

Dubliners' Suppressed Anger: An Intertextual Reading of "Counterparts" and "The Dead"

Younghee Kho

I

It is hardly surprising that the culturally oppressed and economically depressed Dubliners at the turn of the century underwent all sorts of negative feelings, including anger. Mrs. Kearney in "A Mother," for instance, loses her temper when her daughter Kathleen is not able to get back the full payment for her accompaniment as initially agreed upon. She has expected to derive some benefits by teaching Kathleen music and by pretending to uphold the cause of the Revival, a vogue of the times (*D* 117). Indeed, Mrs. Kearney expected to recoup her investment when her daughter was employed as a concert accompanist. The concerts fail to generate much profit, however; the social and economic circumstances of colonial Ireland thwart widespread appreciation of such a cultural event. Payment of Kathleen's wages is thus delayed. Mrs. Kearney's anger, while directed at the organizers of the concerts, is an inevitable outcome of the country's stagnated and paralyzing condition.

Indeed, Joyce's characters in *Dubliners* struggle under such conditions every day. In "Serving Two Masters: Economics and Figures of Power in Joyce's 'Grace,'" Mark Osteen attributes Kernan's financial troubles to British colonialism, quoting Joseph O'Brien's point that its rule impeded Ireland's economic development by not allowing competition among industries (78). Such governance, Osteen points out, resulted in unbalanced development in different regions of Ireland (90). For example, the country's "industrial base remained extremely narrow and centered primarily around Protestant Belfast" while "Catholic Dublin continued to be largely impoverished and unhealthy" (90). Such a condition doubtlessly destabilized Dubliners' financial lives. According to Royal Commission, a weekly minimum for maintaining a family of four was £1 in Dublin at the turn of the century; however, wages often went below the required minimum (Latham 195). It was a common practice to use a pawn shop, thus, for those who narrowly subsisted "from one paycheck to the next one" (Latham 195). It is quite natural that Farrington in "Counterparts" remembers a pawn shop and pawns his watch when he is not able to find enough money for the night's drinking. Though categorized as a middle class, Joyce's Dubliners are never free from financial concerns.

Except in some stories, however, we scarcely observe their anger at the oppressive reality. Only in "Counterparts" do we see how Farrington's fury mounts and erupts into domestic violence, breaking through its long suppression. Such suppression, I suspect, is an undercurrent of other stories in *Dubliners*, belying the obvious lack of the same emotion in many of its characters. Eveline in "Eveline," for example, suffers from her boss' nitpicking in her workplace as much as Farrington does in his (*D* 28). Moreover, she is afraid of her father's possible violence at home (*D* 28). Yet nowhere in the story is evidence of her nourishing anger toward either her father or her boss. Instead, we watch a daily suppression of emotions developing into numbness that finally prevents her from escaping the reality. Maria in "Clay," despite the humiliation she so often encounters, never complains about her circumstance. Bob Doran in "The Boarding House" shows no sign of anger even while he instinctively knows he is soon going to be ensnared

by Mrs. Mooney's plot. Instead, his feelings are mostly limited to fear and anxiety about losing what little he possesses such as his job or social position. These people's anger, so deeply buried and suppressed, never rises to the surface of the texts, yet the reader can sense its uncanny presence. Its ghostly presence, however, comes up in the final story of *Dubliners* in the form of Furey. Representing a figure that evokes Gretta's and even Gabriel's suppressed emotions, Furey is summoned in Joyce's *Dubliners* to remind them of the lack of such emotions as he did to Gabriel Conroy, and that awareness of the missing piece of life comes to him with the tasting of that long-forgotten anger.

