

## “Who is G. C.?”: Misprizing Gabriel Conroy in Joyce’s “The Dead”

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The question—“Who is G. C.?”—that Molly Ivors puts to her dance partner midway through “The Dead” is one that has long engaged the story’s critics (*D* 187). Once a man too newly modern, too inappropriately western, too deeply mired in aesthetics to value spirituality, religion, Christianity,<sup>1</sup> Gabriel has become a man too enamored of the privilege afforded him by his gender, occupation, and intellectual prowess to value women—not least his wife. Gabriel the spiritual bankrupt has become Gabriel the chauvinist,<sup>2</sup> and a tale of tension between the living and the dead has become one of conflict between Gabriel and “the women.” The longstanding scholarly focus on the story’s symbolism and language, as reflecting a generalized paralysis, has given way to agile examinations of Gabriel’s problematic encounters with various women. Mercilessly trying Gabriel for withholding sympathy that they themselves have denied him, generations of critics have tumbled into the ethical trap that Joyce so neatly set. Declining the invitation to intimacy extended by a narrative style that blurs subject and object, thinker and thought, critic and text, scholars have read Gabriel as critically as he has read his fellow Dubliners. Turning their backs on Joyce’s textual hospitality, the story’s critics have collectively demonstrated a lack of the “spacious[ness]” that *Dubliners*’ final story was written to convey (*D* 203).<sup>3</sup> The door, however, remains open, for if proximity to the story’s central, misprizing<sup>4</sup> character tempts

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judgment, it also compels generosity, enabling readers not simply to encounter but also to experience the psychic confrontation between tradition and modernity and its external correlative—although not an inevitable one—the failure of interpersonality.<sup>5</sup>

Events at and after the Morkans' party illustrate the social challenges faced, primarily but not exclusively, by Gabriel Conroy, the story's most persistently fumbling—and most closely narrated—subject. An inconsistently reluctant patriarch, Gabriel is, at once, beneficiary and victim of his relatively elevated status in his aunt's home. Still master of ceremonies but now only a ceremonial master,<sup>6</sup> he is expected to continue serving as figurehead of a familial-cum-tribal community, but also to adapt his behavior adroitly to nascent social conditions—to have mastered, in effect, a set of as yet unestablished mores. Although Gabriel has long attended the holiday gathering and, like the others there, "know[s] [his] part . . . virtually by rote," on this night he fails to anticipate or to satisfy Lily, Miss Ivors, and Gretta, his wife.<sup>7</sup> Confronted by the newly emergent "modern woman" and the proselytizing Irish Ireland movement,<sup>8</sup> "trapped" both in and by the "mythomania that so characterizes Dublin life" (Pecora 242, 241) and the paralyzing—deadening—nostalgia on which it depends, Gabriel proves unable to commune with the living, or to imagine into existence a truly modern Ireland.

While Gabriel's predicament is that of a particularly Irish, incipiently modern (hence largely traditional), metrocolonial consciousness,<sup>9</sup> and a notably privileged one at that, it is not unique. As Raymond Williams has convincingly argued, "residual," "dominant," and "emergent" patterns of behavior, social norms, and "structures of feeling" are always "at once interlocking and in tension," co-extant yet vying with one another for cultural dominance.<sup>10</sup> These competing "traditions, institutions, and formations" constitute a minefield for Joyce's turn-of-the-century subjects, who are beset by emotional distance at every pass (Williams 121). Conveyed through intimate narration, this navigational dilemma is most apparent in the case of Gabriel, although it is by no means unidirectional and by no means his alone.

Its manifestation in the social interactions and psychic life of Stephen Dedalus, as he appears in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), led early critics to read him as sympathetic, and later critics as ironic—reductively, in other words, much as Gabriel has been read. Yet the narrative proximity to the central character in both "The Dead" and *Portrait* compels an evaluative distance that it also leaves room to resist. The access

readers are granted to the private thoughts of Gabriel and Stephen no doubt reveals their strong critical tendencies; but if we eschew oversimplifications of these characters—as unlikable or sympathetic—we can analyze them without appraising them. Specifically, in the case of “The Dead,” we can read Gabriel without reading *like* Gabriel, thus enjoining an ethics of reading that acknowledges relational failure in the story without replicating this failure in our response to its protagonist. Instead of contemning Gabriel, we can appreciate Joyce’s counterintuitive representation of and experiment in the spatial logistics of interpersonality, an experiment in which we as readers are participants, regardless of consciousness or consent.

### PSYCHIC PROPINQUITY

Joyce’s innovative style of narration in “The Dead” has variously been termed (in chronological order): “roving narrat[ion],” “the Uncle Charles Principle,” “psycho-narration,” “dispossessed discourse,” “capable negativity,” “free indirect discourse,” and “a carefully crafted blend” of “‘interior monologue[,]’ . . . ‘free indirect discourse’ [and] ‘omniscient presentation.’”<sup>11</sup> “The Uncle Charles Principle,” coined by Hugh Kenner in 1978, states: “*the narrative idiom need not be the narrator’s*.” It “entails writing about someone much as that someone would choose to be written about”—idiomatically and stylistically—as if an author were writing for the character only, for this narrative technique inevitably exposes a great deal more than most people would choose to reveal about themselves (*Joyce’s Voices* 18, 21; see also 17).

While much has been written about the story’s narrative technique, little has been said about its role in negatively distinguishing Gabriel from his fellow revelers, in relentlessly trespassing on his—and mostly only his—private thoughts. Persistently ascribing negative attributes almost exclusively to Gabriel, critics have failed to take into account the frequency with which the story’s narration enables psychological proximity to him or to notice that several of the story’s other characters are also challenged by the demands of communication. Moreover, failing to theorize the unparalleled degree of access we have to his thoughts—self-absorbed, self-conscious, and fearful, as thoughts so often are—critics have failed to consider the ethical implications of psychic propinquity.

Myriad levels of interiority intermittently invite the reader in, then cast her out of Gabriel’s mind, continually blurring the line not only between

character and narrator, private and public, passing thought and conviction, whim and intention, but also, most interestingly, between reader and text. As professional critic and critical subject, Gabriel, after all, holds both of these latter positions. The acuity with which Joyce's narrative style illuminates the "combat zone" of Gabriel's mind—a mind at once "Pale and Gael," simultaneously out- and inside of, peripheral and central to a "decaying and fragile" culture—invites the kind of identification that Wayne Booth has argued results from prolonged views through a character's eyes.<sup>12</sup> Yet, rather than recognizing the traffic of thought in the modern consciousness of the colonized, conflicted, critical mind, scholars have denounced Gabriel as insufficiently modern, insufficiently feminist, insufficiently Irish, and insufficiently charitable.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Gabriel's defensive judgments that Joyce's free indirect discourse exposes are likely to mirror the reader's own judgments of Gabriel: By turning the psychic interior outward, but inconsistently and in third person, the narration tempts us to condemn judgment, but it also tempts us to judge. It is a temptation little noted and almost never resisted.<sup>14</sup>

#### CRITICAL HISTORY: "GABEBASHING"

In the last fifty years, acceptance of Gabriel as "pompous" and controlling has become so entrenched<sup>15</sup> that in 2000 it enabled an overdue neologism, "Gabebashing," to describe the practice, and its more dubious correlative, "Gabespanking," to describe its "earlier and milder" form.<sup>16</sup> Michael Murphy, in "'The Dead': Gabebashing in Joyce Country," almost exclusively challenges work he explicitly deems feminist, particularly that of Ruth Bauerle, Margot Norris, Vincent Cheng, and Gary Leonard, whom he unnecessarily refers to as "apparently a male feminist" (Murphy 52). By contrast, I am presenting a more extensive critical genealogy, which I follow with my own close reading of the text.

