Dead!  
  
“Wouldn't it be grand? It ain't exactly what you planned

And wouldn't it be great if we were dead?”  
-Gerard Way  
  
Lily [the flower of that name is the archangel Gabriel—the gospel at Annunciation in Lily of the Valley and Renaissance art the Virgin's lily in a tale just before the feast of Epiphany see Introduction p. xxxiv whose protagonist is named Gabriel, Joyce’s choice of interpretive speculation] brought one gentleman into the floor and helped him off again and to scamper along the well. For she had ladies also, but Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought that Miss Kate and Miss Julia were gossip and laughter and fuss walking after each, head over the annual dance. Everybody, old friends, any pupils that were grown up enough and Mary Jane’s pupils, too. Never once had it fallen flat. For years and years anyone could live with the dark gaunt house, the upper ground floor was a day. Mary Jane, then a little girl in short clothes, was now the main prop of the household. She had been through the Academy [the Royal Irish Academy of Music on the river in Central Dublin] and gave a pupils’ concert every year in the Rooms [a hall in Brunswick Street Great Central Dublin just south of river, as in ‘a Mother’]. The Kingstown, Old they were, quite grey in Adam and Eve’s [popular Dublin name for Immaculate Conception, a well-known Fransciscan Island. It is frequently *Finnergan’s Wake*]. Kate, being too feeble, gave music lessons to beginners in the back room.   
  
Lily, the care-taker’s daughter, did housemaid’s work, their modest well; diamond bone, three-shilling tea and bottled stout. She got on well with her three mistresses. They were fussy, that was all. There was no sign of Gabriel [in the Biblical account the angel Gabriel, one of four, announces John the Baptist and the coming of the Virgin Mary, in Hebrew the name means ‘Man of God’], his wife. They would not wish for worlds of Mary Jane—pupils should see him under the influence; when he was like that it was very hard to manage him. Freddy always came late but what could be keeping Gabriel: Miss three mortal hours scraping the snow from his Kate and Julia. Both of them kissed Gabriel’s wife, she must be right as the mail. Go on up, call out Gabriel from the dark.   
  
He continued upstairs, laughing. A light fringe of snow like noise through the cold fragrant air–—from out-of-doors, escaped from crevices and folds. —Is it snowing again, asked Lily. She had preceded Gabriel, smiled at the three syllables and glanced at her. She was a slim, pale with hay-coloured hair. Paler Gabriel had the lowest step, nursing a rag doll. In night, looked stamping and on the floor glanced at the end of a shelf. Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school? —O no, sir, she answered. I’m done schooling this year and more. —O, then, said Gabriel gaily, one of these fine days—with all palaver and coloured as if the high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there the bright glit rims of his delicate and restless eyes. His glossy black curve, the groove by his flicked lustre. He stood up and pulled his waistcoat down.   
  
Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket. —O Lily, he said, thrusting into her hands, it’s Just...here’s a little…. Rapidly, the door. Cried, the girl, following him. Really, said Gabriel—the stairs and a gloom arranging cuffs and his bowtie. A little paper for his speech. The lines above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation from the indelicate shuffling of soles; their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry which they could not understand. They would—–he would fail with a wrong tone. His whole speech was an utter failure.   
  
His aunts and his wife were two small plainly dressed tops, grey and flaccid. She was stout and stood erect, her slow eyes gave her Aunt Kate, her sister’s puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, had not lost their ripe nut colour. They both kissed Gabriel frankly. He was their favourite. —Take a cab back to Monkstown to-night, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate. —No, said Gabriel, we had quite enough of that last year, hadn’t we? Don’t you remember, all the way, east wind blowing in after dreadful cold? —Quite right, Gabriel, quite right. You can’t be too careful. Gabriel, in the snow. —Don’t mind him, with his green shades for Tom Thumb’s eyes at night and the stirabout [a porridge of oatmeal boiled in water and stirred]; you’ll never guess what he makes me wear now! A peal of laughter and happy eyes.   
  
