his aunt and the priest’s sisters that throws light on Father Flynn’s secret. Eliza tells the boy’s aunt that “the duties of the priesthood [were] too much for him” (8). This conversation is the boy’s epiphany, but he, unlike the reader, does not register its significance. The boy is the first-person narrator of the story, but he offers no comment on what he overhears. The story ends without a resolution and the reader recognizes the young boy will likely meet the same fate as the priest.

Through his variation, Joyce makes the reader feel pangs for the character who is too paralyzed even to feel the epiphany. These moments are clear evidence of Joyce's compassion for the people of Ireland. In "Eveline," an adolescent girl remembers a promise to her dying mother that she will "keep the home together as long as she [can]" (28). It is clear that Eveline's strong sense of duty to her mother prevents her from realizing that the present might be the right time to break away from a father who has the potential to turn violent towards her, as he did with her brothers (26).

In "Counterparts," Mr. Farrington's epiphanic moment is also only revelatory to the reader. Mr. Farrington's life is based on a circular pattern of repetitious behavior, as the reader becomes aware. For example, his job involves copying, and he fixes mistakes by repeating the copying (73). In another example, his boss regularly repeats a pattern of complaining and hurling abuse at him (69). In an attempt to escape the sense of indignity he feels at the hands of his employer, Mr. Farrington seeks the "comfort of the public house" (70). However, here, the monotonous and circular routine persists. He buys "rounds" of drinks for everyone, then feels "humiliated and discontented" when he realizes that he has only a little money left and he is "not ... even drunk." And, after he leaves, he "long[s] to be back in the hot reeking public-house" (78).

At home, the monotonous cycle continues with increased force. He abuses his son to relieve himself of the frustration he feels at the hands of his malevolent boss. Mr. Farrington's epiphanic moment manifests itself as dramatic irony. In seeking out the pub, Mr. Farrington trades one abusive environment for another—the patrons take advantage of his generosity. Abuse attracts abuse; a warning to the reader, perhaps, of the destructive nature of a stagnant environment.

Joyce intended the “odour of corruption [that] floats over [his] stories” (qtd. in Joyce xii), and he demonstrates the intensity of this odor by giving us fourteen stories before he gives us one that breaks the structural paradigm of irresolution. It is not until the last story, “The Dead,” that an epiphany is realized by one of the collection’s protagonists. Jelena Krstovic suggests that this story offers a “sense of revelation to the work as a whole” (98), and I am inclined to agree, especially in light of Joyce’s blending of the original definition of epiphany with his own definition. To illustrate this latter point, Joyce’s characters offer clues that pinpoint the date of the party. Gabriel’s announcement to Lily that “it’s Christmas-time” (152) and Aunt Kate’s comment to Gabriel about Freddie Malins’s mother making Freddie “take the pledge on New Year’s Eve” (158) suggest that the story takes place during the first week of January, before the twelfth day of Christmas. The story’s time setting must be close to January 6, the date of The Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord, the Christian feast to commemorate the revelation of God’s presence. God’s manifestation to the Magi was a revelation that eventually moved people all over the world. As stated above, Joyce’s epiphanies represent the potential he sees in his fellow Irish to become thinking beings. With most of Joyce’s epiphanies being reader-based, Joyce likely meant *Dubliners* as a whole as revelatory in and of itself. If realized, the nation of brutes he mimics in his stories might recognize themselves in Gabriel and imagine a better life in their future.

Let us return to the point I made earlier about Gabriel being the only character for whom Joyce is willing to remove the haze. Gabriel’s revelation occurs at the moment he realizes that he has been misreading his wife’s thoughts. Rather than her being full of lustful desire for him, as he expects, Gabriel learns that his wife is still harboring a passion for another man who died, she believes, for her. At this moment, Gabriel is overcome with a rush of emotions:

A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him.

