

The Memories of “The Dead”

The Celtic Twilight had its origins not in mysticism but in starvation.

—Denis Ireland¹

Introduction

The Great Irish Famine (1845–52) was the single most important event in Ireland in the modern period. Uniquely, a European country suffered a catastrophe which the continent had not endured for centuries.² Over one million people died and two million more emigrated within a decade, sending the country into a spiral of demographic decline which it has only recently arrested. Yet it is a commonplace of Irish cultural history to claim that if one looks for a representation of this terrible and defining event, it is impossible to find one adequate to the scale of the catastrophe.³ It has also often been observed that the Famine is rarely (and then only obliquely) represented in the Irish Literary Revival at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet, this reading may be superficial, as this essay seeks to demonstrate through a sustained excavation of the historical layers—biographical, literary, historical, geographical, musical—of James Joyce’s short story of 1907, “The Dead.” One of the chief discoveries of this excavation is the buried history of the Famine embedded at its center. The resonance of “The Dead” and its peculiarly charged language derives from this depth of historical layering, all the more evocative because it is hidden. This story is also set in the period of the Irish Literary Revival, whose origins are conventionally dated to Douglas Hyde’s manifesto “On the necessity for de-anglicising the Irish people.”⁴ “The Dead” may therefore be taken as a work of strategic importance in a consideration of what the Revival was and why modernism was its pre-eminent style.

Indubitably, Ireland remained culturally traumatized in the immediate post-Famine period. It is possible to see the cultural revival as a delayed, second-generation effect, inspired by people born during the Famine. The best known examples would be Michael Davitt (1846–1906), founder of the Land League in 1879, and Michael Cu-

sack (1847–1906), founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884.⁵ Joyce's father, John Stanislaus Joyce, was born in 1849. Joyce himself, born in 1882, belonged to a generation that sought to reshape Ireland in fundamental ways. This reshaping took place in the aftermath of the Famine, which accelerated the hollowing-out of Irish culture. The period from the 1880s, when the post-Famine generation took over, witnessed the creation of an Irish radical memory that sought to escape the baneful binary of modernisation and tradition—the Hegelian view that all that is lost to history is well lost, the Scottish Enlightenment paradigm in which what is sacrificed to progress is retrieved imaginatively as nostalgia. This attitude generated a wistful, rear-mirror view of history where the past stayed firmly in the past, drained of politics and available merely as sentiment. Modernity's nostalgia for its past became a political placebo, sweetening the bitter pill of history and establishing the comfort of distance between past and present. By contrast, radical memory deployed the past to challenge the present, to restore into possibility historical moments that had been blocked or unfulfilled earlier. Violence, not tranquillity, sustained the distinction between modernisation and tradition: “tradition” was not a site of atavism and violence but a defence against a deliberately torn culture, fully exposed to, and unprotected against, the modernist blast. In the Irish case, as in other colonial situations, “tradition” and “custom” were rooted in violence, instability and discontinuity, not anterior or antecedent to modernity, but absolutely implicated in and sustained by it. The “levelled lawns and gravelled clay” of W. B. Yeats were laid over blood: the high monuments of Anglo-Irish culture were brutal petrifications of violence.⁶

Davitt used his personal Famine experiences as the spur to undermine that landlordism which he blamed for his predicament:

Almost my first remembered experience of my own life and of the existence of landlordism was our eviction in 1852, when I was about five years of age. The eviction and the privations of the preceding Famine years, the story of the starving of Mayo, of the deaths from hunger and the coffinless graves on the roadside—everywhere a hole could be dug for the slaves who died because of “God's providence”—all this was the political food seasoned with a mother's tears over unmerited sorrows and sufferings which had fed my mind in another land, a teaching which lost none of its force or directness by being imparted in the Gaelic tongue, which was always spoken in our Lancashire home.⁷

Remarkably in a still profoundly agrarian society, Davitt set in motion the legislative euthanasia of an entire landed class, predating the massive upheavals in Russia a few decades later. This achievement arose from his fusion of the land with the national issue, bringing together for the first time the physical-force nationalists (the Fenians) and the constitutional nationalists in a unified campaign.⁸ Charles Stewart

Parnell, Joyce's political hero, was also pivotal to this transformation, advising the tenants in 1879 not to repeat the mistaken acquiescence of their fathers in the Famine dispossessions: "You must show the landlords that you intend to hold a firm grip on your homesteads and lands. You must not allow yourselves to be dispossessed as you were dispossessed in 1847."⁹ Parnell's appeal to general history was also an appeal to personal history: the children of those who had suffered the Famine evictions had fused the personal and the political and this steeled their determination in the 1880s. Their memory of the Famine was a direct personal experience, not some spurious invention of tradition derived from folklore and song, some second-hand version inculcated by rabid nationalist ideologues via speeches, newspapers and crude polemical histories. Davitt claimed that "The men who made the Land League were the sons of those who went through the horrors of the Great Famine."¹⁰ In contrast to the conservative orientation of arguments centered on the invention of tradition in Victorian Britain, memory in Ireland was deployed for radical political purposes. Memory acted as a spur to agency rather than a prop to passivity. Davitt himself argued in 1882: "I shall never beg a penny for Irish famine. If the people of Ireland, if the tenants and farmers of the west pay rent that should go to feed their children, then let them die and humanity are well rid of such a coward race."¹¹

This cultural territory was also the terrain of the Irish Literary Revival: after great violence, emotion recollected in tranquility. Consider how close so many of its practitioners were to the Famine: John Millington Synge's grandfather Dr. Traill and Standish Hayes O'Grady's grandfather Rev. Thomas O'Grady were central Famine figures in west Cork; Oscar Wilde's father William made his reputation with his nosological tables on the Famine in the 1851 Census; Augusta Gregory was the widow of William of the infamous "Gregory Clause" which facilitated the eviction of at least half a million people during the Famine. James Stephens, Joyce's friend, had been literally starved as a child: "His twisted frame, goitrous throat, rickety limbs were due no doubt to malnutrition in infancy. He never spoke of his childhood though a glimpse may be had in that dark tale 'Hunger.' Often he would say in that whimsical way that when he was a child, he used to chase the ducks in St. Stephen's Green to steal bits of bread from them." Or, in the words of that "dark tale" to which he refers, "They could scarcely die of hunger for they were native to it. They were hunger."¹² Even well into the twentieth century, the connection back to that past persisted. Patrick Kavanagh's grandfather had been a workhouse master just after the Famine.¹³ It may also be the case that the young Joyce himself knew hunger in the penurious, crowded, downwardly mobile household of his father.¹⁴

Irish Modernism and the Famine

A further issue is the relationship between the Literary Revival and modernism. Why did modernism become the preferred stylistic mode of the Revival? This broaches a wider question in literary studies concerning the relationship between modernism and peripherality.¹⁵ Why was modernism, especially its British manifestation, a peripheral rather than a metropolitan phenomenon? Why did it have so pronounced an Irish accent—Joyce, Yeats, Moore, Wilde, Shaw, Synge, Beckett, O'Brien? An answer to this question might begin by observing that the decentered subject of modernism resembled the colonial subject. The colonial encounter in Ireland had produced a hollowed-out identity. Linguistically adrift between two languages, many Irish writers possessed the self-conscious awareness of language characteristic of modernism. The modernist viewpoint was more readily available to those who were acutely aware of the instability of language—the Yeatsian position that “Irish is my national language but English is my mother tongue.”¹⁶ This linguistic position was already sufficiently estranged and distanced to allow use of the English language while escaping the specific gravities of its traditions, the dense weight of its parochialisms. An aesthetic virtue could then be wrung from historical necessity, turning linguistic disenfranchisement to advantage, enlarging rather than contracting its possibilities.

In these conditions, the possibility exists, in Seamus Deane's phrase, for a dialectic between “dumbness and eloquence.”¹⁷ The Irish Literary Revival was an extravagant discourse in the English language about dumbness in the Irish language. It restlessly sought access to a world elsewhere—the world of Gaelic civilisation, dismissed, expunged, unknowable, vanished, whose very absence must be articulated or “summoned” to use a Yeatsian word. That articulation required a new language that was not exactly English, even if it was English-based. It found expression in Yeats's occultism of “A Vision,” Joyce's ur-English of *Finnegan's Wake*, Gregory's Kiltartanese, Synge's sing-song, Beckett's experiments in writing in French and then translating it back into English. We can also see this as a narrative about eloquence. In both Joyce's *A Portrait* and Synge's “Playboy,” the central characters finally achieve eloquence and narrative self-sufficiency only at the cost of leaving their communities. In a wider sense, this is culturally diagnostic, a linguistic parable of post-Famine Ireland, which illuminates Benjamin's aphorism: “no one has ever known mastery in anything who has not first known incompetence.”

But the dialectic of dumbness and eloquence could also be reversed, as in the case of the transition from Irish-speaking to English-speaking. Joyce himself in 1907 wrote the essay “Ireland at the Bar” about Myles Joyce executed in 1882 [the year of his own birth] for his part in the

Maamtrasna murders. Five of “the ancient tribe of the Joyces” had been charged with the brutal murders of five members of another family in the Joyce country in county Galway.¹⁸ Myles Joyce was a monoglot Irish-speaker tried before an English-speaking court. Joyce uses his interrogation as a metaphor for Irish/English relationships:

The magistrate said:

“Ask the accused if he saw the woman on the morning in question.”

The question was repeated to him in Irish and the old man broke out into intricate explanations, gesticulating, appealing to the other accused, to heaven. Then, exhausted by the effort, he fell silent; the interpreter, turning to the magistrate, said:

“He says no, your worship.”

“Ask him was he in the vicinity at the time.”

The old man began speaking once again, protesting, shouting, almost beside himself with the distress of not understanding or making himself understood, weeping with rage and terror. And the interpreter, once again replied drily:

“He says no, your worship.”¹⁹

Joyce points the moral: “The figure of this bewildered old man, left over from a culture which is not ours, a deaf-mute before his judge, is a symbol of the Irish nation at the bar of public opinion.”²⁰ In brutal circumstances, Myles Joyce was executed by the English hangman, Marwood, on 15 December 1882, still vehemently protesting his innocence in Irish. His ghost was believed to haunt Galway gaol where he was buried, and his widow’s curse, delivered on her knees in the formal Gaelic manner, was believed to follow the gaol governor. The principal informer subsequently retracted his evidence, proving Myles Joyce to have been an innocent man. James Joyce’s detailed knowledge of the case came from the oral tradition (presumably from Nora Barnacle) rather than the well-known contemporary account by the nationalist M. P., Tim Harrington.²¹

Joyce was sufficiently interested in his namesake to use his dying words “*Tá mé ag imeacht*” [I am going] in twenty five different languages in *Finnegans Wake*. Recorded and translated by a local journalist, they were as follows:

I am going. Why put me to death? I am not guilty. I had neither hand or foot in the killing. I didn’t know anything at all about it. God forgive the people who swore against me. It’s a poor thing to die on the scaffold for what I never did. I never did it and it’s a poor case to die. God help my wife and her five orphans. I hadn’t hand or part in it. But I have my priest with me. I am as innocent as the child in the cradle.²²

The condition of Myles Joyce was that of post-Famine Ireland. As late as 1968, Samuel Beckett rehearsed the same sensibility: “I have always sensed that there was within me an assassinated being. Assassinated before my birth. I needed to find this assassinated person again. And try to give him new life.”²³

One final annotation is necessary here. The conditions of colonised Ireland could not readily be accommodated within the canonical

British forms of representation such as the realist novel.²⁴ Because conventional literary forms were deemed insufficiently effective, unratifiable or corrupt, Irish writing was challenged to be both highly experimental in its search for alternatives and subversive of its own procedures. Here, a long line of formal experimentation can be traced, from Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* through James Clarence Mangan to Joyce and eventually to Flann O'Brien. Irish literature was always a minor literature, because it is was a colonial literature—disempowered by the canonical forms of the coloniser's discourse, re-empowered by the experimental quest for alternatives to it. Irish literature sought to rewrite its marginality as a new centrality, as its precociously decentered colonial subject becomes the classic modern subject.²⁵

The linguistic situation in Ireland is clarified by considering Derrida's recent meditation on monolingualism. He explicitly identifies himself as a *pied noir*, aware of his triple dislocation from the Arabic and Berber languages of Algeria, the French language of France, and the Hebrew language of his Jewish origins. Derrida—like the Irish writers of the Revival—is eloquent about the silence, about the “terror” of a hyphenated identity, about the chasm created by the trans-voicing of memory, and the consequent instability of his voice: “I was the first to be afraid of my own voice, as if it were not mine, to contest it, even to detest it.”²⁶

