

‘The National Past’

as it emerges from:

- a) Joyce’s short story *The Dead*
- b) Orwell’s novel *1984* and
his essay *Politics and the English Language*

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I) Introduction

To avoid any misunderstandings that might arise from such a wide and far-ranging subject, I should like to point out that it is not in the least in my interest to label the two writers as “nationalists” or even “chauvinists” in extension of an exaggerated nationalism marked by a warlike attitude towards other nations. The question I am concerned with primarily in this treatise is to what degree, in what dimension and perhaps to what purpose there are any characteristics of what might be considered ‘national’, traceable and discernible in the writings of the two authors. And in case there are any features or hints as to a ‘national(minded)ness’, of what values they are within an overall estimation of this topic. It must be taken for granted as well that any author – independent and irrespective of the literary value of his/her single work – has a message for his/her readers which is of a different nature. This message carries an ethical function. It usually is a lesson teaching us a moral or it sets principals along which we are meant to go so as to keep up the good things in life on the basis of what we regard as ‘common sense’. It is such a cluster of mutually interrelated items that form the bulk of my questions connected with the subject and theme of my investigation:

- a) The 'national heritage' - what is it made up of (in either case of the two authors)?
- b) Is this 'national heritage' an object, an asset to be admired, adored, worshipped, even glorified, or just worth romanticizing or, conversely speaking, de-romanticizing?
- c) Does 'national tradition' have an obligation for us (following/resulting from it)?
- d) Do the two writers - irrespective of the points in which they differ from one another - have something in common we are admonished to share in and to cherish as a 'universal' heritage serving as a cornerstone/pillar to any kind of true, genuine (personal and political) freedom?

To shed some light on the intricate complex of these questions is the main purpose of this paper.

II) A) Investigation and evaluation of some of the imagery in Joyce's *The Dead*

It is my primary purpose to probe into the question whether the imagery used in this last piece of Joyce's constringent contributions to the sequence of "Dubliners" adds to a sense of "paralysis", 'futility', and pessimism in Gabriel Conroy, unquestionably the protagonist in this novella-like 'short story'.

The story completing and marking the final highlight in this superb flow of thematically interrelated stories is just this rich in images of differing kinds that I shall have to concentrate on just a few of them to point out the deeper meaning they have for the story as a whole.

From beginning to end there is a lot of play on the two-pronged cluster of light and darkness, shade and growth, day and night, which in turn is reflected and thus intensified by the geographical directions of 'east' and 'west'. It is this world of dualism, of polarity that pervades the whole 24 hour 'plot' in the narrative, largely conveyed to us through the eyes, the mind and senses (emotions) of Gabriel – explicitly through descriptive passages or implicitly, technically speaking, by means of frequent use of interior monologue laying bare to us what's going on in the mind and thus at the bottom of this person's soul.

Towards the end of the story, when the Christmas or New Year dance-party (in itself a turning point, symbolically) at the Morkans' is over, Gabriel has an 'epiphany'. This epiphany is related to his marriage which has become monotonous, vividless, scarily empty. What is it due to that his marriage to Gretta has drifted 'on the rocks', so to speak, without him being aware of it until he has this sudden, unexpected, unforeseeable insight into his life and what it has been like all the while. Gabriel can most certainly not be marked out as an insensitive man, unloving and inconsiderate to others. This becomes clear in the brilliant speech he gives after the opulent dinner in gratitude to the "hospitality" of his relatives, the two Misses Morkan and their niece, the "Three Graces"

as he apostrophizes them. Yet in a way he has perhaps been too introverted as far as his wife is concerned. Has there been a lack of love, a lack of feeling, real understanding for his wife? Has his relationship to Gretta consequently become 'dead' (worn out, threadbare, trodden down, senseless)? Gabriel's awareness of her as a complete being - like a living piece of art eternally to be admired anew - has gone lost. And it is this 'loss' he has become conscious of in a last moment, the moment of his 'epiphany'. What was the event disclosing to him that his wife had already been alienated from him? Was it a "dead" lad (> Michael Furey, his wife's former adolescent lover) who brought him back to life, hopefully, for the story significantly finishes with an open ending? Does the insight he now gains at this decisive moment in his life in this dim lit room of a hotel have an impact on him so as to stir him up and make him re-consider his attitude to life, love and within this context to his wife? And is the ultimate question not why he has been misguided in his assumptions on 'love'? Should he have taken into regard the 'past' of his wife, i.e. what had formed, shaped her in terms of her character, her expectations and her view of life? And if so, what are the means or/and the images in which Joyce tries to bring this across to us?