He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. (188-189)

Unlike the other characters in *Dubliners* who are unable or unwilling to recognize the significance of their epiphanic moment, Gabriel not only recognizes his own paralysis, but he also searches for the truth about his own identity, which is thrown into question by the sudden realization that he is not comfortable with the image that stares back at him in the mirror. He realizes that he needs to let go of the empty and unfulfilling connection that he has formed with the Continental east. He becomes aware he needs to reach west, back toward his Irish origins, in order to find his true self; a version of the self that remained hidden while seeking false security, such as earning money from a British newspaper unsympathetic to the Irish independence movement. In the closing lines of *Dubliners*, Gabriel realizes, “the time has come to set out on his journey westward” (192). The west often symbolizes death, as it is associated with the sun’s setting. Indeed, Albert Watchel writes, “forced to confront his failures, Gabriel, in his own epiphany, sees his living relationship with his wife as less significant than the love of the long-dead Michael, and ... resolves to travel westward into Ireland, where he can meet his demise” (Watchel). Given the text is equally balanced with as much compassion as there is contempt, Gabriel’s resolve to journey westward symbolizes is ask likely to symbolize his potential for new life.

5 SIMONY AND GRACE

5.1 Simony

This third and final pair of contrary themes is the most vividly represented in Joyce's text. In *Dubliners*, simony represents corruption, and corruption is the foundation on which Ireland's power structures are based in Joyce's fiction. This latter point is significant, because corrupt power structures are at the center of Ireland's oppression.

Referred to under section 2121 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, simony is "the buying or selling of spiritual things" (USCBB). The decree states that "it is impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master, for they have their source in God" (USCBB). According to the *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, the payment of fees for liturgical functions led to much abuse in past periods, and its practice, even though it was denounced by Pope St. Gregory VII Hildebrand in a decree of 1074, continued to be the subject of much conflict for centuries afterwards (Flinn 279-379).

Schooled in a Jesuit environment, Joyce would have been aware of the oppressive influence of the Catholic Church on society. To keep Irish Catholicism in line with standard practices at the Vatican, religious practices were strictly adhered to (Coohill 91). Of course, religion is flawed because people are flawed, and the same is true for politics. Joyce makes this distinction through his use of *simony* to expose corruption in the power structures of both religion and politics.

5.1.1 Religious Corruption

Religious corruption, existent in all fifteen stories, begins in the very first line of the first story in Joyce's collection. A young boy, considering the fate of his priest, which is death, concludes: "There was no hope for him this time" (1). Roman Catholics believe that the souls of

unrepentant people go to Hell, not Heaven. The young boy's statement suggests that the priest died before being absolved of a sin or sins. The boy's dream, also, is a strong indication of the same outcome. When drifting in and out of sleep one night, the boy imagines that he sees the face of the dead priest and determines that the priest is trying to confess something. Joyce writes that the boy desires "to absolve the simoniac of his sin" (3).

As to the severity of the sin the priest might have succumbed to, Joyce creates an unsettling sense of ambiguity with Mr. Cotter's inability to fully communicate what he suggests is Father Flynn's sin. For example, he remarks, "there was something queer ... there was something uncanny about him" (1). His unfinished sentences emphasize that which is not known about the priest, bringing to the forefront a fear that the priest might have succumbed to the sins of passion. He starts a sentence saying, "let a young lad run about and play with young lads of his own age and not be ..." (2), but trails off. The ellipsis, of course, suggests that whatever Mr. Cotter is not willing or able to communicate is too evil to be expressed. I allude to this possibility in an earlier chapter.

Bearing in mind Father Flynn's inability to perform even the most basic of priestly acts, Joyce's frustration with religion more likely lay in the sins of intellect rather than the sins of passion, however. Mr. Cotter's inability to articulate a complete thought—his comments are strewn with ellipses—discredits him as a reliable source. The boy calls him a "tiresome old fool," a "tiresome old red-nosed imbecile," reducing him to a clown (3).

This unflattering portrait of Christianity is perpetuated throughout the collection. Mr. Kernan, for example, in the story "Grace," is found at the bottom of a flight of stairs, face downwards in the "filth and ooze of the floor" (149). Joyce's staging of a fallen man is analogous to man's fall from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3.23). In the blending together of

religious imagery and filth, Joyce offers vivid foreshadowing of religious corruption. Mr. Kernan needs help. He is an alcoholic whose social decline is apparent when Mr. Powers meets his children. “He was surprised at their manners and at their accents” (153). Mr. Powers’s surprise indicates the family is poor as the children are uneducated. The religious conversion that takes place, a performance intended to help Mr. Powers, is based on not only on deceit, but also incompetency.

