

## Epiphanies of Colonial Paralysis: James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Louis Becke's *Pacific Tales*\*

Hye Ryoung Kil

The word “epiphany” was evoked when I read a Pacific story by Louis Becke (1855-1913), specifically “A Point of Theology on Maduro,” at the end of which the bodies or remains of an old native man, his little girl, and an English man are visualized in a crude and casual manner. It was an “epiphanic” moment in itself, revealing how Becke’s narrative parallels an epiphany—a concept elaborated by young Joyce or Stephen Daedalus in *Stephen Hero*. This essay was thus conceived to examine the short stories by Becke and Joyce that share characteristics of the epiphany.

---

\* This research was supported by the Yeungnam University Research Grants in 2015.

## I. The Concept of Epiphany in Joyce Studies

The theory of epiphany has been a main subject of Joyce studies—though not so much recently—since the debate on the epiphany was first initiated by Harry Levin in 1960 who first worked with the manuscript *Stephen Hero*, a portion of the original manuscript of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The fact that the term epiphany does not appear in the *Portrait* but only in *Stephen Hero* has made scholars, like Robert Scholes, argue that the epiphany theory is of “a very limited use” and should be “abandoned entirely” (Scholes 68). The epiphany debate, centered on the “Scholes-Walzl controversy,” continued into the 1980s as Zack Bowen excellently summarized in the beginning of his 1981 essay “Joyce and the Epiphany Concept: A New Approach.” Basing his own argument on Walzl’s “broader” definition of the epiphany as “*revelation or illumination* in certain literary and technical sense,” Bowen affirms that the theory has “remained relatively unblemished by the decades of Joyce scholarship” (Bowen 104).

In the 1990s, studies on Joyce’s other manuscript *Epiphanies*, like Stephen’s “book of epiphanies” in which he “think[s] of collecting” epiphanic moments (*SH* 211)—he mentions the book again in *Ulysses*, “Remember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves” (*U* 3.141)—re-affirmed the importance of the epiphany concept in Joyce. Morris Beja notes that “the most intriguing thing” about the *Epiphanies*—with only forty surviving out of at least seventy epiphanies—is the way that most of the epiphanies were “eventually used in Joyce’s more extended works: thirteen in *Stephen Hero*, twelve in the *Portrait*, four even as late as *Ulysses*, and one in *Finnegans Wake*” (Beja 29-30). Vicki Mahaffey also points out that while Joyce critics have tended to “favor the concept of epiphany over the prose sketches that bear the same name,” the sketches of epiphanies themselves are endowed with remarkable features, such as “the absence of authorial commentary that also characterizes Joyce’s later work,” “the division of epiphanies into two types,” and as Beja has found, “their reappearance in the richer contexts of Joyce’s subsequent works” (Mahaffey 193).

As Beja and Mahaffey both recognize that many of them were used in Joyce's later works, the *Epiphanies* are significant, which makes the concept of epiphany itself all the more so. They are not a simple record of daily episodes but "epiphanies" that demonstrate the theory developed in *Stephen Hero*. The characteristics of "the absence of authorial commentary" and "the division of the epiphanies into two types," as Mahaffey observes about the *Epiphanies*, also reveal the technical and formal aspects of the epiphany and epiphany writing as conceptualized in *Stephen Hero*. In this respect, it may be assumed that the epiphany has been established as an important concept in Joyce, and based on this premise, this essay attempts to compare Joyce's and Becke's short stories that narrate an epiphany, focusing on the former's "The Sisters" and "Two Gallants" and the latter's "A Point of Theology" and "A Dead Loss." This essay will begin by re-examining the concept of epiphany not only as applicable to Becke's narrative but as a concept essential to Stephen's or Joyce's esthetic theory, notwithstanding the fact that the word "epiphany" is absent in the *Portrait*.

## II. The Esthetics of Epiphany in *Stephen Hero* and the *Portrait*

"Epiphany" is defined as "a sudden spiritual manifestation," as numerous quoted in Joyce studies, "whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself" (*SH* 211). Although the word appears later in Chapter XXV of *Stephen Hero*, the concept of epiphany emerges earlier in Chapter XV, the first of twelve surviving chapters of the manuscript. Stephen walking through the Dublin streets with "his ears and eyes ever prompt to receive impressions" is depicted as "the artist" who "must wait for the Eucharist to come to [him]" and "set about translating the [Eucharistic] phrase into common sense" (*SH* 30). Later on, while "passing through Eccles' St" and "receiv[ing] an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely," Stephen "think[s] of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies" (*SH* 211)—the

first mention of the word epiphany. The epiphany, “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself,” then, refers to the moment when the artist receives a “keen” impression from trivial things or images of the colonial city, the moment that the Eucharist comes to him in the form of “the phrase” “asking to have [itself] explained” or translated “into common sense” (*SH* 30).

Significantly, the “common sense” into which the Eucharistic phrase translates is the truth of the colonial world, which connects the esthetic phenomenon of epiphany to Becke’s narrative about the colonial Pacific. As Stephen contemplates for his essay “Drama and Life” or “Art and Life,”<sup>1)</sup> the “poetic phenomenon” “signalled in the heavens”—meaning the epiphany or the Eucharistic transfiguration or translation—reveals to the artist “the truth of the being of the visible [colonial] world,” simultaneously giving birth to “beauty, the splendor of truth” (*SH* 80). Stephen’s or Joyce’s esthetics emphasizes “classical temper” as “a constant state of the artistic mind” over “romantic temper”; while the romantic mind is more disposed to imagination than observation, the classical mind, focusing on “present things,” works upon the things that are present so that “the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered” (*SH* 78). In particular, the instance of receiving a keen “impression” or “manifestation” of “truth” on the Eccles’ street, which makes Stephen conceive of or employ the word “epiphany,” belongs to one of “present things,” the object of classical esthetics. Stephen hears a “fragment of colloquy” between a young lady “standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis” and a young gentleman “leaning on the rusty railings of the area”:

The Young Lady—(drawling discreetly) . . . O, yes . . . I was . . . at the . . .  
cha . . . pel . . .