The reason why Gabriel lives in a "thought-tormented" plight as if caught in a cataclysm between a world of "cold" and "snow" on the one side and one of "light" and "fire" on the other is intricate. It consists of an entanglement of various factors, some of which we can only surmise, presuppose or indirectly derive from dexterously schemed allusions and references (under the cover of some images) to other details of the story.

Again it is light, new light in which Gabriel finds his wife so attractive all of a sudden. What makes him see her completely new? Has she re-gained her youth(fulness), has she been born a new human being? What is it that gave her back her original beauty? Before Gabriel begins to reflect about this 'cluster' of questions, he is that much carried away by her charm and outer beauty that he wants to 'devour' her with his very instincts. The (momentous?) sexual desire he unquestionably feels for her is boundless. Thus it is through his wife he feels born again. A miracle has taken place for him, too. The world has opened up to him again. Life has become worth living - through love. His marriage

has been saved (if at all, that is). Like the “snow” outside, which hasn’t been there in Ireland for the last thirty years, his marriage has been ‘cold’, ‘dead’. Now – overwhelmed by a new feeling for his wife – he beseeches everyone (the porter of the hotel as well as Gretta herself) to take away any candle up the staircase and in the room of the hotel itself. It is in a dim lit room or rather in the dark he wants to re-unite with his wife. And at the same time he wants to find out about the mystery enshrouding her ‘abstractedness’ (“Why did she seem so abstracted?” he wondered on p. 156 in the Wordsworth Classics edition). Why was she not with him? Why was she not listening to him? What was it she was wrapped up in her mind with? What was she absorbed in so as not to be able to really communicate with him? Had their relationship – like the unusually cold winter outside – frozen to ‘death’?

Some such questions must have passed through Gabriel’s mind before ‘light’ fell upon him through what his wife confessed to him. An old Irish folk song (*The Lass of Aughrim*), which is a love ballad about a lass abandoned/left in the lurch (by the feudal lord who had fathered her), and which was sung at the party, had brought back to her recollections of the past.

The song reminded her of a boy who used to sing that song too and who was in love with her (when being seventeen). All this had happened at Galway, a small village in the west of Ireland, where she used to stay with her grandmother. There was something inexplicable (about either of them) for which they had fallen in love with each other. And unlike Gabriel, this lad gave himself completely away to her. Though he was seriously ill, he came out to her right in the (cold +) rain just to see his beloved one. He obviously was prepared to sacrifice his life for her. He wholly dedicated himself to her in an unselfish, angel-like way (> cf. Gabriel, one of the archangels, wasn’t he? And here he was about to ‘fail’!?). Through ‘death’ he remained united to her. Thus he has lived on in the heart of Gretta, who herself has been able to live through this invisible link from the past. (This episode of ‘real love’ also fits in with Joyce’s theme of Christianity, which is not only restricted to Ireland. It was Jesus who said, “He who gives his life away for my sake will regain it.”)

In the light of the insight into this complex matter the question to rise for Gabriel is whether he will be prepared in the future to accept this kind of 'humiliation', of 'defeat' in as far as he has had (and will have) a 'dead rival' competing with him for the 'possession' of her not as a mere piece of property but her 'love' as a token of her favor for him/them. Will Gabriel be able to re-kindle a 'fire', a 'light' in the dawn of a new day (which is about to begin in the story) to mend the broken relationship with his wife? Will he be able to foster new bonds in a new light, a light which accepts a person's past, a past tied to history, religion, tradition each of us automatically inherited and has got to be conscious of?

The 'light' in the hotel room lit by a 'candle' can be extended into a broader line of similar images, all of which are intertwined with each other: Gabriel's burning desire, which is like a 'fire', his enchantment (by his wife deep in his soul, the realm of his emotions uncontrolled by reason) leading to his 'enlightenment' (with emphasis on the mind), his 'epiphany' (sudden becoming aware of something he hadn't recognized up to that point of time).

Parallel to this play on 'dark' and 'light' runs the emphasis on our cultural inheritance which we are meant to cherish. Joyce's lesson evidently is that if we don't pay heed to all that has formed/made us, we are doomed to a premature 'death' as becomes obvious in the relations Gabriel has/had to a) his wife, b) Lily, c) Miss Ivor.