A shift occurred in the 1950s regarding Gabriel, who, until then, had been considered primarily "a painfully ordinary man." For Allen Tate, writing in 1950, Gabriel was patronizing toward Lily and oppressive to Gretta, and by 1955 Hugh Kenner had inked him into history as an exemplar of "glib middle-class snobbery."<sup>17</sup> Kenner also began to etch a pattern that many have since traced, that of "Gabriel meets the women," although in Kenner's version, unlike most later accounts, Gabriel, "rebuff[ed]" and "heckled," is something of a victim.<sup>18</sup> Two years later,

Brendan O Hehir set several precedents: he described Gabriel's "encounter" with Lily as "disastrous," his "pleasantry about marriage" as "condescending," and his gift of money as a failed "attempt to regain control." O Hehir also characterized Gabriel's interaction with Molly as "combat," and labeled his disinclination to visit the west of Ireland with Gretta an act of "divorce." In 1959, Gabriel was still being considered, by someone as influential as Richard Ellmann, "generous and considerate," although his narrative was also hardening into the now familiar story of the "three rebuffs."<sup>19</sup> Throughout the 1960s Gabriel's story was increasingly articulated as a tripartite fiasco he was imagined to have brought upon himself.<sup>20</sup> In 1969, Bernard Benstock succinctly wrote: "The road leading to the destruction of Gabriel Conroy's inflated ego is lined with a succession of women" (Benstock 154).<sup>21</sup> "The Dead" had become "Three Encounters."

The decade of the 1970s, influenced as it was by *Tel Quel* criticism, was something of a *Wake*-ian—and heavily psychoanalytic—era, and one that largely gave birth to the political Joyce.<sup>22</sup> Twenty years later, postcolonial readings re-engaged with the politics of nationalism, building most notably on feminist scholarship that in the 1980s produced Gabriel the sexist. Gabriel the would-be adulterer thus became Gabriel the potential rapist,<sup>23</sup> then Gabriel the "sexual[ly] imperial[s]t,"<sup>24</sup> and even, more broadly, Gabriel the imperialist.<sup>25</sup>

Simultaneously, Joyce was being remade as a nationalist writer and "The Dead" as a pro-Revivalist narrative. The early 1990s work of Willard Potts and C oil n Owens, for instance, reads the story's ending as supporting the Irish culture movement that Molly Ivors champions, despite Vincent Pecora's superb 1986 *PMLA* article delineating the pitfalls of such a reading.<sup>26</sup> As Joseph Valente has argued, Joyce is "a decolonizing writer but not necessarily a nationalist writer" ("Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime" 64). It is therefore important to approach the story's ending with, at the very least, some of "the skepticism Joyce felt in reading his own culture" (Pecora 243). Although he sought in "The Dead" to convey "colonial Ireland at its best," Joyce's depiction is nonetheless one of "political fragility," of an Ireland in need of revivification, but which is not itself revivifying (Levenson 173). Neither a "song of exile" nor an anomalous song of (the) Revival, "The Dead" is a critique of the stagnation of the backwards-looking pseudo-momentum embodied by this movement, a momentum from which Joyce, unlike Gabriel, managed to escape (Ellmann 100).<sup>27</sup>

### JUDGMENT AND INTERPOLATION

While my own analysis runs counter to a number of influential feminist and postcolonial readings of the story, it is not meant to function merely—or even mainly—as a defense of Gabriel. Admittedly, Gabriel is insecure and egotistical and demonstrates, in his awkward attempts at communion, an often-profound misunderstanding of his companions. Unable to reach them on their own terms, he repeatedly blunders into “unfortunate” conversations that exacerbate his tendency toward critical thought.<sup>28</sup> As critics ourselves, we have long tried to generate distance between critic-as-reader and critic-as-text, thus cutting ourselves off from an understanding of Gabriel’s directional dilemma, only to wind up negotiating Joyce’s carefully crafted textual world as inadequately as Gabriel navigates his social world. If, however, instead of simply displacing society’s values onto Gabriel, we perceive him in his socio-historical context, and if, instead of condemning his thoughts, we consider the implications of Joyce’s all but singly focused proximate narration we can begin to read both Gabriel and the text anew. It will then become apparent that Gabriel is capable of generosity as well as judgment and that “The Dead” invites intimacy even as it provokes analytical detachment. Joyce extends, in other words, an invitation to relationality that he simultaneously tempts us to decline.

More than a century after January 7, 1904, as we confront—or choose not to confront—our own anxieties about gender and (post)modernity, about interpreting ourselves in a new age of communication, it is time to quit attacking Gabriel for his awkward efforts at adaptation and begin to interpolate ourselves into his drama. Having reached a critical mass of condemnatory judgments—a glut of anti-Gabriel commentary so ingrained that, in 2000, Gerard Quinn would confidently reference his “unquestionably negative qualities”—we must consider, confront, and contextualize anew (Quinn 154). First, we should note that although readers lack equal access to the inner lives of other characters, these characters often behave in ways similar to Gabriel. This raises several compelling questions. Does Joyce provide a basis for ethical comparison? Considering the pleasure evident in countless oppositional readings of Gabriel, has political correctness induced misprision? We should also contextualize the “new and threatening social environment” in which Gabriel finds himself (Pecora 237)—and through which he uncomfortably stumbles.<sup>29</sup> Do we not see an inverse relationship between social novelty and social dexterity?

If we are willing to recognize Gabriel's misprision as our own, we may, paradoxically, cease to be the misprizing subjects that Joyce, in inviting our disavowal of sympathy, tempts us to be. In other words, we can accept the ironic intimacy of pervasive alienation that Joyce's text enables.

#### FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Re-examining the encounters that have long been cited as evidence of Gabriel's faults—his dubious “confrontations” with Lily, Molly, and Gretta—while considering the longstanding critical investment in judging him, we can uncloud the portrait of Ireland that Joyce offers through them. He presents a portrait of the country as an old form, struggling with the pressures of incorporating the energies of the New Woman and the new patriot, while steeped in a Revivalist celebration of the archaic. If we are to consider Gabriel in the context of gender, we must take into account not only the unprecedented behavior of Lily, Molly, and Gretta, but also the familiar habits of Kate, Julia, Mary Jane, even Gretta at times, “women [who] reinforc[e] male values,” or, more accurately, gendered stereotypes (T. Williams 93).

The Misses Morkans, for example, make Gabriel the center of their world on the night of their party. Yet the narrative of Gabriel vs. the women ignores the means by which Gabriel is introduced to the reader: not through his discomfiting interview with Lily, but rather through his aunts' eager anticipation of his arrival. “Every two minutes,” they ask Lily whether Gabriel has yet arrived (*D* 176). Opening the door for him, Lily exclaims, “O, Mr Conroy, . . . Miss Kate and Miss Julia thought you were never coming.” So welcomed, Gabriel, thoughtfully scraping the snow from his feet on the doormat, soothes his aunts, “Here I am as right as the mail . . . !” (177). As Trevor Williams has noted, “the world of the Misses Morkan is not complete until Gabriel arrives,” a circumstance that places Gabriel under a tremendous amount of pressure, although it also extends to him a certain license (93). At once host and guest, Gabriel gives no indication of having solicited either the responsibility or the privilege long laid at his feet.

