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HARGRAVE, ELIZABETH GEORGE. Dubliners in Winter: A  
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James Joyce called Dubliners "a chapter of moral history." This study will show how Joyce's moral intention can be illustrated through Northrop Frye's Mythoi theory. The themes of the book correspond to the themes of the Winter Mythos. The motifs of Winter, specifically, degeneration, perversion and death, will be explored in Chapter One. Joyce uses irony and satire in Dubliners to expose the bleak reality that pervades the lives of the people in Dublin. Examples of irony and satire, the proper generic forms for the Winter Mythos, will be examined in Chapter Two. Chapter Three will discuss the significance of binding Dubliners to the Winter Mythos, how associating the spiritual condition of the people with the season of Winter dramatizes their moral bankruptcy. Joyce deliberately reveals a barren, wintry scene in order to jar his fellow countrymen into self-awareness. He felt that the first step in the "spiritual liberation" of the Irish people was their own recognition of the morally impoverished state of their existence as revealed in Dubliners.

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This thesis has been approved by the following  
Committee: DUBLINERS IN WINTER: A STUDY OF JOYCE'S  
University of North "CHAPTER OF MORAL HISTORY"

Thesis Adviser by Robert W. K.  
Elizabeth G. Hargrave

Grad. Examination Committee Francis A. Laine  
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Approved by

Robert W. K. Sr.  
Thesis Adviser

This thesis has been approved by the following  
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Adviser

Robert Watkins

Oral Examination  
Committee Members

Francis A. Laine

Donald G. Darrell

April 7, 1970  
Date of Examination

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the heart of trouble I can get to the heart of all the world.  
 In the particular it contains the universe."<sup>1</sup> The author  
 stated his purpose in writing *Madame*: "My intention was  
 to write a chapter of the moral history of my country."<sup>2</sup>  
 Joyce did not say "the moral history" but "a chapter of the  
 moral history." The inclusion of "a chapter" indicates that  
 he planned to present only one phase of the whole.

Let us notice that the complete moral history may be

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert, I (New York, 1957), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> William Powell Stone, *James Joyce and the French* (Berkeley, Calif., 1933), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Killeen, II (New York, 1961), p. 134.

## INTRODUCTION

James Joyce called his collection of stories entitled Dubliners a "nicely polished looking glass."<sup>1</sup> A mirror, unlike a painted picture, renders a true image where flaws as well as beauty are reflected. The picture in the mirror that Joyce holds up for the world to see is the city of Dublin and its inhabitants.

Although the self-exiled artist left Dublin at the age of twenty-two, he recreated the city in all his prose. Joyce said, "I always write about Dublin because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the world. In the particular is contained the universe."<sup>2</sup> The author stated his purpose in writing Dubliners: "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country."<sup>3</sup> Joyce did not say "the moral history" but "a chapter of the moral history." The inclusion of "a chapter" indicates that he planned to present only one phase of the whole.

Let us assume that the complete moral history may be

<sup>1</sup>Letters of James Joyce, ed. Stuart Gilbert, I (New York, 1966), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>William Powell Jones, James Joyce and the Common Reader (Norman, Okla., 1955), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Letters of James Joyce, ed. Richard Ellmann, II (New York, 1966), p. 134.

pictured as a circle, a complete cycle. His later writings prove that the cycle was an important figure to Joyce. The hero of Ulysses, for instance, is introduced as he awakes in the morning and abandoned as he returns to sleep. The end of Finnegans Wake also brings the reader back to the beginning.

The particular "chapter" that James Joyce presents in Dubliners concerns the city Joyce knew as a boy and a young man. We might ask the question: Where in the complete moral history of his country, or specifically where in the cycle, does Joyce place the Dublin of his youth?

One way to pinpoint the position is to imagine the complete cycle patterned after the seasons of the year. The circular pattern of nature is a basic image that has been used by mythology and literature to express many universal truths. This cycle has been adapted by both primitive cultures and great literary writers to mirror the complete but changing phenomenon of life from birth to death.

Northrop Frye, in his monumental study, Anatomy of Criticism, uses the seasonal cycle as the basis for his unique theory. His generic plot or mythos theory isolates four modes of literature which correspond to the four seasons of the year. The Mythos of Spring has comedy for its representative genre and the movement is upward from threatening complications to a happy ending. The Mythos of Summer, with the romance as its genre, can be visualized

as being at the top of the cycle. This seasonal mode depicts the ideal state, the most glorified condition, the height of innocence. In the next phase, the Mythos of Autumn, with its corresponding genre, tragedy, the movement is downward. The characters are emancipated from dream; the fall is from innocence toward realism. Fortune is reversed through error, (often termed the "tragic flaw"), and there is a further fall to catastrophe. Finally, the lowest position in the cycle is reached, the Winter Mythos, in which unidealized existence is represented by the generic forms of irony and satire.<sup>1</sup>

This study will examine Dubliners from the viewpoint of Northrop Frye's theory of mythological seasonal modes. I propose to show that the chapter of Ireland's moral history, as mirrored by James Joyce in Dubliners, belongs in the Winter Mythos, the phase of dissolution and darkness.

My study includes three divisions. The first chapter is an examination of theme, showing that the primary motifs in Dubliners correspond to those of the Winter Mythos. The second chapter is a study of the stories as irony and satire, the proper generic forms cited for this Mythos. Finally, I explore the import of linking Dubliners to the

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed explanation see third essay, "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism. This was originally published by Princeton University Press in 1957. All quotes from this work in my text are from the 1969 Atheneum edition.

Winter Mythos, for I believe it illuminates Joyce's moral intention. Joyce deliberately showed the Irish people a wintry scene in his "nicely polished looking-glass." There is moral significance in his conclusion, "snow was general all over Ireland ...snow [was] falling faintly through the universe ...."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>From the concluding paragraph of "The Dead." All citations from Dubliners in my text are from the 1967 Viking Compass edition. I will indicate by page number in the text.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEME

The Mythos of Winter, according to Northrop Frye, is composed of "mythical patterns of experience" rendering a scene of "unidealized existence."<sup>1</sup> Joyce said, concerning Dubliners, "I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard."<sup>2</sup> The picture reflected in Joyce's looking-glass presents the world of experience, with no sordid bit or ugly fact concealed.

Winter exposes nature in her most unglamorous state. The virile green foliage of the summer season has passed through the gorgeous autumn display of color. But the leaves disappear and the naked tree trunks remain, visibly stripped of all signs of life. Literature representative of the Mythos of Winter contains basic themes which reflect a similar condition. The heroic age has passed and idealism no longer reigns. The lives of the characters, like the seemingly dead trees, are exposed in a naked state of apparent death.

The disappearance of the hero is a major theme of the Winter Mythos. According to Frye, the world of the seasonal mode is often presented as "the non-heroic residue of tragedy,

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup>Letters of James Joyce, II, ed. Richard Ellmann, p. 134.

centering on a theme of puzzled defeat."<sup>1</sup> This dark, undermost position of the cycle is often presented by ironic contrast; the harsh reality of the existing situation is compared to the glory of the past.

The Summer Mythos, the world of romance, pictures the ideal. Extreme, opposite conditions appear in the Winter Mythos. Literature of this seasonal mode is concerned with the totality of man's behavior, and often there is a reversal of accepted social standards.<sup>2</sup> "The lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitions, terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement ...of society"<sup>3</sup> are exposed.

Finally, literature that represents the Winter Mythos presents "human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage."<sup>4</sup> Characters who are unable to act will feel trapped and in this state assume a quality of living-death. This Mythos presents a wintry world of dissolution, darkness, and death.

A look at the major themes that appear in Dubliners will show how this collection of narratives corresponds to the conditions of the Mythos of Winter. Each story in Dubliners presents a realistic sketch of some aspect of Dublin life. The stories move from childhood, through adolescence, to

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

maturity and public life. Strong unity is achieved by the presence of basic motifs that continuously run through the book. Each story is merely a variation on the major themes.

Several words, related in meaning, would serve to identify the central ideas in Dubliners. I think that the concept of degeneration, with its consequences, perversion and death, clearly demonstrates Dubliners' position in the Mythos of Winter. Degeneration encompasses the ideas of corruption and paralysis which are often cited as the major themes of the book. Another related motif is frustration, particularly as exemplified in the unfulfilled dream of escape.

Degeneration correlates well with the non-heroic and non-idealistic characteristics of the stories in Dubliners. It not only implies a state of corruption, but indicates that there has been a fall from a better condition. Also, degeneration is evident in nature's seasonal cycle. Vegetation grows, bears fruit and then decays. Winter is the decadent season when all signs of life disappear.

In Dubliners, Joyce draws a subtle but piercing picture of degeneration in his country. Critical attention has been focused on the fourth and final section of the book.<sup>1</sup> These stories expose corruption in Dublin's social structures, politics, religion and culture. The other stories expose the degenerate conditions that exist in personal relationships, and Joyce displays a keen awareness of these problems so

<sup>1</sup>"Ivy Day in the Committee Room," "Grace" and "The Dead" are most often explicated and alluded to.

often neglected by critics who concentrate on the artistry of the final stories.