In this penultimate story, Joyce shows that corruption of religion is multidirectional. Not only is religion corrupted by the Vatican, but it is also corrupted by those at the bottom of the hierarchical structure. Mr. Kernan, for example, is cajoled to join in the conversation with his friends, unaware that he is the “victim of a plot” to dispel his Protestant ways of thinking by helping him understand the Catholic faith (156). While Mr. Kernan’s friends mean well, the benevolence of their plan to convert Mr. Kernan is stained by being based on deceit: the seemingly spontaneous gathering of friends around Mr. Kernan’s bedside was pre-arranged without his knowledge. To complicate matters further, the plot’s development “was entrusted to Mr Cunningham,” a man described as having “a face like Shakespeare” (156). Shakespeare being a revered playwright and performer, suggests Mr. Cunningham, the stand-in spiritual guide, might be a master plotter and performer himself.

Corruption of the faith from the top down is alluded to in Mr. Kernan’s enquiry. He asks, “Weren’t some of the popes—of course, not our present man, or his predecessor, but some of the old popes—not exactly ... you know ... up to the knocker?” (168). Mr. Cunningham replies: “O, of course, there were some bad lots” (168). Through Mr. Kernan, Joyce raises a rather significant point: even the pope himself is capable of corruption. Symbols of consummate faith, it appears, are not always worthy human beings; a point illustrated in Mr. Cunningham’s attempt

to promote something positive about the religion. He adds, “not one of [the popes], not the biggest drunkard, not the most ... out-and-out ruffian, not one of them ever preached *ex cathedra* a word of false doctrine” (168). Joyce raises a very real issue in the irony of Mr. Cunningham’s reply. The doctrine of infallibility, judged by Mr. Cunningham to be “the greatest scene in the whole history of the Church,” was possibly created by someone with serious moral shortcomings (168). According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, God can bestow the gift of infallibility (“the exemption or immunity from liability to error”) ... on unworthy human agents ... without the substance of the Catholic claim being affected” (Toner). This clause suggests, of course, that the authority or substance of the Church should not be questioned even when one of its representatives is found to be corrupt. Since religion is a primary source of ethical conduct, Joyce, with his emphasis on the possibility of flawed human beings representing the Church, appears to be commenting on the hypocrisy of one of the Vatican’s most significant doctrines. And this para is way too long ☺ Break it up.

Through Mr. Cunningham, Joyce also shows how a seemingly already dubious doctrine can be corrupted further by an ill-informed spiritual guide. In his attempt to explain “*ex cathedra*,” Mr. Cunningham inadvertently describes a circular fallacy. He believes that “when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* ... he is infallible” (168). However, it appears from Mr Cunningham’s description of the pope’s declaring “infallibility a dogma of the Church *ex cathedra*,” that a pope is infallible because he speaks *ex cathedra*. Mr. Cunningham clearly does not understand the religion he is attempting to sell to his friend. However, his inadequacy as a spiritual guide goes unnoticed by Mr. Kernan, who is eventually seduced by Mr. Cunningham’s fervorous description of a conclave of cardinals, bishops, and archbishops “from all ends of the earth” gathering in a “sacred college” (169). Mr. Cunningham’s words and “deep, raucous

voice” invoke in Mr. Kernan such a spectacular spiritual vision that he agrees to attend a religious retreat (170). Joyce stages Mr. Kernan’s conversion to Catholicism as a performance with Mr. Cunningham playing the lead acting role as spiritual guide. Mr. Cunningham’s success demonstrates how easy it is to be awed and fooled by a performance masterfully delivered.

