

“I’m sick of my own country”: Ethics and aesthetics in James Joyce’s “The Dead”

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In the last two decades James Joyce’s art has been increasingly re-investigated in terms of its cultural content. Of central interest to many of these studies are the partially constrained cultural boundaries, and just as importantly, the partial ineffectiveness of cultural constraints, in late-colonial Ireland. What is argued is that an Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish dichotomy, or two competing stories, is represented in Joyce’s art in a way that invites a closer investigation of Irish cultural relations, being that the studies in question suggest cultural configurations that are not fully constrained by a colonial dichotomy. As this suggests, the representations of cultural boundaries in Joyce’s art are of particular interest in a contemporary context.

Subsequently, there are three windows in James Joyce’s “The Dead” that organise important boundaries in the short story. Firstly, there is the window in the Morkan’s drawing-room at 15 Usher’s Island which offers a view of the ‘north’ of the city of Dublin. This is a window from which Gabriel Conroy’s view is undisclosed, while his imaginary gaze is drawn towards Phoenix Park to the ‘west’ of the Morkan’s rented residence, and specifically, to a symbol of Anglo-Irish importance, the Wellington Monument (Joyce 1994: 34). Secondly, there is the ‘west’ facing window of the Gresham Hotel from which Gabriel both looks “down into the street” (53), again his view is undisclosed, and from the bed, where he ponders his journey ‘westwards’ (59). This time, the imaginary view is enriched with universal symbols of Ireland which are foreshadowed, earlier in the short story, with Gaelic-Irish significance.¹

¹ A useful starting point regarding this discussion is Ahmet Sünner’s “Ireland, Literature, and Truth: Heideggerian Themes in ‘The Dead’” (2009).

These conjoined but, antagonising² alternate views that Gabriel embodies in the short story are poignantly captured by Declan Kiberd when he writes: "in a land where there were two contested versions of reality, neither side enjoyed complete dominance" (2006: 19). As there is no reference in "The Dead" to anything other than Gabriel's abhorrence of the west of Ireland, his journey westwards in the final epitaph comes as something of a surprise; a partial submittal perhaps, to the part of his wife's biography that he would rather forget.

On the other hand, Gretta Conroy also looks out of the Gresham Hotel window with her view also being undisclosed (Joyce 1994: 54), and subsequently, declares a third window (57), that of her grandmother's house which bears no particular orientation, and her view is blocked by the rain, and just as likely, condensation. Importantly, unlike Gabriel, who hears nothing other than snow falling (59), (inferring that he hears nothing at all in what was a busy city environment; "they were standing on the crowded platform" [51]), Gretta remembers hearing stones hitting the glass, and "ran [...] out the back [...] and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering (57). This strongly suggests that the busy street scene of which she overlooks from the window of the Gresham Hotel is within the scope of her consciousness, while being at the same time, beyond Gabriel's consciousness. While they both look out of the west facing window of the Gresham Hotel, albeit separately, the range of memories that the street scene is capable of evoking for them is aesthetically distanced, even though they are looking through the same frame.

Of importance, is that while Gabriel and Gretta are conjoined through the name Conroy, a name of great Irish historical and mythological significance, (a point I will return to later), their combined biographies suggests a view from the Gresham Hotel that is partly reducible to the two contested versions of reality discussed by Kiberd. Additionally though, Gretta introduces an 'outside' that is internal to, but is in excess of, these two competing stories. Consequently, of importance is that these three windows offer no actual views in the short story at all, even if they do capture the concepts of imagined and experienced

² Gabriel experiences the 'outside' primarily through contemporary symbols of antagonism, for example: the Wellington Monument (Joyce 1994: 34), "the palace of the Four Courts" (51), the "white man" on O'Connell Bridge (52).

realities exceptionally well. But of interest is that through the conjoining of Gabriel and Gretta's differing biographies from the west facing window of the Gresham Hotel, their marriage from that point on is going to depend on them being able to negate the parts of themselves, and the parts of each other, that are illegitimate within their marriage. The dualisms that they individually represent collapse, leaving, in turn, a lack that is represented by the evoked and inerasable presence of Michael Furey.

This contraction of possibilities is not without interest in a wider social context, and, while the windows of the short story offer no other views than imaginary ones, of interest to this study is that those same imaginary views displace the views made possible by the material structures in the short story. For Gabriel, the northern view available to him from the Misses Morkans is displaced towards the west with a conflated Anglo-Irish symbolism, and for Gretta, her affiliation with the poorer classes is displaced as she reluctantly succumbs to a modern lifestyle on the east-coast of Ireland, with the west of Ireland becoming, at this time, a trope of nationalist sentiments.³ In this respect, aesthetics and ethics are central themes in the short story that, rather than cancel each other out, are intractably embedded in each other.

"The Dead", if approached in this way, offers both an established view of Irish cultural institutions that extends beyond the time of Joyce's writing, and also, an opportunity to develop alternate perceptions that are internal to, but in excess of, such established views. It will be the task of this essay, therefore, to present evidence that an alternate view may be unpacked that functions in adjacent to, rather than to dislodge, the relevant and important work of experienced colleagues. To facilitate this task, I will draw on the theorising of Jacques Rancière who constructs a radical theory of perception that is useful to this study.

