

“Victims of Hospitality”: Joyce, Colonialism and the Question of Strangers in *Dubliners*

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Abstract

The paper attempts to interrogate the ambivalence intrinsic to the ‘Irish turn’ in Joyce scholarship understood not only as a belated ‘homecoming’ of the ‘high modernist’ apolitical exile but also as an act of ‘reclaiming’ on the part of Irish Joyceans. By exploring Joyce’s critical writings on Irish politics the essay tries to examine the role of strangers and the theme of hospitality in Joyce’s fiction especially *Dubliners* (1914) to bring into focus Joyce’s understanding of the notion of ‘hospitality’ to further explore the concepts of ‘foreign-ness’ and thereby of an essential ‘Irish-ness’ as well.

Key words: James Joyce, *Dubliners*, colonialism, hospitality, strangers.]

I. ‘Semicolonial’ Joyce

The 1990s witnessed an ‘Irish turn’ in Joycean criticism. It is true that Colin McCabe’s classic *James Joyce: New Perspectives* or the earlier *Revolution of the Word* had already contained essays by prominent Irish Joyce scholars, but it was definitely with the publication of works like Vincent Cheng’s *Joyce, Race and Empire* or Enda Duffy’s *Subaltern Ulysses* or Emer Nolan’s *James Joyce and Nationalism* that Joyce’s position as a major postcolonial writer was established. Towering over these was Declan Kiberd’s monumental *Inventing Ireland*. Kiberd’s edition of the Penguin *Ulysses* was accompanied by Terence Brown’s edition of *A Portrait*. The very title of a work like *Our Joyce* suggests that a certain ‘reclaiming’ is taking place in Joycean studies. Long before Joyce had ‘returned’ to Ireland by a commodious vicus of recirculation, Joyce’s reputation as one of the giants of Modernist fiction was firmly established in America or France thanks to the efforts of scholars like Richard Ellmann, Hugh Kenner, Harry Levin, Valéry Larbaud and of course Jacques Aubert. By the time Julia Kristeva commented on the ‘gracehopping’ anti-Mallarmé, Derrida had already acknowledged his debt to Joyce in at least two major studies, while Lacan had inaugurated the path breaking 1975 Paris Symposium on Joyce with his masterly *Joyce le Symptôme* (Kristeva 167-180; Derrida, “Two Words for Joyce” 145-160; Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone” 253-308; Lacan 21-36). It may not be presumptuous to state therefore that this ‘Irish turn’ represents the latest of these scholarly approaches to Joyce. However the very admission of Joyce into the already vast list of postcolonial authors, thinkers,

posits a problem. As the editors of the volume titled *Semicolonial Joyce* Marjorie Howes and Derek Attridge point out in their introductory note, the question seems to put forth the position of Ireland itself as a postcolonial nation:

...when can colonialism in Ireland be said to have ended? With the treaty of 1921? The 1937 constitution? The 1949 repeal of the External Relations Act? The recent peace accord? Or some future final resolution? (Howes and Attridge 5)

Joyce's own attitude towards Ireland is of course complex if not simply ambivalent. He sounds his disillusionment with the prospect of Home Rule in an early essay in 1910:

The fact that Ireland now wishes to make common cause with British Democracy should neither surprise nor persuade anyone. For seven centuries she has never been a faithful subject of England. Neither, on the other hand has she been faithful to herself. (Joyce, "The Home Rule Comet" 212)

Joyce became the archetypal wanderer, the perpetual exile who could never reach his Ithaca but as if to compensate for this ever-present lack always made Ireland the site of his literary experiments. While he famously defined Ireland as an 'afterthought of Europe' (Ellmann 67) as a centre of paralysis and xenophobic nationalism whose snares the artist must avoid to create the uncreated conscience of his race there is inevitably an acknowledgment of all that is Irish as essentially his own, to quote Stephen Dedalus – 'Ireland must be important because it belongs to me' (Joyce, *Ulysses* 527). It is this deeply 'egoistic' (to echo Rabaté's rereading of the term in *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism*) relation to his nation that perhaps made him recreate 16th June 1904, Dublin in such a way so that if 'it were to disappear' from the face of the earth the book would help to reconstruct it from scratch. In *Dubliners* for instance Joyce's conscious effort is to give this ancient capital of Christendom the legitimacy that it lacks (Rabaté 24-42). Joyce's 'polished looking glass' may not have pleased his countrymen but Joyce's concerted effort is certainly an act of 'reclaiming'. The notorious figure of the 'stage Irishman' was no doubt not unknown to him and his description of the Irish as a 'gentle race' is surely an attempt to 'set the records straight'. It is this same distrust of the foreigner's discourse on Ireland, on Irish fiction that Joyce's Irish readers often share with him. Declan Kiberd, himself a student of Richard Ellmann while paying homage to his former tutor at Oxford can not help notice Ellmann's reluctance in admitting the centrality of Ireland and Irish fiction to Joyce's work. Kiberd feels a distinct unease to see Ellmann's feelings towards Ireland:

