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Deconstructing Binaries in James Joyce's "The Dead"

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Introduction

James Joyce's "The Dead" portrays a man's self-realization of his spiritual paralysis. The protagonist Gabriel Conroy's coming to awareness marks the climax of "The Dead." The story may seem simple on the surface, but it is not as simple as it seems. The story is divided into three sections and Joyce deconstructs various binaries in each section of the story. In the first part of the story Joyce dismantles the binary opposition of male/female. In the second part, he deconstructs binaries of modern/traditional and English/Irish. The third part of story is the most important part and Joyce dismantles the binary opposition of present/past by portraying Gabriel's epiphany. His self-realization makes all the binaries deconstruct in the story. Gabriel makes three mistakes, one in each section of the story: first, Gabriel's failure as a gentleman as Lily, the caretaker's daughter, refuses his tip; second, Gabriel's failure as an Irishman as Miss Ivors calls him "west Briton"¹ (240); third, Gabriel's failure as a man or a husband when his wife, Gretta, reveals Michael Furey's true love.

Joyce in the three sections of "The Dead" states everything essential to the uncompromising truth he stages with the lives of average Dubliners and portrays the exploitation of Ireland by the Irish. Their value systems were based upon these binaries. Being a Protestant and Anglo-Irish implies superiority, prestige and being cultured at the time. Joyce rejects these binaries by portraying Gabriel's failures and his epiphany at the end of the story. Kevin Whelan argues that:

The complexity of Joycean cultural critique was its refusal to inhabit the binaries of Celtic or Saxon, Catholic or Protestant, modern or traditional, national or cosmopolitan, English or Irish — the binaries that so transfixed his

¹ A native Irishman or Irishwoman who sympathises with England.

contemporaries (and later commentators). Joyce rejected the categories, instead seeking to dismantle the binary system itself. (66-67)

Joyce's self-critique of art and his deconstruction can be clearly seen in the first and the second part of the story. In the first section of the story Joyce deconstructs the binary of male/female. Joyce's portrait of man's exploitation of woman in *The Dead* is evident in the dialogue between the young servant, Lily, and Gabriel Conroy. The reader simply realizes from their conversation that Gabriel looks down on Lily. In Gabriel's dispute with Molly Ivors in the second part of the story, which is the most important incident in the second section, Joyce raises the central question of the text: whether or not art should have a political function. This is the problem that Irish writers faced particularly before Ireland's independence. They had double commitments to contribute both to Ireland and to art. What Joyce did by his deconstruction was revolutionary. He believed that art does not have to have a political function, but his contribution to Ireland was different from that of other writers. Unlike many Irish writers before him who reversed the binary of Irish/Anglo-Irish culture, he dismantled this binary opposition. In the dispute between Gabriel and Molly Ivors, Joyce reflects on the spiritual defection and paralysis that Irish so-called artists like Gabriel brought on themselves by their repudiation of their Irish roots. At the same time he rejects Molly Ivors' nationalist attitude.

In the third part of the story Joyce dismantles the binary opposition of past and present. The extremes of opposition are epitomized in Gabriel Conroy and Michael Furey. Michael Furey represents everything that Gabriel is not and will never be. Even after his transformation Gabriel stands in opposition to Michael Furey because

Gabriel's self-realization exemplifies a realism that stands in opposition to the romantic ideal of heroic sacrifice of self that Michael Furey embodies.

Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher, has expressed that deconstruction would not have been possible without Joyce. "Every time I write and even in the most academic pieces of work, Joyce's ghost is always coming on board" (Derrida 210). For Derrida there is no language of the past, only of the future. This language is similar to that of the Joyce. For Joyce an Irish deep past opposed to a shallow present no longer existed. The Irish past, like Michael Furey in the story, does not come to the present any longer. In other words, Irish language and love can not be idealized. As pointed out before, the Joycean cultural critique consists of a refusal to put the binaries of modern/traditional, English/Irish and Catholic/Protestant together. Yeats, on the other hand, constructed and revived Irish identity by reversing the value system of Celtic/Saxon and traditional/modern, but still left the binaries intact. Thus, we can see that Joyce's deconstruction is very different from the contributions of some other famous figures, for instance Yeats.

