

DISROBING THE CREATIVE IMPULSE IN NOVELS BY  
JAMES JOYCE AND SALMAN RUSHDIE

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By

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## PREFACE

As I considered reasons why I chose to focus primarily on these works of Rushdie and Joyce, I was visited by a remembrance. A frightening short story read to me in my childhood speaks to me in adulthood. In Walter Van Tilburg Clark's "The Portable Phonograph," an apocalyptic vision of the future illustrates my decision. One man, among just a few others, has survived what seems to be a nuclear holocaust. He explains to his companions, as they huddle around a sickly fire in a cave, why he chose certain literary works (*Moby Dick*, *The Divine Comedy*, works of Shakespeare, and the Bible) when he saw the destruction mankind was about to wreak upon itself:

When I perceived what was happening . . . I told myself,  
'It is the end. I cannot take much; I will take these.' Perhaps  
I was impractical . . . but for myself, I do not regret . . . I have  
saved what I love; the soul of what was good in us here.

(Clark 182)

Although the end of my term as a student is upon me, I know it is far-fetched to compare it to an apocalypse. Yet, facing an uncertain future, I, too, had to frantically decide what I most valued in my life, as proof that beauty exists. I chose the works of James Joyce and Salman Rushdie because I love what they have to say, but more importantly, I love how they say it. If I had to defend my



choice against all other authors and literature using logic alone, I know my defense would be weak, having not had the time in my life to read all literature meriting perusal.

In all honesty, I chose these because they touch me. Perhaps it is because they have intrinsic literary merit, or because they intricately weave together plots and imagery, but these reasons are only the result of hindsight. I had made my choice long before I was asked to evaluate reasons. Maybe it was “impractical,” but I regret nothing, and would remind those who review this piece that love for literature is much like faith. It is folly to address only logic while ignoring whispers of your soul.

If I must defend my choices, I would have to resort to superlatives. I did not choose to study Rushdie and Joyce because no other works by any other authors addressed the same issues. It is more my belief that, with my limited knowledge of the world, these two authors do it *best*. The novels I intend to explore are utterly beautiful. They excite me, and they provoke me to compare them to other works that touched me somehow in the past. They convince me to give just one small concession to Keats, though my analysis is decidedly un-Keatsian, that “Beauty is Truth.” It satisfies me to find that scholars continue to be unsure whether Keats wrote the words himself, or merely transcribed them from the urn, etched years before by some unknown artisan. It is a fitting image with which to begin an analysis that surfs the liquid space between physical reality and creative inspiration.

Joyce's and Rushdie's artistry is moving, and I read their works as if I were reading epic poetry. The works *encapsulate* Truth *as they create it*. They create by illustrating human nature in all its physicality, sensuality, and barbarity. That is something we feel on a cellular level. The feeling is impossible to articulate with precision, yet it is many of our lives' endeavors to try. It is a reminder that we have a soul. That is why we learn. That is why we stumble, blinded, out of the comfortable cave of shadows. That is why we struggle to teach others to do the same.

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## ABSTRACT

# DISROBONG THE CREATIVE IMPULSE IN NOVELS BY JAMES JOYCE AND SALMAN RUSHDIE

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We have always searched for the source of creation. The same compulsion that drove adventurers to the rivers' fountainheads continues to manifest itself in literary works. James Joyce, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, and Salman Rushdie, in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, both present this search for the source of creation. The search is evident through characters and repeating motifs within the novels.

The act of creation is shrouded in euphemism. To create art, or literature, or life, many say, the creator must be stricken by a supernatural bolt of intervention. This thesis hinges on the assertion that creative inspiration may additionally arise from earthly experiences (birth, sex, food, strife, etc.) rather than solely from the traditional "Muses" or Genius." Whether we call it a Muse, Genius, or Divine Grace, we have historically released ourselves from the culpability of creation. Joyce and Rushdie both address humanity's flight from and periodic embracement of creative responsibility through the actions of their primary and secondary characters.

Creation defined only as an act of sublime inspiration is not useful to humanity. Releasing ourselves from the responsibility of creation also limits our ability to control when and what we create. Yet, as fiction speaks to fundamental truths of humankind, it exemplifies people who are the sources of their own creativity. Their own actions and experiences fuel the spring. It is an expression which arises from the most basic, essential and carnal experiences of mankind.