While he loved Irish people as individuals, the plain truth was that he did not particularly like Ireland. (Kiberd 240)

In the same essay, Kiberd quotes Patrick Kavanagh's poem, 'Who killed James Joyce?':

Who killed James Joyce? / I, said the commentator, / I killed James Joyce/
For my graduation. What weapon was used / To slay mighty Ulysses? / The
weapon that was used / Was a Harvard thesis. (236)

But the question is not simply that of foreign scholars 'killing' Joyce deliberately obliterating his Irishness claiming, that to be modern was to somehow transcend national borders and to be at home amidst *perfect strangers*. It is perhaps this ambivalence that poses the problem for Attridge and Howes. For Joyce, it is not simply a matter of imperialist Britain performing acts of epistemological violence, annihilating Ireland's Gaelic past to simply incorporate all Ireland into a hegemonic discourse of the British nation. Joyce unhesitatingly agrees that it is the Irish themselves who have admitted the invaders into their land. It is the host himself who has admitted, indeed invited the stranger like Buck Mulligan allowing Haines to stay in Martello Tower:

But the fact is that the English came to Ireland at the repeated requests of a native king, [Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leister] without, needless to say, any great desire on their part, and without the consent of their own king, but armed with the papal bull of Adrian IV and a papal letter of Alexander...In addition, there is the fact that parliamentary union [the act of union of 1800 between England and Ireland] was not legislated at Westminster but at Dublin, by a parliament elected by the vote of the people of Ireland, a parliament corrupted and undermined with the greatest ingenuity by the agents of the English prime minister, but an Irish parliament nevertheless. From my point of view, these two facts must be thoroughly explained before the country in which they occurred has the most rudimentary right to persuade one of her sons to change the position from that of an unprejudiced observer to that of a convinced nationalist. (Joyce, "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages" 162)

This lecture delivered in Trieste, contains allusions to many famous Irishmen—Wilde, Shaw, Swift among others and also three 'heresiarchs' John Duns Scotus, Macarius and Vergilus Solivagus. There is also the memory of cultured, ancient Celtic, Scandinavian pasts, a civilization far advanced. But this is also accompanied by a wry admission of one's own guilt and the futility of thinking about a pristine, untainted 'Irish' race:

... to tell the truth, to exclude from the present nation all who are descended from foreign families would be impossible, and to deny the name of patriot to all those who are not of Irish stock would be to deny it to almost all the heroes of the modern movement... (162-163)

II. Strangers and Hospitality

Ulysses therefore becomes the great novel about hospitality– Leopold Bloom, Jew, middle aged, ‘safe man’ offering shelter to wanderer Telemachus– Stephen. And yet Stephen has to refuse, he can not stay all night. Bloom’s search for a lost son (his son Rudy died in his infancy) is counterbalanced by Molly’s bizarre fantasies of seducing Stephen. In *Dubliners*, the question of strangers can be raised somewhat differently. Joyce claimed that Dublin was a small city where everyone knew everyone else. As Raymond Williams explains in *The Country and the City*:

Most novels are in some sense knowable communities. It is part of a traditional method– an underlying stance and approach– that the novelist offers to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways. (Williams 165)

The Joycean project of claiming to *know* all of Dublin so as to present a ‘polished’ looking glass to its citizens repeatedly encounters inassimilable strangers and enigmas. In other words it constantly refuses what Williams accused George Eliot of –‘she finds it difficult to individuate working people –falling back on a choral mode, a generalizing description. It is this ‘choral mode’ that is impossible to achieve’ (165-169).