³ The west of Ireland, being primarily the only area where the Gaelic language had survived, became a symbol of Gaelic-Irish authenticity, or a displacement of Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish cultural hybridity at this time. Declan Kiberd, in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, offers some excellent insights into this construction. This concept is a central theme in "The Dead" with the suggested trip to the Aran Islands by Miss Ivors, who bears a symbol of the Gaelic League (1995: 32-33).

Windows and perception

In his essay, "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge", Jacques Rancière constructs a radical theory of perception through an alternate *political* configuration of the relations of *the people* (demos) and *power* (kratos), through a radical investigation of the *relations of domination* (aesthesis contra ethos). Furthermore, to concretise his point, Rancière applies a fascinating and useful metaphor, (borrowing from a socialist newspaper in France in 1848), of the artisan, or joiner, rather than the artist, to challenge the relations between the vision of the architect and the power of the sovereign gaze through which the toil of the artisan is displaced by ownership:

Believing himself at home, [the joiner] loves the arrangement of a room so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out onto a garden or commands a view of a picturesque horizon, he stops his arms a moment and glides in imagination towards the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences [...] This as if is no illusion. It is a redistribution of [a certain configuration of the] sensible, a redistribution of the parts supposedly played by the higher and the lower faculties, the higher and the lower classes. As such it is the answer to another as if: the ethical order of the city. (2009: 7-8)

There is much that could be said of Rancière's essay. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this essay, it is suffice to draw on the notion that the artisan's view is not wholly determined by the material relations of the (Platonic) ethical city. While the joiner looks through the frame of the window of the unfinished great house, and imagines another set of relations in the world, the way that he is represented on the canvas is disturbed opening up the relations of domination. This aesthetic disturbance introduces a certain instability that is not reducible to any particular social order. Of importance though, in the case of an Irish social order, is that this concept implies a doubling of instability, with an Irish frame enveloping, as Declan Kiberd forcefully puts it, and Gabriel and Gretta symbolise, two competing, but conjoined, stories. For Rancière, this is the aesthetic dimension that is not fully constrained by material relations. Importantly though, the conjoining of two such frames in "The Dead" creates a third option that is foreshadowed by the window in Gretta's grandmother's house, a view that is internal to, but is not wholly constrained by, a northerly or westerly orientation. To realise this potential, I suggest, both window frames must be approached at the same time.

Alternating frames of perception

All approaches to James Joyce's "The Dead" start on a shaky ground with the short story opening with one of the most precarious and over-coded symbols of all, a Lily, leaving even the most confident reader a little unsettled. Additionally, when this symbolic fundament is capped with a sheet of snow in the epitaph, again, the snowflakes being almost uncannily elusive through their lack of coding, any attempt to conclusively contain the Morkan's annual dance possibly reveals more about the reader than the short story itself. Commencing, therefore, from a position where I consider that "The Dead" is configured as open ended, we find ourselves at the Morkan's supper, (as witnesses), passing through the Morkan's party where competing systems of cultural capital are woven together. At the same time, Gabriel Conroy's nervous disposition indicates that his inclusion at the party is dependent on his adjusting to a consensus under a threat of being socially ostracised (Joyce 1994: 32), a situation that Gretta has no doubt also experienced with Gabriel's mother accusing her of being "country cute" (30), (this being a term that bears no element of fondness in a Dublin social context).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, a critical reading of "The Dead" is dependent on both a body of existing literature, or established scholarly views, and a context in which creative adjustments to those views may become manifest. It is necessary, therefore, to outline what I consider may be an agreed stencil regarding the structure and texture of the short story, so that an alternate view may be unpacked. Subsequently, I will begin by drawing on what could be considered to be some banal Joycean truisms. Joyce's solid classical education at Clongowes Wood College needs no explication as it is captured in his semi-autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Furthermore, Joyce's classical education was furthered at University College Dublin where he studied English, French and Italian, and where he extended his already extensive literary knowledge. Consequently, a conclusion may be drawn that any allusions to established classical texts in "The Dead" were more than likely meditated irrespective if those texts can be found in his library or not. This conclusion, I consider, can be extended to ecclesiastical texts without causing too much concern, with such allusions being central to Joyce's oeuvre.