As to Gabriel's wife, she has a natural (down to earth, nature-related) sensitivity which Gabriel himself hasn't become aware of in all those years. What links her to Miss Ivor is also a sense of homeliness, a sense of feeling drawn to one's origins, which in the case of Miss Ivor takes the shape or expression of 'patriotism', a longing, a quest, a search for one's identity on the basis of common experience, a language (in that case 'Gaelic Irish'), history, folklore, literature, art, all of which make up the ingredients of a tradition and cultural 'treasure' shared by the people of one and the same 'nation'. It is against this foil of abstract values we have to see Miss Ivor's 'westbound' yearning (for a

holiday in the west of Ireland, recurrently coming up in her at certain intervals), which transferred to Gretta assumes the evocation of Galway and the person of Michael Furey. I think the moral lesson Joyce wants to teach us in those examples and cross-cultural references to art, music and literature in a universal respect (cf. the Italian opera “Lucrezia Borgia”; the repeated quoting of “Caruso”, an outstanding, famous tenor of his time) is that if we don’t stick to the ‘spiritual’ values we inherited from the past (i.e. our ancestors and their achievements) we will lose touch with life, we will become ‘dead’. We will shrink to mechanically functioning beings, who might be categorized as (the) ‘living dead’ - if I may use an oxymoron to express this idea.

The very fact that Gabriel has been dead for quite a long time becomes evident in the “galoshes” he wants Gretta to wear. Whereas Gretta is not afraid of the snow and the little bit of cold naturally connected with it, Gabriel is scared of falling victim to it. He shies back from a real touch with life. He uses galoshes not just because they are fashionable so as to show off with a good-looking wife at such a Christmas dinner and dance party, but to make sure against the uncertainties of life. He thinks in terms of a life insurance as if there was such a thing against the imponderable in life. Unlike young Michael Furey, who exposed himself to rain (and bad weather conditions in general), who risked his life out of true love for Gretta, Gabriel is not prepared to take any risks so as not to endanger himself.

Undeniably this motif of ‘going west’ means ‘going home’. West is where the sun sets. West is where Ireland is - for Miss Ivor, and for Gretta west is where the dead are buried. The last character in this ‘triangle’ we have to cast some light upon within this perspective is Lily. Even she was underrated, treated ‘patronizingly’ and thus condescendingly by Gabriel. On the one hand he sees her beauty and wants to make her compliments, but somehow he is very awkward in his demeanor towards her. He doesn’t perceive a ‘flower’ in her, which her very name suggests, maybe a flower to blossom and bloom at Easter, the time of Christ’s resurrection, the seasonal re-birth of nature and in unison with this Gabriel’s own ‘coming back to life’. In what Lily retorts him with, Gabriel does not recognize a hint, clue, allusion as to where he as a ‘man’ might be

misguided (> an egotist): "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you." (p.129)

Yet there is still some hope for Gabriel to win back his wife and to unite with her in true love. This is superbly expressed in the final paragraph concluding the story. Just as the snow is 'falling faintly', tapping on the window pane, just as landscape outside and men inside the hotel room are put under a 'warm cover', a blanket so to speak, the veil of snow does not separate Gabriel from his wife entirely. One might just as well see the snow as a means of bringing people together again. The snow will melt away, spring time will come, and 'lilies' will arise. This 'cover-scene' towards an early morning that will take the night away is perhaps the moment when things begin to 'dawn' upon Gabriel (this stubborn archangel), when a 'revelation' takes place, an 'apocalypse' through an epiphany in him.

II) B) Relating those findings to Joyce's position as a 'national writer' and drawing first conclusions

There is undeniably a tinge of a possible healing process left in *The Dead*. This 'process' concerns Gabriel. He has to re-think his attitude to his wife. He must become aware of the specific sensitivity inherent to her person. And like any man she too is made up of a) her hereditary constitution (physically, mentally, psychically), b) the past, which in her case includes an enduring experience from Galway.

Galway itself stands for 'home', for 'Ireland', this yearning for her (and Miss Ivor's) identity. So I think we don't overrate and thus misinterpret the significance the locality of Galway plays in this short story. The underlying meaning and message driven home in this to the sensitive reader is plainly that there is no way round or past the historical and cultural heritage implanted in the soul of each Irish-born citizen in the sense of obliterating, denying, ignoring, neglecting or casting aside of it.