As Duffy has shown, Joyce’s minute depiction of the Dublin of 1904 was deliberately *not* a complete picture. It did not, could not represent everything for everyone, as James Fairhall points out– slum-dwellers or the Anglo-Irish. However as Fairhall concludes such exclusions may not necessarily mean a complete elision. For example the overarching ‘shade’ of Parnell does not completely overshadow the socialism of James Connolly in “Ivy Day at the Committee Room” (Fairhall 11-63). Duffy on the other hand contends that the Dublin of 1904 was fast disappearing after the Easter Rising of 1916 and the guerrilla War of Independence of 1919-21 with many of its sites bombed and disfigured (Duffy 37-57). One needs to re-examine how Joyce’s discourse on strangers in *Dubliners* is inevitably shaped by politics of gender and representation. As we shall see this can not bypass the ethical dimension either.

III. Hospitality in *Dubliners*

“Eveline” has received a fair amount of attention from essentially two quarters– the first, amongst which Hugh Kenner is one, argues that Eveline’s decision at the North Wall, not to elope with Frank to Buenos Ayres is a result of her late realization that Frank is a swindler who was about to take her to Liverpool and sell her (Kenner 19-28). Garry Leonard argues on the other hand that her decision arises out of a dilemma to escape the fate of her mother (who is mentally deranged) to seek an ‘elsewhere’ or to obey her mother’s desire to keep her ‘home’ together (Leonard 23-41). Eveline might well be caught up in the web of her

mother's desire, Mrs. Hill's incomprehensible, delirious last words that encourage Eveline to leave in the first place. But as Katherine Mullin argues persuasively to suggest that Eveline's decision may have been a reflection of Joyce's subtle subversion of the nationalist propaganda against emigration propagated by the *Irish Homestead* (where "Eveline" appeared in 1904). As Mullin shows, Joyce's motive behind making Buenos Ayres as a potential 'elsewhere' may have been the city's dubious reputation at the turn of the century as a centre of White Slave trade. While the popular press constantly emphasized the damaging effects of emigration – both cultural and sexual, Argentina at this time was a place where the colonized Irishman could shed his colonial past and become a prosperous planter 'mastering the unplanted terrain of the Pampas' (Mullin 175). By 1904 the number of Irish emigrants to this 'land of opportunity' had dwindled to zero precisely because of the anxieties about the slave trade. What "Eveline" reflects therefore is not only Joyce's assertion that there is no utopic 'elsewhere' for Eveline where she can escape her father's rod and patriarchal violence but that the seducer does not necessarily have to be an absolute outsider. It is the stranger who resides within who can equally seduce and betray a colonized, economically exploited lower-middle class Irishwoman utilizing tales about 'distant countries' and liberation. What Joyce achieves is a subversion of the common notions about the securities of a private space and a 'home'. The word 'home' occurs about ten times within five pages in the story (Joyce, "Eveline" 37-41).

"An Encounter" presents yet another tale about Joyce's introspection of outsiders in the city. Two boys, the narrator and a boy named Mahony go out on an adventure around the city. The narrator who reads detective stories and 'chronicles of disaster' about the Wild West at school because 'they opened doors of escape' is also constantly hungry of 'wild sensations'. Wanting 'real adventures' he decides to venture out because they 'do not happen to people who remain at home' (Joyce, "An Encounter" 20). After hours of fruitless and aimless wandering across Dublin – North Strand Road, the Ringsend, the Liffey in the ferryboat, the two become tired and rest on a field. The boy narrator who had always imagined that sailors had green eyes is disappointed to find sailors to be as ordinary as men can be. In short there has been no 'real adventure' no 'wild sensation' no sense of estrangement that the narrator had been seeking eagerly. His fantasy of escape seems completely frustrated at this point.

It is then that the two meet a pervert, possibly a homosexual known to many in Joyce's Dublin. An old man, he tells them tales about young girls and finally about boys being whipped. His sadistic pleasure at torture comes as a shock to the narrator. He finally notices that the man has 'bottle-green' eyes. Through the image of these 'green eyes' Joyce suggests that it is this absolute sexual Other that he had been both tempted and frightened to 'encounter'. Instead of an escape he feels almost enmeshed into the hypnotic thrill of the stranger's narrative. The old man wickedly parodies the boys' own aimless wandering in a circle in his very act of story-telling:

He gave me the impression that he was repeating something which he had learned by heart or that, magnetized by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit. (26)

Or even later:

His mind, as if magnetized again by his speech, seemed to circle slowly round and round its new centre. (27)

The old man finds pleasure and sexual fulfillment by this retelling of his fantasies while the boy narrator sees his own fantasy of escape being mirrored in the stranger's articulation. This moment of absolute incomprehension and anxiety produces a profound sense of alienation in the boy's mind. The last line of the story is thus heavy with implication. He now feels estranged from Mahoney, his friend with whom he had sought escape and who now rushes to 'offer aid' to protect him from the old man. He feels guilty but ultimately acknowledges the painful truth that he had always concealed from himself: "And I was penitent; for in my heart I had always despised him a little." (28)

Mahoney was always a stranger to him. This encounter produces a moment of rupture in his mind not only with the world but also with himself.

