

Poetry Porch: Poetry

A Different Night

By Richard Fein

Last night I cried out in a dream helpless to myself,
finding myself only in the contradictions of my life.
I had become a poet whose country was Europe,
my passports, papers and ID's from Ireland and Poland,
though I was familiarly astray in Yiddish havens of New York,
as well as stranger-inhabitant of Dreiser's and Bellow's Chicagos.
Last night in these varied landscapes of myself Gabriel Conroy
appeared, that doubtful hero of *The Dead*, who re-descended into
his contradictions one Twelfth Night in Dublin during and after
a birthday party for his elderly aunt at the turn of the century,
Gabriel, who, after eating and dancing and singing and speechmaking,
left with his wife, to lodge with her, to be alone with her,
while the snow was covering all of Ireland. My dream hatched further
out from the story when Joyce intimated it was time for Gabriel to face his wife
even with the snow itself distending all the shapes it fell upon—
“The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward”—
to that part of Ireland where his wife had originally come from—
Gabriel, like Odysseus, traveling back to where his wife was waiting—
though Joyce himself had gone eastward. To the Continent, to write.