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招待不在場的客人：以精神分析之鏡閱讀喬伊斯的

〈死者〉

Welcoming the Invisible Guests: A Psychoanalytic

Reading of James Joyce's "The Dead"

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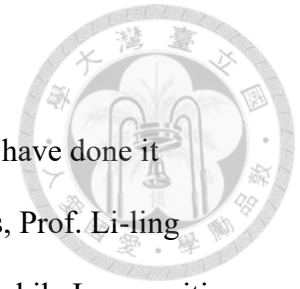
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Abstract



In “The Dead,” Joyce attempts to redefine Irish hospitality. He redefines it by juxtaposing the visible guests with the invisible guests that live in people’s memories. Through the juxtaposition, he is demanding whether it is enough only to entertain the guests who are visible. The answer is clear. To be hospitable, a person must also be able to deal with the guests who are invisible. In other words, he or she must have a way to retain the memories and emotions accidentally evoked. This far, we have seen how Joyce turns Irish hospitality from a mere set of rituals into the capacity deep down to keep things in mind. The things that need to be kept in mind in the story deserve our attention. They are no ordinary memories. Instead, they are memories associated with the Great Irish Famine. What does it take to keep in mind such difficult memories? In Gabriel and Gretta’s case in the story, it appears that communication is key. In this thesis, I will scrutinize the communication between the two characters with the model of “the container” and “the contained” postulated by the British Psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion. In Bion’s language, Gretta is a container trying to contain, or process in her mind, the traumatic romance she has been through. To complete her task, she manages to get another container involved: she relates her pain to Gabriel, who also has the emotions and experiences of his own to process. The link between the two containers matters. It transforms the traumatic romance from something unthinkable into an idea that can be kept in mind.

Keywords: Irish hospitality, object relation, the container and the contained, projective identification, alpha-function, the Great Irish Famine

摘要

在中篇小說〈死者〉中，喬伊斯重新定義了愛爾蘭的好客傳統。藉由對比在場與不在場的客人，喬伊斯質問：是否招待了在場的客人就能稱得上好客？答案呼之欲出。要稱得上好客，一個人必須也要能招待不在場的客人——他/她要有能力思考突然浮現的回憶與情緒。如此，喬伊斯將愛爾蘭好客傳統從儀式轉化為記憶的能力。在〈死者〉中，賈伯瑞和葛瑞塔要面對的是關乎愛爾蘭大饑荒的記憶。要怎麼做才能記憶如此不愉快的記憶呢？溝通似乎是關鍵。本篇論文，我將用英國精神分析師比昂「涵容者」與「被涵容者」的理論，檢視此二角色間的溝通。用比昂的術語來說，葛瑞塔作為一個涵容者，需要涵容——即消化——自身創傷的戀情。要完成這項任務，她需要向另一個涵容者賈伯瑞訴說自己的苦痛。這件事是有難度的，畢竟賈伯瑞作為一個涵容者，也有自身的情感與經驗需要消化。要度過困難，兩個涵容者的連結至關重要。透過連結，兩個角色能將記憶從創傷轉化為思想。

關鍵詞：愛爾蘭好客傳統、客體關係、涵容者/被涵容者、投射認同、阿爾法功能、愛爾蘭大饑荒

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Introduction

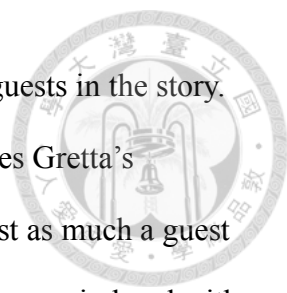


After completing the first fourteen stories of *Dubliners*, James Joyce began to consider himself rather harsh to his country's people (*SL* 109). In September 1906, while sojourning in Rome, Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus:

Sometimes 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 for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it except in Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter “virtue” so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty: for it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, Switzerland, France, Australia or Italy. (*SL* 109-10)

Simply, starting to miss the hospitality of his home country, Joyce wanted to present a fairer picture. Yet, as he himself remarks, it was impossible for him to rewrite the book (*SL* 110). The way out lies in “The Dead”—the story added later on to the previous fourteen stories of the book. According to Richard Ellmann, the Christmas party held by the Morkan sisters is Joyce's representation of the hospitality he missed (254). Also, the part about hospitality in Gabriel's after-dinner speech is, he notes, “Joyce's oblique way... of making amends” (254). These are some of the evidence that shows the importance of hospitality in “The Dead.”

Indeed, “The Dead” can be read as a story that explores the meanings of hospitality. In the story, we have Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia, and their niece entering heart and soul into the party they hold. We also have Gabriel carving the goose and delivering a speech to have the guests enjoy. This much is hospitality for the guests who are



visible. Yet, in addition to the visible guests, there are also invisible guests in the story. Toward the end of the party, the ballad “The Lass of Aughrim,” evokes Gretta’s romance with Michael Furey. In a sense, the memories evoked are just as much a guest to be welcomed as other visible guests at the party. After all, memories are imbued with emotions, and these emotions must be sustained—or welcomed—by the one who bears the memories and the one to whom the memories are told. This leads us to the need for hospitality in relation to the invisible guests, which is a lot more intangible and even difficult. With the visible guests, Gabriel, for example, may well just perform the rituals: he needs only to carve the goose and can even deliver a largely insincere speech. With the invisible guests, however, he needs to do much more—at least, be much more sincere. The work is difficult indeed, yet somehow it is the difficulties involved that get to test whether or not he is truly a hospitable person. Thus, my thesis will focus on hospitality in relation to the invisible guests. I will treat the virtue mainly as the capacity for sustaining emotions and keeping things in mind. However, before I go deeper into my argument, I would like first to review what other critics have said about the story.

Criticism of “The Dead” began with humanist interpretations. Hugh Kenner keeps in mind the concept of paralysis—the keyword of *Dubliners*—as he reads the story. He argues that “[i]n ‘The Dead’ everybody is dead” (62), and that the factor which kills everybody is the tendency of each to remain isolated (65). Take Gabriel as an example. Kenner describes him as a “closed system” secluded from live experience with his community: he endeavors to distinguish himself from other participants in the party and yearns every once in a while to be outside the house among the snow (65-66). As what Gabriel turns to for escape from his people, the snow, in Kenner’s interpretation, is “anti-communal” (67). “Because it is anti-communal it is death,” he goes on to argue

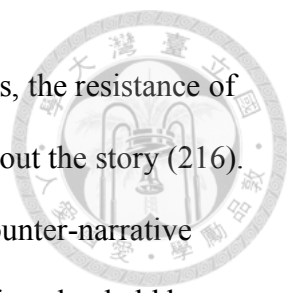
(67). Regarding the snow as a symbol of death, Kenner reads the conclusion of the story rather pessimistically: the panorama of snow that Gabriel envisions simply signifies the triumph of death over the living (67).

Richard Ellmann disagrees as he discovers in the snow a sense of “mutuality” (260). For Ellmann, the snow connects whomever it falls upon, creating “a sense that none has his being alone” (260). Thus interpreted, the ending promises life. Yet still, what is warm and lively comes at a price. Ellmann correlates “The Dead” with Joyce’s own life experience. It turns out that Joyce’s wife, Nora Barnacle, also experienced a tragic romance at home, as Ellmann reveals to us (252). A guy who had courted Nora died young, and she had always carried with her the memory of this passionate young lover (252). Thus, Joyce—like Gabriel, taken by surprise by his wife’s story—was also struggling with what Ellmann terms the “rivalry with a dead man” (252). However, Joyce chose to succumb, Ellmann stresses, due to the “artless integrity” he admired in his wife: though not well-educated, Nora was straightforward and did not seem to care that much about how others judged her (258). Just as Joyce succumbed to a romance he had no part in taking, so does Gabriel surrender to Michael Furey, whose passion is far greater than his (258). In Ellmann’s interpretation, surrender is the essence of Gabriel’s epiphany: there, he manages to relinquish his “civilized thinking,” “continental tastes,” and other “nice distinctions on which he has prided himself,” thus achieving “a self-abandonment not unlike Furey’s” (258-59). Self-abandonment, though far from easy, has its reward nonetheless. For Ellmann, it helps connect Gabriel at a deeper level with his country’s people (259-60). Previously in the story, Gabriel, as he himself confesses, is sick of his own country (*D* 189). Yet, through the very experience with his wife in the hotel, Ellmann argues, “he grants a kind of bondage, of acceptance, even of admiration to a part of the country and a way of life that are most Irish” (259). With bondage

established, no one is left alone—such is the mutuality Ellmann emphasizes while reading the story (260).

In Ellmann's reading, Gabriel, ready to form bondage, is overall a "generous and considerate" character (261). He does not appear so for critics later on who are attentive to the politics involved in the story. Margot Norris, for example, finds Gabriel's aesthetic appreciation rather problematic (218-19). She draws the reader's attention to the scene where Gabriel, seeing Gretta mesmerized by Bartell D'Arcy's singing, would like to paint a picture of her (*D* 210). Norris argues that seeking to turn Gretta into a picture—an aesthetic object under his gaze—Gabriel deprives Gretta of a life of her own, reducing her to merely what he desires of her (219-21). By so doing, she goes on to argue, he simply repeats the violence committed by the duke of "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning—whose lines he wishes so much to quote for the evening speech (219-21). Through the analogy between Gabriel and Browning's duke, Norris reveals how this seemingly benign character is violent and oppressive in actuality. Along similar lines of thoughts, Vincent J. Cheng demonstrates just how Gabriel is a patriarch repeating in his conjugal relationship the British domination over the Irish colonized (135). Soon after his arrival at the feast, he complains to his aunts that Gretta "takes three mortal hours to dress herself" (*D* 177). This is seemingly harmless humor, yet Cheng notices in it an attempt to infantilize womankind (135). Deep down in this, he argues, is "the affectionate attitude of the British Empire towards its colonies as incorrigible children... who can thus only be properly ruled by the parent empire" (135). As Cheng illustrates, by identifying with this parent empire, Gabriel brings the imperial into the sexual, and the public into the private (135). The violence involved is just without question.

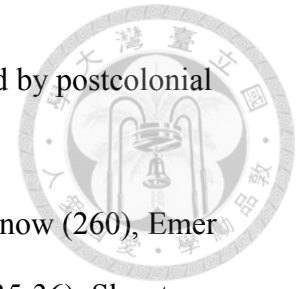
Not only do critics pick out the violence hidden in the text, but they also touch



upon the resistance to the violence they discover. According to Norris, the resistance of such a kind shows itself in the stifled back answers scattered throughout the story (216). For Norris, these back answers, though mostly stifled, constitute a counter-narrative forceful enough to disrupt the primary narrative featuring the aesthetic value held by Gabriel (216). Back answers matter not only to Norris but also to Trevor L. Williams. Like Norris's and Cheng's, Williams's analysis of the story revolves around the antithesis between Gabriel and the women and locals he is belittling. However, Gabriel is rather vulnerable to the voices he seeks to silence (91-96). Williams identifies characters in the story who are audacious enough to talk back no matter what—Lily first, followed by Miss Ivors, and finally, Gretta (91-95). In Gretta's case, Williams, like Cheng, also notices the overlap between the public and the private (93-94). Yet, for him, the overlap is exactly where changes occur: by revealing the secret she has kept for years, Gretta manages to show Gabriel how he is not a master even in his private sphere and, in this way, questions his power inside-out (95). Here, we witness the full force of back answers. In fact, in Williams's interpretation, back answers speak volumes: with the audacity to talk back, the three women resist the power structure that seeks to incorporate them and, in turn, save themselves from the fate of becoming paralyzed inside that very structure (93-96).

With Norris's and Williams's analyses, we get to appreciate the potential back answers have for changes. Indeed, there are—or seem to be—changes taking place in the story. At least, Gabriel reaches an epiphany toward the end. Yet, how much or to what degree is Gabriel changed with his epiphany? This is yet another point in the story where critics are found to disagree with one another. Earlier, we have seen the debate between Ellmann and Kenner on whether the snow at the end is communal or anti-communal. Debates like this repeatedly recur throughout the criticism of the story as the

years pass. The following are some of the contesting viewpoints held by postcolonial critics starting from the 1990s.



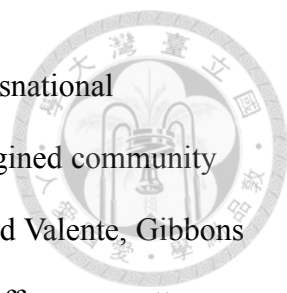
While Ellmann celebrates the “mutuality” represented by the snow (260), Emer Nolan is more interested in the agent that produces such mutuality (35-36). She stresses it is, after all, the newspaper which informs Gabriel that snow is general all over Ireland (35). For Nolan, the role of the newspaper is significant: following Benedict Anderson, Nolan demonstrates how the newspaper is there to create a shared temporality, as it gets its readers to feel that they are identified with one another, reading the same material at the same time (28, 35-36). For both Nolan and Anderson, this imagined community of readers proves an enticing cultural artefact¹ with a sense of belonging it seems to promise (Anderson 4-6; Nolan 36). It is ideal to resort to for subjects like Gabriel—who, Nolan stresses, live anxiously in a country torn in the middle of tradition and modernity (34-36). Yet still, the community is imagined; what we have deep down is nothing but a “homogeneous, empty time,” as Anderson describes it (qtd. in Nolan 28). Along similar lines of thoughts, Luke Gibbons contrasts the hollow West Gabriel imagines with the newspaper with the vivid West Gretta remembers through the ballad, “The Lass of Aughrim” (134-35). For Gibbons, ballads get to tell a different story—as an oral tradition marginalized in front of public media like newspapers and monuments (143-47). Fugitive and fragmented, this oral tradition is, however, akin to “the memories of the vanquished”—which, Gibbons stresses, is even more true to Irish history (144-45). “For Joyce, it is this remnant of oral culture, rather than the ‘empty, homogenous

¹ Anderson uses the term “cultural artefact” to describe nationalism, which he takes care to distinguish from ideologies in general (4-5). Namely, for an ideology to be an ideology, it has to have its content, which is the intellectual work of a specific (grand) thinker. In contrast to this, nationalism, Anderson stresses, requires no grand thinkers (5). It is empty—the way kinship and religion, in Anderson’s view, are empty (5). In fact, for Anderson, a nation is nothing more than “an imagined political community” (6). “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion,” he argues (6).

time' of the newspaper, which is characteristic of the most resilient strains in Irish nationalism—or any subaltern culture,” Gibbons contends (134).

There are critics still who, like Ellmann, are optimistic about Gabriel's final vision. Though critical of the violence Gabriel has committed before the epiphany, Cheng is touched by his transformation as the story draws to the conclusion (146-47). Like Ellmann, Cheng also recognizes in the transformation the factor of self-surrender—which, he illustrates, is mirrored in the fall of the snow (146-47). According to Cheng, the snow, while falling non-preferentially, is there to break the barriers Gabriel has set up to distinguish his patriarchal ego (146-47). With barriers undone, Cheng contends, Gabriel is open to all that he has previously denied—including the subjectivity of others and the repressed part of himself—thus reaching what it means by generosity (146-47). Snow is general also for Joseph Valente. Valente doubts whether what Gabriel has in mind is really the imagined community, as Nolan describes (94). For Valente, the newspapers in Ireland are somehow “too various and too fractious” to serve as common ground (94). If consensus must be found, Valente argues, it is to be found in the snow: “the weather is an experience people always share, but not as specifically ethnonational subjects” (94). Specific to neither a nation nor an ethnic group, the snow, Valente goes on to argue, is at the same time where consensus resides and that which is beyond the consensus of the imagined community (94-95). As such, it adds potential and space to Gabriel's epiphany. The Ireland Gabriel envisions is national indeed; nevertheless, with snow as its central motif, it also has its transnational dimension, as Valente concludes (95).

Though having different perspectives on what Gabriel finally sees, Cheng, Valente, and Gibbons share in their emphasis on the matter of difference. Cheng notices the subjectivity of others and the repressed part of the self as something different from



the patriarchal ego (146-47). Valente characterizes the snow as a transnational experience different from the merely national epitomized by the imagined community the newspaper creates (94-95). Though not as optimistic as Cheng and Valente, Gibbons is attentive to the different stories ballads are able to tell (144-45). Difference matters, as it is highly relevant to the central memory the story is dealing with. The West which Gretta has experienced is, after all, a place marked by its hybridity.

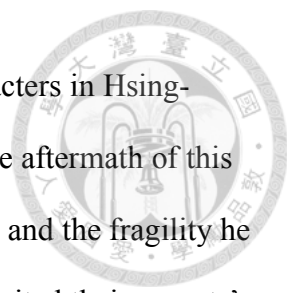
Critics have made relevant observations. Marjorie Howes, for example, is attentive to both the geographical and historical complexities of the West. Following Terence Brown, Howes emphasizes that the Galway Gretta refers to in the story is at once “a set of islands, a city, a county, a province” (68). This implies that Galway—or the West in general—is somewhere torn between the rural and the urban, simply a “shifting, semimodern” region in Howes’s description (67-69). This is not the whole picture yet. Drawing from Joyce’s critical writing, Howes also demonstrates how Galway has once been an international trading center populated by Spanish descendants—a stark contrast to its “backward modernity” contemporary with the story (68-69). Taking all these complexities into account, Howes concludes, rather than “Furey’s passionate heart,” it is the gasworks he is involved in that best symbolizes what the West is about (70). Valente does a good job of highlighting the specifics of the gasworks in the time the story refers to. Valente reminds us that the gasworks is an imprint of foreign capital and industry (92-93). Involved in such a kind of work, Michael Furey, Valente stresses, is not to be construed simply “as the iconic Irish peasant of romantic imagination” (93). Furey is the key figure of Gretta’s nostalgia without a doubt. Yet equally important, Valente argues, is the fact that he is “a sadly displaced and debilitated modern laborer, passing weakly of an industrially induced or exacerbated disease” (93). For Valente, Furey’s case namely testifies how modern

industries foreign to Ireland are interfering with the local way of living there (93). With its residents thus exploited, the West, Valente concludes, is just not so pure a place; in fact, the experience there is transnational—the way the snow Gabriel envisions in the epiphany is a transnational phenomenon (93-95).

