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Paralyzed and Liberated Bodies of Male Characters in *Dubliners**

Eri Tanaka

Introduction

Joyce himself explained his intention and the organized schema of *Dubliners* in a letter to Grant Richards on the fifth of May 1906 as follows:

My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. (*SL* 83)

The word paralysis, which is placed at the beginning of the first story, “The Sisters,” remains as the motif for the rest of the collection, exposing the bleak lives of Dublin inhabitants from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Critics have been engrossed in the word paralysis for decades and put forth various interpretations of the word. ¹ As Claire A. Culleton and Ellen Scheible point out, however, these readings, which deeply focus on the paralysis of the characters and the narrative of each of the stories in *Dubliners*, “have become so conventional that they risk turning into stock readings” (2). We, as new readers of *Dubliners*, as Culleton and Scheible say, have to “reconsider the traditional tropes of paralysis and stagnation in favor of movement and change” (2).

Stephen Dedalus declares to fly out of the “nets” of “nationality, language,

religion” (P 5.1049) at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce, then, through his alter ego in the autobiographical novel, shows the necessity and possibility of the liberation of Dubliners. Jim LeBlanc says that Joyce “points out a path by which a Dubliner (at least one with literary aspirations) can escape the paralysis that haunts Joyce’s short stories . . . to transcend the ‘nets of external circumstance’” (53).² In this paper, then, we look into the indications of not only the paralysis but also the liberation of characters in *Dubliners*.

Indeed, physical paralysis was a real problem for people in Dublin in the early twentieth century. They suffered from venereal diseases, alcoholism or many other diseases that led their bodies to paralysis or immobility. Given that these diseases were mostly caused by a poverty and an unhealthy environment, paralysis in Dublin was closely related to its social background. According to the National Archives, “In 1911 Dublin had the worst housing conditions of any city in the United Kingdom.”³ Culleton says that paralysis in Dublin “was especially compounded by the slow, sclerotic responses of the Dublin Corporation to address dangerous housing situations, drainage problems, or street and tenement sanitation” (11). Joyce’s stories, then, acutely reflect the effects of real social problems in Dublin on their paralyzed characters; and his fictions indicate a way to get Dubliners out of the restraints that make them paralyzed.

We will pick five stories from the book and look into the paralysis and liberation of male characters. It can be said that Joyce’s representations of the body differ between the male characters and female ones, which reflects the low social status of women in the Victorian era. It means that the male bodies and the female ones should be discussed separately in order to distinguish the specific circumstances that influence the body of each character in Joyce’s stories. The concept of the bodies of Irish people, however, is complicated in terms of the sexualization of the country in the process of British colonization. Since Ireland was considered to be female compared to the male Britain, men in Ireland, in order to reconstruct the emasculated image of the Irish people, asserted their manliness through the national liberation movement. In this paper, focusing on the bodies of male characters, we will find out

how they are trapped in and transcend from “nets of external circumstance.”

I. The Boys’ Paralysis and Liberation

We will begin by examining “The Sisters” and “An Encounter.” Both stories are said to describe the paralysis of old men: one a priest; the other a person commonly identified as a pederast. What we will see in this section is the boys’ symptoms of paralysis and their liberation from what restrains them. Then we will conclude that their liberation is achieved by the awareness of others’ paralysis.

The opening line of “The Sisters”: “There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke” (S:1), indicates physical troubles of the priest, Father James Flynn. This line is an inner voice of an unnamed boy who narrates the story. The boy gazes up at the window of the priest’s house and says softly to himself the word “*paralysis*” (S:10). At this time, the boy as well as readers do not know yet that the priest has passed away. However, the narrator, whose perspective is more sophisticated than at the time of acting, knows about the death of the priest since he narrates his story retrospectively. The narrator continues to tell the boy’s impression of paralysis as follows:

It had always sounded strangely in my ears like the word *gnomon* in the Euclid and the word *simony* in the catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (S:10-15)

What we can see here is that the narrator notices that the boy is fascinated by the sound of paralysis like other unfamiliar words such as “gnomon,” and “simony,” but after the boy knows that the priest has died, he fears the fatal meaning and power of paralysis.