Religious representatives depicted as actors are common in Joyce’s fiction. Father Keon in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” has two faces. He is described as “resembling a poor clergyman or a poor actor” (122). Not only does Father Keon’s physical appearance resemble an actor, but his actions resemble one also. Father Keon seeking Mr. Fanning (the same person who is funding the political candidate Mr. Tierney) on “a little business matter,” is clearly perturbed at finding the canvassers in the committee room: “He opened his very long mouth suddenly to express disappointment.” Then, to mask his disappoint, the priest immediately “opened wide his very bright eyes to express pleasure and surprise” (122). The dualistic description of Father Keon’s appearance and the priest’s desire to seek one who has a personal financial interest in the new candidate, suggests that this priest is selling a false spiritual image of himself. To the canvassers, the priest’s poor acting is masked by his physical appearance. The priest selling a false image of himself is a form of simony.

Joyce emphasizes the canvassers’ inability to recognize simony by writing this story’s priest in the dark. For example, on the priest’s departure, Mr. Henchy grabs a candlestick to “light him downstairs,” but Father Keon denies the help, insisting that he can see (123). The priest is comfortable behind his mask and in the dark because it helps to conceal his corrupt nature—a disturbing concept, particularly as Joyce appears to be leading his reader to consider his or her own source of all knowledge. For Descartes, the source of all knowledge is God.

In *Dubliners*, priests are the way to God, but Joyce's priests have a strong desire for money and possessions rather than spiritual or ethical values. In the story "The Sisters," the boy's description of the old woman wearing shoes worn down at the heels and a skirt clumsily "hooked at the back," juxtaposed with the priest's specter as he lies in his coffin "solemn and copious," evoking an image of grandeur and plenty, is a paradoxical scene. The priest's sisters gave everything they had, including their youth, to make sure that Father Flynn "wouldn't ... want anything while he was [alive]" (8). This story's spiritual guide likely demanded much more than a steady supply of snuff.

Father O'Rourke is another priest in the same story who hides his corrupt nature behind the mask of religion. He enters the sisters' lives in the guise of a benevolent philanthropist after Eliza's announcement that Father O'Rourke "took charge of poor James's insurance" (8). The flowers and candles given to the sisters by Father O'Rourke for Father Flynn's viewing come out of the chapel. It is likely that these items are left over from a previous service and, therefore, are not Father O'Rourke's to give. Yet, Father O'Rourke is not short of material wealth. The priest has first-hand experience of the "new-fangled carriages" that Father Flynn and his sisters were never able to afford to travel in.

Clearly, Joyce's spiritual representatives are flawed. But, while Joyce is shining a torch on the corrupt nature of those who serve the Church, his characters remain in the dark. Eliza and Nanny resemble the same brute that walks in circles around the monument of King Billy, epitomized by Gabriel and his guests in "The Dead." This brute is not physically shackled to the monument; it chooses to walk in circles because that is what it has always done. For the sisters of the first story it will take a letting-go of the old ways to realize they are shackled, not by a material substance but by ignorance. Joyce's fiction clearly demonstrates that there is a driving

force behind the stagnation of the Irish population. In “The Sisters” the young boy’s “fancy ... that the old priest was smiling as he lay there in his coffin,” as if mockingly, suggests that religious corruption is, at least, partly to blame.

5.1.2 Political corruption

Political corruption also features in Joyce’s fiction as a form of simony within Irish society. “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” for instance, is an elegy to the Irish member of the British Parliament and advocate of the Home Rule initiative, Charles Stewart Parnell. As discussed in the introduction, Ireland’s failure to re-elect Parnell led to the death of the Home Rule movement. Since this story relies on a knowledge of the events leading up to Parnell’s demise to appreciate the fragmentation Joyce projects in this story, I have included a brief description of the political situation Joyce used as a source.

Joseph Coohill offers a basic but accurate explanation of the political history at this time. In *Ireland: A Short History*, Coohill explores the details behind the failure of the Home Rule movement. He begins his explanation with the circumstances that led to the movement’s recognition as a practical option for Ireland. Initially, Coohill writes, the leader of the Home Rule Confederation, Isaac Butt, spearheaded a campaign for Home Rule on the grounds that it was difficult to rule Ireland from London. Butt considered that Home Rule would help solve a number of conflicts between England and Ireland. He founded the Home Government Association in 1870. However, the Association came under sectarian conflict, so Butt replaced it with the Home Rule League and the Home Rule Confederation to account for Catholic and Protestant ideologies respectively.