While we have the gasworks as a foreign imprint on the countryside, we also have the effect of the Great Famine the British colonizers have left the locals to suffer. Though no words in “The Dead” explicitly touch upon this catastrophe, critics manage somehow to correlate the two. After all, the Province of Connacht—to which Galway belongs—is the region damaged the most during the Famine era (Smyth 281). It is Kevin Whelan who began excavating the history of the catastrophe buried in the story. In his 2002 article, he shows how various details in “The Dead,” such as the names used and the scenes depicted, reverberate with other texts² that address the Famine more directly (70-75). Yet, his study remains only at the level of reverberation; it takes later critics to explore the deeper connections between the story and the historical event.

Here are a few examples of the observations critics have recently made as they read “The Dead” alongside the historical context of the Famine. Mary Burke notices just how the heavy snow in the story echoes the “Night of the Big Wind” in early 1839—the terrible storm that appears “in folk recollection to have been a harbinger of the Great Famine of the 1840s” (241, 254-55). With this and other details reminiscent of either the storm or the folkloric tradition once alive, “The Dead,” Burke suggests, is Joyce’s commemoration of the catastrophe and the folkloric tradition it has wiped out (262-63). While the Famine in Burke’s reading remains the forgotten past to be evoked

² The most prominent among these texts is perhaps Bret Harte’s *Gabriel Conroy* (Whelan 71-72). Harte’s story, as Whelan notes, originates in a real-life incident redolent of the Great Irish Famine (71-72). In the winter of 1846-47 (exactly the “Black ’47” within the Famine years), a group of emigrants, with two Irish families among them, were trapped by the heavy snow in California; with nothing to eat, they ended up resorting to cannibalism to keep themselves alive (qtd. in Whelan 71-72). While laying out Harte’s story, Whelan shows us that Joyce borrowed not only the name Gabriel Conroy but also the scene of the heavy snow as he composed his own story (71-72).



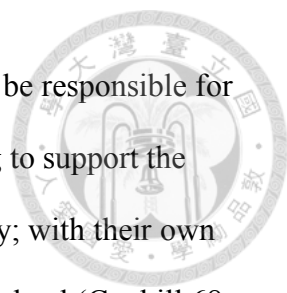
via reminiscence, it becomes problems directly confronting the characters in Hsing-chun Chou's analysis. Chou identifies traces in the plot that betray the aftermath of this catastrophe. One obvious case she finds is the illness Furey contracts and the fragility he always suffers: the post-Famine generation, she notes, somehow inherited their parents' health problems and, as a consequence, easily fell ill (73). Not only Furey, but other characters, as Chou reminds us, are also ailing and prone to death (74): Mr. D'Arcy "had a dreadful cold and couldn't sing" (*D* 211), Aunt Kates remarks that "everybody has colds" (*D* 211), and Aunt Julia in Gabriel's fantasy "would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse" (*D* 222). The effect of the Famine simply lurks, and by lurking, Chou concludes, demands the reader that it be seen and acknowledged (76).

Following Chou, I will treat the Famine as a major cause of pain in the story. For me, the catastrophe is a prime factor that disrupts Gretta's childhood/adolescent experience at home. This is not to deny the transnational dimension of living Valente observes in the West. In a sense, the Famine is as much a transnational phenomenon as the gasworks by which Michael Furey is exploited. With gasworks, we see the intrusion of foreign capital and industry. With the Famine, we see a foreign government that cared little about the welfare of the Irish locals. The Famine in Ireland spanned from 1845 to 1852; many disasters witnessed during these years were owed to the problematic decisions made by the indifferent British colonizers. However, colonialism was behind the scene not just during the Great Famine. Even before the Famine, it had been there to affect the Irish economy and population so that Ireland became in no way fortified against any major catastrophe. Ever since the Elizabethan conquest of Munster and Ulster in the sixteenth century, people were coming from England to claim land

from the Irish locals (Nally 65-66). With the coming of the industrial revolution, Ireland was made the farm in charge of the grains to sustain Great Britain (Coohill 60; Nally 66). Under this structure, most Irish were tenants tilling the land they did not own (Nally 66). This resulted in poverty among the general public (Nally 66-67).

Meanwhile, due to the demand for labor in the overall agricultural society, Ireland's population was seen to burgeon (Coohill 60). The poor multitude needed to be fed, and growing potatoes was the easy way out. As Joseph Coohill notes, "it could be tilled easily, it yielded more crop per acre than any grain, [and] it was a good subsistence food and could provide the nutritional value of grain at one-third the cost" (61). Given that the dependence on potatoes was simply total, it is not hard for us to imagine what a blow Irish people would suffer should a potato blight occur.

The blight attacked in the fall of 1845, which marked the beginning of the Famine. Though what killed the potatoes was a specific fungus (called *phytophthora infestans*), it was, however, the poor measures taken by the British government that made things worse (Coohill 62). While the Irish locals were dying of hunger, the British government was obsessed with *Laissez-faire*: the governors were eager to promote a free market in their colony and believed that the less they interfered with the economy, the better (Coohill 64; Nally 71). Thus, the relief they provided remained fairly limited (Coohill 64). One typical example was the deficient public works project. The public works project was established in early 1846 by the then prime minister Sir Robert Peel for people to earn money for food (Coohill 63). However, as Lord John Russell took over in the summer, he made the work conditions harsh and wages low in the workhouses so that people could have the incentive to embark on an independent industry of their own (Nally 71). Furthermore, reluctant to be involved in the local economy, Russell's government determined that the funds for the project should come



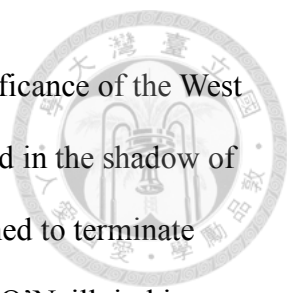
from local taxes (Coohill 64). It even insisted that the Irish landlords be responsible for the distress their country suffered (Coohill 64). The burden of having to support the public works project forced many landlords to the edge of bankruptcy; with their own livelihood threatened, they started to evict the poor tenants from their land (Coohill 68-69). The result was that multitudes of people swarmed into and overwhelmed the public workhouses: many people were turned away, while those successfully employed ended up earning only wages below the subsistence level, with the entire project poorly funded (Coohill 65-69). Simply, the workhouse system was a failure. Just as Coohill illustrates, people “were falling from hunger and dying next to their work” (65).

With limited relief provided, people in Ireland were prone to starvation. Many of them ended up with barely any strength for work; some even had difficulty bearing themselves to the relief stations (Coohill 67). What’s worse, with bodies weakened, the residents as a whole were at the mercy of diseases of various kinds. “Hunger lowered the body’s natural resistance, and many otherwise non-fatal diseases became fatal,” Coohill notes (67). Thus, people, as Coohill describes, were seen to die “in their cottages or by the side of the road” (67). Such was the apocalyptic panorama of the Great Famine. To flee the dead-end at home, many were driven to emigrate (Coohill 67-68). It is estimated that during the Great Famine, about one million people emigrated, desperate for a better life, while a further one million people could not choose but die at home—of either starvation or diseases (Coohill 59). Still, there were people who survived in Ireland. Yet, suffering long from malnutrition, diseases, and various other poor conditions in the country, the survivors became extremely poor in health (Chou 73). Poor health was, however, not the only challenge confronted by the survivors. In front of them was also great poverty which the Famine had left the land to suffer. In fact, poverty remained so serious a problem in Ireland that emigration continued even

after the Famine was over (Chou 55). The condition was especially severe in the countryside. Coohill remarks that young rural males in search of a decent job at the time would choose rather to leave the country than to settle down with other local industries (72). Such a phenomenon, he stresses, only further “strengthened the image of Ireland as a land of no opportunity” (72).

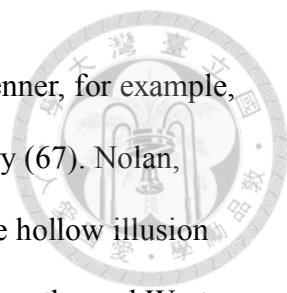
The province of Connacht, where Gretta comes from in “The Dead,” was the region damaged the most during the Great Famine (Smyth 281). Prior to the catastrophe, farms in Connacht were exceptionally densely populated, with tenants passing over the land they rented to their sons, and sons to their further offspring (Smyth 282). However, large families like this were torn apart as the landlords during the Famine evicted one tenant family after another (Smyth 288-89). “In Connacht alone, the official court and constabulary records suggest that c.30,000 families or c.150,000 people were put out on the road in the Famine years,” William J. Smyth observes (288). People out on the road became laborers swarming into the workhouses. Thus overcrowded, the workhouses, Smyth notes, became notorious for their hygiene condition: diseases like fever and dysentery were easily contracted among laborers (287). With this, the workhouse system, instead of providing relief, only exposed the starved victims to further danger. This much is what Connacht was like in the mid-nineteenth century—which is, however, half a century before the feast in “The Dead.” It is reckoned that the feast in the story takes place on 6 January 1904 (Tindall 45; Walzl 438-39). If then, the romance Gretta has had in Galway would have been around the 1880s—more than three decades after the Great Famine. What happened in these three decades? Had the situation improved, or were things equally bad? How on earth is this account of history relevant to the story we are tackling?

Following Chou, I maintain that the effects of the Great Famine continued all the



way to the time where “The Dead” is set. While explicating the significance of the West in the story, Chou stresses just how much the residents there remained in the shadow of the Famine, even after the catastrophe itself had officially been claimed to terminate (59). Her evidence comes from the research done by Tim P. O’Neill. O’Neill, in his research, shows how famine continued to be a problem in the western counties all the way to 1925 (204-18). He is attentive to the fact that in the post-Famine period, alarming reports were still constantly made by the priests and teachers who lived in areas like Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, and Cork (206). These reports, he notes, were concerned about the hardship persistent in these areas and also about the residents there who died of starvation (206). In fact, the situation was so bad that the western counties, O’Neill observes, became the “living museum” of what things had been in the Great Famine era (207)—the phenomenon reiterated by Chou as she discusses the signification of the West in “The Dead.”

Through O’Neill’s and Chou’s studies, we get to appreciate how the distress people have suffered in the Great Famine is something here and now for the characters in “The Dead.” Things are especially so for Gretta and Michael Furey, who spend their childhood and adolescence in the West. In my thesis, I will treat the aftermath of the Famine as an agent that stands between Gretta and Furey. It interferes with their relationship, making it as much traumatic as it is romantic. The trauma has to be tackled; thus, in the story, we see Gretta narrating to Gabriel the romance she has had. The narrative has quite an impact as it leaves Gabriel with feelings far from comfortable to tolerate. The difficulty with feelings leads us back to the issue of hospitality in relation to the invisible guests. Namely, in front of the emotional effect brought up by Gretta’s story, is Gabriel a hospitable host or just an indifferent man? Is he honest enough with his feelings?



Hitherto, we have seen two contrasting sets of perspectives. Kenner, for example, insists that Gabriel remains anti-communal throughout the entire story (67). Nolan, along similar lines of thought, suggests that Gabriel is indulged in the hollow illusion fed by the newspaper (35-36)—which, Gibbons notes, is far from being the real West Gretta remembers (134-35). In contrast to these rather pessimistic viewpoints are interpretations that emphasize Gabriel's potential for making changes. Thus in Ellmann's and Cheng's readings, we find Gabriel ready to surrender (Cheng 146-47; Ellmann 258-59). And through Valente's, we get to appreciate how his epiphany reflects the transnational experience typical in the West (93-95). I agree more with the latter critics who think of Gabriel as willing to communicate and capable of surrendering. It is just that I am more curious about what it is that enables Gabriel to surrender. Therefore, I will lay more emphasis on his mental functioning behind the scene. Gabriel's mental functioning is intriguing of course, but it is not an object that can be studied alone. Equally important is Gretta's effort to communicate the pain which is extremely difficult to communicate. Gretta's effort is essential: simply, without what she has done, it wouldn't be necessary for Gabriel's mind to function thus extensively.

In short, for a fuller picture, I will in this thesis investigate the entire communicative process between the two characters. I will approach it from the psychoanalytic angle. The theory I employ is mainly the model of "the container" and "the contained" postulated by the British Psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion. In Bion's language, the communicative process between the couple can be abstracted as follows. Gretta is a container trying to contain, or process in her mind, the traumatic romance she has been through. To complete her task, she manages to get another container involved: she relates her pain to Gabriel, who also has the emotions and experiences of his own to process. This is just a brief picture with much space left to fill up. What happens

between the two containers? Why is it necessary for them to cooperate? And what is it that links the two together ultimately? I will explain all of these in more details in the following chapters. Here, I would only like to stress that the link between the two containers matters. It transforms the traumatic romance from something unthinkable into an idea that can be kept in mind and, in this way, enables the two characters to show real hospitality to the memories and emotions they are supposed to welcome.

The following is what I plan to do in the chapters to come. The first chapter is the methodology chapter. I will begin by reviewing what other critics, using psychoanalysis, have said and failed to say about the story. The review leads to why it is necessary for me to reread the story with Bion's model of "the container" and "the contained." I will spend the rest of the chapter laying out what Bion says with his model. In the process, I will emphasize the mechanism of projective identification and a specific mental function named "the alpha-function." The two are the key factors that enable one container to communicate with another at a deeper level. The second chapter is on Gretta and the traumatic romance she has had with Michael Furey. I will first correlate the romance with the historical event of the Great Famine in the mid-nineteenth century. The correlation is significant. It helps us understand how traumatic the romance is and why it is necessary for Gretta to communicate it to Gabriel using projective identification. I will then describe what it is like when Gretta's projective identification comes into play. Meanwhile, I will clarify what it is that she wants to gain through this specific communicative means of hers. The third chapter is on Gabriel—namely, how he is supposed to receive the traumatic experience Gretta conveys to him through projective identification. I suggest that in order to properly receive the pain projected into him, Gabriel needs first to work through a certain fragmented part of his character he has previously denied. I will explore what that fragmented part is and how

Gabriel manages to come to terms with it in the story. The capacity on his part to sustain both the fragmentation in his personality and the pain Greta projects into him is his alpha-function. I will explicate how, through his alpha-function, he gets to transform Greta's traumatic romance from something intolerable into an idea that can be kept in mind.

Chapter One

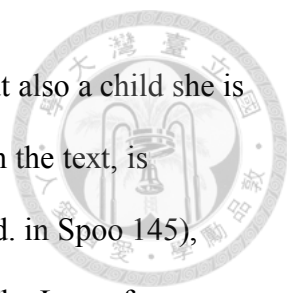
The Container and the Contained



This chapter is on methodology. I will explicate in detail what Bion says about the container and the contained. I will also explain why it is helpful for me to read “The Dead” with Bion’s model. However, before I do so, I would like first to review what other critics have said about “The Dead” using psychoanalysis.

Let me begin with the rather Freudian readings. Sheldon Brivic, for example, reads “The Dead” as “Joyce’s most ironic, distant study of jealousy” (87). And jealousy, according to Brivic, comes from the Oedipal situation where Gabriel is defeated by Michael Furey over Gretta’s favor (90). In this contest for love, Brivic stresses, Michael Furey—as the representative of “the past and the dead”—is just the paternal power that can hardly be rivaled (90). Defeated by such a paternal power, Gabriel ends up unable to communicate with his wife: he is “shy of intruding on her grief,” as Brivic notices in the text (qtd. in Brivic 91). Just as he fails to confront his wife, so he also fails to confront his life (Brivic 90). He just cannot carry on, Brivic notes, without controlling things that are out of order in life (92). This leads us to the issue of repression in the story.

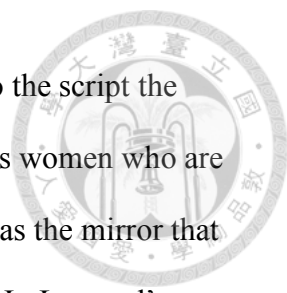
Gabriel can be seen as a repressing agent. Simply, by dismissing things out of order in his eyes, he prevents people around him from being in touch with the emotional experiences true to their lives. The number one victim is Gretta. Robert Spoo observes that Gretta, in order to be Gabriel’s wife, cannot but repress memories of the past familiar to her (148). In fact, the repression is so strong, Spoo stresses, that the familiar, when managing to return, should return in a most unfamiliar—or uncanny—way (148-49). For Spoo, what is uncanny about that which Gretta remembers is that Michael



Furey, in her recollection, appears not only as a boy she has loved but also a child she is bearing with her (149). The latter, though not manifestly expressed in the text, is implied by Gretta's language, "I was great with him at that time" (qtd. in Spoo 145), and also by Furey's own resemblance to the babe who lies cold in "The Lass of Aughrim" (Spoo 145). According to Spoo, it is these details added up that make the evocation of Furey a truly uncanny moment (145). Although the evocation is uncanny, its uncanniness, Spoo argues, lends strength to Gretta nonetheless in her relation to Gabriel: "by the end of the story it is Gabriel who considers his past futile and negated" (149).