Although Gabriel's encounter with Lily marks, for many, the first instance of his “paternalistic authority” (Pecora 239),<sup>30</sup> what transpires is more benign social blunder than supercilious effrontery. Addressing Lily “in a friendly tone,” Gabriel “gaily” makes inquires, first about her education and then about her “young man.” When Lily responds “with great

bitterness" that "the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you," Gabriel "colour[s] as if he felt he had made a mistake" (*D* 178), a response that has been interpreted as a performance (Pecora 238), despite the unlikelihood—or impossibility—of intentional blushing and the fact that Gabriel looks away from Lily as his cheeks redden.<sup>31</sup> Presenting Lily with a coin, Gabriel is not attempting "to buy . . . [Lily's] compliance for the purpose of gender confirmation,"<sup>32</sup> but rather to smooth over an awkward moment. Having tried but failed to connect with someone he has "known [since] she was a child" (*D* 177), Gabriel backs off "in deprecation" (178)—expressing the hope that in future such discomfort, for them both, can be avoided.<sup>33</sup> Demonstrating that he is *not* "all palaver and what [he] can get out of" a woman, Gabriel readily abandons the small talk and gives to, rather than takes from, the young woman whose unexpected behavior disarms him. Indeed, Lily's behavior *is* unexpected. Remarked upon later by Aunt Kate—"I'm sure I don't know what has come over her lately. She's not the girl she was at all" (181)—Lily's conduct has not only recently undergone a transformation, but appears to have no immediate connection to Gabriel.<sup>34</sup> Also of note: in the dinner scene we learn that Lily has especially reserved three potatoes for Gabriel, three potatoes she has kept hot while he was carving, an act of thoughtfulness that suggests no (residual) animosity.<sup>35</sup>

#### LANGUAGE AND CLASS

The text gives us no sense that Gabriel has a history of misjudging women. Indeed, on this particular night he feels, seemingly for the first time, "as if the women" he encounters "speak languages different from his own, or at least as if they speak a code with words he knows but with different meanings." This "uneasy relation to women parallels his uneasy relation to [his dinner] speech," and his response to Lily's rebuff is to "retreat . . . into worries about" it (Munich 129, 132–3, 129). Is it any wonder that a failure of words prompts Gabriel to question the merits of his carefully planned speech, a tribute he is expected to make annually? Trying to shake off the "gloom" "cast . . . over him" by Lily's "bitter and sudden retort," he examines the notes for his speech, as:

[t]he indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only *make himself ridiculous* by quoting poetry to them which



they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would *fail* with them just as he had *failed* with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a *wrong* tone. His whole speech was a *mistake* from first to last, an utter *failure*. (*D* 179; emphases added)

Preoccupied with his own failure—the deficiencies in his speech, his interaction with Lily—Gabriel is concerned not simply with how he is perceived but also with how he affects others: He would not simply fail, “he would fail with them,” just as he had not simply blundered, he had done so “with the girl.” His concerns demonstrate an anxiety about appropriateness. Negotiating the uncanny, Gabriel aims not to control his listeners but to satisfy them, and thus ponders how best to behave.

In worrying about his performance, Gabriel reflects on “grade,” because class differences may well have accounted for his miscommunication with Lily. Such reflections are a prime example of why critics have called Gabriel “snobbish . . . and “arrogan[t]” (*Dilworth* 159).<sup>36</sup> Note, however, that Gabriel’s thoughts, ungenerous though they may be, are nothing more than thoughts—thoughts that we penetrate more fully and frequently than those of the other characters. Further, these thoughts indicate Gabriel’s perception of himself as of a “differe[nt]” rather than *better* “grade of culture.” “Discomposed” by Lily’s edginess and faulting himself for provoking it, nervous about the speech that is a key feature of the party, and standing on the threshold of the festivities, Gabriel is disquieted by “the indelicate clacking” and “shuffling” of the men inside, who, like his aunts, treat him like a functionary (*D* 179).

A teacher (we are reminded of Gabriel’s status by his use of the word “grade”), Gabriel is a professional orator, as well as a professional writer. Expected to address the guests on behalf of his aunts, he takes his speech seriously, and, aware that a rhetorician perceived as “ridiculous” cannot be effective, he considers how to appeal to listeners who, unlike him and Molly, are not men and women of letters. Thus, while Gabriel is fond of Robert Browning, whose work he has just reviewed, he considers eliminating from his speech “the lines” (179) of a Victorian who “was [at that time] regarded as a difficult and obscure avant-garde poet.”<sup>37</sup> Why not rather include “some quotation that they would recognize” (*D* 179)? Social hierarchies in evidence in “The Dead” are certainly offered up for criticism, but the text asks us to see Gabriel, though privileged, as also

entrapped.<sup>38</sup> He is, after all, fully cognizant of social distinctions circulating in early-twentieth-century Dublin society; and he also feels the noose of restriction as he struggles at once to uphold tradition and to meet the demands of the developing century.

#### FAMILY

The only male Conroy or Morkan present at the festivities, Gabriel is both honored guest and supplementary host. It is a position of authority bestowed on him by both broadly cultural and specifically familial traditions. His aunts do not begrudge but rather encourage this role, about which Gabriel is himself ambivalent.<sup>39</sup> He does, however, fulfill his duty,<sup>40</sup> and it is this cheerful willingness that seems above all to endear him to his aunts and cousin. By way of comparison, Gabriel's brother, "senior curate in Balbriggan," just twenty-two miles away, makes no appearance at the holiday gathering (*D* 186). Constantine's absence, illumined through a photograph, has only rarely been remarked.<sup>41</sup> How can we account for this reference—to a priest who fails to make time for an event so important to his elderly aunts—if not to show his brother in a comparatively positive light?

Gabriel's thoughts and actions mark him not as the "domestic martinet" ("Not the Girl" 196)<sup>42</sup> that his "serious and matronly" mother may have been, but as an anxious caretaker (*D* 186). Eyeing her image in the photograph with Constantine, Gabriel "remembers her sullen opposition to his marriage." Although "some slighting phrases she had used"—phrases by a woman who married up about a woman she thinks beneath her son—"still rankled in his memory" (187), Gabriel defends Gretta mentally now as he defended her first by marrying her—"for love."<sup>43</sup> And, almost as quickly as it has surfaced, "the resentment died down in his heart" (*D* 187). "A standing joke" among Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia, and Gretta, "Gabriel's solicitude" is the very quality that makes Aunt Kate "feel easier in [her] mind when he's here" (180, 182). "Quite right," Aunt Kate responds when she learns that Gabriel has booked a room at the nearby Gresham in an effort to forestall the cold that Gretta contracted during last year's long, frosty night-ride home. "You can't be too careful" (180). Her laughter, a moment later, at her "favorite nephew[s]" concern for his wife, like that of Gretta herself, is more tender than trenchant (179). Similarly, Gabriel's proactive interest in his family's health, including his prescription of certain behaviors (exercising, eating well) for his

son and daughter—whose ages we are never told and who may well be young children—and his request that his wife wear galoshes, suggests concern rather than coercion. Gretta, after all, is not compelled to follow her husband's advice, and thus she winds up walking through Dublin's late-night streets in unprotected boots, cumbersomely carrying "her shoes in a brown parcel tucked under one arm [while] with her hands [she] hold[s] her skirt up from the slush" (*D* 213).

#### NEW WOMEN, NEW IRELAND

Gretta is an exception in a text peopled with single working women. The preponderance of professional females is significant, given that in turn-of-the-century Dublin only a handful of fields were open to women: teaching and the arts were the two most prominent, although women might also serve as shopkeepers, secretaries, or overseers of boarding houses.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the 1870s, Irish women had petitioned for greater access to education, which a piece of 1878 legislation sought partially to enable. In 1881, "the Association of Irish Schoolmistresses and Other Ladies interested in Education was formed . . . to campaign for changes in girls' secondary and third-level educational opportunities."<sup>45</sup> The Royal University Act of 1879 set up an examining board through which women could qualify for university degrees, although they were still barred from actual attendance.<sup>46</sup> It was not until 1904 that "Trinity College Dublin—after a long hard struggle—opened its gates to women," and not until 1908 that a University act "decreed that full attendance at the reconstituted Queen's universities was compulsory," a policy that National University Dublin and Queens University Belfast would not implement until 1909 (R. Owens 31; Hill 27). Amidst all this hard-won opportunity, "intellectual middle-class women . . . began to build their own support networks. The Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates, for example, was formed in March 1902." The support was needed: "the Catholic Church," "the wider population," and "male academics" often voiced and otherwise demonstrated "strong . . . opposi[tion] [to] the emergence of the 'modern woman.'" For "women graduates, teaching became the main occupation," but jobs were scarce and "those employed received poor wages at rates below those of their male colleagues" (Hill 27; R. Owens 32).<sup>47</sup>