This theory of creativity's source works on two levels. First, it acts as an anchor for our life's experiences. Using what we know, we are able to extend ourselves into the abstract, or the imaginary. When the abstract is coupled with something we already know from experience, the abstract concept becomes a vivid image in our mind – something unknown and fantastic becomes comprehensible. In other words, it becomes a metaphor. The second level of this theory works in a more practical sense. Because creativity can be linked to experience as an anchor, and can make the unknown understandable as a metaphor, it becomes valuable as a tool for pedagogy. Brain research has shown that metaphorical teaching enables students to learn new concepts quickly and to envision new applications for what they have learned. Scaffolding entails building new areas of skill and knowledge from a foundation of already learned skill and knowledge. In essence, it is the pedagogical equivalent of a metaphor.

This premise can be employed to teach literature such as the novels of Joyce and Rushdie, but more importantly, it can be used to help students to develop a sense of ownership of the creative impulse and process. By demystifying what it means to create art and literature, we give students the ability to act on what they imagine.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE CREATIVE IMPULSE IN LITERATURE AND IN LIFE

Literature arising from the ages of modernism and postmodernism reveals “in a dense and often unordered actuality as opposed to the practical and systematic, and in exploring the actuality as it exists in the mind of the writer it has been richly experimental” (Harmon and Holman 326). Both James Joyce and Salman Rushdie, though living and writing at different times and in different places, define fully the experimental creativity inherent in all thinking people. Joyce is well-established, his novels sitting comfortably in the college curriculum worldwide. His works have been thoroughly analyzed, deconstructed, interpreted, translated, and evaluated, and literary academicians have concluded that his work is of scholarly and creative merit. Rushdie has yet to attain the literary laurels, yet his work is a fitting complement, continuing the experimental writing that the modernists employed. Few novelists complement each other so well, by the very fact that they are antithetical. In the paradigm of point and counterpoint, only the antithetical have the potential to create something new: a synthesis of opposites.

Chapters Two through Five of this thesis examine the physical foundations of artistic inspiration. Each artist provides a metaphorical link between the world of art and the world of vulgarity by seeking a creative home, a mandala from which all human experience radiates. In the spirit of postmodernism, Rushdie's works are presented ahead of his modernist forerunner's, though Joyce and Rushdie could act as figurative bookends to a century of artistic endeavor (Cohen). Rushdie's flavor of postmodernism "rejects history but also the society of whose fabrication history is a record. It rejects traditional values and assumptions, and it rejects equally the rhetoric by which they were sanctioned and communicated" (Harmon and Holman 326). Time is elastic; it refuses to follow the Newtonian laws of nature, and playfully bends the clock to illustrate the subjectivity of each human's experience; this plasticity is arguably more true to the human condition than historical accounts. Joyce's myth acts as the metaphorical anchor to Rushdie's magic, just as modernism is the foundation for the postmodernist movement. When consumed as complementary courses to the same meal, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* and Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* embody the journey modern art and literature have taken over the past century. Both Joyce and Rushdie grew up in cultures imbued with English Imperialism, so it is not surprising that they are the spiritual spokeswriters for rhetorical rebellion. They both write literature of the disenfranchised, which ironically transforms the very societies they challenge.

The fundamental philosophical assumptions

of modernism, its tendency toward historical discontinuity, alienation, asocial individualism, solipsism, and existentialism continue to permeate contemporary writing, perhaps in a heightened sense. But the tendency of the modernist to construct intricate forms, to interweave symbols elaborately, to create works of art that, however they oppose some established present order, create within themselves an ordered universe, have given way . . . to a denial of order, to a presentation of highly fragmented universes in the created world of art, and to critical theories that are forms of phenomenology. Myth has given way to the experiencing of aesthetic forms.