Joyce presents the degenerate condition of human relationships from several angles. One of the most pathetic examples is rendered in the parent-child relationship. The first three stories, which concentrate on the child's world, give no indication of a normal, healthy home environment. In "The Sisters" and "Araby" the sensitive boy narrator is living with an aunt and uncle, inferring that the child's parents are dead. The adventurer of "An Encounter" never mentions his parents. All three stories have been interpreted from the thematic viewpoint of the child seeking a suitable father figure.<sup>1</sup> In each situation there is no real parent present to give the love and security a child needs.

The young narrator of "The Sisters" senses a lack of understanding in his environment and responds with antagonism: "I knew that I was under observation so I continued eating as if the news had not interested me." (10), "I felt that his little beady black eyes were examining me but I would not satisfy him by looking up from my plate." (10), and "I crammed my mouth with stirabout for fear I might give utterance to my anger" (11). In "Araby" the uncle is so disinterested in his nephew's anticipated venture that he completely forgets it. His uncle's lack of concern frustrates

<sup>1</sup>See "First Flight to Ithaca" by Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck in James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. Seon Givens (New York, 1963), pp. 54-60. This article first appeared in Accent, Winter, 1944.

the youth and causes him to be late. In addition, the boy has to endure the humiliation of repeatedly asking for money to go. The young boy in "An Encounter" significantly ponders the idea that "real adventures ...do not happen to people who remain at home; they must be sought abroad" (21). However, instead of finding a suitable parent replacement he meets only a sinister old pervert.

The next section of the book, the stories dealing with adolescence, presents a slightly different angle on the degenerate parent-child relationship. In three of the four stories, the natural parents of the young people are shown to play an important role in their children's development.

Jimmy, the protagonist in "After the Race," is pictured as an aspiring playboy, devoid of responsibility, who cares only for the gaiety and excitement offered by his international racing friends. Jimmy's father is a self-made man, and Jimmy serves his father's wishes by becoming an example of "conspicuous consumption."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Doyle is "covertly proud of the excess" (43). In "A Boarding House," Mrs. Mooney poses as a concerned mother who only wants the "right thing" done for her daughter's happiness. However, it is obvious that the romance between Polly and her young man has been precisely managed by Mrs. Mooney. In both of these stories Joyce carefully shows how the subtle encouragement of the

<sup>1</sup>Zack Bowen, "After the Race," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart (New York, 1969), p. 57.

parent has molded the action of the young persons. The degeneration in the parent-child relationship is more frightening here than in the previous section. Neither presents evidence of a healthy home environment, but malicious manipulation posing as concern emerges as the more vicious.

An extreme example of the maneuvering parent is presented in a later story in Dubliners. In the character of Mrs. Kearney ("A Mother") the veneer of subtlety is dropped and her emotional rage reveals her destructive powers. Mrs. Kearney's concern for her social position and having her own way overrides any consideration for her daughter's feelings.

Joyce shows in the stories "Eveline," "A Little Cloud," and "Counterparts" that the parent-child relationship has degenerated to a state of perversion. Eveline's father complicates her responsibilities of household management by engaging in drunken bouts and withholding money from his daughter. At nineteen, the girl "felt herself in danger of her father's violence" (38). "A Little Cloud" and "Counterparts" expose a father venting his own frustrations against his child. Little Chandler, upset by an experience which has made him feel inferior, shouts at his baby. This father at least feels some remorse when he sees the frightened reaction of his infant. In "Counterparts," the unjust action of Mr. Farrington is much more severe. The father, returning home full of liquor and frustration, fails to recognize his child at first. Furthermore, he inflicts physical blows on his small boy, who had waited up to fix the father's dinner.

A Halloween party forms the background for the story "Clay" and this is the only scene in Dubliners that approaches a happy family atmosphere. The joy of the festivities is punctured, however, by the introduction of grim reality on which the irony of Maria's fate is realized. Maria, though possessing the qualities of motherhood, has never married. Her fateful choosing of the clay symbolically points to the spiritual death that is overtaking the family in Dublin. The theme of sterility subtly overshadows the levity.

Joyce has taken great pains to present the victims of the disease, moral paralysis, that has gripped his country. He has clearly shown that the germs of the disease were transmitted from parent to child. The degenerate condition of the parent-child relationship drawn in Dubliners leaves no doubt that the younger generation, lacking moral guidance, will not be able to grow and mature in a healthy environment and will face a future of spiritual death.

Another aspect of the degenerate quality of life in Dublin is presented in the male-female or husband-wife relationship. True to the non-heroic and non-idealistic nature of the deterioration and perversion themes, there is not one example of successful romantic love in these stories. The dream of romance is present but never brought to fulfillment.

The youth of "Araby" undertakes a romantic quest and seeks a love token for his lady, but he finds only disillusionment and failure. Eveline contemplates a life of romance and adventure with Frank but becomes paralyzed with fear at the

moment of departure. The love adventures of the questing knights in "Two Gallants" are reduced to the world of prostitution and vicarious fulfillment. These are Joyce's pictures of youth seeking romance in Dublin.

"The Boarding House," located at almost the mid-way point in Dubliners, marks the end of the section on adolescence, and the narrative focuses on the adventures of Polly and Mr. Doran. Joyce, however, gives a piercing glimpse into the status of an older married couple. At the beginning of the story the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Mooney is discarded as a failure, possibly foreshadowing the fate of Polly and Mr. Doran. The relationship of the older couple was so bad that the two had separated. A seemingly successful conclusion to Polly's romance is reached at the end of the story when her marriage plans are set. "This is youth: youthful adventure. A hero. A maiden. This is love and sex. This is marriage in Dublin."<sup>1</sup> But the groom "longed to ascend through the roof and fly away to another country" (67-68), because "Once you are married you are done for" (66). Instead of an exciting adventure, marriage is pictured as a trap.

The next story, "A Little Cloud," which begins the section on maturity, paints a similar picture of marriage. The gay free bachelor life led by Ignatious Gallaher is juxtaposed to the settled married existence of Little Chandler. The resentment Little Chandler feels toward his marriage grows

<sup>1</sup>Nathan Halper, "The Boarding House," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 83.

as he listens to the bold adventures related by Gallaher. When he returns home, Little Chandler looks at the eyes of his wife in a photograph and finds them cold and passionless. "Why had he married the eyes in the photograph ... Could he not escape from his little house" (83)?

Mr. Doran and Little Chandler dream of escaping, but they are pictured early in marriage. The story, "A Mother," reveals the condition of a man after several years of married life. Mr. Kearney could well reflect the fate of a man who can be manipulated by his mother-in-law or quails in front of his wife. To silence any gossip that she was becoming an old maid, Mrs. Kearney had settled for a man beneath her expectations. She was careful, however, to choose one upon whom she could exercise all her dominating powers. Mrs. Kearney trained her husband to the point where he would respond instantly to her lifted eyebrow. Mr. Kearney is pitifully reduced to the position of a well disciplined pet which follows commands without the slightest thought of disobedience.

Joyce draws two meaningful sketches of middle age celibacy in the characters of Maria in "Clay" and Mr. Duffy in "A Painful Case." The implication is that the male-female relationship has deteriorated to the state of sterility. Absence of warmth and vitality between the sexes will eventually result in separation and loneliness. Reproduction will cease and the species will die. This consequence is reflected in the natural seasonal vegetation cycle. With the removal of the sun's light and warmth, the mature foliage dies and all trace of life

disappears.

Brewster Ghiselin interprets Dubliners as the "action of the human spirit struggling for survival under peculiar conditions of deprivation."<sup>1</sup> He sees "the drift of the soul toward death" beginning with the story, "Clay."<sup>2</sup> The fateful condition of Maria's life, reflected in her failure to choose the ring and accentuated by the error in her song, emphasizes the decline of any productive relationship between the sexes. Ghiselin also interprets the final action of Mr. Duffy as a "symbolic movement of the soul toward death."<sup>3</sup> Attracted to Mrs. Sinico in the beginning by an intellectual intimacy, Mr. Duffy rejects any physical communication with her and kills any chance for the friendship to grow. This denial of the very basic elements which lead to a productive affiliation between a man and a woman can have no other result than sterility and death. Mr. Duffy's choice is deliberate and therefore harsher than Maria's.

"The Dead," the concluding story in Dubliners, reveals an ambiguous relationship in the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. William Powell Jones states that "the longing of Gabriel for his wife is a reflection of mature married love, a theme untouched in the earlier stories."<sup>4</sup> Jones would have

<sup>1</sup>"The Unity of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, ed. Peter K. Garrett (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1968), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>4</sup>James Joyce and the Common Reader, p. 17.

been more correct to say that this is the first place in Dubliners where mature married love has been the focal point of the story. Frank O'Conner notes that "several times the warmth and gaiety gives rise to the idea of love and marriage but each time it is knocked dead by phrase or incident."<sup>1</sup> The final blow comes when Gretta tells Gabriel the story of her love for a dead boy. At this point Gabriel is forced for the first time to look at reality. The "sinful and malificent being" is finally exposed. Many aspects of death, including the death of his old relationship with Gretta, are forced into Gabriel's ken.

Degenerate conditions in personal relationships are not restricted to families in Dubliners. A lack of depth and understanding and an absence of any real feeling characterize the social relationships in the stories.