The fact that the word paralysis is mentioned only in the boy’s narrative suggests the boy’s sensitiveness to the word paralysis. Considering that the boy used to witness “his [Father Flynn’s] large trembling hand” (S:107), the boy might notice

the abnormal state of Flynn's body. Then after Flynn's death, when the boy hears Eliza Flynn's stories such as "I'd find him with his breviary fallen to the floor, lying back in the chair and his mouth open" (S:254-56) and "there he was, sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession box, wideawake and laughing—like softly to himself" (S:297-99), he might assume that the priest's physical paralysis expanded to the priest's mental disorder, leading him to die. The word paralysis haunts the boy so much that he fears the possibility of the influence of it upon himself. In other words, he himself is paralyzed with a morbid fear of paralysis.

The sign of the boy's physical paralysis is described in his dream. The paralytic's "heavy grey face" (S:74) appears in the boy's dream murmuring and confessing something. Critics have been analyzing the meaning of the grey face, but we should not overlook the boy's reaction to the face. Though the boy wonders why it smiles continually, he soon notices that he is also smiling feebly. The boy's smile implies that he unconsciously does the same thing the priest does, which means that he cannot control his bodily movement under the influence of the priest. This is a sign of physical paralysis of the boy. Moreover, copying the priest's behaviour suggests that the boy may possibly be like the priest, who is a victim of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and dies of paralysis. The boy is caught in the net of Catholicism under the influence of the paternal authority figure.

The boy, however, feels freedom after he confirms the priest's death: "I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death" (S:118-20). As LeBlanc says, "As Father Flynn ends his life with paralysis, the boy begins his with an awareness of his existential freedom" (52): his feeling of freedom is brought by the priest's death. His actual liberation, however, has not occurred yet at this time of acting. It is achieved at the moment when the boy narrates his past. By narrating his story retrospectively, the boy can perceive the priest's physical paralysis, the fear of its influence on himself, and the initial sign of his own bodily paralysis. Through the awareness of paralysis of both the priest and his past self, the boy at last can liberate himself from the oppressive influence of the priest, or Catholicism, which deprives the boy of his freedom.

The theme of the boy's awareness of the paralysis of both an old man and himself is taken over to the second story, "An Encounter." An old man in this story is called a "queer old jossler" (En:248), who has pederastic inclinations. An unnamed boy meets the old man when he skips classes with his friend, Mahony, and lies in a field. The boy soon notices the old man's paralytic physical movements such as "a sudden chill" (En:222) and "a twitching forehead" (En:272-73). Though the boy averts his eyes from the old man's body, the old man's monologue "circling round and round in the same orbit" (En:231) comes to the boy's ears. The boy thinks that the man's repetitive phrases are suggestive of his mental disorder. The old man, then, talks about whippings and young girls, which shows the abnormal sexual desires of sadism and pedophilia. Fearing to be a victim of the so-called pervert, the boy walks away from him.

The important point is that the boy tries to escape a strict routine of school that seems to imprison him, "replacing it with an escapist adventure" (Backus and Valente 48), and instead, he is caught by the physically and spiritually paralyzed man, who scares the boy stiff. According to Fritz Senn, the paralyzed man is "a spectre of what the boy himself may one day become" (31).⁴ In fact, the old man's inclination towards novels and whipping boys parallels the boy's obsession with romantic novels and fantasies of whipping Joe Dillon. The old man, thus, mirrors the boy's future self, showing the boy his folly and arrogance. In the last sentence, there is the word "penitent," which is too difficult for the boy at the time of acting to use: "And I was penitent for in my heart I had always despised him [Mahony] a little" (En:300-01). This word signifies that the adult boy narrates the story retrospectively. The boy's liberation is, then, achieved when he tells the story of the encounter with the paralyzed man and repents the restricted state of his past self.