(Harmon and Holman 401)

Joyce is the ideal modernist, serving as the thesis from which the postmodernist antithesis arises, combining the myths of Daedalus and Ulysses with an ultra-realistic awareness of historical events. Whereas Rushdie's works are quintessentially magical realist, Joyce's works could be considered mythical realist. Both, however, present truly human characters – prone to foibles, searching inwardly as they travel outwardly through (and against, and transcending) society's constructs. The capacity to distill the human experience so distinctly is most often the responsibility of the poets, and the works take on



the attributes of a poem, both in content and form. It only serves to illuminate the unique capabilities of these novels when poetry, such as that of Seamus Heaney, is placed beside them. It is for just this reason that my discussion of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is interwoven with selections from Heaney's *Opened Ground* and *Preoccupations*. In all of these works, the characters seek a purpose for their creation, and a cause for their creative compulsion.

Each novel focuses on the characters' search for a sense of place, an aesthetic home – a sense of fitting into the environment. Of course, each character experiences moments of existential displacement because they are immanently artists, and artists, by nature, inhabit a realm apart, but not entirely disconnected from, the society to which they desire to belong. It is that very separateness and resulting connected objectivity (in its oxymoronic glory) that allows them to encapsulate the human condition in their art, whether culinary (Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children*) visual (Aurora in *The Moor's Last Sigh*), poetic (Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), or mental (Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*). Yet, in their objectivity, they form a world by the act of perceiving it; thus, their world is fundamentally subjective, flowing from their consciousness and molding the environment from which they feel so foreign.

Chapter Six is devoted to teaching metaphorical thinking and creativity using the works of Rushdie and Joyce (both as springboards and as classroom readings). Pedagogy is the logical next step, since brain research shows that the brain learns the same way a metaphor works. That is, innovation arises from a foundation of the known, and abstraction can best be understood when tied to

the physical. It is the duty of all educators to give students the tools to create their own experience. Literature historically has been each new generation's link to the discoveries of the previous generations; it is our collective memory put to paper. The educator taps in to the deep well of human experience contained therein. The human brain seeks metaphorical connections, building new knowledge from the old, so it is only fitting that works based on just such experiences be made available to students; students can seek self-awareness by example. Students can express their own creativity by experiencing the creative quests of each character, for it is the quest itself that is most important. As Salman Rushdie observes and students are certain to find, "The elevation of the quest for the Grail over the Grail itself, the acceptance that all that is solid has melted into air, that reality and morality are not givens but imperfect human constructs, is the point from which fiction begins" (*Imaginary* 422). With the revelations of each character integrated into their own understanding of the world, students can begin a journey of their own, a quest for self-discovery, creative inspiration, and perhaps, self-actualization.

## CHAPTER II

### HANDCUFFED TO HOME: SALEEM SINAI'S POST-EXISTENCE IN AN IMAGINARY INDIA

Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* traces the birth, life, and aesthetic development of Saleem Sinai, a man born in Bombay on the stroke of midnight August 15, 1947 – the moment of India's independence. Rushdie distills the entire experience of India within the chutneys of Saleem Sinai, focusing on a mysterious link with all other children of India who were born at the same instant. Saleem is a microcosm of India, and his own birth, therefore, is tied to the creation of an independent India. Much like Saleem, we are left with fragments of memory regarding his creation, and must struggle to ferret out meaning in a seemingly arbitrary jumble of symbols. However, when we examine Saleem's experience with a critical eye, a definite thread of significance emerges. This thread, the very structure within which Saleem writes, is the concept of history and its interplay with the individual, and how history is both the creator of and the creation of humanity. Rushdie even admits that "everything in [*Midnight's Children*] has to do with politics and with the relationship of the individuals and history" (Wise 57). Rushdie's connection to a cultural environment which still echoes with English colonialism, as well as his having

been a student of history at Cambridge, helps the reader relate the experiences of Saleem to Rushdie's distinct concept of historical processes and their roles. This is why the relationship of private lives to public events exists in *Midnight's Children*. The existence of this relationship allows us to explore the facets and limits of individuality and creativity within India's rich history.

*Midnight's Children*, a novel about the experiences of three generations of the Sinai family, begins in the confines of a small, darkened room inside of a pickle factory. Saleem, who narrates the tale, works in the pickle factory making chutneys by day and writes in the darkened room frantically recording his experiences by night. He works in a sort of "post-existence," struggling to portray his life, his history, his actual existence, by pulling together the fragments of his memory, and creating meaningful units. He hopes that "one day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth" (*Midnight's* 550). This connection between public affairs and private lives is fundamental in Saleem's life, as it helps him to understand the significance of his own birth and lineage. History and the individual "interpenetrate, and that is how the writer needs to examine them, the one in the context of the other" (*Sunday Standard* 6).