II

In fact, we see more clearly in "Counterparts" how one is provoked to more and more intense anger through Farrington in his highly restraining social condition, a condition economically inferior and even subjugated to the industrial north of Ireland and exploited by the British Empire as a colony. As Terrence Brown explicates, Farrington is a drudge under a Protestant boss, Mr. Alleyne, from the north of Ireland and is mobbed by English colleagues such as Miss Parker and Mr. Shelley, a result from the likelihood that Farrington's company "employs Protestants almost exclusively, and deals with a largely non-Catholic clientele ... in the sectarian fashion of the period" (274-75). The relationship between Farrington and Mr. Alleyne, therefore, reflects the Irish Catholic relationship to the Protestant and pro-British north, and it is not in favorable terms. In fact, the story begins with "[t]he bell [that rings] furiously" and Mr. Alleyne's "furious voice" from the tube (*D* 70). These sounds not only announce what will soon follow—a scolding for Farrington's neglecting his duty—but also suggest that such a scene is not a rare one. Farrington's initial response, a mutter of "[b]last him!" also intimates that such a scene is a routine (*D* 70). Little surprise that Farrington pays no heed to the boss's reproach; instead, the scrivener gets angry as "[a] spasm of rage grip[s] his

throat for a few moments and then passe[s]” (*D* 71). Needing an emotional outlet, Farrington sneaks away and blows off steam by drinking. This diversion, however, puts his work further behind, and he realizes that neither will he concentrate on his copying job nor finish it on time. His anger naturally escalates:

Blast it! ... He longed to execrate aloud, to bring his fist down on something violently. He was so enraged that he wrote *Bernard Bernard* instead of *Bernard Bodley* and had to begin again on a clean sheet. He felt strong enough to clear out the whole office single-handed. His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence. All the indignities of his life enraged him. ... (*D* 74)

Compressed in the words “[a]ll the indignities of his life” is the restraining social condition Farrington has to suffer, just as he has to put up with Mr. Alleyne (*D* 74). And indeed, Farrington momentarily revolts against another of Mr. Alleyne’s “tirade,” feeling he “could hardly restrain his fist from descending upon the head of the manikin before him” (*D* 74). Farrington’s retort and ensuing apology, however, makes him more keenly aware of his tenuous job security (*D* 75). He has to taste his anger again, a flavor with him now as chronically as is alcohol: “He felt savage and thirsty and revengeful, annoyed with himself and with everyone else” (*D* 75).

Even after leaving work, his situation takes no turn for the better. Meeting Englishman Weathers in a bar, Farrington encounters more humiliation than ever. Mere “acrobat and knockabout artiste” at a theater, Weathers represents his namesake, a force Farrington has to endure (*D* 79). In particular, Farrington’s encounter with this Englishman mirrors Ireland’s colonial relationship with England in which Irishmen feel defeated and even financially exploited by their counterparts. For example, Farrington feels deprived by Weathers when a young woman leaves the bar before he has introduced her to Farrington (*D* 79). Weathers promised Farrington’s party a meeting with girls in return for the rounds, though the promise turns to be empty (*D* 78-9). Infuriated again, Farrington even “[loses] count of the conversation of his friends” (*D* 79). In the following arm wrestling with Weathers,

tinged with a nationalist sentiment (Farrington's friends reminds him of "national honour"), Farrington is defeated in front of a group of spectators (*D* 79). Now, he is "full of smoldering anger and revengefulness" and "[h]is heart swelled with fury" (*D* 80, 81). He gives vent to his rage against the most vulnerable being at hand: his son (*D* 82). While Farrington displays one of the fieriest dispositions in *Dubliners*, his anger is a product of the social condition in which an individual is ruthlessly driven to everyday defeat. Farrington's aimless anger reflects that of Dubliners, and his day plainly reveals how they live day to day immersed in that emotion. The rampant anger and frustration is without a foreseeable end as it generates similar emotions in one after another. It is also probable that the son will grow up mimicking Farrington's resentment. Similarly in "The Sisters," the first story of *Dubliners*, we observe that the protagonist boy feels anger and hatred toward Old Cotter when the man meddles in the friendship between the boy and the dead priest. The boy pretends to focus on eating "for fear [he] might give utterance to [his] anger," to this "[t]iresome old rednosed imbecile!" (*D* 5). Old Cotter is not only an alcoholic like Farrington but is able to wield his authority as an adult over the boy. As a result, the suppression of the boy's emotion is found in the embedded silence of the story, a story likely to be narrated after he reaches his adulthood. Likewise, Farrington's son may not be able to find an outlet still in his adulthood except, like his father, indulging himself either in drinking or in violence. Thus producing a vicious circle across generations, the anger of the repressed, intensified by all their social disadvantages of the colonized, seems to deeply pervade Irish society.

