

James Joyce
and His
Contemporaries

Edited by
Diana A. Ben-Merre
and
Maureen Murphy

Prepared under the auspices of Hofstra University

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Abbreviations

Note: We have adopted the James Joyce Quarterly's system of abbreviations for references to Joyce's works or to the Ellmann biography.

- CP Joyce, James. Collected Poems. New York: Viking Press, 1957.
- CW Joyce, James. The Critical Writings of James Joyce, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1959.
- D Joyce, James. "Dubliners": Text, Criticism and Notes, ed. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz. New York: Viking Press, 1969.
- E Joyce, James. Exiles, New York: Viking Press, 1951.
- FW Joyce, James. Finnegans Wake, New York: Viking Press, 1939 and London: Faber and Faber, 1939.
- GJ Joyce, James. Giacomo Joyce, ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1968.
- JJ Ellmann, Richard. James Joyce, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- JJII Ellmann, Richard. James Joyce, rev. ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- L I, II, III Joyce, James. Letters of James Joyce, Vol. I, ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Viking Press, 1966. Vols. II and III, ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966.
- P Joyce, James. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man": Text, Criticism and Notes, ed. Chester G. Anderson. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

x Abbreviations

- SH Joyce, James. Stephen Hero, ed. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon. New York: New Directions, 1963.
- SL Joyce, James. Selected Letters of James Joyce, ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1975.
- U Joyce James. Ulysses. New York: Random House, 1934 ed., reset and corrected 1961.

Preface

This collection of essays, an outgrowth of a conference on James Joyce and his contemporaries, focuses on Joyce's work from significant points of view and places Joyce in the context of the Ireland of his time. The first part, Joyce's canon, deals with central problems of interpretation in his fiction. Janet Egleson Dunleavy, Joseph Bentley, and Suzette Henke treat problems of narrative, Maria Tymoczko and Julienne H. Empric, problems of characterization.

Dunleavy, examining the problematic nature of the narrative voices in "The Dead," identifies four different narrative voices and their places in the story. In a similar vein, Henke's identification of ALP's narrative language in Finnegans Wake helps to delineate character and theme. Dealing with the central problem of narrative unity in Ulysses, Bentley finds that Jean Piaget's theory of child development offers a pattern by which disparate narrative elements can be understood. Tymoczko, demolishing the view that the trio of characters in Ulysses is European, demonstrates that figures from early Irish sagas served as models for characterization in Ulysses, while Empric enlarges the rather static view of feminine characterization in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

The second part, "The Rhetoric of Joyce's World," explores Joyce's belief that literature in any form tends to structure consciousness and that popular literature, indeed all forms of popular culture, does so more insidiously and on a grander scale than any other. R. B. Kershner, Jr., develops this idea in his discussion of the strange conjunction of Maria Corelli and Stephen Dedalus in Ulysses. The influence of popular literature also is evident in Cheryl Herr's essay that describes the complex mixture of Roman Catholic doctrine and economics in Jaun's sermon in Finnegans Wake (III, ii). Jeanne A. Flood and Bonnie Kime Scott analyze the rhetoric of nationalist politics and social reforms, showing how these are reflected in "The Dead" and in Stephen Hero and Portrait.

"Joyce's Connections to the Writers of His Time," part III, tells something about the continuities of literary influences. Dominic Manganiello demonstrates that Joyce's connection with Oscar Wilde is deeper than the shared theme of the betrayed artist; Rhoda B. Nathan reveals affinities between Joyce's and Shaw's dramatic interests and influences, and Michael Kenneally describes the way Sean O'Casey measured himself against Joyce in the writing of his own Autobiographies.

Joyce's influence on the Irish writers of today is the subject to the fourth part. Modern Irish prose writers, as Joseph Browne's essay on Flann O'Brien suggests, are often ambivalent about their relationship to Joyce; however, the poets seem to find him a fairly straightforward and a rather benign presence. If Joyce truly told Yeats, "I have met with you too late," he has had a good deal to teach modern Irish poets. Perhaps, ironically, his most important function is to serve as an alternative to Yeats. Robert F. Garratt's essay illuminates this aspect of Joyce's influence; Lucy McDiarmid shows specifically how this "familiar ghost" has been an enabling presence for Seamus Heaney.