The Home Rule movement gained much public support. However, Butt failed to win the support of either the Conservatives or the Liberals, mainly because of his unwillingness to, as

Coohill describes, “breach the standards and codes of accepted parliamentary practice” (99). Charles Stewart Parnell was not afraid to employ unconventional political practices to win support for the Home Rule movement. Parnell was the first to use obstructionist tactics in the Commons. In 1885, the Home Rule movement won Liberal party backing. The Home Rule bill was not, however, passed in Parliament. Conservative opposition was expected, but Liberal dissent was not predicted. Many Liberals, who were Unionists at heart, feared Irish independence, but Parnell did not give up despite Conservative efforts to smear his name with allegations of ties to terrorist activity. He successfully defended the charges and at the same time discredited the Conservative-backed newspaper, *The Times*, for supporting the claims against him. This strategy helped win back British public support.

Home Rule was finally within Ireland’s grasp until news of Parnell’s affair with Katherine O’Shea was leaked to the press and made into a public scandal. Despite the fact that O’Shea’s husband was aware of the affair, and, according to Coohill, likely used it to advance his own political career, many members of Parnell’s party withdrew their support for the leader and the party split. This split not only made it difficult to enact further Irish reforms, but many, like Frederick Stern, also believed it was “the beginning of the end for Parnell, who suffered then defeat after defeat, until his death less than a year later” (228). The implication here, of course, is that Parnell died of a broken heart.

Joyce recreates this political fragmentation in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room.” Joyce’s political figures are motivated by their own personal gain rather than Irish affairs. Mr. Hynes, for example, is concerned that the politician, Richard Tierney, will “drag the honour [*sic*] of Dublin in the mud to please the German monarch” (118). Mr. Henchy, who is canvassing for the same candidate, believes “the King’s coming [to Ireland] will mean an influx of money” that

will benefit the country (129). According to Hynes, this candidate is not interested in representing the labor classes but rather “only wants to get some job or other” (118). Mr. O’Conner, after considering that Mr. Hynes just might be right about the possibility of Tierney “kowtowing to a foreign king” (118), remarks, “I wish he’d turn up with the spondulics” (118). “Spondulics” is an Irish term for money. Clearly, Mr. O’Conner cares only about being paid. Indeed, the reader might even question the motives of the British Prime Minister, Gladstone, in agreeing to support the Home Rule movement. Coohill explains that Parnell had enough political support that his alignment with the Conservative party in the 1885 election would have meant a defeat for Gladstone (119).

Coohill also writes that historian T. A. Jackson considered Charles Stewart Parnell “the only one who could have transformed Home Rule eventually into a meaningful movement for independence” (109). In “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” the old man, Jack, reminisces about old times, declaring that “there was some life in it then” (118). He is referring to the hope that Parnell’s spirit brought to the people of Ireland. Mr. Hynes agrees with the old man and proceeds to recite a poem that he wrote about the death of Parnell. In it he reflects, “The Irish heart where ‘er it be / Is bowed with woe—for he is gone / Who would have wrought her destiny” (131).

At the time of Parnell’s fall, large numbers of Catholic Church officials were in the Home Rule League. The sixth stanza of Mr. Hynes’s eulogy suggests Joyce believed that the driving force behind Parnell’s fall and Ireland’s ultimate paralysis was the Catholic Church: “Shame on the coward, caitiff hands / That smote their Lord or with a kiss / Betrayed him to the rabble-rout / Of fawning priests—no friends of his” (132). While Parnell did not lose the support of all Catholic Church representatives, those who turned against him, like the Reverend Lawrence Gillooly,

Bishop of Elphin, who critically questioned many of Parnell's judicial actions, certainly were influential in the radical Leader's removal from office. For Joyce, the death of Parnell meant that Ireland would remain in England's shadow.