Even before Saleem's birth, "historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, [his] family's existence in the world" (*Midnight's* 25). From the beginning of the tale, Saleem is conscious of his strange connection to history.

His life is shaped by his family history and its traditions since the time of his supposed grandfather. Before the time of his birth at the moment of India's independence from the British, Saleem is indissolubly "handcuffed to history" (*Midnight's* 3). His post-existence ability to see events before his birth allows him to be the chronicler of history to which he could not be physically connected. His narrative pulls his identity into India's history symbolically. Saleem writes:

And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an  
 excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours,  
 so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane!  
 I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the  
 one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed  
 multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me . . . . I must  
 commence the business of remaking my life from the point  
 at which it really began, some thirty-two years before  
 anything as obvious, as present, as my clock-ridden,  
 crime-stained birth. (*Midnight's* 4)

Saleem is haunted by his simultaneously meaningless and symbolic connection to history. For instance, as an individual standing against the historical forces, Saleem finds himself showing symptoms of "falling apart" because he feels that he has been "buffeted by too much history" (*Midnight's* 37).

Saleem's connection by the nose to Aadam Aziz is paradoxical, though, because, as the reader later discovers, there is no direct familial (genetic) connection. However, Saleem is never able to discard his connection to national

history, which he claims to inadvertently influence his actions. Saleem does not influence India's history in insignificant ways; rather, his small actions alter history at its crucial junctures. Saleem insists that "my vengeful irruption into the history of my age was certainly no trivial affair" (*Midnight's* 317). As stated earlier, even his birth was a historical necessity:

At the end of that January, history had finally, by a series of shoves, brought itself to the point at which it was almost ready for me to make my entrance.

There were mysteries that could not be cleared up until I stepped on to the scene. (*Midnight's* 103)

Saleem's involvement with the public lives of India's mightiest continues throughout his life, though his entry into "public affairs of India occurred for entirely ignoble reasons . . . and inspired by the most parochial of motives" (*Midnight's* 350). Saleem's belief that he has been responsible for creating the spark that fueled national events can be seen in stories he recounts of his youth. Saleem is a curious mixture of flight from creative culpability and total acceptance of responsibility. For instance, Saleem recalls how, when he displays his bicycling prowess to his scornful love Eve, he uncontrollably hurtles into the center of a language march. Here, Saleem speaks the only words he knows in the Gujarati language: "Soo che? Saru che! Danda le ke maru che!" (*Midnight's* 228). This rhyme becomes the chant for the Marathi marchers since it is a malicious statement of intent toward the Gujarati (How are you? -- I am well! -- I'll take a stick and thrash you to hell!). According to Saleem, this rhyme

got the language riots underway, and this is how he “became directly responsible for triggering off the violence which ended with the partition of the state of Bombay, as a result of which the city became the capital of Maharashtra” (*Midnight's* 229). This is a fairly tall order for a child who merely sought to convince a girl that he could ride a bicycle. Indeed, Saleem’s motives for mounting the bike were in no way connected to the sparking of the language riots, but he is well aware that the consequences of his actions, unlike his motives, are in no way under his control.

In a similar situation, when the young Saleem seeks to end the affair between his aunt, Lila Sabarmati, and Homi Catrack, he cuts bits of historical headlines apart in order to make an “informative” letter. In it, he includes the letters “COM” from the headline “GOAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE LAUNCHES SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGN”; he includes the letters “MAN” from the headline “SPEAKER OF E-PAK ASSEMBLY DECLARED MANIAC”; he includes the letters “DER” from the headline “NEHRU CONSIDERS RESIGNATION AT CONGRESS ASSEMBLY,” and so on to bring his aunt’s adulterous excursions to the attention of his uncle Sabarmati (*Midnight's* 311-2). After his uncle attempted to kill the lovers in a jealous but contemplative action, the newspaper perceived the affair as a means by which “India will discover who she was, what she is, and what she might become” (*Midnight's* 314). Commander Sabarmati is seen as a hero – a defender of India’s cultural pride. He is viewed as acting in the interests of India, but Saleem, in his post-existence perspective, knows otherwise. With Saleem there was a motive, with Sabarmati there was an action,