Joyce's interest in the politics of feminism is evinced in "The Dead" by his inclusion of the single music teachers, Kate, Julia, and Mary Jane, as

well as through his staging of a heated discussion of Pope Pius X's *Motu Proprio*, which denied women the right to sing in Catholic choirs, a decision that the text treats critically. But the story engages feminist politics beyond these examples by depicting Molly Ivors not only as a female academic but also, readers are expected to surmise, as an active member of the Gaelic League. While Irish women had been agitating for women's suffrage since the 1860s, the formation of the Ladies' Land League in 1881 was a particularly significant step in Irish women's political history. Created by Anna Parnell, after the leaders of the original Land League (including Anna's brother, Charles Stewart Parnell) had been arrested, the LLL was "squashed by Parnell on his release" in 1882.<sup>48</sup> Its successes, however, had demonstrated, to women not least, the capacity of Irish women for political organization, direct and otherwise. In 1893, when "the Gaelic League was launched as the means whereby Irish would be re-established as the first language of Ireland," it became "the first association to admit women and men on equal terms."<sup>49</sup> In 1900, Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Erin) met for the first time with the central goal of "re-establish[ing] . . . the complete independence of Ireland," "in which they would as a matter of course take equal citizenship" (Ward 51).<sup>50</sup> Over the years, this group merged with a number of other groups, ultimately becoming, in 1907, the influential Sinn Fein League (Ward 66). In the person of Gabriel's forceful colleague, Joyce depicts "a body of educated articulate women impatient for reform"—for "behind Miss Ivors stands a multitude" (R. Owens 31; Levenson 166).

Neither Molly's position at the University nor her affiliation with the Gaelic League is problematic for Gabriel.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, as the text unambiguously states: "they were friends of many years standing [whose] careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers." Later, we learn "There had never been any ill-feeling between them until that night" (*D* 188, 192).<sup>52</sup> Gabriel is thus disarmed by Molly's ambivalence toward him, her rapid fluctuation between conviviality and aggression. "Abruptly" declaring, "she has a crow to pick" with him, she engages him in a "cross-examination" sharp enough to capture their neighbors' attention (187, 189). Partaking with him in a European dance, she attacks Gabriel as a "West Briton" (188). Having so shamed him, she "took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone: 'Of course, I was only joking'" (188). And although she has doubted his loyalty to the cause of Irish nationalism, she now praises his work. Intent on "baiting him" to the end, she "looked at him from under her brows . . . until he smiled,"

only to whisper coyly into his ear her original accusation: “West Briton!” (*D* 190; San Juan 229). “[N]ot know[ing] how to meet her charge,” Gabriel “tried to keep his good humour under the ordeal” (*D* 188, 189). He only partly succeeds: responding once to her “shortly,” he eventually erupts not at her but at her Gaelic-League myopia—“I’m sick of my own country, sick of it!”—after which, “heated” by his own “retort” (189), he manages to hold his tongue.<sup>53</sup>

The exchange between the two is carried out during a dance of lancers, whose “hyper-symmetrical action and reaction” illustrates both outmoded forms of gender relations—conceptions of male and female as “entities complet[ing] each other”—and the disparate forms of “Irishness” manifest in Molly and Gabriel, forms that seem unable to dance in step (Leonard 461; “Catholic Revival” 24). The Gaelic League that Miss Ivors represents, which had achieved a major victory with the introduction of St. Patrick’s Day in 1903, placed a “xenophobic emphasis on whatever was ‘distinctively Irish’” and a correlative condemnation (C. Owens 80; “Catholic Revival” 8)—or at least a deep distrust—of that which was not. Gabriel’s European interests—his “cosmopolitanism”<sup>54</sup>—and the placement of his review in a Unionist paper make him an easy target for Molly’s nationalist fervor.<sup>55</sup> They also ally him with the self-exiled Joyce, himself a writer for the *Daily Express*, whose notion of a “New Ireland” was a “Europeanized” Ireland and who, in 1907 while at work on “The Dead,” declared in a Trieste lecture: “No one who has any self-respect stays in Ireland.”<sup>56</sup> But we need look no farther than “The Dead” itself to see that Molly (like Michael Furey) serves as a representation but *not* a celebration of revivalist nationalism. Joyce’s rendering of Molly is, after all, a *critique* of Molly—as the embodiment not of the New Woman but of the New Ireland, an imagined community embracing an Irish past at the expense, Joyce felt, of an Irish future.

Critics, however, have failed to notice that Joyce’s depiction of Molly is unflattering, focusing instead on Gabriel’s part in their interaction and reading his thoughts as “slurs” (“Joyce’s ‘The Dead’” 494). Conveyed primarily in an intimately narrated section following the dance, Gabriel’s thoughts are as follows:

Of course the girl or woman, or whatever she was, was an enthusiast, but there was a time for all things. Perhaps he ought not to have answered her like that. But she had no right to call him a West Briton before people, even in joke. She had tried to make him ridiculous

before people heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit's eyes.  
(*D* 190)

For Leonard, Gabriel's uncertain and "curiously floundering assessment" of Miss Ivors takes the form of "the most vicious epithets about the feminine gender." "A low blow," writes Trevor Williams of Gabriel's musings: "questioning her gender" (Leonard 461, 471 n. 23; Williams 93).<sup>57</sup> At once puzzled, angry, and ashamed, Gabriel gives private vent to a public confrontation as he tries to make sense of the encounter. He accepts Molly's "entusias[m]"—her nationalism—but denies her "right to call him a West Briton"—to question, in other words, his own patriotism. The public attack (the phrase "before people" is used twice) makes him feel "heckl[ed]," "star[ed] at," and mocked, provoking the response that he tentatively ("perhaps") regrets: "I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (*D* 189). Finding himself, as with Lily, on newly uncertain ground, Gabriel mulls over Molly's identity, wondering whether to refer to her as a woman or a girl. Similarly, as Molly prepares to depart, Gabriel wonders whether or not he should volunteer himself as an escort. Although he hesitates before doing so, considering, perhaps, whether offering or failing to do so would be the greater mistake, he ultimately errs on the side of custom, risking further ridicule for the sake of kindness: "If you will allow me, Miss Ivors, I'll see you home if you really are obliged to go" (195). While today's reader may view his gesture as "patronizing" (Eggers 384), a turn-of-the-century Dubliner would likely have expected him to behave precisely as he did—a Dubliner like Gretta, who, in response to Molly's declension, "I am quite well able to take care of myself," "frankly" replies, "Well, you're the comical girl, Molly" (*D* 196).