Richard Ellmann tells us that Joyce, fond of coincidences, was pleased to share his birthdate with James Stephens and his birth year with Eamon de Valera [JJI, 22]. The final group of essays are devoted to other 1982 Irish centenarians: Pádraic Ó Conaire, James Stephens and Eamon de Valera. Philip O'Leary describes Pádraic Ó Conaire's pioneering efforts to provide a modern urban voice for literature in the Irish language, while Brendan O'Grady compares the work of James Stephens with that of another contemporary, Seumas O'Kelly, author of The Weaver's Grave.

Eamon de Valera, one of Joyce's models for Shaun in Finnegans Wake, is the subject of the last essay: Francis M. Carroll's analysis of de Valera's part in the Irish Bond-Certificates Drive of 1919-1921.

Irish history and an awareness of the Irish past informed the work of Joyce and his generation. This past has continued to enlarge not only our understanding of Joyce, but also the director of modern Irish and, through Joyce, modern European literature.

Part I

**Joyce's Canon:
Style and Structure**

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The Ectoplasmic Truth-tellers of "The Dead"

Janet Egleson Dunleavy

As Hugh Kenner and John Kelleher have established, James Joyce's "The Dead" is not just a story about Gabriel Conroy's progression from self-absorption to self-awareness during an evening begun at the annual Christmas dance given by his aunts and concluded at the side of his sleeping wife in a room in the Gresham Hotel.(1) It is also a ghost story, featuring a veritable Who's Who of Irish dead who walk unseen through the substructure, perceived only in the subconscious minds of the Misses Morkan's living guests, and manifest only to readers guided through allusion and analogue by such a Dante as Professor Kelleher. These spirits are perversely unwilling to reveal themselves that they may be given their due, yet they become malevolent when treated with disrespect. Gabriel Conroy is their chief target. Socially inept among both the living and the dead, he unwittingly exhibits symptoms of hoof-in-mouth disease in the company of Lily, the caretaker's daughter and Miss Ivors, his old schoolmate--with almost everyone, in fact, including his own good wife, Gretta. The indignant spirits of the dead have the last word.

Professor Kelleher identifies the narrative level on which Joyce's story is a ghost tale. His evidence is irrefutable and his conclusions are supported by (as we ought to know from Henry James) the long-established custom in England and Ireland of telling ghost stories at Christmas time. Moreover, Professor Kelleher's explanation of how the ghost story is woven together with the other narrative levels fabricated by Joyce gives both depth and texture to "The Dead." But in both explication and explanation Professor Kelleher concerns himself only with the better class of Irish ghost, the spirits of the Irish dead who so distinguished themselves in myth, legend, or history as to be celebrated by living compatriots in song, story, and statuary. Yet also unseen but not unheard at the Misses Morkan's annual dance are a number of lesser-known ghostly guests. About the evening's event, we are told that "everyone who knew them came to it." They came, too, these unidentified spirits, and if we read carefully we see that they knew not only their hostesses, but their hostesses' nephew as well--better, in all probability, than the luminaries spotted by Professor Kelleher. Very much at home in the Morkan household, they are not unlike the living among whom they walk unseen but in whom they maintain a lively interest.

How, then, have these ghosts gone unnoticed for so long? Very easily: after all, they are ghosts; their stock-in-trade is to go unnoticed. In addition, trends in literary criticism since "The Dead"

was first published have also conspired to keep them (and therefore Joyce's readers) in the dark. In the early years of the century, for example, it was the fashion to attribute the shrewd observations and pithy comments for which the ghosts should have received credit to the author himself, James Joyce. A few years later, when the author was banished from the text to do his work offstage while paring his fingernails, these same remarks were credited to that ubiquitous observer of fictional events, the omniscient narrator. And then, just when their cover was nearly blown by investigators searching for point-of-view narrators (who work together, like the Lavender Hill Mob, rather than alone, like Willy Sutton), all narrators were declared redundant, supplanted (appropriately in this age of automation) by a more efficient literary device, narrative mode.

As things have turned out, this latest shift in literary fashion has proved a lucky turn of events. Had it not occurred when it did, bounty-seeking critics surely would have accused our ghosts of controlling the text through conspiratorial point-of-view narration.(2) However, the evidence necessary to support the conspiracy theory does not exist: our ghosts do not work together; they are not the Lavender Hill Mob. Rather, like the members of the chorus of T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, they are a pick-up group of observers and curiosity-seekers, minor characters who perform an important role within the narrative framework, ghostly guests whose gossip we are privileged to overhear.

