1.

Realism

In ‘A Painful Case’ Mr

James Duffy’s refuse to live in the city, which is unsustainable because ‘too modern and pretentious’ (D 82),

should be read in the same light (what does Mr Duffy mean by ‘too modern’?).

He never gave alms to beggars and walked firmly, carrying a stout hazel.

He had been for many years cashier of a private bank in Baggot Street. Every morning he

came in from Chapelizod by tram.

(D 83)

Mr Duffy’s firmness –as well as the personality of other characters of Dubliners- is conveyed also by means

of the pace of the sentence. The style in ‘Clay’ is sparkling as Clay wants to represent herself, while in ‘A

Painful Case’ the short and detached sentences convey Duffy’s ‘distance from his body’(D 83). In ‘A Painful

Case’ Joyce suggests also the existence of multiple realties when he writes that Mr Duffy ‘began to doubt the

reality of what memory told him’ (D 90)

A man has fallen down a flight a stairs in a central Dublin pub and is briefly unconscious. Two men and a pub employee carry the man upstairs, and they, along with the manager and the crowd already assembled in the bar, try to figure out what happened. The manager calls a policeman to the scene, but when the officer arrives he offers little help. A bystander succeeds in resuscitating the injured man, who says his name is Tom Kernan. Barely able to answer any questions, Mr. Kernan prepares to leave when a friend of his, Jack Power, emerges from the crowd and escorts him to a carriage. During the ride home, Mr. Kernan shows Mr. Power that he injured his tongue in the fall, and as such is unable to speak and explain the accident. This event reflects Mr. Kernan’s recent fortunes: he used to be an esteemed businessman but has recently hit a rough patch. After the carriage arrives at the house and Mr. Kernan goes to bed, Mr. Power chats with the children and Mrs. Kernan. He mentally notes to himself the lower-class accents of the children, just as Mrs. Kernan begins to lament her husband’s neglectful behavior. Mr. Power assures her that he will help Mr. Kernan to reform.

The final and third section of “Grace” occurs at the Jesuit Church service and focuses on the words of the officiating priest, Father Purdon. Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Kernan, Mr. M’Coy, Mr. Power, and Mr. Fogarty sit near each other in the pews, which are filled with men from all walks of Dublin life, including pawnbrokers and newspaper reporters. From the red-lit pulpit, Father Purdon preaches to them, he claims, as businessman to businessman, as the “spiritual accountant” to the congregation before him. The service, in turn, is a chance for reckoning, and he asks the men to tally up their sins and compare them to their clean or guilty consciences. Both those whose accounts balance and those whose show discrepancies will be saved by God’s grace, as long as they strive to rectify their faults.After two nights, a group of Mr. Kernan’s friends visit the house in order to convince Mr. Kernan to join them in a Catholic retreat, or cleansing service. The challenge lies in the fact that Mr. Kernan is a former Protestant who converted to Catholicism for his wife and has never warmly accepted his new church. Mr. Power, Mr. Cunningham, and Mr. M’Coy spend their visit at first talking about Mr. Kernan’s accident and his health, taking time to complain about the ineffective policeman at the bar. Then they gradually reveal their plans for the retreat and turn the discussion to religion. Mr. Fogarty, who runs a neighboring grocery, joins the group, and they all praise the Irish priesthood and nineteenth-century popes. Mr. Kernan follows along, contributes, and eventually agrees to join the retreat, with one exception: he refuses to light any candles as part of the service, explaining that he does not believe in magic.

In “Grace,” a framework of fall, conversion, and redemption reveals the complicated role of religion in Dubliners’ lives. The three separate sections of the narrative serve to undermine the process of redemption. In the first section, Mr. Kernan serves, quite literally, as the “fallen man.” His disastrous accident at the pub apparently is part of a downward spiral he has been experiencing and remains a mystery in the story. Mr. Kernan can remember only that he was with two men in the bar, but claims no other recollection of the event. Mr. Kernan probably hides the truth out of embarrassment, forcing the reader to pull together the hints that suggest he was drunk and abandoned by his companions. This puzzling start to the story makes the steadfast efforts of Mr. Kernan’s friends to help him all the more strange. We don’t know what’s wrong with Mr. Kernan or why he needs help. The story complicates this seeming goodwill by revealing the unsupportive tendencies of friends like Mr. Power, who inwardly grimaces about the lower-class upbringing of the Kernan children. That Mr. Power recoils from certain status signs suggests that his concern for others stems from his concern for his own reputation.