The Young Gentleman—(inaudibly) . . . I . . . (again inaudibly) . . . I . . .

The Young Lady—(softly) . . . O . . . but you’re . . . ve . . . ry . . . wick . .

---

1) In fact, Stephen’s theory “closely paraphrases the aesthetic theory” of Joyce in “James Clarence Mangan,” and not “Drama and Life” (*CW* 73).

. . . ed . . . (*SH* 211)

The fragment of conversation between the young woman and man becomes an epiphany when Stephen perceives that the man is courting the woman standing on the steps of “Irish paralysis.” It is like the case of the Ballast Office clock that Stephen refers to as an example of epiphany:

He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. Cranly questioned the inscrutable dial of the Ballast Office. . . .

—Yes, said Stephen. I will pass it time after time. . . . Then all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany.

—What?

—Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanised. (*SH* 211)

Just as the “inscrutable” clock, a “present” thing, may achieve its epiphany when “a spiritual eye” adjusts “its vision to an exact focus” and knows “what it is,” the “present” dialogue reaches an epiphany in “the moment the focus is reached”—the moment Stephen’s “spiritual eye” is focused on the truth that courting the Irish woman who suffers from “paralysis” reveals the phenomenon of colonial “paralysis.” The paralysis of the relationship is typical between the colonized Irish man and woman, paralyzed and corrupted under Catholicism and English rule, as Stephen depicts “the spectacle” of Emma flirting with the young priest as “typical of Irish ineffectualness” earlier in the book (*SH* 66).<sup>2)</sup> Thus, this moment serves as “a sudden spiritual manifestation” that reveals the “truth” of colonial “paralysis”—commonly detected in Becke’s stories—which equals the “unuttered” “meaning” of

2) The “paralysis” or “ineffectualness” of the relationship between man and woman in colonial Ireland is suggested in many stories in *Dubliners*. In the *Portrait*, a case concerns Davin who is invited to stay the night by a peasant woman in the Balluhourra hills while her husband is away (*P* 183). And in *Ulysses*, Bloom, a married man, is led to masturbate by Gerty, “a specimen of winsome Irish girlhood,” who literally suffers lameness or paralysis (*U* 13.81).

“present things” “the quick intelligence” may glimpse at in the classical art.

The revelation of the common-sense truth or “unuttered” meaning of things is what makes Stephen find “the third, the supreme quality of beauty” in the phenomenon of epiphany (*SH* 211): beauty is “the splendor of truth.” Quoting Aquinas, Stephen identifies the three qualities of beauty as “integrity, a wholeness, symmetry and radiance” (*SH* 212). When perceiving “a thing” and discovering that it is “a *thing*,” the esthetic mind finally sees that it is “*that* thing,” which is “the moment that [Stephen] call[s] epiphany”; it is the moment when the “soul of the commonest object,” its “whatness,” with its “structure” “adjusted to” “*that*” point, seems “radiant” to the mind, showing that it is “*that* thing” (*SH* 213). The moment in which “*that* thing” is “radiant” in “the visible world” is the moment of epiphany in which the commonplace “truth” of the colonial world manifests. This concept of epiphany, as the esthetic phenomenon of the “whatness” and the “truth” of a thing becoming “radiant,” is retained in the *Portrait*, only without using the word epiphany. Stephen’s esthetics, again, begins with the relationship between beauty and truth in the novel: “Plato, I believe, said that beauty is the splendor of truth. I don’t think that it has a meaning but the true and the beautiful are akin” (*P* 207). Then he continues with the act or process of apprehending beauty: “*Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance*” (*P* 212). The “radiance” is “the whatness of a thing,” defined as the “supreme quality” of beauty, which is “felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in his imagination” (*P* 213). The “mysterious instant” that the “supreme quality of beauty” is perceived by “the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony” is designated as “the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure” (*P* 213). This esthetic theory is more organized and elucidated than the epiphany theory in *Stephen Hero*, with the word “epiphany” replaced with “the luminous silent stasis,” though the process of perceiving the three qualities of beauty is the same as in the theory of epiphany. In short, whether the instant that beauty is perceived by the mind—when the “whatness of a thing” becomes radiant—is termed as the epiphany or “luminous silent stasis,” there is no difference in that the common-sense “truth”

of colonial Dublin is revealed in that instant of “esthetic pleasure.”

Interestingly here, while the process of apprehending beauty and truth is the same in the two theories, the esthetics of “the luminous silent stasis” suggests a subtle change from the phenomenon of epiphany to the experience of stasis. The epiphany, as previously discussed, is disposed to classicism, preferring to choose the object of esthetic image from common, present things. The phenomenon of epiphany, in this case, is likely to occur in the thing by itself, rather than in the mind of the artist, as Stephen says that “[t]he object achieves its epiphany” in an esthetic moment (*SH* 213). Still, “the object is epiphanised” as well (*SH* 211), which implies that the epiphany is a phenomenon taking place in the esthetic mind rather than in the object. In fact, the theory of epiphany—which is to occur not only “in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture” but “in a memorable phase of the mind itself”—is assumed to have combined the esthetic tempers of both classicism and romanticism, emphasizing the act of “observation” and “imagination” respectively; the epiphany in this sense may well be the “deeper insight” that Joyce suggests will make both classical and romantic schools “at one” (Parrinder 39; *CW* 74).<sup>3</sup> Yet the act of esthetic apprehension is focused on the “observation” of an esthetic image in common things or the “vulgarity of speech or of gesture” in *Stephen Hero*, whereas the focus is more adjusted to “a memorable phase of the mind” in the *Portrait*. That is, the esthetic image is “felt by the artist” “in his imagination” though the mind perceiving the image has also observed its “wholeness” and “harmony” in the *Portrait*. The “luminous silent stasis” represents a spiritual state, which is delineated earlier in the novel as “the lightnings of intuition”—“lightnings of so clear a splendor” that one can feel “the spirit of beauty has folded him round like a mantle” (*P* 177). Therefore, the focus is placed on the experience of the spiritual state or the “imagination,” although “observation”