Derrida has no source language, only a target language, no language of the past, only of the future.²⁷ A linguistic alien, his mantra becomes: “I have only one language and it is not mine.”²⁸ This linguistic position is similar to that of a Joyce or a Beckett. H  l  ne Cixous, with her Spanish/French/Jewish father, and her German/Jewish mother, has similarly stressed her *Alg  riance*, with its curious sense of having departed but never having arrived.²⁹

Joyce, Modernism, and the Famine

It is possible to identify—however crudely—two broad strands within modernism. “Right” modernism (Eliot, Pound) desired a unified, authentic Western culture, of hierarchy and social order, with an organic cultural unity and no “dissociation of sensibility.” Mournful and elegiac, it lamented the loss of the organic community, *Gemeinschaft*, a victim of the alienating anomie of modern industrial society. “Left” modernism (Beckett, Joyce, Brecht) accepted this deracination and was uncompromisingly avant-garde and determinedly political, finding expression in dadaism, constructivism, and surrealism. It embraced the demotic rather than the elitist, the urban rather than the rural, and espoused the hybrid multiplicity of a fragmented tradition. The choice between these two forms of modernism was cultural as well as individual. The “right” wing model of a deep past opposed to a shallow

present was not available to Joyce because, for his generation, an Irish deep past no longer existed. It had been eviscerated by a dual colonialism—"The English tyranny and the Roman tyranny"³⁰—that curious complicity of British imperialism and Roman Catholicism which made Ireland "the scullery maid of Christendom" and the home of "the gratefully oppressed" (35). So thorough was the evacuation that an indigenous Irish culture could no longer be resuscitated even by a determined policy of cultural revival: "Just as ancient Egypt is dead, so is ancient Ireland."³¹ To believe otherwise was to live delusionally in a twilight world of Celtic kitsch, by "the broken lights of ancient myth."³² The only reality the Irish past bequeathed was a treadmill of brute repetition, the endless circling of Patrick Morkan's horse around King Billy's statue in "The Dead."

Modern Ireland was haunted by the afterlife of that deeper world from which it was permanently estranged. And here lay Joyce's most profound insight: the Irish in this condition were not deprived of modernity—they literally embodied it.³³ Their provincialism and alienation were central to the condition of modernity, not its be-nighted opposite. For Joyce then, to be colonised was also to be modern. The derivative, shallow and broken identity of his Irish subjects was also the archetypal modern identity. In *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, Joyce employs a repetitive lexicon to describe this colonised world—spectral, shrivelled, stale, vague, mean, dull, dark, melancholy, sombre, sour, sullen, gaunt, bleak, bitter, denuded, pallid, grey, servile, consumptive, narrow, tawdry, gloomy, listless. It is a world of shadows, condemned always to the second hand, to an identity based on alienation from self and others.

Joyce's critique was not just abstract or generalising: it was rooted in a penetrating analysis of post-Famine Irish culture. In chapter five of *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus walks from north to south across Dublin City, and his journey through space is also a journey through time. Stephen draws parallels between the paralysis of "a bleak decaying seaport" and his own unease, while contemplating a series of versions of Ireland. Passing "the great dull stone" of Trinity College, he rejects "the fetters of the reformed conscience," before engaging with nationalistic Ireland. In its cultural manifestations, he dismisses the dutiful bad verse of Thomas Moore, "the nationalist poet of Ireland," and the Gaelic Revival, as symbolised by the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League.³⁴ In a long passage, he explores the possibility of modern Anglicised Dubliners being able to reconnect with the older Gaelic culture, as symbolised by the Irish-speaking communities of the west coast, before rejecting that possibility as unattainable.³⁵ Having rejected literary nationalism (Moore), the Irish language revival, popular nationalism and Gaelic sports, he also rejects political nationalism, in a consideration of the "tawdry tribute" of the Wolfe Tone monument.³⁶

The Irish past, like Michael Furey in “The Dead,” can only return to the present as an absence: the Irish language, love, a national community have all been consigned to the spectral. Stephen then traverses St. Stephen’s Green to Newman House, where in a remarkable passage, he registers his unease at Roman Catholicism as he passes down a corridor:

The corridor was dark and silent but not unwatchful. Why did he feel that it was not unwatchful? Was it because he had heard that in Buck Whaley’s time there was a secret staircase there? Or was the Jesuit house extraterritorial and was he walking among aliens? The Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space.³⁷

Here, Catholicism is presented as “extraterritorial” and “alien.”³⁸ Later, Stephen, recalling his Roman namesake, concludes that “his countrymen and not mine had invented what Curley the other night called our religion.”³⁹ Stephen is then in a position to reject Catholicism as yet another insidious snare. These reflections precede the celebrated encounter with the English Jesuit, with its equally alienating reverberations:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech.⁴⁰

Stephen is continually reminded that his position as an Irishman is inescapably derivative.

This remarkable chapter ushers in the equally celebrated conclusion of the novel, in which Stephen rejects the nets of nationality, language and religion, choosing to combat them with the weapons of silence, exile and cunning. These famous words have usually been read tritely as representing Joyce’s contemptuous dismissal of Ireland in favour of cosmopolitanism. As always with Joyce, we need to read carefully. The triple collocation “silence, exile, cunning” is derived from Balzac, *La Comédie Humaine*, volume five. Lucien and Blondet are conversing: “*Mon cher, répondit Lucien, j’ai mis en pratique un axiome avec lequel on est sûr de vivre tranquille; Fuge, Late, Tace!*” [flee, hide, be silent].⁴¹

The deliberate literary echo deployed by Joyce reminds us of two principles. One is that Joyce treats memory as itself a constructed form, intersplined with literary representations. Again and again in *A Portrait*, Stephen’s memory is triggered by literary references, which he then imaginatively absorbs and blends with his own experience. The second principle is the imperative not to reduce Joyce’s cultural politics to a crude and morally-charged choice between “national” and “cosmopolitan.” The complexity of the Joycean cultural critique was its refusal to inhabit the binaries of Celtic or Saxon, Catholic or Protestant, modern or traditional, national or cosmopolitan, English or

Irish—the binaries that so transfixed his contemporaries (and later commentators). Yeats, for example, reversed the value systems of Celtic/Saxon, traditional/modern, but still left the binaries intact. Joyce rejected the categories, instead seeking to dismantle the binary system itself. That is one of the points of his famous remark to Yeats: “I’m afraid, Mr. Yeats, you’re too old for me to be able to help you.”⁴² However, Joyce did share Yeats’s sense that Ireland in the post-Parnell period would “be like soft wax for years to come.”⁴³

We also need to pay precise attention to the cultural politics of Ireland in the late Nineteenth Century. *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* offer a sophisticated critique not of “old Ireland” but of the new Ireland that had emerged since the Famine; Stephen Dedalus rejects what is essentially the Ireland of the Devotional Revolution, of the second-hand language, of a spurious narrow nationalism.⁴⁴ Escaping the despised post-Famine present, two options were available: a retreat into the Irish past (rejected as unavailable except in a shallow revivalism), or a soaring flight of aesthetic transcendence. This second solution was dangerous and potentially deforming, a free-fall without the parachute cords of community and identity. Read in this way, Joyce’s work, beneath its calm surface, is pervasively disturbed by the presence of the Famine: the post-Famine condition of Ireland is the unnamed horror at the heart of Joyce’s Irish darkness, the conspicuous exclusion that is saturatingly present as a palpable absence deliberately being held at bay, “the terror of soul of a starving Irish village.”⁴⁵

This is the world described in 1848 by John Mitchel:

A calm still horror was over the land. Go where you would, in the heart of the town or in the suburb, or the mountainside or on the level plain, there was the stillness and heavy pall-like feel of the chamber of death. You stood in the presence of a dread, silent, vast dissolution. An unseen ruin was creeping around you. You saw no war of classes, no open Janissary war of foreigners, no human agency of destruction.

You could weep but the rising curse died unspoken within your heart like a profanity. Human passion there was none but inhuman and unearthly quiet. Children met you, toiling heavily on stone heaps but their burning eyes were senseless and their faces cramped and weasened like stunted old men. Gangs worked but without a murmur or a whistle or a cough, ghostly, like voiceless shadows to the eye.

Even womanhood had ceased to be womanly. The birds of the air carolled no more and the crow and the raven dropped dead upon the wing. The very dogs, hairless with the head down and the vertebrae of the back protruding like a saw of bone, glared on you from the ditch side with a wolfish, avid eye and then slunk away, slowly and cowardly. Nay, the sky of heaven, the blue mountains, the still lake, stretching far away westward, looked not as they wont. Between them and you rose up a steaming agony, a film of suffering, impervious and dim. It seemed as if the *anima mundi*, the soul of the land, was faint and dying, and that the faintness and death had crept into all things of earth and heaven. You stood there too, silenced in the presence of the unseen and terrible.⁴⁶

Mitchel's remarks were echoed by the American writer W. G. Has-kins a decade later in Dublin:

In the midst of all so rich and beautiful, a solemn, sad loneliness hung like a black pall over everything. The streets, though wide, were deserted; the stores, though lofty and built for endurance, were closed; business there was almost none. Dublin was like a deserted village or a city of the dead.⁴⁷

As a counterweight to the vacuity of post-Famine Irish culture, Joyce and the other Irish modernists espoused the importance of representation as an auratic process which rescued presence and fullness from depletion. Wilde, O'Casey, Shaw, Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett were from that Dublin which so glaringly presented that pallid vacuum. For all of them, a cult of representation became a means by which the political could be replaced by the aesthetic. The artist restored the aura in the aesthetic realm which had been stripped by the brute contingencies of politics. The aesthetic absorbed and then saturated the political. This process required a cult of the artist—self-created as at once intimate and exilic, immersed in reality but detached from “the local stupidity” (Pound). This generated the classic modernist stance, which required the Nietzschean “pathos of distance” to allow for the creation of the autonomous work of art. In Ireland, that pathos of distance was cultural as well as individual, the distance travelled from an intact Irish culture, securely grounded and self-reliant. The Famine represented the most visible landmark on that terrible journey.

Here was a people exiled, refugeeed, unhoused, evicted from a community of recognition, silenced. This was the condition prophesied by Thomas Davis on the eve of the Famine:

To impose another language on such people is to send their history adrift among the accidents of translation; 'tis to tear their identity from all places—'tis to substitute arbitrary signs for picturesque and suggestive names—'tis to cut off the entail of feeling, and separate the people from their forefathers by a deep gulf . . .⁴⁸

Local reports of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin at Knock in County Mayo in 1879 noted that she was silent.⁴⁹ In the midst of a community in rapid transition between two languages, in which should she have spoken? In the Mayo of that time, it was not uncommon for monoglot Irish-speakers to have grandchildren who were monoglot English speakers.

In a vivid anecdote, Douglas Hyde captures the confusion of the period:

About two or three miles west of Ballaghderreen [County Roscommon], I chatted with a little “gossoon” [*Garsín*, boy] who ran beside my car. And as I spoke to him in Irish, he answered me in English. At last I said: “*Nach labhraínn tú Gaedhlig?*” [Don't you speak Irish?]. His answer was: “And isn't it Irish I'm spakin?”⁵⁰

Joyce and "The Dead"

One of the best-known passages in Irish literature comes at the end of "The Dead," where Gabriel Conroy becomes aware of the snow falling outside his hotel window.

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (225)⁵¹

The snow here is not just an objective correlative of Gabriel's psychic desolation. His comfortable middle-class journalistic world has disintegrated with his devastating realization that the passionate love of his wife Gretta was the young Galway man, Michael Furey, who had literally died for love of her. Gretta's buried passion had been resurrected by the singing of "The Lass of Aughrim"—a folk song which summoned the deep, oral, Irish-language, Jacobite, Gaelic past of the west of Ireland. This song was a favourite of Nora Barnacle and her mother. On 26 August 1909 in a letter to Nora, Joyce tells her: "I was singing an hour ago your song 'The Lass of Aughrim.' The tears are in my eyes and my voice trembles with emotion when I sing that lovely air. It was worth coming to Ireland to have got it from your poor, kind mother."⁵² By contrast with the deep cultural history of the west, Gabriel occupies the shallow bourgeois present, typecast as a provincial journalist with the unionist *Daily Express*. He is a "West Briton," a teacher of Romance languages at the Royal University (190). He lives life vicariously, at a distance from it: throughout "The Dead," he observes things at second hand through his spectacles, as here where he is looking through a window, a recurrent metaphor for separation in this short story. He is routinely unnerved, ill at ease in his body, indicated by the nervous tic of constantly blushing. He occupies the shadows, as if he is not fully alive, as if his participation in life is at one remove, like "distant music."