III

As we see in Farrington's case, anger is habitually suppressed in the Irish lives depicted by Joyce¹⁾ until it surfaces in "The Dead," a story that can be read as another counterpart to "Counterparts." Known for illustrating a positive aspect of

Irish hospitality in general, “The Dead” is not aloof to such an emotion. Michael Furey, as his name suggests, personifies suppressed anger that goes buried with his death. Born in the west of Ireland and employed at a gas company, Furey is an even more marginalized figure socially and economically than is Farrington. He symbolizes anger toward any oppressors in society whether it be the British, pro-British Irish Protestants, or “West Briton”²⁾ (*D* 165). The revival of his forgotten name is an awareness that such anger cannot be entirely suppressed to the end. While listening to the cause of Furey’s death, for example, Gabriel feels “[a] vague terror ... as if ... some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world” (*D* 191). Up until that point, however, the sense of resentment has been long forgotten. Such a sentiment terrorizes Gabriel perhaps because it feels so distant to him. Having been enshrined in a cozy, middle-class life, Gabriel is unlikely to confront frustrating, anger-fueling situations as Farrington does daily. Little surprise Gabriel responds only dully to the colonized condition of Ireland.

If Weathers symbolizes the unfavorable social condition Farrington has to suffer in “Counterparts,” in “The Dead,” snow shows a correlation with such a condition and Irish habituation to it. Gerhard Friedrich pointed out in 1954 that Joyce took Gabriel’s name from Bret Harte’s *Gabriel Conroy* (qtd. in Roos 105). Examining more closely the relationship between Harte’s novel and Joyce’s story in “James Joyce’s ‘The Dead’ and Bret Harte’s *Gabriel Conroy*: The Nature of the Feast,” Bonnie Roos notes a more terrifying aspect of the snowstorm in the former novel. While she notes nothing more than the immediate danger of cold and hunger in *Gabriel Conroy*, I suggest that Joyce, along with his protagonist’s name and the theme of hunger, also borrowed the setting of weather from Harte’s novel in order

-
- 1) The boy in “The Sisters,” for instance, has to restrain his anger by eating when he is provoked by Old Cotter: “I crammed my mouth with stirabout for fear I might give utterance to my anger. Tiresome old rednosed imbecile!” (*D* 5).
 - 2) A term that refers to those loyal to Britain. In “The Dead,” Miss Ivors calls Gabriel such a name twice for his indifference to the Irish Revival as well as for his writing in a pro-British newspaper.

to represent the harsh and underprivileged social condition of a colony in "The Dead." Not only does Michael Furey die after being exposed to winter rain, but Kate and Julia fuss about the weather, saying "[Gretta] must be perished alive" on the way to their house (*D* 153). Like Captain Gabriel Conroy in Harte's novel, Gabriel in "The Dead" has made his way through the snow, a trouble that even follows him into the house as "[a] light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes" (*D* 153). Perhaps not directly and mortally, the snow still threatens Joyce's Dubliners at the turn of the century. Even the hospitality and warmth of the Morkan party cannot entirely relieve them from such a condition.

Moreover, its milder existence than in Harte's novel further emphasizes how the people has been accustomed to the social condition of the colonized and how such habituation can be more dangerous to engender hardened insensitivity and paralysis. Gabriel's encounter with Miss Ivors is noteworthy in this sense. Her accusation of his disregarding Irish politics lets him lose his temper for the first time in the story (*D* 165). Not only does he blurt out his real emotion that he is "sick of [his] own country, sick of it," but he cannot continue to define his position "for his retort [has] heated him" (*D* 165 emphasis mine). He unwillingly confirms Miss Ivors' disparagement of him as his momentary anger prevents him from further explanation (*D* 165). Not accustomed to such state of emotion, Gabriel seeks a refuge in a nook of a room and even dreams of escaping to the outside snow.³⁾

How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper table! (*D* 166-67)

3) Richard Ellmann also notes Gabriel's psychological response in "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead,'" writing "this warmth is felt by Gabriel as stuffy and confining, and the cold outside is repeatedly connected with what is fragrant and fresh" (523-4).