The two aunts laughed heartily too, for Gabriel’s latest goloshes. I wouldn’t, laugh nervously. —What are goloshes, Gabriel? —Goloshes, Julia! Goodness me, don’t you know what goloshes are? You wear them over your...over your boots, isn’t it? Have a pair now. —Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent. Gabriel knit his brows and says the word. —Tell me, Gabriel, you’ve seen...the point–to gaze after that waltz had ended. The drawing room within some couples coming out. Gabriel whispered into his ear: —You know, the reason they are so fond of me is—he did not finish his sentence, led the three young ladies into the back room. The middle of end to end, and a sideboard of knives and sweets. A smaller hop-bitter to some ladies’ punch: hot, strong, and sweet. Three bottles of lemonade for the young men to fill himself, a goodly measure of whisky. —God help me, he said, smiling. His wizened, broader smile in musical echo to his pleasantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders.   
  
The boldest said: —O, now, I’m sure—and said, with sidling mimicry—now, if I don’t take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it [for I feel I want it: possible reference to stock jokes of the Pat and Mike variety—–the reference here may also invoke a character, a catch from a popular and vulgar review (G.)]. His hot face had leaned forward a little too confidently and the young ladies, with one instinct, received silence. Mary Jane’s pupils asked, what was the name of the pretty waltz? Mr Browne ignored the two young men, who were red-faced. The room, excitedly clapping hands and crying: —Two gentlemen and three ladies, Mary Jane! Mr Kerrigan, will you take a partner? Mr Bergin, o, that’ll just do now. —Three ladies, Mary Jane, the pleasure, and Mary Jane turned to...Miss Daly, you’re really awfully good. We’re so short of recruits. The room wandered into the room, looking behind at a column of blunt convex disorder. His scanty hair in a high key at a story he had been telling: Gabriel on the stairs and at the same time rubbing the knuckles backwards and forwards into his left eye.   
  
Freddy bade the Misses’ offhand fashion the catch in the sideboard, crossed undertone the story he had raised quickly and answered: —O, no, hardly noticeable. Isn’t he a terrible fellow! New Year’s Gabriel, into the drawing-room. Gabriel in answer and, nearing the climax of his disarray: in his dress, filled out and left handed, accepted the glass, engaged in the readjustment of his dress. Mr Browne poured out for Freddy Malins before he had the climax, in a kink, bronchitic glass, began to rub the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into repeating words his last phrase as his fit of laughter. Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was full of runs and difficult, hushed music. The piece had no melody for him and he doubted Mary Jane to imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to the page.   
  
Gabriel’s eyes glittered with the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*: hung there beside the Tower [the two young sons of the English King Edward IV were murdered in the Tower who became Richard III in 1483. Portrayal of the innocents asleep or dead, was a common Victorian genre]. Aunt Julia worked in red, blue and brown when she was a girl—-in school they taught a waistcoat of purple tabinet [a silk and wool watered fabric which resembles poplin] with little foxes’ heads lined with satin and round mulberry buttons. It was strange, Aunt Kate used to call it Constantine [after the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great who effectively brought Christianity, supremacy, in the Roman empire, both piety and ambition for offspring], dressed in chosen names for the dignity of Gabriel, himself had a shadow over his sullen opposition to memory. That was not true at all. It was Gabriel who had nursed their house at Monkstown. He knew that Mary Jane must be near the end of the melody, with every bar and a final, deep octave in the blushing and rolling up the room. The four young men in the doorway had gone back when the piano stopped.   
  