Joyce uses the falling snow to ease the scene from Dublin to the west of Ireland, ending in the desolate graveyard "where Michael Furey lay buried." Joyce hinted to his brother Stanislaus that "The Dead" was "a ghost story."⁵³ Michael's surname recalls the Furies, who in Greek mythology represented the spirit of the dead, notably the avenging souls of murdered men. Furey is associated with the snow, the chill, the cold which pervades everything, even the bodies of the

participants (Gretta “perished alive,” “Mrs Malins will get her death of cold”)—that cold air prowling outside the house, a malignant energy seeking to penetrate the warm house and even the bodies of the living (177, 207). The shade of Furey is borne on that cold blast.⁵⁴ When Gabriel enters the house, and takes off his coat, “a cold fragrant air from out of doors escaped from crevices and folds” (177). It is as if Gabriel has unwittingly released Furey into the party. Furey had worked at the gasworks in Galway and at the critical emotional event in the story for Gretta, “the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair” (213). As they leave the house, “The piercing morning air came into the hall” (207). When Gabriel tries to kindle a sexual flame with Gretta in the hotel, “The air of the room chilled his shoulders” (224). At the moment of revelation, Gabriel is seized by “a vague terror,” “as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world.” It is only with “an effort of reason” that he can shake himself free of this incubus (221–22). Throughout the story, Furey is associated with sudden blasts and releases of air, cold, and gas. At the end of the story, Gabriel’s attention is directed to the snow outside by “a few light taps upon the pane,” recalling Michael’s efforts to attract Gretta’s attention by throwing gravel up at her window.

Furey can also be taken as symbolic of a vibrant, passionate life which has vanished—it is now “barren”—the dynamic life of the pre-Famine Gaelic countryside, subsequently safely paled by “crooked crosses” (Roman Catholicism).⁵⁵ Gretta, we remember, has been sent to a convent in Dublin to sever her unsuitable relationship with Michael.⁵⁶ The snow can then be seen as a metaphor for the cultural change in post-Famine Ireland—that stultifying pallor which the deadly combination of British imperialism and Roman Catholicism imposed on Irish life, reaching its nadir in Dublin, “the mask of capital” (39).

Literary Reverberations

Joyce’s snow deliberately evokes earlier moments in Irish literature. One of the inspirations of his short story was Thomas Moore’s “Oh ye Dead,” a party piece of Joyce’s.⁵⁷ Moore’s lyric (see Appendix A) concerns the Irish folk belief that the shades of men who have died on foreign soil (notably the Wild Geese) return to haunt their familiar and beloved places of origin.⁵⁸ They converse with the living but if asked why they do not return home, they say that they are obliged to go to Mount Hecla and instantly disappear. Moore’s Irish politics, however thickly syruped and disguised, were generally radical: the song returns to his familiar ground of vanished possibilities and the betrayed present. His Ireland is haunted by the United Irishmen and

their redemptive projects: the fading of the light is a *leitmotif* in Moore for the defeat of their Enlightenment project and the consequent gloom in Ireland.⁵⁹ The veteran United Irishman Andrew O'Reilly claimed in the mid nineteenth century: "The music of Ireland is the music of a heart-broken people: it is a collection of sighs."⁶⁰ Like the revenants of his lyric, Moore obsessively revisited the radical politics of his youth, before he and they had been evicted into the callous present—a desolate world of shadows, of the living dead, of the broken dream. Moore's master image is of the dead condemned to glacial cold, "to freeze 'mid Hecla's snow." The second stanza was sung as if the dead were whimpering for the bodily existence which they could no longer enjoy, as if their voices issued from an out-of-body experience. His brother Stanislaus reported this mode of singing the song to a fascinated James.⁶¹

The Wild Geese are also referenced in the place name Aughrim—their defeat at which caused their exile—and the goose at the center of the festive table.⁶² There is one further reference coded in the goose. Nora Barnacle's surname would originally have been the common Connemara name Ó Cadhain, normally anglicised as Coyne. On a false etymology, the name in Nora's family had been anglicised as Barnacle, the word *cadhan* in Irish meaning a "Barnacle goose."⁶³ When Joyce himself was visiting in Galway, her family referred to him as Shames Showe—a phonetic rendering of the Irish version of his name Séamas Seoighe—and an indication that they were an Irish-speaking family.⁶⁴

In one sense, Joyce's short story offers a variation on Moore's lyric. Joyce learned from Moore the power of music to articulate the unspeakable. Moore's *Melodies* ache for a political impossibility, for a vanished world superior to the present, for all that loss and silence seeking again to come to presence and voice. Moore's music echoed across the Irish nineteenth century as a language of the politically unsayable, of the impossible public sphere. Once Ireland actually achieved a measure of independence, the popularity of Moore instantly plummeted, indicating that his appeal to Catholic Ireland stemmed from its peculiar position within nineteenth-century British politics.

In 1906, as he began to think about "The Dead," Joyce was reading Bret Harte's *Gabriel Conroy* (1875).⁶⁵ The novel opens with a party of emigrants (initially led by the now dead Captain Gabriel Conroy) trapped in the Californian Sierra in March 1848. In their trek west to California, having become engulfed by snow, they are immobilised, quarrelsome and starving. The novel is derived from the Donner party, a real-life group of emigrants (including two Irish families, the Breens and the Reeds) who had been trapped by unusually early and heavy snowfalls while crossing the Sierras in the winter of 1846–47 (also the worst season—Black '47—of the Irish Famine). The stranded

party had eventually resorted to cannibalism to keep themselves from starving.⁶⁶ These events, so redolent of the Irish Famine experience, form the basis of Harte's narrative and suggest why Joyce gestures directly towards the novel in his choice of Gabriel Conroy as a name for his protagonist. It also helps to explain why "The Dead" so insistently emphasizes food and hospitality. Harte places particular emphasis on the relationship between death and silence (see Appendix B).

It is not just Moore and Harte that are frozen into Joyce's snow. His favourite Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan, is also there, and the latter's 1846 Famine poem "Siberia" (see Appendix C).⁶⁷ This oblique meditation on Famine revolves around the image of "the killing snows." The poem mimics the trajectory by which the intimate human circadian rhythm gradually slows to an abstract geological time. In an inhuman violation of the body's basic integrity, its barriers are breached by a grotesque invasion of materiality, an infestation that slows the blood to a sandy sludge. Consciousness is then displaced into a space beyond, beyond biology, beyond memory, beyond ethics. An entire culture is annulled, sinking into a glacial coma, a cultural deep freeze of silence, isolation and death. Human time cedes to a chthonic time, beyond redemption. All of this is observed in the poem with the detached fascination of experiencing one's own dissolution: its voice emanates not from a warm, living body but from its spectral mutant. Mangan tracks the Famine's ontological violence—history's appalled reversion to geological time, into a space and a time which precede and follow human geography and human history and which are supremely indifferent to them. Again, we can feel the weight of Mangan's snow impressed on Joyce's, notably in the final sentences where Joyce generalises from Gabriel's predicament.

There is a further presence and pressure in the writing of this ending. Throughout *Dubliners*, there are palpable echoes of George Moore, especially the "Zola's ricochet" Moore of *A Drama in Muslin* (1886). Moore treats Dublin as "a land of echoes and shadows," whose precise physical description conveys "the moral idea of Dublin in 1882," where "the souls of the Dubliners blend and harmonise with their connatural surroundings," in which "the poor shades go by, waving a mock-English banner over a waxwork show."⁶⁸ This Dublin is "a corpse, quick with the life of the worm."⁶⁹ For Moore, the city lay "mysteriously dead—immovable and mute beneath the moon, like a starved vagrant in the last act of a melodrama."⁷⁰ Moore's version of Dublin as a necropolis, a city of the dead, the leprous and the paralytic, is powerfully present in Joyce's *Dubliners*, and nowhere more so than in "The Dead," which reworks Moore's motifs—the statue of O'Connell, the dinner party disrupted by a political discussion, the world of the journalist. One of these motifs is snow. In the Galway-based section of his novel, Moore envisaged the plain but intelligent

Alice Barton—one of his “muslin martyrs”—staring out the window at the snow-drenched west of Ireland landscape, as she comes to a realization that there was no escape for her “from this awful mummery in muslin,” this “white death”:

But through her gazing eyes the plain of virginal snow, flecked with the cold blue shadows of the trees, sank into her soul, bleaching it of every hope of joy; and, gathering suggestions from the surroundings, she saw a white path extending before her—a sterile way that she would have to tread—a desolate way, with no songs in its sullen air, but only sad sighs, and only stainless tears, falling, falling, ever falling—falling silently. Her life is weak and sterile, even as the plain of moonlight-stricken snow. Like it, she will fade, will pass into a moist and sunless grave, without leaving a trace of herself on the earth—this beautiful earth, built out of and made lovely with love.⁷¹

This passage influenced Joyce, from the highly polished Paterian patina even to the celebrated chiasmic cadence of the “falling faintly”—“faintly falling” snow. Joyce has also redeployed Moore’s use of a figure gazing through a window at snow as a metaphor for desolate detachment and isolation, and the snow as a proleptic evocation of future psychological pain.

The snow in “The Dead,” then, is not just weather. To be meteorologically accurate, rain would have been the more appropriate western weather—but this would not work so well in the cultural economy of Joyce’s work, as we can see in the relative failure of his 1913 poem “She weeps over Ragoon,” which rehearses the end of “The Dead.” Ragoon was the Galway cemetery where Michael Bodkin, the model for Michael Furey, was buried. Joyce imagines Nora Barnacle/Gretta Conroy grieving over the grave:

Love, hear thou
How soft, how sad his voice is ever calling
Ever unanswered, and the dark rain falling.
Then as now.

Dark too our hearts, o love, shall lie and cold,
As his sad heart has lain,
Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould
And muttering rain.⁷²

Translating the rain into snow intensifies the ramifying cultural registers of “The Dead”: snow combines the personal and the cultural, while drawing on its many earlier figurative uses in the Irish literary tradition.

Joyce’s language was therefore intensely and consistently reverberative, an effect heightened by the constant imaginative absorption and reworking of literary precedents. Consider his use, for example, of George Moore’s *Vain Fortune* (1892) (see Figure 1).⁷³ In the novel, a bridal couple receives the devastating news on their wedding night

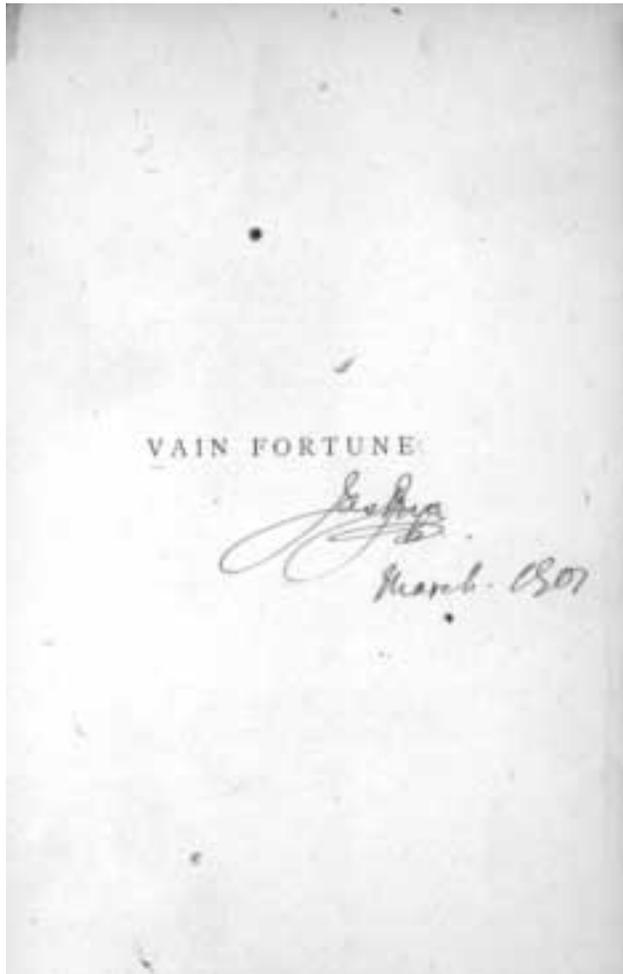


Figure 1: Title page of George Moore's *Vain Fortune*, signed by James Joyce in 1901. (Courtesy of the Beinecke Library, Yale University)

that a young woman whom the husband jilted has committed suicide. The news separates the wedding couple: there is no kiss, no consummation of the marriage, only remorse and separation. The wife finally falls to troubled sleep while the husband goes to the window to look out at the melancholy dawn. He realizes that his life is a failure and that he has made a terrible mistake. His wife lacks the passion of the girl who killed herself for him. In his treatment of Gabriel and Gretta at the Gresham Hotel, Joyce carefully varies this scenerio. As Gabriel is inflamed by memories of their honeymoon, Gretta is consumed by memories of Michael Furey. His shade drives a wedge between the married couple, opening Gabriel to the realization that he is merely a

second-hand lover of his wife and that their marriage has consisted only of “the years of their dull existence together” (215).

