

Rupkatha Journal

On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities

ISSN 0975-2935

www.rupkatha.com

Volume VIII, Number 1, 2016

General Issue

Indexing and abstracting

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SNIP, IPP and SJR Factors

Nr.	Source ID	Title	SNIP 2012	IPP 2012	SJR 2012	SNIP 2013	IPP 2013	SJR 2013	SNIP 2014	IPP 2014	SJR 2014
1	21100201709	Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities	0.313	0.034	0.1	0.271	0.038	0.116	0.061	0.007	0.101

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Artistic Escape as Joyce's Notion of Love and Hatred

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Abstract

It is a known fact that, like T.S. Eliot, James Joyce's intentions to cleanse the absurdities of his native country have greatly echoed in his writings. He resolutely believed that the refinement could be possible only through his departure. However, taking the rationale behind his exit to settle in European soil into account, we can as well detect that it is the result of his bitterness towards his country because he felt many times that he was not given due attention by his contemporary writer community and religious society. Even though he had visited his hometown a few times, he stayed as an escaped artist until his last breath. It is interesting that in his works we find his idea of making an artistic escape as a consequence of his love or hate liaison with his country and its people. This article bases its argument in these research grounds and possibly explores how the writer ultimately builds up a great liking for an alienation which he believed to fetch him prominence and recognition of his very own existence in the physical and artistic world.

Keywords: exile, escape, alienation, longing, artist, love, hatred

“Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home” (Joyce, 1990)

Introduction

It could be awful for many readers to read that James Joyce, the writer who craved to give a complete picture of his city Dublin, lived a large amount of his life outside his native country. Joyce's traveling in Europe has, in fact, made a great impact on the European countries; Many pubs, coffee houses, streets, avenues and squares in Paris, Dublin, Zurich and Trieste have been named him.

During the time of Joyce or even before, it was a practice that people from Ireland moved to other places looking for employment due to the financial depression brought by the British imperial power. The countrymen were suppressed even as the nation was in the brink of tasting freedom from the English. His time taught him the adverse shape of his surroundings. This led him take a giant step into the other parts of Europe. In spirit, he really, on no account, departs his country and all his three novels were composed on the continent deal with Dublin.

Exile - the dominant theme

In 1998, Dr. A. Joseph Dorairaj, in his hermeneutical study on James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* observes: “The theme of exile constitutes the obverse of the flight out of the labyrinth. What enables the re-enactment of the foundational event of the mythical forebear is the hermeneutical character of all foundational events, which, like speech-acts, allow themselves to be re-enacted in various possible ways even while being situated within the same tradition, thanks to the triple distanciation. Joyce's rich mythopoeic imagination underlies the entire

hermeneutical operation of the re-enactment of the mythical event from a given horizon of inquiry.”

Unlike many other twentieth century modern writers who conventionally treat the notion of exile as the central theme to stir up interest or attention, Joyce, rather sees it as a necessity for the exiles to live. It was seen by him as a distinctive biographical model of artistic modernism as well. Many of the works, during his time, celebrated the concept of exile as a key ingredient of high modernism. John G. Cawelti in his 2010 essay *Eliot, Joyce, and Exile* speaks of the notion of artistic escape that Joyce and Eliot depicted in their works. He says (2010) that some of these were voluntary as in the case of Ezra Pound, Eliot and American expatriates of the 1920s; others had to leave their country for the reason that they were chased out by the calamities of wars, revolutions and discriminations. Here the essayist observes the two great minds as the significant exemplars in the facet of their artistic escape venture: “Eliot left America in 1914 to study at Oxford. The First World War made him an exile because he could not return to America during the war. However, after the war he stayed on voluntarily and returned to America only for visits. He eventually transformed himself into what must have been his own idealized vision of an Englishman. As he once put it, a “classist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion.” *The Waste Land* (1922) was the major work he created as his exile began. Joyce’s exile began in 1904 and was both voluntary and involuntary. He voluntarily left Ireland for Italy, but was forced by World War I to leave Italy for Switzerland. It was during this time that he was working on *Ulysses*. After the war, he lived in Paris until he was again forced to flee to Switzerland. *Ulysses*, published in the same year as Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, examines many aspects of exile. One of its protagonists, Stephen Dedalus, had gone to Paris to what he felt to be repressive influence of his native country, Ireland; the other, Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew, is in many ways an exile in his own country” (Cawelti, 2010).