and with India there was a consequence. As with the language riots, Saleem's motives were relatively petty. Instead of offering a portrait of India to its people, Saleem wanted only to create a scandal: to "teach a lesson to all wives and mothers" (*Midnight's* 314). The true irony lies in the fact that the very medium Saleem used to construct his letter (the newspaper), misconstrued his motive and created consequences out of Saleem's control.

Rushdie thus creates in Saleem a chronicler who provokes much of the history he records and who enshrines in his personal heritage the identity of India itself. Saleem's post-existence, this time of chronicling, is present from the onset of the novel, and can actually be viewed as creating India's history more precisely than his actual life. When he sits in the pickle factory and records his life, he pickles existence as well. In other words, even without action in the outer world of India, Saleem is still connected to its history. To make his chutneys of history Saleem must cleanse, reduce, and intensify its flavors. Thus, even in his post-existence, Saleem is still simultaneously history's manipulator and puppet. This pickling process occurs in Saleem's memory, and includes all events that have ever occurred in India's past.

Because of Saleem's state of post-existence within the pickle factory, personal identity and history become almost inseparably mingled in memory. The core of Saleem's situation is the fact that he is not only connected to Indian history through his existence (beginning with his timely birth); this connection is further imbedded in his identity by its residence within his memory. It is almost impossible to separate Saleem's identification with the public and his own



personal identity. Despite his constant references to fragmentation, it is this nonseparation of identity that actually gives much of the novel its unity (Pathak 123). Of course, it can also be said that the very references to fragmentation offer quite a bit of unity because of their prominent recurrences. (They become part of a jumble of seemingly absurd symbols in Saleem's world out of which he must create meaning.)

Who am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything  
that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of  
everything done to me. I am everyone everything whose  
being in the world was affected by mine. I am anything  
that happens after I've gone which would not have  
happened if I had not come . . . I repeat for the last  
time: to understand me, you have to swallow the  
world. (*Midnight's* 457-8)

Saleem's sense of timelessness is a direct result of his confusion with his private identity and India's history. Because he "subsumes most matter of public record within himself," during his post-existence, he becomes the timeless entity of India itself (Wilson 29). In this way, time becomes a major preoccupation in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem's imaginary India transforms into a "time-construct" where his identity relationship forms both a "rootedness" and at the same time a "liberation from the shackles of the world of Time" in order to create a connectedness through timelessness (Roa 135). Saleem's identity is realized in both the historical and ahistorical detail in his narrative. In other words, because Saleem

cannot undo the forces that have driven him to be so much a part of his homeland's history, he turns to myth and fantasy to discover his imaginary roots. In Saleem's imagination, time becomes cyclical and regenerative. To explain, Saleem's narrative covers a period of sixty-three years: from the skies of Kashmir in 1915, to the streets of Bombay in 1978. Yet, the narrative authoritatively slides back and forth over that chronology, effectively beginning at the center, the midnight of August 15, 1947. This narrative world that progresses from the past to the present, yet is told with a consciousness of India's full history including future, can be understood primarily as the result Saleem's married private and public identity. To reiterate for clarity, this marriage is the result of Saleem's post-existence as the pickler of life. It is at this midnight hour, within the suspension of time and space, that we begin to understand that objective time, which is straight and linear, must move into the background while Saleem's subjective world of intuitive perception of a particular reality is dramatized.

During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, for instance, Saleem manipulates time so that the war can directly relate to his life. Instead of military movements and diplomatic procedures, Saleem chronicles the war in terms of pepperpots, bed-wettings, pregnancies, and so on. Time falls into further flux as the reason for the war is explained by Saleem. Instead of the Indian and Pakistani people having separate histories from Saleem (it could not be *their* histories that caused the war), Saleem's personal history is understood as the reason for the conflict. In the words of Saleem Sinai:

Let me state this quite unequivocally; it is my firm conviction

that the hidden purpose of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 was nothing more or less than the elimination of my benighted family from the face of the earth. In order to understand the recent history of our times, it is only necessary to examine the bombing pattern of that war with an analytical, unprejudiced eye (*Midnight's* 403).