The second section of the narrative treats Mr. Kernan’s conversion, and Joyce undermines this process by showing the men attempting to convince Mr. Kernan to join the retreat with inaccurate details about Catholic church history. The men discuss the supposedly unspotted history of the Jesuits, trying to boost Mr. Kernan’s view of the church, and deflect Mr. Kernan’s complaint about provincial priests by claiming that “[t]he Irish priesthood is honoured all the world over.” When Mr. Fogarty arrives, the men begin to discuss the illuminated career of the nineteenth-century Pope Leo XIII, but they do so by misusing a variety of Latin terms. Mr. Cunningham, by far the most verbose of the group, attempts to recount the Church debate over papal infallibility, but he makes mistakes as well. The point of the scene is not the specific errors, but the men’s reliance on big terms and names to make themselves appear serious and pious. As such, Mr. Kernan’s conversion is something of a sham.

Mr. Kernan’s “cleansing” in the final section of the narrative never really occurs. He arrives at the church and listens to the priest, but the story does not follow his rise from the fall. Instead, the many contradictions in the service are highlighted, which serves to critique the church as a place of healing. Father Purdon shares his name with the name of the street that is home to the red-light district, or prostitution area, of Dublin, and his pulpit shines with a red light as though he is a beacon of sin, not redemption. The progression in the story from fall to redemption, then, stalls and halts. “Grace” seems to ask how far indeed is the distance between the bottom of the stairs in the pub and the pews in the church.

The conclusion of the story assures the men that grace can save them from sin, but the word grace has multiple meanings. It can refer to the quality of poise or politeness. It can also refer to a granted delay or postponement, such as a grace period given to a debtor who owes money. It might sometimes refer to the unconditional favor of God granted to humans that enables them to be saved. All of these meanings surface to some extent in this story and serve to point out how simple events become infused with spiritual significance, and not always to useful ends. Mr. Kernan himself embodies the word grace ironically, as he is literally a man who has no poise. His friends, however, interpret this fall as indicating a lack of God’s grace. The story concludes with Father Purdon’s assurance that even the fallen man can be saved with the help of God’s grace, but the priest uses the economic language of accounting to communicate his thoughts to the congregation of businessmen. Reckoning with oneself, then, acts as a period of grace, yet none of the men in the story come to terms with themselves. Searching for grace becomes yet another repetitive cycle for these Dubliners.

In “Grace”, James Joyce achieves realism through completely objective narration of the story.

2.

British Empire

Miss Ivors

3.

Christianity

Anti-clergicalism

The sisters

Father Flynn, in The Sisters, is perceived as an unsuccessful and fallen priest. However, he is respected – by the boy-narrator, in particular – as a spiritual educator

In the first story, “The Sisters,” Father Flynn cannot keep a strong grip on the chalice and goes mad in a confessional box. This story marks religion’s first appearance as a haunting but incompetent and dangerous component of Dublin life.

Generally

Huge background, symbols Irish way of living, native to Ireland

Part of life, very important

In the story “The Boarding House”, Joyce presents us with an image of Ireland where religion is the governing force in determining equitable situations. This is clearly apparent when Mrs. Mooney experiences trouble with her marriage and seeks a separation. This situation is described as, “She went to the priest and got a separation from him with care of the children” (72). For most societies a situation like this would fall under the category of civil law, and be decided in a court of law. The fact that Mrs. Mooney went to the priest to solve a domestic dispute, and not to an attorney shows that the citizens of Ireland regarded the church as the head figure of Ireland.

Grace

Subject of matter

Grace begins with a metaphor for the biblical fall of humankind when Mr Kernan is discovered lying unconscious, having fallen down drunk in a basement pub toilet. Kernan is found by fellow drinkers who later convince him to take up religion and give up his heavy drinking. On one level, Joyce appears to present religion as having saving power. On another level, however, he presents Irish Catholicism in this story as little more than a business. Kernan is cast as a new stakeholder, recruited to procure spiritual wealth for Cunningham, Power, M’Coy and Fogarty.

In “Grace,” Tom Kernan’s fall and absent redemption highlight the pretension and inefficacy of religion—religion is just another daily ritual of repetition that advances no one.