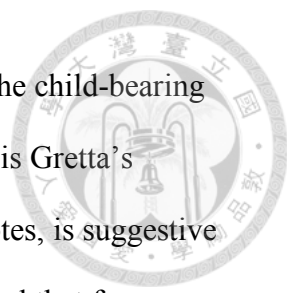
Garry M. Leonard employs the Lacanian reading and dates the Oedipal situation further back to Gabriel's childhood. Leonard explicates how this early Oedipal situation fragments his subjectivity ever since (292-93). The moment Leonard is attentive to is captured in the photo above the Morkan's piano, where Gabriel's mother is pointing something in the book to his brother. For Leonard, what's so important about the photo is the fact that Gabriel is missing (292). Since he is absent, he is eager to know what his mother has been absorbed in there and then; thus, the message in the book, according to Leonard, becomes "a lost page that Gabriel has been searching for ever since" (293). It is in order to retrieve this lost page, Leonard interprets, that Gabriel should turn out to become a reviewer of books—he just wants so much to be what his mother desires (292-93). He strives to become what his mother desires yet can never really become it—Leonard believes it is such a fact that renders his subjectivity fragmentary deep inside (293). The fragmentation needs to be covered up: this is where "the fictional unity of the self" comes into play, as Leonard puts it in line with Lacan's theory (290).

In Lacan's theory, this fictional unity, as Leonard illustrates, depends largely upon the Other: in other words, how long this fictional unity is able to stand depends on



whether or not the audience spoken to is able to respond according to the script the subject has had in mind (290). In a man's case, Leonard explains, it is women who are treated as the audience, and as the audience, they are expected to act as the mirror that reflects the ideal integral self the man wants so much to be (297-98). In Leonard's interpretation, "The Dead" features Gabriel's encounter with three women—Lily, Molly Ivors, and Gretta—who refuse to serve as his mirror (289-90). With Lily and Molly Ivors, Gabriel is already somewhat unnerved. It is Gretta who gets him truly defeated, as she confesses to him what is on her mind is actually Michael Furey instead of him Gabriel (306-07). Such a confession, Leonard notes, renders him a "glimpse into the Real," simply the fact that the integral subjectivity he believes himself to own is all fake (307). With the dissolution of this fictional integrity, Leonard concludes, Gabriel is left to read "the censored chapters of his history," simply the terrifying knowledge that who he is deep inside is and is to remain permanently fragmentary (308).

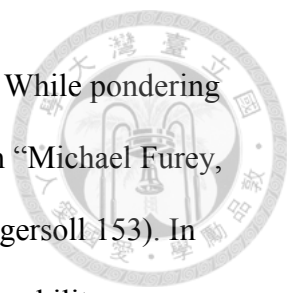
Like Leonard, Suzette Henke also notices the fragmentation in Gabriel's subjectivity. For Henke, Gabriel is a character caught between extreme arrogance and self-doubt: deep down, he has an "almost neurotic fear of exposure to the perilous fluidity of life," which he overcompensates, nonetheless, by reducing all people he encounters into less-than-human objects that feed his narcissistic gaze (42-43). The victims Henke identifies include Molly Ivors, who challenges Gabriel openly, and Gretta, who is his wife (43-44). This much is how Henke criticizes Gabriel's mastery, and at this level, her criticism is rather similar to Leonard's. She stands out, however, with the additional attention paid to Gretta's resistance and the changes it brings. While in Leonard's interpretation, Gretta resists Gabriel's mastery just by blurting out her romance with Michael Furey, in Henke's, Gretta resists with something more. According to Henke, the key to Gretta's resistance lies in her locution, "I was great with



him at that time” (qtd. in Henke 46). Like Spoo, Henke also detects the child-bearing phantasy hidden in it (46). Yet, she stresses that behind the phantasy is Gretta’s melancholic identification with Furey dead and gone—which, she notes, is suggestive of great passion at work (46). Henke argues it is passion thus displayed that forces Gabriel to recognize that the Gretta in front of him, rather than an object desired, is a subject who desires (47). Now that Gretta is recognized as a subject, Gabriel can no longer use her to secure his false self-image; instead, he must surrender to the feelings and impulses he has in the unconscious (Henke 47).

In both Leonard’s and Henke’s analyses, we have Gabriel ending up face-to-face with his split-off fragmentation in character. With Leonard, Gabriel is just left defenseless with “the censored chapters of his history” (308). Henke, however, finds these censored chapters redemptive: they somehow promise “psychic regeneration” to Gabriel, whose passion is seriously stifled by arrogance (47-48). Yet still, psychic regeneration remains something forced upon Gabriel, instead of what he actively seeks. We see Gabriel actively making changes, though, in Earl G. Ingersoll’s psychoanalytic interpretation of the story.

Ingersoll illustrates Gabriel’s transformation along the concept of travel. For Ingersoll, travel, as a metaphor, has the significance of crossing the bar (147). Thus, Gabriel, with his sexual desire stifled at home, is eager to travel (Ingersoll 151-52). In the story, he is planning a cycling tour eastward, “to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany” (*D* 189), and the purpose, as Ingersoll reminds us, is to seek power (149). Yet ironically, it is Gretta who really gets to travel: she travels by “going west through memory, regressing to the realms of romantic love,” as Ingersoll points out (153). Having witnessed his wife traveling, Gabriel starts to appreciate things differently. Ingersoll argues that toward the end of the story, Gabriel gets to recognize the ultimate



power of traveling—of crossing the bar—lies in identification (153). While pondering on “his journey westward” (*D* 223), Gabriel manages to identify with “Michael Furey, his aunts, and all the living who will one day be among the dead” (Ingersoll 153). In identification, Ingersoll notes, Gabriel finally acknowledges the vulnerability—or “femininity”—he shares with those he identifies with and, in this way, goes beyond what he has formerly believed himself to be (153-54). The bar thus crossed matters. For Ingersoll, only when Gabriel, in such a manner, recognizes the lack in himself does he become fully human (154).

That there is a certain lack inside Gabriel is crystal clear. As to how he relates to the lack in himself, different critics have different perspectives, as we have seen. I agree more with Ingersoll that Gabriel gets to approach the fragmentation in his unconscious actively instead of just remaining passive. Like Ingersoll, I appreciate that Gabriel, toward the end of the story, allows himself to identify with those whom he has considered as weak and has himself empowered through this identification.

Identification matters, but there are still questions to be raised. What is it that enables Gabriel to identify with others? While he identifies with others, how much does he become those he identifies with, and how much is he still himself? I contend that it takes a certain capacity for Gabriel to experience identification in a meaningful way. Without that capacity, he might have, from the beginning, resisted the identification altogether, or the identification would turn out so strong that he would end up losing himself entirely. Neither of these is able to lead to growth. The capacity matters not only in the issue of identification. It reaches deep down to whether or not Gabriel is able to relate to the lack in himself. This leads us to the task Leonard leaves Gabriel with in the conclusion of his argument: “He [Gabriel] must read the censored chapters of his history, the ones that refute the unity of his subjective consciousness and are, therefore,

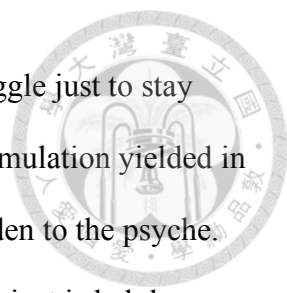
not consciously known” (308). It is not just that he must read the censored chapters of his history but that he *must be able to read* these censored chapters. If he were not able to sustain the weight of what he is supposed to read, he might abandon the task altogether and go back to the fictional integrity he has previously seized. If so, it would seem as if the new year party and the hotel episode had never really happened—the entire story would simply lose its meaning. Thus, for the story to be meaningful, it is essential that Gabriel should have the capacity to tolerate the insight revealed to him as well as the emotions that come along with the insight.

This brings us somehow to the limitations of the Lacanian approaches we have seen. The critics are brilliant in revealing the lack in Gabriel’s personality, but as to how to deal with such insight, they offer barely any solutions. Here, one may jump up and defend that the solution is simply to cross the bar, as Ingersoll illustrates to us. I agree that crossing the bar is a way out. But how to cross the bar? What is it that gets one prepared to cross the bar? We need an ideal; we also need the proper steps to reach that ideal. It is in order to be more specific about the proper steps that I switch to Bion’s model of the container and the contained. For a container, an insight, as well as the emotions which come along, is a state of mind that needs to be contained. And containing is an object-relation rather than just an individual endeavor. So far, we have our focus mainly on Gabriel: we see him face to face with the lack he has formerly denied. With the model of the container and the contained, however, it is essential that we take Gretta into consideration. We need to see the lack with which Gabriel is confronted as correlated with the pain Gretta conveys to him. In a certain sense, such a correlation is already adumbrated in Henke’s analysis: she suggests it is somehow Gretta’s passion that forces Gabriel to address the issue in himself (47). The correlation between the two deserves closer investigation. I will start my analysis with Gretta. I will

depict Greta as a container trying to contain her pain through the relationship she has with Gabriel, another container. I will then move on to Gabriel and examine how he, as a container, manages to contain the pain conveyed to him, which somehow is mixed up with certain aspects of his character he has not yet properly contained.

I will spend the rest of this chapter explicating the relationship between the container and the contained. I will also explicate how, in order to contain the contained, one container must link with another. However, before I go deeper into Bion's theory, I would like first to return to Sigmund Freud. I will review what Freud says about instincts, especially the situation of danger caused by instinctual excitation. Only when we know more about the danger related to instincts can we appreciate how difficult it is to contain an emotional state and why it is necessary to complete the task in an object-relation.

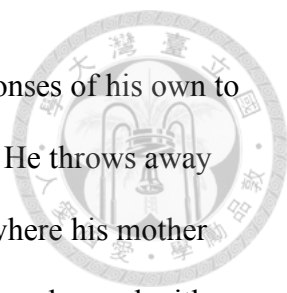
In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud draws our attention to a specific danger in infancy. The danger is that which is confronted by an infantile subject when it is separated from its mother. It is economic in nature: it consists in the increase in stimuli flooding the infantile psyche during separation (*S. E. XX: 137-38*). Yet, what is it about separation that it should yield such great amounts of stimulation? This takes us back to the role of the mother at the earliest stage of her child's life. According to Freud, her timely provision then allows for the continuity of the intra-uterine experience on her child's part—where the child, as a foetus, is perfectly taken care of inside the womb (*S. E. XX: 138*). In the eyes of the infantile subject, the mother has all it needs to keep it alive. With her presence, everything is fine. In contrast, her absence, as Freud emphasizes, is to leave the subject at the mercy of “a *growing tension due to need*” (*S. E. XX: 137*). Here, what we have is instinctual factors intensively at work: deep inside,



a great amount of energy is mobilized, which gets the subject to struggle just to stay alive. Though the struggle is integral in the matter of survival, the stimulation yielded in the process is of such high amounts that it ends up nothing but a burden to the psyche. In fact, exposed to such high amounts of stimulation, the infantile subject is helpless: as Freud argues, it can neither master the stimulation psychically nor discharge it by itself (*S. E. XX: 137*). Its young psyche is just prone to paralysis, unless there is help from the outside. This is the core of the danger when it comes to separation.

The danger of separation thus comes down to the danger of instinctual excitation. And what is so dangerous about instincts, as we have seen, lies in their potential for stimulation. It turns out that the human psyche, as Freud reminds us in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is extremely vulnerable to stimuli both from the outside and from the inside (*S. E. XVIII: 27-29*). “*Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than reception of stimuli,*” he stresses (*S. E. XVIII: 27*). And trauma lies where the ego fails to protect itself against the stimuli it is exposed to (*S. E. XVIII: 31-32*). In Freud’s theory, the protective work is carried out through the “binding” process (*S. E. XVIII: 30*). He argues that in response to the breach caused by stimuli, a system is developed in the mind which is capable of “taking up an additional stream of fresh inflowing energy and of converting it into quiescent cathexis, that is binding it psychically” (*S. E. XVIII: 30*). Oftentimes, binding is achieved through repetition. According to Freud, the traumatized subject is to bring itself again and again back to the situation where it is overwhelmed till it feels in control of the situation (*S. E. XVIII: 35-36*).

Probably, the most auspicious way to repeat a traumatic situation is playing. The example Freud offers is the “fort-da” game played by his own grandson (*S. E. XVIII: 14-17*). The child is working through the danger caused by separation. In other words,



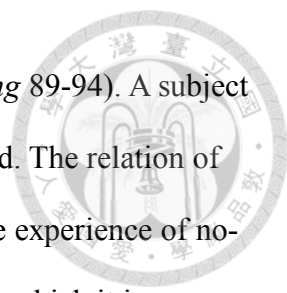
he is trying to bind the stimuli constituted of the raw instinctual responses of his own to his mother's unprepared-for absence. The following is what he does. He throws away every small object at his disposal and by so doing repeats the scene where his mother has disappeared (*S. E. XVIII: 14*). For example, he has with him "a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it" (*S. E. XVIII: 15*). He will hold the object by the string and throw it "over the edge of his curtained cot" till it goes out of sight; meanwhile, he will give a prolonged cry of "o-o-o-o"—the babbling of the German word "fort," which means gone (*S. E. XVIII: 15*). Afterwards, he will pull the reel back by the string and exclaim "da," or there, at its reappearance (*S. E. XVIII: 15*). The whole episode is, in short, a play of "disappearance and return" (*S. E. XVIII: 15*). Freud argues that through playing, the child is transforming the scene in which he is placed "in a *passive* position" into one in which he takes on "an *active* part" (*S. E. XVIII: 16*). Originally, unprepared for the mother's sudden departure, he has been left in "fright" with his psyche overwhelmed by instinctual excitement (*S. E. XVIII: 12*). Yet now, carried over into the play with the wooden reel, "the disappearance and return" becomes one "within his reach" (*S. E. XVIII: 15*). Capable of envisioning what loss is like, the child becomes free of the excitement by which he has been possessed. And with the excitement allayed, the binding work is temporarily done.

Here, we have a child able to play and ready to relate to a mother who, at times, is unavailable to mind her own business. With such an illustration, it seems that things are just so easy. As long as a child is able to play, separation is no big deal. Yet, just as Freud himself emphasizes, the psychical state the infantile subject is in while the mother is absent is a danger after all. The stimulation experienced then is paralyzing, and the subject, as a consequence, may well turn out unable to play. Therefore, while Freud offers the picture of a child capable of playing alone, we need to ask what gets the child

ready to play. To be more specific, in the initial stage of life, is the subject always ready to bind the instinctual stimulation by itself, or is there an object who timely intervenes? If there is such an object, how does it intervene? To answer these questions, I will switch to the model postulated by Wilfred R. Bion.

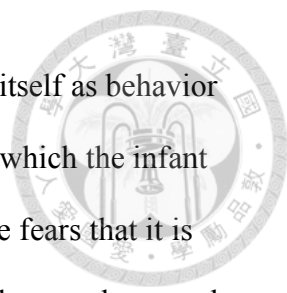
Bion takes the danger recognized by Freud as a thought to be thought of. For Bion, the prototype of thoughts is the frustration the infantile subject suffers when its “inborn expectation of a breast” should meet the breast’s absence (“Psycho-analytic Study” 306-07). The sense stimuli yielded then, as we have appreciated with Freud’s theory, are burdensome to the psyche. With Freud, we have the binding work meant to reduce the tension caused by the incoming stimuli. With Bion though, we have thinking initiated in the mental system to deal with the pressure of thoughts (“Psycho-analytic Study” 306). Bion suggests that to think is to transform raw sense stimuli into ideas the psyche is able to work with (“Psycho-analytic Study” 308). The former are designated by him as “the beta-elements,” whereas the latter are “the alpha-elements” (*Learning* 6). Thinking as an endeavor to transform beta-elements into alpha-elements then becomes a function known as “the alpha-function” (*Learning* 6; “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). Alpha-function is integral to mental development. Not only does it help reduce the stress caused by sense stimuli, but it also enables the subject to keep in mind the emotional experiences it has been through. The question now lies in how the subject gets to acquire its alpha-function, especially at the stage of infancy.

According to Bion, it is through interaction with the mother/nurturer that the infantile subject gets to acquire its alpha-function. Simply in the very beginning, the subject must learn to borrow the alpha-function from its mother/nurturer to deal with the beta-elements stuck in its psyche. To be more specific about this process, Bion



introduces the model of “the container” and “the contained” (*Learning* 89-94). A subject thinking of a thought is a container managing to contain the contained. The relation of the two is inverted in the case of the infantile subject burdened by the experience of no-breast. Here, the container, instead of containing, is contained by that which it is supposed to contain. The way out is to project the contained into another container—namely the mother—to see how this other container manages to contain it. But is it really the way out? After all, through projection, it now becomes this other container that is challenged by the contained. With this, it looks so much like the subject is just steering clear of its own trouble, but is it?

The questions met here lead us to Bion’s rather unique appreciation of the mechanism of projective identification. When it comes to either projection or projective identification, Bion holds views different from the ones held by his predecessors. His predecessors take projection mainly as a defensive mechanism. For Freud, projection is meant to deflect the pressure coming from the instincts, thus making it a danger from the outside (*S. E.* XVIII: 29). Melanie Klein is attentive to the omnipotence involved in the process. Klein argues that things projected “are meant not only to injure but also to *control* and to *take possession of* the object [onto which they are projected]” (8; emphasis added). Bion agrees with both Freud and Klein that there are times indeed when either projection or projective identification is used excessively to evade bad feelings and experiences (“Psycho-analytic Study” 307). However, he manages also to distinguish a rather realistic projective identification from the omnipotent projective identification (“Attacks” 312-13; “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). Whereas the omnipotent projective identification aims to evacuate the troublesome emotional experiences from the self, the realistic one is getting the self prepared for these experiences. Bion describes the matter as follows:

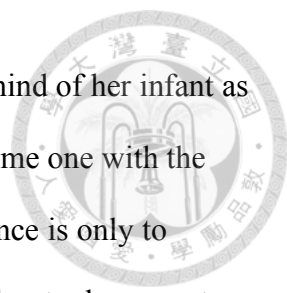


As a *realistic* activity it [projective identification] shows itself as behavior reasonably calculated to arouse in the mother feelings of which the infant wishes to be rid. If the infant feels it is dying it can arouse fears that it is dying in the mother. A well-balanced mother can accept these and respond therapeutically: that is to say in a manner that makes the infant feel it is receiving its frightened personality back again, but in a form that it can tolerate—the fears are manageable by the infant personality. (“Psycho-analytic Study” 308)

What we have here is actually communication in its crudest form. By enabling the mother to feel what it feels, the young kid manages to communicate to her the sensation that is beyond words. It is as if the child were asking her how it feels and what it means to be painful. The communication thus achieved is crucial. In fact, it is because of its communicative potential that projective identification in Bion’s account turns out to be the link that connects the infant with the mother, the patient with the analyst, as well as any subject with its object (“Attacks” 313). As a link, it deserves to be well taken care of. Namely, what is projected must be patiently retained and responded to.