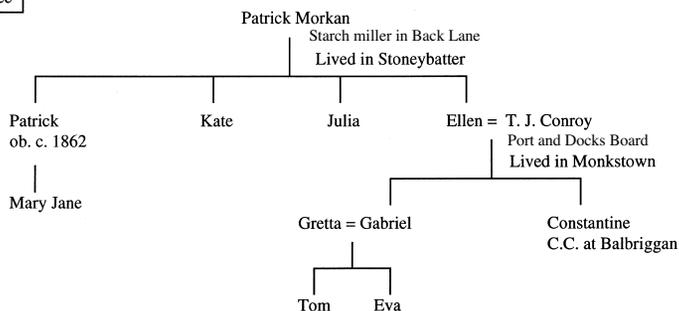
Joyce similarly recycled a scene from another Irish novel, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *All in the Dark* (1865). This contains a passage where a man gazes from a darkened stairwell towards a woman further up them: “She had quite vanished up the stairs and he still held the door handle in his fingers and stood looking up the vacant steps and, as it were, listening to distant music.” The scene is closely mirrored at the end of “The Dead” and the phrase “distant music” is used by Joyce. That same scene also replicated the theatrical staging of the end of Ibsen’s “A Doll’s House,” a play with which he was intimately familiar.⁷⁴

All these literary precedents add to the charged language of “The Dead,” the point at which the mature style of Joyce emerges. At one level, the story can be read as a successful exercise in naturalism, an acute diagnosis of a marriage set in a dense and closely observed social context. At another level, the story is structured around a matrix of symbolism (consider the careful choreography of color, for instance). At yet another level, it can be read as a series of sophisticated variations on other texts.⁷⁵

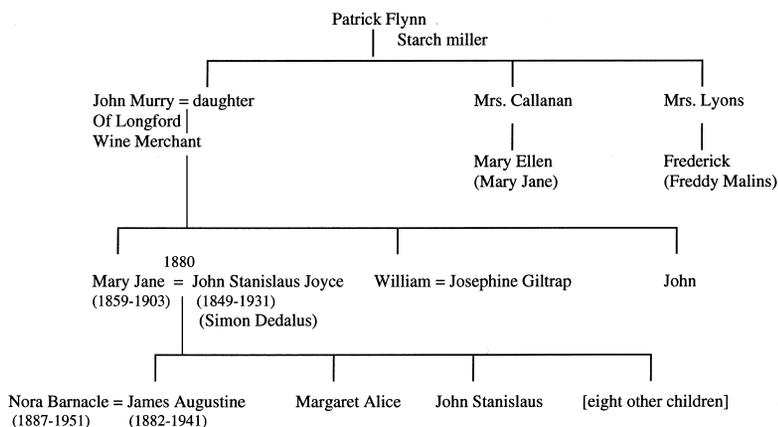
Historical Reverberations

The story can also be read as the subtle deployment of a series of historical traces. Consider the familial similarities between the Morkans and the Joyces, which become clear if one compares the relevant genealogies (see Figures 2 and 3). The story is permeated by a foreboding sense of generational transition, both personal and cultural. There is a clear sense of a passing from the aunts’ “generation on the wane” to the “new generation” of Mary Anne and Molly Ivors, with their “new ideas, new purposes” (193, 204). This waning signals the wider transition between an older, more anglicised Dublin and a newer one, steeped in the Gaelic Revival. The theme is explicitly foregrounded by Gabriel in his dinner speech. The aunts are equally uncomprehending of the intellectual interests of the college-educated Molly Ivors and of the musical taste of their niece, who plays a technically difficult “Academy piece.” This becomes even more apparent if we take the conventional thirty years as a generation. Three times in the story, that thirty-year interval is specifically recalled. The last big snowfall ominously occurred thirty years ago, when Patrick Morkan died. This is proleptic of Julia’s death: she sings the song “Arrayed for the Bridal,” with its shades of imminent death and its close parallels with the spinster aunt’s life. Joyce also used here a motif from Irish folklore—the “lightness before death.” (This was the common belief that just before a person died, they experienced a brief moment of re-

Morkan Pedigree



Joyce Pedigree



Figures 2 and 3: Joyce and Morkan family genealogies

newed energy and exhilaration.) The short story places a heavy emphasis on how well Julia looks, how well she sings, how lively she is—all of it ominous in this context.⁷⁶

Joyce also signalled that Gretta can be identified with Nora Barnacle: “Do you remember the three adjectives I have used in ‘The Dead’ in speaking of your body? They are these: musical and strange and perfumed.”⁷⁷ The sentence in the story reads: “But now after the kindling of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust” (216).

Geographical Reverberations

His close friend Constantine Curran observed of Joyce: “His memory was a map of the town.”⁷⁸ The influence of Vico should be observed here. The Italian philosopher of the interplay between myth, memory and history disrupted a cosy historicism, developing an alternative enlightened tradition.⁷⁹ Memory was not for Vico a merely passive record of experience but an active and dynamic force that opened rather than restricted the imagination. William Blake despised “the rotten rags of memory” precisely because he believed that this narrow realist version of it precluded imagination and creativity in favour of an empirical epistemology. Vico believed that memory involved imagination, ingenuity, even invention: “Memory thus has three different aspects: memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship.” That understanding informed Vico’s distinctive style: not the linear, discursive method favoured by the mainstream enlightenment but a spiral of connectivity, a recursive, clotted, elliptical matrix. The influence on Joyce is clear. He felt a special affinity with this genius, neglected and spurned in his own time and place—Naples in the early Eighteenth Century—and yet judged by posterity to be its finest product. Naples often appeared to other Italians as, in Antonio Gramsci’s dismissive phrase, “*un angolino morto della storia*” [a dead end of history]. Vico’s imaginative horizon never extended too far beyond the Sinus Cumanus—the semi-circular Gulf of Naples, whose shape irresistibly recalled Dublin Bay for Joyce. When Vico was exiled in Vatolla for nine years, he took Naples with him in memory, imagination, desire . . . It is within this expansive Viconian sense of memory that we should locate Joyce’s engagement with his native city.

Thus if we plot the city of Dublin as revealed in “The Dead,” we find one of the codes to its complex historical narrative (see Figure 4). The story is set across three different zones of the city—the medieval (now shabby) Catholic sector, the eighteenth-century Georgian grid of the “Protestant Ascendancy” and the expanding middle-class coastal suburbs. Joyce’s own imagination was drawn to the “medieval” quality of the oldest part of Dublin. This area had been the fashionable Catholic mercantile quarter until the end of the eighteenth century. It had lost out socially when the centre of gravity of the city shifted irreversibly east and down-river under the aegis of the Protestant parliament, with its set-piece Georgian squares and streets and its landmark buildings like the Custom House and the “menacing” Four Courts (214). The Catholic merchants had resisted tooth and nail the decisive switch east of the Customs House, which they knew would seal the fate of the old mercantile quarter of the city—

the Liberties, Stoneybatter and Usher's Island. As the nineteenth century proceeded, vitality seeped out of the area, it lost its social cachet and the dread tenementization inexorably encroached. Yet Joyce's imagination was drawn to this area of the city. He told Arthur Power: "One of the most interesting things about Ireland is that we are still fundamentally a medieval people, and that Dublin is still a medieval city. I know that when I used to frequent the pubs around Christ Church, I was always reminded of those medieval taverns in which the sacred and the obscene jostle shoulders."⁸⁰ Joyce also believed that the "old classical Europe" was destined to disappear, and that there would be a return to medievalism. Thus Dublin's classical inheritance held little attraction for him; one finds no sustained treatment in Joyce of the neo-classical city, despite its undoubted importance on a European scale.

Set in this context, it is no surprise that "The Dead" is set on Usher's Island and concerns the desolate fall of the old houses of Usher into multiple occupancy, the gregarious, poverty-stricken slums of O'Casey's plays.⁸¹ We are told on the first page of the story that the aunts live in a "dark, gaunt house" (175) and soon after that they live above a corn-factor's offices (see Figure 5). That this is a step down in the world is hinted at in the aunts' plaintive memory of the time when their family had their own horse and trap (208). That all three Morkans are unmarried fits the demographic profile of post-Famine Ireland, and the palpable sense that this is a terminal family. Usher's Island is a setting which reinforces the social liminality of the Morkan sisters, the sense of a cultural world which is out-of-kilter with the present, and which is close to termination. Thus for the Morkans to move there from Stoneybatter was not a step up the social ladder.⁸² Writing in 1892, the Catholic historian William James Fitzpatrick describes Usher's Island as "the fashionable R. C. district of the old city now fallen in status."⁸³ By contrast with the downwardly mobile Morkans, the Conroys are on the rise. T.J. Conroy is an upwardly mobile, respectable Catholic in a "Protestant" job with the Ports and Docks board who lives in Monkstown, one of the exclusive "Protestant" suburbs to which the wealthy had fled after the Union, leaving the old city to tenementize and moulder.⁸⁴ His domineering and socially conscious wife called her children the fashionable names Constantine and Gabriel: "It was she who had chosen the names for her sons for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life" (187). Contrast the old fashioned Morkan names of Ellen, Julia, Kate, Pat and Mary Jane. She steered her sons into the respectable middle-class occupations of priest and lecturer.⁸⁵ She bitterly opposed Gabriel's marriage to the "country-cute" Greta (187). Constantine is a Catholic priest stationed at Balbriggan on the railway line to the north of the city. Mary Jane's pupils come from "the better-class families on the

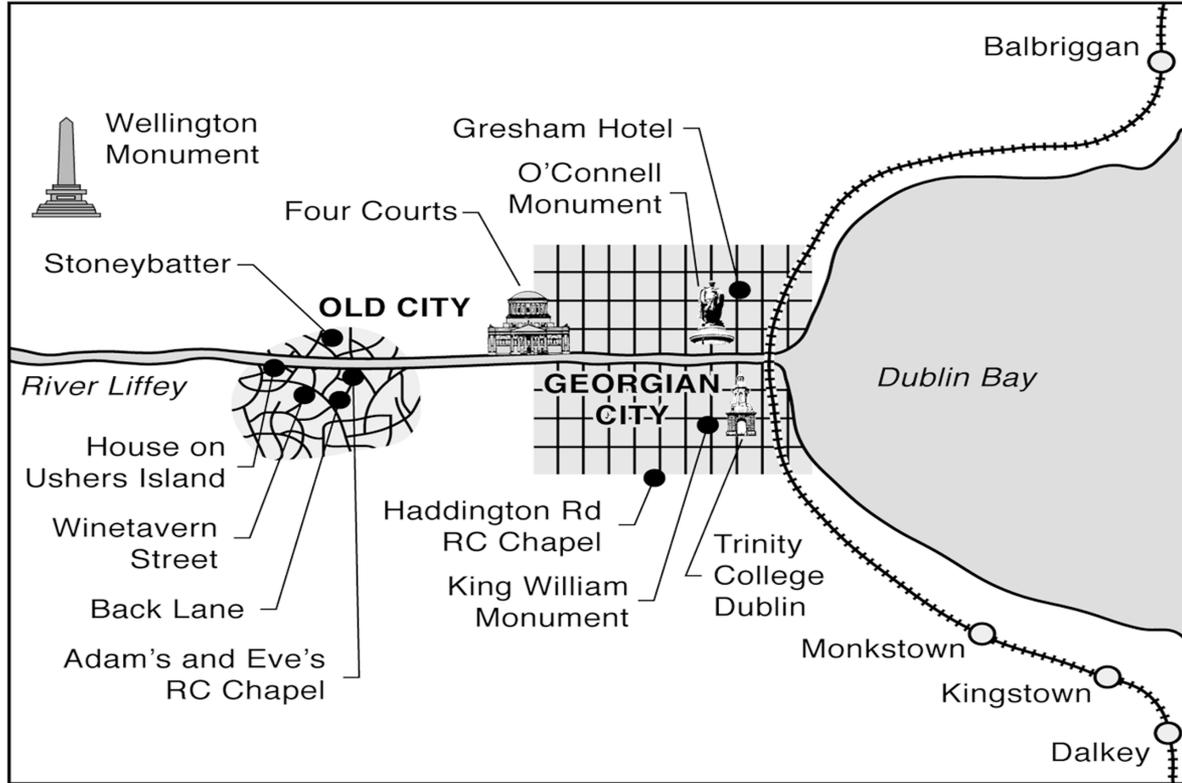


Figure 4: The geography of "The Dead." Drawn by Matthew Stout.