Lancer [a quadrille dance, this story of martial allusion, the festive board were armies in serried ranks] was frank-mannered with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes fixed in the bore on an Irish device [the Celtic revival of the 1880s encouraged the self-conscious Celtic in fashion and costume—–the separatist movement, notably puritanical in sexual matters]. They had a crow to pluck with you. —With me? said Gabriel. —What is it? asked Gabriel, smiling at their solemn manner. Gabriel coloured his innocent eyes, trying to smile. —I’m ashamed of you, frankly, to say you’d write for a rag like that. A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel’s face. He wrote a literary column, every book, received the paltry cheque. He loved nearly every second-hand bookseller, to Webb’s or Massey’s on Aston’s Quay [*Bachelor’s walk*], or to O’Clohissey’s in the by-street. He did not know how to say that literature was above politics. They were their careers, first at the university, then as teachers.   
  
He could not risk blinking his eyes, trying to smile and writing books—–their turn to cross. He was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft, friendly tone: —Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.   
  
They were the university question [University college did not admit ‘women’ at the time when Gabriel and Miss Ivors might be reckoned to have attended, so he must have studied at one of the other institutions, established by Dominican nuns and established by Loreto nuns—–both took their degrees within that reputation, Gaelic language, to make their way in the world cf Bonnie Kime Scott, *Joyce and Feminism*, Bloomington/Sussex, 1984, p. 41. Joyce’s Dublin acquaintance may have been a model], and Gabriel felt at ease. A friend of Miss Ivors had shown her his review of Browning’s secret: she liked the review immensely. Then she said: —Mr Conroy, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles [the focus of much nationalist mythologizing, a *de rigueur* for any *echt* Gael] this summer? We’re going to stay there a whole month. You ought to come. It would be splendid for you to come, won’t you? said Miss Ivors, laying her warm hand eagerly on his arm.   
  
—The fact is, said Gabriel… —Well, said Gabriel, it’s partly the keep in touch with language. Turned to listen to the cross-examination. Gabriel glanced nervously and tried to keep his good humour under the blush. —To visit truth, Gabriel said suddenly, sick of my own country, sick of his heated agitation! The dance, the lancers over Gabriel. Freddy Malins’ stout, feeble catch in a crossing. In Glasgow [many Protestant and Catholic Irish immigrants lived there (as they still do) in mutual distaste] and Dublin, a beautiful crossing—–had been most of all unpleasant, whatever. All things answered. She had no right to call him ridiculous, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit’s eyes. He saw his waltzing couples, his—–Gabriel, the goose as usual. Miss Daly will carve the ham and I’ll do this waltz. So Gabriel… —No words. —Something like that. I’m trying to, to sing, I think. —There were no words, said Gabriel moodily, the west of Ireland and his clasped little jump. —O, Gabriel, she cried, I’d love to see the interruption, tell, Gabriel, what beautiful places in Scotland and every year to a splendid fisher. One day he caught a fish, a beautiful big big fish, and the man in the hotel boiled it for their dinner.

Gabriel hardly heard, he began the quotation. He saw Freddy coming and retired into the embrasure of the plates and knives. Those who remained seemed tired of Gabriel’s warm trembling fingers, the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk alone, first along the river and then through the park! [The Phoenix Park is a short walk away from the party.] The snow would be a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. [Monument in Phoenix Park, Hero of Waterloo: Wellington was born Dublin but refused famously declaring that to be born in a stable does not make one a horse. His contribution to Irish debates on identity is in Gabriel’s mind after his encounter with Miss Ivors.] How much more pleasant would it be there than at the supper table!  
  
His Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, [Greek mythology: daughters of Zeus and Eurynome as Aglaia (Brilliance), Euphrosyne (Joy), and Thalia (Bloom) are the patrons of gracious social intercourse.] Paris, [Greek mythology: Paris was required to choose to which of three goddesses (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite) he would award the golden apple mischievously thrown by Eris (Discord). He chose Aphrodite (Love) and was awarded Helen and all discordant consequences.], the quote from Browning. *One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music*. Miss Ivors praised life. Was she sincere? There had never been any feeling between them until that night. It unnerved him to think that she would be looking at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes.   
  