Considering Derrida's concept of deconstruction, this essay is going to explore how James Joyce dismantles the binaries of male/female, Catholic/Protestant, Irish/Anglo-Irish, modern/traditional and past/present. To achieve this, the essay is going to examine Gabriel's interactions with other characters, and his rhetorical questions and the back answers he receives from the other characters and from himself. Concerning back answers Margot Norris states that:

Back answers repeatedly disrupt the pretty picture of prosperous and happy domesticity, of social harmony, and of refined culture in the story. Their

repressed force echoes in our ears even after they have been silenced by a gold coin, and after dinner speech or change of topic. (216)

There are many instances of back answers in the story such as: “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” (230), “West Briton” (240), “And why couldn’t he have a voice too? [...] Is it because he is only a black?” (247). Furthermore, Gabriel’s character will be compared to Mr. Browne’s in order to examine how Joyce dismantles the binary opposition of Catholic/Protestant.

Gabriel’s Failure as a Man and Gentleman

Lily’s back answer to Gabriel’s query about her marriage and her refusal of Gabriel’s tip are the main incidents of the first part of the story, which takes place at the Misses Morkans’ house where Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia, the sisters, have their annual Christmas party. This year Gabriel, their nephew, is going to give a speech. When Gabriel arrives he wants to give Lily a tip but she does not accept that. When Gabriel asks Lily if she will not be marrying soon her blunt reply “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” (230), can be interpreted as one of the shrewdest observations of what we learn about the Gabriel in the course of the story. This failure is the starting point of Gabriel’s misunderstanding of women in the story, including his wife Gretta.

Considering Lily’s statement “The men that is now is [...] what they can get out of you,” one can say that when Gabriel talks nicely to his wife his main goal is to get something out of her; he wants to satisfy his sexual desire. Lily’s statement can be applied to the two main male characters: Mr. Browne is indeed “all palaver” and

Gabriel, particularly in the hotel room, is “all out for what he can get out of you”. “Palaver” can be used to describe Gabriel as well since his words are empty and insincere.

The third part of the story in which Joyce deconstructs the binary opposition of past and present is rooted in Lily’s above-mentioned sentence. The story of Michael Furey, whose only surviving words are that “he did not want to live” (265) if Gretta went away, confirms Lily’s reference to men in present. Lily means that men were different and much better in the past. Here we can see the idealized view of Irish love that Lily has. Another important feature of the people in “The Dead” which is related to our discussion is that with the exception of Gretta and Gabriel, they are all unmarried. This unmarried state, not only of the elderly Kate and Julia but also of young and relatively young Mary Jane and Miss Ivors, shows the disappearance of the Irish manner of loving in the story.

From the very beginning of “The Dead” Gabriel appears self-satisfied and overbearing in the presence of women, but this is only on the surface. With the first words that he utters he excuses himself and blames women for his late arrival: “they [his aunts] forget that my wife here take three mortal hours to dress herself” (229). In this sentence Gabriel reveals his egotistical dismissal of women. The second main incident, which is Gabriel’s second mistake as well, happens when Gabriel insults Lily by trying to cover up his first mistake with a holiday tip. This can be interpreted as Gabriel’s underestimation of women.

After Gabriel has made his mistakes in the first section of story Freddy Malins, who is always drunk, arrives and Gabriel is told to take care of him when other people go to the room to have a drink or to dance. At the same time Mary Jane plays the piano, but Gabriel does not listen because the music does not interest him. Gabriel is

unable to grasp the melody, indicating both Mary Jane's poor level of playing and his own dismissal of her genuine effort. This can be seen as another of Gabriel's underestimations of women. Although Mary Jane lacks virtuoso talent, Gabriel's lack of compassion towards women prevents him from appreciating what achievement she has laboured to attain. Only after he has acknowledged his mother's unfairness toward Gretta who "had nursed her during all her last long illness" (237) can Gabriel identify the opening melody of Mary Jane's academy piece. As Margot Norris explains, "Gabriel thinks of the woman who had nursed a disapproving and ungrateful mother-in-law through her dying illness" (222). Gabriel has negative ideas about women and these ideas affect his imagination. As he judges women from his point of view he can not value Mary Jane's piano playing. One can say that accepting his mother's unfairness toward his wife increases his capability to understand women. This can be interpreted as one small step forward towards Gabriel's profound change that takes place at the end of the story.