Furthermore, Joyce's encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish historical and mythological texts is equally represented in the literature, and is demonstrated in his lecture in Trieste (Joyce 1959). Additionally, Joyce's in-depth knowledge of contemporary texts, together with his close readings and genial vigour strongly suggests that intertextual allusions are part and parcel of Joyce's stylistic form. Richard Ellmann goes as far as saying that by 1906 "it is clear that the whole idiom of twentieth-century fiction was established in Joyce's mind" (1959: 242). The conclusion that can be drawn, therefore, is that any intertextual traces present in "The Dead" are, without much doubt, the raw material from which Joyce configured the texture of the short story.⁴

Of more interest though, is that Richard Ellmann, without reflecting on the issue, mentions that Joyce, during his the writing of "The Dead", was consuming any textual reference, (newspapers, magazines, and so on), relating to Ireland that he could acquire (1959: 244). John V. Kelleher not only confirms this assertion, but extends it, (having access to Ellmann's library), by adding "clippings, tram tickets, tram schedules, anything at all" (2002: 431). While it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the extent to which such contemporary sources were utilised in the weaving process of the short story, nevertheless, one example may prove useful to demonstrate my point; a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* on the 15th of November 1903, signed Alumnus Trinity College, Dublin:

I am willing to admit that the college boys are more likely to paint the town red than to paint "King Billy" green. But when it is said that Trinity College, Dublin, is notoriously an Orange institution, I beg [...] to dissent from this [...] slanderous [...] statement [...] Instead of being notoriously Orange, it is a notorious fact that Irish people for over 160 years have turned to it for leaders of great national movements, and the great literary men, jurists, and orators have been Trinity College men [...] O'Connell, the greatest of the modern Irish, escaped [...] by the accident of a family connection [...] but those of us who would be willing to stand by the green flag, even unto death, [...] never thought any less of the Gaelic blood in our veins from the fact that we were graduates of [Trinity College]. [There] is a statue of George II in Stephen's Green which your editor might, in an unguarded moment, have naturally confused with that of "King Billy" in College Green, but St. Stephens Green is beyond the range of college raids or enterprise, except when a band of our

⁴ Adrienne Auslander Munich presents a useful example of how subtexts are woven into the fabric of "The Dead".

boys may escort some prima donna, after a performance at the Opera, to the Shelburne Hotel.

In “The Dead” we read “how the gallery boys would sometimes in their enthusiasm unyoke the horses from the carriage of some great *prima donna* and pull her themselves through the streets to her hotel” (40 emphasis in original). While this quotation is not an exact duplication of the original letter published in *The New York Times*, it does demonstrate that, either through memory or research, Joyce was employing a contemporary array of sources in the construction of the short story that were woven into the fabric of classical, literary and ecclesiastical allusions. But one point that needs to be considered, drawing from the lessons derived from the symbolic referents of ‘Lily’ and ‘snowflakes’, is that some allusions are filled with a certain richness, or ambiguous density, while others, for example, King Billy’s statue, introduce a certain complex surface contingency that subverts straightforward readings, such as is exemplified in the above letter.

Together, an ambiguous density and a surface contingency produce an alternating or, ‘trembling’, fabric on which the story is narrated. This ‘trembling’ is also partially embodied by Gabriel whose emotions are continually alternating: “trembling with desire” (Joyce 1994: 53), trembling now with annoyance” (54), “a fever of rage” (54), “trembling with delight” (54), “brimming over with happiness” (55), “fires of lust began to grow angrily” (55). Gabriel exhibits an emotional contingency that translates into a nervous disposition throughout the short story. Of importance though, is that the intertextual template discussed, that constructs the underlying fabric on which the short story is grafted, is aesthetically portrayed through the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta. In this respect, the way that their marriage is configured, as discussed at the beginning of this essay, is of much interest.

Furthermore, Gabriel’s nervous disposition and reluctance in the short story is also derived from his social position at the party, and demonstrates a partial consensus that is held in place by firstly, his unwillingness to challenge the existing social order, secondly, the frame of “a system of thought” (Haugaard 2003: 89), and thirdly, is re-enforced by the threat of a reconfiguration of knowledge: “[Miss Ivors] whispered into his ear: - West Briton!” (Joyce 1994: 33). Here, what has previously been a legitimate identity threatens to become illegitimate, and Gabriel adheres to a social consensus (both through self-discipline, and by

adapting to the expectations of a changing social order), while his personal biography threatens his inclusion within that same order. What becomes evident is that, for Gabriel, there is no escape from the weave of power and knowledge in the short story. This scene foreshadows Gabriel's unexpected trip to the west of Ireland as, standing with "people [...] in the snow outside" (42) carries some very serious consequences, (a point I will return to later). Either way, intertextual allusions in "The Dead", whether exhibiting a dense or surface texture, provide an opportunity for the text to be opened out and read in a multitude of ways.