Perhaps, he would say, *Ladies and gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation murmur in the room of attention*. The door, an irregular musketry of pitch and prelude. It was that of an old song of great spirit. The runs embellish the air and the grace notes. Follow the voice, without looking at the singer’s Gabriel—–the song and the invisible song-book, the cover perched sideways. Still applauding when everyone else had ceased, talking, heads gravely, slowly in acquiescence. At last he could clap, both hands, shaking when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved my mother good, as it did to-night. *Now! Would you believe that now? That’s the truth! Upon my word and honour that’s the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh so…*  
  
Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments, released her hand from his grasp. Mr Brown extended his open prodigy to audience: *My latest discovery!* He was Freddy Malins. —Well, Mr Browne, if you’re serious, you might simply throw away that choir. The good sense of the refractory child, a vague reminiscence playing on night and day. Six o’clock on Christmas morning! And all for what? —Well, isn’t it for the honour of God, Aunt Kate? Mary Jane, twisting around on the piano, the slave boys over their heads. I suppose it is for Mary Jane, and it’s not Mary Jane. Seeing all the dancers come back, Mary Jane is of the other persuasion [euphemistic, and in this context, protestant].   
  
Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to religion, said hastily: —I don’t question the common Father, straight to his face… —And besides, Mary Jane, we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very thirsty we are also quarrelsome. —We had better go to supper, said Mary Jane, and finish the discussion afterwards.   
  
One the landing outside the drawing room Gabriel found Mary Jane trying to button her cloak, would not stay. She did not feel in the least hungry and had already overstayed her time. —Mary Jane, after all your dancing. I am afraid you didn’t enjoy yourself at all. —Ever so much, I assure you, but you really must let me run off now. It’s only two steps up the quay. Gabriel hesitated a moment and said: —If you will allow me, I’ll see you down the staircase. Mary Jane gazed after a moody puzzled Gabriel, asked himself. He stared blankly down the staircase. In despair: —Where is Gabriel? she cried. —Where on earth is Gabriel? There’s nobody to carve the goose!   
  
Gabriel, a flock of geese and a fat brown goose and the other paper stripped of its neat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other, sherry. One the closed square were three squads of red labels, with transverse green. Gabriel took his seat at the head of the table, looked to the edge of the piano. Bottles of stout and ale for the great confusion, and noise, the noise of corks and hot work. Mary Jane settled to walking on each other’s heels, getting in each other’s way and giving it unheeded orders, suppers. And Gabriel was time enough, that, at last, amid general laughter, he said, smiling: —A little more of! What a vulgar! Chorus of voices invited to begin with preparatory draught (kindly forget my existence)...*gentlemen, the subject was the opera, a dark-complexioned young vulgar, the Gaiety* [another Dublin theatre on South King St, where Grafton St gives on the Green] *of the finest tenor voices.* He answered carelessly. —Freddy Malins? Now I’d be curious to hear your opinion of him.   
  
Nobody answered the question. Mary Jane led the table back to legitimate opera. One of her pupils had it very fine, poor Georgina Burns [unknown—–possibly suffered a mental breakdown? in *Mignon* the heroine undergoes a period of insanity, reference to the opera may have brought her to mind]. Mr Browne could go back further still, to the old Italian. After night, an Italian encore, *Like a Soldier*, *Fall* [from William V. Wallace’s opera *Martiana*]. The gallery boys, the carriage could not get the voices to sing them: that was why.   
  
—O, well. —I’d give anything to sing, said Mary Jane. —For there was only one...to please me, I mean. But I suppose you’ve never heard of Gabriel…  
  
The pudding was transferred to the clatter. Forks and spoons began midway down, by Mary Jane. The pudding was Aunt Julia’s making and she said herself that it was not quite brown enough. —Well, I hope..., said Mr Browne. The blood was silent all through the son, going down in a bracing air. How hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny from their guests. —You mean, in our church, the monks never spoke...in the morning, slept in their coffins [misconception of the Trappist rule of St Benedict—–the monks sleep in their habits, buried in open coffins]. The rule of sins committed by all the sinners in the very clear end. Subject: it was buried in the silence. The table indistinct, the monks very pious. Raisins and figs and apples and chocolates and Aunt Julia invited all the guests to port or sherry. The noise of the unsettling. Cough one, twice and… The silence came and Gabriel pushed back, at once grew louder in encouragement and then ceased altogether.