We can see in the first part of the story how Joyce dismantles the binary of female/male. On the one hand, he portrays Gabriel's general dismissal of women and on the other, he shows especially by Lilly's statement, "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (230), that men do not regard them as equals and Lilly is aware of this fact. Although Joyce has deconstructed the binary of male/female along the story and particularly in the first section, the narrative voice has always seen women from Gabriel's eyes. Since it is related to the binary of male/female this essay is going to show how Julia Morkan, a female character in the story has been portrayed just as ignorant as her sister by the narrative voice, mainly because of her gender.

Julia Morkan, Forgotten Artist

Julia Morkan is perhaps the only character in the story that has been portrayed unfairly. She is always described by Gabriel as an “ignorant” old woman and marginalized as a moribund old maid. Her identity has been robbed by her relational title as “Aunt Julia” and she is being invariably treated as her sister’s twin. Thus the Morkan sisters are seen as ignorant old women by an arrogant nephew. Margot Norris states the following about Julia Morkan:

I will argue, perhaps the truest and greatest artist in “The Dead” whose art has been suppressed, and ultimately extinguished, on purely gender ground [...]. The narration itself, notwithstanding all the nice little things it says about them at the beginning, also treats them as two ignorant old women. (226-227)

The narrative voice both dismisses her art as being insignificant and unappreciated. After her singing the narration questions the warm reception the audience gives her:

Gabriel applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song and loud applause was borne in from the invisible supper table. It sounded so genuine that a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia’s face as she bent to replace in the music stand the old-leather-bound songbook that had her initials on the cover. (242)

In saying that the applause “sounded so genuine” the narrator implies either that it was not genuine, or that Julia was doubtful about its genuineness. Why should the applause not be sincere, and why should the praise of Julia in the text not be genuine?

One of the reasons is that Julia's fulsome praise comes from the two men who are treated as a comical and alcoholic pair by the narration. Freddy Malins' immense sincere praise is followed by Mr. Browne's:

I was just telling my mother, he said, I never heard you sing so well, never. No, I never heard your voice so good as it is to-night. Now! Would you believe that now? That's the truth. Upon my word and honour that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so... so clear and fresh, never. [...] Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery! (242)

Freddy Malins might be mistaken in his comments about the singer, but there is no reason whatsoever to say that he is wrong in his judgement when acknowledging the beauty of an old woman's song, or criticising the injustice of black singers of the legitimate operatic stage on the basis of race: "And why couldn't he have a voice too?" asked Freddy Malins sharply. Is it because he's only a black?" (247). Freddy's protest against racial discrimination is not so easy to dismiss by the company, nor by the reader, as his protest is against race discrimination practices as a normal phenomenon in his society. But Freddy's protest is suppressed too: "Nobody answered this question and Mary Jane led the table back to the legitimate opera" (247). If his protest toward racial discrimination is true then his immense praise of Julia Morkan could be sincere too.

One can argue here that although Joyce questions some serious problems such as race discrimination that Irish society encountered at the time, the narrative voice suppresses Julia Morkan's talent due to her gender. Julia Morkan's case might be the

single instance in the story that Joyce leaves the male/female binary opposition unchallenged.