---

3) Joyce writes in the essay about Mangan, “It is many a day since the dispute of the classical and romantic schools began in the quiet city of the arts . . . it is so far good, and presses slowly towards a deeper insight which will make the schools at one” (*CW* 73-74).

is still a part of the act of esthetic apprehension in the *Portrait*.

In this respect, Stephen's theory of esthetics is more balanced in the *Portrait*, with the "luminous silent stasis" signifying "a rare balance of spirit and matter, imagination and observation" (Mahaffey 192), although this does not necessarily mean that the stasis theory is different or altered from the epiphany, which also incorporates the acts of classical observation and romantic imagination in theory. In fact, the stasis that is compared to "the lightnings of intuition" "in many respects parallels" the epiphany.<sup>4</sup>) The "balance" between the two esthetic acts or the focus on the act of romantic imagination, which is noticeable in the *Portrait*, concerns the role of the artist—instead of change in the theory—as the subject of romantic mind as well as classical observation. By focusing on the romantic mind, the mind of the artist—instead of the act of the mind—is emphasized, as Stephen describes the poet in the manuscript as "the intense centre of the life of his age," who "alone is capable of absorbing in himself the life that surrounds him" (*SH* 80). It is the artist who should "record [moments of] epiphanies" (*SH* 211), as manifestations of the truth of colonial Dublin. Therefore, Stephen's theory of epiphany, with the two modes of esthetic apprehension of classical observation and romantic imagination, is still valid in the *Portrait*; it is merely that the term epiphany is replaced with "the luminous silent stasis" to underline the role of the artist, who can absorb the colonial "life that surrounds him" and achieve the epiphany or the silent stasis in his mind.

### III. The Epiphany of Stark Realism

The epiphany is an essential concept in Joyce's work, particularly in *Dubliners*, which was written during the same period as *Stephen Hero* and the *Portrait*. In fact, the earlier written stories "The Sisters," "Eveline," and "After the Race" in

---

4) Kumar notes that Joyce "unnecessarily introduced an element of ambiguity" "by using a new term" when "epiphany in many respects parallels intuition" (Kumar 29).



*Dubliners* were first published under “the pseudonym of Stephen Daedalus” (Ellman 164), which indicates the degree to which the artist Stephen overlaps with the author of the *Dubliners* stories. Moreover, Stephen’s name is spelled “Daedalus” in *Stephen Hero*, while it is “Dedalus” in the *Portrait*, which supports the assumptions that *Dubliners* was written by the artist of epiphany; most, if not all, of the stories conclude with an epiphany that manifests the truth of colonial Dublin; and the epiphanies belong mostly to the classical mode of “stark realism” rather than the romantic one of “visionary fantasy” (Riquelme 104). Joyce thus wrote in a letter, “I am writing a series of epicleti. . . . I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” (*SL* 22). As “epicleti” refers to the “invocation” of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the bread and wine of the Eucharist, *Dubliners* was intended to serve as a literary catalyst, narrated in the style of realism. The literary catalyst or “epicleti” leads to epiphanies that reveal “paralysis”—“the special ordour of corruption” which Joyce intended to float over the stories (*SL* 79)—as the truth or the soul of the city.

Strictly speaking, it is the epicleti and not the epiphany that is narrated in *Dubliners*, which makes the narrative unique. Writing stories to invoke an epiphany implicates a challenge that while the author or artist (re)creates or narrates his experience of epiphany, the reader may not be able to share the same experience. Thus the artist is doubly missioned; he is not only to “contemplate intensely the truth” of the life surrounding him but also to represent the truth manifesting in the moment of epiphany so that the reader can experience it (*SH* 80). Yet the truthful “image” born in the epiphanic moment “must be set between the mind or sense of the artist himself and the mind or senses of [the reader]” in order to let the reader perceive the image or truth just as the artist did (*P* 213). The artist, “like the God of creation,” must remain “invisible” and “indifferent,” making no comment so that the reader can discover the truth by himself (*P* 215). Such esthetics naturally favors the style of realism, which was an established convention in late nineteenth-century short fiction and contributed to the popularity of Becke’s stories. Joyce was especially influenced by Gustav Flaubert who wrote in an 1857 letter: “An artist

must be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful” (qtd. in Gifford 256). The influence of the French realism writer on Joyce is more obvious as the former talks about “style” in the same letter: “It is time to endow [art] with pitiless method, with the exactness of the physical sciences. Still, for me the capital difficulty remains style, form, that indefinable Beauty . . . as Plato said, the splendour of Truth.” Joyce, while writing *Dubliners*, similarly adopted “a style of scrupulous meanness” as the form of “epicleti” to evoke an epiphany (*SL* 83)—that is, to create “Beauty” and “Truth.” The pitiless, mean narrative style of realism or “stark realism” is also suggested when Stephen conceives “a book of epiphanies.” The epiphanies are to be recorded “with extreme care” as they occur in “the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (*SH* 211). The moments are to be represented or narrated exactly as they are so that the narrative can re-invoke the epiphany, subtle and fleeting, which the artist experienced or created. In this respect, the narrative of *Dubliners* renders “a new type of short story” that adopts absolute realism and at the same time is “intricate and carefully crafted” to call forth the epiphany that betrays the paralysis (Parrinder 41), the “special ordour of corruption,” of the colonial city.