Here, time falls into reverse. The war is not motivated by historical unrest between the people of India and Pakistan. Instead, the war is motivated by an event of the future: the death of Saleem's family. Only in his period of post-existence could Saleem, through his memory, manipulate time, reverse action and consequence, in order to find meaning.

Furthermore, Saleem's connection with the history of India could be understood as a type of release from the actual ills of history. In relating historical events to his own life, Saleem creates a catharsis, where timelessness within memory and imagination are necessary ingredients. Saleem's personal world of memory and imagination provide the superstructure for an essentially historical narrative. While fleeing the horrors of the Bangladesh War, he recalls his fraternity with the midnight's children, and in particular, his closeness with Parvati. He points out that "the children of midnight were also the children of the time: fathered . . . by history" (*Midnight's* 137). With a chance (or perhaps not) meeting with Parvati that saves his life, Saleem becomes aware of "what I later became convinced was the truth: that the purpose of that entire war had been to re-unite me with an old life, to bring me back together with my old friends"

(*Midnight's* 446). Once again, time works in reverse. With his reintroduction to Parvati, Saleem automatically assumes the entire war was a preconceived means to this end. In this way, the brutalities of the Bangladesh War existed for a purpose. In Saleem's post-existence as chronicler, meaning is created out of the absurd.

In addition to the cathartic manipulation of history to create meaning, Saleem's post-existence narrative could be viewed as a way of presenting India's reality in Truth. Because Saleem's existence is so fundamentally connected with India's in a "dream they all agreed to dream," he feels obligated to portray historical truth rather than historical fact (*Imaginary* 58). While recording truth, Saleem is not in favor of merely transcribing India's reality, for that would be symptomatic of "a kind of failure of the imagination" (*Midnight's* 137). For instance, he allows key incidents to take place in different sequences of order, perhaps, to convey some deeper purpose. The assassination of Mahatma Ghandi, for example, occurs on the wrong date, and he "will continue to die at the wrong time" in Saleem's India. To convey India's truth in totality, for "the urge to encapsulate the whole of reality is," according to Saleem, "an Indian disease," a bit of historical license "is surely permissible in these circumstances (*Midnight's* 60,198). It is important to keep in mind that Saleem's judicious rearrangement of historical events does not minimize their authenticity in this situation. In addition to portraying Indian truth, Saleem is solidifying his connection with its history by becoming its translator. To Saleem,

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get

from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible . . . tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves – or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion is reality (*Midnight's* 197).

Saleem is the ultimate New Historian. By dismissing the historical play-by-plays that are usually the result of the unchallenged voice of the powerful, he is representing truth that is subjective, but really, more objective than what is recorded as fact. Furthermore, by placing himself at the center of historical events, Saleem is transferring the role of history-maker from the powerful to himself, a person who admittedly is powerless (Flanagan 39): “I’ve been the sort of person to whom things have been done; but Saleem Sinai, perennial victim, persists in seeing himself as protagonist” (*Midnight's* 285).

Saleem laments his tie to history, for he realizes while he writes in his post-existence that, because of the marriage of his identity to that of India's, he can never truly be an individual:

Why, owing to accidents of birth, prophesy, etcetera,  
must I be responsible for language riots and  
after-Nehru-who, for pepper-pot-revolutions and pots  
which annihilated my family? Why should I . . . accept  
the blame for what-was-not-done by Pakistani troops  
in Dacca? . . . Why, alone of all the more-than-five-  
hundred-million, should I have to bear the burden of

history? (*Midnight's* 475)

Saleem's consciousness of history, while giving him a sort of unity in his awareness of himself as a blend of past and present, produced maddening results. Just as he was powerless to the historical consequences of his youthful actions, so he is powerless in the duty of recording this history. He has no choice. As his counter-ego Shiva points out, history could be explained as "the continuing struggle of oneself against the crowd" (*Midnight's* 339). Saleem has lost that struggle and will succumb to the consequences of the very history he has created.