To better understand how these ghosts function in the structure of "The Dead," let us go back to why for so long their voices were confused with those of others--first the author, then an omniscient narrator, then a narrative team. In "The Dead," wherever the action is--downstairs, where the guests enter; upstairs, where the Misses Morkan's annual dance is in progress; in Gabriel's mind (or memory), crossing the O'Connell Street Bridge; in a room at the Gresham Hotel -- there a voice intermittently joins the narrative to report on what may be seen, heard, thought, remembered. These narrative accounts link with dialogue, descriptive connectives, and dramatic episodes to provide the linear structure of the story. The linear structure carries the action through time, from after 10:00 p.m., when Gabriel and Gretta arrive at the "dark, gaunt house on Usher's Island," until the early morning hour when the Christmas party over, Gabriel and his wife are alone together in the Gresham Hotel. With its perceivable beginning, middle, and end, the story offered within the linear structure affirms the finiteness of the visible world, the contrarities of human life. At the same time, the linear structure serves as the skeleton of the story, the uniqueness of which depends upon other narrative levels and fictional devices --much as the uniqueness of a human being is perceived not just from hip bone connected to the thigh bone but from a web of other physiological and social characteristics.

If this were all that was true of the narrative accounts of "The Dead," they might yet serve readers who prefer to get their story from an author persona, omniscient narrator, or team of narrators--their *raison d'être* within the telling of the story could be regarded as conventional, and the manner in which they function with other narrative elements would be both apparent and easily described. That something more is happening, however, in these narrative accounts of "The Dead" --something that distinguishes the narrative mode--is strongly suggested by the fact that they are not presented in camera-eye or reportorial style, or through one single distinctive narrative voice, or through a well-drilled team of narrative voices. What we seem to have instead is a story filtered in part through at least four different and distinctive personalities who cannot be ranked as multiple point-of-

view narrators, because they are not given full responsibility for telling the tale, but who can be described as characters, so fully are they developed on at least one narrative level and so specific are their roles.

We first meet these four characters within the first few pages of "The Dead." Voice I (how else shall we distinguish them?) opens the story with "Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet." Voice II introduces the passage that begins "It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan's annual dance." Voice III reveals a poetic perspective as it heralds Gabriel's arrival: "A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds." Voice IV provides more pedestrian details: "He was a stout, tallish young man. The high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to his forehead where it scattered itself in a few formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there scintillated restlessly the polished lenses and the bright gilt rims of the glasses which screened his delicate and restless eyes."

The distinguishing feature of each of these four voices, dominant rhythm, is insistently evident when these lines are read aloud; it registers subtly even when they are read silently (as the author, of course, intended and expected). "Lily, the caretaker's daughter" has a three-syllabled dactylic pattern that is sustained whenever this voice is heard. "It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan's annual dance" is predominantly iambic. "A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes" has the slow, stately dignity of the spondaic. "He was a stout, tallish young man" is as prosy in rhythm as its message is prosaic. Moreover, Voice I and Voice II are conversational in both tone and language; Voice III employs metaphor, simile, poetic diction, pitch, stress, consonance, assonance, and alliteration; and Voice IV offers a catalogue of visual detail. These and other characteristics of our four ghosts (who are never seen but are often heard throughout the evening) remain consistent throughout the story.

When Voice I enters the narrative, it is a little after ten o'clock, just about the time when the Misses Morkan are growing anxious because neither Freddy nor the Conroys have yet arrived. Voice II follows with an account from a different perspective of exactly the same time span. The simultaneity of these two passages is emphasized by the identical observations, from downstairs and upstairs, with which they end. The Conroys arrive, and the two aunts escort Gabriel's wife to the ladies dressing room, while the reader and at least three of the ghosts remain downstairs in the cloakroom with Gabriel and Lily. Voice I falls silent, possibly discomfited by Lily's aberrant behavior (the Misses Morkan, if they ever knew, certainly would not tolerate such back talk). Voice III probes the mood and mind of Gabriel. Voice IV glosses over the embarrassing episode between Gabriel and Lily by concentrating on other visual details. Each voice reacts differently to what has happened. Meanwhile, leaning over to hide his flushed face, Gabriel flicks at his shoes. Then, accompanied by the ghosts (of whom he is unaware), he joins the other guests upstairs. There he suppresses his somber mood, regains his poise, and greets his aunts affably. Voice IV, condescending and slightly sardonic, but also articulate and observant, remarks Gabriel's behavior. Thereafter, Voice IV and Voice III continue to hover around Gabriel, on whom the narrative focuses, while Voice II comes and goes, interjecting an occasional word about others, until the guests sit down to dinner. During dinner, Voice II