Gabriel leaned his trembling company. A row of upturned faces, he raised his eyes to the piano. A waltz and the skirts sweeping against the drawing-room door. People, perhaps, were standing in the snow, gazing up at the lighted windows and the air was in the distance: the park weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument flashed westward over my lot this evening. —A task for Mr Browne: I can only ask you to will the deed and lend me to express you in words what my feelings are on this first time, under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. The recipients – or perhaps, I’d better say, the victims of – a circle in the air. With everyone Mary Jane all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly: recurring country of no tradition. So much jealousy—–of tradition that is unique as the cultivated. One roof shelters the aforesaid – may do so for many. A tradition, genuine assent round the table. It shot through Gabriel—–was not there and in himself: thought-tormented age: will, kindly humour an older day. *Those great singers of the past, seemed to me, beyond hope.* *At least, that in gatherings such as this we shall cherish in our hearts the memory of those who will not willingly let die* [John Milton: in *The Reason of Church Government*].

Gabriel, falling into inflection, in gatherings such as thoughts that will recur to our minds: absent faces here tonight. Our path strewn with brood upon strenuous rush: of our *we*: in the spirit of fellowship, in the true spirit of the guests of – what shall I call them? The Three Graces of Dublin, musical Gabriel. Three Graces, Aunt Julia, Mary Jane. Aunt Julia did not understand but she looked up, smiling, at Gabriel, who continued in the same vein.   
  
—I will not attempt to play the part that Paris played, between them. When I view them in heart, too good heart, become a byword with perennial singing and a revelation and the tears which hastened to his close. He raised his ass while every member of the company fingered ass expectantly, and said loudly: —Let us toast them all three together! Let us drink to position, and affection in our hearts! Turning, the three sang in unison, with Mr Browne: *For they are Jolly Good Fellows, which nobody can deny!* Kate was making Frank. Freddy Malins beat the singers toward conference, while they sang, with emphasis: *a lie a lie an awful lie this weight it must be satisfied* [they are...a lie, in this tradition, an addition to the many this story contains, for the English general, Marlborough, the hero of [ ], the word ‘gay’] turning their acclamation by acting as the piercing morning into the hall they said: —close the door, will death of cold.   
  
Out. Everywhere. Lowering her tone. Archly, he is very attentive. —He has been laid here like the gas [installed, thereby permanently available, though not of course so permanently welcome or useful] all during Christmas. This Mary Jane, close the door. The hall-door would break: astrakhan cuffs and collar and pointed down the snow-quay of shrill whistling, borne all the cabs advanced behind the office, struggling into hall. —Not down? —Nobody, ‘re all gone. —O, no. Someone is strumming Gabriel. Mary Jane Gabriel and Mr Browne and a shiver: makes me feel cold to look at you, to face your journey home at this hour.   
  
—I’d like nothing better this minute, said Mr Browne, in the country or a fast spanking between the shafts, and trap at the never-to-be-forgotten. And Gabriel laughed too. The old gentleman was a glue-boiler. Gabriel had a starch mill. The old gentleman had a horse by the name Old Gentleman’s Mill, walking round and that was all very well; but now comes the tragic part. One fine day old gentleman thought to drive out with *the Lord have mercy on, compassionately*—Amen. Gabriel, the old gentleman, as I said, harnessed and put on his very best stock collar in the grand style from his ancestral mansion somewhere near Back Lane [just south of the river—–the distinct Gabriel imagines [ ] to have lived shabby, was not possessed of an ‘ancestral mansion’]. Everyone laughed at Gabriel’s—–O now, Gabriel, he didn’t live in Back Lane, really. Only the mill was there. Out of the mansion of his forefathers, continued Gabriel, everything beautifully. Johnny came in the statue [this story of William Prince of Orange and the Battle of Boyne...it has since been removed]: he fell in love with the horse King. He thought he was back again in the mill. Anyhow he began to walk round the statue.   
  