Figure 5: Harold Clarke, "The Last Hour of the Night," 1922. The Georgian house shown on the right of the image is remarkably similar to the house on Usher's Island where "The Dead" is set.

Kingstown and Dalkey line" (176). She herself plays in the new church of Haddington Road, which bridges the Georgian city and the middle-class world of the coastal suburbs, while her aunt plays for Adam's and Eve's, the infinitely less fashionable Franciscan chapel located in the city slums.

An additional reason for the Usher's Island setting is that the adjacent Guinnesses brewery is on the site of "Lord Galway's Walk."⁸⁶ This introduces both a Galway and a Jacobite theme. The Huguenot Lord Galway had been the victor at the Battle of Aughrim and the principal instigator of the Penal Laws, seen in Catholic narrative as a betrayal of the Articles of Limerick.⁸⁷ As a result, the Wild Geese regiments

had flocked to the service of France in the eighteenth century, vainly awaiting a French invasion in support of the Stuarts.⁸⁸ It is also possible that the island setting is intended to recall Nun's Island in Galway, Nora's birthplace. The location also helps the east-west symbolism of the story. Gabriel looks east always—to the continent, to Monkstown, to the Gresham Hotel.

It should also be pointed out that Francis Magan lived on Usher's Island. In the 1890s, Magan had just been sensationally unmasked as the most famous informer of 1798, and this context fits into the complex series of betrayals in the story. Lord Edward FitzGerald was betrayed on Usher's Island, on his way to Lord Moira's House, but his betrayer long remained unknown, despite intense archival scrutiny. A great sensation was accordingly created by the publication in 1892 by W. J. Fitzpatrick of *Secret Service Under Pitt* which "outed" Francis Magan as the Catholic informer who had betrayed the Protestant Lord Edward FitzGerald for blood money.⁸⁹ Magan had been recruited by the "Sham Squire" Francis Higgins. Magan, the secretive betrayer, was a respectable Catholic barrister who lived at 20 Usher's Island, which had been the residence of Dr John Carpenter, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin in the Penal Days.⁹⁰ The house was inherited by Magan's eccentric spinster sister Elizabeth Magan, who vegetated there for twenty years in one room of the old house: "gloomily passing the closing years of a hidden life" . . . "the garden was covered from end to end with some feet deep of cinders" . . . "covered in rank nettles" . . . "sewers and gratings choked." She herself had been betrothed to Mathias O'Kelly's brother "but he broke away." "Whether the bridal feast had been absolutely spread is not stated."⁹¹ Here we have a direct echo of Julia Morkan "Arrayed for the Bridal." The Irish poet William Allingham wrote about the sealed room in the Magan house as if the feast had been laid and never subsequently removed:

Within there were carpets and cushions of dust,
The wood was half rot, and the metal half-rust:
Old curtains, half cobwebs, hung grimly aloof
'Twas a spiders' Elysium from cellar to roof.

But they pried not upstairs, through the dust and the gloom,
Nor peeped at the door of the wonderful room
That gossips made much of, in accents subdued
But whose inside no mortal might brag to have viewed.

Full forty years since turned the key in that door;
'Tis a room deaf and dumb 'mid the city's uproar,
The guests for whose joyance that table was spread
May now enter as ghosts for they're everyone dead.⁹²

Joyce himself had an intimate familiarity with 1798. We know that his father pointed out to him the home of Francis Higgins on

Stephen's Green and that J. J. O'Neill, a librarian in the National Library, showed him the Dominick Street house of Leonard McNally, the other notorious informer "outed" by W. J. Fitzpatrick, as well as the Molesworth Street residence of the Emmet family.⁹³ That interest was deepened by the centenary commemoration which, in Dublin, had a strong emphasis on Lord Edward. One visitor to Dublin in this period was startled when he asked a cabbie to take him to the best-known tourist spot in Dublin: the driver took him straight to Thomas Street and pointed out the house where Lord Edward was arrested.⁹⁴ In a remarkable little book called *Memorable Dublin Houses* (published in Dublin in 1899), Wilmot Harrison describes over one hundred city houses with literary or historical connections. Just over half were linked to the 1798 rebellion, and the highest number of entries for an individual was seven for Lord Edward. Remarkably, Magan's house at Usher's Island was also included.⁹⁵ A three mile ceremonial 1798 way passed from the site of Wolfe Tone's putative statue at the top of Grafton Street, via his birthplace in Stafford Street to St. Michans (burial place of the brothers Sheares), via Moira House on Usher's Island (where Lord Edward had been almost taken) to Thomas Street (where Lord Edward was arrested) and then St. Catherine's Church (outside which Robert Emmet was executed in 1803).⁹⁶ In 1898 and 1903, this became a secularised pilgrim route for nationalist processions commemorating the centenary of 1798 (with its motto "Who fears to speak of '98?" taken from the most popular commemorative song "The Memory of the Dead" by John Kells Ingram) and the execution of Emmet in 1803. This '98 way traverses the area in which "The Dead" is set. That Joyce was intimately acquainted with this 1798 theme is demonstrated in the "Wandering Rocks" section of *Ulysses* where Tom Kernan muses as he walks down Island Street on Usher's Island:

Somewhere here Lord Edward Fitzgerald escaped from Major Sirr. Stables behind Moira House. Damn good gin that was. Fine dashing young nobleman. Good stock, of course. That ruffian the sham squire, with his violet gloves, gave him away. Course they were on the wrong side. They rose in dark and evil days. Fine poem that is: Ingram. They were gentlemen. Ben Dollard does sing that ballad touchingly. Masterly rendition. *At the siege of Ross did my father fall.*⁹⁷

This motif of betrayal surfaces in a series of incidents in the story. Lily, pregnant and abandoned, resentfully claims: "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get from you" (178). As one of the aunts notes, "She's not the girl she was at all" (181). "The Lass of Aughrim" ballad has exactly this theme (see Appendix D). There is also the betrayal of Gabriel by Gretta, which mirrors Joyce's own fear of betrayal by Nora Barnacle.⁹⁸

Thus, the house on Usher's Island forms the centerpiece of the story. But Joyce does not offer a merely sociological, historical or ar-

chitectural account of it. All those are present, but the writing itself cannot be reduced to these conditions of its creation. He explained his writing method to Arthur Power: "In the intellectual method, you plan everything beforehand. When you arrive at the description, say, of a house, you try and remember that house exactly, which after all is journalism. But the emotionally creative writer refashions that house and creates a significant image in the only significant world, the world of our emotions. The more we are tied to fact and try to give a correct impression, the further we are from what is significant."⁹⁹

Musical Reverberations

In the treatment of music, the class and cultural gradations are finely shaded, in the interplay between traditional (folk song), popular (pantomime) and classical (operatic) music. This creates, as with the literary, historical and geographical references, a series of interlocking layers. "Thought-tormented music" is an apt phrase to describe its role. "The Lass of Aughrim," for example, releases the emotional charge in the story. It belonged to "the vernacular undergrowth of song" which flourished in the Dublin of Joyce's youth.¹⁰⁰ This is a long narrative ballad, with the evocative or implied narrative characteristic of the Irish song tradition. The ellipsis permits a lyric intensity which deepens the power of these haunting songs. Versions of this song had first appeared in print in Scotland in the early eighteenth century as "The Lass of Loch Royal."¹⁰¹ From there, it spread from north to south in Ireland, acquiring a local habitation and a name as "The Lass of Aughrim," the association of the Gregory family with Galway perhaps cementing the link. In the ballad, the mother of Lord Gregory rejects the girl who has borne his love child: she is forced out into the threatening rain, wind and storm, and baby and mother die, to the intense grief of a stricken Gregory, who curses his callous mother. The snow in "The Dead" reprises this aspect of the song. Certainly Joyce knew and sang a version: according to his sisters, he was "perpetually singing at home. He purported to know 35 verses of it."¹⁰² It is quite possible that Joyce, a voracious reader, knew the long, thirty-five verse Scottish version printed in Francis Child's five volume *The English and Scottish Popular Songs* (1882–1898). The Barnacle version included the following lines:

If you'll be the lass of Aughrim,
As I am taking you mean to be
Tell me the first token
That passed between you and me.

Oh don't you remember
That night on yon lean hill
When we both met together
Which I am sorry now to tell.

The rain falls on my yellow locks
And the dew it wets my skin
My babe lies cold within my arms
Lord Gregory let me in.¹⁰³

In considering the song, it is important not to prioritise the printed words. As Gabriel Conroy registers, its strange attraction stemmed from the fact that it was sung in the distinctive Irish way, on the pentatonic rather than the diatonic scale.¹⁰⁴ Joyce understood the power of music to capture emotion and sought to replicate its effect in his prose. Arthur Power describes him at his Parisian parties: “Towards midnight Joyce would go over to the piano and try running his fingers in a ripple over the keys. He would sing in a light and pleasant tenor voice many Irish ballads in which romance and satire were combined, and which were the secret source of his inspiration.”¹⁰⁵

The argument over tenors (Irish, English and continental) replays the earlier cultural argument over language.¹⁰⁶ The Pope’s axing of the women from the church choir signals one more generational shift. Mary Jane’s “Academy Piece,” “full of difficult runs and passages” loses its audience and, like Gabriel’s literary references, suggests an inability to command emotion, a retreat from the warmth and fullness of life into a merely technical or professional accomplishment. Freddy Malins’s championing of the Negro tenor in the music hall pantomime introduces another theme—the role of popular culture. The Hydean and Yeatsian animus to low-brow culture took in the intense popularity of the music halls which had sprung up in the city in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For Yeats, there was no difference between the appeal of the “yellow press” and the music hall—both were equally degenerate manifestations of modern urban, mass culture. Joyce embraced the demotic elements of mass culture (he was soon to be involved in introducing to Dublin the cinema, whose montage technique was to play a powerful role in liberating his mature style from late Victorian naturalism). Malins, in some respects the most decent of all the characters in the short story, rallies to the Negro singer’s defence: “Is it because he’s only a black?” (199).¹⁰⁷ The racial theme is also characteristic of Joyce, and foreshadows his choice of the Jewish Leopold Bloom as the central protagonist of *Ulysses*. The upwardly mobile Mary Jane quickly switches the discussion back to a discussion of what she calls “the legitimate opera” and Bartell D’Arcy talks about London, Paris and Milan—just as Gabriel earlier had retreated to talk of the continent when pressurised by Molly Ivors about Ireland (199–200). These cultural tensions are also evident in the dances at the party: the waltz, for example, was frowned on by Irish-Irelanders as a degenerate foreign importation, which encouraged too much physical contact.¹⁰⁸ The lancers and quadrilles had both been introduced to Ireland by the military and spread from Dublin Castle

downwards. In 1897, the first Irish *céilí* had been held at Bloomfield Hall in London, and this period witnessed the invention of a series of specifically “Irish” dances, such as “The Walls of Limerick” and “The Siege of Ennis,” designed to minimise any risk of erotic contact.¹⁰⁹ Once more, the impact of the Famine had been to seriously weaken the vigorous vernacular tradition of dance. One reason for Miss Ivors’s abrupt departure from the party may have been because she disapproved of the type of dances that were occurring there.