Interestingly, stories by Becke, which are also narrated in “stark realism,” betray in an epiphanic moment the phenomenon of paralysis implicated in “greed, corruption, and violence” in the colonial Pacific (Eves 133). Becke’s realism, according to one reviewer, was “extremely strong,” “incomparably stronger” than that of R. L. Stevenson (qtd. in Day 39-40), who claimed that his novella *The Beach of Falesa* (1892) was “the first realistic South Sea story” (qtd. in Edmond 172). Becke’s stories—though almost forgotten now—were often compared to Stevenson’s, as they paralleled Stevenson’s later work not only in time and space but “in their relation to the literary forms and ideology of imperialism” (Dixon 179-80). Becke’s Pacific tales, like Stevenson’s, did not conform to romantic adventures that promoted imperial expansion. In other words, Becke’s realistic narrative, which renders “the most vivid, and yet honest, picture of [the] islands” (Maude 225), presents “a substantial record” of the commercial colonization of the

Pacific instead of rendering an imperial romance (Eves 80). It is worth noting here that Becke's realism is related to his subjectivity as a colonial Australian to the British Empire, just as Joyce's is with his subjectivity as a colonial Irish. Australia, like Ireland, worked to achieve independence from the Empire at the turn of the century, and its literature preferred the mode of "realism" to express "radical, egalitarian and nationalistic ideas" (Dixon 184). Becke's stories, thus, narrated in a style of realism, a style of no less "scrupulous meanness" than Joyce's, reveal the truth and soul of the colonial Pacific as paralytic and corrupt in a moment of epiphany.

The realistic narrative in Becke's Pacific tales is "notable" for its "absence of description of the environment" in a similar way that Joyce's narrative in *Dubliners* lacks commentary on the context of major events (Eves 83), which serves to evoke the epiphanic truth of the colonial world. The absence of authorial commentary in Joyce's stories is intended to invoke the epiphany of the common truth of Dublin in "the reader's [own] imagination and sensitivity" (Hayman 641). For one, in the very first story of *Dubliners*, "The Sisters," the want of explanation or description about the paralysis of Father Flynn helps to illuminate the paralysis of Dublin by highlighting the paralytic image of the priest as the truth of the colonized Catholic city. Similarly, the extremely plain narrative devoid of detailed description in Becke's stories contributes to bringing forth the epiphanic truth of the Pacific in the reader's mind. In his 1898 story "A Point of Theology," the lack of description of the death of the Englishman and the old native and his grand-daughter, with only their bodies displayed, contributes to spotlighting the rotten image of the Christian colony as the truth of the colonial Pacific. Given the similarity in the narrative style and the image suggested by the narrative, Becke's stories, like Joyce's, can be deemed as the epiphanies betraying the paralysis of colonial world.

With paralysis or corruption as the epiphanic truth of colonial world, it is challenging for the artist to declare that art is "the very central expression of life" and "not an escape from life" and that he "affirms out of the fullness of his own life" (*SH* 86). It should be noted, however, that the invocation of the epiphany of

paralysis as the common truth of the colony is an act of “affirmation,” as the truth or “realities” “alone give and sustain life” (*SH* 80). The “affirmation” does not mean that the paralytic life is affirmable but that it is truth or reality, the acknowledgment of which “alone” would lead to the liberation of colonial life from paralysis. In this respect, the epiphany of paralysis involves “the dialectic of decadence and emancipation” (Heller 5). While disclosing “an absence of meaning” in paralytic colonial life, with failed attempts to escape from it, the epiphany “violates paralysis by bringing it to light,” by illuminating the desire to escape or live, which exists “beyond paralysis” (Heller 8-9). In other words, the artist of epiphany affirms not only the paralytic reality of colonial life but also the desire for life, which is the other side of the coin. Thus, this essay will compare Joyce’s “The Sisters” and “Two Gallants” with Becke’s “A Point of Theology” and “A Dead Loss” respectively in order to illustrate that Becke’s stories also invoke the epiphany of colonial paralysis, which simultaneously reveals the hidden desire to escape from it.

#### IV. “The Sisters” and “A Point of Theology on Maduro”

Stories in *Dubliners* present the epiphanies of the “realistic” mode, with its “vulgarity of speech or of gesture,” instead of the “fantastic” one with its “memorable phase of the mind” (Riquelme 123). The epiphanies evoked in *Dubliners*, then, may have grown out of “slips,” as Stanislaus Joyce remarked on his brother’s *Epiphanies* that they were initially “ironical observations of slips, and little errors and gestures” that revealed “the very things [people] were most careful to conceal” or “the subconscious” of colonial people (Stanislaus Joyce 124-25). In fact, the first story, “The Sisters,” evokes the image of paralytic Dublin for the boy narrator with slips, most effectively with the word “paralysis”—appearing on the very first page—which must have been repeatedly said in his presence, as he narrates that “the word paralysis” has “always sounded strangely” in his ears (*D* 7).

The word paralysis, revealing the secret reality of Father Flynn, who may well have contracted “‘general paralysis of the insane,’ i.e., paresis, syphilis of the central nervous system” (Gifford 29), contributes to the epiphany of the subconscious or commonplace truth of Dubliners as paralytic or corrupt under both the Catholic Church and the British.