Gabriel in a circle in his goloshes amid the laughter of others. —Round and round. Gabriel was—–was highly indignant. *Johnny! Johnny, the horse!* The peals of laughter followed Gabriel’s resounding hall-door. Mary Jane ran to open Freddy Malins. Freddy Malins, with his hat well back, head and his shoulders humped with cold, puffing and steaming after his cab. Gabriel in the draught. After many manoeuvres, in after—–there, of confused talk, and then the cabman bent down for the address. The confusion, Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head through a window of the cab. The difficulty to drop the route, and Mary Jane from the doorstep with cross-directions and contradictions and abundance of laughter.

Freddy Malins was speechless with laughter. The great danger of his hat, progressing till at last Mr Browne shouted to the bewildered cabman above the din of everybody’s laughter: —Trinity College gates! said Mr Browne, we’ll tell you where to go! —Make like a bird for Trinity College! —Right, sir, said the cabman. The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.   
  
Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a darkness—–of the hall gazing up the staircase—–standing near the top of shadow, also. He could not see the terracotta, salmon pink panels of skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his. Bannisters, Gabriel, at stillness and the noise of laughter and dispute on the front, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man’s voice singing. He stood still in the gloom of hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his mystery, as if he were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a man standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. A painter would paint—–blue felt would show off the bronze against the darkness and the dark panels of the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter.   
  
He wouldn’t sing all night, to sing a song before. Do, Mary Jane, and the staircase was closed abruptly. He cried. Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come. —We were all in raptures listening to you. I’m as hoarse as signs to the subject, and frowning.   
  
Snow like thirty years; I read this snow all over Ireland. We have the snow on the repentant. The history of pity, his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife. The flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen. Fire seemed unaware of the talk about Gabriel. There, colour on a sudden ride, leaping out of his *Aughrim*. —I’m sorry you were not in voice to-night. —Goodnight, Gabe, Goodnight! —Goodnight, thanks ever so much. Goodnight! —O, goodnight. —Goodnight, goodnight. —Goodnight! —Goodnight, again. —Goodnight, all. Safe home. —Goodnight. Goodnight…  
  
The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the slush. Only streaks of the burning stood out menacingly against the heavy sky. Gabriel’s eyes were still bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, and various.   
  
He was walking so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after something foolish and affectionate. Into his ear—–to him so frail that he longed to, to be alone with moments. Their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory. A heliotrope-envelope was caressing his hand. Birds were ivy and the sunny web of the shimmering along. He could not eat. They were standing on the crowded platform. He was placing a ticket inside the warm palm of glove. He was standing in the cold, looking through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. It was very cold. In the cold air, quite close to his [ ]; he called out to the man at the furnace: —is the fire hot, sir?   
  
But the man could not hear, with the noise. It was just as well. He might have answered rudely. A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart, coursing in a warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fires of stars: moments of their life together, broke upon illuminated memory. He longed to recall their dull ecstasy. For years, he felt, quenched his soul, his writing, household cares. All their souls’ tender fire. One letter: *Why—–words like cold? [ ] is no word, to be.* Distant music. Words had written years, before, were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with the others, had gone away, in their room in the hotel. They would be alone together, would call her softly: perhaps, would not hear at once. Undressing, in his voice would strike him….  
  
At the corner of Winetavern Street [close to Usher’s Island, which gives on to the south bank of the river], they met a cab. Its rattling window seemed tired. The others, a few words, some horse along the murky morning sky, dragging his rattling box after his heels. Gabriel, again in a shaft of serious and weary sovereign [a gold coin worth ‘Two Gallants’]. —I lent him pity, Mr Browne, because he’s not a bad fellow at heart.   
  