Joyce reveals the shallowness that existed between people through his deft handling of conversation. Trite phrases dominate personal communication and social exchange. A good example is found in "The Sisters" when the boy and his aunt visit the home of the dead priest. Consolation in grief is offered and answered in clichés: "It must be a great comfort for you to know that you did all you could for him" (15), and "Ah, there's no friends like the old friends" (16). The superficial talk that the young boy in "Araby" overhears at the end of his quest makes him aware of the reality and empti-

<sup>1</sup>"Work in Progress," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 25.

ness of his venture. Ignatious Gallaher reveals his patronizing attitude through the use of stock phrases: "Well ...it's a relaxation to come over here, you know. And, after all, it's the old country, as they say, isn't it? You can't help having a certain feeling for it. That's human nature ..." (78).

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room" is composed almost entirely of dialogue. The magnificent skill with which the author handles the various conversations in this story exposes a very clear and illuminating picture of the political institution in Joyce's Dublin. "The nation sick with longing for the return of its lost leader" has been cited by Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck as an appropriate theme for this story.<sup>1</sup> Each seemingly insignificant word adds color to Joyce's pathetic picture of Irish politics.

This story particularly seems to fit into Northrop Frye's descriptive requirement for literature representing the Mythos of Winter, "The non-heroic residue of tragedy, centering on a theme of puzzled defeat."<sup>2</sup> The residue of life, "It was an old man's face," the residue of fire, "the cinders," and the residue of day, "darkness and shadows" are all mentioned in the first paragraph (118). Throughout the story nostalgic thoughts are bantered around in cliché conversation. The ineffectiveness of the modern political system is heightened by contrast with the vitality of Parnell's day. "Musha, God

<sup>1</sup>"First Flight to Ithaca," James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Frye, p. 224.

be with them times! said the old man. There was some life in it then" (122).

Stephen Dedalus gave his reasons for leaving Ireland in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets."<sup>1</sup> Religion, the traditional guardian of a man's soul, is exposed as a prime villain in Dubliners. Religion is pictured as a tyrant playing a principle role in the degenerate condition of Dublin's society.

"The Sisters" is a story often analyzed symbolically rather than naturalistically. John William Corrington sees the priest as an image for the Catholic Church, an institution which in Joyce's opinion had failed the Irish people.<sup>2</sup> In the story the priest is associated with paralysis and simony (9). He is depicted as a failure, "The duties of the priesthood was too much for him" (17). He was unable to dip snuff without spilling it as he was unable to carry the chalice without dropping it. The chalice, a traditional symbol associated with communion, ironically "contained nothing" (17), implying that the church had no spiritual nourishment to offer the people.

<sup>1</sup>The Viking Press Edition, p. 203. All references from this book are from this edition.

<sup>2</sup>"The Sisters," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 21.

The public attitude toward religion is exposed in the story, "Grace." For Mrs. Kernan, "Religion ...was a habit" (157). For Mr. Kernan and his friends, it was like a game, "You might join in and we'd have a four-handed reel" (163), or a meeting of the club, "He's a man of the world like ourselves" (164). For Father Purdon, Heaven was a well run business where all the accounts tallied.

The religion of a culture should embody the concepts of idealistic virtue for which a man strives. Religion in Ireland, according to Joyce, had degenerated to the state of empty, broken chalices and balanced bank books. Idealism had vanished, the mundane reigned. Literature of the Winter Mythos is characterized by Northrop Frye as exposing the stereotyped beliefs and crank dogmas that hold back a society.<sup>1</sup>

The arts, as an expression of Dublin's culture, also appear to be in a fallen condition. The beauty of music is reduced to a banal argument over four shillings in the story, "A Mother." The concert organizers are slovenly and ineffective. The first two concerts were admitted failures, and the final concert is presented with typically Joycean subtlety. Everything was described as "very successful" except for Madame Glynn's performance. However, it is precisely in the description of this event that interest is centered. "The poor lady sang Killarney in a bodiless

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 233.

gasping voice," and "She looked as if she had been resurrected from an old stage-wardrobe" (147). This description shrewdly imparts a lifeless quality to Dublin's arts.

"The Dead" also offers some comments on Dublin's cultural life. According to Florence L. Walzl, "The party, the symbol of Irish society in the story, is a study in a devitalized culture."<sup>1</sup> When Mary Jane plays the piano, no one listens. She is compared to a priestess, suggesting the meaningless ritualistic quality of the music. The pictures on the walls of the room depict stock scenes. Another performance, Aunt Julia's song, prompts a heated quarrel. Dinner conversation is centered on the opera. As in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," days of the past are nostalgically remembered. "Those were the days ...when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin" (199). The evocation of the radiant glory now disappeared again suggests the departure of the heroic and idealistic. As the winter scene outside the window brings to mind the dead vegetation, the scene inside the house suggests a barren culture.

Joyce's picture of degeneration in social institutions and personal relationships is underscored by the theme of death. "That the dead do not stay buried is, in fact, a theme of Joyce from the beginning to the end of his work."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Patterns of Paralysis in Joyce's Dubliners: A Study of the Original Framework," College English, XXII, 4 (January, 1961), 228.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York, 1959) p. 253.

Death is the natural consequence of degeneration and Dubliners is filled with dead characters as well as imagery suggesting death.

The opening lines of the book evoke the scene of death, "There was no hope this time," and the conclusion of the book centers on a dead figure, Michael Furey. Inside this frame, in many of the intervening stories, death plays an important role. Eveline's dead mother is still able to exert power over her daughter. In "A Painful Case" Mrs. Sinico's tragic physical death is contrasted to Mr. Duffy's spiritual death. The ghost of Parnell dominates the stale scene in the committee room, and ghosts hover over the party in "The Dead."

The light of the sun and the summer season have been traditionally associated with vitality. Likewise, darkness and the winter season denote a loss of life in the cyclical interpretation. The theme of degeneration in Dubliners is re-enforced by allusions to the time of day and time of year. Florence L. Walzl points out in her essay, "Patterns of Paralysis in Joyce's Dubliners," that "since Joyce views paralysis as a kind of living death, or rather succession of deaths, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, details of darkness, cold, night, winter and blindness image this process. Thirteen of the present fifteen stories take place at the end of the day, at twilight, or actually at night. Most are set in landscapes of frigid cold. References to the end of day

and the end of the year are recurrent."<sup>1</sup>

The most vivid reference to the weather is in the last story of the collection. The wintry scene surrounding "The Dead" is significantly impressed on the reader's mind. The snow is introduced with Gabriel Conroy, "A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes" (177). Richard Ellmann feels that the snow is especially connected with Gabriel and his decline. "Viewed from inside at the party, it is desirable, unattainable, just as at his first knowledge of Michael Furey, Gabriel envies him. At the end as the party-goers walk to the cab the snow is slushy in patches and then seen from the hotel room, it belongs to all men, it is general, mutual."<sup>2</sup>

If this story is interpreted as the breakdown of Gabriel's egotism, as David Daiches suggests, the vivid image of the snow at the end can be associated with the dissolution. Bernard Benstock states that "The motif of death is solidly established in the coda story of Dubliners."<sup>3</sup> Joyce accomplishes this impact by extending the association of the wintry scene and the snow from the particular to the universal. The death of Gabriel's ego becomes an image for the whole country. "Snow

<sup>1</sup>Walzl, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup>Ellmann, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>"The Dead," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 153.

was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves" (223).

The sterile quality of the people's lives is also communicated in Joyce's description of the surroundings, the gaunt buildings, the brown houses and the drab streets. This scene, from "A Little Cloud," particularly imparts the dreariness of Dublin.

The golden sunset was waning and the air had grown sharp. A horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the threshold. (71)

The following passage from "Araby" illustrates how Joyce not only employs references to the season and the evening but engages all the senses to accentuate the gloomy atmosphere.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gantlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. (30)

Why should one continue to live in such a dingy environment? Why not escape from these oppressive conditions? Many of the characters in Dubliners do dream of escape, but the pathos is deepened by the fact that each attempt is unsuccessful. Not one is able to fly from the nets like Stephen

Dedalus. W. M. Schette comments on this theme. "In Dubliners one pattern comes to the fore time after time: the protagonist of a story ...is placed in a position which reveals the direction he must take if he is to live a full and creative life; but always he is defeated by the combined forces of his environment."<sup>1</sup>

The people remain trapped. Brewster Ghiselin notes that "Certain images in Dubliners, of closed or circumscribed areas, such as coffin, confession box, rooms, buildings, the city and its suburbs, become symbolic when they are presented in any way suggesting enclosure, as they frequently are."<sup>2</sup> The protagonist in each story is like Little Chandler, "A prisoner for life" (84). This captive state conforms to Northrop Frye's condition for literature of the Winter Mythos, "human life presented in terms of largely unrelieved bondage."<sup>3</sup>

The narratives in Dubliners paint a bleak picture. The lives of the characters have lost all traces of heroism and idealism. Degeneration is prevalent in personal relationships and social institutions. Allusions to past glory stress the "residue of tragedy" that remains. Old stereotyped beliefs are exposed as the restricting tyrant of society. The captive, immobile quality of the people's lives places them

<sup>1</sup>Joyce and Shakespeare (New Haven, 1957), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>"The Unity of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>Frye, p. 238.

in a state of living-death. The recurring themes of degeneration and perversion, surrounded by imagery of darkness, coldness and death, qualify the stories as literature representing the Mythos of Winter.