In the scenario above, we have a well-balanced mother ready to contain the feelings her child has projected into her. What keeps her balanced, Bion remarks, is her capacity for “reverie” (*Learning* 36). For Bion, reverie is a manifestation of love. He notes:

Using it in this restricted sense reverie is that state of mind which is open to the reception of any ‘objects’ from the loved object [in the mother’s case, the infant] and is therefore capable of reception of the infant’s projective identifications whether they are felt by the infant to be good or bad. In short, reverie is a factor of the mother’s alpha-function. (*Learning* 36)



Simply, in reverie, the mother has herself suffused with the state of mind of her infant as if she were the infant itself. On the one hand, the mother gets to become one with the infant. On the other hand, this becoming-one-with-the-infant experience is only to remain a reverie—a dreamlike state which the mother can choose either to dream or to wake up from. Here, we have the mother retaining certain mental control over the feelings she is one with. With this, she gets to transform the beta-elements projected into her into the alpha-elements. Such is the alpha-function on the mother's part. It enables the communication initiated by the infant to continue, and as such is as much a link as the projective identification made by the infant (Bion, "Attacks" 313). With her alpha-function, the mother helps transform the beta-elements into the alpha-elements; now, the infant is ready to take its projected character back from her.

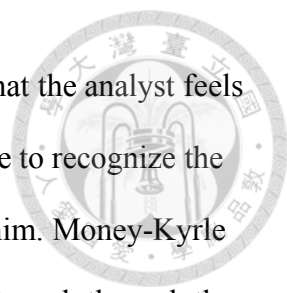
Not only does the infantile subject take in the alpha-elements the mother has made ready for it, but it also manages to take in the mother's alpha-function (Bion, "Psycho-analytic Study" 308). Thus, we have the subject ready to play. The best example in hand is probably Freud's grandson playing the "fort-da" game. The child enacts the absence and presence of his mother in the play, yet the play is only symbolic of—not equivalent to—the initial experience of "no breast" that has left him frightened. As merely a symbol, the play consists of the alpha-elements distinct from the beta-elements of sense stimuli. These alpha-elements group together as an intelligible idea of loss. With this, the child comes to make sense of the frustration it has experienced and is bound to re-experience later in life. It grows into a container capable of containing the contained. This is a landmark in mental development without a doubt. However, to reach the landmark, the child must first project its fright into the mother container. Here, we are led back to the question of whether the infantile subject is able to bind its instinctual stimulation alone. The answer might probably be that for the binding work to be

effectual, it must be built upon the link where one's projective identification is contained by another's alpha-function.



So far, we have appreciated how this other container's alpha-function is key for one's communication to turn out effective and meaningful. But what does it take for a person to transform the beta-elements into the alpha-elements? In the illustration Bion offers, we have the mother having a reverie. It looks as if she needs only to dream, and her child's emotional disturbance is ready to become an intelligible idea. Things just seem easy enough, but are they really that easy?

The discussion leads us once again to the issue of projective identification. In Bion's description, we have a child reasonably calculating its behavior to have its mother feel the emotional disturbance it wishes to communicate. It may as well be that the mother also has her vulnerability to tune into the disturbance the child yearns to communicate. To put it from another angle, we can say that the mother's vulnerability is that which is sought by the disturbed part of the child if there is indeed "a state of mind which seeks another state of mind" (Pick 35). Therefore, while dealing with her child's projective identification, the mother is, in fact, working through the vulnerability inside her own character. It is so not just between the child and the mother but also between the patient and the analyst—who, because of the patient's transference, is put in the position of the mother. Roger Money-Kyrle thus draws our attention to a challenge in the clinic where the patient's projective identification becomes mixed up with part of the analyst's character which the analyst has hitherto known little of (24). For example, originally, it is the patient who feels incompetent; then, through projective identification, it becomes the analyst who feels bewildered in front of the material the



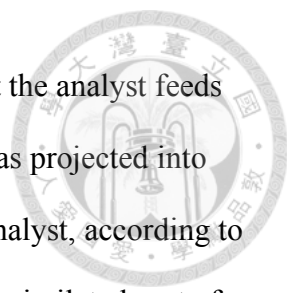
patient presents to him³ (24-25). Nevertheless, the point is not just that the analyst feels bewildered but also that the analyst should turn out for a while unable to recognize the bewilderment he suffers as that which his patient has projected into him. Money-Kyrle suggests that in such a situation, the analyst should first and foremost work through the emotional disturbance of his own (25). Only when the analyst gets to come to terms with his own emotional disturbance, Money-Kyrle stresses, is he ready to disengage himself and cope with the patient's projective identification (25).

In Money-Kyrle's illustration, we have an analyst pressured not only by the patient's projective identification but also by the encounter with part of his own character he has not yet assimilated (24-25). Somehow the capacity to sustain the pressure is crucial. In Money-Kyrle's account, it is such a capacity that gets the analyst eventually to give what has been projected back to the patient (25). Irma Brenman Pick follows Money-Kyrle as she reminds the practicing analysts to hold back before reacting to the patient's projective identification (35). She observes:

The child's or patient's projective identification are actions in part intended to produce reactions; the first thing that happens inside a living object into whom a projection takes place is a reaction. The analyst may deal with this so quickly as not to become aware of it: yet it is a crucial factor. The encounter is an interaction and, indeed, if it is being dealt with that quickly, we may have to ask whether the deeper experience is in fact being avoided. (35)

What we need to notice is the contrast between the reactions that come quickly and the willingness to brood over the impulse to react. What is problematic about reactions, as Pick notes, is that they are meant to "eliminate discomfort," or simply to shake free of

³ Money-Kyrle, in his article, uses the pronoun "he" to refer to the analyst. I follow his usage while paraphrasing his idea.

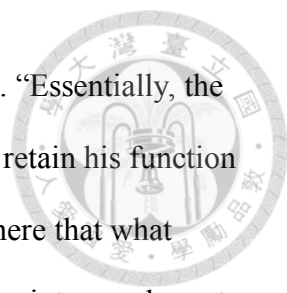


the accretion of stimuli stuck up in the psyche (36). In this way, what the analyst feeds back to the patient ends up no different from that which the patient has projected into him—the beta-elements still remain beta-elements. Worse still, the analyst, according to Money-Kyrle, may even, in the process, stuff into the patient the unassimilated part of himself (26). After all, eventually, it is still the encounter with this unassimilated part of his own character that makes him most uncomfortable in the transference situation.

Whether it is only the patient's projection thrust back or the patient's projection plus the analyst's unassimilated character, what ensues is the impasse in communication. And it is in order to avoid this impasse that the analyst must learn to brood over the impulse to react instead of acting out. Only when the analyst is able to work through the tension he is confronted with is he able to invite the patient to look at the situation together. This working through on the part of the analyst is, for Pick, "the deeper experience" that must not be avoided (35). Through this deeper experience, the beta-elements get to be transformed into the alpha-elements. Pure sense stimuli then become an intelligible idea which in turn can inspire further thinking.

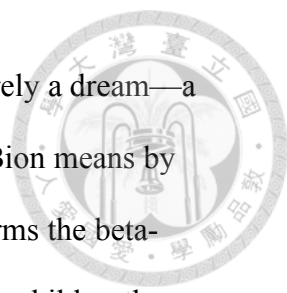
While Pick speaks of the analyst reacting too quickly, Herbert Rosenfeld speaks of the analyst transformed by the patient's projection (170-71). For Rosenfeld, the analyst is able to do little if he should end up transformed by what the patient has projected into him⁴ (170). "However, if the analyst or mother has effectively and understandingly *transformed the projection* and so has remained unchanged by it, the infant or patient begins gradually to feel safer and better in the relationship," he contends (171). To transform—instead of being transformed by—the patient's projection, the analyst needs somehow to stay active in the transference situation. In fact, for Rosenfeld, containing the patient's projection is more active mental functioning

⁴ Rosenfeld, in that book chapter, uses the pronoun "he" to refer to the analyst. I follow his usage while paraphrasing his idea.



than passive reception of the patient's feelings and experiences (160). "Essentially, the analyst has to be prepared to enter into an intense relationship and to retain his function of putting experiences into words," he stresses (160). We can detect here that what makes the analyst active is mainly this endeavor to put the experiences into words, or to transform the effect of the patient's projective identification into ideas that are thinkable. It is as if part of the self gets to emerge and become an agent that turns to inspect the rest of the self influenced by the patient. This self-inspecting agent is significant. It is the work it does that prevents the analyst from being totally transformed by the patient's projective identification and thus preserves for him the capacity for further thinking.

The experiences of the analysts quoted above shed light on what I think is the essential factor in alpha-function. It consists in the coexistence of two agents in one's character: one is susceptible to the disturbances caused by the child's or the patient's projective identification, while the other remains unchanged by them. Being disturbed by this other party's projection is somehow inevitable. Just as Money-Kyrle shows, the disturbances reach deep down to one's vulnerability or part of the character that has hitherto remained unknown—which indeed poses a challenge to the ego already integrated (24). Still, one may as well resist being disturbed and be blind to the vulnerability touched upon. Yet, to do that is to reject the other's projective identification altogether, thus amounting to what Bion refers to as "attacks on linking" ("Attacks" 308, 313). Therefore, to some extent, one must be disturbed if one is to retain the function of a container. It is only that containing entails much more than just being disturbed. To be a container, the mother or the analyst must also have an agent inside which, remaining unchanged, is able to inspect the rest of their character subject to the child's or the patient's projective identification. As long as this inspecting agent is



awake, the entire experience of being disturbed is able to remain merely a dream—a dream to fall asleep to or to wake up from. Thus we approach what Bion means by “reverie” (*Learning* 36). In reverie, the mother or the analyst transforms the beta-elements projected into them into the alpha-elements. Meanwhile, the child or the patient gets to feel that they are held by this other container to whom their feelings matter. All these pave the way for trust to build up between the two parties. Now that trust is building up, the two parties can together explore the further significance of the alpha-elements they share—namely, the emotional experiences made intelligible through one’s attempt to link with the other.

In the hotel episode in “The Dead,” Greta narrates to Gabriel the romance she has had with Michael Furey. There is something peculiar about the story she tells. It is not just a story about the pain she has had at home but also an attempt to project that very pain. In short, what we have is projective identification coming into play. On the one hand, Greta is projecting her pain into Gabriel, another container. On the other hand, Gabriel somehow has a certain vulnerability with him to receive the pain Greta has projected. The vulnerability reaches deep down into his fluid and fragmentary subjectivity—which, according to Leonard and Henke, has been buried long in his unconscious (Henke 47-48; Leonard 307-08). How does Gabriel manage to work through the vulnerability Greta seeks in him? How well does he serve as a container? I will discuss these issues in detail in the chapters to come. However, before exploring the role Gabriel plays, I need first to focus on Greta and the pain she strives to contain. In the next chapter, I will correlate the pain she suffers with the historical event of the Great Famine. I will explicate how the aftermath of the Famine interferes with her romance and makes it a traumatic experience. I will also explicate how she manages to

contain her experience and why the story she tells is projective identification.



Chapter Two

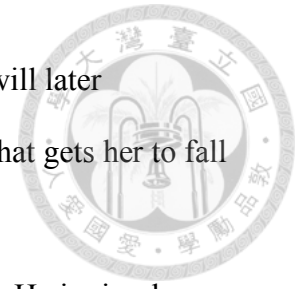
Romance Near Death



Before examining how Greta, as a container, manages to contain the pain she suffers, I would like first to scrutinize the pain itself—simply, what it is about the pain that makes it so difficult to contain. The pain is undoubtedly concerned with the loss of Michael Furey. Nevertheless, things are never just about Gretta and Furey alone. What stands between them is the effects of the Great Famine, which lasted in the West all the way to the post-Famine era. This third agent matters. Somehow, it serves as the factor that draws the two lovers together and meanwhile pulls them apart. As such, it aggravates the pain of loss, making it almost impossible for the human mind to tolerate.

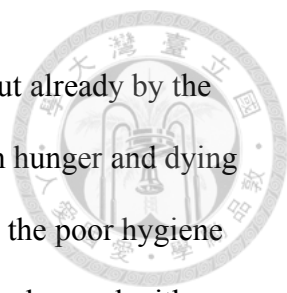
Gretta and Furey have fallen in love in Galway, Connacht, in the west of Ireland. When it comes to the West in the late nineteenth century, the aftermath of the Famine is an issue that must not be ignored. After all, just as O'Neill reminds us, the West at the time was regarded as the "living museum" of the catastrophe (207), with famine continuing to ravage people's life there (204-18). Thus, while reading "The Dead," we must be sensitive to those details that betray the shadow of this catastrophe. One such detail is the fact that Gretta has left her hometown. She has left Galway and entered a convent in Dublin for better education—or simply a better future. It is true that she is not like other youngsters in the countryside who have emigrated once and for all. Nonetheless, she shares with them the departure from home for a better future. This testifies to the fact that the West, ruined by the haunting effects of the Famine, was namely "a land of no opportunity," as Coohill puts it (72). There was barely any hope and death was not far away with famine continuously attacking. Such is the desolation lying behind the fervent love Gretta and Furey have shared. Gretta remembers only

how, in Galway, she has been great with Furey. Yet somehow, as I will later demonstrate, it is the desolation she has yet been able to remember that gets her to fall in love thus fervently.



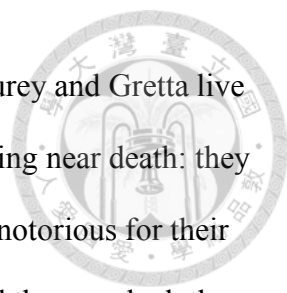
In comparison with Gretta's, Furey's case is even more severe. He is simply ruined by the lasting harm the Famine has dealt to the land and its people. In the story, he dies of serious illness—which, according to Chou, reflects the health problem pervasive in the post-Famine generation (73). The health issue, as Chou illustrates to us, is part of the aftermath of the Famine: the worn survivors in the Famine era passed down their poor health to their offspring; the society as a whole thus remained at the mercy of diseases (73). In addition to the illness Furey suffers, the gasworks by which he is exploited is also curious. Valente shows that the gasworks, as an imprint of foreign capital and industry, is a transnational phenomenon (92-93). I suggest the gasworks is transnational not only in the sense that it is itself something foreign but also in the sense that it is reminiscent of a specific colonial situation back in the Famine era. It harks back to the workhouse system established by the British colonial government at the time. Now, we have a question to solve: what is it about the gasworks in the late nineteenth century that makes it a living monument of the workhouse system more than three decades ago?

The key to this lies in the nature of the gasworks. Don Gifford describes it as “[a] utilities plant where gas for lighting and heating was manufactured from coal. One of the chief byproducts was *air pollution*, and the work was *notoriously dirty and unhealthy*” (125; emphases added). What we need to notice is the almost fatal work conditions of the gasworks: the laborers were exposed to such a tremendous amount of pollution that their health was eroded day by day. Similarly, more than three decades ago, refugees in the workhouses had been toiling in extremely poor hygiene conditions,



which had proved detrimental to their lives, with their bodies worn out already by the shortage of food. Just as Coohill describes, people “were falling from hunger and dying next to their work” (65). And this picture is definitely a colonial one: the poor hygiene conditions were owed, after all, to the fact that the British colonizers, obsessed with *Laissez-faire*, were reluctant at the time to fund the relief project needed by so many. This colonial history is significant. I suggest it is in order to remind the readers of this colonial history that Joyce should make Furey “a boy in the gasworks” (*D* 219).

Furey is not only “a boy in the gasworks” (*D* 219) but also a boy who earns his living away from home. His people live in Oughterard—which, Gifford notes, is a small village “seventeen miles west-northwest of Galway” (125). Alienated in an extremely dangerous job, Furey is reminiscent somehow of what his previous generation has been through. During the Great Famine, also in the province of Connacht, a large number of people were forced to separate from their families as the landlords evicted one tenant family after another. Banished from the land their families had long subsisted on, many victims were stranded alone in the workhouses—which, instead of providing relief, only exposed them to further danger with fever and dysentery spreading among the overcrowded space. So far, we have seen how Furey resembles the victims of the Great Famine. Still, one may jump up and protest that the resemblance is meant only as an allegory, which is not direct evidence that the effects of the Famine still exist in the time of “The Dead.” But why bother to arrange this allegory in the story? I suggest it may well be because Joyce knows just how people have continued to live in the shadow of the Famine that he should arrange such an allegory in his story. The colonial history of the Famine matters because it is not just history. The challenges people have met at the time are here and now for Furey, Gretta, as well as the rest of the post-Famine generation in the countryside.