#### CAMARADERIE

The Morkan sisters' party is, after all, a celebration of what Gabriel praises as "*camaraderie*," "living affections," and "genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality" (204). Molly may be committed to an Irish Ireland, but she does not honor her elderly Irish hostesses by dining at their table, a rebuff felt not only by Gabriel but also by Mary Jane, who "gaze[s] after" a departing Molly, with "a moody puzzled expression on her face" (196). What if we knew what lurked behind Mary Jane's "moody" visage, Miss Ivors's "sour expression" (190), and Lily's "bitter and sudden retort" (179)? What if, that is, we had access to their thoughts to the extent that

we have access to Gabriel's? We would find, the text suggests, that Gabriel is simply one among many with the capacity for harsh judgment, a mental lack of charity not necessarily expressed in unkind words or actions. Viewed in this context, Gabriel's "attitude" is not "princely," but merely human (Pecora 239). Consider the "quarrelsome" behaviors of almost all of the story's central characters, and even a few of the minor players (*D* 195): Lily is snappish, directing toward a well-meaning Gabriel her anger at "the men that is now" (178); Miss Ivors speaks "abruptly," implicitly blaming Gabriel for the effects of colonization (187); Gretta criticizes Mr. D'Arcy's arrogance behind his back, as does Aunt Kate behind Browne's, whom she has earlier snubbed; Aunt Kate calls after her sister "almost testily" and later "turn[s] fiercely on her niece," misplacing her anger at the Pope himself (181, 194); Gretta's mother, we are informed, spoke "slighting[ly]" of Gretta (187); Mary Jane speaks "archly" of Browne (206); and Mr. D'Arcy, when asked to sing, responds "rude[ly]" to his hostesses, who, "taken aback," are momentarily rendered speechless (211).<sup>58</sup>

Compared to the behavior of his fellow Dubliners this evening at the Misses Morkan, Gabriel's least charitable actions and thoughts, all essentially reactive, are neither singular nor excessive; nor are they enacted. Although he speaks "coldly" (for the briefest moment, in a mere sentence) to his wife, her behavior—she whispers in his ear—mirrors that of Molly Ivors, who has only just offended him with a susurrous assault (191). Still smarting from this lancing he received at lancers, he thinks of his aunts as "two ignorant old women," just as later, hurt by his wife's memories, he reflects on the party guests as "vulgarians" (192, 220). Given access to Gabriel's private reflections, critics have been unwilling to distinguish thought from action. And Gabriel's actions, in the main, are kind and generous, and his treatment of these same "fussy" aunts and occasionally difficult guests consistently benevolent (176). Aunt Kate, supervising the arrival of the guests and then later the formalities of supper, is nearly "in despair" without Gabriel. When she seeks him out, he responds warmly on both occasions: "'Here I am, Aunt Kate!' cried Gabriel, with sudden animation, 'ready to carve a flock of geese, if necessary'" (196). Relied upon and reliable, Gabriel is committed to "executing his function to everybody's delight and the aunts' pleasure" and is disturbed when he fails (Levenson 173; San Juan 226).

While he does use his speech to avenge himself on Miss Ivors,<sup>59</sup> the rhetorical execution is only a diluted version of his plan. Gabriel imagines

digging at her indirectly by suggesting that "the new and very serious and hypereducated generation . . . lack[s]" "certain qualities" that the "wan[ing]" generation exemplifies: "humanity, . . . hospitality, [and] kindly humour" (*D* 192). In the speech itself, however, he balances his critique by praising not only the "new generation . . . growing up in our midst," as "serious," "enthusiastic," and "in the main sincere," but also Ireland itself, as "unique . . . among the modern nations" (*D* 203). Even in Molly's absence, Gabriel's initial impulse to stick it to her, so to speak, is only minimally indulged, and ultimately, like Molly herself, he extols Irishness. Having more than satisfied his audience—Aunt Julia smiles, Aunt Kate tears up—Gabriel "hasten[s] to his close" (205).

### MARRIAGE

Bidding a courteous farewell to some of his aunts' laggard guests in a final gesture of familial duty, Gabriel is "surprised" by the sight of his wife, "standing on the stairs in . . . shadow" (209, 210). Struck by "her stillness" and the "grace" and "mystery in her attitude," he imagines her as the subject of a portrait he would entitle "*Distant Music*" (209, 210). For both Valente and Cheng, Gabriel's thoughts are an example of his "sexual imperialism": he "reduces his wife to a generic image of Woman as enigma" ("Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime" 70).<sup>60</sup> But consider that Gabriel does *not* refuse her unknowability, force her into the image of what he thinks a wife—his wife—should be, or disregard the distance between them, imposing his desire for closeness onto her. Gabriel's public reaction to Gretta foreshadows his private one in the Gresham, demonstrating a willingness to accept his wife on her terms, to accommodate himself to another, and so to commune with her more deeply than he has previously.

Brought to life by a glimpse, Gabriel's desire for Gretta is borne by affection. Watching her in silence, "a sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his *heart*" (*D* 212, emphasis added) and his eyes shone "bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, *tender*, valorous. . . . He longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and *affectionate* in her ear. . . . Moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory" (213, emphases added). Lest readers fail to note the tenderness that is at the core of Gabriel's love, Joyce writes further: "yet more *tender* joy escaped from his *heart*," as, "like



the *tender* fires of stars[,] moments of their life together . . . illumined his memory” (213, emphases added). “He longed to be alone with her” (214). Joy, warmth, and affection precede the “keen pang of lust” ignited by “the first touch of her body” (215). And when they are at last alone together, Gabriel “put his hands on her hair and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers” (217). Even after Gretta begins to speak of Michael, Gabriel “caressed one of her hands . . . , caress[ed] it just as he had caressed her first letter to him” (220).

Yet, despite four references to Gabriel’s tenderness (a fourth occurs on 219), three to his caressing hands, and two to his heart, his passion has been described as selfish and lascivious.<sup>61</sup> His feelings do escalate into “a fever of rage and desire” (*D* 217), but he checks the “wild impulse”—only an *impulse*, just as a thought is only a thought—to seize her, the “long[ing] to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her.” He instead waits for Gretta to “come to him of her own accord,” to offer some sign of her own “ardour” (215, 217). He is no “brut[e]” (217), and, as Cheng acknowledges, “the basic situation in the Conroys’ hotel room is a common scene that has been reenacted in bedrooms at some time or other by every sexually active couple in human history: one partner is frustrated to discover that the other is not ‘in the mood’” (Cheng 41).<sup>62</sup> Staying his passion, keeping it from her, Gabriel gives his wife both the ear and the space that she needs—no easy task in the face of her confession.

In honoring his wife’s emotional desire to share but to withdraw, Gabriel overcomes rather than reinscribes “his inability to connect with Gretta” (Schwarz 121).<sup>63</sup> Although stung by the discovery that while he was recalling the “distant music” of their early love, she was remembering another, Gabriel is “kinder . . . than he . . . intended” (*D* 214, 218). With “an effort of reason,” even as he is “seized” by “terror,” “burn[ing]” with “shame,” and unassured by a hand that “did not respond to his touch,” Gabriel listens to Gretta’s tale of Michael Furey (220). When at last “she stopped, choking with sobs, and, overcome with emotion, [Gretta] flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window” (221–2). His gentleness is matched by his readiness to allow their separation, an allowance that actually *closes* the chasm between them. Demonstrating a “self-conscious willingness . . . to grant Gretta a private space of her own, one in which she can be her own emotional subject,” Gabriel connects with

her by releasing her in an act of generosity (Cheng 41). The "[g]enerous tears [that] filled Gabriel's eyes" are not only for Gretta; they are also for Michael and for himself (*D* 223).

#### SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The sympathy and understanding that Gabriel demonstrates at the story's conclusion are evidence of a shift—but one that Gabriel fails to recognize. Like so many critics he overlooks his generous sensitivity and overvalues Gretta's newly disclosed past. While he is surely more unhinged by Gretta's revelation than by Lily's hostility or Molly's effrontery, Gabriel listens compassionately without reacting defensively—no small feat given that he seems to have taken at face value Gretta's claim that Michael died for her and has interpreted their relationship as the great love of her life. But is this what Gretta has told him?<sup>64</sup> Regarding Michael's death: because Gretta had been told that he "was in decline . . . or something like that" *before* his final visit, is it not more likely that the young man's death was inevitable than that, obscurely, he died for her (*D* 220)? Regarding their love: Gabriel asks Gretta three times if she had been in love with him. Her vague responses are by no means affirmative: "It was a young boy I used to know," "I used to go out walking with him," and finally, "I was great with him at that time" (219, 220). Of his death, she says: "He died when he was only seventeen. Isn't it a terrible thing to die so young as that? . . . Poor fellow. . . . He was very fond of me and he was such a gentle boy" (219, 221). Pity, not love, is preeminent in Gretta's description of the "delicate boy" who welcomed death (219). But readers need not make the same mistake as Gabriel who, comparing his feelings for Gretta to those that inspired Michael's "wish" to die, deems his own love, essentially, inadequate (223). "Unable to work his way through Gretta's version of her love story to its adolescent core," as Albert Wachtel explains, Gabriel "falls in with her sentimental thoughts. . . . He does not see that dying, especially for a person 'in decline,' is easy compared to living on as far as possible 'in the full glory' of one's passions."<sup>65</sup> Are we meant to believe, with Gabriel, that Michael Furey's love was greater than that of a man who, years into a marriage, is not only driven into a frenzy by the touch of his wife, but still swoons at memories of their courtship? And, further, are we meant to see Michael's pointless death as a sacrifice? For whom? To what end?