Characteristically, the epiphany of paralytic life as the truth of the priest and colonial Dublin is not evoked from the contemporary implication of the word paralysis that the disease hints at religious and moral corruption, which the boy seems not aware of anyway. Instead, the epiphany of Dublin’s paralysis is effected because the meaning of the word is not understood by the boy, to whom it only “sound[s]” “like the name of some maleficent and sinful being” doing “its deadly work” (*D* 7). The fearful-sounding word, added to by other slips or fragments of the talk about the priest, develops into the epiphany of paralysis in the image of the priest “wide-awake and laughing-like to himself” alone in the dark confession-box (*D* 15). The fragment of the priest’s sister’s speech “wide-awake and laughing-like to himself”—which is repeated—and her saying that “something gone wrong with him” finally epiphanize the truth of the priest as paralytic because the boy narrator does not know the meaning of the words and speech (*D* 16). The epiphany is achieved in something that the boy hears, exactly in the thing that is said. The epiphany reveals the truth that Father Flynn’s paralysis is embedded in his secret desire to escape from “the priesthood,” which is “too much” for the colonized priest and thus makes him paralytic (*D* 15).

Similarly, the epiphany of the truth of the Christian colony as paralytic is evoked in Becke’s “A Point of Theology,” where the narrative of the conflict between Protestant and Catholic natives ends with the image of decayed bodies of the Catholic native and the British trader. The story, though told in third person narrative, assumes a first person perspective through the supercargo character Denison who—often appearing as the alter-ego of the author who used to work as a supercargo among the Pacific islands—is supposed to experience the epiphanic image. The narrative begins with Denison’s trading vessel calling at Maduro to

supply the island trader Macpherson. The British trader tells Denison and his captain about an old native Rime who, with his little grand-daughter, has returned after forty years from Tahiti where he converted to Catholicism, while the Maduro people have become “rigid Protestants” to whom “‘Papist’ was an abomination and a horror” (“Point” 15). The Protestant natives would not give the “Katolikos” food until they “give up the ‘evil’ religion,” which makes “foolish Rime” and his little girl starve to death; Macpherson, who helps them, has “himself tabooed”—that is, his trade “boycotted” (“Point” 16). The white men, after vainly trying to persuade the Protestants and driven into a violent struggle in which Rime and his girl are nearly murdered, take the Catholics to the ship. Yet they secretly leave the island the next day on a small canoe, which compels Macpherson to follow them, despite the danger of adverse winds, to take them to a nearby island where there are many Catholics. The narrative ends:

Three weeks afterwards the Sadie Perkins sperm whaler of New Bedford came across a boat, five hundred miles west of Maduro. In the stern sheets lay that which had once been Macpherson, the “auld fule Papist, and the wee bit lassie.” (“Point” 20)

As discussed previously, the narrative ending lacks description about why or how they died—though not difficult to guess—which makes the image of decayed bodies shocking or “keen enough to afflict [one’s] sensitiveness very severely,” as stated in *Stephen Hero*. As the image of the paralytic priest reveals the truth that colonial Dublin is corrupt under the rule of the Catholic Church implicitly supporting British rule in Joyce,<sup>5</sup>) the vision of three bodies floating in the middle of the Pacific betrays the truth that the colonial Pacific is rotten by the Christian mission complicit with the white man’s colonial expansion in Becke. The

---

5) The Catholic Church had served British rule since the very beginning of Irish colonial history, in Joyce’s time contributing to the destruction of the Home-Rule leader Charles S. Parnell. Thus, Joyce wrote in a letter, “[T]he Church is still, as it was in the time of Adrian IV, the enemy of Ireland” (*SL* 124).

conversion of the native to Christianity was more often than not performed for material value, as the missionary project initially aimed at the “external transformation” of the native because of the lack of a common tongue necessary to teach the Bible (Smith 53). The initial prioritizing of a material civilization to a spiritual one—that is, Christianization—promoted colonial trade, in which the first missionaries were actively involved, and made the native increasingly dependent on civilizing goods supplied by the missionary traders. The native’s reliance on trade goods inevitably established a close tie between the native people and the missionary sect who converted them to Christianity, while the materialistic conversion caused some natives to convert alternately to Catholicism and Protestantism as they wished. This is well demonstrated in the native convert’s description of the American missionary as “a very rich man, and the friend of the President of the United States and God” in a story included in Becke’s *Pacific Tales* (“In the Old” 37). In this context, the conflict on Maduro between the native Protestants and Catholics, which drives the latter—the elderly native with his little girl—into death in exile, reflects the extent to which the native conversion to Christianity is corrupt.

Strikingly here, the bodies include that of Macpherson, the British trader, who has been respected by the native Protestants. Though a trader, he teaches “a class in the Mission Church” in his spare time and “neither dr[inks] nor smoke[s]” (“Point” 14), representing the typical missionary trader. That the British missionary trader, along with the native Catholics, is destroyed is almost as shocking as the terrible end of the white man in Stevenson’s Pacific work. In fact, many of Becke’s stories end in the violent death or murder of white men, committed either by the whites themselves or by the native. Becke’s stories, in this respect, reveal the corruption of both the colonized and the colonizer, as the author was in the position of both, while Joyce’s *Dubliners* is necessarily focused on the paralysis of the colonized Dubliners. “A Point of Theology,” in particular, presents a strong message that the mission is complicit in the corruption of native Christianity, which is epiphanized in the last narrative that spotlights the body of the British missionary

trader, together with those of native Christians. The epiphany is evoked, as in “The Sisters,” because no explanation is given regarding the cause of their death, except that the bodies are depicted just as they may have been seen by the sailors who found the boat. The bodies, betraying the paralysis of the Christian Pacific, illuminate the inherent desire to escape from it, which is the very cause of the three deaths.