With this in mind, one useful example of such a configuration can be found in John V. Kelleher's "Irish History and Mythology in James Joyce's 'The Dead'" where he makes two very useful, and two very different points. The first point draws attention to the notion that an allusion need not be complete for it to be present in the short story (2002: 421). To exemplify this point Kelleher presents a very compelling argument for the extensive, but incomplete, allusion, of the pseudo-historical and mythological legend of *The Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel*.⁵ In this respect, historical and literary texts, often drawing their

⁵ The pseudo historical / mythological version of this story is represented in the "Annals" in 14 A.D. Following a massacre of the house of Conaire Mór, a disillusioned people offered the sovereignty to Morann, a respected scholar. Morann refused the offer, however, arguing that the three legitimate heirs of the massacred nobles of the house of Conaire Mór must be returned to their thrones (O'Donovan 1990: 95). The three Kingdoms to be reformed were the provinces of Ulster, Munster and Leinster, with Connacht being incorporated into Ulster, and thereby temporarily losing its importance (O'Donovan 1990: 94-5; O'Curry 1873: xxv). After the return of the heirs and their installation as monarchs of three regions, Morann was made chief judge of Ireland. Being the bearer of the chain of Idh (which strangled the accused if they lied, or expanded if they told the truth), he was awarded power over truth and therefore the power to arrest illegitimate knowledge (O'Donovan 1990: 96). Of interest is that Conroy is a derivative of Conaire (Woulfe 2010: 479), and Morkan is a derivative of Morann (Woulfe 2010: 623). According to the bards, the lack of rightful heirs created a void that sent Ireland into a spiral of decay, and the massacre of the nobles is described as a time when an established social order lost control to subaltern groups. Furthermore, the appointment of Morann as chief judge ensured that scholars gained a privileged position within the social order as they were invested with the power to suppress illegitimate elements of discourse (O'Donovan 1990: 97).

origins from John O'Donovan's translation of the *Annals of The Kingdom of Ireland*, (and echoed extensively by educators and Irish Literary Revivalists at that time), conflate with other important literary texts forming an intertextual template onto which other textual traces are woven. The extent of the weaving of mythology, history and literature in Irish society at that time should not be underestimated as is demonstrated below by the table of contents in the Christian Brothers *Irish History Reader*, being a book that was utilised in many Catholic primary schools throughout Ireland in 1905.

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Figure 1 (Irish History Reader iii)

Christian Brother education, as clearly demonstrated by Dáire Keogh (2008), was the ideological fodder of the lower-classes, and as pointed out by Richard Ellmann, Joyce was empirically well acquainted with this

sphere of Irish society, even though Ellmann states, "Joyce chose never to remember this interlude [...] in his writings" (1959: 35). When considering the examples of intertextual weaving discussed by Kelleher, and comparing them with the history syllabus as presented above, this would be a point that I would have to dispute.

Of importance though, in a wider social context, is the process of organising elements of history, mythology, literature and genealogy into a relational field that:

[Further] the sacred cause of nationhood. After religious instruction, there is no more effective instrument in the education of youth than that which the reading lessons present; and the efficient and cultured teacher will never fail to utilise to the full the advantages which they afford him for cultivating the intelligence and directing the will of his pupils. (*Irish History Reader* 2011: vii)

While this is not the type of education afforded to Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (with the experiences of Stephen being semi-autobiographical), and more than likely neither, therefore, afforded Gabriel, as like Joyce, who was educated in a Catholic university, Gabriel "had taken his degree in the Royal University" (Joyce 1994: 30). Michael Furey on the other hand, if having received an education at all, would have received an education similar to that portrayed in the *Irish History Reader*, and through him, if in no other way, so did Gretta Conroy.

The point being, differing educations are not reducible to an Anglo-Irish / Gaelic-Irish dualism in the short story, but are internal to that same dualism. Gabriel's rebuke, "'I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!'" (Joyce 1994: 32), only exemplifies the sense of cultural affinity afforded to Gabriel, (a cultural affinity that is juxtaposed by the writer of the letter to *The New York Times* earlier), in turn, demonstrating a binding, as well as an antagonising boundary shared by the more advantaged members of Dublin society as represented in the short story. Of more importance though, is that this 'antagonistic bond' functions to dispel the bond expected of Gabriel towards, what Miss Ivors claims is, his "own people" (32). This complex 'ethical' relationship is, as demonstrated earlier, aesthetically portrayed through the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. While this analysis does not claim to extend beyond the boundaries of "The Dead", it does open up some thought provoking and

useful angles from which ‘aesthetics’ and ‘ethics’ can be viewed in the context of the short story.

Subsequently, as Gabriel states that the other guests’ “grade of culture differed from his” (Joyce 1994: 24), and as Joyce utilises, with great sophistication, historical, mythological and contemporary sources in “The Dead”, it is of interest to identify the range of cultural inclusiveness that the Morkan’s invitation only annual dance entertains, that is, with Gabriel and Gretta representing the cultural margins of the event. As the view afforded by the union of Gabriel and Gretta is drawn towards a ‘westerly’ view, with Gabriel glancing “left and right nervously [...] under the ordeal” (32), I will present a genealogical analysis of the guests from the archives of the Gaelic League.