Thrown at first by “a series of challenges” to his “conventional perceptions of women,” Gabriel at last proves able to adjust to the (increasingly) unexpected in his encounters with them (Eggers 379). He is fooled, however, by the romanticism implicit in Gretta’s tale into doubting the adequacy of his own love and the value he places on a burgeoning modernity, as well as into believing that Molly’s version of Ireland is the only legitimate one. Comparing himself to the fantasy of the innocent young Oughterard boy who died for love, Gabriel comes to see himself not only as a failed lover but also as a failed Irishman, a “West Briton,” and improbably concludes that to change his former status he must change his latter. His encounters with Lily and Molly prepare him to face his wife’s unexpected admission, but they also prepare him too readily to accept a revisionist history that upends his sense of himself, his marriage, and his future.

Gabriel’s sleep-cusped musings that it is “better [to] pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade away and wither dismally with age” compel his compulsion to “journey westward” (*D* 223)—to participate, in effect, in the (re)construction of an undiluted Ireland that, as Joyce well knew, was itself a fiction. Failing to recognize the fact of his own generosity, Gabriel inhibits both a personal transformation and a potentially productive peripeteia. Revering a mythical past embodied by a fallen angel, he thwarts a viable future. Eschewing an authentic modernity, he follows instead a well-worn path, becoming the man “Joyce might have become, had he remained in Ireland.”<sup>66</sup>

#### THE WEST OF THE STORY

The vast majority of critics read Gabriel’s Furey-inspired westward inclination as a redemptive revelation, one that ultimately “revivifies [the] seemingly dead and deadening Irish world” portrayed in the larger work, *Dubliners* (*Teller and Tale* 130). In doing so, they cast Michael, a specifically “*revivalist* figure,” as a “locus of redemptive possibility” (“Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime” 72),<sup>67</sup> thereby disregarding Joyce’s explicit and copious critique of the movement.<sup>68</sup> As Joyce well knew, turn-of-the-century western Ireland was “depressed,” economically and otherwise; its “young people were condemned to unwholesome jobs”—like the gasworks that likely “induced or exacerbated” Michael’s lung condition—“to aborted ambitions,” and “inadequate medical care[,] to poverty and wasted lives denied in the Gaelic League’s political romanticizing of the

West of Ireland" ("Stifled" 496; "Joyce's Politics" 93; "Stifled" 496). Joyce was no more prey to the Revivalist construction of an idyllic peasant life than he was to the crude English version to which it was a reaction.<sup>69</sup> Interpreted by Gabriel as a symbol of an undiluted love and an undiluted Ireland, Michael functions as a myth. Condemned by critics for being judgmental, Gabriel, conversely, functions as a scapegoat for readers who project onto him their own lack of sympathy. And just as the West becomes for Gabriel the (false) promise of salvation, so Gabriel has become such a promise for readers. Having shown him no mercy, critics require his redemption at the story's conclusion because he is, after all, like us, and we, with our failure of recognition, are like him.

"It is well past time for Ireland to have done once and for all with failure," wrote Joyce, in "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages" as he was at work on "The Dead." "If she is truly capable of reviving, let her awake, or let her cover up her head and lie down decently in her grave forever" (*CW* 174). Although Gabriel has begun to live anew—by adjusting to change—he is asleep to this fact. Lying in bed, he imagines himself heading toward Furey's grave, toward a shadowy west with its "lonely churchyard[s]" and "barren thorns." The living, the dead, the haze of sleep, and a numbing west all merge as his "soul swooned slowly" (*D* 224), like one lying down forever. Gabriel's vision, like Ireland itself, steeped in the "exclusivist cultural nationalism" to which Joyce was responding ("Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime" 73), is occluded by the snow that was "general all over" (*D* 223). So, too, has been the vision of the story's critics. Invested in a "cultural mythology" (Pecora 242) that idealizes the "chivalric romance" ("Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime" 72) and the pre-colonial, critics have failed to see Joyce's rendering of Irish Ireland for what it is: the futile reverence of a mythical past, the stagnation of moving forward by moving back, a Hibernian ice age of deadening chill—not a resurrection.

Celebrations of the snowy western Ireland lyrically evoked at the end of "The Dead" are as common as frosty denunciations of the story's protagonist. Reflexively treating Gabriel's psyche as an object of criticism, we have failed to recognize that, while narrative proximity to Gabriel illuminates his psychology of disconnection, it makes him neither its proponent nor its cause. The psychic propinquity that is the driving force of Joyce's immaculately staged ethics of reading functions, finally, as an invitation to intimacy. By means of an aesthetics that lays bare the mind of tradition confronting modernity, "The Dead" exposes the mechanics

of interpersonal distance, positing recognition as an alternative to condemnation, identification as an alternative to isolation.

## NOTES

1. See Brewster Ghiselin, "The Unity of Joyce's *Dubliners*," *Accent* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1956): 75–88; Brendan P. O'Hehir, "Structural Symbol in Joyce's 'The Dead,'" *Joyce's "The Dead*," ed. William T. Moynihan (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), 120–32, originally published in *Twentieth Century Literature* 3 (Apr. 1957): 3–13; and William T. Noon, S.J., "Epiphany," in *Joyce's "The Dead*," originally published in *Joyce and Aquinas*, by Noon (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

2. Even, by one estimation, Gabriel the rapist. Ruth Bauerle, "Date Rape, Mate Rape: A Liturgical Interpretation of 'The Dead,'" in *New Alliances in Joyce Studies*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 113–25. An early example of Gabriel as chauvinist is Edward Brandabur, "Arrayed for the Bridal: The Embodied Vision of 'The Dead,'" in *Joyce's "The Dead*," 108–19. See also Vincent J. Cheng, "Empire and Patriarchy in 'The Dead,'" *Joyce Studies Annual* 4 (2003): 16–42; and Joseph Valente, "James Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime," in *Joyce and the Subject of History*, ed. Mark Wollaeger, Victor Luftig, and Robert Spoo (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 70. Subsequent references to this last work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

3. Joyce famously wrote to his brother Stanislaus prior to penning "The Dead": "thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in *Dubliners* at least) none of the attraction of the city. . . . I have not reproduced its . . . hospitality" (*LII*, 166).

4. See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 14. To be clear: my title employs misprision for its common ("misunderstanding") as well as its literary meaning, referring both to Gabriel as misprizing subject and Gabriel as object of critical misprision.

5. As Pecora sees it, "The Dead" critiques "cultural formulas" that conflate self-sacrifice and generosity. Vincent P. Pecora, "'The Dead' and the Generosity of the Word," *PMLA* 101 (1986): 237. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text. As I see it, "The Dead" critiques a denial of generosity that it simultaneously depicts, entices, and invites readers to suspend.

6. As Joseph Valente, in conversation, succinctly put it.

7. John Paul Riquelme, "For Whom the Snow Taps: Style and Repetition in 'The Dead,'" in *The Dead*, by James Joyce, ed. Daniel R. Schwarz (Boston and New York: Bedford–St. Martin's, 1994), 228.

8. Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: A Century of Change* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2003), 27.