II. The Waddling Gait as a Sign of the Destroyed Body

"Two Gallants" is the sixth story in *Dubliners*, which tells the story of two young men, Lenehan and Corley. They, with no regular occupation, swindle a gold coin out of a servant girl, a slavey. The traditional explanation for the story proposed

by Walzl and Walton A. Litz is that the two men are venal and worthless, are never gallants. This reading focuses on metaphorical elements in the story: the harp, the slavey, and the gold coin; and then associates them for the interpretation of the story whose main theme is both individual and political betrayal. (Walzl 75; Litz 331)

Although we support the symbolical reading of the earlier critics, we focus on paralysis of a male body in this section. One of the new readings, where the characters' bodies are discussed, is Enda Duffy's "Men in Slow Motion: Male Gesture in 'Two Gallants.'" Duffy analyzes male gesture in the story and considers gesture as a counter-style to paralysis. In this section, we will point out that the liberation from paralysis is achieved by self-awareness. Self-awareness is, as we have seen in the previous section, acquired by watching others' paralysis and realizing one's own situation.

The man who has a possibility to get out of a paralytic situation is Lenehan, who walks a long distance. According to Jasmine Mulliken, Lenehan walks about 8.4 km and more than two hours.⁵ Even though he is mobile, his body is "convulsed" (TG:18). Also, "his figure fell into rotundity at the waist, his hair was scant and grey and his face, when the waves of expression had passed over it, had a ravaged look" (TG:23-26). These physical descriptions remind us of the symptoms of paralysis. His physical paralysis is probably due not only to aging but also to drinking. Alcoholism has been a significant public health problem in Ireland, and in *Dubliners*, alcohol is used by some characters to escape from reality. In "Two Gallants," Lenehan is looking forward to "a free bout of all-night drinking" (Leonard 120), indicating that the money from the slavey will be used for their drinking.

Corley's body is described more specifically than that of Lenehan as follows:

The swing of his burly body made his friend execute a few light skips from the path to the roadway and back again. . . . He walked with his hands by his sides, holding himself erect and swaying his head from side to side. His head was large, globular and oily, it sweated in all weathers. . . . He always stared straight before him as if he were on parade and when he wished to gaze after someone

in the street it was necessary for him to move his body from the hips. (TG:68-79)

Here, Corley's gait is noticeable for its peculiarity, which is often regarded as a policeman's gait. We, however, say that Corley's waddling gait is a symptom of paralysis caused by syphilis. This idea is supported by the history of his relations with women. Corley used to go with some girls, one of whom becomes a prostitute, and the slavey whom Corely dates now had an affair with another man. According to Kathleen Ferris, Joyce himself suffered from many of the symptoms of *tabes dorsalis*, including a peculiar gait. Ferris says that Joyce's peculiar gait is exhibited in many of the characters in his works (64-87). If Corley is so poor that he is obliged "to sell his sex to the slavey for a gold coin" (91) as Margot Norris points out, it is possible that Corley has caught syphilis through relations with many women, and his peculiar walk is an exhibition of syphilis which leads him to be physically paralytic.

Corley's waddling gait is repeatedly mentioned, and it is important to note that the descriptions of his gait reflect Lenehan's point of view. For instance, the following sentence: "As he [Lenehan] walked on slowly, timing his pace to theirs, he watched Corley's head which turned at every moment towards the young woman's face like a big ball revolving on a pivot" (TG:228-31) which shows that Lenehan is watching Corley's unique manner of walking, swinging his head to and fro, with curiosity. Lenehan definitely notices the oddness of the Corley's gait. Given that Lenehan knows of Corley's sexual relationships with women, he may think Corley's physical infirmity has something to do with his way of living as a male prostitute who relies on women.