The guests include a Mr Bartell D’Arcy who is a descendant of the first Chief Justice of Ireland, a John D’Arcy (Woulfe 2010: 241), while Mr. Clancy is a descendant of a family of Chief Judges (Woulfe 2010: 363). Additionally, Mr Bergin is descended from the chiefs of the Barony of Geashill in county Offaly (Woulfe 2010: 550). Mr Kerrigan, Mr Kilkelly and Mr Clancy, for their part, are all descendants of ancient Gaelic families from Connacht (Woulfe 2010: 363, 369, 462), connecting them with Miss Ivors’ trip to the Aran Islands.⁶ Equally significant is the appearance of Miss Daly, who descends from a bardic family (Woulfe 2010: 493), together with a Miss Power who is a descendant of the first Normans to arrive with Strongbow and were awarded county Waterford for their services (Woulfe 2010: 271-72). Furthermore, Mrs Cassidy is a descendant of an ancient and established medical family (Woulfe 2010: 448), while Miss Higgins derives from one of the most distinguished literary families in Ireland (Woulfe 2010: 576). Georgina Burns is a descendant of the kings of Leinster, a powerful family that became refuged in county Wicklow and carried out attacks on the British establishment in Dublin for 300 years (Woulfe 2010: 444). Miss O’Callaghan is a descendant of a king of Munster (Woulfe 457) and Miss Furlong is descendant of an old and respected Anglo-Irish family from county Wexford (Woulfe 2010: 289).

Kathleen Kearney, who will be following Miss Ivors to “the Aran Isles” (Joyce 1994: 31-2), is a descendant of a noble ecclesiastical family who once had a high position at Cashel Castle (Woulfe 2010: 460).

⁶ Ivors has two origins, one Norse and one Gaelic (Woulfe 2010: 570).

Furthermore, Malins derives from an ecclesiastical family who were the hereditary keepers of the bell of St. Patrick known as the bell of the testament (Woulfe 2010: 615). His adversary and partner, Mr Browne, being a "man for the ladies" (Joyce 1994: 27), is an old Norman surname (Woulfe 2010: 249). Not coincidentally, one of the most famous and successful Irish military leaders of the Wild Geese was a Field Marshall Maximilian Ulysses Browne⁷ (McLaughlin 1980: 29), who was related to a number of ex-patriot military leaders of the same name with careers spreading from Austria to Russia (Stone 2006: 64). Importantly, the elevated social status of the group is extended through an elevated historical cultural status, and this is not without interest when considering both the way in which the short story is textured, and the historical context in which it was written, as a combined social and cultural status carries material, as well as cultural consequences.

The second point of relevance made by Kelleher is that one is left with a certain nagging doubt when configuring a reading of "The Dead", as if one is missing something that is almost visible, but never really manages to manifest itself in the scholarly study at hand (2002: 416). Kelleher's view, I would draw attention to, is directed through the bedroom window of the Gresham Hotel where Gabriel Conroy ponders his "journey westward" (Joyce 1994: 59). Kelleher is not alone at pondering this view with interpretations ranging from, among others, Galway, to further afield such as to trade routes on the Atlantic seaboard.⁸

My assertion of Kelleher's view being 'westerly' is additionally supported by his research into Lily's pronunciation of Gabriel's surname, Conroy, which, in the short story, consists of three syllables (Joyce 1994: 23). Kelleher relies on the genealogical archive of the Gaelic league, which, in turn, differs to that of scholars in Ulster at that time, such as

⁷ Field Marshall Maximilian Ulysses Browne was a trope utilised by the Irish poets of the 18th century, where Browne is likened to the mythological figure of Fionn Mac Cumhaill (O'Ciardha 2002: 338-39).

⁸ Luke Gibbons presents a very thought provoking case for reconsidering how this westerly view should be interpreted in "The Dead", stating "Miss Ivors' enthusiasm for an excursion to the Aran Islands can be seen as reclaiming the west of Ireland from romanticism for a modernising project in keeping with the resurgent energies of Joyce's own generation" (2007: 369).

John O'Hart.⁹ Kelleher maintains that the three syllables is a result of Lily using the working class variant "Mr. Connery" (44). This, I maintain, is derived from a 'westerly' view which, in turn, creates, to begin with, at least one blind spot. I refer to the 'northerly' view offered to Gabriel from the window in the drawing-room of the Morkan's drawing-room.¹⁰

⁹ Rev. Patrick Woulfe and John O'Hart's projects re-assemble differing genealogical histories from the void that existed at that time. Even though Woulfe's final work was not published until 1923, he was involved in the Gaelic leagues project since 1898, and published his first work, without notes, in 1906. The biography used in his work is extensive though, and leans almost entirely on sources available prior to 1907, and therefore would have been available to Joyce. Interestingly though, John O'Hart's comprehensive study is not present among his references, and being a work completed at Queen's University in Belfast, it might offer evidence of the hostile climate of that time. Of importance though is the genealogical variant of Furey, or Fury, (names had received different spellings in different documents and genealogists at that time attempted to conflate different variants into standardised forms), which does not exist within the Gaelic league's project. Patrick Woulfe had been unable to identify the origins of the name, even though he made some openly unsubstantiated guesses as to its Gaelic-Irish origins (2010: 526-27). However, John O'Hart, relying on court records, more convincingly claims that the name is of Huguenot origin (1892: 487). Dublin was host to a large and established Huguenot community (Lee 2008: 215). Furthermore, the Huguenot's were utilised by Anglo-Irish sources at that time to deconstruct the Gaelic Leagues project (Smith 1905: 220). Subsequently, the Huguenot's were not written into a national imaginary until 1936 with the award winning Trinity College dissertation by Lawless Grace Lee.