The shadow lasting from the Great Famine to the time when Furey and Gretta live is the near-death situation. During the Great Famine, people were living near death: they suffered from starvation and were forced to labor in the workhouses notorious for their hygiene conditions. Meanwhile, there was no prospect: however hard they worked, the money they earned was never enough for them to buy the food they needed direly. In the story, Furey also lives near death. As an offspring of the Famine victims, he already needs to struggle with health problems. His health issue is only further aggravated by the serious pollution produced by the gasworks. Thus poor in health, he is left with barely any prospect: “He was going to study singing only for his health” (*D* 221). Too weak to chase his own dream, he has no choice but to see himself consumed by the dangerous job he is trapped in. This is how desperate Furey’s life is. Though Gretta’s situation is not as bad, she is closely connected with Furey whose life is terribly at risk. In this way, death is also not far away from her. Death is near to Gretta, not just because she may at any time lose her beloved but also because the place she lives is where famine does not actually cease. Just as O’Neill shows with his research, famine continued to ravage the western counties all the way to the early twentieth century (204-18). Simply, with the shortage of food unresolved, survival is bound to remain uncertain.

Living near death, people are fragile. In fact, their fragility is close to that of a newborn child separating from its mother. The fragility of the newborn child has to do with its immature mental functioning. Having little experience with the environment and barely able to control the motions of its own body, the child can hardly react when its mother disappears. The mother has all it needs to keep it alive, yet it can do little to reach her. Such is the helplessness of the newborn child. Helplessness similar to this can somehow be detected in people caught in the near-death situation. Take for example the

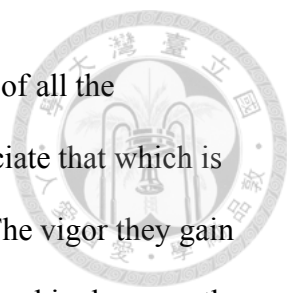
victims in the Famine era. It is true that, unlike the newborn child, many of them (especially the adults) were rather mature in their mental functioning. Yet, the mature mental functioning helped little: however hard they strived, food was still out of their reach. Potatoes were no longer available, and the wages they earned in the workhouses were way below the subsistence level. The ordeals where these victims were caught somehow epitomize the difficulty people encounter in the near-death situation. Namely, in that position, people have little control over that which they depend on in the matter of survival—the same way the newborn child has little control over the absence and presence of its mother.

Ill-equipped to reach the mother, the newborn child, according to Freud, is at the mercy of “a *growing tension due to need*” (*S. E.* XX: 137). It is likewise with people living near death. The tension they share with the newborn leads us to yet another level of danger when it comes to the near-death situation. This has to do with the fact that the tension is instinctual. It is owed to something resistant to death deep inside any given living entity—as we can witness in the struggle a child has been through when its mother is absent. But what is so dangerous about the instincts to carry on? Aren’t they integral in the matter of survival? Instincts matter to survival without a doubt, yet they are also the source of stimuli detrimental to the human psyche. Just as Freud shows in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the human psyche is extremely vulnerable to the stimuli coming in: as long as the number of stimuli exceeds what the psychical apparatus is able to bind, the mind is to be traumatized (*S. E.* XVIII: 27-32). Excessive stimuli are the trouble we have here. They are exactly the threat confronting the people who, caught near death, are gnawed by the growing tension of feeling needy. In short, the near-death situation is dangerous. It is dangerous not only because death is near but also because the stimuli to which people are exposed in this position are overwhelming and

traumatizing.

The sense stimuli flooding Gretta and Furey are the great passion they feel for each other. The passion is not just two people being drawn together as they reach their adolescence. It has a darker dimension which is related to the near-death situation the Famine has left in Galway, Connacht. Namely, caught in the near-death situation, residents in the region are struggling to stay alive. Furey is struggling because he lives alone and is involved in a job detrimental to his worn body. Gretta is struggling because there is little prospect around her, and the life of her beloved is at risk. For both the struggling characters, the presence of each other matters. The sensation that there is another person right around prevents both of them from being overwhelmed by the struggle they cannot be spared from. Therefore, in a sense, we can say it is the struggle for life that draws the two together. However, it is not as simple as that. Once the presence of the other becomes necessary in the matter of survival, that which has made them struggle to stay alive becomes that which fuels their love. This leads us to the instinctual dimension of their relationship. This instinctual dimension is significant. I suggest it is because of the instinctual factors involved that the passion they feel for each other should turn out great and, eventually, traumatizing.

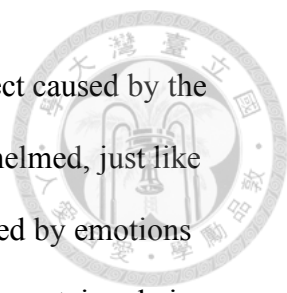
Of course, there is more to their relationship than the issue of survival. Gretta does admire Furey's beautiful voice. "He was going to study singing only for his health. He had a very good voice, poor Michael Furey," Gretta recollects (*D* 221). The message implied here is that even though Furey is not able to receive the proper training he desires, he still sings well. This shows how, in Gretta's eyes, Furey's capacity to sing is a constant: it survives the vicissitudes that prevent him from pursuing his singing career, including the diseases he contracts and the harmful effects he suffers in the gasworks. As such, the capacity becomes the very evidence of his liveliness. The liveliness Gretta



recognizes in Furey is critical. It is there to assure Furey that in spite of all the challenges he is struggling with, he is still alive. Being able to appreciate that which is alive and beautiful, Gretta also gets to feel hopeful about life itself. The vigor they gain from this experience deepens their tie. It is just that the more a relationship deepens, the more difficult it is for people to let it go. Things are especially so for Gretta and Furey. After all, they are caught near death and, in such a state, are desperate for anything that promises life.

As long as they are together, things are fine; problems come when they are forced to separate. Alone, they become the full victims of the near-death situation. The tension of feeling needy surges, whereas before, it has been eased by the company they have offered to each other. With its full force, the tension kills: the stimuli it imposes upon its victims simply run way beyond what their psychical apparatus is able to bind. Therefore, in the story, we see Furey risking his life for love. On a rainy winter evening, he sneaks out to see Gretta for the last time before she embarks on her trip to Dublin. In a sense, he has to meet her. Having to separate from her is already a blow, not to mention the fact that he is sick and is prohibited from seeing her face to face. He has to find a way to ease the tension caused by these, or he will be overwhelmed by the sense stimuli of passion dammed up inside. However, to ease the tension costs him his life. There is simply no way out. The psychical apparatus is totally vanquished by the sense stimuli it is exposed to. The container, instead of containing, is contained by the contained which it is supposed to contain. Here, there are no such things as alpha-function and alpha-elements; what's left instead are beta-elements paralyzing the body and the mind. Such is the trauma Furey suffers being torn apart from Gretta, whom he loves and depends on exclusively.

Like Furey, Gretta is also traumatized. As she learns of the news that Furey is no



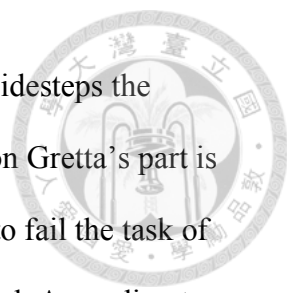
longer alive, she also suffers her passion dammed up inside. The effect caused by the dammed-up passion is great. At the time, she must have been overwhelmed, just like years later, as she narrates her romance to Gabriel, she is overwhelmed by emotions when she reaches the part of Furey's death. Here, we witness another container being contained by the beta-elements it is supposed to contain. Gretta is caught in this state of mind not only because she herself is a victim who falls in love in the near-death situation in the post-Famine era but also because she, crazily in love, manages somehow to identify with Furey in despair. Gretta's identification with Furey shows itself in various details in the story. One such detail, as Henke discovers, is the line, "I was great with him at that time," uttered by Gretta herself (qtd. in Henke 46). According to Henke, the phrase "great with him," is suggestive of the image of pregnancy—namely, the mother being one with the child inside her body (46). More obvious than the child-bearing phantasy is perhaps the image of Gretta walking in the snow. The image is touched upon in the joke Gabriel makes about her carelessness. "But as for Gretta there... she'd walk home in the snow if she were let," he says jokingly to his aunts as they talk about the dreadful effects of the weather (*D* 180). The audacity Gabriel pictures in a cavalier manner is reminiscent, however, of Furey standing defenseless amid the foul weather years ago just to see Gretta for the last time. This desperate image somehow remains with Gretta and shapes her character. This is how Gretta identifies with Furey driven to despair.

The identification, in Henke's description, is of a melancholic kind—it is rent by passion too intense for the bereaved subject to let go of the love object dead and gone (46). It turns out that reluctant to let go, the subject regresses, and, by regression, preserves its tie to the love object no longer available. But what does regression have to do with identification? In other words, why is it that identification—especially in the

case of melancholia—is to be thought of as regressive?

To answer this, we need to turn to the developmental process mapped out by Freud and his followers. For Freud, “identification is a preliminary stage of object-choice” (*S. E.* XIV: 249). Namely, in the initial stage of life, the infantile subject has yet been able to distinguish itself from the object it is attached to. This has to do with the immediacy of the mother’s care at this stage. According to Freud, the infant at this stage needs only to hallucinate, while the mother, intuiting that her child is in need, will show up at once with her breasts (*S. E.* XII: 220). The immediacy on the mother’s part creates the illusion that everything is the infant’s creation. Therefore, instead of the infant relating to the mother as its love object, what we have is an autistic “bird’s egg with its food supply enclosed in its shell,” as Freud vividly describes (*S. E.* XII: 220). Here, we witness the total confusion between the subject and the object, and this is what it means by identification. The bird’s egg will hatch, though, as the infantile subject grows. As the subject interacts more with the environment around it, a function will emerge, which will then enable it to draw the boundaries between itself and the object it is pinning on (Sandler, “On Communication” 1102). With this, the subject begins to experience what it means by object-love. Nonetheless, there are still occasions where the boundary-setting function fails, as we can see in a melancholic subject who has difficulty mourning for the object lost. Unable to mourn, it regresses to the state where the subject and the object are indistinguishable. It identifies with the lost object in such a way as if “the shadow of the object fell upon the ego” (*S. E.* XIV: 249). This much is the pathology of melancholia in Freud’s theory.

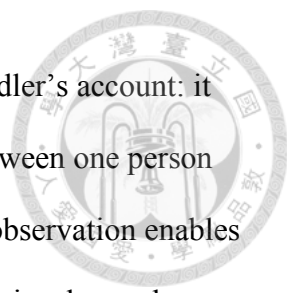
So far, we have appreciated how identification is a melancholic phenomenon. The question we now have is whether Gretta’s identification with Furey is truly melancholic. In Henke’s account, it is melancholic: driven by passion too strong, Gretta simply “seals



up the lover's replica like an embryo in a womb," and, by so doing, sidesteps the mourning she needs to mourn (46). I agree with Henke that passion on Gretta's part is strong and deep, but, for me, strong passion is not sufficient for one to fail the task of mourning. One fails to mourn because of something more complicated. According to Freud, what prevents a subject from mourning is oftentimes the ambivalence⁵ it bears about the lost object (*S. E.* XIV: 250-51)—a factor not obvious in Gretta and Furey's relationship. A question now arises: if Gretta is not melancholic, how come she still identifies with Furey?

It turns out that identification is not exclusively a melancholic phenomenon. According to the British Psychoanalyst Joseph Sandler, "the state of primary confusion between self and object" actually persists throughout life ("Concept" 46). It persists even after the subject, having acquired the boundary-setting function, is ready to distinguish itself from the object it has formerly identified with. This has to do with the fact that the subject, as Sandler argues, is not all the while ready to draw the boundaries between itself and the object it is relating to—especially in a relaxed state ("On Communication" 1102). With the boundary-setting function suspended, the subject, Sandler observes, gets to experience momentary confusion with the object ("On

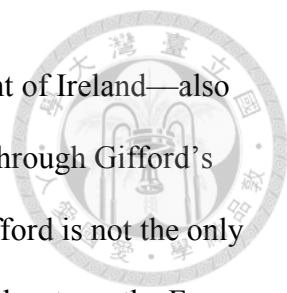
⁵ Strong passion is a phenomenon commonly seen in people who tend to choose their objects narcissistically. For many psychiatrists in Freud's time, the narcissistic type of object-choice is the prime factor that causes melancholia, as the relationships founded upon this object-choice are very close to narcissism where the subject and the object are indistinguishable (*S. E.* XIV: 249-50). Though this speculation makes sense, it lacks clinical evidence, as Freud points out (*S. E.* XIV: 250). There is one phenomenon that is clinically verified, though. Simply, a patient falls into melancholia less because his or her love-object really dies but more because he or she is abandoned by that very love-object (*S. E.* XIV: 251). Such situations of "being slighted, neglected or disappointed," according to Freud, "reinforce an already existing ambivalence" in the relationship, and this, he stresses, is a factor that must not be overlooked when it comes to melancholia (*S. E.* XIV: 251). Freud argues: "If the love for the object—a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up—takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering" (*S. E.* XIV: 251). It is significant that the patient turns himself or herself into such a substitutive object. By so doing, Freud stresses, he or she manages to avoid the embarrassing situation of having to express his or her hostility out in the open (*S. E.* XIV: 251). "After all, the person who has occasioned the patient's emotional disorder, or on whom his [or her] illness is centred, is usually to be found in his [or her] immediate environment," Freud notes (*S. E.* XIV: 251).



Communication” 1102). This momentary confusion is critical in Sandler’s account: it paves the way for the capacity for empathy and is thus the bridge between one person and another (“Concept” 46; “On Communication” 1104). Sandler’s observation enables us to appreciate Gretta’s identification with Furey in a new light. Previously, we have touched upon how the tie the two characters establish serves as a shelter for both of them in the near-death situation in the post-Famine countryside. It may as well be that inside the shelter, they are able to feel relaxed and, in a relaxed state, allow themselves to regress unconsciously to the primary confusion between self and object. This primary confusion has a huge impact on their relationship. On Gretta’s part, it allows her to feel the passion Furey feels and suffer the pain he suffers. Empathy thus experienced reshapes her character and gets her to identify with Furey even more. Thus, she develops her child-bearing phantasy in the story and nurtures with her the wish to also walk defenselessly in the snow. Both of these are an imprint of a deep relationship she has been through.

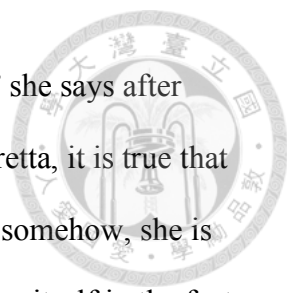
Nevertheless, the relationship is somehow too deep for her to experience. It has been a source of life for her in the near-death situation. Yet, failing to be so till the very end, it is also a source of pain. The pain Gretta endures not only has to do with her dammed-up passion but also has to do with the suffering she has shared with Furey in identification. The problem now lies in how she manages with a relationship that involves that much pain. If we picture her as a host, how much of the relationship is she able to welcome, and how much of it is she not yet ready for?

It turns out that Gretta is not able yet to keep everything in mind. This is showcased in her rather problematic way of remembering Furey: “I think he died for me” (D 220). Gifford traces the origin of the line to *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, a play by W.



B. Yeats (125). In the play, Gifford notes, Cathleen—the embodiment of Ireland—also speaks of the deceased patriots as men dying for love of her (125). Through Gifford’s analysis, we spot the rhetoric of martyrdom in Gretta’s language. Gifford is not the only critic who discovers this rhetoric. In Vincent P. Pecora’s analysis of the story, the Furey Gretta represents is also a martyr—yet in a different manner (241-42). According to Pecora, Furey’s image in the story is largely confused with Christ dying for humankind (241-42). The confusion, Pecora stresses, is the “legend” Gretta fabricates for her romance—the fabrication done by “idealizing both his [Furey’s] death and her love” (241). Pecora’s point has been expanded by Chou. Chou maintains that coming from Galway, Gretta should know by heart the effects of the Famine on the land (75). With this, she should know it is poverty and diseases that have caused Furey’s death—yet still, she insists that Furey has died for her (Chou 75). Chou argues that in so insisting, Gretta appears no different from Molly Ivors, who treats the West as a utopia preserved for primitive Irish culture (75). Both characters, she concludes, mean to ignore the disastrous history deeply affecting the region (75).

I agree with both Pecora and Chou that by idealizing her relationship with Furey, Gretta steps away from what has really happened to her. It is a sign showing that she is not ready to know all that must be known. Yet, not being ready to know is different from being unwilling to know. With Molly Ivors, we see the model of a subject who is unwilling to know. Enthusiastic about nationalism, Molly Ivors, in the story, is quick in passing her judgment. Having discovered that Gabriel writes a literary column for *The Daily Express*, a conservative newspaper, she quickly judges him to be “a West Briton” (D 188). She refers to him as West Briton again after he turns down her invitation to go on “an excursion to the Aran Isles” (D 188). Of course, Gabriel is not entirely guiltless with the decisions he has made, yet still, he has his reasons. However, Molly Ivors does



not want to know the reasons he has. “Of course, you’ve no answer,” she says after Gabriel blurts out that he is sick of his own country (*D* 190). With Gretta, it is true that the idealization on her part shows her limitations in knowledge. Yet, somehow, she is not satisfied with her limitations. She wants to know more. This shows itself in the fact that while idealizing her romance with Furey, she also manages to maneuver with the idealization she fabricates. By thus maneuvering, as I will then demonstrate, she is actually preparing herself to know what she has hitherto been unable to know.