The Nature of the Dispute between Gabriel and Molly Ivors

“The Dead” is the last story of *Dubliners*. James Joyce has portrayed Ireland, and the Catholic Irish middle-class community in particular, in a negative way in *Dubliners*. He confessed himself that his treatment of Ireland in *Dubliners* had been “unnecessarily harsh” (qtd in Potts 84). However, by the time Joyce wrote the final story, “The Dead” he realized that he might have written too harshly about the Irish, their attitudes and traditions. Perhaps that is the reason why Joyce attempts to show some positive characteristics of Ireland, such as its hospitality, in “The Dead”. This does not make the story a cheerful one, but it is not entirely hostile either. The hospitality of Irish people is portrayed in the second part of the story when Gabriel gives his speech.

The second part is set at the house of the Morkans as well. After Mary Jane has finished playing the piano, Gabriel finds himself next to Miss Ivors. They have a conversation and Gabriel tells her that he will not go for an excursion to the Aran Isles because he wants to go for a cycling tour of France, or Belgium, or perhaps Germany. She, however, cannot understand why he does not want to visit his own country, but Gabriel makes an excuse that he wants to practice foreign languages. After that she calls him “west Briton” (240). Then everybody goes to have supper and Gabriel takes a seat at the head of the table. After the dinner Gabriel makes his speech and talks about some positive characteristics of the Irish as well.

There are different themes that are presented at the same time in the story: the day to day moribund lives of the sisters, Miss Kate and Miss Julia, Freddy Malins' alcoholism, Gabriel Conroy's psychological paralysis and his interactions with other characters, the unresponsiveness of Protestant Mr. Browne and the haughtiness of the tenor Bartell D'Arcy. All of these issues come to some conclusion in the story, but among them there is one in the story that is not brought to any conclusion and remains unsolved: that of Molly Ivors, an upper-class, educated Catholic woman with nationalist beliefs which is one the most interesting in the story. She is present in the story for a short time, dancing and arguing with Gabriel then leaves quickly afterwards.

As pointed out earlier in the introduction there was a problem that Irish writers faced especially before the independence of Ireland. They were encouraged by nationalists to use art as a tool to idealize Irish nationality, language and love. Great Irish writes like Yeats never used art for nationalistic purposes but left the binaries unchallenged. The interesting point is that Joyce uses Gabriel's quarrel with Miss Ivors to raise this central question of the text that interested most Irish artists at the time: whether or not art should have a political function.

He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books. (238)

One can say that Joyce's idea is to liberate Irish writers from restrictions through direct and indirect means, and in this way he made Irish literature flourish by separating it from politics. He did not want nationalist writers to use art for their own purposes. Moreover, in the story Joyce disowns both Molly Ivors' nationalism and Gabriel's rejection of his Irish root which leads to the deconstruction of the Irish/Anglo-Irish binary. Joyce stages art's censorship of its own oppressiveness. For him there was no red line. Art's censorship is the most important element that does not allow binaries to be deconstructed. Regarding that Margot Norris argues:

By eschewing using his art polemically to criticize social oppressiveness, Joyce is able to critique art's own oppressive practices. He has his text, on the one hand, maintain implicit faith in an essential aesthetics — a faith that art is above politics. On the other, he disrupts it with incidents that show that art is product of social forces that operate on the same principles of privilege and exclusion that govern such categories such as gender, race, class and age, in social and cultural life. (236)

One can argue here that although art is above politics it is largely affected by the politics since social forces are controlled and influenced by it. Racial difference, class and gender in social life are all products of society and of the forces which have impacts on society. So the importance of Joyce's deconstruction becomes more apparent here. Joyce wants to change the direction of these social forces that have created the binaries such as Irish/Anglo-Irish, Protestant/Catholics, male/female, by dismantling these binaries.

Molly Ivors is perhaps the only female character in the story who has been endowed with intelligence and a good position. She is an educated, middle or upper class Catholic, with a special interest in Ireland: “the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device and motto” (237). Although she attacks Gabriel with a derogatory term “west Briton” her attack is made in good humour and playfulness: “she stood on tiptoe whispered the term into his ear” (240). She is portrayed as an open-minded person. Her warmth and good behaviour towards Gabriel in the story shows that she does not object to his writing a review for the *West British Daily Express*: “Miss Ivors took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone: Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.” (238). She even says that “she liked the review immensely” (238).