A. Walton Litz, discussing the significance of the harp in "Two Gallants," states, "The melody played on the harp is that of Thomas Moore's 'The Song of Fionnuala', and the unsung words are a gloss on Joyce's story."<sup>1</sup> I think these words are a gloss on the entire collection of stories.

Silent, O Moyle! be the roar of thy water,  
 Break not, ye breezes, your chain of repose,  
 While, murmuring mournfully, Lir's lonely daughter  
 Tells to the night-star her tale of woes.  
 When shall the swan, her death-note singing,  
 Sleep with wings in darkness furled?  
 When will heaven, its sweet bell ringing,  
 Call my spirit from this stormy world?

Sadly, O Moyle, to thy winter-wave weeping,  
 Fate bids me languish long ages away;  
 Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping,  
 Still doth the pure light its dawning delay.  
 When will that day-star, mildly springing,  
 Warm our isle with peace and love?  
 When will heaven, its sweet bell ringing,  
 Call my spirit to the fields above?<sup>2</sup>

Joyce's "chapter of moral history" like the words of this song, links Ireland to the season of Winter. The country, like nature's foliage, appears lifeless, awaiting the dawn of warmth and light.

<sup>1</sup>"Two Gallants", James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, pp. 67-68.

<sup>2</sup>See comment (Ibid. p. 68) for background of song.

## CHAPTER TWO: IRONY AND SATIRE

"Mythical patterns of experience" mirroring degeneration, perversion and death are found in the Winter Mythos. Literature of this seasonal fictional mode "attempts to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existence."<sup>1</sup> Irony and satire, according to Northrop Frye, are the proper generic forms for this task. The ironic and satiric elements in Dubliners will be explored in this chapter.

To eliminate the difficulty of dealing with two words the distinction between irony and satire must be briefly drawn. Irony is "A device by which a writer expresses a meaning contradictory to the stated or ostensible one."<sup>2</sup> The quality that makes irony so effective is "the impression it gives of great restraint." There is an "unemotional detachment" on the part of the writer. "In contemporary criticism, irony is used to describe a poet's 'recognition of incongruities' and his controlled acceptance of them."<sup>3</sup>

The relationship of irony and satire is a close one, the difference being primarily a matter of degree. Satire is a form of irony pushed to an extreme. Northrop Frye

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup>Definition from A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms, comp. Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz.

<sup>3</sup>Definition from A Handbook to Literature, Thrall, Hibbard & Holman, 1960 Odyssey Press Edition.

defines it as "militant irony," and adds, "Irony is consistent both with realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author. Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience."<sup>1</sup>

The stories in Dubliners are primarily ironic rather than satiric because they are realistic glimpses of life. As Marvin Malaganer and Richard Kain point out, Joyce demanded that his pictures, whether of families, priests, or middle class politicians, be accurate and immediately recognizable.<sup>2</sup> Joyce fulfills another stipulation of irony because he refrains from moralizing. Irene Hendry, discussing Dubliners, states that the stories remain objective "because the author offers no overt interpretation of his material but merely arranges it so that its meaning is 'revealed'."<sup>3</sup>

Joyce communicates his belief in artistic objectivity through Stephen Dedalus' famous statement, "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."<sup>4</sup> Joyce also said that

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Joyce: The Man, the Work, the Reputation (New York, 1956), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>"Joyce's Epiphanies," in James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism, p. 31. Originally publ. Sewanee Review, IIV (July, 1946).

<sup>4</sup>A Portrait of the Artist, p. 215.

"Mastery of art had been achieved in irony."<sup>1</sup> In Dubliners Joyce begins his own "mastery of art," his own ironic exposure of life's ambiguities.

The relationship of irony and satire may be further drawn according to purpose. Both devices attack society. Satire, because it reaches into the realm of the absurd, is tempered by the comic aspect. Irony, more subtle on the surface, is often the sharper tool, precisely because it remains true to fact. Thrall, Hibbard and Holman point out that many twentieth-century writers maintain "the satiric spirit in the face of the gravity of naturalism and the earnestness of symbolism." Joyce is not cited among the examples of this technique, but I believe this is what he achieves in Dubliners. With unemotional aloofness, Joyce ironically exposes the absurdities of modern life in Dublin. His purpose is that of the true satirist who "conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising ...attempts ...to inspire a remodeling."<sup>2</sup>

Northrop Frye enumerates three phases of satire and three parallel phases of irony in his description of the Winter Mythos.<sup>3</sup> The first phases of both irony and satire emphasize the theme of the disappearing hero. In satire,

<sup>1</sup>The Workshop of Daedalus, ed. Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain (Evanston, 1965), p. 66. See pp. 60-68 for early version of A Portrait of the Artist.

<sup>2</sup>See Satire in A Handbook to Literature.

<sup>3</sup>See Frye, pp. 226-239 for detailed explanation.

the figure of the eiron, a stock character of Greek comedy, is substituted for the hero. The Omphale archetype, the man bullied or dominated by women, is often used. Irony, however, makes no attempt to poke fun at the character. It views tragedy "from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes" and "supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe." According to Frye, "this is the phase of most sincere, explicit realism."

The second phase of satire attacks the stereotyped beliefs and dogmas that impede a society's free thought. Obviously, this phase has traditionally poked fun at politics and religion. In the parallel phase of irony, the pragmatic is pitted against the dogmatic. "The practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it."

Ordinary sense experiences are abandoned in satire of the third phase. The satirist will resort to fantasy. He may picture society as a parade of pygmies or a congregation of giants. Irony is too rooted in realism to present the ridiculous. But in this phase of irony, the human figures are "desdichado figures of misery or madness." Life is pictured in terms of "unrelieved human bondage." Frye observes that "sinister parental figures abound in this phase." (I thought this point particularly interesting after an examination of the parental figure in Dubliners.)

The ironical dimension in Dubliners is intended to

expose the absence of heroism, the banal doctrines of society, and the people's inertia. L. A. Murillo discusses the ironic temper in Dubliners as an introduction to his study of irony in Finnegans Wake. "Explicitly grounded in the 'impersonal manner' of an attitude that sees in Irish social convention and religion the cause of private frustrations and failure," Joyce applied "techniques that multiply and radiate the ironical significance of an inconclusive end or plot." Murillo's brief treatment of irony in Dubliners concentrates on this moment of focus in which "Joyce is striving toward an impersonal precision of statement and metaphorical reference that will fix or 'arrest' the naturalism into a symbolic illumination."<sup>1</sup>

My discussion is concerned with specific examples of irony that are operative within the narratives. The inconclusive end as the moment of focus and ironical exposure is achieved only because of the aggregate of implied meaning hidden in Joyce's carefully selected details. Examples of irony are found in all the stories in Dubliners, and as the protagonist moves from childhood to maturity the caustic quality is intensified.

Joyce uses the intuitive perception of children to expose his observations of life's incongruities in the first three stories in Dubliners. Religion is the prime target in "The Sisters." In the opening paragraph, the church is

<sup>1</sup>See The Cyclical Night (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 16 ff.

associated with paralysis and simony. Joyce's amazing talent of cramming a very natural, seemingly insignificant incident with meaning accomplishes this connection. The priest is afflicted with paralysis. The word paralysis, with its mysterious sound and half-comprehended meaning, fills the young narrator with awe. Although the boy is afraid, he longs "to look upon its deadly work" (8). Not until the final page of "The Dead" is the full ironical significance of this incident grasped, when all of Dubliners is revealed as an exposure of paralysis' deadly work.

"The Sisters" is important not only because of its initial position in Dubliners but also because early versions of the story are available.<sup>1</sup> In Joyce's process of revision we not only notice an increase in his artistry, but we see him deliberately inserting material for symbolic amplification. For example, Joyce adds material which associates the young boy with the role of the priesthood. The offering of the sherry and crackers and the boy's refusal of the crackers is considered to be a parody on the Communion service. Interpreting the event as parody and recognizing parody as one approach to ironic exposure, I believe Joyce is suggesting that the boy, armed with youthful innocence, intuitive knowledge, fear, and curiosity, and particularly a willingness to face reality, possesses more of the proper qualities for a true spiritual leader than

<sup>1</sup>See Marvin Magalaner, Time of Apprenticeship: The Fiction of Young James Joyce (London, 1959), pp. 72-87.

the real priest.

This interpretation is strengthened by another incident of ironic exposure in the story. During dinner Old Cotter comments that he considers the boy's friendship with the old priest to be "bad." Pressed for a reason, Old Cotter is unable to give an honest answer, he merely hints at perversion. "It's bad for children ...because their minds are so impressionable. When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect ..." (11). Old Cotter in his blindness does not realize that the child has already been impressed, unfavorably impressed, by Old Cotter himself. Ironically, it is because the adults in the home had failed him that the boy turned to the priest. The child is wiser than the adult.

The boy adventurer of "An Encounter" is similarly endowed with keen perception. Joyce's critical revelation is achieved in this story through subtle detail as well as situation. Marvin Magalaner recognizes the irony in the boys' choice of the Pigeon House for their retreat. The Pigeon House symbolically suggests the House of the Dove, the home of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> "Very sensibly, [Mahony asked] what would Father Butler be doing at the Pigeon House" (21)? The subtle hint is that no Dublin priest would concern himself with the truly important matters of religion. The adventure ends in failure as the boys never reach their destination. They succeed only in meeting an old sinister

<sup>1</sup>Magalaner and Kain, The Man, The Work, The Reputation, p. 76.

pervert. Thus, within the framework of a simple story of boys playing hooky, Joyce implies that people in Dublin have no real spiritual leaders, that the Temple of the Holy Ghost is unattainable.