To explore Gretta’s maneuver, we need first to pay attention to when she presents the idealized image of Furey. She presents the image just as she feels that Gabriel is sexually excited about her. Toward the end of the party, as he sees Gretta absorbed in the song she listens to, Gabriel finds his passion greatly aroused. All the way back to the hotel, he is thinking of the secret life they have had and is planning to coax her into intercourse once they are alone. Of course, Gretta does not necessarily know all that has gone through his mind; after all, he does not have a chance to tell her the details. However, he does have a chance to caress her hair and hold her hand between his palms. He then whispers to her: “Gretta dear, what are you thinking about” (*D* 218)? “Tell me what it is, Gretta. I think I know what is the matter. Do I know?” he adds (*D* 218). All these are enough for Gretta to know that Gabriel, at the time, is possessed by sexual desire. And this is exactly the moment she calculates to have him meet the idealized Furey. The idealized Furey appears as a perfect rival of love. In front of such a perfect rival, Gabriel is bound to be frustrated, thus left to suffer his passion dammed up inside. However, Gabriel is not alone in being caught in this state of mind. Years ago, when forced to separate, both Gretta and Furey have also been drowned by the passion burning inside them. The sharing of experience is not a coincidence. Instead, it is effected by Gretta’s minute calculation—including the way she fabricates her romance

and the time she chooses to present her fabrication. Here, we have a vivid picture of what it is like when projective identification comes into play.

In a certain sense, projective identification lends power to Gretta over Gabriel. Gabriel has a tendency to overpower his wife. Fascinated by his wife engrossed in music, for example, he would like to turn her into a picture: “*Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter” (D 210). According to Norris, what Gabriel intends here is actually to reduce Gretta to an aesthetic object under his gaze—in this way, he repeats the violence committed by the duke in “My Last Duchess” (219-21). Through Norris’s interpretation, we notice Gabriel’s potential violence. However, Gabriel is not the only character who desires to paint ruthlessly. Equally important is the fact that Gretta manages successfully in the story to ruthlessly paint her state of mind deep into Gabriel’s heart. Through projective identification, she gets Gabriel to struggle with the struggle she has had a hard time with. Somehow, this is her back answer to Gabriel’s long-held mastery. By having him disturbed in his private sphere, Gretta, as Williams notes, “confronts him with the limitation of his power” (95). Now that Gabriel is rendered powerless, Gretta is able to reject easily the aesthetic image he seeks to impose upon her. In this way, she successfully frees herself from the power structure oppressive to her, as Williams concludes (94-96).

Projective identification is more than just a forceful back answer, though; Gretta wields it mainly to access the things she has not yet known about her traumatic romance. What prevents her from having a fuller picture of the romance is the excessive pain it involves. Back in Galway, Furey has failed with the pain: the action he has taken to ease his dammed-up passion has proved detrimental to his life, with his body already weak. Vanquished in this way, he has had nothing but pure beta-elements unassimilated and indigestible. In identification with Furey suffering, Gretta, at the time, has somehow

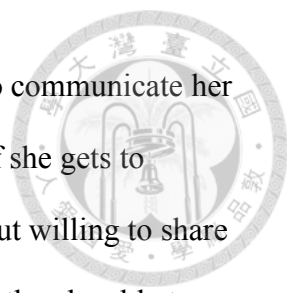
incorporated these beta-elements. Beta-elements accumulate in her, when she, alone in Dublin, learns of Furey's death. With this accumulation of beta-elements, Gretta fails with her function as a container. After all, there seems to be no one who intervenes.

There is no alpha-function available for her to transform the beta-elements plaguing the mind into the alpha-elements intelligible. To restore her containing ability, she must borrow the alpha-function from someone else, and to do this, she has to have recourse to projective identification. By projecting into another person the state of mind intolerable for her, she gets a chance to witness how the same state of mind may be well managed if that other person turns out mature enough with emotions. Through learning of such a kind, she gets to envision how it might be possible for her to process the experience she has had. Thus, gradually, she develops the alpha-function of her own and grows into a container ready to keep things in mind.

However, does Gretta really want to keep in mind the pain involved in her traumatic romance? In the story, we find her fast asleep as soon as she gets Gabriel disturbed by the pain that has originally been hers to suffer. With this, it looks so much like she is just steering clear of her own trouble, but is it? The question we meet here is actually the larger question concerning the function of projective identification.

Through the process I have just laid out, we get to appreciate projective identification as a mechanism that facilitates the process of knowing. Yet, it is equally true that people may use it excessively to evade bad feelings and experiences. What does Gretta really aim for with the mechanism? How can we be sure that she really wants to know about the things she has been through?

The evidence I find is the interest she expresses in the trip Molly Ivors has invited them to the west of Ireland. "O, do go, Gabriel, she said. I'd love to see Galway again" (*D* 191). She is eager to take the trip because a trip back home is a chance for her to



recollect what has happened to her there. It is also a chance for her to communicate her experience to Gabriel. In her case, communication matters terribly. If she gets to communicate her pain to a person, or if there is a person who turns out willing to share the weight of her pain, the pain will become more tolerable. She will then be able to transform the pain she has suffered into ideas that can be kept in mind. Nevertheless, Gabriel does not want to know about her experience at home. He resents the idea of a trip to the countryside altogether in spite of the interest she shows. “You can go if you like, said Gabriel coldly” (*D* 191). In response to a husband who does not want to know, Gretta becomes more aggressive. Thus, she turns to projective identification.

Gretta turns to projective identification also because the pain she strives to communicate is beyond words. This has to do with the fact that the tie she has had with Furey is somehow too close. As we have seen, it has served as a source of life for both of them in the barren countryside ravaged by the Famine. With the tie meaning this much, the pain of having to separate becomes easily confused with the pain of being left alone to struggle near death. Also, Gretta manages to confuse her pain with Furey’s because she, too close to Furey, easily empathizes with him in identification. In short, the pain stuck up in Gretta is various factors agglomerated. And as such an agglomeration, it is beta-elements that appear as a nameless burden in the mind. The nameless burden can acquire its name only when it is projected into a dependable container. By projecting her pain into Gabriel, Gretta is asking him how it feels and what it means to separate from a person who is life itself. She is also asking him how painful it is to suffer passion dammed up inside as a consequence. This far, we find projective identification as a means of communication for Gretta in the situation peculiar to her. Previously, we have seen how, with projective identification, Gretta successfully resists the aesthetic image Gabriel intends to force on her. It turns out that

for Gretta, projective identification is not only a back answer to Gabriel's potential violence but also a link she tries to establish with Gabriel. Through the link, she is getting him to know the experience she has had. Such a link deserves to be well taken care of—the emotions projected via the link must be patiently retained and responded to.

Gretta's part ends with her falling "fast asleep" (*D* 222). She falls asleep, knowing that she has made her progress. The effect of her projection will continue, and somehow, she trusts that Gabriel is able to handle it. Now, we need to shift our focus to Gabriel. What happens to him as he is communicated to in such an aggressive manner? In the midst of the party, while rejecting Gretta's request to join the trip to the West, Gabriel shows himself as a subject who does not want to know. Will he be changed by Gretta's projective identification? Given that he is changed, to what degree is he changed, and how does he deal with the changes? These are the issues I will address in the next chapter.

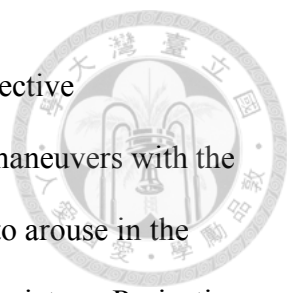
Chapter Three

Hospitality and Working Through



This chapter is on the role Gabriel plays as the receiver of Gretta's projective identification. To be more specific about the matter I want to describe, I would like to picture Gabriel as a host in relation to the emotions Gretta asks him to welcome. How does he treat the invisible guests he is supposed to welcome? If, eventually, he is able to become hospitable to these guests, what is it that enables him to be hospitable? These are the issues I will discuss in detail in this chapter.

Nonetheless, before exploring how Gabriel manages to become hospitable, I need first to check out a part of his character that makes him susceptible to the emotional effect of Gretta's story. That part of Gabriel's character reaches deep down to the fragmentation of his subjectivity noticed by both Leonard and Henke (Henke 42-44; Leonard 289-91). As both of these critics show, Gabriel, for the most part of the story, cleverly turns his back on that fragmentation in himself and only manages to confront it after Gretta reveals her secret romance (Henke 42-44; Leonard 289-91). For the transformation to really occur in Gabriel, Gretta's revelation is definitely the key. In Henke's account, even more essential is the passion involved in the revelation: somehow, it is under the influence of the passion the revelation betrays that Gabriel finally surrenders to his split-off fragmentation in subjectivity (46-47). This much is the correlation Henke adumbrates between Gretta's passion and Gabriel's split-off fragmentation. In this chapter, I would like to strengthen the correlation even more. I would like to depict Gabriel's split-off fragmentation as that which is sought by Gretta's unresolved passion. It is simply an injured state of mind meant to mate with another injured state of mind.



The discussion above leads us to yet another dimension of projective identification. In the previous chapter, while discussing how Gretta maneuvers with the story she tells, we focus on the calculation on the part of the subject to arouse in the object the feelings it tries to convey. This, however, is just part of the picture. Projective identification is never only the subject's sole endeavor. To be meaningful, it must also be an experience shared by both the subject and the object. But how does the subject manage to make it a shared experience? To answer this, we need to examine further the calculation on the subject's part. It turns out that the subject does not only calculate to create in the object the emotions that are originally its own. To achieve the desired-for effect, it also calculates to seek in the object the state of mind similar to the one it is sustaining. In fact, it is not until that similar state of mind is successfully sought in the object that projective identification really occurs.

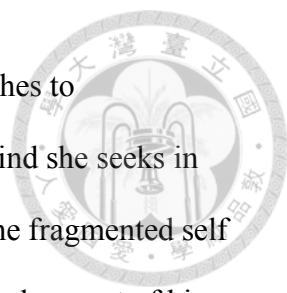
For a more concrete model, let me turn once again to the clinical picture offered by Money-Kyrle. Money-Kyrle's picture features an analyst feeling bewildered in front of the material the patient has presented—the bewilderment the analyst suffers is actually the state of mind sought by the patient's incompetent self (24-25). Namely, while being disturbed by the material he is unable to interpret, the analyst, in Money-Kyrle's description, is experiencing the confusion of the strain he suffers as an analyst and the incompetence the patient projects into him (24-25). What Money-Kyrle vividly portrays is not only the calculation on the part of the subject but also the overlap of both the subject's and the object's states of mind. In fact, this overlap in emotional experience is intrinsic. If the analyst did not have the strain of having to make interpretations, he might not even perceive the incompetence projected by the patient. It is likewise in Gabriel's case. It is true that Gretta maneuvers with the story she tells. In

the end, it is still the fragmented⁶ part of Gabriel's character that has him exposed to the effect of her story. The story leaves him uneasy, and the uneasiness, as we now know, is the overlap of two states of mind. It is Gabriel's unassimilated fragmentation mixed up with the unassimilated pain Gretta has projected.

The overlap in experience is indeed the occasion where one person can most efficiently transmit his or her feelings to another person. Nevertheless, it is also a situation extremely difficult to handle. Back to Money-Kyrle's illustration, the analyst, while being disturbed by the patient's perplexing material, is, for a while, unable to discern that the disturbance he suffers is, in fact, the effect of the patient's projective identification (24-25). Under such circumstances, Money-Kyrle stresses, it is essential that the analyst should work through his own emotional disturbance before anything else (25). Adding up to Money-Kyrle's suggestion, Pick emphasizes the necessity on the part of the analyst to remain in the state of mind sought by the patient (35). For Pick, only when the analyst is able to manage things thus patiently can the analytic experience go deep in the treatment (35). Through Money-Kyrle's and Pick's arguments, we have a glimpse of how the overlap in the emotional state is dealt with in the clinic. It is troublesome, and yet the trouble involved is somehow the hospitality on the part of the analyst to the patient he is treating. It is his endeavor to contain that which the patient can hardly contain by himself.

The question we now have is whether or not Gabriel should take the similar trouble in the story to be hospitable. I am afraid the answer is yes. It is true that he is not an analyst and that what is in front of him is his wife instead of a patient. Yet, what happens between them is communication no less than that which occurs extensively

⁶ When it comes to the fragmentation in Gabriel's character, I use an adjective different from that used by Leonard. Whereas Leonard refers to Gabriel's subjectivity as "fragmentary" (298), I speak of his inner self as fragmented. I choose a different adjective because I disagree with Leonard about the cause of Gabriel's inner fragmentation. I will elaborate on this point in the next segment of this chapter.



between the patient and the analyst. Simply, to catch what Gretta wishes to communicate, Gabriel must learn to relate to the disturbed state of mind she seeks in him. This, of course, implies the necessity for him to work through the fragmented self he has previously split off. That fragmented self is integral. It is not only a part of his character he must integrate to be a complete person but also a receptive organ he needs to access the message deep inside Gretta's story. Here, I would like to emphasize its significance as a receptive organ. For me, only when Gabriel learns to "listen" with this receptive organ is he ready to catch the meaning beyond words and show real hospitality to the feelings Gretta conveys to him.

Before exploring how Gabriel manages the fragmented part of his character, we need first to inspect what that fragmented part consists of. Leonard, as we have seen, traces the fragmentation of Gabriel's subjectivity to the Oedipal situation captured in the photo above the Morkans' piano (292-93). In the photo, Gabriel's mother is exchanging a message in a book with his brother, and Gabriel, Leonard stresses, is entirely excluded from the exchange (292-93). For Leonard, it is the message Gabriel has missed at the time that renders his subjectivity fragmentary: however hard he strives, he just cannot reach that missing message and, thus, can never become what his mother desires (292-93). Being undesired-for is indeed something to be anxious about. However, in the text, there is a more obvious trouble that bothers Gabriel. The trouble has to do with his nationality—somehow, Gabriel is not comfortable at all being Irish. We can smell this in his eagerness to distinguish himself from other guests—simply, other fellow Irish—at the party. He seeks to distinguish himself mainly through his after-dinner speech. His own superiority in taste and education is all he is preoccupied with while fixing the details of the speech amid the noises people make dancing happily. "The indelicate

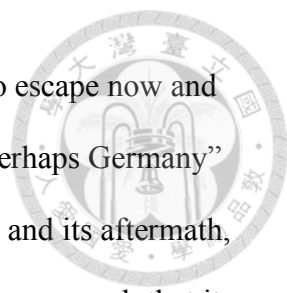
clacking of men's feels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his" (*D* 179). Here, we have a glimpse of his arrogance toward his country's people. As the story unfolds, the arrogance is laid out in the open. In the heated debate with Molly Ivors over the places to visit during the summer vacation, Gabriel blurts out, "I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (*D* 189)

But what is so disturbing about being Irish? What is wrong with Ireland that Gabriel should feel sick of it? It turns out that at the dawn of the twentieth century—the time when the story takes place—Ireland was still seized by the aftermath of the Great Famine. Poverty remained among the general public, and people continued to emigrate in search of a better future (Chou 55; Coohill 72). With such tremendous effects on the landscape, the Famine became what the country was immediately associated with at the time. If it was the Famine that Ireland was associated with, Irishness then became tightly connected with the helplessness of the victims in the Famine era. The victims' helplessness, as we have seen, is close to the experience of a newborn child with no control over the presence and absence of its mother. In a sense, the danger confronting the newborn child is even more horrible than the Oedipal situation troubling a child of three to five years old. The latter has to do with the loss of love, whereas the former has to do with the loss of life. On the border of life and death, one will be driven to struggle by the instinct to carry on—which is the trouble, as I have reiterated. But don't we also witness the trouble with instincts in the Oedipal situation? After all, one does struggle for the yearned-for love. Indeed, in the Oedipal situation, one will struggle, yet the struggle in its intensity is incomparable to the one caused by the near-death situation. In fact, the latter struggle is powerful enough to overwhelm the entire psychological apparatus. I suggest it is this experience of being overwhelmed that fragments the subjectivity of any person who happens to fall into the near-death situation—whether it is a child

exposed too long to the absence of its mother or the poor Irish who had no way out in the Great Famine.

In short, in Gabriel's time, to be Irish is somehow to remain susceptible to the overwhelming effects of instincts. It signals regression to early infancy, where one, having no experience at all with the environment, is at the mercy of the threats from both the outside and the inside. Such is the nightmare Gabriel is eager to escape from. But isn't he already far enough from this typically Irish experience? After all, he has grown up in Dublin—far away from the West where the potato blight continued to attack. And unlike the generally poor Irish citizens, his family is rich enough to have both him and his brother well educated. With life already apparently free of the challenges bothering most of his country's people, how come he is still haunted by the nightmare they are having?

It turns out that however well-to-do he is, Gabriel, being Irish, is as much a colonized subject as Gretta, Michael Furey, and the victims of the Famine back in the mid-nineteenth century. The colonized position is critical. Back in the Great Famine, it was largely because they were colonized that the Irish should end up living near death. Ruled by the indifferent British government, they had no right to decide upon the relief measures that could help ease the catastrophe at home. Instead, they had to submit to whatever systems the British government had forced upon them, including working in the notoriously-dirty workhouses. The passivity these victims were caught in is the fate Gabriel yearns to but fails to evade. Simply, as long as Gabriel is a colonized subject, it remains possible for him to fall into a situation where things critical in his life end up in the hands of the indifferent colonizers. If such a scenario ever comes true, he will do no better than the newborn child, who can only struggle vainly and see itself drowned in the struggle it cannot do without. This potential danger is the horror that possesses



Gabriel. It makes him sick of his own country—from which he has to escape now and again by taking his annual “cycling tour” to “France or Belgium or perhaps Germany” (*D* 189). It is true that unlike those directly influenced by the Famine and its aftermath, he has not been forced near death. Yet, the horror he has possesses him so much that it becomes as if he had really been overwhelmed by what has once overwhelmed his country’s people. Thus, we find a part of his character shattered and his subjectivity injured.