¹⁰ To the North of the house on Ushers Island is Stoneybatter, or the place where the Morkans "after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter" (Joyce 1994: 21); this being "the great thoroughfare to Dublin from the districts lying west and north-west" (Collins 1913: 70). What is striking is the hiatus that Joyce inserts into the spelling of Stoneybatter, a hiatus that is contrary to most literature at that time, (but is repeated in *Cyclops* [Joyce 2002: 240]). For examples of this see Patrick Weston Joyce's *The Origin and History of Irish Names and Places* (1871: 45), and James Collins *Life in Old Dublin: Historical Associations of Cook Street* (1913: 70-2). An example of Joyce's spelling can be found in John Thomas Gilbert's *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin, in the Possession of the Municipal Corporation of that City* (1905: 12, 223, 227). The hiatus may infer the ellipsis created by the Morkans' absence

As an example, one 'northerly' inquiry into the pronunciation of the name Conroy, (which, in turn, would displace Kelleher's 'westerly' inquiry), would begin by stating that Gabriel's name is, in fact, Conroy, and not Connery. Phonetic research has shown that the linguistic feature mentioned by the narrator is a predominant feature of Ulster intonation where there is a rise at the end of words.¹¹ Lily's pronunciation can therefore be read as a dialect rather than a sociolect, (or possibly even more provocatively, a dialect and sociolect intersection), and the Morkan's household, while maintaining the class stratification often referred to in the literature, could be interpreted as a regional class stratification centring on Dublin. This is one example of what Kiberd refers to as being two competing stories, where the enforcing of one story, by default, displaces the other.

One is left pondering the critical reception of John Huston's film adaptation of "The Dead" if the opening scene had presented Lily greeting the guests in a broad Ulster dialect. More interestingly though, I would consider, is that such views in "The Dead" are represented as being born by material structures. Here, the high stakes become apparent, and Gabriel and Gretta's conjoined, but alternative, views construct the aesthetic co-ordinates that were heavily relied upon by competing ideological groups at that time, such as The Irish Literary Revival, The Gaelic League, and so on. In this respect, the discomfort experienced by Kelleher may be that of a dissent that is carefully woven into the fabric of the narrative, a dissent that makes demands of the reader to look beyond Gabriel's imaginative westwards pull, and also, beyond the 'northerly' view as exemplified above.

from the thoroughfare, or their cultural distance from the lower-classes that inhabited the area at the time, as Stoney Batter is a British spelling. Either way, however the ellipsis is to be interpreted, it is persuasively present by its insertion into the short story by Joyce.

¹¹ A distinctive feature of Ulster intonation is a rise at the end of words (McElholm 1986: 35), which, if coming after a vowel, typically creates an unexpected hiatus when a "vowel or a diphthong is cut into two sections, separated by some sort of a glottal stop and giving the impression of a disyllabic pronunciation" (Wagner 1969: ix).

Gaining a third perspective

If this is the case, how is one to approach the Morkans' household and Gabriel Conroy, their "favourite nephew" (Joyce 1994: 25), while flushing out this dissent that arguably eludes Kelleher, a dissent that is to be internal to, but in excess of, a northerly or westerly view? Furthermore, and possibly even more importantly, how are we to view the Morkan's house that frames the cosmology of the "annual dance" (21), or flush out the uninvited presence that is evoked by Gretta, Michael Furey, without becoming trapped by the alternating views that Gabriel is enslaved to? Firstly, an analysis of the configuration of the house on Ushers Island may prove useful.

The house on Ushers Island is predictably divided into two floors, with the Misses Morkans and their housemaid Lily residing on the top floor, and a British merchant, a Mr Fulham, residing on the bottom floor. The Morkans' floor is divided into two rooms with the meal eaten in "the back room" (Joyce 1994: 27). In the centre of the back room there are "two square tables placed end to end, and on these Aunt Julia and the caretaker were straightening and smoothing a large cloth" (27). "Everybody who knew" the Misses Morkans were invited to the dance and the group includes "members of the family, old friends [...] the members of Julia's choir, any of Kate's pupils [...] and even some of Mary Jane's pupils" (21).

This ensemble includes members of the Gaelic league, such as Miss Ivors who carried on her collar "an Irish device" (Joyce 1994: 30), and who used a standardised Gaelic phrase "*Beannacht libh*" (37), as well as members of both the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish communities such as Mr Browne who is "of the other persuasion" (36). Also many of Mary Jane's "pupils belonged to better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line" (22).¹² The two tables in the back room, in this context, are assembled to ensure the seating of these two cultural groups around a single table with the tablecloth covering the division that exists between them. Importantly though, the merchant, a Mr Fulham, the landlord, is excluded (22), and already, in the opening paragraphs of "The Dead", a presence is lurking in the building by proxy, an outside that does not

¹² Kingstown and Dalkey were affluent suburbs with a strong Anglo-Irish presence, which positions a number of the guests culturally closer to Gabriel than Gretta.

succumb to the Morkans' "orders" (39), or yield to the patrons who do not tolerate "back answers" (22).