There is an additional touch of irony at the end of the story. The goal of the adventure was not reached, but the "encounter" with the perverted man has had a positive effect. The brush with grim reality, the exposure to sordid truth, has brought the boys into a closer personal relationship. The narrator particularly gained insight, "and I was penitent for in my heart I had always despised him a little" (28).

In the stories dealing with childhood, the real world of adult life is ironically exposed through the sensibilities of a young boy. The irony is "romantic" in the sense that it is "built upon the contrast between the individual's desire or feelings and the sordid realities of the modern world."<sup>1</sup> "Araby" is only a place of darkness and dreariness. "I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service" (34). When the silence is broken it is only by a superficial exchange of chatter which the boy overhears. The harsh realities are exposed, but again there is a final twist of irony. Like the boy of "An Encounter," the youth of this story is jarred into self-realization. "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature

<sup>1</sup>Definition from S. L. Goldberg, "The Artistry of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 88.

driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (35).

The boys in these stories, like all children, had adventuresome spirits and idealistic dreams. The grim realities of life puncture their romantic ideals like the chill of winter winds interrupts the golden days of Indian summer. The dark themes of the Winter Mythos are more clearly exposed in the next section, which centers around adolescence. In the stories we begin to see the sinister parental figures developed, the complete deterioration of romance and the emergence of the Omphale archetype.

The irony of the story "Eveline" is focused in the line "Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window" (39). The literal reference to time indicates Eveline's proposed meeting with Frank, but her time as a free human spirit is the extended meaning. She cannot move to open the window of a new adventurous life. Eveline is afraid to go with Frank because "he would drown her" (41). She chooses to stay with her father who is not only irresponsible, but violent. Ironically, she cannot see that she is being trapped "like a helpless animal" (41) with a sinister parent as her keeper.

The subtle ironies operative in Jimmy Doyle's story begin with the title, "After the Race." The "race" literally refers to the cars "scudding in toward Dublin, running evenly like pellets in the groove of the Naas Road" (42). However, as William Powell Jones points out, "We feel the mad

race will go on forever as Jimmy will never assume responsibilities."<sup>1</sup>

Jimmy is pictured by Joyce as the typically irresponsible playboy. Psychological reasons for Jimmy's character are explicit within the story. Jimmy is still an adolescent, and the responsibility for Jimmy's image is clearly indicated by Joyce as the father's.<sup>2</sup> A yachting party was Jimmy's idea of seeing life" (47). The irony of Jimmy's life is cloaked in the simple setting of a card game. "Jimmy did not know exactly who was winning but he knew that he was losing. But it was his own fault for he frequently mistook his cards and the other men had to calculate his I. O. U.'s for him. They were devils of fellows but he wished they would stop: it was getting late" (48). Jimmy is losing at the game of life, and the ironic cry, "Daybreak, gentlemen!" (48) is sounded as he is submerged into the "dark stupor" (48).

"Two Gallants" is a cleverly drawn parody. The sarcastic tone of the title links two modern Dublin youths with the knights of romantic fiction. Corley, the knight, is the successful, experienced seeker of adventure. He expects admiration and is confident of victory. Lenehan, the squire, imitates his ideal, flatters, worships and serves him. His goal is bound up in Corley's.

Ideal live belongs to the summer season of the cycle.

<sup>1</sup>James Joyce and the Common Reader, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>See chap. 1, p. 5 of text.

During the winter, love is presented in terms of exploitation and prostitution. A. Walton Litz, in a penetrating essay on "Two Gallants," shows how every nuance of description and dialogue artistically adds to the ironic contrast. For example, "the information that Corley 'aspirated the first letter of his name after the manner of Florentines' is both a detail of characterization and a suggestion that the relationship between Corley and the slavey is an ironic inversion of the truly 'gallant' relationship between Dante and Beatrice."<sup>1</sup>

The gold coin which Corley receives and shows to Lenehan portrays the final pronouncement of Dublin's debased gallantry. It perfectly climaxes the events of the story. Besides indicating spiritual and economic degradation, the coin provides the necessary "happy" ending to the romance-parody. Both street-walkers achieved their goal; both youths were paid.

Joyce returns to a more subtle approach in "The Boarding House," as his careful choice of descriptive words and phrases carry the ironic implications. For example, Mrs. Mooney was spoken of as "The Madam" by all the resident young men" (62). When her plan succeeds she is "an outraged mother" (64). Polly, the enchanting seducer, is described as "A little perverse madonna" (62) possessing a quality of "wise innocence" with which she "divined" (64) her mother's intention.

<sup>1</sup>"Two Gallants," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 66.

Mr. Doran, who allows himself to be drawn into the trap set by Mrs. Mooney, offers the first indication of the Omphale archetype in Dubliners. The situation is pathetic rather than ridiculous because it remains in the realm of naturalism. Little Chandler of the next story, "A Little Cloud," is a more clearly drawn illustration of the Omphale archetype. He is afraid to take up for himself in front of his wife. Ironically, the only person with whom he is able to assert himself is a mere baby. All he accomplishes is hurting his own flesh and blood.

"A Little Cloud" ushers in the section that pictures the Dubliners in maturity. Maturity should be a time of wisdom and spiritual growth. The irony of the situation is that none of the characters in this section have even as much wisdom as the boy of "An Encounter" or the youth of "Araby." Rather than spiritual growth, Joyce shows spiritual decline. The Winter Mythos themes become more pronounced.

Joyce draws the character of Ignatius Gallaher with irony. A "man of the world" type, he shares his experiences with his old friends, but the scene of his tale borders on the comic. "In a calm historian's tone" (78) he delivers his secrets in the manner of a man giving an important report. The barroom is the scene and immorality is his topic! Ignatius Gallaher reveals through his bragging and patronizing ("What a relief to return to dear dirty Dublin" [75]), that he is really an insecure man who feels compelled to transfix his erudite image of himself upon those whom he knows to be

gullible.

Robert Scholes feels that the story "Counterparts," in both title and plan, offers a major clue to Dubliners.<sup>1</sup> The major themes are repeated with variations, and the ironic tone is intensified as the stories progress. For example, Mr. Farrington is a counterpart to Little Chandler, but Farrington's frustration and misery are more accentuated. Poor Mr. Farrington cannot even succeed at getting drunk. "He cursed his want of money and cursed all the rounds he had stood" (95). Like Little Chandler he vents his frustration on his own child, but Farrington resorts to physical rather than verbal blows.

The ironic exposure of the story "Clay" is focused in the character of Maria. Several oppositions are operative in Maria. She is associated with the Virgin Mary and a Halloween witch. She is described as "a veritable peacemaker" (99) who was always reconciling the quarreling women in the laundry where she worked. However, she was unable to reconcile the brothers, Joe and Alphy, whom she had loved and nursed as a mother. Finally, Maria commits a meaningful error by omitting a verse from the song she sings. It is precisely in the omitted words that the irony of Maria's fate is revealed, "I dreamt that suitors sought my hand."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Counterparts," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Omitted verse found in Hugh Kenner's essay, "Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 47.

Maria, who loves children, has never married. The realization that no "good" parents exist in Dubliners deepens the pathos of Maria's fate.

Mr. Duffy, of "A Painful Case," offers the male counterpart to Maria. The story was originally entitled "A Painful Incident."<sup>1</sup> It is easy to decipher the meaning Joyce adds by the change. The real painful case is not the "DEATH OF A LADY AT SYDNEY PARADE" (113) but Mr. Duffy. Emotional death is worse than physical death.

Marvin Magalaner points out the preciseness of Joyce's artistic sensibility in using naturalistic detail. The first paragraph gives a very realistic picture of Mr. Duffy's surroundings. Among other things we are told that "In the desk lay a manuscript translation of Hauptmann's Michael Kramer" (108). According to Magalaner, Joyce had read Hauptmann's play, which was published in 1900, and had been impressed with its skillful blend of naturalism and symbolism, something Joyce was trying to perfect in his own work. "The irony of Mr. Duffy's translating Hauptmann's play is that in doing so he is given first a picture of himself and of his barren life, and then he is shown the tragedy that must inevitably result from such a course of emotionless perfection. That he fails to heed Hauptmann's words and thus suffers almost the same pangs as Michael Kramer supplies

<sup>1</sup>Marvin Magalaner, Time of Apprenticeship, p. 87.

an added touch of irony."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Duffy wrote, "Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse" (112). Mr. Duffy's philosophy is a prescription for emotional death. Ironically, Mr. Duffy, writing as an authority, has given neither relationship a chance.

The last four stories in Dubliners comprise the section on public life. The previous stories have concentrated on ironic exposure of the paralyzed and degenerate individual. The final section reveals the sick and sterile social institutions in the community.