Music in “The Dead”¹¹⁰

Singers

Georgina Burns			
Therese Tietjens	Hamburgh	1831–1877	soprano
Ilma de Murzka	Croatia	1835–1889	soprano
Campanini	Italy	1845–1896	tenor
Zelia Trebelli	Paris	1838–1892	mezzo-soprano
Antonio Giuglini	Italy	1827–1865	
Ravelli Aramburo			
William Parkinson	England		tenor
Enrico Caruso	Italy		
Negro at the Gaiety Theatre			tenor

Operas

<i>Mignon</i>	Paris	1866	Ambroise Thomas [after Goethe’s <i>Wilhelm Meister’s Lehrjahre</i>]
<i>Dinorah</i>	Paris	1859	Meyerbeer
<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>	Milan	1833	Gaetano Donizetti [after Hugo]

Aria

“Yes let me like a soldier fall” from *Maritana* [London, 1845]
by Vincent Wallace (1812–1865)

Dance

Waltz, lancers, quadrilles

Conclusion

In 1993, Peter Ackroyd reminded us:

We must not think of time as some continually flowing stream moving in one direction. Think of it more as a lava flow from some unknown source of fire. Some parts of it move forward, some parts branch off from it and form separate channels, some parts of it slow down and eventually harden. There are parts of London, I believe, where time has actually hardened and come to an end.¹¹¹

In geological terms, Joyce shared Ackroyd’s igneous rather than sedimentary view of historical layering. Rather than each historical layer been laid down uniformly over its predecessors, smoothly and quietly

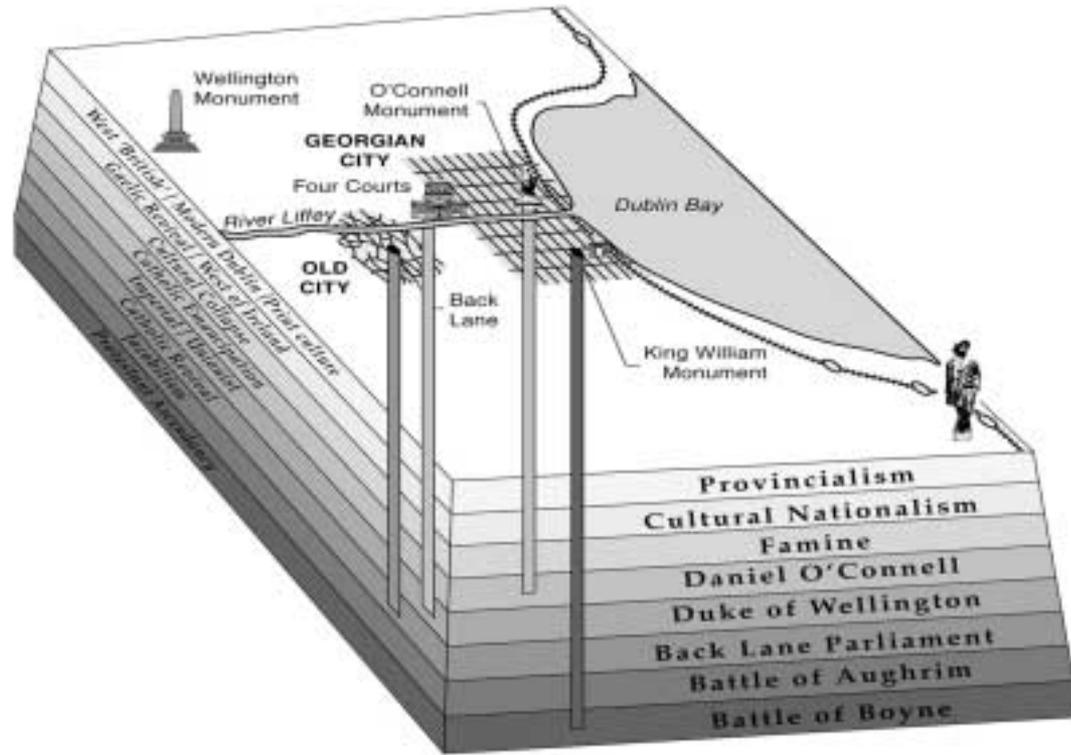


Figure 6: Cultural and historical layering in “The Dead.” Drawn by Matthew Stout.

building up, and with each earlier layer completely buried under its successor, Joyce believed in an unconformable geology, whose layers abruptly impinged on each other. Tremendous stresses and strains wrenched settled geological formations asunder, reassembling them in violent unions and then juxtaposing them in unpredictable combinations. The underlying geology remained unstable: old forces rumbled away deep in the substrate and at any time volcanic stresses in the bedrock could be suddenly released by unstoppable eruptions which pierced the brittle surface. In a country like Ireland with a troubled history, the seemingly quiet surface was a deceptive crust, which offered only a temporary stay against the flows of unfinished history seething beneath it. In such circumstances, there could be no easy partitioning of the past from the present in Ireland. The city itself was a palimpsest, a multilogue of competing versions of history and culture. Its monuments and traces reached down into the layers from which they derived their power and presence, their aura (see Figure 6).

This analysis of the cultural history embedded in “The Dead” allows us to make some wider claims. Firstly, it insists on the impact of The Famine on Joyce and on its primacy as a theme in “The Dead”; it may well be that a similar reading strategy could decipher it in other texts of the revival period. Secondly, this essay demonstrates that an account of writing in post-Famine Ireland which neglects the linguistic transition in the period is fatally flawed. The language—Irish—in which the experience of the Famine was actually lived by the bulk of its victims was itself one of its casualties. The trauma was to be increasingly remembered in a different language to the one in which it was experientially endured. Despite the absolute centrality of this point, it is scarcely glanced at in recent accounts of the cultural history of the Famine. It is this abrupt linguistic transition which differentiates the Irish Famine, its representation and its memory from comparable historical disasters. Palestinians remember the 1948 expulsions from their homeland as *Al-nakbah* (The Disaster) and do so in Arabic, the language in which they lived the experience. European Jews writing about the Shoah (Holocaust) have mainly utilised the language that they used at the time of their experience of it. Thus the representation of the Irish Famine in the English language presented remarkable difficulties. The Irish Literary Revival itself can be seen as one coping strategy. In a wider sense, general trauma theory needs to be modified in the Irish context to take account of this linguistic lesion.

These are not contexts in which it has been usual to locate Joyce. It is the contention of this essay that we need to pay attention to them. Joyce understood the force of William Faulkner’s aphorism: “The past is not dead. It is not even past.” The scale of his achievement is to weave this complex historical understanding and narrative imagination into what seems at first reading a standard naturalist text.

Appendix A

Thomas Moore, "Oh, ye Dead":

Oh, ye Dead; oh, ye Dead; whom we know by the light you give
From your cold gleaming eyes, though you move like men who live,
Why leave you thus your graves,
In far off fields and waves,
Where the worm and the sea-bird only know your bed,
To haunt this spot where all
Those eyes that wept your fall,
And the hearts that wail'd you, like your own, lie dead?
It is true, it is true, we are shadows cold and wan;
And the fair and the brave whom we lov'd on earth are gone;
But still thus ev'n in death,
So sweet the living breath
Of the fields and flow'rs in our youth we wandered o'er,
That ere, condemned, we go
To freeze 'mid Hecla's snow,
We would taste it awhile, and think we live once more!¹²

Appendix B

Opening of Bret Harte's *Gabriel Conroy*:

Snow. Everywhere. As far as the eye could reach—fifty miles, looking southward from the highest white peak,—filling ravines and gulches, and dropping from the walls of canyons in white shroud-like drifts; fashioning the dividing ridge into the likeness of a monstrous grave, hiding the bases of giant pines, and completely covering young trees and larches; rimming with porcelain the bowl-like edge of still cold lakes, and undulating in motionless white billows to the edge of the distant horizon. Snow lying everywhere over the California Sierras on the 15th day of March 1848, and still falling.

It had been snowing for ten days; snowing in finely granulated powder, in damp, spongy flakes, in thin, feathery plumes; snowing from a leaden sky steadily; snowing fiercely, shaken out of purple-black clouds in white flocculent masses, or dropping in long level lines, like white lances from the tumbled and broken heavens. But always silently! The woods were so choked with it,—the branches were so laden with it,—it had so permeated, filled and possessed earth and sky; it had so cushioned and muffled the ringing rocks and echoing hills, that all sound was deadened. The strongest gust, the fiercest blast, awoke no sigh or complaint from the snow-packed, rigid files of forest. There was no cracking of bough nor crackle of underbrush; the overladen branches of pine and fir yielded and gave way without a sound. The silence was vast, measureless, complete! Nor could it be said that any outward sign of life or motion changed the fixed outlines of the stricken landscape. Above, there was no play of light and shadow, only the occasional deepening of storm or night. Below, no bird winged its flight across the white expanse, no beast haunted the confines of the black woods; whatever of brute nature might once have inhabited those solitudes had long since flown to the lowlands.

There was no track or imprint; whatever foot might have left its mark upon this waste, each succeeding snowfall obliterated all trace or record. Every morning the solitude was virgin and unbroken; a million tiny feet had stepped into the track and

filled it up. And yet in the centre of this desolation, in the very stronghold of this dim fortress, there was a mark of human toil.

[Trees felled to indicate blazed tree with canvas square on it; Canvas gives notice that Captain Conroy's party of emigrants are lost in the snow and are camping up the canyon. Starving. Itinerary given. Names of living—eight men including Gabriel Conroy, three women including Grace Conroy—names of three (children) who died on route, and of one man lost.]

The language of suffering is not apt to be artistic or studied, but I think that rhetoric could not improve this actual record. So I let it stand, even as it stood this 15th day of March, 1848, half-hidden by a thin film of damp snow, the snow-whitened hand stiffened and pointing rigidly to the fateful canyon like the finger of death.¹¹³

Appendix C

James Clarence Mangan, "Siberia":

In Siberia's wastes
The Ice-wind's breath
Woundeth like the toothed steel;
Lost Siberia doth reveal
Only blight and death.
Blight and death alone.
No summer shines.
Night is interblent with Day.
In Siberia's wastes always
The blood blackens, the heart pines.

In Siberia's wastes
No tears are shed,
For they freeze within the brain.
Nought is felt but dullest pain,
Pain acute, yet dead;
Pain as in a dream,
When years go by
Funeral-paced, yet fugitive.
When man lives, and doth not live,
Doth not live—nor die.

In Siberia's wastes
Are sands and rocks.
Nothing blooms of green or soft,
But the snow-peaks rise aloft
And the gaunt ice-blocks.

And the exile there
Is one with those;
They are part and he is part,
For the sands are in his heart,
And the killing snows.

Therefore in those wastes
None curse the Czar.

Each man's tongue is cloven by
The North Blast, that heweth nigh
With sharp scymitar.

And such doom each drees,
Till, hunger-gnawn,
And cold-slain, he at length sinks there,
Yet scarce more a corpse than ere
His last breath was drawn.¹¹⁴

Appendix D

“The Lass of Aughrim”:

I am a king's daughter that's straight from Cappelquin,
in search of Lord Gregory, may God I find him.
The rain beats on my yellow locks, and the dews wet my skin,
My babe is cold in my arms, Lord Gregory, let me in.
Lord Gregory he's not here, and henceforth can't be seen,
He is gone to Bonnie Scotland to bring home his new queen.
Leave now these windows and likewise this hall,
for it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.

I'll shoe your babe's little feet, I'll put gloves on her hands,
And I'll tie your babe's middle with a long and green band.
I'll comb your babe's yellow locks with an ivory comb,
And I'll be your babe's father until Lord Gregory comes home.
Do you remember, Lord Gregory, that night in Cappelquin,
when we both changed pocket handkerchiefs and that against my will,
for yours was pure linen, love, and mine was coarse cloth,
yours cost one guinea and mine but one groat.

*Leave now these windows and likewise this hall
for it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.*

Do you remember, darling Gregory, that night in Cappelquin,
when we both changed rings on our fingers and I against my will,
for yours was pure silver, love, and mine was black tin.
Yours cost one guinea and mine but one cent.

*Leave now these windows and likewise this hall
for it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.*

My curse on you, mother, and my curse it being sore,
Since I heard the lass of Arms came a-rapping to my door.
Lie down, you foolish son, and lie down and sleep,
for it's long ago a weary lass sat wailing in the deep.
Come saddle me the black horse, the brown and the grey,
Come saddle me the best horse in my stable this day.
And I'll range over valleys, over mountains so wide.
And I'll find the lass of Arms and lie by her side.¹¹⁵

Notes

For valuable assistance of various kinds, I am grateful to Dudley Andrew, Peter Brooks, Ted Cachey, Joe Cleary, Seamus Deane, Luke Gibbons, Catherine Morris, Mathew Stout, Jay Walton, and Mary Thompson.