Such a presence is not reducible to mythology or allusion, but functions as an invitation to examine the configuration of mythology and allusions, or the *established relations* of the Morkan's annual gathering and the template that underpins it. The template, in this case, as Mr Fulham usefully portrays, is organised by the frame of material relations of the city itself. In the short story, there are four geographical coordinates that construct this material frame. These are firstly, the house on Ushers Island where the party is held, secondly, to the east of the house is O'Connell Bridge where Gabriel and Gretta turn north up Sackville Street (now O'Connell street),¹³ thirdly there is the Gresham Hotel at the north end of Sackville Street, and fourthly, there is Stoneybatter to the north of Ushers Island, and to the west of the Gresham Hotel. Of particular interest though, is that while the geographical coordinates organised by the windows of The Morkan's house and the Gresham Hotel intersect in Stoneybatter, a place that the Morkan's had left, they do not intersect in a place of inconsequence; that is, they intersect in the south-eastern corner of the grounds at of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum.¹⁴

In both an Irish and a literary sense, the asylum accords Gretta's, almost insignificant, declaration, "he was in decline, she said, or something like that" (Joyce 1994: 57), a tintinnabulous density that reverberates the entire texture of short story.¹⁵ In 1909, R. Barry O'Brien

¹³ Luke Gibbons makes the very interesting point that the "white man" (Joyce 1994: 52) that Gabriel refers to when crossing O'Connell bridge is an allusion to the rebellious Whiteboys of the 18th century, as is the white horse referred to by Miss O'Callaghan as a symbol of King William's charger (1996: 145).

¹⁴ Maps at this time were not completely accurate, with a modern satellite cross-reference showing that the grounds of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum are actually some meters to the north of the intersection point, which would, just as interestingly, make the intersection point Saint Mary's Industrial Training School for neglected, abandoned or orphaned children. But a cross reference between many maps from, and prior to, the period, all demonstrate a similar margin of error indicating that the point of intersection, is with all probability, within the grounds of the Asylum.

¹⁵ By employing this single phrase, reference is made to the steady decline in the Irish population starting with the Great Famine (Whelan 2002: 70), also to a widespread discussion on racial decline marked by the rapidly growing levels of

referred to this density as “the three scourges that afflict Ireland, Emigration, Tuberculosis and Lunacy” (315), which captures, rather bluntly, the immense importance of Gretta’s comment, and of Gabriel’s sad but simple question “Consumption, was it?” (Joyce 1994: 56), to the weaving of the short story as a whole.

Furthermore, this entire area of Stoneybatter was not, as is sometimes suggested, just an area populated by the lower-classes, but the most expansive and condensed area of its sort in Ireland combining all of the technologies facilitated by imperial modernity; that is, prisons, workhouses, lunatic asylums, orphanages and poor hospitals (Kelly 2007: 109; Malcolm 2003: 315-16). This area is displayed in Figure 2, and for clarity, also in a map of protected structures within the site in Figure 3. Of interest is that the point of intersection is in the north-west corner of Figure 2, being the area shared by the Church of Ireland Chapel, and the Roman Catholic Church, that served the internees at that time, (with separate male and female infirmaries being placed on either side of the Roman Catholic Church).¹⁶

what was considered to be insanity (Malcolm 2003: 327, 333). These two examples are foreshadowed by Jonathan Swift who relates the decline of mental and physical health to relations of domination (1768: 9), and who is a central figure regarding asylums, literature, and ethics, in Dublin.

¹⁶ The boundaries of management between the asylum, the work house and the prison were very diffuse, with all these institutions incorporating each other’s functions up to a given point. But of interest is that by 1907 it is reported that the conditions in Richmond District Lunatic Asylum were chronically overcrowded with “constant outbreaks of zymotic disease [and] dysentery [being] almost endemic in this institution” (Kelly 2007: 109). It is also reported that in the North Dublin Workhouse “the provision for the inmates of the lunatic departments is truly deplorable. The overcrowding is very marked [...] The female ward for ‘healthy lunatics’ is ‘little more than a dungeon, ventilation is inadequate, and the beds are laid upon wooden trestles. The patients are obliged to take their meals in this repelling place” (Kelly 2007: 112). Consequently conditions were reported as being far harsher than similar institutions in other parts of the country (Kelly 2007: 112), and being compounded by a “large floating population” (Kelly 2007: 113). Elizabeth Malcolm interestingly points out that there was a widespread social awareness of the institutions, with farmers and shopkeepers having vested interests because of the pressures of funding, and states “despite the creation of a more representative form of asylum