The magnificent artistry of Joyce's ironic indictment of Irish politics has been examined by many critics. "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" is a favorite of the Dubliners' collection. This story offers an excellent example of "the satiric spirit in the face of the gravity of naturalism and the earnestness of symbolism."<sup>2</sup> Robert Boyle, S. J., comments on the characters in this story: "If they achieve symbolic stature, it is because they are human beings completely and profoundly realized. If they tell more than their own personal story (as they certainly do--they tell the story of Ireland), it is because they bring their environment with them."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Marvin Magalaner, Time of Apprenticeship, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 23, this chap.

<sup>3</sup>"'Two Gallants' and 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 104.

The contrast between the glory of the past and the incompetence of the present provides the irony. The ghost of Parnell and the green twig of ivy, symbol of regeneration, radiate the idea of former vitality. The cold, dark atmosphere of the committee room, combined with the men's inability to carry through any action (even simple things like opening beer bottles and keeping a fire lit) reveal the pitiful state of Dublin's modern-day politics.

Joyce discloses the sly evilness of Henchy, the true villain, in a superb rendering of typically Irish banter. One of my favorite passages is the scene in which Mr. Henchy undertakes to defend the reputation of King Edward. "I admire the man personally. He's just an ordinary knockabout like you and me. He's fond of his glass of grog and he's a bit of a rake, perhaps, and he's a good sportsman. Damn it, can't we Irish play fair" (132)? It is not merely Henchy's craftiness, but the history of Parnell's downfall that adds to the irony of Henchy's rhetorical question.

"Ivy Day in the Committee Room" is "the story of the Hero reduced to farce,"<sup>1</sup> according to Frank O'Conner. "Mock-heroic at its poker-faced deadliest" is represented by the three "poks" of the beer bottles echoing the three volleys of the hero's grave and Joe Hynes' poetic tribute substituting for a Dead March.<sup>2</sup> This lament at the end of the story

<sup>1</sup>"Work in Progress" in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

is a masterpiece of artistic achievement. The poetry with its affected metaphors and sentimental clichés is obviously poor, but the emotion of the poet is sincere. The final touch of irony occurs when Crofton ignores the feeling behind the tribute and praises the poem as "a very fine piece of writing" (135).

The next story, "A Mother," is most often interpreted as an exposure of Dublin's cultural life. The arts, like politics in the previous story, emerge in terms of incompetence and preoccupation with money. However, as the sarcasm of the title is recognized, we realize that Joyce is also dealing with family relationships. In my opinion, Mrs. Kearney can be placed in the group of "sinister parental figures" that appear in Dubliners. Not only does she cause her daughter undue public embarrassment, but she completely wrecks the daughter's musical career. David Hayman notes that Mrs. Kearney is the clearest exposition of the dominant female, a type which Joyce despised.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Kearney is the most profound example of the Omphale archetype in the entire book. This poor man is so bullied by his wife that he functions as a mere robot, obeying commands like a machine. This role-reversal is the basis for much of the story's irony. Mrs. Kearney ponders, "They wouldn't have dared to have treated her like that if she had been a man" (148). However, it obviously never

<sup>1</sup>"A Mother," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, pp. 123-124.

occurred to her to let her husband handle any business. Mr. Holohan's final insult, "I thought you were a lady," borders on the comic in view of the role reversal.

"Grace" is another favorite of the Dubliners' collection and has received a wide amount of critical attention. This story is generally considered to be a parody based on the theme of man's fall and redemption. According to Stanislaus Joyce, The Divine Comedy furnished the pattern for the parody.<sup>1</sup> The first scene, depicting Hell, describes Mr. Kernan as he experiences a drunken tumble down the stairs in a lavatory of a public house. The next scene, where Mr. Kernan is convalescing in his room corresponds to Purgatory. The final scene brings Mr. Kernan to Heaven as he attends a retreat in the Gardiner Street Church.

Joyce's ironic exposure in "Grace" is primarily aimed at the religion of most middle-class Dubliners and the Jesuit Order. The scene in which Mr. Kernan's friends persuade him to make the retreat is "amusing rather than painful because of its brilliant social comedy and trenchant satire upon ignorance and stupidity," writes Julian B. Kaye.<sup>2</sup> Joyce illustrates again his brilliant handling of Irish dialogue. The hilarious discussion of Church history is described by Robert Adams as "chuckleheaded collective woolgathering,"

<sup>1</sup>Recollections of James Joyce (The James Joyce Society, New York, 1950), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>"Simony, The Three Simons, and Joycean Myth," in A James Joyce Miscellany, ed. Marvin Magalaner, (The James Joyce Society, 1947-1957), p. 23.

by "fuzzy-minded people who know almost nothing of what they are talking about but who manage nevertheless by accumulating small errors, to get pretty close to the truth."<sup>1</sup> In a chapter entitled "Conscious Error, Conscious Erudition," Adams uncovers the truth and discusses Joyce's intention.

An interesting observation that adds to the satirical tone of "Grace" is made but not developed by Frank O'Connor. Interpreting the story as "the biblical story ...reduced to farce" he thinks that the four friends, Cunningham, McCoy, Fogarty and Power represent the Four Evangelists.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, O'Connor does not support his statement with proof. Joseph E. Baker renders another ingenious reading. Omitting Fogarty, he discovers the Trinity by relating Mr. Power to God, Mr. Cunningham to Christ, and Mr. McCoy to the Holy Ghost.<sup>3</sup> Many other parallels, based on religious and Dantean correspondences, have been drawn by scholars. As Richard M. Kain notes, "Regardless of where we choose to stop, 'Grace' remains basically a story which combines moral intent, satiric humour, and mocking parody, and yet in essence is a nostalgic evocation of the shabby and needy but appealing Dublin life from which Joyce exiled himself."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's Ulysses. (New York, 1962), pp. 177-178.

<sup>2</sup>"Work in Progress," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>"The Trinity in Joyce's 'Grace'," James Joyce Quarterly, II, 1965, pp. 299-303.

<sup>4</sup>"Grace," in James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays, ed. Clive Hart, p. 152.

"The Dead," the concluding story in Dubliners, has been universally admired and is considered to be a minor masterpiece in its own right.<sup>1</sup> It is nearly always described as "different" and cited as the "best" in the collection.

S. L. Goldberg notes important differences in the protagonist, Gabriel Conroy, and a change in the kind of irony that emerges in the story. According to Goldberg, and I agree, "there are no simple black-and-white judgments here, but rather a delicate balancing of insights."<sup>2</sup>

This delicate balance is achieved by the juxtaposition of opposing ideas. For instance, a contrast between warmth and cold runs throughout the story. The warm, lighted, vivacious house is invaded by the snow and cold air as Gabriel enters. Later, as Gabriel walks through the cold outdoor air his thoughts are filled with ideas of warmth, "furnace," "warm flood," and "fires of stars" (213).

The most potent paradox is presented in the opposition of life and death that is prominent in the story. The dialogue is permeated with subtle suggestions about death, as when Gabriel mentions that Gretta takes "three mortal hours to dress" or when Aunt Julia uses the Irishism "perished alive." An obvious reference to life is achieved by the seasonal Christmas setting. The hope of renewed life that

<sup>1</sup>Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 90, n. 9.

<sup>2</sup>"The Artistry of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 90.

the birth of Christ is vital to the meaning of the story.

"The Dead" has been interpreted, validly I think, by David Daiches as the story of the assault on Gabriel's ego.<sup>1</sup> The walled circle of Gabriel's egotism receives blow after blow until finally it is broken down completely. Nevertheless, at the very moment of collapse, Gabriel's awareness and consciousness begin to expand until he ironically experiences a sensation of reconciliation in which life and death dissolve into each other.

The attack on Gabriel's ego is presented with various ironic twists. The drunk, Freddy Malins, whom Gabriel despises, proves to be capable of a more spontaneous grace in response to Aunt Julia's song than her own beloved nephew. S. L. Goldberg notes that Gabriel "misses the ironical application to himself of his story about the old horse who could not break the habit of the treadmill."<sup>2</sup> The sharpest irony of all is revealed after the story is completed. In Gabriel's speech he had made the remark that "I will not linger on the past" (204). When Gretta tells him of her love for a dead youth, the irony of the remark is clear.

The title, "The Dead," is finally realized to be packed with ambiguous meaning. It could apply to the actual dead persons who are still exerting an influence over the living

<sup>1</sup>"Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, pp. 32-36.

<sup>2</sup>"The Artistry of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 90.

(like Michael Furey). It could mean the death of Gabriel's ego. It could also refer ironically to those living who are actually in a state of spiritual death. It might even signify the point of moral status that must be reached before life is understood and rebirth takes place.

Dubliners, from the first paragraph to the last, is filled with ironic exposition. There are passages in the stories, the examples of parody for instance, which are satiric in tone. Joyce uses the generic forms, irony and satire, to expose the themes of Northrop Frye's Winter Mythos: degeneration, perversion, and death. Joyce was deliberately showing the Irish people a dark, dreary, wintry reflection of themselves, and his reasons for doing so will be explored next.

## CHAPTER THREE: PURPOSE

"Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."<sup>1</sup> This, the poetic cry of Stephen Dedalus as he prepares to leave his native Ireland to pursue his chosen profession, art, is most relevant to the meaning and design of Dubliners. The subjective novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, as well as the factual biographies of James Joyce, reveal a young man who struggled with the decision of what to do with his life. Joyce, like Stephen, seriously considered becoming a priest in the Jesuit Order. The final choice, however, was to dedicate himself to being a "priest of the imagination." James Joyce, like other modern writers, believed that art was bound to morality and that the artists were the ones who must provide spiritual leadership for the people. Dubliners is Joyce's first big attempt to contribute some meaningful guidance in his newly assumed "priestly" role.