"Clay" on the other hand looks at the other side of the problem, from the point of view of Maria, an old unattractive spinster, who is almost an 'invisible woman' in Dublin. Maria works as a scullery maid at *Dublin by Lamplight* which as Gifford points out was a Protestant institution for 'Fallen Women' (Gifford 77). A Halloween story, "Clay" shows Maria's pathetic attempt to bring gifts to please the household of Joe. Margot Norris has shown that the 'deceptively simple' nature of the narrative technique conceals the way Maria is perceived by others. Maria blushes when prospects of marriage are discussed even in passing by a 'stylish young' shop girl at a cake shop (Norris 206-215). There are repeated references to the absolute invisibility of Maria as she walks across the city. The young men on the tram fail to notice her and she does not get a seat:

She thought she would have to stand in the Drumcondra tram because none of the young men seemed to notice her...the young men who simply stared straight before them. (Joyce, "Clay" 114)

The only man who offers her a seat is an old drunkard who steals her cake which she had purchased for the children while only pretending to take interest in her. Norris argues that the reader is strangely made blind to the way Maria is greeted at Joe's household. One is not sure whether they are weary or even irritated by her presence. The children play pranks on her and at the little divination game they force Maria to choose clay, the symbol of death. The silence followed by 'a great deal of scuffling and whispering' (117) that greets Maria's choice is strangely ambiguous. The reader like Maria is also under a blindfold. Clay, symbolizing death, once again breaks the boundary between the outside and the inside world in the story. Clay, brought from the garden, outside, almost becomes a piece of

nature that threatens to collapse the inner, private room of the household— a symbol of culture. The theme of an intrusion is of course already played over Maria's entry into the house. What is deeply disturbing about the narrative strategy in the story is the way Maria is described by the author:

... Maria was a very, very small person indeed, but she had a very long nose and a very long chin.
 ...In spite of its years she found it a nice tidy little body.
 ...when she laughed her grey-green eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness and the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her nose
 ...Maria laughed and laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin.
 ...She talked a little through her nose, always soothingly: 'Yes, my dear,' and 'No, my dear.' (110-118)

Like the word 'clay' the word 'witch' is never mentioned in this Halloween story but the hints are only too insistent to be ignored. The anxiety about the presence of strangers, outsiders, absolute Others and 'invisible women' now becomes almost metaphorical. Maria becomes the witch, whose ominous presence forcibly brings back the uncomfortable question of death and complete disruption of communal harmony at the feast. She becomes identified with that very figure, that evil-spirit whose presence the feast wishes to obliterate. She is that stranger, whose entry the house was supposed to prevent.

There are numerous such 'ghosts' in the Dublin of *Ulysses* as well— Wetherup, Miss Dunn and of course the mystery man of the novel, the flâneur M'Intosh. The identity of M'Intosh has generated an enormous amount of speculation and critical commentary. Enda Duffy identifies him as Michael Collins himself, the leader of the War of Independence, a wanted man who nevertheless 'crisscrossed the city in civilian clothes' (Duffy 66). Significantly however, M'Intosh remains a stranger he always was in the novel. He haunts Bloom's thoughts at night and appears only to disappear in *Hades* and *Circe*, while claiming to know all about Bloom. Such strangers keep on crisscrossing the civilian space of the city in *Dubliners*, and who as Vincent Cheng argues, form:

...the other as the constructed product of an imagined and absolute *difference* from the self, a discursive repository of all that is repugnant to the self, and whose very presence *within* the self is denied and repressed in order to construct the self's own self image and subjectivity; such a process repeatedly figures the other as primitive, primitive, barbaric, bestial, sexually rapacious, stupid, and so on – in the manner in which the English constructed the Irish (as well as other "races") during the nineteenth century. (Cheng 78)

Cheng and Fairhall both show how after the rebellion, after the Phoenix Park murders, the English process of *simianization* of the Irish that was already old

was in full swing-newspaper cartoons for example repeatedly portrayed the Irish as apish; primates who are uncontrollable and like children need to be disciplined.