Later, Lenehan walks around the city alone and goes into a cheap restaurant, where the discrepancy between his middle-class consciousness and his real situation becomes clear. He feels embarrassed at eating in a cheap restaurant for working-class people, but in reality, Lenehan cannot afford to eat at a more expensive restaurant since he is about to drop out of the middle class. Lenehan's way of living, after all, is similar to Corely's since he relies on Corely in order to get money and cling to the middle class. While he is thinking about Corley's adventure, Lenehan thinks about his

own situation as follows:

In his imagination he beheld the pair of lovers walking along some dark road, he heard Corley's voice in deep energetic gallantries and saw again the leer of the young woman's mouth. This vision made him feel keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit. (TG:279-83)

Here, Lenehan visions the figures of the couple walking. When he recognizes the couple's existence through physical images, like Corley's voice and slavey's mouth, he becomes anxious about his life. He, however, soon becomes less worried about his future, thinking that he will be able to "settle down" (TG:294) instead of being "about town" (TG:79). Although his hope for his future seems to be rather sentimental and self-deceptive, we remark that he notices his real situation through the vision of the others' physical features and views his future life in a positive light. The bodies of others act as a trigger for self-awareness.

Considering that Lenehan's imagination starts from the walking of the couple, the figure of Corley's walking must weigh on his mind. Lenehan sees Corley's waddling gait as a sign of the body destroyed by his way of living. Lenehan, then, associates Coley's figure with that of his own future, thinking he will end up being overly dependent on others while he is obsessed with middle class consciousness and suffering from unemployment and alcoholism. In the sense that he becomes aware of his own situation through his friend's body, and at least tries to imagine the new way of living, Lenehan has a possibility to liberate himself from his paralytic situation.

III. Farrington's Hand and His Son's Prayer

"Counterparts," the ninth story of the book, is a story of Farrington, "The man" who feels humiliation and defeat at both his workplace and a pub, ending up in him abusing his child. Unlike other stories in *Dubliners* we have seen so far, Farrington seems to be hopeless. However, since the descriptions of the body can be seen throughout the story, it is fair to say Joyce gives due weight to the characters' bodies.

Also, assuming that the characters' physical paralysis and liberation are common motifs in *Dubliners*, we will explore the motifs through the descriptions of Farrington's body. Farrington's figure is explained in detail at the beginning of the story: "When he stood up he was tall and of great bulk. He had a hanging face, dark winecoloured, with fair eyebrows and moustache; his eyes bulged forward slightly and the whites of them were dirty" (Cp:9-12). All day long, Farrington feels anger and frustration, and such feelings are expressed through his physical conditions. For example, "His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence" (Cp:145-46), "He felt savage and thirsty and revengeful" (Cp:192-93), and "He felt his great body again aching for the comfort of the publichouse" (Cp:203-04). These sentences show that he feels his whole being deprived of freedom because he is physically restricted by his work and his boss. Quoting John V. Hagopian's statement: "the scrivener has almost assumed an archetypal significance in modern literature as a meaningless man, an insignificant victim of the brute forces of society or the universe" (272), Leblanc says, "Farrington's apparent entrapment by contingent economic, political, and social circumstances is reinforced thematically in the very nature of his employment" (61). In order to gain physical freedom, Farrington needs to escape from the workplace, and, actually, when he goes out of his workplace, his enjoyment of the outside atmosphere is shown with his body parts: "His head was full of the noises of tram gons and swishing trolleys and his nose already sniffed the curling fumes of punch" (Cp:223-25).

Among body parts, a hand is an important element in the story, which shows a loss of "his [Farrington's] reputation as a strong man" (Cp:350). For example, Farrington is a scrivener (copyist) for a legal firm, which means he uses his hand. When he gets angry, his resentment is represented by the word hand: "He felt strong enough to clear out the whole office single-handed" (Cp:144-45) though he soon miserably apologizes to Mr. Alleyne for his rudeness. After Farrington's useless rebellion against Mr. Alleyne at his workplace, two hand-related events occur: an arm wrestling match at a pub and child abuse at home. At both events, Farrington again fails to show his strength. He is beaten at arm wrestling by a young man, and he beats

his son, which is “the most pathetic defeat of all during his miserable day” (Leonard 182). It is ironic that even though Farrington physically escapes from his workplace, which makes his body imprisoned or paralyzed, and shows off physical strength at a pub and at home, his body parts prove his miserable failure.