In an obscure article entitled, "The Moral Vision in 'Dubliners'," Anthony Ostroff laments the fact that Dubliners has been considerably neglected by critics and that when it is given attention it is most often mentioned in passing as background for Ulysses. According to Mr. Ostroff, although

<sup>1</sup>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. pp. 252-253.

published criticism of Joyce has at least touched upon the artistry of Dubliners and in particular, dealt with the concluding story, "The Dead," such criticism "has tended either to overlook or to obscure the moral vision that Joyce has indicated as his guiding force in writing the book."<sup>1</sup> I agree with Mr. Ostroff that the importance of the moral aspect has been neglected and that it was foremost in Joyce's mind as he carefully fashioned his collection of stories. I believe that binding the moral vision to the winter season of nature's cycle will help to illuminate the purpose behind Joyce's exposition.

It is not surprising that publishers balked at the stories presented to them by the young Irish writer. The irony of the situation is that they did not object to the severe critical exposure of life in Dublin but based their hesitations on scattered words and incidents which were considered "dirty." Joyce's bitter fight to get his stories published in their original form is a long and interesting tale in itself. It is precisely in some of his remarks in defense of Dubliners that his moral intent is revealed in a formal statement. In a letter to Grant Richards dated 20 May 1906, Joyce wrote, "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 moral history of my country? I fight to retain them because I believe

<sup>1</sup>Western Speech, XX (1966), p. 197.

that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country."<sup>1</sup>

What did Joyce mean by saying that by writing his chapter of "moral history" he had taken "the first step towards the spiritual liberation" of the Irish people? I think it means very simply that he wanted to show the people reality. He wanted to pull off their masks and make them see the true nature of their lives. As trees in the winter, when stripped of foliage, are exposed in their bleakest state, the people of Dublin are revealed to be degenerate, perverted, and spiritually dead. Joyce states in another letter to Richards, "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."<sup>2</sup>

Richard Ellmann records a relevant event in his biography of Joyce. While the young author was visiting Dublin in an attempt to expedite publication, a man who was aware of the difficulties said to Joyce, "It's a pity you don't use your undoubted talents for some other purpose than writing a book like Dubliners. Why don't you use them for the betterment of your country and your people?"<sup>3</sup> Ellmann notes that Joyce

<sup>1</sup>Letters, I, ed. Stuart Gilbert, pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>James Joyce, p. 343.

gave an odd reply by mentioning that he was the only Irishman writing leading articles for the Italian press. What Joyce seemed unable to express to this man, he wrote in a letter to his wife at this same time, "I am one of the writers of this generation who are perhaps creating at last a conscience in the soul of this wretched race."<sup>1</sup>

"Creation" of a conscience suggests a new birth, a continuation of life. The phrases "spiritual liberation" and "course of civilization" indicate a flow rather than a status. Also Dubliners was called "a chapter" of the country's moral history. If Joyce is presenting one phase of a whole it would be helpful to place the exposed part into proper perspective. One way to achieve this is to apply a cyclic interpretation.

William York Tindall, in his book, James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World, discusses the importance of the cycle in Joyce's work. Tindall points out that Joyce was obviously influenced by Vico's cyclical theory of history. "The pattern of events in time gave him [Joyce] the sense of order and of belonging to a whole which, although in time, suggests eternity. Cyclical recurrence became his substitute for metaphysics."<sup>2</sup> Tindall further suggests that Joyce, like Eliot, was influenced by Frazer's pattern of the dying, reborn, and sacramentally eaten god as

<sup>1</sup>James Joyce, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup>New York, 1950, p. 65.

evidenced in the death and resurrection of Finn and Earwicker. "Frazer's vegetable gods, reproducing the cycle of the seasons, insure fertility. They die with the flowers in the Winter and recover in the Spring."<sup>1</sup>

Northrop Frye's Mythoi theory, based on nature's seasons, offers a suitable cyclic framework in which Dubliners can be placed. The themes of the book, degeneration, perversion and death are the themes of the Winter Mythos. Irony and satire, the proper generic forms for this mode, are used. Joyce's moral purpose was to expose reality. Northrop Frye describes the Winter Mythos as "the phase of most sincere, explicit realism."<sup>2</sup> Joyce's "chapter of moral history" could be entitled "The Phase of Winter."

Binding Dubliners to the Winter Mythos illuminates Joyce's moral intention because it helps to define the reality Joyce is reflecting in his "nicely polished looking-glass." The reality is characteristic of Winter--the dark, cold, bitter segment of the seasonal cycle, for Joyce is exposing the evil side of human nature.

S. L. Goldberg notes that "the sense of some external evil, some 'maleficent and sinful being' ...dominates and limits the stories from the very first page."<sup>3</sup> "Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the

<sup>1</sup>Tindall, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Frye, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup>"The Artistry of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 91.

word paralysis ...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" (9). Joyce carefully records the boy's sensitive reaction to the mysterious sense of evil. The child feels afraid, but at the same time he feels compelled to get nearer and look. Joyce wants his countrymen to get nearer to the reality of evil and look at its deadly effects. A "conscience in the soul" implies a knowledge of good and evil.

If this exposure is Joyce's moral intention, a further question is implied. Why must the people be shown the dark side of their natures? Why must they be led to experience fear and be shown the effects of evil? I believe that Joyce is saying that it is necessary for people to recognize the reality of their own sinful condition before they can experience any humility, have any reawakening, or make any move toward a spiritual revival. Just as Winter precedes Spring, mankind must comprehend evil before it can value good. Would the warmth and light of Spring be welcomed so joyously if it were not for the bitter cold and darkness of Winter?

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"<sup>1</sup> Cyclic interpretation presupposes an inevitable change. When things are at their worst, when the bottom of the cycle is reached, there must be a turning upward--a move toward a better condition. Joyce is saying that the people must view their condition as one views a wintry scene and sees the

<sup>1</sup>Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind," l. 70.

dead condition of nature. This acknowledgement of moral paralysis in their lives will constitute the first step towards spiritual liberation. Then the course of their civilization may move on to Spring--a rebirth, a creation of conscience.

The sharp critical exposition of Dubliners' pages should not be taken for static, fatal finality but should be considered as only part of a cyclic flow. After all, Winter is but one season of the year. Northrop Frye points out that "The mythical or abstract structural principle of the cycle is that the continuum of identity in the individual life from birth to death is extended from death to rebirth."<sup>1</sup> His Mythoi theory, structured on the seasonal cycle, is grounded in one archetypal myth: the quest-romance. Frye explains:

The four mythoi that we are dealing with, comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony, may now be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth. Agon or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvelous adventure. Pathos or catastrophe, whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy. Sparagmos, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world is the archetypal theme of irony and satire. Anagnorises, or recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy.<sup>2</sup>

Joyce's statements of moral intent have been examined and bound to the Winter Mythos. But do the stories them-

<sup>1</sup>Frye, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

selves offer any support for the theory that self-realization serves a moral purpose? Are there any instances where a character, acknowledging the dark side of his human nature, responds with a change, a reawakening, a birth of conscience?

Mr. Ostroff, among other critics, has commented that the first three stories differ from the rest in the collection.<sup>1</sup> For one thing, these are the only stories written from the first-person-narrative point of view. Mr. Ostroff comments that these "are the only stories in which we see the protagonists treated sympathetically, and at the same time see hope for the protagonists."<sup>2</sup> This could be explained by the mere fact that the protagonists are children. I contend, however, that the significance lies in the way in which the children differ from the other characters in Dubliners.

Joyce's ironic exposure, examined earlier, reveals the children as possessing more wisdom than the adults. Nearly all the adult characters in the book are blind to the realities surrounding them. Each of the protagonists in the first stories, however, is affected by his individual brush with reality. In each case the child's exposure to sordid truth makes a decidedly moral impression in that it has made him more aware of his own nature. This experience of self-awareness significantly sets these boys apart from the rest of the characters in Dubliners.

<sup>1</sup>"The Moral Vision in 'Dubliners'," p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

Death, a major theme of the book, is the reality to which the boy of "The Sisters" is exposed. The adults in the story react to the old priest's death in the common traditional manner by visiting the relatives and offering their sympathy in trite phrases. Joyce records the boy's feelings, "I wished to go in and look at him but I had not the courage to knock. I walked away slowly along the sunny side of the street, reading all the theatrical advertisements in the shopwindows as I went. I found it strange that neither I nor the day seemed in a mourning mood and I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death" (12). The boy's reaction is natural and reflects the truth rather than any false sentiments superimposed upon him.

Immediately before, the boy had visualized the priest, still alive, sitting in his "dark little room" (12). The scene was unwholesome, almost sinister. Adjusting to the reality of death, the boy walks in the sun and experiences the birth of a new sense of freedom. The idea of new life emerging from death corresponds to both the seasonal cycle and the quest-romance. The new sprout of life, or the new hero and his bride, mysteriously arises out of the disillusion of the old order.

The second story, "An Encounter," reveals a sensitive boy's encounter with another of life's sordid realities: perversion. The protagonist senses the true nature of the man met on his boyish adventure, and he experiences fear.