9. See Valente, "Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime," 59–80.

10. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121, 128, 132. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

11. Allen Tate, "Three Commentaries: Poe, James, and Joyce," *Sewanee Review* 58 (Winter 1950): 10; Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 18. Subsequent references to Kenner's work will be cited parenthetically in the text. John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction: Oscillating Perspectives* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 123. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text. Pecora, 235. Joseph Valente, "The Politics of Joyce's Polyphony," in *New Alliances in Joyce Studies*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 62. John Paul Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead': The Dissolution of the Self and the Police," *Style* 25 (1991): 502 (and "For Whom," 222). Weldon Thornton, *Voices and Values in Joyce's Ulysses* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 2.

12. "The mind of [Joyce's] Dubliners is at once a colony and a combat zone" ("Politics" 61). "Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime" 63; Michael Levenson, "Living History in 'The Dead,'" in *The Dead, by James Joyce*, ed. Daniel R. Schwarz (Boston and New York: Bedford–St. Martin's, 1994), 173. Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 274–84. Although critics have generally withheld the sympathy that Booth describes, many have nonetheless created the narrative of Gabriel's final redemption. However, this is an act not of sympathy but of empathy—of identification, ironically, with the alienation of judgment.

13. Gabriel's problem is not a "lack of any real identity" (Pecora 238), but a preponderance of identities.

14. Exceptions to the former include Vicki Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, 1988 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 28; and Gerald Doherty, *Dubliners' Dozen: The Games Narrators Play* (Madison and Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 11. For an interesting argument about the split between the narrator and Gabriel and its relationship to the reader's judgment, particularly at the story's end, see Bruce Avery, "Distant Music: Sound and the Dialogics of Satire in 'The Dead,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 28 (1991): 473–83.

15. Gerard Quinn, "Joyce and Tenebrae: The Ironic Passion and Death of Gabriel Conroy," *James Joyce Quarterly* 37 (2000): 160. See also Margot Norris, "Stifled Back Answers: The Gender Politics of Art in Joyce's 'The Dead,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 35 (1989): 499–500; Margot Norris, "Not the Girl She Was at All: Women in 'The Dead,'" in *The Dead, by Joyce*, 196; Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead,'" 488; Levenson, 173; and Daniel R. Schwarz, "Gabriel Conroy's Psyche: Character as Concept in Joyce's 'The Dead,'" in *The Dead, by Joyce*, 106.

16. Michael Murphy, "'The Dead': Gabebashing in Joyce Country," *English Studies* 81, no. 1 (2000): 43. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

17. Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck, "First Flight to Ithaca: A New Reading of Joyce's 'Dubliners,'" *Accent* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1944): 98; Tate, 11, 14; Hugh Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), 68.

18. "Gabriel meets the women" is the clever phraseology of Joseph Valente, in conversation. Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce*, 66.

19. O Hehir, 122, 125, 126; Richard Ellmann, "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead,'" in *Critical Essays on James Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Boston: Hall, 1985), 98, originally published in *James Joyce*, Richard Ellmann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); William York Tyndall, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (New York: Octagon-Farrar, 1982), 43. For O Hehir and Tyndall these "three rebuffs" were "Lily's remarks about men, Gretta's about 'goloshes,' and Miss Ivors' about politics" (Tyndall, 43). More recent critics generally identify the three rebuffs as Lily's, Molly's, and then Gretta's in the Gresham.

20. See, for example, Brandabur and Bernard Benstock, "'The Dead': A Cold Coming," in *Critical Essays on James Joyce* (Boston: Hall, 1985), 148–62, originally published in *James Joyce's Dubliners: Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart (London: Faber, 1969). Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

21. Although Benstock writes of Gabriel's "lack of sophistication in handling women," he also describes him as a victim—of Lily's "cynicism," Molly's "narrow nationalism," and Gretta's "final twist of the knife" (154, 152, 155).

22. Crediting Trevor L. Williams with the initial observation, Jean-Michel Rabaté describes the 1975 Paris International James Joyce Symposium as "the moment when the 'apolitical' view of Joyce was shattered." Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Classics of Joyce Scholarship," in *Palgrave Advances in James Joyce Studies*, ed. Rabaté (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 266. Rabaté cites Trevor L. Williams, *Reading Joyce Politically* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 28.

23. "Not the Girl" 200, *passim*; Bauerle 113, 177, *passim*. Norris quite clearly distinguishes character from text, however, arguing that the latter illustrates but does not condone the oppression of women at the hands of the former, and that "The Dead" was intended as "a critique of bourgeois love and marriage" ("Stifled" 488; see also 482, 483, 484). See also Tilly Eggers, "'What is a Woman . . . a Symbol of?'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1981): 377–95; and Adrienne Auslander Munich, "'Dear Dead Women,' or Why Gabriel Conroy Reviews Robert Browning," *New Alliances in Joyce Studies*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 126–34.

24. Valente, "Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime," 70, 69. See also Cheng, 26; and Willard Potts, who writes, "Gabriel's attitude toward Gretta is a form of sexual West Britonism, recalling English attempts at mastering or overmastering Ireland." Willard Potts, "The Catholic Revival and 'The Dead,'" *Joyce Studies Annual* 2 (1991): 22.

25. See, for instance, Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead'"; Trevor Williams; Valente, "Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime"; and Cheng.

26. Potts, "Catholic Revival," 3–26. Cólín Owens, "The Mystique of the West in Joyce's 'The Dead,'" *Irish University Review* 22, no. 1 (1992): 80–91. Pecora 233–45.

27. Valente describes "The Dead" as "Joyce's first song of transnationalism." "Joyce's Politics: Race, Nation, and Transnationalism," in *Palgrave Advances in James Joyce Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 91.

28. See Thomas Dilworth, "Sex and Politics in 'The Dead,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 23 (1986): 168.

29. "The psychological effects of the social conditions (of the time) were felt by the entire middle-class society, male and female," assert Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless. Henke and Unkeless, *Women in Joyce* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 37. Among the conditions they outline are poverty (33), extremely low marriage rates (33), late marriages (36), large families (36–7), and a "pervasive" "inability to communicate or understand" (32).

30. See also O Hehir 122; Bauerle *passim*; Cheng 26–8; and Valente, "James Joyce" 69–70.

31. We later learn, in Gabriel's interaction with Molly Ivors, that the effort of maintaining "good humour" when under stress causes him to blush (*D* 189).

32. Gary Leonard, "Joyce and Lacan: 'The Woman' as a Symptom of 'Masculinity' in 'The Dead,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 28 (1991): 458. See also Trevor Williams 92; and Bauerle 115. For Pecora, Gabriel's generosity, here as elsewhere, is compelled by "his inability to communicate successfully"; it is an "avenue of escape," a means of saving face (239, 240, 242).

33. Deprecation is defined by the *OED* in the following ways: 1. Intercessory prayer. *Obs.*; 2. a. Prayer for the averting or removal (of evil, disaster, etc.); b. Formerly: Prayer for forgiveness. *Obs.*; 3. Entreaty or earnest desire that something may be averted or removed; earnest expression of feeling against (a proposal, practice, etc.); 4. Imprecation: curse. *Obs.* rare. It is unlikely that Joyce was here invoking the fourth, rare and obsolete, definition. Deprecation in this context—and almost all others when correctly used—does *not* carry the negative connotations *popularly* associated with it.

34. For Earl E. Ingersoll, Aunt Kate's "displeasure with Lily is probably the result of the very impertinence that otherwise would seem directed only toward Gabriel." *Engendered Trope in Joyce's Dubliners* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 150. Kelleher considers that although Gabriel "thinks himself rebuffed by Lily," "she is only grumbling about the prospective men in her own life" (425).

35. As Murphy sarcastically queries, "A victim bearing gifts?" (46). Lest readers protest that Lily may be acting at the request of the Misses Morkan, I would point out that while the narration specifically reveals that Lily's serving each guest "with a dish of hot floury potatoes wrapped in a white napkin . . . was Mary Jane's idea," Lily's kindness to Gabriel is attributed to no one, and is thus likely her own (*D* 197).