One of the most provocative dualistic images in *Dubliners* is the linguistic arrangement of the "black cavernous nostrils" of the priest in "The Sisters" in relation to the "heavy odour [of] flowers" (6). These images appear side by side. The arrangement suggests that something beautiful is at risk of being lost. Ireland has many attractions; the country's ability to endure numerous invasions and its ancient and unique language are two of its most obvious qualities.

5.2 Grace

While Ireland might be stagnant politically and spiritually because of corrupt power structures, Joyce shows us, through his motif of grace, that there are qualities of Ireland worth exploring and celebrating. The author's compassion is demonstrated in *Dubliners* with examples of benevolence and strength, and evidence of his appreciation for Irish culture and hospitality.

5.2.1 Benevolence

In the story "Grace," the word is used to describe Mr. Kernan's physical appearance: dressed in in a silk hat and gaiters, Mr. Kernan passes for a respectable man "by grace of these two articles of clothing" (153). Mrs. Kernan is a symbol of Irish generosity (a virtue that may be substituted for grace) with her apology for not having food in the house to offer Mr. Power (154); and Mr. Fogarty's ability to "[bear] himself with a certain grace," despite his financial decline, symbolizes Ireland's humility (166). The elegance, generosity, and strength that these characters display represent just some of the virtues that epitomize Ireland. With *Dubliners*, Joyce not only preserves these virtues, but, through Gabriel, also warns of the consequences of

losing them. To illustrate this latter point with one of the most profound and frequently examined examples from the text, Gabriel fears that the new generation will “lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humor which belonged to an older day” (204).

5.2.2 *Women*

Grace comes in many forms, but the predominant form in *Dubliners* through which Joyce exemplifies the grace of Ireland is female. In some of the younger female characters of “The Dead,” grace represents spirit and independence. Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, objects to being considered by Gabriel as a woman incapable of being independent, and she lets him know of her pique in no uncertain terms. Gabriel is “discomposed by the girl’s bitter and sudden retort” to his suggestion that she would soon be marrying (178). Another female epitomizing ‘grace’ is Miss Ivors. She agitates Gabriel in her cross-examination of him, when she implies that, while it is good to seek knowledge of other languages and other cultures, it is wrong to distance oneself from one’s own culture. Mary Jane, the Miss Morkans’ niece, embellishes traditional musical pieces, adding notes to the melody to make the music her own. Her independence is admirable. In fact, she is “the main prop of the household” (175).

In the older female characters grace has a more profound significance. By the grace of the Miss Morkans, “The Dead” is filled with melody. Miss Julia is a leading soprano, and Miss Kate is a teacher who gives music lessons. Gabriel refers to his aunts as the “Graces of the Dublin musical world” (205). Of course Mary Jane is not excluded from this moniker, as she has been through the Academy of Music, but for his aunts, who wish to hear Gabriel’s reference repeated (206), the term “Graces” has spiritual implications.

5.2.3 *Music*

Music, according to the great composer Ludwig van Beethoven, is “the mediator between the life of the mind and the senses,” (qtd. in Kinderman 169). Brettina Brentano, a close relation of the Johann Von Melchoir Birkenstock family to whom Beethoven was a frequent guest, elaborates on Beethoven’s philosophy. She explains that music is “the one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of knowledge” (qtd. in Kinderman 169). Beethoven’s philosophy about music, coupled with Brentano’s elaboration of Beethoven’s philosophy, suggests that mind and body are intricately linked, a philosophy that, as demonstrated earlier, was anticipated by Descartes in his “Meditations on First Philosophy” (Descartes 27). The musical Miss Julia and Miss Kate are the leading agents in the “riot of emotions” experienced by Gabriel (Joyce 191). The sisters provide a link through which Gabriel ascends from an egotistic creature “sick” of his own country (190) to a thoughtful man who wonders whether the music of the “new generation,” for example Mary Jane’s Academy piece, has “any melody for the other listeners” (186). He realizes it lacks the hospitable, soothing, and welcoming quality that the melodies of the older generation are clinging to. Gabriel’s aunts help him to see that Ireland is at risk of losing its beauty, those old-fashioned values which are an esteemed part of Ireland’s traditional heritage.