The injured subjectivity has to be denied. Therefore, instead of acknowledging he is as much being colonized as the rest of his country’s people, Gabriel relates to them the way the British colonizers dominate their colonies. At least, that is how he treats his wife, as Cheng vividly portrays: by complaining that Gretta “takes three mortal hours to dress herself” (qtd. in Cheng 135), Gabriel attempts to infantilize her; right behind this infantilization, Cheng stresses, is the Empire’s condescension towards its colonies as “incorrigible children” (135). There is something more I would like to add about the child image in this context. As I have pointed out, the child image is, originally, what Gabriel is afraid of becoming—should he, for whatever reasons, fall into the hands of the indifferent colonizers. Yet now, through the joke he has made, it becomes Gretta who is one with this image. Here, we witness a kind of projective identification quite different from the one Gretta wields in the story. Whereas Gretta aims to communicate, Gabriel here is evading the horror he cannot be spared from. Evicted in this way, the horror becomes the beta-elements that wander without a container. And so long as these beta-elements fail to be contained, they pose a threat from which Gabriel must constantly distance himself. Though the distance he keeps allows him to stay temporarily safe, it prevents him from developing the ability to really come to terms with the uneasiness he is bound to suffer. Without the ability, he is to remain a broken

container in relation to the emotions he has. Just as he fails with his own emotions, so he will fail with the emotions people convey to him and expect him to welcome. Thus, hospitality is out of the question—unless he learns to reunite with the state of mind he has projected.

In a sense, the story is preparing Gabriel to reunite with his projected state of mind. He is to meet three women—Lily, Molly Ivors, and Gretta—who, as Williams stresses, are audacious enough to talk back in front of him (91-95). With their back answers, these women, as Leonard elaborates in his argument, shatter the “fictional unity” Gabriel wears in appearance (289-90), thus leaving him with “the censored chapters of his history” (308). I suggest a major part of these censored chapters has to do with his projected passivity—the passivity he shares with his fellow Irish as a colonized subject. The passivity is forced back into him by Lily’s unexpected retort concerning the question of marriage. It reveals to him that he is in no control of her mind. And behind this is the deeper knowledge that he can never really hold sway the way the British hold sway over the people they have colonized. The knowledge is brought to him again by Molly Ivors’s teases. Simply, however hard he strives, he can only make himself “a West Briton”—never a real British (*D* 188).

Nonetheless, with Lily and Molly Ivors, Gabriel is able to make himself comfortable again. After all, he is still at the party, and at the party, as his aunts intend everything to remain in control, he is coaxed to be a master. For example, he is asked to tame the drunken Freddy Malins, which immediately distracts him from the embarrassment he feels with Lily’s retort. And while he is still discomposed by the confusion Molly Ivors has caused in him, he is brought to carve the goose. The task proves especially helpful. “He felt quite at ease now for he was *an expert carver* and

liked nothing better than to find himself *at the head of* a well-laden table” (D 197; emphases added). The position of being at the head of the dinner table affords him a sense of dominance. This sense of dominance is further enhanced by the fact that he is an expert carver. As a carver, he gets to deal with the meat the way the British colonizers deal with the life and death of the people they have colonized. This far, we get to witness how he is made to resemble a colonizer at the party. This strategic resemblance keeps the passivity he suffers safely projected.

Things are not so easy when Gabriel is alone with Gretta in the hotel room. There, he fails to coax Gretta into intercourse as he has intended to. Instead, he falls for her projective identification. She forcefully stuffs into him her romance with Michael Furey and, in this way, projects the frustration she has had at home. Under the influence of what Gretta is projecting, Gabriel finds himself assailed by his passivity and feels extremely embarrassed. “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” (D 220; emphases added). That which makes him pitiable is the fact that rather than the master he has imagined himself to be, he is only a pennyboy—simply a servant. He is so not just at the party in relation to his aunts but also on a larger scale in relation to the Empire. As a servant, he is left with no grand things to accomplish. To put it another way, all he does as a servant is no big deal. At least, that is what becomes of his after-dinner speech—which, he now discovers, is nothing but an oration to vulgar people. Capable of nothing grand, he finds himself appealing to none. And with no one who really admires him, the passion he has felt turns out to be lusts that can only make a fool of him. Made ridiculous by his own lusts, Gabriel now becomes no better than an infant helpless with the efflorescence of its instincts. This child image strikes home. It is

his split-off fragmentation managing to return. Here, Gabriel is face to face with “the censored chapters of his history” (Leonard 308).

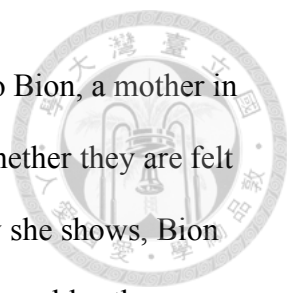
The situation worsens as Greta then idealizes the death Furey has died. In front of the martyr to whom Greta introduces him, Gabriel appears all the pettier. His embarrassment aggravates. In fact, in front of the rival over whom he can never triumph, his embarrassment turns into a terror beyond words. Now, he is fully submerged by the censored chapters of his character. He, as a container, is contained by the contained he is supposed to contain, to put it in Bion’s language. Nevertheless, he does not escape from the crisis he is here exposed to. In a sense, he cannot escape. He is no longer at the party. There are no public matters for him to attend to and no more tasks for him to distract himself and regain his sense of dominance. In fact, it is pointless for him to chase any sense of dominance now that his power is already challenged inside out. It is challenged not just by the heroic sacrifice Furey has been capable of making in Greta’s account. That there is this secret romance hidden from him in the private sphere of his married life is enough to prove he is incapable of mastering anything, as Williams persuasively shows (95).

So far, we have seen how it is impossible for Gabriel to evade the censored part of himself brought up by Greta’s projective identification. It turns out that he also chooses not to evade it. He tries to make himself reasonable on the spot so that he may be ready to receive the rest of the story Greta is going to tell. “He did not question her again for he felt that she would tell him of herself” (*D* 220). Here, we can see an agent emerge which is directing Gabriel into the posture appropriate for the moment. The agent is, in fact, his self-awareness—which turns out to be crucial as the story draws to its conclusion. According to Cheng, it is the key factor that saves him from the “domestic tyrant” he almost becomes in the story (135, 146). Simply, checked by his self-

awareness, he manages to curb his sexual desire, thus forestalling physical violation against Gretta's will (Cheng 146). Also, because of his self-awareness, when Gretta breaks into tears, reaching the part of the story she is not able to continue, he is "shy of intruding on her grief" (qtd. in Cheng 146). By keeping his own impulses in check, Gabriel, Cheng observes, manages to "grant Gretta a private space of her own" (146). In this private space, Cheng stresses, Gretta gets to be "her own emotional subject," rather than an aesthetic or sexual object dominated by Gabriel (146).

For Cheng, it is significant that Gretta finally becomes a subject, rather than an object, in Gabriel's eye. In Cheng's account, such a subject-to-subject relationship challenges the hierarchical order fed by Gabriel's old patriarchal ego (146-47). Now that his old patriarchal ego has begun to dissolve, Cheng concludes, Gabriel is led into a rather collective subjectivity in which he is ready not only to relate to others as fellow subjects but also to acknowledge the sameness he shares with them (147). I agree with Cheng that it is this rather collective subjectivity that Gabriel ends up acquiring in the story. Yet, I think it takes more than just the toppling of the hierarchical order to reach this state of mind. In fact, there are some important stages to go through, from a mere willingness to accept others as fellow subjects to the real attainment of the collective subjectivity. It is the process in between that I would like to be specific about.

One important stage is to learn to be susceptible to the emotions others cast as subjects. It is the price one has to pay to really relate to others as fellow subjects. We have seen Gabriel pay the price already with his endeavors to check his impulses, as Cheng illustrates to us (146). He refrains from both retaliation and sexual advances so that he may stay along with the censored chapters sought by the emotions Gretta is projecting. The receptiveness he displays here is, in fact, similar to the receptiveness on the part of a mother in relation to the infant she cares about. We have learned of the



mother's receptiveness in what Bion says about reverie. According to Bion, a mother in reverie is ready to receive whatever emotions her infant projects, "whether they are felt by the infant to be good or bad" (*Learning* 36). Key to the generosity she shows, Bion stresses, is her love for the infant (*Learning* 36). Just as it is love that enables the mother to remain in her reverie, so it is love that enables Gabriel to remain receptive to Gretta's emotions. This becomes increasingly clear in the epiphany section. There, we find: "Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself toward any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love" (*D* 223).

With love, Gabriel willingly endures the censored part Gretta, through projective identification, is seeking in his character. Spending time with the fragmentation buried long in his personality, he begins to grow. He develops the ability to really come to terms with the pain he cannot be spared from—the ability he has failed to develop, with the tendency in him previously to resort to mastery to steer clear of troubles. There is something intriguing about the ability he now acquires. Simply, to come to terms with his own pain, he needs not just to suffer the pain itself passively. While suffering, he needs at the same time to be able to rise above and see the rest of himself in pain. That part of his personality which manages to rise above is, in fact, the self-awareness Cheng observes in him (146). While Cheng emphasizes the repressive work it helps complete (146), I would like to return to its essence as a self-inspecting agent. So long as Gabriel has this agent with him, he is able to see. By seeing, he gets to know more about the pain by which he is tortured and becomes more tolerant of it. Capable of tolerating the pain on his own part, he is ready to experience the emotions Gretta projects and has him suffer. This much is how, with his self-inspecting agent, Gabriel gets to stay susceptible to the emotions projected into him. It turns out that, with this agent, he is reaching a stage distinct from that of being merely susceptible. Namely, now, he does not just

endure the fragmented self sought by Greta's emotions but—by knowing more of the sensations he has, being fragmented—also manages to assimilate that fragmented self. In this way, he is a step closer to Greta's experience, thus approaching what Cheng refers to as the collective subjectivity.

Before proceeding to the notion of collective subjectivity, I would like to stay a while longer with the self-inspecting agent. We have briefly touched upon the role it plays for Gabriel to assimilate his split-off fragmentation. Let me be more specific about what it is doing to serve that epistemological purpose. It turns out that the agent in question is not just there in Gabriel's mental system to see him bearing up with his censored, fragmented self. It is also there to put what it sees into words.⁷ The fruit is the epiphany we witness as the story reaches the end—which features detailed descriptions of the feelings and visions Gabriel has, being in touch with his own weakness. By putting all these emotional experiences into words, the agent in question manages to transform them from censored, unreadable chapters into intelligible ideas. And by so doing, it lessens Gabriel's stress in front of what he must read about himself. The image of Gabriel having a part of his character to read leads us somehow to the point where Leonard concludes his interpretation of the story. In Leonard's conclusion, Gabriel is tasked to read "the censored chapters of his history"—which, being fragmentary, are rather inaccessible to his consciousness (308). Here, though, we find him equipped to read these censored chapters, having viewed the work done by that specific agent inside him. As that which allows him to relate to the hitherto inaccessible part of his character, the agent in question proves something special in his mental system. It is not just his self-inspecting agent or his self-awareness, as we have named it. Rather, it is his alpha-

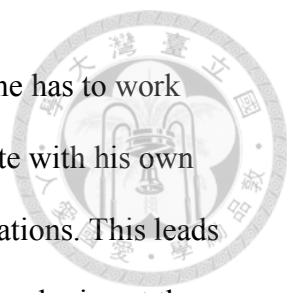
⁷ I am following Herbert Rosenfeld's idea, which I quote in the first chapter. Here, I would like to note that the words employed in this situation are not a discourse or any fixed language system. Instead, they are fragmented and experimental. They are signs in hand that help facilitate the process of thinking—just like a child's babbling and playing.

function that enables him to contain the contained he is supposed to contain.

With his alpha-function, Gabriel softens yet again. It is evident right at the beginning of his epiphany. There, we find:

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-opened mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face and on her hair: and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death. (*D* 222)

Featuring in this passage is the posture of surrender. Gabriel is surrendering both to the romance Gretta has had and to the emotional state Gretta has had him endure through her account of the romance. In Ellmann's interpretation of the story, surrender is intrinsic to what Gabriel has learned throughout the evening: it is key to the real generosity he shows to Gretta as the story reaches the end (258-59). I agree with Ellmann about the significance of surrender. I would also like to emphasize that behind the surrender Gabriel makes is his alpha-function intensively at work. It is intensively at work so that he is able to bear up with the fragmented state Gretta, through projective identification, is seeking in him. It is intensively at work so that he does not just endure the sensations he has while being fragmented but also manages to put these sensations into words. This latter attempt to put things into words implies communication going



on, which is exactly what happens between Gabriel and the feelings he has to work through. Simply, with his alpha-function, Gabriel gets to communicate with his own feelings as if they were people alive with whom he can have conversations. This leads to my specific appreciation of the meaning of surrender. For me, surrender is not the picture of a person passively tolerating the emotions he or she must sustain; rather, it is the picture of that person being prepared to be intensively involved in dialogue with those emotions. Only when the person in question is willing to engage this much with the emotional state to which he or she must surrender can surrender itself become a deeper experience that leads to changes.

The deeper experience Gabriel has starts with the deeper experience with his own person. Namely, in his epiphany, he manages to spend quality time with his inner fragmentation. As we have discussed, the fragmentation is related to the ordeal he is afraid to fall into—the ordeal his country's people suffered, passively ruled by the indifferent British Empire. This feared-for colonial experience assumes the shape of a newborn child who, left uncared-for, is overwhelmed by the struggle it cannot be spared from. We have seen how Gabriel strives to steer clear of this child image for the major part of the story. We have also seen how, during his encounter with Gretta, this child image gets to return in the guise of a pennyboy ridiculous with his own lusts. In the epiphany, the child image evolves into yet another figure. Though the figure proves no less disturbing than the pennyboy, Gabriel, with his alpha-function, is ready to receive the message it conveys.

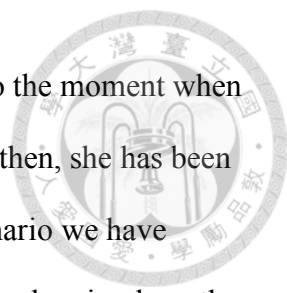
The figure the child image evolves into is Gabriel himself in a funeral to come:

Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt

Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. *He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones.* (D 222-23; emphasis added)

Featuring in this scenario is the Gabriel eager to help but capable of nothing. He is troubled by the passion that leads nowhere, the same way the pennyboy we have witnessed is troubled by the lusts he can hardly sublimate. And lurking behind both these victims is the shadow of a young child paralyzed by its vain struggle with its mother out of reach. The vain struggle, when returning in the guise of “his own clownish lusts” (D 220), as quoted above, has taken Gabriel fully by surprise. Ill-equipped, he has hardly been able to process the lusts confronting him. The lusts have, therefore, remained beta-elements that make no sense. It is true that, like the lusts on the pennyboy’s part, the dammed-up passion Gabriel is pictured to bear in that funeral to come proves equally pathetic. It is “lame and useless,” just like the words he is to find then to console Aunt Kate (D 223). Yet, its uselessness is scrutinized by the alpha-function he now has with him. With this, it gets to become alpha-elements comprehensible to the mental system. Now that the passion and its futility are comprehensible ideas, they get to serve as a medium for Gabriel to reach the child image he has to work through. By looking into how futile his effort is to turn out in that funeral he might soon attend, he manages to touch the vain struggle the child is troubled by. He is in touch with its struggle; he is in touch also with its helplessness with the struggle. Such is the quality time he spends working through the fragmentation buried long in his personality.

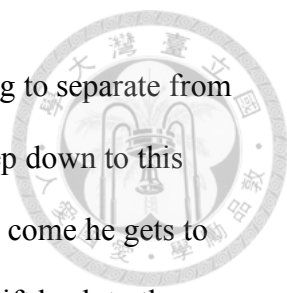
It turns out that Gabriel does not just work through the pain he has had difficulty with. Intertwined with the pain he works through is the pain Gretta has had in the near-



death situation she has fallen into. Here, I am referring specifically to the moment when she, alone in Dublin, has learned about Michael Furey's death. Back then, she has been helpless with the death she has known of, just as Gabriel, in that scenario we have inspected, is helpless with Aunt Julia's death. This is just one instance showing how the traumatic experience Gretta has projected is mixed up with the fragmentation deep inside Gabriel.⁸ This overlap in experience is significant. Through this overlap, Gabriel gets to have a deeper experience with the unassimilated pain Gretta, through projective identification, has asked him to welcome. Here, we find him approaching what it means by hospitality. To reach this state, the fragmentation inside him certainly has a role to play. It is his receptive organ to the pain Gretta has conveyed. It is just that to really serve as a receptive organ, that fragmentation needs first to be processed into what Gabriel himself is able to relate to and keep in mind. This brings us once again to the work done by the alpha-function he has lately acquired. His alpha-function is integral. As that which fixes the receptive organ inside him, it is the real hospitality he displays to the feelings and experiences conveyed to him.

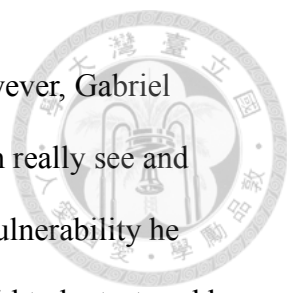
The feelings and experiences conveyed to Gabriel are more than just those Gretta has borne herself. Evidence of this is a thought that comes upon him as he reflects on the smallness he shares with people around him: "Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age" (*D* 223). This looks like a bold way out of feeling small. Yet, what appears as a bold way out is actually helplessness that strikes home. A concrete picture of such helplessness is

⁸ The two become mixed up in the following manner. The fragmented state Gabriel suffers, as we have learned, is similar to that which a young child suffers with its mother long absent. It is likewise with the state the victims were caught in back in the Great Famine. It is likewise also with the state the post-Famine generation was caught in, forced near death like their predecessors. All are related to the feared-for colonial situation. Because of these connections, the fragmented state Gabriel suffers becomes a medium through which Gretta gets to project into him the traumatic experience she has had. On the one hand, we have Gabriel's fragmentation as a receptive organ; on the other hand, we have the traumatic experience Gretta projects. The fruit we end up with is, therefore, an overlap in experience—simply the pain of the two characters closely intertwined.