### V. “Two Gallants” and “A Dead Loss”

The symptom of general paralysis or corruption is not only detected in the colony under the rule of Christianity—both Protestantism and Catholicism—but also under commercialism, which represents the two most important British colonial activities. Commercialism is characteristic of British colonial culture, in which everything is bargained, and every concern reduced to material or money issues. Stephen remarks in the morning of the day in *Ulysses*, “The problem is to get money,” while Bloom contemplates in the night, “All those wretched quarrels . . . were very largely a question of the money question which was at the back of everything greed and jealousy” (*U* 1.497, 16.1111-15). The Scottish novelist Stevenson also speaks of “the money question” as the essential feature of colonial culture. While travelling the Pacific islands in the 1890s, he is reminded that his “Scots folk of the Highlands and the Islands” were “in the same convulsive and transitional state” of being colonized as the Pacific people “of to-day”: “In both cases an alien authority enforced . . . new customs introduced, and chiefly that fashion of regarding money as the means and object of existence [*sic*]” (Stevenson 8). The attitude of perceiving “money as the means and object of existence,” which corrupts human relationship, is brought to light in the narrative ending of Joyce’s “Two Gallants” and Beckett’s “A Dead Loss.” The materialistic or commercialized relationship, as the truth of the paralytic colony under commercialism, is epiphanized in these stories, as the truth of the paralytic colony under Christianity



is betrayed in the two short stories discussed earlier.

As mentioned in the discussion of the moment when Stephen first thinks of “epiphanies” in *Stephen Hero*, paralysis or the “special ordour of corruption” that floats over colonial Dublin is typically revealed in the commercialized human relationship, particularly between man and woman. The fragment of conversation between the young man and woman incidentally overheard by Stephen epiphanizes the truth of Dublin that even the courtship is corrupt in the commercialized colony, with the woman’s love traded for marriage, as suggested by the fragmented talk. Stephen discusses this point when he is frustrated about Emma whom he has a crush on:

I like a woman to give herself. I like to receive. . . . But surely what they call the temple of the Holy Ghost should not be bargained for! Isn’t that simony? . . . A woman’s body is a corporal asset of the State: if she traffic with it she must sell it either as a harlot or as a married woman or as a working celibate or as a mistress. But woman is (incidentally) a human being: and a human being’s love and freedom is not a spiritual asset of the State. . . . Love gives and freedom takes. . . . Emma will sell herself to the State but give nothing.  
(*SH* 202-03)

The Dublin woman, like Emma, seeks marriage without love or without giving but by selling her body as “a corporal asset of the [commercial] State.” Being “the temple of the Holy Ghost,” however, the body is not to be “bargained for” in the Christian State, which is otherwise regarded as “simony.” It is inevitable in this regard that the word “simony”—along with “paralysis”—appears on the first page of the first story, “The Sisters,” of *Dubliners*, intended to betray the paralytic life of the commercialized Christian colony, oppressed with the “impossible task” of “serving both God and Mammon” (*CW* 190). Every sin is necessarily “simoniac” in colonial Dublin, as the boy unknowingly mentions “the simoniac of [the priest’s] sin” (*D* 9). In Dublin as such, marriage is not a matter of love or freedom but an object of bargain for livelihood, as Eveline, dreaming of “escape” from oppressive

domesticity, considers running away with a man who may give her “life, perhaps love, too” in “Eveline” (*D* 38). The fear of new life abroad, however, or rather the corrupt habit of being “gratefully oppressed” at home, is epiphanyed in the last image of Eveline as “a helpless animal,” giving “no sign of love or farewell or recognition” to her departing lover (*D* 40, 39), just like the epiphanyic image of the priest “wide-awake and laughing-like to himself” in “The Sisters.” Similarly, settling down with a woman with money is the dream of unmarried men without the means of subsistence in colonial Dublin. Gallaher professes that he “mean[s] to marry money” in “A Little Cloud,” while Lenehan, living like “a leech,” hopes that he might be able to “live happily if he could only come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready” in “Two Gallants” (*D* 79, 48, 55). The materialized relationship between the loveless and moneyless man and woman is thus featured in many of the *Dubliners* stories.

Of the stories portraying the distorted relationship under commercialism, the ending of “Two Gallants” achieves its epiphany by vivifying the image of “a small gold coin,” which Corley, one of the two ironically-designated “[g]allants,” has procured from a “slavey” (*D* 58). The image of the shining coin is comparable to the sound of the “fall of the coins” in “Araby,” though the epiphany of the demoralization of the commercialized city is evoked in the image of the boy “[g]azing up into the darkness” of the bazaar hall, instead of the sound of the falling coins; failing to buy for his love and dropping his “pennies” in his pocket, the boy sees himself “as a creature driven and derided by vanity,” with his eyes “burned with anguish and anger” (*D* 32, 33). The sound of the coins being counted at the bazaar, mixed with that of two young men and a young lady laughing and teasing in “English accents” (*D* 32), suggests the boy’s potential relationship with his love when his own coins—exchanged with a thing for her—are put among the other coins counted at the bazaar. So the sound of his “pennies”—not worth a thing at the bazaar—falling inside his pocket marks his incapacity for any relationship, be it materialistically tainted or not, which contributes to the epiphany of the paralysis of the commercialized colony. Like the sound of the falling coins in

“Araby,” the image of the “gold coin,” which the slavey woman hands over to Corley, epiphanizes the corrupt relationship under the influence of English commercialism between the Dublin man and woman in “Two Gallants.”