Joyce’s concept of exile is operated internally among his characters. They exit or strive to exit their native land for many numbers of reasons though not physically but psychologically. Even though their country does not explicitly order them to leave, they feel that they have been betrayed; hence, no other way, rather to go away. Joyce, from his childhood, had been an ardent supporter of the escalation of the deprived state of his nation and he eyed for exile as a means of departure. According to him, the country capital had turned so uninviting owing to the unfair treatment and actions by the governmental, societal and Catholic establishments.

“The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses, where we ran the gantlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness.” (Joyce, 1967). The characters too think of permanent settlement somewhere and not revisiting their home country. They viewed their departure as their single opportunity to make a decent living in a different place.

Dublin – a disappointment for Joyce and his products

Joyce after leaving Ireland uses his knowledge of the native land and immensely reflects them in his autobiographical descriptions. The characters he carved have the same experience as he does. They undergo the same occurrences that what Joyce had undergone in his time. The life that his characters have is based on the city that in which he grew up. It is a mirror image of the author’s

personal life though he spent a big portion of his lifetime away his country. For him, as a writer, the land was only a place that he could escape physically, but in no way emotionally or mentally. He always thought of his city and its people. Mark Traynor of The James Joyce Centre says: "He more or less conceived of Dublin after he left it. He conceived it in his imagination but in such detail that people often suggest it's a central character of his work. He had a strong desire to leave. He felt it was quite restrictive. He saw himself as an artist and he felt that in order to fulfill his goals he had to, as he described it, go into exile. I think Joyce thrived on looking at things from afar." (Living, 2016).

Soon after the after the publication of *Ulysses*, he explained his obsession with his city, saying, "For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal." In the writings of Joyce, it is also evident that the concept of unfaithfulness is also closely coupled with the idea of exile. This unfaithfulness is supposed to possess multi-layered understandings; It could connote being disloyal to their nation by having false nationalist beliefs or having no faith in the political system. These setups fail to deliver to the public what they swore to do. Likewise, the people too show unfaithfulness by leaving their country and not having any plan to revisit and serve it. This is also a kind of disloyalty which leads the characters to vacate their dwelling places. This happens for the reason that they do not find contentment in the government. Hence making a living in other countries was thought to be a wise progress. Joyce often articulated his unadulterated concern for his country, more explicitly for the city Dublin in his letters. His nationalistic fervor is one of the influences for him to pen *Dubliners*.

Conception of supreme thoughts

The formation of most of his short stories took place well ahead of his departure. They stayed alive in his mind before he thought of taking an artistic escape. As a man from bourgeois family and as an *avant garde* artist, Joyce magnificently mirrored the reality of his social, religious and cultural milieu targeting to chuck out the darkness from the crippled minds of the public. In a letter to Grant Richards (the publisher of *Dubliners*) written in May 1906, Joyce plainly declared his overall idea and plan in writing the stories:

"My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to be the center of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under its four aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. I have written in for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, what he has seen and heard." (*Letters of James Joyce-II*, 1966)

Helpless circumstances in *Dubliners*

It is logical that the narration of the stories was not proposed to amuse but vibrantly aimed at demonstrating the dishonesty of his city. His portrayal of the city is quite pejorative. It is an immobile paralysed city which is weary of corruption. It holds no positive signs of livelihood, i.e., failing to provide its citizens with any chance to live contentedly. In return, the people take vengeance on their country by quitting it.