36. See also Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead,'" 488; and Schwarz, 105.

37. Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982), 114. In the end, while he does not include the Browning, Gabriel includes a phrase he used to review the author's work: "thought-tormented" (*D* 203), thus relaying the idea without referencing the esoteric original.

38. See Vicki Mahaffey, "Joyce and Gender," in *Palgrave Advances in James Joyce Studies*, 127; and Pecora 233.

39. Sitting in the window embrasure, gazing outdoors, he reflects, "How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! . . .



How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!" (*D* 192). While Gabriel is carving the goose, however, we learn that he "liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table" (197).

40. John V. Kelleher notes that Gabriel "does not think of cutting his aunts or avoiding the annual chore of presiding at the Christmas dinner though obviously he never enjoys the party." See John V. Kelleher, "Irish History and Mythology in James Joyce's 'The Dead,'" *Review of Politics* 27 (July 1965): 424. See also Epifanio San Juan, Jr., *James Joyce and the Craft of Fiction: An Interpretation of Dubliners* (Madison and Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972), 22. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

41. For instance, Benstock, 159. Craig Hansen Werner is "str[uc]k" not by the absence of Constantine in particular but by that of priests in general. See *Dubliners: A Pluralistic World* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 58.

42. See also Pecora, 239; Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead,'" 489; and Schwarz, 106.

43. See Kelleher, 424.

44. As Florence L. Walzl notes, *Dubliners* depicts women working in all of these positions. Walzl, "Dubliners," in *A Companion to Joyce Studies*, ed. Zack Bowen and James F. Carens (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood, 1984), 196–7.

45. "Movements for Political & Social Reform, 1870–1914: Feminism," *Cork Multitext Project*, July 27, 2006, <http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/feminism>. Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800–1918: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), 151. "Ireland," *New Advent*, 2006, July 27, 2006 [www.NewAdvent.org](http://www.NewAdvent.org), citing E. A. D'Alton, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, "Movements for Political & Social Reform."

46. See "Movements." See also Rosemary Cullen Owens, *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement, 1889–1922*, (Dublin: Attic, 1995), 31.

47. See also Walzl, 197. Opportunities were also on the rise for less educated women, and in 1901 "the first civil service typist took up her post . . . while the Guinness Brewery held its first examinations for four lady clerkships in June 1906," and "by 1914 almost 8,000 women were employed as clerks, the fastest-growing area of female employment in the twentieth century" (Hill 47).

48. Sally Richardson, "Irish Women and Revolution," *The Irish Democrat*, Dec. 23, 2003, *Ireland's Own*, Nov. 14, 2005, <http://irelandsown.net/women4.html>. R. Owens 28.

49. Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto, 1983), 40–1. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text. Also see R. Owens 35 and Luddy 299.

50. Also see Richardson.

51. I mean not to suggest that it "should" be, but to counter the notion that Gabriel's treatment of Miss Ivors is necessarily patronizing.

52. Historically, it is unlikely that Molly Ivors's career "at the University" could truly have been "parallel" to Gabriel's, as explained previously.

53. Gabriel displays the same patience with Freddy and Mrs. Malins, although the former is childish and drunken and the latter tedious and self-involved. His aunts

have asked him to keep an eye on the recalcitrant Freddy and, "like a good fellow," he does (*D* 182). He courteously sits with Mrs. Malins, unsolicited, "while her tongue ramble[s] on" (190)—the point of view may be Gabriel's but her speech bears him out.

54. Willard Potts, *Joyce and the Two Irelands* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 24. See also Valente, "Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime."

55. He is, however, neither the only one present interested in non-Irish culture nor the only one to venture beyond Ireland's borders. Mr. Browne wears a coat with "mock astrakhan" trimming (*D* 206); Mrs. Malins is in rapture over Scotland, where she lives with her married daughter; participants in the dinner conversation praise London, Paris, and Milan, French and Italian operas, and an English tenor; Aunt Kate sings an Italian aria; and the Misses Morkans "don't have on their walls the pictures of saints or religious subjects associated with Irish Catholic homes nor do they have pictures of Irish scenes or subjects. Their pictures, which show 'the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet' and 'the two murdered princes in the Tower' are both emphatically English" ("Catholic Revival" 19–20).

56. Potts discusses Joyce's views on "the New Ireland" in *Exiles*, *Ulysses*, and his critical writing (*Joyce and the Two Irelands* 23–4). (*CW* 171)

57. See also Riquelme, "Joyce's 'The Dead'" 493–4.

58. Mr. Browne and Freddy Malins, while neither "quarrelsome" nor overtly judgmental, are certainly self-absorbed, no less so than Gabriel. Browne, who cannot even get Freddy's name right (*D* 185, 206), is a heavy-drinking performer desperate for an audience. His inability to listen to others is pronounced and pathetic. He is what Freddy, something of a child though nearly forty, may become.

59. Both Bauerle 117, and Potts ("Catholic Revival" 23) stress this point.

60. See also Cheng 41; and "Not the Girl" 196.

61. See "Not the Girl" 196–7; Peter J. Rabinowitz, "'A Symbol of Something': Interpretive Vertigo in 'The Dead,'" in *The Dead, by Joyce*, 147; and Pecora 241.

62. I do not, however, agree with Cheng that "Gabriel's situation" is particular to—obliquely suggested by his assertion that it is "not atypical of"—"heterosexual men" (27).

63. This phrase that I am borrowing from Schwarz comes right out of a passage in which he argues that "the ending of 'The Dead' make[s] clear" Gabriel's failure with his wife and family (121).

64. At least two critics have questioned Gabriel's reading of Gretta's romantic past. Valente notes that "Gabriel functions as the first reader and co-author of the legend of Michael Furey ('Joyce and the Cosmopolitan Sublime' 73). Werner observes, "Most critics assume that Gabriel is correct in believing Michael Furey to have been Gretta's great lost love. Yet there is little evidence in her speech to support such an interpretation" (Werner 71).

65. Albert Wachtel, "Against Symbolism: Gabriel Conroy and the Living Dead," in *The Cracked Looking Glass: James Joyce and the Nightmare of History* (Selinsgrove, Penn.: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), 60–1. While I share Wachtel's view of Gabriel's misreading, his view of *Gretta's* feelings is clearly different from my own.

66. Harry Levin, "Editors' Preface" to *Dubliners, The Portable James Joyce*, ed. Levin (New York: Viking, 1947), 18. Pecora notes that "Gabriel sacrifices himself to the past, and to the dead, more profoundly than any of his compatriots does." And because doing so is a "replication" of "the story of Christ," "the most fundamental structuring device for heroism, generosity, self-knowledge, and spiritual transcendence" in Gabriel's culture and the West more broadly, "it has remained difficult for us to read the end of 'The Dead' with anything approaching the skepticism Joyce felt in reading his own culture" (243).

67. This is not Valente's interpretation, but these are Valente's words, describing the view of "most readers"—by which I take to mean critics (69). Indeed, Valente argues, "a whole series of narrative motifs link Michael Furey's apparently noble *gest* with the vain deluded *quest* of the boy in 'Araby'" (69–70). If the boy's quest and Furey's *gest* are "vain" and "deluded," so, too, is Gabriel's decision to journey west. (Similarly, I would argue, the picture of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, which echoes Furey's late-night visit to Gretta, suggests not the transcendence of their love but its earthy futility.) In seeking, in essence, to replicate this past, Gabriel is himself on a deluded quest.

68. Cólín Owens, for example, argues that Joyce's "public denunciation of the Irish cultural revival and his physical exile are masks for his acceptance of the Irish cultural tradition" (82); and Cheng maintains that Joyce's "exploration of Gabriel [is], in part, a very complex exorcism of some of his own guilt and feelings of anti-Irish complicity" (32).

69. Edward Hirsch, "The Imaginary Irish Peasant," *PMLA* 106 (1991): 119, *passim*.