(Source: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/omalley/120/alien/four.html>)

It is also in this sense as Kiberd argues, that Ireland was England's unconscious (Kiberd 9-25, 327-355). The stereotypes comprised a veritable list of incompatibles – a grossly 'feminized' passive people who could grow turbulent at the same time. David Lloyd quotes Matthew Arnold on the 'Celtic mind':

The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits... (Lloyd 134)



"The Irish Frankenstein," *Punch*, 20 May 1882

(source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Punch_Anti-Irish_propaganda_%281882%29_Irish_Frankenstein.jpg)

What often follows as a 'fitting reply' is the production of a nationalist counter stereotype, a figure marked by hyper masculinity. Such projects in Joyce's writings appear to be either doomed from the start or followed by an almost unconscious identification with the colonizer. Such is the figure of the Citizen in *Cyclops*, one-eyed and one might say a monocular xenophobe to be juxtaposed with Bloom, the feminized 'safe man' as Davy Byrne calls him in 'Lestrygonians' (Joyce, *Ulysses* 146). Little Chandler in *A Little Cloud* fails repeatedly to hide his own inadequacy and impotency coming face to face with Gallaher, his friend who has made it 'big' in London. His self projected portrait of a talented mind is shattered to reveal his helplessness as a father who is powerless to deal with his own child. Gabriel in *The Dead* is perhaps the best example of it.

The Dead in many ways as the concluding piece to the collection sums up many of the recurrent motifs of the earlier stories. According to Ellmann, this is one of Joyce's most personal stories, dealing with one of the most painful episodes of his own life (Ellmann, "The Backgrounds of *The Dead*" 243-253). The story has been read in various ways largely as a series of three encounters of Gabriel with three women— Lily, Molly Ivors and his wife Gretta that slowly, forcibly make him confront his own failures and frailties. What lies at the heart of the story of course, is the feast and Gabriel's speech.

Gabriel according to Molly is a West Briton, who writes book reviews for the conservative daily, *The Daily Express*. Gabriel, easily the most 'accomplished' of the Morkans' guests because of his superior upbringing, his education, even his attire, his ability to quote Browning, carve a goose – is once again at a loss. He can not think of a 'grandiose phrase' to counter her argument. Gabriel wishes to separate the politics supported by his newspaper from his own stance toward nationalism, arguing that 'literature was above politics' (Joyce, "The Dead" 214). Gabriel knows that he could not be further from the truth and once again stays silent.

The conflict between the nationalist, revivalist Molly and the 'liberal' Gabriel is brought out brilliantly at the dance scene. The annual dance was supposed to emphasize harmony and synthesis at the house but it has the opposite effect in this scene. Molly tells him to 'cross' but what takes place is a 'cross-examination' where they both speak at cross purposes bringing out the absolute lack of communication and incompatibility between them. Molly asks him to visit the Aran Isles, near the west coast. Gifford tells us that 'The properly patriotic Irish Revivalist regarded the Isles as an Irish utopia since the natives still spoke Irish and lived in what was sentimentally regarded as true Irish fashion (i.e., in eighteenth-century poverty and superstition)' (Gifford 117). Gabriel refuses and promises to take a tour of Europe instead. He refuses to acknowledge that Gretta, his wife is also from Connacht and very much wishes to visit Galway. Questioned about his allegiance to his own language Gabriel flatly refuses to call Irish his own. But as before, he fails to come up with an explanation. Molly's presence makes him uncomfortable and although he refuses her offer to visit the Isles, he is nevertheless reminded of Gretta's origin that made his own family call her 'country cute' (Joyce, "The Dead" 213). To counter it Gabriel has recourse to his speech, carefully prepared and which he now alters slightly to incorporate his attack. The dinner itself like Gabriel's speech is marked by an excess, a remarkable excess of food items that is not only striking but somewhat misplaced. Critics have observed that what lurks behind this expression of solidarity and bounty is always the ghost of the Great Potato Famine of 1846-51 that destroyed about 30% of the population at certain counties killing 700,000 people. Bonnie Roos in her article reads the episode along with the Bret Harte's novel *Gabriel Conroy* (which provided Joyce with his protagonist's name) and the centrality the novel grants to the Famine (Roos 99-126). The juxtaposition of starvation and festivity and cannibalism and

gluttony (an allusion to Dante's *Inferno*, 33), seems to mark for her the hiatus in Irish writing that Terry Eagleton identifies as between 'the experience it has to record, and the conventions available for articulating it' (qtd. in Roos 99-126). The feast is also related to the theme of expenditure and a certain degree of wastefulness that entails the question of hospitality. In *After the Race* for instance, Joyce begins to explore the question of unconditional hospitality. In that story, Jimmy is too excited to refuse his companions to his house. What follows is a bout of drinking and gambling. Jimmy becomes the 'greatest loser' at the game. He realizes that 'he would regret in the morning, but at present he was glad of the rest, glad of the dark stupor that would cover up his folly' (Joyce, "After the Race" 51). He realizes at last the risk involved in offering unconditional hospitality but only too late. Gabriel makes the same mistake at the after dinner speech.