The same goes for Gabriel, in whom we can recognize Joyce himself. Gabriel wants to go to the Continent for a holiday. The Continent obviously stands for this (escaping, running) "away" from a Roman Catholic impregnated background/Irishness. The movement to the Continent reveals a desire for a liberation of the mind, an act towards progressivism, an opening and widening of the mind. In a way it means rejecting, renouncing a 'religion' (here the 'Church') as a one-sided, mind-restricting (= mind-narrowing) "ideology". Any "ideology" - simply by its definition and 'self-understanding' - doesn't tolerate any other ideology. It automatically excludes and fights any counter-attitudes to life and human existence as such. In the light of this recognition we might be justified to see a cosmopolitan (mind) in Gabriel. Yet, conversely and relentlessly, it is this cosmopolitan viewpoint/perspective that will oblige him to give in to his wife's natural wishes from time to time and travel with her to Galway for her sake. In other words, he will have to find a compromise and make both ends meet in order to save his marriage and not remain the self-styled 'hero' of a self-imposed 'tragedy'. He will have to blend his own 'Irishness' - which he despises as 'provinciality', a hindrance to the unfolding of his mental capacity, a disgrace in a way, which cannot be wiped out and with which he has got to put up - with his bird-like urge for more freedom - a territory of the mind he seems to find on the Continent enriched with multicultural elements motivating and inspiring him into a new, promising beginning as an artist - distant from the oppressing world of Ireland.¹

Whereas Orwell is definitely a writer with a purely political purpose, in Joyce there is a far deeper going artistic feature dominating his 'national' concern and (indirectly active)

¹ Joyce's ambivalent attitude to the Church in conjunction with his indisputably national position towards Ireland can best be summed up in the following quotation from A. Nicholas Fargnoli and Michael Patrick Gillespie, *James Joyce A To Z, The Essential Reference to the Life and Work*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1995, p.30, article on "Catholicism", left-hand column:

By his early twenties, Joyce voiced an ardent dissatisfaction with Catholic religious doctrines and the larger Church-dominated social system that he believed victimized the citizens of Ireland. He rejected the Church and claimed that it "is still, as it was in the time of Adrian IV [Nicholas Breakspear, the only English pope, 1154-59], the enemy of Ireland" (*Letters* II.187).

Joyce did not, however, minimize the place of religion in his work. In numerous ways - many not at all complimentary to the Church - his writings reflect the Catholic culture in which his mind was formed.

...

References to the mass, the sacraments, funeral rites, veneration of saints, the cult of the Virgin Mary, religious retreats, sermons and other Catholic practices abound in Joyce's work, not as decorative devices but as important aspects of his overall thematic intentions.

involvement for an 'independent', sovereign Ireland. His 'nationality' has been shaped and tinted by (the) residues if not 'relicts' (in his eyes!) from a Church inspired and infiltrated history.

III) Orwell's viewpoint per evidence from:

A) 1984

In Forster's *The Machine Stops* it is the machine man believes in, in Orwell's *1984* it is power, political power a party oligarchy believes in. *1984* is not an anti-utopia, in which man has lost control over technology to become its slave, it is a man-made disaster, a dystopia of perversion: logic (i.e. reasoning), language, and history have been twisted out of order, reversed to the single purpose and benefit of an elitist small group of people, the Inner Party members, those functionaries that form the establishment within a communist system. Seen from this angle, Orwell's book is the vision of a nightmare. What makes this 'trauma' even tragic is its 'inescapability' (inevitableness). There is no way round or out of this terror regime. Winston, the revolting, rebelling 'thought-criminal' tries in vain to find like-minded conspirators to stand up against this tyranny. At the end of his courageous attempt he finds himself completely abandoned, utterly left alone - apart from his rather mechanically functioning, unconvincing love-partner Julia.

Forms of such totalitarian states, in which even the private sphere of the individual is constantly supervised and checked by a Big Brother machinery of telescreens, hidden microphones (cf. bugs), plain-clothes police forces and spies, were copious and conspicuous to the alerted, attentive mind at the time Orwell wrote his novel. It is against this background that he pleadingly sends out a last warning (in form of a quasi-supranational universal appeal) to watch out so as not to fall victim to the 'glorifiers' (= over-enthusiastic adherents) of such dictatorship, examples of which in Orwell's days were a) Germany under Hitler, b) Mussolini's fascist movement, c) general Franco's coming/rising to power in Spain, d) communist Russia led by Stalin.

It is within this fear of Orwell's lying menacingly ahead of him like this mene, mene, tekel, upharsin (= the writing on the wall, ☞ Old Testament: Dan.) of a globe divided up

into three totalitarian power blocs that we have to see his understanding of a "national past", of whose heritage he is aware and which he wants to pass on to as many people(s) as possible. Like a beneficent prophet (seer) or missionary from the New Testament he feels bound to voice his vision of this impending catastrophe so as to prevent it in the very last minute.