Then how can Farrington find liberation from his confined or paralyzed circumstances? As for Farrington’s liberation, we basically agree with Leblanc’s suggestion that “‘The man’ can and must choose to face his condition as a free consciousness. He does, however, have a choice of attitude. He can accept his circumstances and stifle, even transcend his wrath . . .” (64). We want to add one more suggestion for Farrington’s liberation: Farrington must look at his son’s body, which gets unfair physical punishments, and empathize with his son, who prays for his father. His son’s prayer has a meaning that “his father will not suffer the spiritual punishment consequent on his drunkenness and anger” (Gifford 76). Farrington needs to learn his son’s infinite self-sacrifice and sympathy under cruel circumstances. As A. Nicholas Fargnoli and Michael Patrick Gillespie point out, “Farrington and his son Tom are counterparts. They both suffer unjustly from the casual brutality of an unfeeling world” (63). Then if Farrington notices his son mirroring his situation and feels empathy for him, he can have the self-awareness of both his confined or paralyzed circumstances and his brutality. At that time, he could get out of prison with a broader view of things. His son should not become like his father, but his father should become like his son.

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IV. The Masculine Body

In this section, we will focus on the descriptions of the body in “The Dead,” the last and longest story in *Dubliners*, and discuss Gabriel Conroy’s paralysis and liberation. It cannot be said, however, that he is physically paralyzed. Actually, his aunt Julia Morkan’s physical paralysis is implied: “her slow eyes and parted lips gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going” (D:142-44).⁷ In that sense, Gabriel is confined in a paralyzed prison, the house where three spinsters, Julia, Kate, and their niece Mary Jane have a party on a

Christmas day. In this matriarchal space, Gabriel tries to show his masculine pride, which is after all shaken by the other three women: Lily, Miss Molly Ivors, and Gretta Conroy. Therefore, Christine van Boheemen-Saaf says, “‘The Dead’ is often read as a story about masculinity under attack from femininity” (228). In terms of Gabriel’s masculine pride which controls his thoughts and behaviours, his body as well as his mind is, in a sense, paralyzed. Then we point out that Gabriel’s paralysis is his self-confidence in his masculine body.

Masculinity in Joyce’s book is often read in relation to emasculation or feminization of the Irish male at the turn of the century. Ellen Scheible mentions, “In the world of Joyce’s *Dubliners*, the nation was still struggling to develop its identity in the face of an emasculating and overly feminized domestic interior” (100). In the process of revolution and independence, as Boheemen-Saaf explains, “The son of Ireland is always already identified with the collectivity of the nation which is understood as female and maternal” (232). With the feminine qualities, the Irish male was always feminized in contrast to masculine English. Such a gendered positioning “may have spurred a perpetual drive to emphatically assert one’s non-feminization” (Boheemen-Saaf, “Postcolonial” 226). Joyce’s Gabriel should be read in the historical and cultural context and regarded as an Irish male who feels pressured to prove his masculinity which is always feminized.

Gabriel is first emasculated by Lily, who gives him a “bitter comment about men” (Doherty 227). His view of the relationship between men and women is overturned by her advanced point of view. What is an interesting thing is that soon after his hesitation is described, a sentence which tells us about his masculine body is inserted: “He was a stout tallish young man” (D:98). It seems that Gabriel’s intension of recovering his lost masculinity enters the narrator’s voice describing his masculine body. After that, Gabriel gives her a coin as if to make up for his mistake, but such a behaviour is like a rape which forces masculinity. In order to conceal his feeling of being emasculated, Gabriel asserts his masculine body by handing over consolation money to her.

Miss Ivors, an ardent Irish nationalist, is the second young woman who assaults

Gabriel's masculinity. While dancing with Gabriel at the party, she rebukes him as a "west Briton" (D:421-22) ⁸ and teases him about his book review appearing in the pro-British *Daily Express*. Miss Ivors sharply condemns Gabriel's lack of interest in Irish language and culture, and exposes his hypocrisy. In the context of gendered Irishness, her behaviour of representing the importance of Irishness to Gabriel is synonymous with that of forcing him to identify with the nation, which is recognized as a feminine. Then, Miss Ivors' attack against Gabriel, who identifies more with the English point of view than that of the Irish, can be interpreted as an emasculating feminization.