"I went up the slope calmly but my heart was beating quickly with fear that he would seize me by the ankles" (28). His boyish pride triumphs outwardly, but inwardly he confesses the truth. "My voice had an accent of forced bravery in it, and I was ashamed of my paltry stratagem. I had to call the name again before Mahony saw me and hallooed in answer. How my heart beat as he came running across the field to me! He ran as if to bring me aid. And I was penitent; for in my heart I had always despised him a little" (28). As in the earlier story, the boy's touch with reality has had a moral effect. The boy experiences humility, and at this point he is able to enter into a close personal relationship with his friend.

The most striking example of self-awareness that occurs in Dubliners before the final pages is offered by the youth of the third story. It is significant that the protagonist of "Araby" is older than the previous two. Closer to adolescence, he is at the "initiation period," the time between innocence and the brink of maturity. The central conflict of the story is between the real and the ideal. The youth suffers the painful experience of disillusionment, an experience common to all in the maturing process.

Ben L. Collins suggests that the story might be a subtle allegory of man's fall from grace. For instance, "The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle pump" (29), likens the yard

to the Garden of Eden. The Garden, according to Collins introduces two of the story's basic motifs, love and religion. "The Garden is connotative both of man's fall and women: Adam, through his love for Eve, ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and was cast from Paradise into the world of reality. This allusion or quasi-allegory describes what is yet to happen in 'Araby'."<sup>1</sup>

The word blind is also important. It appears in the first sentence, "Richmond Street, being blind ..." (29) and then in the window blind "pulled down to within an inch of the sash" (30). Although the theme of "blindness to reality" runs continuously through Dubliners, it is particularly related to the moral implications of a "fall from innocence" allegory. In the original Genesis account, the serpent said to the woman, "then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (iii, 5)<sup>2</sup> The moment a human being can see both good and evil is precisely the moment when his conscience is created. This awakening is accompanied by self-awareness. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." (iii, 7) The boy at the end of "Araby," like Adam and Eve, was struck by self-knowledge--"I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity." He is leaving innocence. He has been initiated into the "reality" of life.

<sup>1</sup>"'Araby' and the 'Extended Simile'," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Quotes are from King James Version.

A true sense of self includes admission of both sides of human nature, the marvelous and the sinful, the light and the dark. The seasonal cycle encompasses summer and winter. The young protagonists are armed with insight and youth and have a chance to develop into morally responsible human beings. Ironically, the mature characters in Dubliners who should be more morally responsible remain blind to their degenerate condition. Mr. Ostroff notes that Little Chandler, Mr. Duffy, and Gabriel Conroy are the only examples outside the first three stories of one's insight into his own condition, but he quickly adds that "only in the last case is it an insight full enough not to leave the character utterly helpless and beyond redemption."<sup>1</sup>

Explaining the moral vision in Dubliners, Mr. Ostroff says that, in general, we "see into lives that are moral failures, both pathetic and monstrous, and the failures, although their immediate courses and terms vary, have in common the same paralyzing principle: the rule is not to act, or, at least, not to act morally."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Ostroff further relates this moral paralysis to an "inability to love."<sup>3</sup> This evaluation is supported by the lack of personal relationships found to exist in the stories. Degenerate conditions between friends, lovers, and families certainly indicate

<sup>1</sup>"The Moral Vision in 'Dubliners'," p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

a loss of the capacity to love.

The moral vision in Dubliners reveals a bleak picture. The spiritual essence of the characters may be compared to the state of vegetation in winter. The vital elements of their lives, like the autumn leaves, have disappeared and only a naked, death-like shell remains. I agree with Mr. Ostroff who comments, "Before moral paralysis can be relieved it must be understood, and it is toward an understanding of such paralysis that the book is designed."<sup>1</sup> The seasonal Mythos interpretation would predict a reawakening of the spirit as nature is revitalized in the Spring. Does Joyce indicate that there is hope for a change in his people?

I believe Joyce evinces the first breath of spring in the character of Gabriel Conroy, the protagonist of "The Dead." This final story presents the most vivid picture of winter and death, but it is precisely out of this dark center that hope stirs and starts to awaken. "Because of its position at the end of the collection, and at the end of Joyce's work on Dubliners, "The Dead" brings the themes of all the other stories into vital relationship with each other, while at the same time it traces a complex process of self-recognition which purges Dubliners of all vestiges of provincialism. The hero of "The Dead," Gabriel Conroy, bears the name of the archangel who will one day wake the

<sup>1</sup>"The Moral Vision in 'Dubliners'," p. 208.

dead."<sup>1</sup> A. Walton Litz follows this comment with a brief analysis of the story, viewing it as a movement toward Gabriel's moment of self-realization. "But Gabriel's self-knowledge is not the sudden intuition of a child; it is the full experience of a sensitive and intelligent man."<sup>2</sup> Litz states that this is the first time in Dubliners when there is a true communion of humanity, because Gabriel is able to turn his mind away from himself toward humanity.<sup>3</sup>

Brewster Ghiselin considers "The Dead" as "The conclusion of the action of a long story." The thesis of his article, "The Unity of Dubliners" is that the book depicts the single action of the soul's drift toward death. With the story "Grace," the soul is brought to a dead halt, "the end of its divagations, before a lifeless altar at 'the centre of paralysis,'" and "anything further might seem superfluous." Ghiselin surmises, "Joyce may have asked himself, however, what would happen if the dead should recognize and accept their death. Whatever else the final story of Dubliners may be, it is an answer to this question."<sup>4</sup>

What is the moral difference between Gabriel and the rest of the characters in Dubliners? What sets him apart?

<sup>1</sup>James Joyce, Twayne's English Authors Series, No. 31 (New York, 1966), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>In Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 80.

Obviously part of the answer lies in the same thing that sets the young protagonists of the early stories apart. Gabriel, like the young boys, has gained self-insight through his contact and recognition of reality. But there is more to Gabriel's experience than a mere flash of intuition, and this difference makes the reader sense the greatness and sureness of his change.

In his analysis of "The Dead," David Daiches has pinpointed, I believe, the key to the difference in Gabriel's moral awakening. Daiches sees the theme of the story as "the assault on the walled circle of Gabriel's egotism."<sup>1</sup> The first chink is made when Gabriel enters the door and is met by Lily. Other incidents add sharp blows up to the climax, when the fortified circle of Gabriel's egotism finally collapses. This is the moment when, full of self-confidence and desire for his wife, Gabriel is told by Gretta that she is really thinking about an old love affair.<sup>2</sup> This is the moment of Gabriel's epiphany. "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 clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror" (220). David Daiches adds that as the result of his new knowledge, "Gabriel escapes from

<sup>1</sup>"Dubliners" in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-36 for detailed analysis.

himself, as it were, and the rest of the story shows us his expanding consciousness until the point where, dozing off into subconsciousness he feels a sense of absolute unity, of identity even, with all those elements which before had been hostile to his ego."<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Ostroff feels that the ego is a prominent factor in moral paralysis. "All the morally paralyzed figures who move through the volume move purely in terms of self-interest (however short a view of self-interest they may take) and move utterly without love--that is to say without loving."<sup>2</sup> The boys of the earlier stories are not yet morally paralyzed because their wall of ego has not been completely built. There are still some places where the light of insight can shine through. In the cases of Mr. Duffy and Little Chandler, however, the walls are too solid for even the slightest opening. Mr. Duffy experiences a moment of pity, but he returns to his old preoccupation with himself. As Mr. Ostroff points out, "his pity for Mrs. Sinico is transformed into pity for himself, and we leave him as paralyzed as we found him, his egotism perhaps reduced, but his egocentricity intact."<sup>3</sup> Little Chandler's eyes fill with "tears of remorse" (85), but we sense that his pity is more for himself than for the child.

<sup>1</sup>See "Dubliners" in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, p. 36 for detailed analysis.

<sup>2</sup>"The Moral Vision in 'Dubliners'," p. 204.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 203.



## CONCLUSION

Joyce reflects a picture of Dublin and its inhabitants in his "looking-glass." The mirror catches the city during the Winter. The themes of the book show Dublin as "a city in which no creative relationships can exist. Man is alienated both from his fellow man and from the vigorous ideals and bold dreams on which alone a living organism can thrive."<sup>1</sup> The ironic exposure carefully filters out light and a dark aura pervades throughout the picture. "All that existed in the Dublin of his youth was by no means sordid, but Joyce's artistic perception is concerned with being. He saw the imbedded, unconscious, immoral character of society with terrible clarity, and he wrote a chapter in the moral history of his country."<sup>2</sup> Joyce's purpose was moral. He wrote to "create a conscience" in his race. Like his fellow countryman, W. B. Yeats, Joyce believed that art should convey spiritual values to a nation. An artist was a "priest of the imagination." Dubliners is a premature response to Yeat's plea:

Poet and sculptor, do the work,  
 Nor let the modish painter shirk  
 What his great forefathers did,  
 Bring the soul of man to God  
 Make him fill the cradles right.  
 ("Under Ben Bulben")

<sup>1</sup>William M. Schutte, Joyce and Shakespeare: A Study in the Meaning of Ulysses (New Haven, 1957), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Parr, James Joyce: The Poetry of Conscience (Milwaukee, 1961), p. 13.

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