- 1 Denis Ireland, *Eamon De Valera Doesn't See It Through* (Cork: Forum Press, 1941), 28.
- 2 For many years, the standard history was *The Great Famine; Studies in Irish History 1845–1852*, ed. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1956). More recent general treatments are C. O. Grada, *Black '47 and Beyond; The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), and J. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2001). A good modern cultural history is Robert Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland; Rebellion, Famine and Emigration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 3 Chris Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- 4 Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland; The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).
- 5 Note the deaths of both men in 1906, about the time that Joyce was contemplating writing "The Dead." He was later to present an unflattering portrait of Cusack as "The Citizen" in *Ulysses*.
- 6 W. B. Yeats, "Ancestral Houses" in *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: Dent, 1990), 246.
- 7 Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland; or, The Story of the Land League Revolution* (London: Harper, 1904), 106. Two good modern treatments of Davitt are T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846–1882* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981); and Carla King, *Michael Davitt* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1999).
- 8 Joyce admired the clear sense of purpose of the Fenians. His friend Arthur Power said of Joyce in Paris: "There was much of the Fenian about him—his dark suiting, his wide hat, his light carriage and his intense expression—a literary conspirator, who was determined to destroy the oppressive and respectable cultural structures under which we had been reared" (Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* [Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999], 81).
- 9 Cited in D. McCartney, "Parnell, Davitt and the Land Question" in *Famine, Land and Culture in Ireland*, ed. Carla King (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000), 78.
- 10 Cited in King, *Michael Davitt*, 10.
- 11 Cited in P. Travers, "Davitt after the Land League" in King (ed.), *Famine*, 89. Davitt never allowed his commitment to Ireland to obliterate his sense of wider responsibilities. He wrote about, among other issues, the pogroms against Jews in Russia, the plight of the aborigines in Australia, and of the Kanakas in the South Sea islands. Among the countries he visited were Palestine, Egypt, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France, Italy and the United States. His own suggestion for his epitaph was: "Here lies a man who from his cradle to the grave was considered by his foes to be a traitor to alien rule and oppression in Ireland and in every land outside her shores" (King, *Davitt*, 66).
- 12 Austin Clark, *A Penny in the Clouds; More Memories of Ireland and England* (Dublin: Moytura Press, 1990), 109. The bleak story "Hunger," set among the Dublin poor of the early twentieth century, was published in *Etched in Moonlight* (London: MacMillan, 1928): 23–53.
- 13 Una Agnew, *The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1998), 140–56. Kavanagh's grandfather, James Kevany, had been born at Easkey, County Sligo, and was an Irish speaker. He was appointed National school teacher in Kednaminsha in County Monaghan, where his name (due to his strong accent) was inadvertently written as Kavanagh, thus severing the family from their Gaelic ancestry. He was sacked (following the birth of an illegitimate child) and ended up as a workhouse teacher and master in Tullamore, County Offaly from 1856–1896, losing all contact with his illegitimate child, the father of Patrick Kavanagh (1904–1967).
- 14 See the suggestive comments on Joyce's later food fetish in John Garvin, *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), 77–78. In James Stephen's "Hunger," the starving Dublin family envisages a feast, of the type presented in "The Dead": "He used to make up lists of the gigantic feeds they would have when the

- ship came home (what ship he did not say, nor was it understood that he expected one) and he or she or the children would remind each other of foods which had been left out of his catalogue: for no food of which they knew the name could justly be omitted from their future" (28).
- 15 Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London: Verso, 1992); Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998).
 - 16 W. B. Yeats, "A General Introduction to My Work," in *Selected Prose*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Pan, 1976), 265. Note Gabriel's defensive comment in "The Dead" that "Irish is not my language": James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. T. Brown (London: Penguin, 1992), 189. Subsequent references to *Dubliners* will be made parenthetically in the text.
 - 17 Seamus Deane, "Dumbness and Eloquence" in *Ireland and Post-Colonialism*, ed. C. Carroll (Cork: Cork University Press, forthcoming).
 - 18 James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 145.
 - 19 Joyce, *Occasional Writing*, 145. Joyce makes him an old man, despite his actual age being 45.
 - 20 Joyce, *Occasional Writing*, 146.
 - 21 Timothy Charles Harrington, *The Maamtrasna Massacre* (Dublin: Nation Office, 1884). The crucial discussion of this is by John Garvin, "The Trial of Festy King" in *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom*, 159–69. A more recent discussion of this still controversial miscarriage of justice is Jarlath Waldron, *Maamtrasna; The Murders and the Mystery* (Dublin: E. Burke, 1993).
 - 22 Garvin, *Joyce's Disunited Kingdom*, 167.
 - 23 C. Juliet, "Meeting Beckett" in *Triquarterly* 77 (1989–90), 10.
 - 24 David Lloyd, "Violence and the Constitution of the Novel" in *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993): 125–62; J. Kenny, "No Such Scene: Tradition and the Contemporary Irish Novel," in *New Voices in Contemporary Irish Criticism*, ed. P. Mathews (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000): 45–52.
 - 25 There is an illuminating treatment of this theme in David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature; James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Note too that Joyce considered American literature, like Irish literature, to be a minor one; hence his interest in writers like Bret Harte, Jack London and R. W. Service (see Power, *Conversations*, 108).
 - 26 Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. P. Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 48.
 - 27 This aphasia creates the unappeasable desire for a first language, a mourning for what one never had, a language of the other but radically different from the language of the other as the language of the master or colonist. This other language would speak the memory of the originary defect, would describe what did not happen, would be a language of spectrality, negative traces and scars. Since this prior language does not exist, it must be generated from within the resources of the given language. This is the double hand that Derrida possesses in relation to French—a hand reaching out to touch and thank, a hand to restrain, and to keep him at a distance. Derrida describes this impulse of love and of aggression as a caressing of French with borrowed claws, as he feels simultaneously both outside and inside the language. This outside space is an elsewhere whose geography and language were unknown and prohibited—an elsewhere to which Derrida feels he has been exported in advance. This is equally the territory of Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski's metamorphosis into Joseph Conrad, the modernist novelist, or of Franz Kafka and Paul Celan, learning to write in German as a way of exiting their Judaism: "They wanted it, but their hind legs still stuck to the Judaism of the father and their forelegs could not find any new terrain—the despair that followed constituted their inspiration" (Letter from Franz Kafka to Max Brod, June 1921; cited in Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 92–93).
 - 28 Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 1.
 - 29 Hélène Cixous, *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London: Routledge, 1999). A comparable example, in this case involving Native American languages, is discussed in Louise Erdrich, "Two Languages in One Mind But Just One in Heart," *New York Times*, 22 May 2000.
 - 30 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Seamus Deane (London, 1992), 222.
 - 31 Joyce, *Occasional Writing*, 125.

- 32 Joyce, *A Portrait*, 184.
- 33 S. Deane, "Dead Ends: Joyce's Finest Moments" in *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge & Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 21–36.
- 34 The question of the extent of Joyce's knowledge of Irish remains open. He entered the Catholic University in 1898 and, in the winter of 1899–1900, special classes were arranged for the university students at the Conradh Na Gaeilge [Gaelic League] offices (24 O'Connell Street). George Clancy, the model for Davin in *A Portrait*, was a prime mover in this. We know from his own account that Joyce attended some of these classes, and that Patrick Pearse was among his teachers. The Irish-language newspaper *An Claidreamh Soluis* of 2/6/1900 lists consecutively John F. Byrne and James Joyce in attendance at the Antient Concert Rooms at a meeting on "The Irish language and education" [Byrne was Joyce's close friend, the model for Cranly in *A Portrait*]. A Mr. Joyce was also in attendance at Pearse's lecture on "The literature of the Cuchulainn epoch" (See T. O. Fiaich, "James Joyce ag foghlaim Gaeilge" in *Everyman* I [1968], 133–35).
- 35 A celebrated book by Daniel Corkery *The Hidden Ireland* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1925) was later to argue that the genuine Ireland of the eighteenth century survived in the oral, Irish-speaking culture of the remote countryside, far from the spurious and alien glamour of Georgian Dublin.
- 36 Luke Gibbons, "'Where Wolfe Tone's Statue Was Not': Joyce, Monuments and Memory," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 139–59.
- 37 Joyce, *A Portrait*, 188. Buck Whaley built the house on Stephen's Green which housed the Catholic University of Cardinal Newman and its successor the Royal University, where Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead" teaches Romance languages. Whaley, whose family rejoiced in the nickname "Burnchapel" for their notorious anti-Catholicism, represents one type of the Anglo-Irish gentry. Tone and Parnell represent another version of the type, but with strong nationalist leanings. Note the strong Gothic subtext here.
- 38 The effect is heightened because the Catholic University was then staffed by Jesuits—an extraterritorial order in that they were not under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the local bishop—recruited from "alien" England.
- 39 Joyce, *A Portrait*, 250.
- 40 Joyce, *A Portrait*, 193.
- 41 Balzac is citing himself here. The original use of the motto comes from *Le Médecin de Campagne*. Dr. Benassis flees Paris after an unhappy love affair and ends up in a mountain community. He claims to have found "*Fuge, Late, Tace*" on the walls of a cell in the monastery of La Grande Chartreuse, deserted after the French Revolution. I am grateful to Peter Brooks of Yale University for this identification. Martial's *Epigrams* (Chapter 5, epigram 25, vol. I, 378) contains "*Leitus venit: sta, fuge, curre, late.*"
- 42 In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce refers to the "Cultic twalette." A critical faultline is embedded here also. Following Edward Said's positive assessment of Yeats, Declan Kiberd has offered an essentially celebratory reading of Yeats's cultural politics. (See E. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature: Yeats and Decolonization* [Derry: Field Day, 1988]; D. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 305–16.) A much darker version, following the Joycean line, is offered by Seamus Deane, "The Literary Myths of the Revival" in *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish literature 1880–1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985): 28–37.
- 43 W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1966), 199. There is a good treatment of this theme in W. Potts, *Joyce and the Two Irelands* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).
- 44 Joyce would have endorsed Yeats's stinging dismissal of Irish culture as one "made timid by a modern popularisation of Catholicism sprung from the aspidistra and not from the roots of Jesse": Yeats, "General Introduction to My Work," *Selected Criticism*, 260. The term "Devotional Revolution" was coined by the American historian Emmet Larkin to describe the extraordinary changes in the devotional and institutional life of Irish Catholicism in the post-Famine period, when the church metamorphosed from its deeper Gaelic vernacular form into a more bourgeois, Roman form. The transition had been massively accelerated by the cultural carnage wrought by the Famine. Thus the form of Catholicism practised in Ireland in the late nineteenth century was not an aspect of tradition but

- of modernity: E. Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland 1850–1875," *American Historical Review* (June 1972): 625–52. Emer Nolan, in *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), offers a revisionist reading of the complexities of Joyce's attitude.
- 45 Joyce, *A Portrait*, 184. The traditional *Dúiche Seoighe*, the "Joyce Country," literally the hereditary lands of the Joyces, was in west Galway, an area devastated by the Famine. Joyce, obsessive about origins, would have considered this Irish-speaking region as his ancestral home.
- 46 Cited from *United Irishman* (newspaper) by W. Dillon in *Life of John Mitchel*, 2 vols (London, 1888), i.211. Such scenes developed the *saeva indignatio* in Mitchel, as he himself acknowledged: "I had the misfortune, I and my children, to be born in a country which suffered itself to be oppressed and humiliated by another": Dillon, *Life of Mitchel*, ii.104. Mitchel's savage account of 1861, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* was to provide a compelling, emotionally-charged narrative of the Famine which dominated subsequent nationalist and especially Irish-American memory of it: see James Donnelly, *Great Irish Potato Famine* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2001), 184–214.
- 47 W. Haskins, *Travels in England, France, Italy and Ireland* (Boston: P. Donahoe, 1851), 261.
- 48 T. Davis, "Our National Language," *The Nation*, 1 April 1843.
- 49 J. White, "The Cusack Papers: New Evidence on the Knock Apparition," in *History Ireland*, iv.4 (1999): 39–43.
- 50 Douglas Hyde, "My Memories of the Irish Revival" in *The Voice of Ireland*, ed. W. Fitzgerald (Dublin, 1922), 455. Hyde's own early notebooks offer a vivid example of the linguistic strain in Ireland in the immediate post-Famine period. At the age of thirteen in 1873, among his copperplate exercises in Latin, Greek, French and English, are jotted down what appears to be an extraordinary farrago of nonsense or gibberish words. Closer study reveals them to be a preliminary attempt to transcribe phonetically the words of an Irish-language poem by Antoine O'Raihteire (*ob.* 1835). Hyde went on to found the Gaelic League in 1893 to safeguard the future of Irish as a living modern language. See the introduction by Dominic Daly to Douglas Hyde, *Songs Ascribed to Raftery* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), vii.
- 51 The Shannon River geographically and symbolically separates the east from the west of Ireland. Joyce's adjective "mutinous" recalls the last stand of the Jacobites in Limerick, the city on the Shannon (225). This Jacobite sub-text runs like a seam through the story.
- 52 *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann, 2 vols (London: Viking, 1966), ii.242.
- 53 Stanislaus Joyce, *Recollections of James Joyce* (New York: James Joyce Society, 1950), 20.
- 54 Furey is modelled on Michael Bodkin, an admirer of Nora Barnacle, who had died in 1903. To Joyce's chagrin, her initial attraction to him was because he reminded her of Bodkin. The Joyce/Barnacle relationship is in play in the Gabriel/Gretta one.
- 55 It is important that Michael is said to come from Oughterard in the Joyce country, and that his country origins are stressed by Gretta. Earlier, Gabriel had tried to distance his wife from the suggestion that she was a country girl.
- 56 This replicates events in Nora Barnacle's life: she had worked in the Presentation convent in Galway.
- 57 James Flannery, *Dear Harp of My Country; The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (Nashville: J. S. Sanders, 1997), 156.
- 58 The Wild Geese were the (overwhelmingly Catholic) Irish soldiers who, after their crushing defeat at Aughrim in 1690, went to fight in the armies of France and Spain, but always (as the name itself suggests) remained intent on returning to Ireland with a conquering Jacobite army. See Joyce's own commentary in his *Occasional Writings*, 123.
- 59 Kevin Whelan, *Fellowship of Freedom; The United Irishmen and 1798* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998).
- 60 A. O'Reilly, *Memoirs of an Emigrant Milesian*, 3 vols (London, 1853), iii.305.
- 61 Ellmann, *Joyce*, 253.
- 62 Aughrim was the decisive battle for the Catholic cause in the Williamite War—far more so than the better known Battle of the Boyne. On Aughrim, see the following: E. Ó Muirgheasa, "Briseadh Eachdhroim" [The Defeat at Aughrim] in *Dhá chéad de cheoltaibh Uladh* [Two Centuries of Ulster Song] (Dublin, 1934), 458; and B. Ó Buachalla, "Dán ar Chath Eachroma" [A Poem on the Battle of Aughrim] in *Éigse* xiv, 2 (1973): 117–23; B. Ó