When the dance finishes, Gabriel runs away from her and blames her in his mind for embarrassing him in front of other people. The incident with her remains strong in his mind for a while, but when he comes up with an idea of obliquely attacking her in his speech, he feels uplifted. His plan for revenge, however, fails since she leaves the party before his speech. Instead, Gabriel feels his masculinity threatened by Miss Ivors once again. When Miss Ivors leaves the party, Mary Jane tries to get her to stay, but she says she has to go home. Gabriel offers to walk her home for her safety, but she bluntly refuses his offer. Of course, Gabriel might be relieved to find her leaving because he does not need to worry about being insulted by her anymore; but her refusal of his chivalric offer is also a disgraceful treatment, which makes him feel emasculated. Gabriel's masculinity is emasculated twice by Miss Ivors' attacks: one is her pressure on him to identify with "the nation which is understood as female and maternal," and the other is her rejection of his chivalric proposal.

Gretta Conroy is Gabriel's wife, and she is the third woman who emasculates Gabriel. At first, Gabriel tries to prove his masculinity by dominating Gretta's femininity, but soon he experiences emasculation at the hotel, where they plan to spend the night after the party. Just before they leave the party, he sees Gretta standing on the stairs transfixed by the song that Mr. Bartell D'Arcy sings. Gabriel is enamored with his wife's mysterious mood and feels some sort of epiphany towards her. His sexual desire stimulated by her figure becomes increasingly strong on their way to the

hotel. It is obvious that the touch of her body arouses his lust, which makes him pay close attention to their bodies when they go up to the hotel room as follows:

She mounted the stairs behind the porter, *her head* bowed in the ascent, *her frail shoulders* curved as with a burden, her skirt girt tightly about her. He could have flung *his arms* about *her hips* and held her still for *his arms* were trembling with desire to seize her and only the stress of *his nails* against *the palms of his hands* held the wild impulse of *his body* in check. (D:1336-42; emphasis added)

Right after they go into the hotel room, Gabriel notices that Gretta is “so abstracted” (D:1390) but such a mood rather provokes his masculine brutality. Gabriel thinks that he “long[s] to be master of her strange mood” (D:1394) and that he “long[s] to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her” (D:1398-99). When his wife kisses him, Gabriel is extremely delighted. It is interesting to note that his happiness is expressed through his body. For instance, “Gabriel, trembling with delight at her sudden kiss and at the quaintness of her phrase, put his hands on her hair and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers” (D:1408-10) and “His heart was brimming over with happiness” (D:1411-12). Moreover, holding her body with confidence, Gabriel arbitrarily interprets his wife’s thought as one that is the same as his.

Against his expectation, however, both Gretta’s body and her mind escape from his control, and Gabriel finds out that she has been occupied with memories of another man. Gabriel now realizes that while he has been thinking of satisfying a desire of his body by controlling his wife’s body, she has been musing over memories of Michael Furey, a deceased boy whom Gretta once loved. Here we must notice that Furey, who fascinates Gretta, does not have a body because he is now a ghost. Gretta rejects the male ejaculation; or emasculates Gabriel by presenting the insubstantial being of Furey to Gabriel’s imagination. Furey’s body while he was still alive also confronts Gabriel’s masculine body because Furey was “very delicate” (D:1453). It is said that he suffered from tuberculosis, which at the time of this story was one of the serious

infectious diseases. Such a body condition as Furey's in his lifetime is the complete opposite of that of Gabriel, who has a "stout tallish" (D:98) "plump body" (D:107) and values the masculine body as we can see from his order for his son to "do the dumbbells" (D:167). Gabriel's feeling of being humiliated "by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks" (D:1476-77) can be interpreted as his annoyance that not his masculine body but Furey's bodiless being and his once delicate body have been always appealing to Gretta since the old days up till now. Gabriel must feel defeated by Furey whose body is formless now and was delicate in the past.