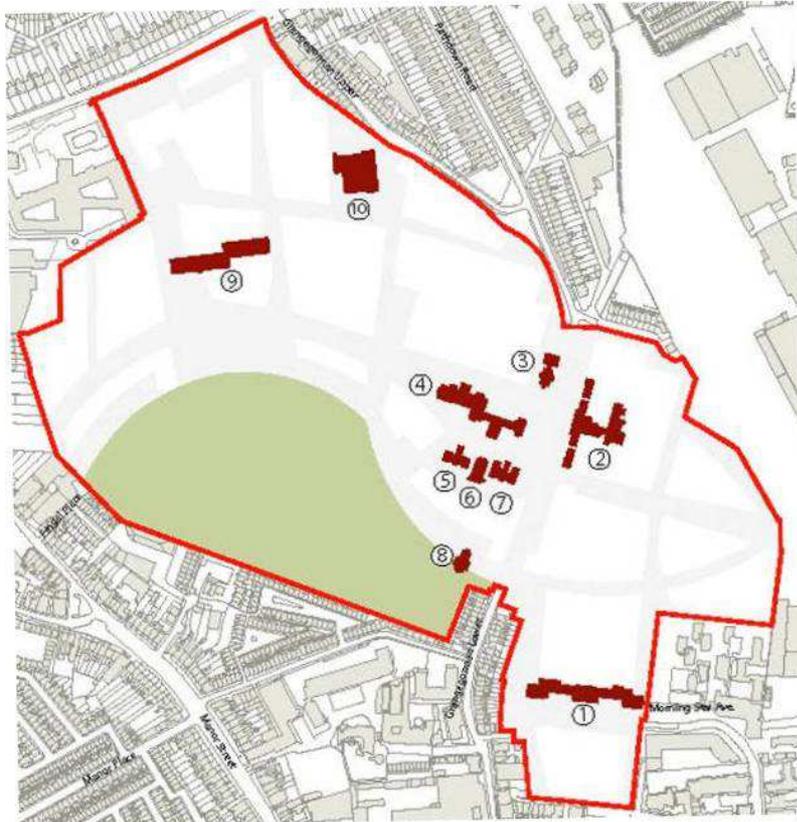


Figure 3: 1 Lower House, 2 Clock Tower, 3 Mortuary, 4 Female House, 5 Male Infirmary, 6 RC Church, 7 Female Infirmary, 8 Church of Ireland Chapel, 9 Top House, 10 Laundry Building. (“Grangegorman”)

Importantly, as Gabriel and Gretta portray the aesthetic boundaries of the short story, these four co-ordinates mark the boundary of material relations of the short story. As such, these boundaries are not collapsible within the frame of their marriage, being inasmuch the ethical frame that makes their marriage possible to begin with.

Subsequently, these ‘ethical relations’ are displaced as they are aesthetically represented by the inerasable presence of Michael Furey, a “reminder of shameful consciousness of [Gabriel’s] own person” (Joyce 1994: 56) evoked through a “veiled voice” (56). Neither is it just a

question of going 'outside' as another window in the short story suggests:

He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. Her face, quite fragrant in the cold air, was quite close to his; and suddenly she called out [...] –Is the fire hot, sir? But the man could not hear her [...] it was just as well. He might have answered rudely. (52)

The juxtaposing of a freezing 'outside' and an alternating 'inside' depicted in the above example is not reducible to a geographical distance, but of a distance far more elusive, as it represents the ethical relations of the short story itself. Mr Browne demonstrates the reverse side of this coin when he "assumed a very low Dublin accent so that the young ladies, with one instinct, received his speech in silence" (Joyce 1994: 27). Subsequently, as the above example suggests, anger is the emotion that may fill the space from 'low Dublin', which is in turn, returned by the young ladies performance of silence from 'high Dublin'. Importantly, Gretta's invigorated complexion offers no means of consolation to anyone other than Gabriel.

Furthermore, this is also a useful indicator regarding the hiatus that Joyce inserts into the spelling of Stoney Batter, as such a gap confers strongly with the actual experiences imposed on the inmates of these institutions, being displaced from their families, and in many cases, from the city itself. Therefore, as aesthetically conveyed by the marriage of Gabriel and Gretta whose relationship is a failed aesthetic reducible to the two contested stories as discussed by Kiberd, ("he had never felt [love] towards any woman" [Joyce 1994: 59], which is, incidentally, also the condition for Gretta's union with Gabriel), this hiatus is also an ethical failure between the parts of the city that is displaced by an Irish cosmology, being internal to it.

Consequently, there is no doubt of the suffering of those individuals that Gabriel imagines "perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows" (Joyce 1994: 42). There is also no doubt that for Gabriel to stand in the street with them, "in the pure air" (42), would result in a completely different relationship with his family and friends. But of *real* importance is that there is no doubt that people *are* shivering in the streets outside when Gabriel and Gretta look out of their 'northerly' and 'westerly' facing windows, as, actually, they have always been there, inasmuch as they have never left. As such, if

Rancière's radical investigation of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics is to be usefully employed in an Irish context, it will not be by juxtaposing the two, but rather by making visible their relational dependency, in turn, keeping Michael Furey firmly within the frame of our minds.

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