5.2.4 *Irish Hospitality*

Irish hospitality, according to Joyce, is a virtue “non-existent elsewhere in Europe” (qtd. in Joyce xiv). Gabriel’s discomfort at Lily’s abrupt retort symbolizes the effect of inhospitality. The new “children,” while seemingly more self-sufficient and able to take pride in Irish individuality and independence, threaten Ireland’s *grazioso*. The naive ‘old children,’ like Gabriel’s aunts, promote the melodies of old Ireland, the songs most likely at risk of being lost for the sake of Ireland’s ‘growing up’ and becoming independent—a nation that is less tolerant

and less harmonious, resonant of Mary Jane's musical piece that is technically correct music but lacks geniality. Gabriel's ability to recognize the value of that which is unique to Ireland suggests that Joyce did not want the new generation of his compatriots to compromise their Irishness for the sake of independence

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Dubliners* begins and ends with death. But, as Peter Brook notes in his study of design and intention in narrative, death “need not be a literal death—it can be some simulacrum, some end to a period, an arrest” (95). My paper has demonstrated that when viewed as a looking-glass, as the author intended, *Dubliners* calls for an end to an oppressive period in Ireland’s history.

When examined through the lens of Rene Descartes, the gnomonic aspect of Joyce’s collection becomes more concrete and less obscure. Others have identified optimism in *Dubliners*, but most rely on the significance of Gabriel’s recognition that “the time has come for him to set out on his journey westward” (225). As has been shown, Cartesian dualism provides a way of seeing Joyce’s collection as equally balanced. The writer’s compassion is just as evident as his contempt, as my antonymic analysis shows. Recognizing this balance helps us better understand what Joyce may have meant by making no apology for the brute-like spectacle he projects in his nicely polished looking-glass. The Irish people need to see themselves through ruthless, but honest, eyes in order to not only recognize their brutishness, but to realize their need to break free of the monotonous cycle of oppression within which they are confined.

The circular experiences of Joyce’s characters project a suffocating cycle of paralysis. But, as is shown with Gabriel, this cycle of paralysis is not impermeable. Joyce saw it as his duty to endeavor to free the brute. The automaton that move through Joyce’s stories, with the exception of Farrington in “Counterparts,” accept their fate passively. Farrington rejects oppression with violence, but, ironically, his reaction preserves the endless cycle of abuse which saturates this story. Paul de Man writes: “To read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to repeat—that is to say, the endless prosopopeia by which the dead are made to

have a face and a voice” (qtd. in Lukacher 91). Metaphorically dead, Joyce’s brutes are made to have a face and a voice through the writer’s imagination/fiction. With Gabriel, Joyce shows us the Dublin brute has the potential to be freed. This final protagonist receives the gift of imagination when he sees himself in the mirror. The image staring back at him created, at last, a conscience in his wretched soul. Joyce’s gift to the Irish people is his fiction. His fiction is the image Gabriel sees reflected in the mirror. Gabriel’s reaction is yet another clue that Joyce used his art to jolt the non-fictional Irish brute into recognizing he too has a mind. Brutes have minds, of course, but without the faculty of imagination their bodies and minds remain unconnected. With the gift of imagination, Joyce’s Dubliners have the potential to become thinking beings and break free from the monotonous cycle of the effects of British colonialism on Ireland.

Clearly, Joyce’s *Dubliners* represents the old ways of Ireland, some of which are worth holding onto, but many of them, as Gabriel suggests in his after dinner speech, have to be let go. In the contrary themes of paralysis and progression, I have shown that the text suggests Ireland can move forward if its citizens recognize the paralyzing effects of British rule. Through Gabriel, Joyce demonstrates a need for people to embrace their Irishness. Through his contrasting themes of gnomon and epiphany, Joyce demonstrates the need to question authority and see challenges as opportunities for a better life. And, in his final contrasting themes of simony and grace, Joyce demonstrates that while Ireland’s power structures are corrupt, the country has many qualities worth celebrating.

In the words of the eighteenth-century French radical, Rabaut Saint-Etieme, “our history is not our destiny” (qtd. in Ferry 6). In his speech, Gabriel explains:

Our path through life is strewn with many ... sad memories:
and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart

to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavours (205).