Notably, the dishonesty of the relationship between Corley and the maid woman does not simply lie in that he is interested in the money that she can bring in instead of her, as he brags to Lenehan, “There’s nothing to touch a good slavey” (*D* 50). But it is also detected in the narrative suggesting that she has stolen the gold coin, “a sovereign”—which is in fact worth the lowest-rank maid’s “wages for at least six or seven weeks” (Gifford 62)—from the house she works at in the hope that Corley will “marry her” (*D* 48). Corley is cautious enough to not let her “know [his] name,” while telling her he used to be “in Pim’s”—a wholesale-retailer “widely regarded in Dublin as [a model] of sober commercial reliability” (Gifford 57)—so that she considers him “a bit of class” or decent enough to marry her (*D* 49). It may well be, thus, that she has taken the “sovereign” coin from the house, “cautiously” “running down” and “running up” back the steps leading to the house, after which Corley “swiftly” leaves and Lenehan, while secretly following him, makes sure he is “not observed” (*D* 57). From this perspective, the corrupt relationship as the truth of the commercialized colony is epiphanized in the gold coin, which is presented only in the ending paragraph:

‘Can’t you tell us?’ he [Lenehan] said. ‘Did you try her?’

Corley halted at the first lamp and stared grimly before him. Then with a grave gesture he extended a hand towards the light and, smiling, opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple. A small gold coin shone in the palm. (*D* 58)

The sudden appearance of the gold coin, without any authorial commentary on it, evokes an epiphany betraying the degree to which the relationship is corrupt in colonial Dublin. The shining coin achieves the epiphany effectively, as in “The Sisters,” because it is not clarified how or why the gold coin emerges in Corley’s palm, not to mention if it is even the maid’s own. Like the paralytic image of the

priest “wide-awake and laughing-like to himself,” the gold coin, as an esthetic object, betrays the beauty of the commonplace truth of the colony that the relationship between man and woman is paralytic. The man like Corley and Lenehan—Corley’s parasite or “disciple”—simply tries to “touch” a woman for money, even possibly persuading her to steal, while the woman only wants to get a decent man to marry and to provide her with livelihood. Still, the epiphanic beauty or truth lies not only in that the man and the woman materialistically exploit each other, but that they do so hoping to “settle down” and “live happily,” as Lenehan wishes. They hope to escape from the exploitative, paralytic relationship.

Not surprisingly, the commercially distorted relationship in the colony is best demonstrated in the slave trade, known as “blackbirding” in the Pacific. While many of Becke’s stories realistically depict human trafficking,<sup>6)</sup> “A Dead Loss” invokes the epiphany of the most inhuman or commercialized human relationship as the well-known truth of the colony in its ending. In this story, in which the supercargo Denison again acts as the observer of the epiphanic moment, the truth is epiphanized in “slips” or “vulgarity of speech or of gesture,” as defined in *Stephen Hero*. As in “The Sisters”—in which the epiphany of colonial corruption begins with the slip of the word “paralysis”—an epiphanic slip in Captain Chaplin’s saying, “a sad end to my lovely five hundred dollars,” which refers to the native girl Lunumala who has just disappeared into the sea, is preceded by a slip in the native sailor’s response to her suspicious query, “Why is the ship going to the South?”: “To Fiji, my white tropic bird” (“Dead” 58, 57). The casual mention of “Fiji,” along with the expression of “tropic bird,”<sup>7)</sup> epiphanizes the status or true relationship of the beautiful daughter of a dead chief and Captain Chaplin, an ex-blackbirder, who has bought her from an island trader in trouble for “five

---

6) Becke himself was once engaged in “blackbirding” as the young supercargo working for Captain Hayes who was infamous across the mid-nineteenth-century Pacific, as written in *Concerning “Bully” Hayes*.

7) The blackbirding trade focused on plantations in Fiji and Queensland in the late nineteenth century.

hundred dollars”: the trader was “tabooed” for taking Lunumala from another island as his new wife and sending away his old wife native to the island where his business is set. Staying three months on board, Lunumala, “grave, dignified, and always self-possessed,” becomes attached to Chaplin, who “treat[s] her kindly”; “little kn[owing] his intentions regarding her future,” she has “given him such affection as she [i]s capable of,” although he would answer “nothing” when she asks, “There is my land over there behind the sun. When will we get there?” (“Dead” 57). Only when she hears that the ship is heading to “Fiji” does Lunumala realize that she is just a slave and a thing to be sold to whoever makes the best offer, and not a human being to Chaplin.

While this realization or her own epiphany of her position as a commercial thing leads to her suicidal jump, Lunumala’s last image, similar to that of Eveline, like “a helpless animal,” contributes to the reader’s or Denison’s epiphany at the end of the narrative, which reveals the paralysis of commercialized colony. Lunumala, looking in the “hard, unrelenting face” of Chaplin, who confirms that the ship’s destination is Fiji, slowly mounts to the upper front deck; looking back at Chaplin and Denison for a second, with “her white dress flapp[ing]” and “her long, black hair stream[ing] out like a pall of death,” she suddenly “spr[ings] over” (“Dead” 57). After a vain search with the whaleboat, Chaplin returns and in a few minutes is back to “his usual cool way,” and the narrative ends:

“A sad end to the poor girl’s life,” said the supercargo.

“Yes,” said the methodical ex-Honolulu black-birder, “and a sad end to my lovely five hundred dollars.” (“Dead” 57-58)

Chaplin’s “usual cool,” “methodical” remark on the loss of his “lovely five hundred dollars” that he paid for Lunumala in the face of her death epiphanizes the paralysis of human relationship in the commercialized Pacific. Like the gold coin shining in Corley’s palm, Chaplin’s careless reference or slip of the tongue regarding his “lovely” money achieves an epiphany because of its unexpectedness, despite its coming from the “ex-Honolulu black-birder.” Although when taking her from the

trader, he intends to hand over Lunumala to “a friend” of his in Honolulu who is “always willing to give a few thousand dollars for a really handsome girl” (“Dead” 56), his behavior with her appears humane throughout, leading her to trust and even possibly love him. Furthermore, the ship is heading to Fiji instead of Honolulu, where she may have to “remain awhile” for some other reason than being sold as a slave (“Dead” 57). In short, the context of Chaplin’s businesslike utterance on the death of the girl is not quite clear and thus unexpected, as in other epiphanies, because of which it can effectively evoke an epiphany revealing general corruption as the truth of the commercialized colony.