The overall party-line motto or rather institutionalized goal to keep everybody active and at the same time under control is "Ingsoc". "Ingsoc" in itself is side-lined by a number of subordinate 'doctrines' conducive to the spirit of "Ingsoc" and its realization, such as "doublethink" and "Newspeak", the latter of which has survived in the English language up to this day.

Orwell is largely a socialist thinker, yet on a national level, which he himself restricts to England - not to Britain, Great Britain, thus excluding the Scots and Welsh from being "English" in a 'national sense'. Within the web of his socialism Orwell is not strongly opposed or biased against communism as such. Any form of communism is a collectivism that tries to do away with society's partition into social classes. Significantly, Orwell uses an Irish name for one of the "Inner Party" leaders (☞ O'Brien). This has two reasons. On the one hand Ireland is the country that has always with perseverance and persistency, perhaps not unflaggingly, striven for political freedom, an independent as well as united Ireland. On the other hand, it has allegedly never clung to a rigid system of social classes like its age-old enemy Britain. This is Orwell's vision in utmost desire: a society free(d) from any form of racial or whatsoever segregation and discrimination inflicted upon it by a redundant system of class layers. Any 'caste' system is detrimental/defective to a greater sense of community based upon common tradition and history.

Freedom of the mind in an atmosphere of privacy guaranteed by "law and order" is basically what the English 'soul' yearns for. It is also what Orwell dreams of, this specific "national characteristic" of "Englishness". Where the rights of man, in particular the right to voice one's opinion, are shamelessly violated or even completely

eradicated, there is no common welfare to be expected. Any 'democracy' needs criticism. It virtually thrives and flourishes on it as long as this criticism is constructive within the frame of a (written or – in the case of Britain – unwritten) constitution marked by a) legality (a legal system, in which the rights and duties of the citizens are laid down), b) the partition of power, i.e. government (into the three branches of the legislative body, the executive organ and the jurisdictional part). Very often it is extra-parliamentary opposition in the form of a strong commitment of a large number of people from different backgrounds and walks of life that gives incentives, enlivening stimuli through counter-suggestions to a far more fluent and efficient running of what must be seen as their own 'affairs' (cf. Latin "res publica" = public issue concerning everybody in contrast to "res privata"). So freedom of the mind is always conducive to the functioning of a 'democracy'.

Outstanding critics of democratic procedures are frequently artists, such as novelists, playwrights, even painters and sculptors. They, too, form a constitutive part in the running of a 'nation'. It is therefore within this broader light that we must see Winston and his "diary (project)" in its wider emblematic sense of "art", "autobiography", "history", "culture", etc., whose implicit, undercurrent function it is to preserve one's past, a people's past as a 'national treasure' in the end. So the "diary" serves here as a "signifier" indicating the 'signified' in it: "art", culture as heritage from the past (partly within a national level) yielding/shedding signals of orientation for man's (or a whole nation's) future. If the implication of the "diary" is art and freedom of speech is the cornerstone of art, freedom of thought and the opportunity of creative writing become "inalienable" rights of man forming part of his God-given nature, his 'constitution'. The famous extract from the American "Declaration of Independence" – as quoted and referred to by Orwell in the appendix to his book – would be disgraced into one misleading word (deprived of its richness in promises) if translated into "Newspeak", the language of the totalitarian state of Oceania. Where freedom becomes (here: is declared) a crime, what bleak outlook remains there for man?

III) Orwell's viewpoint per evidence from:

B) *Politics and the English language*

Orwell's nationality is a nationality of the language, his beloved English, about whose decay, deprivation through foreign influences and modern-day corruption he is so much concerned and worried. According to him language functions as an authority. And like authority it exercises a great influence on us. Language – to Orwell – is not just a 'modernist' type of 'signifier' depleted from any meaning, serving the whim and fancy purpose of its user of the moment. On the contrary, it has a stabilizing effect upon man (within the 'national' boundary of a society by which it is spoken). It embodies 'virtues' like:

- a) source of orientation (and thus a 'future')
- b) clarity in simplicity and straightforwardness ☞ no vagueness, ambiguity, ambivalence or equivocation
- c) purity ☞ no superfluous, unnecessary extra words, such as far-fetched Latinisms, and the like
- d) cultural, national heritage in a wider sense, which apart from art and history includes habits of people, such as d₁) listening to classical music on a [rainy] Sunday morning to read several Sunday papers thereafter, d₂) pottering about in the garden, d₃) keeping yourself to yourself, which is always the best thing to do, d₄) having a cup of tea in between times, d₅) not starting work before 9 o'clock, which means filling the first hour of your 'work' with reading a daily so that in actual fact you begin work not before 10 a.m., d₆) overall motto: enjoy yourself and watch it!
- e) trashy, threadbare phrases that have become habitual should be avoided
- f) 'dead' metaphors (i.e. those devoid of any [concrete] sense) should be ignored and thus eliminated/removed from language

Why does Orwell see himself as the 'Lord Protector' and 'Defender' of all these qualities forming a 'national faith', so to speak?