Miss Ivors' criticism turns a cozy and comfortable bourgeois space of the Morkan party into an unbearable one for Gabriel, and he prefers the outside where Wellington's pro-British politics seems rather natural under the paralyzing effects of the snow, or of the colonized condition. In this sense, Gabriel's desire to run into the snow reflects the extent to which he has been numb to such a condition.

Gabriel's relationship with his wife Gretta is not an exception to this long-lasting state of numbness. Indeed, their married life has also long turned into dry and monotonous one, "the years of their dull existence together" (*D* 186). Recalling a moment in which they watch together "a man making bottles in a roaring furnace" "in the cold," Gabriel desires to revive the forgotten passion in them (*D* 185). Yet, he never realizes even at that moment, they were without romantic passion he thought they had once together. Instead, as the weather condition suggests, their relationship is solidly grounded in the paralyzing condition of the cold. No wonder Gretta shows intense interest in the fire of the furnace, asking, "Is the fire hot, sir?" (*D* 186). The tableau, instead of symbolizing a romantic moment in their relationship, betrays what Gabriel later realizes: Gretta longs for such a passion in the memory of Furey, the one Gretta and Gabriel have forgotten for so long, if they ever had it. Such passion, however, lacks not only in their married life. According to Ellmann, Gabriel "has himself always lacked [the passion in life]" until he sees it in Michael Furey (519). Only after learning the existence of Furey, Gabriel muses himself, "Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dimly with age" (*D* 194). For the first time, he decides to confront what he has wished to avoid—whether it be the chill relationship with his wife, his mortality, or his country.⁴⁾

Gabriel experiences various emotions such as a sense of humiliation and indescribable fear after he learns Furey's existence; however, Gabriel's first

4) In addition to Norris' explanation of "[Gabriel's] journey westward" being death, it may also indicate a literal visit to the Aran Isles that Miss Ivors suggests or to nearby Galway from where Gretta comes (*D* 194). Then, the movement implies his attempt to restore his perfunctory relationship with his wife and country to the genuine one.

response to Furey's name is notably anger. It is notable, I argue, because for the first time in *Dubliners*, Joyce shows a psychological process in which one confronts his or her suppressed anger. Learning his wife was thinking her old lover, "[a] dull anger [begins] to gather again at the back of [Gabriel's] mind and the dull fires of his lust [begins] to glow angrily in his veins" (*D* 190). It is this initial anger that ultimately leads to his epiphany. Gabriel realizes not only that he has led passionless life but also that he is, along with others, moving toward death for "[o]ne by one they [are] all becoming shades" (*D* 194). He understands that he is not different from the marginalized in the realm of the dead. The indivisible wall between him and Furey gives way as "the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling" (*D* 194). Furey's anger becomes Gabriel's, and furthermore, it extends the rage of Joyce's Dubliners such as Farrington who experiences irritation and frustration in his daily life, a life highly strained in the social condition of Ireland.

Gabriel's fury, however, is different from Farrington's in a sense that it is roused to be ultimately appeased. Unlike Farrington's anger which accumulates to the point it explodes and results in violence, Gabriel's is "dissolving and dwindling" along with the boundaries he set himself against others (*D* 194). The snow, once deployed to speak for his unassailable self and the cozy bourgeois world insensitive to the marginalized, now expresses the appeasement of suppressed anger.⁵⁾ Not only does the snow fall everywhere in equal terms, "general all over Ireland," by doing so, but it allays the fury of the oppressed by "falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling" (*D* 194). Dubliners, like Gabriel, are at last able to liberate themselves, "to set out on [their] journey westward" only after such pacification. Adding to the collection this last story then, Joyce shows a change from Dubliners' anger-ridden yet suppressed consciousness to its final dissolution, a step necessary

5) Critics, from the beginning, have also noted the snow in the final scene. William York Tindall, for example, explains how snow is finally connected with liberation, while Ellmann says that it symbolizes the "mutuality" of human beings that Gabriel at last learns (Tindall 47; Ellmann 525).

to awaken from their emotional paralysis.