On the other hand, Gabriel wants to escape his Irishness as his nationality gives him an inferiority complex. He could be described as a Catholic who has become more Protestant than Protestants themselves. That is the reason why he feels insecure and alienated and wants to adopt an English lifestyle and perhaps change himself into an Englishman. He is even embarrassed by his wife’s origins. She comes from the West and hence represents the inferior native so that when Miss Ivors asks if Gretta is not from Connacht, he replies “shortly” that “her people are” (239), thus implying that she is not.

He has a love-hate relationship with his country. He is rightfully uneasy with his assumption that Irish people and ways are inferior to the English. “I am sick of my own country, sick of it!” (239). As Willard Potts suggests, by Gabriel’s outburst Joyce probably attacks the Irish habit of scorning things (86). At the same time Joyce describes important features of his country, such as its hospitality and the

ingenuousness of its people. These admirable traits are mainly associated with the West of Ireland where Gretta comes from.

Gabriel's after-dinner speech is a good example of Joyce's meditation on the positive Irish distinctive traits. In the speech Gabriel wants to prove that Miss Ivors is wrong in calling him West Briton, but he ends up condemning himself. His intent is show that Miss Ivors does not have these positive qualities, but at the same time he shows a complete lack of humanity and hospitality: "It is not the first time that we have been the recipients or perhaps, I had better say, the victims of the hospitality of certain good ladies" (249).

Gabriel, however, has some serious doubts about the changes he has made in himself. His doubts and uneasiness enable him to be transformed at the end of the story. He thus becomes more profoundly Irish than anyone else in the story, including Miss Ivors with her Gaelic jewellery and phrases. Here it becomes apparent that Joyce's attempt is to dismantle the binaries of modern/traditional and Irish/Anglo-Irish. For Miss Ivors perhaps the main way of becoming more Irish is to learn Gaelic language, but for Joyce, as he shows with Gabriel's transformation, loving one's country and roots is more important than the language you speak. To have traditional views and nationalistic ideas like Miss Ivors is not acceptable. At the same time Joyce implies that to be modern and anglicized like Gabriel before his transformation is not acceptable either. We can be certain that when Gabriel sets out on his journey westwards, it will not be to follow Miss Ivors' beliefs and her Irishness. Joyce criticizes Miss Ivors' severe Irishness by portraying Gabriel's epiphany. When Gabriel comes to self-realization he probably accepts his Irish roots but unlike Molly Ivors, he does not become nationalist. The traditional views and the Irish deep past that Miss Ivors is seeking does not exist for Gabriel even after his epiphany.

Gabriel versus Mr. Browne

In "The Dead" Joyce portrays a group of relatively rich, educated Catholics who are superior to the one Protestant among them. In the story, Gabriel and Mr. Browne are two characters who are closely linked through a series of parallels and contrasts. The most obvious parallel between them is their difficulty in dealing with women. Browne's provincialism and Gabriel's cosmopolitanism constitute some of the obvious contrasts. As Potts argues, "According to popular stereotype, the sophistication and social status of Protestant males made them powerfully attractive to Catholic women" (86). Entering the story as if he were aware of this fact Mr. Brown announces: "I am the man for the ladies" (233). Then he continues: "You know Miss Morkan the reason they are fond of me is[...]" (233). But the reaction of Aunt Kate and the three other women make it clear that he is badly mistaken about the ladies being fond of him.