In conclusion, Becke’s short stories “A Point of Theology” and “A Dead Loss” share the qualities of epiphany with which Joyce intended to endow his stories in *Dubliners*. The epiphany, as “a sudden spiritual manifestation” “in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture,” is achieved when the observing character or the reader unexpectedly receives a strong impression from a casual image or utterance that manifests paralysis as the truth of colonial life. Becke’s two tales, thematically comparable to Joyce’s “The Sisters” and “Two Gallants” respectively, are narrated in stark realism, lacking detailed descriptions, which create a keen impression that evokes the epiphany of colonial corruption at the end. In each epiphanic moment, “A Point of Theology” and “The Sisters” commonly reveal the demoralization of the colony under Christianity, while “A Dead Loss” and “Two Gallants” similarly illuminate the corruption of the colony under commercialism. Becke’s epiphanies, therefore, show that the epiphany as a narrative technique—which owes a lot to the nineteenth-century style of absolute realism—was already employed by Becke in the stories that also reveal the paralysis of British colonies before the concept was introduced by Joyce.

(Yeungnam University)

## Works Cited

- Becke, Louis. *Concerning "Bully" Hayes*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Dead Loss." *The Ebbing Of The Tide – South Sea Stories*. 1896. Reprint. Filiquarian Publishing LLC, 2010. 53-58.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "In the Old, Beach-Combing Days." *Pacific Tales*. 1897. Reprint. San Bernardino: British Library, 2014. 19-41.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Point of Theology on Maduro." *Rodman The Boatsteerer And Other Stories*. 1898. Reprint. Filiquarian Publishing LLC, 2013. 14-21.
- Beja, Morris. *James Joyce: A Literary Life*. London: MacMillan, 1992.
- Bowen, Zack. "Joyce and the Epiphany Concept: A New Approach." *Journal of Modern Literature* 9.1 (1981-1982): 103-14.
- Day, A. Grove. *Louis Becke*. New York: Twayne, 1966.
- Dixon, Robert. *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Edmond, Rod. *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Eves, Richard. *Bad Colonists: The South Seas Letters of Vernon Walker & Louis Becke*. Eds. Nicholas Thomas and Richard Eves. London: Duke UP, 1999.
- Gifford, Don. *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Dubliners and A Portrait*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1982.
- Hayman, David. "The Purpose and Permanence of the Joycean Epiphany." *James Joyce Quarterly* 35.4/36.1 (1998): 633-55.
- Heller, Vivian. *Joyce, Decadence, and Emancipation*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995.
- Joyce, James. *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. Eds. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. London: Faber and Faber, 1959. Abbreviated as *CW*.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dubliners*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. Abbreviated as *D*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Abbreviated as *P*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. London: Farber and Farber, 1992. Abbreviated as *SL*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Stephen Hero*. Norfolk: A New Directions Paperbook, 1963. Abbreviated as *SH*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ulysses*. Eds. Hands and Walter Gabler et al. New York: Vintage Books, 1986. Abbreviated as *U*.
- Joyce, Stanislaus. *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1958.
- Kumar, Shiv K. "Joyce's Epiphany and Bergson's 'L'Intuition Ohilsophique.'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 20.1 (1959): 27-30.
- Mahaffey, Vicki. "Joyce's Shorter Works." *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. Ed. Derek Attridge. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. 185-212.
- Maude, H. E. "Louis Becke: The Traders' Historian." Review of *Louis Becke*, by A.G. Day. *The Journal of Pacific History* 2 (1967): 225-27.
- Parrinder, Patrick. *James Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Riquelme, John Paul. "Stephen Hero, Dubliners, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Styles of Realism and Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. 103-30.
- Scholes, Robert. "Joyce and the Epiphany: the Key to the Labyrinth?" *The Sewanee Review* 72.1 (1964): 65-77.
- Smith, Vanessa. *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Stevenson, R. L. *In the South Seas*. 1891. Reprint. Lexington: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2013.



**Abstract**

Epiphanies of Colonial Paralysis:  
James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Louis Becke's Pacific Tales

Hye Ryoung Kil

This essay re-examines the concept of epiphany developed in Joyce's *Stephen Hero* and compares the technique and theme of the epiphany narrated in Joyce's *Dubliners* with Louis Becke's tales. The epiphany, as "a sudden spiritual manifestation" occurring "in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture," is achieved when the observing character or the reader unexpectedly receives a keen impression from a casual image or utterance that manifests paralysis as the truth of colonial life. Becke's stories "A Point of Theology" and "A Dead Loss," which are thematically comparable to Joyce's "The Sisters" and "Two Gallants" respectively, are narrated in stark realism and create a strong impression that evokes the epiphany of colonial corruption at the end. In each epiphanic moment, "A Point of Theology" and "The Sisters" commonly reveal the demoralization of the colony under Christianity, while "A Dead Loss" and "Two Gallants" similarly illuminate the corruption of the colony under commercialism. Becke's epiphanies thus show that the epiphany as a narrative technique was already employed by Becke in the stories that also reveal the paralysis of British colonies before the concept was introduced by Joyce.

■ **Key words** : colonial paralysis, *Dubliners*, epiphany, James Joyce, Louis Becke, Pacific tales

Received October 29, 2015

Reviewed November 26, 2015

Accepted November 30, 2015