Orwell wrote this essay in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II, at a time the British Empire had already fallen apart, and what was left of it transformed and been saved into what became known as the Commonwealth of Nations, communist Russia had shaped

out as a world power (superpower) number II whilst Europe was seemingly in a state of transition - of which nobody quite knew of what kind and to what end exactly – if not utter turmoil. It is this political disorder (and upheaval) that Orwell sees reflected in the dilapidation of the English language.

If language is the ‘soul’ of the body, then politics is the active ‘mind’ of it. And that is what Orwell perceives, the inextricability of politics and language. Both phenomena are inseparably interlinked with each other, one presupposes and pre-conditions the other. So when Orwell remarks “the present political chaos is connected with the decay of the language...”² it is the task of the English language to restore ‘order’, not just limited to a ‘national’ level, but ‘order’ in a more global, universal sense in as far as the world-wide community of English-speaking people(s) are concerned.

IV) Conclusion: final assessment of the two authors **with focus on what relates them to ‘modernism’**

What both writers have in common is the feeling to have lost something, something they miss, they cannot replace, which fact makes them suffer. And it is this loss that contradicts the uniqueness of art, its not being subject to the changes of time, its immortal significance. Or is this (view) a dichotomy in itself?

If literature holds up a mirror to us, and if literature is unquestionably a form of art, then art is indispensable. We cannot do without it, we cannot afford to ‘miss’ it. Or is our belief, our assumption that we have lost something just self-deception? Is not art subject to the same laws of nature as is human life in general? Is artifice steering away from art, and art from life, history? So who or what is responsible for the loss of art the way it used to be? This raises the question/point whether art cannot be fixed to a concept of its own definition rising from never-changing conventions innate to society. Obviously this view hasn’t got a leg to stand on. Both writers are aware of the fact that time changes, and with it art, i.e. its concepts, the notions of what it should be, its methods, devices,

² “Politics and the English Language”, p.170, in: *George Orwell, A Collection of Essays*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, ¹1981.

styles, means to bring it about, to create it. And this is the point at which both writers send out their diverging messages to the public.

Whereas Orwell uses language as a means of art to criticize politics, Joyce is less pessimistic, is open to liberalism and progressivism (to be equated with ‘modernism’ in a sense of its own?) and tries to find ways to adjust art to the needs of time. Thus Joyce blends the past (☞ Ireland and Catholicism) with the present (cf. the multicultural open-mindedness of/on the Continent Gabriel feels lured to) and experiments with the recovery of the novel along new lines, away from the constraints of conventional society.

In this respect the two writers each want to save something: Orwell the ‘Englishness’ in democracy and individual freedom and creativity of the mind, Joyce the novel (and tangibly other literary genres, too) through what has become known as ‘stream of consciousness technique’.

The warning signals of both authors (in Joyce “the faintly falling snow”, for instance), their misgivings and at the same time attempts to rescue what has been lost mark them as ‘modernist’ writers.

My tutor’s comment on the paper, the grades he gave me for it and my performance in class consisting of (the quality of) my written and oral contributions, including one major oral presentation on Beckett’s Endgame, and last but not least the results from the mid-term exam all participants had to take:

You do a nice job of sketching out the two national traditions each author invokes here. You also have some interesting things to say about modernism, particularly regarding the connection between a lost national past and the lost language that modernism begins with. You also give a nice reading of Gabriel’s conflicted response to Ireland and his

wife, though I'm afraid I still don't see him as being quite as generous toward his homeland as you make him. It is Ireland and the past that have obstructed his modernism in my view – you still see Ireland as a home that Joyce needs to carry forward.

My only real complaint here is about the organization. While it is well-documented, this is less an essay than a linked series of points, most of them particularly perceptive and well-articulated, but not necessarily building up toward your conclusion.

Excellent work over the course of the class. I really appreciated your presence.

paper: A-

class: A