One of the saddest memories for Ireland is Parnell's fall. R. Barry O'Brien, a major figure in the Home Rule movement, held that Parnell "brought Ireland within the sight of the Promised Land" (qtd. in Coohill 108-109). The implication here, of course is that O'Brien saw Parnell's downfall as a kind of "Paradise Lost," with Parnell the equivalent of a fallen angel representing the loss of a guiding patriarch leading his people toward freedom. The Irish leader was clearly admired by Joyce as he is, of course, memorialized in what is arguably his greatest work. However, if the reader takes Gabriel's advice to not brood over such sad memories, he or she will see that while Ireland may have lost one guiding patriarch, the country did not lose Joyce. He may have removed himself in body, but his mind remained inextricably linked to his people.

Joyce's collection of stories represents the apotheosis of grace, and Grace according to John Milton in "Paradise Regain'd" is "but to guide Nations in the way of truth" (Milton 473). Joyce, with *Dubliners*, liberates the brutish bodies of the Dublin world. He lifts the veil of ignorance with his literary looking-glass, and exposes a potential nation of munificent minds unrestrained and worthy of a life much better than the lot they tolerate under British rule. To echo the words of Gabriel in the concluding chapter of "The Dead," Joyce's fiction is an indication the time has come for Ireland to set out on its journey towards a new destiny.

Finally, the significance of Gabriel's recognition that it is time to set out on his journey west should not be underestimated. Indeed, this final image has been much debated, as I suggested above. Traditionally, the west symbolizes death, but if we consider the dualistic

nature of *Dubliners*, with a gnomonic counterpart demonstrating an equal amount of Joyce's compassion, the west represents not death, but potential life, or rebirth even, from a nation of "ludicrous figure[s], ... well-meaning sentimentalist[s], ... pitiable fatuous fellow[s]," to a nation of people enlightened and, as a result, set free to construct their own truths and determine their own paths. In terms of what is reflected in Joyce's looking-glass, when one considers Joyce's liberating language and looks beyond that which is presented as truth, *Dubliners* reverses the brutish Irish image as a mirror reverses and presents the opposite of what is expected. That is to say, rather than functioning as a condemnation of everything Irish as the writer's early publishers suggested, *Dubliners* serves as a fictional canvas upon which Joyce projects his dream of an Ireland that can transcend the tedium-inducing confines of its past.

WORKS CITED

- Bond, Steven. "Joyce, Beckett & the Homelette in the Poêle." *Otherness: Essays and Studies* 1.1 (2010): 1-23. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
- "gnomon, n." *OED Online*. Oxford UP, March 2015. Web. 12 April 2015.
- Brooks, Peter. "Freud's Masterplot." *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Harvard UP, 1992. Print.
- Descartes, Rene. "Meditations on First Philosophy: In which the Existence of God and the Distinction in Man of Soul and Body are Demonstrated." *The European Philosophers From Descartes to Nietzsche*. Ed. Monroe C. Beardsley. New York: The Modern Library, 2002. Print. 25-96.
- Fairhill, James. *James Joyce and the Question of History*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.
- . *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellman. New York: Viking, 1975. Print.
- Maddox, Brenda. Introduction. *Dubliners*. By Joyce. New York: Bantam Dell, 2015. xii-xxiii. Print.
- Rice, Thomas Jackson. "Paradigm Lost: 'Grace' and the Arrangement of *Dubliners*." *Studies in Short Fiction* 32.3 (1995): 405-21. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 1 May 2015.
- Sicker, Philip. "Shades of Descartes: An Approach to Stephen's Dream in *Ulysses*." *James Joyce Quarterly*, 22.1 (Fall 1984): 7-24. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
- Wachtel, Albert. "*Dubliners*." *Masterplots, Fourth Edition* (2010): 1-3. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 3 Dec. 2014.

Weir, David. "Gnomon Is an Island: Euclid and Bruno in Joyce's Narrative Practice." *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 28.2 (Winter 1991): 343-60: *JSTOR*. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.