Joyce's *Dubliners* capture how one is paralyzed by his or her social condition from which even more privileged ones than others (like Gabriel Conroy) cannot escape. In such condition, Farrington's anger might be one of the most natural emotions. Curiously, however, the characters in *Dubliners* seem hardly experience anger even in the circumstances where it seems most natural. The suppression of anger, one facet of their rigid paralysis, reflects how and to what degree their psyche is governed by the effects of long-held colonialism and its social consequences. In this context, Gabriel's encounter with Furey and his subsequent emotions in "The Dead" is significant, for they metaphorically suggest a process of a man whose emotions are restored from being frozen and numb except experiencing petit annoyances. His anger represents those of his contemporary Dubliners, awakened from long dead sleep. This change, inscribed by Joyce, is necessary for them to find a missing piece of their emotional gnomon and to move forward.

(Korea University)

Works Cited

- Beckett, J. C. "Northern Ireland." *Journal of Contemporary History* 6.1 (1971): 121-34.
- Brown, Richard. *James Joyce: A Post-Culturalist Perspective*. London: Mcmillan, 1992.
- Brown, Terrence. "Notes." *Dubliners*. London: Penguin, 1992. 274-87.
- Cullen, L. M. *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1972.
- Ellmann, Richard. "The Backgrounds of 'The Dead.'" *The Kenyon Review* 20.4 (1958): 507-28.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. Ed. Margot Norris. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- _____. *Dubliners*. Ed. Sean Latham. New York: Longman, 2011.
- Osteen, Mark. "Serving Two Masters: Economics and Figures of Power in Joyce's 'Grace.'" *Twentieth Century Literature* 37.1 (1991): 76-92.
- Parulis-Cook, Sienna. "Who is 'He'?" *James Joyce Quarterly* 41.4 (2004): 830-32.
- Roos, Bonnie. "James Joyce's 'The Dead' and Bret Harte's *Gabriel Conroy*: The Nature of the Feast." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15.1 (2002): 99-126.
- Tindall, William York. *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1959.

Abstract

Dubliners' Suppressed Anger: An Intertextual Reading of "Counterparts" and "The Dead"

Younghee Kho

This article examines the possibility of reading "The Dead" as a counterpart to "Counterparts," focusing on anger and reading the return of Michael Furey in "The Dead" as an embodiment of a revived anger of Joyce's *Dubliners*, an anger that is often suppressed in many other characters. The two stories reveal a stark contrast in their articulation of anger: while "Counterpart" shows how Farrington has to suppress his fury until he spots a body weaker than him at home, Gabriel Conroy experiences his re-awakening of an intense anger long forgotten. The fury, though ignited by a romantic rivalry with Michael Furey for Gretta, is not only personal; it is collective in the sense that it comes from the misrecognition of *Dubliners* who are oblivious of their own marginalization. The sentiment naturally hovers, as does the spirit of Furey, around the whole story. Gabriel's identification with Furey and even others in the end is significant in this sense; the identification is a sign for recognition of the people's shared but ignored rage against their underprivileged condition. The final story of *Dubliners*, while revealing, on the one hand, how rigid the paralyzing effects of their social condition have been, suggests, on the other, the possibility of undoing such effects through the return of the repressed with his fury.

■ Key words : Michael Furey, anger, suppression, Ireland, snow, passion

(마이클 퓨리, 분노, 억압, 아일랜드, 눈, 열정)

논문접수: 2014년 6월 7일

논문심사: 2014년 6월 8일

게재확정: 2014년 6월 24일