In the scene at the dinner table Joyce deconstructs the image of the socially superior by portraying Mr. Browne's ignorance. Browne says in the presence of Dublin's leading tenor, Bartell D'Arcy, that contemporary tenors can not match those of the past. When D'Arcy asserts that excellent tenors still can be found "defiant," Browne asks "Where are they?" (247). D'Arcy answers, "In, London, Paris, Milan," (247), but Browne appears to know nothing about those cities. He does not even know Ireland well enough to perceive how the majority of its population practice Catholicism. Hearing "how hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny-piece from their guests" (247) he says unbelievably, "And do you mean to say that a chap can go down there and put up there as if it were a hotel and live off the

fat of the land and then come away without paying a farthing” (247). He is even more baffled to learn that the monks sleep in their coffins and wonders why they do not choose “a comfortable spring bed” (248). Mr. Browne even fails to display Protestant reserve. In the middle of Gabriel’s speech he cries loudly “No, no!” and “Hear, hear” (249-50). He leaves the party laughing and shouting as well.

Joyce shows none of the Catholic characters with whisky. Within a few minutes of his appearance, Mr. Browne, by contrast, is asking people to move aside so he can reach the decanter to pour himself a “goodly measure of Whisky” (234) and after handing Freddy Malins the lemonade, he serves himself another whisky. Browne’s difficulties with the three young ladies are also related to drinking. Browne says, as he sips his whisky: “God helps me, it’s the doctor’s order” (234). When one of the young ladies says that no doctor ever gave such an order, he gives a reply that offends them, “Well, you see, I’m like the famous Mrs Cassidy, who is reported to have said: Now Mary Grimes, if I don’t take it, make me take it for I feel I want it” (234).

Mr. Browne has modelled himself on the Irish stereotype. Mistakenly convinced of his success at making himself more Irish, Browne feels perfectly at home in the Morkan’s house. Even the colour of his clothes, “long green overcoat” is appropriate for someone aspiring to become more Irish. The problem is that these middle-class Catholics do not fit the stereotype and in fact are trying to escape it. Most of the guests are free from traits associated with Irish Catholics. As a result, Browne remains a distinct outsider at the Morkan’s party. Freddy Malins is the only Catholic at the party who comes close to the stereotype. In addition to being fellow drinkers and bachelors, they have the same taste in music, so when Malins enters the discussion of opera to praise “a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the Gaiety pantomime,” Browne approves. “It takes Teddy to find out the really good things,” he

says, without irony. Everyone else is silent until Mary Jane leads the conversation “back to legitimate opera” (246-47).

If Browne feels at home in this company of Catholics because he mistakenly imagines that he has become just like them, then Gabriel feels alienated because he mistakenly imagines that his grade of culture is superior to that of the other people at the party; consequently he feels that he is different. Considering himself superior to other characters in the story, Gabriel thinks that they are ignorant and not worth knowing. Moreover, having accepted the stereotype of Catholic as culturally inferior, Gabriel apparently has thought that they are not worth knowing. The main reason that he is taken aback by Lily, Miss Ivors and Gretta is that they do not behave according to stereotype. Lily should have responded eagerly to his query about her marriage prospects; Miss Ivors should have showed a special respect to his having a review in the *Daily Express*, and Gretta should have responded warmly to his passion. Gretta’s feelings about Michael Furey, however, have a profound effect on Gabriel partly because they show that she is not as ignorant as Gabriel thinks and partly because they show the meaninglessness of the grade of culture he has attained and prides in.

While the most overt similarity between Gabriel and Browne comes from their difficulties with women, the most overt contrast between them lies in their responses to the difficulties. Whereas Browne remains unaware and ignorant of the difficulties, Gabriel exaggerates them. He overreacts first to Lily’s back answer about men, then to Miss Ivors’ calling him “West Briton” and finally to Gretta’s revelation about Michael Furey. Remembering the story, Gabriel thinks that “He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love” (266). Perhaps it is not true that he never had such a feeling. It might be a change of feeling that he has now. In all his years as married he has striven to erase the stigma of his

Irishness and to move himself toward the lofty position of a gentleman. He has paid too little attention to maintaining his love for his wife and her love for him. However, Gabriel's overreaction to Lily, Miss Ivors and Gretta and his mistake in thinking that they are refusing him show that beneath his so-called sophistication, he has some serious doubts about what he has become. These serious doubts lead him to the transformation at the end.