This is very obvious in the story of 'Eveline' in *Dubliners* where Joyce brings out most of the characters' inability to escape. Eveline Hill is terrified of leaving Ireland. There is a mental

impediment in Eveline to escape the land. “Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.” (Joyce, 1967). She dreams of beginning a joyful life abroad. “She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her” (Joyce, 1967). But, she could not; she gives her word to her mother that she will take care of her family and religious duties by sacrificing her aspirations. “She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work -- a hard life -- but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.” (Joyce, 1967). Her aged father does not treat her well either. In the end, she is trapped between these conditions, i.e., yielding to the pointless sentiments and being victimized by the society. “She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (Joyce, 1967).

Another story from the collection titled “A Painful Case” talks of the social and personal exclusion of Mr. James Duffy, a self-centered person with no religious attachment. It is fascinating to note here that when Eveline’s commitment to the Catholic Church blocks her from parting the city, for James Duffy, rejection from the Church endorses him to expel himself from the social order. He also detaches himself from his family, acquaintances and the political affairs. All through his existence, he makes his way towards an internal banishment. He wants to remain aloof from the rest of the people for the reason that he can have power over others. He shows zero concern about making some associations with anybody. “He had neither companions nor friends, church nor creed. He lived his spiritual life without any communion with others, visiting his relatives at Christmas and escorting them to the cemetery when they died. He performed these two social duties for old dignity's sake but conceded nothing further to the conventions which regulate the civic life” (Joyce, 1967). But at one point of time, his internally operating exile is disturbed when he makes a connection with the ill-fated Mrs. Sinico. She, like Eveline, dreams to get away from her surroundings, but ends up losing her life. It is somewhat regrettable that she existed in an awful time where women could not possess any command over their own days. “Now that she was gone he understood how lonely her life must have been, sitting night after night alone in that room” (Joyce, 1967).

Stephen’s quest for self-identity and political betrayal in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

The impact of colonialism is as well said to have strongly influenced Joyce to look for an exit from his society. In his comparative study titled *Confronting Modernity, Subjectivity and Nationality: A Study of James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and O.V. Vijayan’s The Legends of Khasak* (submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam) in 2012, Milon Franz quotes the post-colonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha: “The important concern of the postcolonial discourse is with double consciousness. The colonialist ideology resulted in the creation of colonial subjects i.e., colonized persons who did not resist colonial subjugation because they were taught to believe in British superiority and, therefore, in their own inferiority. Many of these individuals tried to imitate the colonizers, as much as possible, in dress, speech, behaviour, and lifestyle; a phenomenon postcolonial critics refer to as ‘mimicry’. Postcolonial theory also speaks about diaspora, and unbelongingness or unhomeliness which need not always be that of the expatriates. Forced migration in the modern world accelerated the unstable sense of self produced by double consciousness. This feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than

to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to by Homi K. Bhabha and others as 'unhomeliness'. Being unhomed is different from being homeless. Sometimes postcolonial condition also causes unhomeliness in one's own country. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself. In other words, cultural identity crisis makes a person, a psychological refugee."

Joyce very much distanced his writing away from all the conservative styles of writing. All his descriptions of the city displayed Dublin as a paralysed city. The theme of paralysis employed in the plot embodies all types of people that Joyce experienced in his individual life. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he captures the nastiness of Dublin life. It also talks about in detail the voyage of the protagonist into exile. When Stephen joins school he escapes from the charges of his family to look for what he needs through his learning. When the Catholic Church asks him to perform his duties he escapes from humanity. And finally he decides to escape from his country when the Church offers him priesthood. Because he knew that this risks his love for creativity and originality. To a college friend Stephen replies: "– Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning." (Joyce, 1992). Here, Stephen makes an obvious and clear testimonial of who he really is; he is truthful to his beliefs and he can be identified by his artistic aspirations.