Michael Furey failing with the passion dammed up inside him, having to separate from Gretta in the near-death situation at home. With a thought related deep down to this failure, Gabriel is, in fact, identifying with Furey in despair. But how come he gets to identify with Furey? To answer this question, we may need first to shift back to the mental processes occurring in Gretta. As I have pointed out, the solace she has found being together with Furey has led her to identify with him at a deeper level. This identification has become part of her character way before she wields her projective identification in the hotel room. In identification with Furey, she has managed to confuse her own pain with the pain she has perceived in him. And through her later projective identification in the hotel room, the confusion inside her is confused yet again with the fragmentation she seeks in Gabriel. Such multilayered confusion accounts for why Gabriel, through the fragmentation inside him as a receptive organ, reaches not only the traumatic experience on Gretta's part but also the traumatic experience on Furey's part.

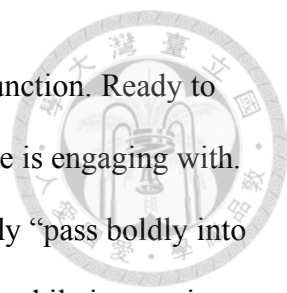
It is essential that Gabriel is led to undergo these layers of identification. Simply, through them, he gets to enjoy what Cheng refers to as the “non-hierarchical sameness” with his country's people, thus reaching a so-called collective subjectivity (147). While Cheng speaks of collective subjectivity (147), Ingersoll speaks of “crossing the bar”—or traveling (153). According to Ingersoll, Gabriel, while identifying with others, travels to the experiences of those he has considered as weaker than him—he crosses the bar that separates the me from the not-me—and, in this way, acknowledges the frailty they all share (153-54). I generally agree with Ingersoll. My reading affirms what Ingersoll has said by emphasizing that Gabriel, through identification, is reaching the frailty his country's people have already shared. There are differences, nonetheless, between my reading and Ingersoll's. For Ingersoll, it is more the vulnerability Gabriel sees in others



that reflects the vulnerability he shares with them (154). For me, however, Gabriel needs first to work through the vulnerability inside him before he can really see and relate to the vulnerability others are bearing. In a certain sense, the vulnerability he perceives in others is more severe than his own. While he is just afraid to be tortured by the indifferent colonizers, Michael Furey, for example, has really, in his lifetime, been tortured by the colonial landscape.⁹ How does Gabriel deal with the experiences that feel more painful than his own? It turns out that he does not just engage with these painful experiences with his own vulnerability inside as a receptive organ. He engages with them also in a manner that allows the story to end meaningfully.

The discussion this far leads to my specific appreciation of the way Gabriel makes his journey. Partially, I agree with Ingersoll that Gabriel, through identification, does travel to the life experiences he has originally felt to be distinct from his own (153-54). Yet still, I would like to add that he does not just travel. While he travels, he manages at the same time to remain where he is so that he may—as it is vividly shown in the epiphany—put into words whatever experience he has while traveling. The effort displayed here implies his alpha-function intensively at work. The work done by his alpha-function is significant. It is significant to him in front of the painful life experiences he is led to travel to. Take, for example, the life experience of Michael Furey. The near-death situation at home has tortuously fueled his passion and then cruelly left it where it has been. Dammed up inside, the passion has become pure sense stimuli, which, overwhelming to his psychical apparatus, have ended up claiming his life. The painful process Furey has undergone with these sense stimuli is somehow the painful process Gabriel needs to undergo while traveling. In the midst of this painful

⁹ He has been troubled by diseases, which are part of the aftermath of the Great Famine (Chou 73). He has been exploited by the gasworks, which is reminiscent of the workhouses back in the Famine era. Most severely, these two factors have combined to ruin the romance that has meant life to him.



experience, it is essential that Gabriel equip himself with his alpha-function. Ready to put things into words, it lends him strength over the life experience he is engaging with. With this, he will not, under the influence of the sense stimuli, literally “pass boldly into that other world,” as Furey did years ago (*D* 223). Instead, he is able, while journeying to this specific experience, to turn these sense stimuli from the beta-elements into the alpha-elements he can reflect further on. This step is important. Only when he is ready to reflect on the journey he makes can he really wake up from the effect it brings to him.

The capacity to wake up leads us to yet another aspect of Bion’s concept of “reverie” (*Learning* 36). Previously, while dealing with this concept, we have focused mainly on how Gabriel, out of love, willingly dreams the dream Gretta intends him to dream. He falls asleep to be in contact with the fragmented part of his character and, through that fragmented part, drifts to the traumatic experience both Gretta and Furey have shared. This is indeed an important step but it is not what reverie is all about. After all, reverie will not be reverie, or a dream will not be a dream, should the dreamer, in the end, fail to wake up. Therefore, as important as Gabriel’s willingness to dream is his capacity to wake up. By waking up, he proves himself a container capable of containing the message Gretta has projected into him. Behind this effort, as I have reiterated, is his alpha-function working intensively to name the unnamable. In a certain sense, his alpha-function can be taken as the counterpart of Gretta’s projective identification. Previously, while dealing with the significance of Gretta’s projective identification, we have talked about how the mechanism—as a way for her to communicate to Gabriel the pain beyond words—is a link she tries to establish with him. We can appreciate Gabriel’s alpha-function similarly. By naming the unnamable, it enables him to continue the communicative process Gretta has initiated; in this way, it is as much a link as the projective identification on Gretta’s part. With the link established, Gabriel is in a

position ready to feed back to Gretta the message she has projected. But what is it that he is going to feed back to her?

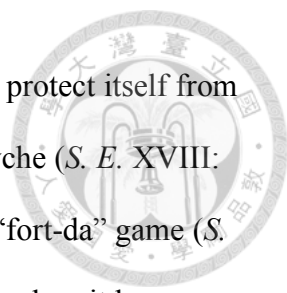
To answer this question, I would like to go back to what Ellmann says about surrender (258-59). According to Ellmann, Gabriel, in a surrendering posture, is “relinquishing a good deal—his sense of the importance of civilized thinking, of continental tastes, of all those tepid but nice distinctions on which he has prided himself” (258). By giving up all he has prided himself on, Gabriel, Ellmann suggests, is also dying for Gretta—he achieves “a self-abandonment not unlike Furey’s” (259). With Ellmann’s reading, we have a picture of Gabriel offering himself to Gretta as the heroic Michael Furey she has lost. In a certain sense, he does return Furey to her toward the end of the story. Yet, I doubt whether the Furey he returns is really that much a bold martyr. Having experienced Furey’s helplessness in person, Gabriel, I suggest, is able to see through the pretense of boldness. Thus, what he returns is not at all the martyr Furey—like the patriots dying for Cathleen, the embodiment of Ireland (Gifford 125), or Christ dying for humankind (Ellmann 259; Pecora 241-42). Instead, it is the flesh-and-blood Furey who, like Gretta herself, has been vulnerable to the near-death situation of the post-Famine countryside. As a fellow victim of this environment, he has been able to feel the passion she has felt and suffered the pain she has suffered. He has spent some quality time with her but has not been able to offer anything more—he has had his limitations. Such is the difficult knowledge Gabriel has to feed back to Gretta. Though the knowledge is difficult, Gabriel is prepared to feed it back. He is prepared to because he is also working through the difficulty himself.

Conclusion



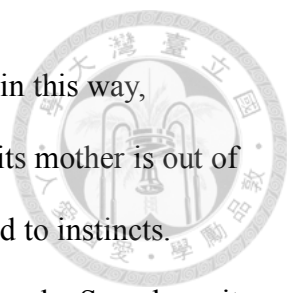
In “The Dead,” Joyce attempts to redefine Irish hospitality. He redefines it by juxtaposing the visible guests with the invisible guests that live in people’s memories. Through the juxtaposition, he is demanding whether it is enough only to entertain the guests who are visible. The answer is clear. To be hospitable, a person must also be able to deal with the guests who are invisible. In other words, he or she must have a way to retain the memories and emotions accidentally evoked. This far, we have seen how Joyce turns Irish hospitality from a mere set of rituals into the capacity deep down to keep things in mind. The things that need to be kept in mind in the story deserve our attention. They are no ordinary memories. Instead, they are memories associated with the Great Famine, where people suffered under the colonial government indifferent to their pain. It turns out that the Famine is not just a catastrophe there and then damaging Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century but also something affecting the characters in the story in the narrative present. It affects Gretta, who, falling in love in the region trampled by the Famine and its aftermath, ends up traumatized. To keep her traumatic romance in mind, she tries to relate it to Gabriel. The communicative process is far from smooth, though, as Gabriel also has his own issues to tackle. Here, we witness how difficult it is to welcome the invisible guests. The tension between a person and the invisible guests he or she is supposed to welcome recalls the tension Bion portrays between the container and the contained. Thus, in this thesis, I borrow this model to delineate what Joyce means by hospitality.

In the first chapter, I introduced the model of the container and the contained. For better explication, I first returned to Freud. I reviewed the situation of danger Freud recognizes in early infancy, where the child, separated from its mother, is overwhelmed



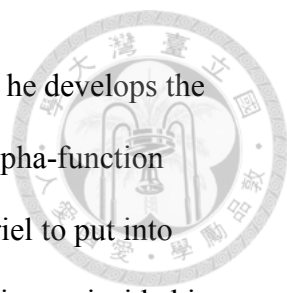
by the stimulation caused by its own instincts (*S. E. XX*: 137-38). To protect itself from danger, the child has to learn to bind the stimuli affecting its own psyche (*S. E. XVIII*: 30-32). Freud explains what binding means with the example of the “fort-da” game (*S. E. XVIII*: 14-17). In the example, we see a child capable of turning the loss it has suffered into play. The child, as a container, is able to contain the contained it is supposed to contain—there is already maturity to a certain degree. Yet, how does the child manage to attain such maturity? This is where Bion’s theory comes in. For Bion, in the very beginning, it is simply impossible for a child to contain the fear of loss (“Attacks” 313). To grow into a container, the child, according to Bion, needs first to use projective identification to have its mother experience the fear it can hardly contain (“Attacks” 313; “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). A well-balanced mother is able to retain the fear projected into her and, meanwhile, transform it from pure sense stimuli into a tolerable experience—the very ability Bion refers to as the alpha-function (*Learning* 6; “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). With her alpha-function, the mother is preparing the child to take back its frightened personality (Bion, “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). It follows that the child does not just take back its own frightened personality but also takes in the alpha-function that helps contain that personality (Bion, “Psycho-analytic Study” 308). Thus, the child becomes one ready to play; it approaches the state of mind similar to that which Freud demonstrates with the example of the “fort-da” game. Through Freud’s theory, we learn the significance of the binding work. Through Bion’s, we learn further how, for the binding work to be effectual, it must be built upon the link where one’s projective identification is contained by another’s alpha-function.

In the second chapter, I examined Gretta’s part of the link—namely, her use of projective identification. To explain why it is necessary for her to use projective identification, I discussed the pain she is suffering. The discussion leads back to the



impact of the Famine. The Famine forced its victims near death and, in this way, exposed them to the danger similar to that a young child faces when its mother is out of reach. The danger, as we have found through Freud's theory, is related to instincts. Simply, driven by the instinct to carry on, the victims were left to struggle. Somehow, it is to ease the struggle they cannot be spared from that Gretta and Furey come together. When they are together, things are fine; when they are forced to separate though, things get out of control. Furey is consumed by a passion he can do nothing about. Gretta does not just suffer heartbreak in consequence but also, in identification, incorporates Furey's pain. The entire experience is traumatic. To contain her trauma, she seeks to communicate it to Gabriel. Yet, how to communicate the trauma, which, as the agglomeration of various tragedies, is beyond words? The way out is projective identification. Through projective identification, she has Gabriel suffer the frustration she has had. It is her way of asking how it feels and what it means to be heartbroken. If Gabriel gets to answer these by transforming the intolerable pain projected into him into intelligible ideas, Gretta will become able then to keep in mind what she has been through.

In the third chapter, I examined how Gabriel handles the pain Gretta has projected. It turns out that the pain Gretta has projected manages somehow to intermingle with a part of Gabriel's character he has not yet assimilated. That part of his character has to do with his Irish nationality. Being Irish, he is as much a colonized subject as Gretta, Michael Furey, and the victims of the Famine back in the mid-nineteenth century. This situation is terrible: so long as he is a colonized subject, it remains possible that he will someday share their fate and be left to struggle helplessly like a newborn child in its mother's absence. This feared-for child image is what Gabriel strives to steer clear of throughout his life. Yet, this time, out of his concern for



Gretta, he tries to retain this child image. While he attempts to do so, he develops the alpha-function to really work through the uneasiness it brings. The alpha-function manifests itself most explicitly in the epiphany. There, it allows Gabriel to put into words whatever sensations he has while he is in touch with the child image inside him. In this way, he is able to be actively engaged in dialogue with these sensations, instead of merely sustaining them passively. This paves the way for him to finally assimilate the child image long censored in him. Now that the child image is integrated into his personality, he is able to use it as his receptive organ to catch Gretta's projective identification. Thus, toward the end of the story, he gets to relate to the pain Gretta suffers herself and also the pain she suffers in identification with Furey. He becomes hospitable to the memories and emotions conveyed to him.

Through Gabriel's transformation, we have appreciated what Joyce's hospitality is like. The picture Joyce presents has its Irish context, yet it also touches upon the ethics of hospitality in general. After all, the memories of Michael Furey come to visit just so unexpectedly; with this, it looks much as if the hospitality Gabriel displays is unconditional. But is it really unconditional? The question brings us to the contrast Jacques Derrida draws between unconditional hospitality and conditional hospitality. Conditional hospitality, according to Derrida, is one performed with the expectation that the guest, in the end, is able to give something in return (69). With such an expectation, the host here is not hospitable enough in Derrida's eyes (69). To be really hospitable, the host, Derrida argues, must be able to give unconditionally (70). This means he should not expect the guest to give anything back (Derrida 70). Not only that, Derrida stresses, he should not even prevent the guest from taking over the mastery of his own place (70-71). Here, we have a glimpse of the chaos unconditional hospitality gets to yield. In fact, given the chaos, Derrida observes that unconditional hospitality, pure as it is, is

impossible in practice (71). Despite that, its impossibility still matters. The impossibility manages somehow to challenge the conditions of the hospitality we have hitherto displayed. Simply, prompted by the impossibility, just as Penelope Deutscher vividly portrays while expounding Derrida's theory, people are likely to ask: "Why not more and better hospitality? What does set the limit?" (70) Questions like these force us to reexamine the concern we have reserved for ourselves and, in turn, make us more receptive to the others to whom we need to relate (Derrida 81; Deutscher 69-71).

We see Gabriel undergo similar changes toward the end of "The Dead." The encounter with Michael Furey reorganizes his subject formation and, in turn, makes him receptive to the otherness he has formerly rejected. In this way, he is a step closer to unconditional hospitality in Derrida's terms. Only, I would like to stress, there are still conditions in the hospitality he displays. The conditions lie in his alpha-function. An intact alpha-function is necessary for Gabriel to tackle the otherness he needs to tackle. After all, it is of pure sense stimuli which that otherness consists. In front of those stimuli, Gabriel must be equipped to transform them into thoughts, or else he will be overwhelmed. Capable still of thinking, he manages, for example, to put into words that which has driven Michael Furey to his self-sacrifice: "Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age" (*D* 223). Through words, he gets to meditate upon the impulse, instead of acting it out. Meditated long upon, the impulse evolves into a thought. It assumes the shape of the figure he sees through his tears: "The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree" (*D* 223). Underneath a dripping tree, the Furey Gabriel sees is haggard and helpless. He is no bold figure like Christ or the many Irish nationalist martyrs but is only, like Gretta, a victim in the post-Famine countryside. Sharing the same ordeal, he

empathizes deeply with her. He loves earnestly indeed, but still, he is not the Savior.

On a proper occasion, Gabriel may need to face the reality together with Gretta. It may not be an easy job, as Michael Furey has long been idealized in her memory. There are lots of efforts he has to make. In the story, he has already made some of them: with his alpha-function, he has transformed the sense stimuli Gretta has projected into ideas that make sense. These ideas gather and form a “pre-conception”¹⁰ that allows him to envision what the West is like (Bion, “Psycho-analytic Study” 306). Yet, a pre-conception has to mate with a “realization,” be it positive or negative (Bion, “Psycho-analytic Study” 306-07). Thus, Gabriel must “set out on his journey westward” (*D* 223). He must make himself a guest in the part of his country he has known little of. As he sojourns, he will be challenged by new experiences. He will need to take in new ideas and, with these new ideas, reformulate his conception of what the West is like. It is essential that he remain in a posture ready to work through the impacts of his journey. Only when he is able to surrender in such a manner can he really face the reality with Gretta when the timing is right.

¹⁰ A pre-conception is a set of ideas that allow a person to anticipate what may happen in the future. The example Bion offers in his 1962 article is that of an infant waiting to be fed. A pre-conception, in such a case, appears as the child’s “inborn expectation of a breast” (“Psycho-analytic Study” 306). The “realization” of such a pre-conception is the exact breastfeeding experience. However, the experience can be positive or negative: the mother may arrive just in time, or she may, for some reasons, delay (“Psycho-analytic Study” 306-07).

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