To sum up, Joyce deconstructs the binary of Protestant/Catholic by portraying Mr. Browne's ignorance. He shows that to be a Protestant mistakenly and artificially is prestigious and means superiority to Catholicism in Irish society at the time. At the same time he depicts the Irish Catholics' problems from the other side. Thus, Joyce shows that the problems that Irish society faces is beyond the dichotomy of Catholic/Protestant and that they are not superior or inferior to each other.

Gabriel Conroy versus Michael Furey

In the third part of the story when preparing to leave the party, Gabriel sees his wife, Gretta, on the stairs, lost in thought. He stares at her for a moment, not recognizing her. Once he recognizes her, he imagines her as a painting. Her distracted yearning mood arouses sexual interest in him. Then Gabriel and Gretta go back to their hotel after saying goodbye to the hostesses. When Gabriel tries to confront her indirectly about his sexual interest after the party in the hotel room, he finds her unresponsive. Gretta is very thoughtful and tells Gabriel that she is thinking about a person that she used to know in Galway when she was living with her grandmother. His name was Michael Furey and he was her childhood friend. He died when he was only seventeen and she believes that he died for her. He died after facing the cold of a winter night to

confess his love for her. After this revelation she is on the bed crying and then falls asleep. Gabriel is alone and looks out of the window and thinks about the story he has just heard and about his earlier feeling for his wife.

If Joyce would have ended “The Dead” after Gabriel’s speech, or with the ending of the dinner party, it would still be a remarkable and beautiful story. But he gives us one last revelation, which makes all the deconstructed binaries more colorful and prominent especially the binaries of Irish/Anglo-Irish and modern/traditional which are connected to the binary of past/present. In this section of the story, Joyce dismantles the binary opposition of present and past. Indeed the deconstruction of binaries in the other sections of the story would not be so striking without Gabriel’s epiphany. Michael Furey represents the past and stands in opposition to Gabriel Conroy who embodies the present. To examine this, it is necessary to compare Gabriel to Michael Furey.

From the beginning of the story, Gabriel feels alienated from his society because he thinks his grade of culture is higher than that of the other characters’ in the story, so as a result of his alienation he feels insecure. His insecurity is manifest in his self-absorbed, self-justifying and hypocritical feelings of superiority toward the guests, and especially toward his aunts: “What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?” (242). As mentioned above, Gabriel has serious doubts about the changes he has made in himself. He feels that he makes himself ridiculous by pretending some anglicised behaviour. He is also uneasy with his wife’s rural background. Regarding Gabriel’s relation to his wife L. J. Morrissey argues that:

His [Gabriel’s] inner image of his wife is comprised of a similar vacillation. He is delighted by the exterior image at the opening of the party [...]. Yet his

attained ideal is corrupted by a nagging doubt, by a fear that, as his Mother said, she is only country cute. (22)

Although Gabriel is uneasy with his wife's rural background he is fond of her beauty "whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to his face and the hair" (232). Throughout the story there are many examples of Gabriel's love-hate relation and double feelings towards his wife's rural background, his people and his Irishness. That is the reason why, despite his interactions with other characters in the story, he feels distant from them and this distance makes him insecure. At the same time he feels he is superior to them, but the artificial cultural superiority he has made for himself is neither real nor stable. He is subconsciously aware of this fact. The serious doubts that help him to be transformed at the end of the story are rooted in his subconscious awareness of his artificiality.

Gabriel does his best to shame others for those qualities he finds lacking in himself. When Gretta, his wife, slightly mocks Gabriel's continental affection of "goloshes" he reminds her of her grade of culture "Tonight even, he wanted me to put them on, but I wouldn't [...], Gutta-percha things. We both have a pair now. Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent. [...] Gabriel knitted his brows and said, as if he were slightly angered: It is nothing very wonderful, but Gretta thinks it very funny [...]" (232). Margot Norris points out, in "The Politics of Gender and Art in 'The Dead'" that "Gabriel seeing himself as he imagines Gretta seeing him, sees himself striving to surmount his social anxieties and perils" (226). After Gretta reveals Michael Furey's true for her Gabriel realizes that during his whole life with Gretta, she has never considered him a real man and husband "He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning

sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror” (263).