Gabriel himself posits the question of hospitality as his first priority:
He ran over the headings of his speech: Irish hospitality, sad memories, The Three Graces, Paris, the quotation from Browning.
...it is not the first time that we have gathered together under this hospitable roof around this hospitable board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients –or perhaps the victims –of the hospitality of certain good ladies.
...our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality.
...the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which our forefathers have handed down to us... (Joyce, "The Dead" 231-232)

Gabriel answers Molly's 'hypereducation' with the 'virtue' of absolute hospitality that invites, incorporates everything. Gabriel even identifies it as *the* Irish virtue.

Gabriel's collapse is complete when he pretends to share Gretta's past while remaining rooted to his own liberal, bourgeois European upbringing. Gretta becomes once more linked to her marginalized, primitive, rural Galway through an Irish melody *The Lass of Aughrim*. It is Gabriel's error to even try to intrude into it. He discovers Gretta's still deep love for the long dead Michael Furey and his complete inaccessibility to that memory. His delusion about his wife's past, his inadequacy, his failures at the party all become identified with this moment:

...he saw himself a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts...the pitiable fatuous fellow... (Joyce, "The Dead" 251)

As the ghost of this alien, who died for Gretta invades his life, he feels:

A vague terror seized Gabriel...some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. (252)
...His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading... (255)

Gabriel realizes that this past is unalterable. He, the educated 'West Briton' who writes in *English* can not re-write this hidden, unconscious past that is so much about his own country. Gretta's past after Gabriel's invitation becomes Gabriel's past as well. Gabriel thus decides to go west, that very space that he had declined to explore earlier to revisit his own subaltern past. He can not fathom it, it is incalculably alien to him and yet he must acknowledge it, as Dipesh Chakrabarty writes:

The supernatural can inhabit the world in these other modes and not always as a problem or conscious belief or ideas... gods and spirits are not dependent on human beliefs for their own existence, what brings them to presence are our practices. They are parts of the different ways of being though which we make present manifold: it is precisely the disjunctures in the present that allow us to be with them. (Chakrabarty 473-475)

What Gabriel and the other protagonists of *Dubliners* such as Joe repeatedly encounter is the double bind of hospitality; the dangers of an unconditional invitation and the simultaneous difficulty of ignoring the stranger. This is also Derrida's question at the end of his seminar on hospitality:

Between an unconditional law or an absolute desire for hospitality on the one hand and on the other a law, a politics, a conditional ethics, there is distinction, radical heterogeneity, but also indissociability. One calls forth, involves, or prescribes the other. In giving a right, if I can put it like that, to unconditional hospitality, how can one give *place* to a determined, limitable, and delimitable –in a word to a calculable– right or law? (Derrida 147)

Tied to this question is a supplementary one that according to Derrida haunts Western ethics from Sophocles to Lot in the Genesis and always problematizes the notion of an unconditional hospitality, and unconditional giving, the perfect gift:

Should one hand over one's guest to criminals, rapists, murderers? or should one lie to them so as to save the people one is putting up and for whom one feels responsible? (151)

The question is perhaps unanswerable and Joyce's writings relentlessly try to interrogate the question of hospitality with that of betrayal– the question of Parnell for example. Joyce radicalizes the question by suggesting that betrayal is all the more profound and complete since it is a betrayal by one's own. Who then, is the 'stranger' or more importantly is the host *at home*? Does the parasite reside outside or inside the nation? the text? J. Hillis Miller's question acquires another dimension at this point:

Is a citation an alien parasite within the body of the main text, or is the interpretive text the parasite which surrounds and strangles the citation

which is its host? The host feeds the parasite and makes its life possible, but at the same time is killed by it, as criticism is often said to kill literature. (Miller 217)

Patrick Kavanagh's question— 'Who killed James Joyce?' is therefore not easy to answer. Joyce himself makes us aware of the problem in his writings on nationalism and culture. And this is precisely the problem that any act of 'reclaiming' inaugurated by an 'Irish turn' has to grapple with.

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