The Christmas dinner talk in *Portrait* makes a transformation in Stephen's thinking. He follows his father, a strong nationalist who suffers from sentimental nostalgia. He also comes to know that his admired national hero Charles Stuart Parnell was betrayed by his own supporters. In 1912, Joyce in his essay "The Shade of Parnell," paradoxically reflects Parnell's own appeal and straightforwardly charges the blame on his countrymen for the politician's fall: "They did not throw him to the English wolves; they tore him to pieces themselves." The dinner talks also enlighten him about the sick prevailing conditions, i. e., dishonesty in political and religious establishments. In Tracey Teets Schwarze's 1997 article "Silencing Stephen: Colonial Pathologies in Victorian Dublin," she mentions that "It is not England that is Ireland's chief betrayer; it is Ireland itself." The collapse of Parnell was due to rise of severe criticism on the illegitimate relationship between him and a lady. It was seriously viewed by the Catholic Church and the fanatically Catholic Dante. According to the Church, they both have betrayed themselves and their state.

Stephen also builds a guilty conscience through the religious discourses of Father Arnall; he totally believes his words thinking that he (Stephen) lives an immoral life against God and religion. Arnall teaches: "And remember, my dear boys, that we have been sent into this world for one thing and for one thing alone: to do God's holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless. One thing alone is needful, the salvation of one's soul. What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffer the loss of his immortal soul? Ah, my dear boys, believe me there is nothing in this wretched world that can make up for such a loss.-- I will ask you, therefore, my dear boys, to put away from your minds during these few days all worldly thoughts, whether of study or pleasure or ambition, and to give all your attention to the state of your souls." (Joyce, 1992).

But, the priest himself does not seem to stand by what he demands. The sermons threaten very badly that Stephen keeps searching in the locale for a chapel to confess his sins: “The thought slid like a cold shining rapier into his tender flesh: confession. But not there in the chapel of the college. He would confess all, every sin of deed and thought, sincerely; but not there among his school companions. Far away from there in some dark place he would murmur out his own shame; and he besought God humbly not to be offended with him if he did not dare to confess in the college chapel and in utter abjection of spirit he craved forgiveness mutely of the boyish hearts about him” (Joyce, 1992).

After gaining a fair amount of knowledge on all fake functionalities of the systems, he becomes aware of the necessity of exile. He firmly believed that he is destined to be his own master of arts: “He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world” (Joyce, 1992). Stephen envisages his future artist-self and like the mythological characters Deдалus and Icarus, he wants to flee and become a writer. To set off his quest, he should leave his nation and find living somewhere safe and serene. Thus, out of frustration on his country, Stephen (Joyce) talks to his friend, Devin, about the needs to run off from the gloomy sight of Irish culture: “This race and this country and this life produced me...The soul is born...It has a slow and dark birth, more mysteriously than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, and religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (Joyce, 1992).

A self-imposed alienation in *Ulysses*

The exhibition of Joyce’s creations hints this notion of the writer and supplies the stance of him through the reminiscences of his life. In *Ulysses*, we observe that Joyce’s literary alter ego Stephen Dedalus indistinctly estranging from the governing authorities the British Empire and the Roman Catholic Church, controlling his native country. He leaves Ireland for Paris, but he is compelled to return upon hearing the news that his mother was gravely ill. After her death, he feels that he, in any way, is not at home. Leopold Bloom, the other prominent exile character, carries with him some remoteness from his religious beliefs and practices. He, even as a Jew, has limited information about his own Jewish motherland Palestine. He is not a learned person. He had only plain answer for everything. He answers the question ‘What is a nation’: “A nation is the “same people living in the same place...and “love is the opposite of hatred” (1990). He represented universal brotherhood; He always hated bad company and also people who failed to treat women gently. He is a believer of the egalitarian society which is afar under the control of any class or belief or language or country. Like Joyce, Bloom is often taunted for his undisruptive religion while the other violent residents are very much approved by society. Whatever be his faith or morals or race, not a soul wanted him in Ireland.