When Gretta tells Gabriel that Michael Furey died for her Gabriel suddenly sees a truth he had never seen before. He realizes that he has been spiritually dead. It is not easy to perceive how Gabriel suddenly learns something from this revelation. John Paul Riquelme mentions that “It is surprising however that he seems to learn something about his own deficiencies from the final encounter” (126). It is the first time Gabriel looks beyond himself and recognizes other people as equal human beings “He had never felt like that himself towards any woman” (266). Many critics have argued that Gabriel has changed completely when he comes to his self-realization, but in fact it is ambiguous whether the epiphany is just an artistic and emotional moment, or whether Gabriel will ever manage to escape his smallness and insecurity. His transformation could still be affected by some Anglo-Irish concepts he has in mind. No one can deny that his urban Anglo-Irish culture has affected his religion and his perception of the Irish world. In other words, Gabriel experiences his transformation through his anglicised concepts which have been internalised in his character for years. The shattering epiphany that Gabriel has achieved is not only the climax of “The Dead” but also of *Dubliners*, as Mitzi M. Brunsdale states:

Joyce’s portrait of Gabriel Conroy’s personal epiphany is the most powerful as well as most hopeful he sets into *Dubliners*, since Gabriel Conroy, like Lenehan, Joe Hynes, and little Chandler, is a failed Irish artist, the fate Joyce himself had to leave Dublin to escape. (40)

In portraying Gabriel's paralysis, Joyce wants to show how Dublin has shaped Gabriel's character and caused restrictions in Gabriel's perception. This is the reason why Joyce left the city himself. Perhaps the binaries and social forces that control society were too strong to be deconstructed in a short time.

Conclusion

In "The Dead" Joyce dismantles different binaries in each section of the story. The deconstruction of binaries has been shown by three main events, one in each part of the story. In the first section Joyce deconstructs the binary of male/female. This is portrayed in Lily's harsh reactions to Gabriel Conroy's query and his tip. In the second section the binaries of modern/traditional and Irish/English are deconstructed. This can be seen in the dispute between Gabriel and Molly Ivors. In the third part of the story, which is the most important part, the binary of present/past is dismantled.

Joyce's deconstruction in the first part of the story is portrayed by Gabriel's underestimation and his dismissal of women and the harsh reaction he receives from Lily. In the first part of the story Joyce shows the abuse of women by men and suggests that typical Irish women are not as ignorant as Gabriel thinks. Lily is aware of the fact that she is not treated as equal in society because of her gender and she regards men as "all palaver". In the second part of the story Joyce uses Molly Ivors' conversation with Gabriel to deconstruct the binaries of Irish/Anglo-Irish and modern/traditional. Joyce rejects Miss Ivors' severe traditional nationalism and at the same time Gabriel's repudiation of his Irish roots. In the third part, the binary of past/present is dismantled when Gretta reveals the memory of Michael Furey which

leads to Gabriel's self-realization. Joyce shows that the Irish deep past, like Michael Furey, is dead and does not come to the present.

Gabriel's epiphany subsequently makes the deconstruction in all parts of the story more colourful and outstanding. The dismantling of present/past is closely connected to deconstruction of Irish/Anglo-Irish and modern/traditional. The opposition between deep Irish past and anglicised culture is dismantled. What Joyce did was revolutionary, because all the great Irish writers before him tried to reverse these binaries instead of deconstructing the binary oppositions.

The central question of the text that Joyce raises in the dispute between Molly Ivors and Gabriel is whether or not art should have a political function. This shows the double commitment of Irish writers who had to contribute both to Ireland and to art, but Joyce's contribution was innovative and different from that of other Irish writers. He tried to deconstruct the social forces such as race, class and gender that are products of politics. Thus, the importance of Joyce's deconstruction becomes more apparent when he wants to change the direction of these social forces that keep the binaries unchallenged.

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