- Buachalla, *Aisling ghéar. Na Stiobhartaigh agus an t-aos léinn 1603–1788* [Bitter Allegory: The Stewarts and the Irish Learned Class 1603–1788] (Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1996); E. Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause; A Fatal Attraction* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002).
- 63 Indeed when Nora's alcoholic father retreated from Galway to Oughterard, he wanted to reassume the Ó Cadhain name. The surname Coyne is particularly linked to counties Galway and Mayo: Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1985), 64.
- 64 Garvin, *Joyce's Disunited Kingdom*, 108.
- 65 G. Friedrich, "Bret Harte as a Source for James Joyce's 'The Dead,'" *Philological Quarterly*, xxxiii.4 (1954), 443–44. On 25 September 1906, Joyce had written from Rome to Stanislaus: "Do you think I should waste 2 lire on buying a book of Gissing's or should I buy a volume of Bret Harte?"
- 66 For the details of the Donner party, see *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America*, ed. Michael Glazier (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1999), 98.
- 67 Joyce described Mangan as "a true poet" to his brother (see S. Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years* [New York: McGraw Hill, 1964], 99). He later wrote two long and penetrating accounts of Mangan in 1902 and 1907—the year he finished "The Dead" (see *The Collected Works of James Clarence Mangan; Poems 1845–1847*, ed. Jacques Chuto, R. Holzapfel and E. Mangan [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997], 157).
- 68 G. Moore, *A Drama in Muslin* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), 158–59.
- 69 Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, 171.
- 70 Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, 203.
- 71 Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, 98.
- 72 James Joyce, *Poems and "Exiles,"* ed. J. C. C. Mays (Dublin: Penguin, 1992), 45.
- 73 Joyce's personal copy in the Beinecke Library (Yale University) bears the date 1901; see Fig. 1. My thanks to Dudley Andrew for checking the inscription. Stanislaus lists it among his brother's reading: S. Joyce, *James Joyce's Early Years*, 98. In 1901, Joyce judged it to be the best of Moore's novels—"fine, original work": Joyce, *Occasional Writing*, 51.
- 74 Joyce championed Ibsen in his essay of 1900 ("Ibsen's New Drama," *Occasional Writings*, 30–49); Stanislaus talked about his brother's "cult of Ibsen" (*James Joyce's Early Years*, 99); and Arthur Power of "the merit of Ibsen" as the first of three issues about which he was "quite fanatical" (*Conversations*, 125).
- 75 Another possible source, closely read by John Kelleher, is the 1892 Paris edition by Whitley Stokes of *Togail Bruidne Da Dhearga* [The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel], an early Irish mythological tract (see J. Kelleher, "Irish History and Mythology in 'The Dead,'" *Review of Politics* xxvii [1965]: 414–33). Paul Muldoon, more playfully and less persuasively, reads the story as a sustained retelling of the magnificent Irish eighteenth-century lament *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* (see Paul Muldoon, *To Ireland I* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]).
- 76 *Ulysses* informs us that Aunt Julia died the following June—an indication that Joyce intends us to intuit her impending death in his short story. I am assuming that the story is set on 6 January 1904, because the Papal decree on female singers was issued in November 1903.
- 77 Letter of 22 August 1909, in Ellmann, *Letters of James Joyce*.
- 78 C. P. Curran, *James Joyce Remembered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 39.
- 79 Giambattista Vico, *New Science; Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, trans. David Marsh (London: Penguin, 1999); Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World; The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 80 Power, *Conversations*, 107.
- 81 The echo of Poe's title is deliberate: there is a recurrent gothic element in the story. Later, Joyce's contemporary, Harry Clarke, produced a superb series of illustrations of Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (New York, 1919) which included "The Fall of the House of Usher." (See Fig. 5.) Poe's motto from de Béranger for this story could also have functioned for "The Dead": "Son cœur est un luth suspendu: / sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne." Note too how a ballad forms the emotional core of this story of the living dead, how it fea-

- tures a storm outside, “gaseous exhalations,” the “sentience” of objects, and a series of words favoured by Joyce: sullen, vague, melancholy, bitter . . . See the map of tenement housing (283) in F. Aalen, “Health and Housing in Dublin 1850–1921,” *Dublin City and County: From Prehistory to Present*, ed. F. H. A. Aalen and K. Whelan (Dublin, 1992): 279–304.
- 82 The aunts moved there “when the previous big fall of snow had taken place thirty years ago.”
- 83 W.J. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service Under Pitt* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 147. Lord Moira’s once fashionable house on Usher’s Island had been converted to the Mendicity Institute in 1815—symbolic of the rapidly collapsing status of the area. Francis Rawdon, Lord Moira, was a critic of hard-line Protestant policies in Ireland in 1797 and 1798. He was a friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the United Irish leader, and it was to his house that he was going when he had been almost captured in May 1798. Moira was a leader of fashion—the “king of the coxcombs” as he was described by the acerbic John Giffard. A leading Whig, he ended up as Governor-General of India.
- 84 John Kelleher suggests that T. J. Conroy, Gabriel’s father, is modelled on Charles Halliday (1789–1866), author of the posthumously published *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin* (Dublin, 1884), a book which supplied Joyce with the various references to the Vikings which stud his texts. Halliday moved from Arran Quay (opposite Usher’s Island) to Monkstown in 1834, details of which are supplied in the antiquarian memoir of 124 pages of his life by the historian J. P. Prendergast. Monkstown is the residence of Gabriel’s family in the story.
- 85 The names Constantine and Gabriel are both symptomatic of the “Devotional Revolution” in Irish Catholicism. By the end of the century under the influence of the Gaelic revival, there was a palpable surge of interest in using more distinctively Gaelic Christian names. These two names mark out the Conroys as a family with upper-middle class ambitions.
- 86 Henri Massue, second Marquis de Ruvigny, was created Viscount Galway in 1693, and elevated to Earl of Galway in 1697, by William of Orange.
- 87 J.G. Simms, *Jacobite Ireland 1685–1691* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
- 88 The text presumably known to Joyce on this topic was John Cornelius O’Callaghan, *History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France* (Dublin: Kelly, 1870).
- 89 The mystery had been treated at length in Thomas Moore’s much reprinted *Life and Death of Lord Edward FitzGerald* (1830).
- 90 For Carpenter, see H. Fenning, “The Archbishops of Dublin 1693–1786,” in *History of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin*, ed. D. Keogh and J. Kelly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000): 175–214. John Carpenter (1729–1786) was the son of a Dublin tailor. He was considered to be dumb until the age of seven, when he blurted out his name while frightened in a Dublin crowd: he was presumably only speechless in English as he came from an Irish-speaking family, possibly of south Ulster derivation. He was to become a diligent collector of Irish-language manuscripts and he left a library of 4,000 books. Educated in Lisbon during 1747–1754, he returned to Dublin, where in 1770 he was consecrated Archbishop in a private house (probably the one at Usher’s Island) because of the Penal Laws. He lived at Usher’s Island until his death in 1786.
- 91 Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service Under Pitt*, 151.
- 92 Cited in G. F. Cuming, “The Betrayer of Lord Edward Fitzgerald; Counsellor Magan” in *The Gael*, 21 November 1921, 26.
- 93 S. Joyce, *James Joyce’s Early Years*, 64; Curran, *James Joyce Remembered*, 39–40.
- 94 T. J. O’Keefe, “The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: The ’98 centennial,” in *Eire-Ireland*, xxiii (1988): 51–73. For Joyce’s own familiarity with Lord Edward, see Joyce, *Occasional Writing*, 115.
- 95 W. Harrison, *Remarkable Dublin Houses* (Dublin: Leckie, 1899). My thanks to Luke Gibbons for making a copy of this book available to me.
- 96 G. Owens, “Nationalist Monuments in Ireland 1870–1914: Symbolism and Ritual” in *Ireland: Art Into History*, ed. Raymond Gillespie and Brian Kennedy (Dublin: Town House, 1994): 103–17.
- 97 *Ulysses*, 241. Joyce’s interest in 1798 is also reflected in the passage in *A Portrait* about Archibald Hamilton Rowan at Clongowes Wood. There is a poignant description by Rowan’s biographer Sir Harold Nicolson of his meeting with Joyce in Paris in 1934 to

- discuss the source of this anecdote (see H. Nicolson, *The Desire to Please: A Story of Hamilton Rowan and the United Irishmen* [London: Constable and Co., 1943], 136–40.)
- 98 There are the barest of hints that the “country cute” Gretta had entrapped Gabriel via pregnancy. This would explain Gabriel’s snobbish mother ostentatious hostility to Gretta. She reprises the role of Lord Gregory’s mother in the song “The Lass of Aughrim” who callously turns away the pregnant girl. We should treat none of these effects as accidental in a writer of Joyce’s penetration. He himself believed that a genius makes no mistakes. A small example: count the number of “good nights” at the end of the party—an ominous thirteen.
- 99 Power, *Conversations*, 28.
- 100 Curran, *James Joyce Remembered*, 42.
- 101 H. Shields, “The History of “The Lass of Aughrim,”” in *Musicology in Ireland*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990): 58–73.
- 102 Curran, *James Joyce Remembered*, 41; Donagh MacDonagh, “The Lass of Aughrim, or the Betrayal of James Joyce” in *The Celtic Master*, ed. Maurice Harmon (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1969): 17–26; G. Geckle, “The Dead Lass of Aughrim” in *Eire-Ireland* ix (1974): 86–96. Joyce met Nora first in 1904. About this time, he felt betrayed by the casual (and lying) boast of a friend, Cosgrave, that he had previously slept with Nora. Joyce was also obsessive about Nora’s relationship with Michael Bodkin, who died in 1903. These tensions are tangible in “The Dead.”
- 103 Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, 240; Ellmann, *Joyce*, 295. The finest version of the singing of this song is by Elizabeth Cronin of County Cork, recorded in 1952: *The Folk Songs of Britain*, volume iv (New York: Caedmon, 1961; TC 1145).
- 104 One of the few false notes in John Huston’s film version is the use of a Scottish rather than an Irish version of “The Lass of Aughrim.”
- 105 Power, *Conversations*, 50.
- 106 These arguments were frequent in the Joyce household itself. Stanislaus tells us that “Singers of the past were often discussed as in “The Dead”” (S. Joyce, *Joyce’s Early Years*, 65). His father had “listened at the back of the Gaiety to rehearsals of Tietjens and Trebelli” (Curran, *James Joyce Remembered*, 42).
- 107 The theme had been foreshadowed in the earlier reference to “Christy Minstrels” (181).
- 108 The relevant contemporary citations are in Potts, *Joyce and the Two Irelands*, 208. William Rooney contrasted Dubliners’ love of the waltz with their hatred of traditional Irish music and tradition: Arthur Griffith denounced the Royal Irish Academy of Music (where Mary Anne Morkan studied) for cultivating in its students “a horror of Irish music.”
- 109 Helen Brennan, “The Fleshpots of Egypt and Gaelic Mayo: Dance and the Gaelic League,” *The Story of Irish Dance* (Dingle: Brandon, 1999): 29–44.
- 110 *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 9 vols (London, 1959).
- 111 Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Penguin, 1993), 213.
- 112 *Poetical Works of Thomas Moore*, 8 vols (London 1853), iv. 39–40.
- 113 *Bret Harte’s Writings*, vol. xiii (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d.—copyrights on this volume range from 1871–1900).
- 114 *The Nation*, 4.184, 18 April 1846.
- 115 As sung by Elizabeth Cronin (of County Cork) on *The Folk Songs of Britain*, vol. iv (New York: Caedmon Records, 1961; TC 1145).