Many of the characters’ angst and discomfort during the events of the novel spring from their function as recluses; implying the connotation that the departure is not only a physical expulsion but also a sound unconscious vigor. Yet, these uphold the point that the cost that Joyce paid for his escape was truly intended for the interests of his homeland.

Conclusion

Joyce's position as an exile has had an intense effect on his manner of writing and his own individual philosophy of life. Many of his works exhibit diverse levels of exile; some of them occur externally and some operate internally. The escape for Joyce and his creations was not a material of penalty or any other form of punishment but an opening to break out from the restrictions of one's traditions and an option to build a genuine and deeper human self by rising above these frontiers.

In short, the above works of Joyce take into account of all levels of escape and unfaithfulness. His socio-cultural setups constantly ignored to provide accommodation for his futuristic revolutionary beliefs. Hence, he decides to take an artistic escape, i.e., turning to arts and literature. Escape does not just mean getting away from a place; it also implies settling in an ideal world. Joyce treated both equally; escaping his country and settling in Europe. Choosing Dublin and its locale as the center for all his novels and stories proves that they were the objects of his love and of his hate. Tapati Bagchi in his study on the style and techniques of the early Joyce states: "His obsession with Dublin bears eloquent testimony to his deep love for the city" (2009). In one perspective, it is perceptible that whatever Joyce tried to invent and inform was an outcome of his love for his city Dublin. In a letter to his brother Stanislaus in 1905, Joyce showed his contempt for a George Moore's work: "When you remember that Dublin has been a capital for thousands of years, that it is the 'second' city of the British Empire, that it is nearly three times as big as Venice it seems strange that no artist has given it to the world" (Selected Letters," 1975). But, on the other, he despised it, as it appeared to be the centre of paralysis to him. His aversion to his city was the effect of the dullness of Dublin life: what he mentioned "paralysis" is the cerebral, ethical and spiritual idleness paralysing the town. Joyce feared the detrimental evolvment of these external forces and resultant mental colonization and manipulated nationalism.

It is also a substance of primary importance that the maturation of Joyce's artistic qualities grabs a zenithal literary attention when his detestation for his country gradually turns into affection: He, as a writer in exile in Rome, brought a remarkable change in his attitude towards his country. Biographer Richard Ellmann in his review of *The Dead* declares the story as "his (Joyce's) first song of exile" and "in Trieste and Rome he had learned what he had unlearned in Dublin, to be a Dubliner" (1983). Even Joyce substantiates his changed opinions about his native country in one of his letters to his brother Stanislaus, dated 25 September 1906: "Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in *Dubliners* at least) none of the attraction of the city for I have never felt at my ease in any city since I left it except in Paris. I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty: For it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, Switzerland, France, Austria or Italy" (*Letters of James Joyce-II*, 1966).

Fundamentally, he viewed the act of escape as a means of independence from the restraints of family, religion, politics and especially press because he landed in a lot of problems in taking his works to print. Michael Levenson in his critical essay on 'The Dead' in Joyce's *Dubliners* reveals: "Joyce himself, choosing exile, sought to escape exactly those forces, emanating from deep within the colonial state... And yet, Joyce was not content merely to live outside the grip of his home colony, merely to escape the fatal tangle of political tension. Against the threat of being absorbed within a larger frame, he set out to contain the container, to swallow those who would swallow him in their contexts. The characteristic strategy of his work is to bring inside the fiction exactly those pressures that surround it in the living world" (1994). For Joyce and his characters,

the escape was sought as a much needed move to be truly independent. And they achieve it after undergoing inexplicable hardships. Hence, this resolution to leave the country should not be misconceived as a denial of his identity or of his native soil. As a matter of fact, his artistic escape has greatly helped Joyce in giving a very honest observation of his country and that ultimately has generated a permanent literature.

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