He, trembling now, did seem so abstracted. He did not know how he could begin. He would only come to accord! To take, to be brutal, longed to be master of strange [ ]. Gabriel strove to restrain himself from breaking out. Brutal language about the sottish pound. To cry to soul, to crush body against his overmaster. —He said: he opened up that little fever. Of rage and desire that he did not hear come from the window. He stood before an instant, looking strangely. Then, suddenly, on tiptoe and his shoulders, trembling with the quaintness of his hands on the washing, heart was brimming over with happiness. He was wishing for it, had come of his own accord, had been running with his impetuous desire that was in him, and then the yielding mood had come upon him so easily he wondered why he was so diffident, holding head between his hands. Slipping one arm swiftly, drawing towards him, softly: did not answer nor yield wholly to his arm. He said again, softly: I think I know.

—I am thinking about that song, *Aughrim*. Gabriel stood stock-still for a moment, and then followed as he passed in the way of the cheval-glass he caught sight of himself in full-length, his broad, well-filled shirt-front, the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his hand like a child. A kinder note than he intended went into his voice. —I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song. —And who was the person long ago? asked Gabriel, smiling. —It was a person I used to know in Galway when I was living with my grandmother, they said. The smile passed away from Gabriel’s face. A dull anger began to gather at the back of his mind. The dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins. —Someone you were in love with? he asked ironically.   
  
—It was a young boy I used to know, they answered, named Michael [critics noted their love bears the name of an Archangel whose name means ‘Who is like God?’]. He used to sing that song, *Aughrim*. He was very delicate [frequent Irish euphemism for consumption, which, at the time of this story, had no certain cure].   
  
Gabriel was silent. He did not wish them to think that he was interested in this delicate boy.   
  
—I can see him so plainly, they said, after a moment. Such eyes he had: big dark eyes! And such an expression in them– an expression!   
  
—I used to go out walking with him [see endnote 88], when I was in Galway.   
  
A thought flew across the shaft of light towards the window in silence.

—He is dead, they said at length. He died when he was only seventeen. Isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young as that?

—...he was in the gasworks [employed in a plant which manufactured gas from coal, distinctly unromantic and scarcely conducive to good health for the ‘delicate’].

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. He had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire: had been comparing them in his mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a pennyboy sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable mirror. He turned his back to the light: the shame that burned upon his forehead.   
  
...forces against its vague world. He shook himself free of effort and reason and his hand. He did not question again. He felt warm and moist: it did not respond to touch; he continued to caress it just as he had caressed his first letter to them that spring morning. —I implored him to go—–his death in the rain. He said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well —–as well! He was standing at the end of a tree. —And did he go home? asked Gabriel.   
  
—Yes, he went home. I was only a week in the convent; he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. I heard that…  
  
That choking, overcome by sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held their hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on their grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window. Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, tangled hair and half-open romance: a man had died for his sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor he played in—–told him all the story. His eyes had thrown some clothes, a petticoat string dangled to the floor. One limp upper, the fellow riot of emotions, of an hour, his aunt’s supper, his own foolish speech, the wine and dancing, the merry goodnight in hall, the pleasure of the river in the snow. He too, would soon be a shade with the shade of his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon moment, when he was singing, *Arrayed* for the drawing-room. —Chill.   
  
He stretched himself under the sheets and down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory, fade, dismally into thought. How many years: that image of their lover’s eyes when he had told them he did not wish to live?  
  
Tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt love. The tears gathered in the partial darkness he imagined the form of a young man under a dripping tree. Other forms were his soul, that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading into a gray, impalpable world: the solid world itself had one time reared and lived, dissolving and dwindling.   
  
A few light upon the snow again. He watched sleepily, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow all over Ireland [a very rare occurrence]. It was falling on every part: on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen [turf bog to the southwest of Dublin] and, farther softly falling into the dark, mutinous waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely hill where Michael lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned as he heard the snow falling faintly: the universe faintly falling: like the descent upon all the living and the dead.