At the end of the story, Gabriel's eyes are filled with generous tears. He even feels love that he has never felt towards his wife. This scene is full of a pathetic and sentimental atmosphere, yet there is a kind of liberation when Gabriel looks out of the window and decides to set out on his journey westward. Now that Gabriel imagines the existence of a bodiless being and its influence on living people, he must change his arbitrary views on the body and accept the moment when the living and the dead are harmonized. Like the attacks on Gabriel's masculinity by other two women, Gretta's rejection of his desire of the body emasculates Gabriel. In the last emasculation, however, Gabriel experiences liberation for the first time. By imagining Furey's bodiless vision, he becomes aware of the powerlessness of his own masculine body, and in the end, he can liberate himself from the brutal pride in his masculinity.

When Gabriel is paralyzed with astonishment at finding Gretta's body being away from him, he sees in the mirror his masculine body, in a piece of masculine clothing, a "wellfilled shirtfront" (D:1433). Referring to Jacques Lacan's theory of mirror stage and gaze, John Paul Riquelme regards the mirror scene in "The Dead" as the Gabriel's realization of "the body in pieces as the body in death" (134). As Riquelme says, "The loss of delusions about one's own immortality is perhaps inevitably dispiriting, but it can also be liberating" (134), liberation can be brought by self-awareness. In addition, we would say that self-awareness is triggered by looking at the others' figures. Soon after seeing himself in a mirror, Gabriel visualizes Furey's figure, an incorporeal and a delicate being, by hearing Gretta's story. At that time,

Gabriel, who has been blind to overconfidence in his masculinity, clearly sees that his masculine body in a mirror is only a powerless pretension.

Conclusion

In *Dubliners*, paralyzed people who suffered from the social and political situation at the turn of the century are described. In this paper, we have found that male characters in *Dubliners* are rejected, suppressed, or pressured by their circumstances, such as Catholicism, poverty, alcoholism, social class, working condition, and colonization, which confine or paralyze their bodies. However, as we have observed, they experience existential liberation when they become aware of their confined situations and paralyzed bodies through perceiving those of others.

The following line, written by Joyce in defense of *Dubliners*, suggests his intention of writing the moral history of his country:

I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass. (*SL* 90)

As Gabriel sees himself in the mirror and experiences the liberation, *Dubliners* in Joyce's short stories are portrayed as the reflections in Joyce's "nicely polished looking-glass" to make people in reality recognize their own confined situations and inspire them to take one step towards liberation.

Notes

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¹ Wolfgang Iser demonstrates the various interpretations of the word paralysis. Florence L. Walzl, one of the influential earlier and postwar critics of *Dubliners*, sees the paralysis motif as a symbolic image (115). Iser says such a symbolic or ideational reading "has greatly illuminated the individual stories and the collection as a whole" (116), while at the same time,

stasis” (116).

² In a letter to Richards, Joyce says, “I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country” (*SL* 88).

³ See “Poverty and Health,” *The National Archives of Ireland*.

⁴ William York Tindall had earlier made the same argument, saying “[m]eeting himself for the first time, the boy suddenly knows himself, his sin, and his folly—and maybe the nature of Dublin” (19).

⁵ I referred to the digital project *Mapping Dubliners Project*.

⁶ Joyce once wrote to his brother, Stanislaus, about the story, “. . . if many husbands are brutal the atmosphere in which they live (vide Counterparts) is brutal and few wives and homes can satisfy the desire for happiness” (*Letters*, II. 192).

⁷ Julia and her sister Kate ironically echo Eliza and Nannie in “The Sisters,” who remain imprisoned at home to care for their brother James Flynn during his paralytic illness.

⁸ “An Irishman whose allegiance is toward England and who therefore accepts Ireland’s status as a provincial ‘West of England’” (Gifford 116).

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