In his post-existence, Saleem becomes aware of the folly of his connection to history. In his attempt to create meaning by purposefully explaining Indian history in his own personal context, he places himself on the receiving end of "broken promises; made to be broken" (*Midnight's* 523).

Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers  
marching one two three, four hundred million five  
hundred six, reducing me to voiceless dust . . .  
because it is the curse of midnight's children to  
be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake  
privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool  
of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in  
peace. (*Midnight's* 552)

In Saleem Sinai's post-existence, he comes to the conclusion that he has never existed at all. The interlocking relationship of Saleem's identity and India's

history has left him with the understanding that his individuality has been distilled into the chutneys of history. Although Saleem wishes that he would have “never dreamed of purpose,” he has learned, albeit too late, that “what can’t be cured must be endured” (*Midnight’s* 518).

## CHAPTER III

### ELEPHANTA AS AESTHETIC HOME IN *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH* – WITH ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS TO THE POETRY OF SEAMUS HEANEY

Much of Rushdie's novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* is heavily sown with images of artistic home. The novel visits and revisits what home is to Moraes Zogoiby (Moor) in his childhood, and what home means in his adulthood: visions of home he strives to encompass – perhaps to understand, perhaps out of a sense of nostalgia, but always with an undercurrent of a place in his memory that is lost and can only be experienced now through the imagination. Ironically, his imaginative link to his aesthetic home was originally formed through sensuous experiences in his life and the lives of members of his family.

Moor recalls how he observed the creative impulse put into action through the art of his mother, Aurora. His birth is the result of his mother "caress[ing] her husband's body . . . in a room in the Lord's House newly heavy with odours of spice" (*Moor's* 142). He is his mother's deliberate creation, rising from "mushrooms . . . and chicken entrails" used to quicken his arrival – with unfortunate success (*Moor's* 142). Aurora's art seems to capture the essence of her son at critical stages of his life with prophetic vividness. When Moor



betrayed his family and became a henchman for the Zogoibys' rival in India's economic underbelly, Aurora's "Moor Exile Paintings" became darker. The Moor is the only figure who remains on the canvas, "a Baudelairian flower . . . of evil . . . and of weakness" (*Moor's* 303). As his place within the family disintegrates, the canvas Moor "slowly grew phantom-like himself, became a Ghost That Walked, and sank into abstraction" (*Moor's* 303). Without his bodily presence and deference to his mother, Moor loses his place as a subject of her art. He rejects the role of "subject" in terms of art, but also in terms of power. Being the manifestation of Aurora's creative compulsion, Moor becomes abstraction himself. Moor is unbound from his physical ties to the world, symbolized in his flight to Spain.

Seamus Heaney's poem, "Squarings," from *Seeing Things*, encapsulates this disconnection when the speaker asks of the creative spirit: "Where does the spirit live? Inside or outside/ Things remembered, made things, things unmade?" (*Opened* 346). Heaney wonders where the creative impulse exists in relation to its product. Just as Moor understands near the end of his life that his creativity, as well as his mother's, will lie in the past. Like a sprite in the forest, it must reside inside the mind.

Physicality as a catalyst for creative production is also evident in terms of Moor's environment. Detailed descriptions of structural abodes abound in his recollections, as do descriptions of the land and place-names, ancient and well known to inhabitants of the India and Spain in his tale. Yet Moor intermittently makes it clear that these are abandoned places – places extant only in memory.

It is as if the artistic home he seeks lies somewhere in his act of searching. Elephanta is Moor's home, the seat of his mother's artistic expression, and the name of Vasco Miranda's obsessive recreation. Elephanta's plodding weighty name illustrates how even the physical structures within the novel serve as a catalyst for artistic creation. Elephanta is symbolic of Moor's fleeting childhood, and is his literal route to India. We assume it is destroyed by the fire-bombings that herald Moor's escape.

Similarly, in "Alphabets" from the collection *Haw Lantern*, Seamus Heaney laments the disappearance of his childhood school in the window of his memory: "The globe has spun . . . . Time has bulldozed the school and the school window" (*Opened* 270). A globe in the schoolroom is a microcosm of the earth's yearly passage around the sun. This is an interesting connection to the Moor's experience, since his life runs at double-time, speeding each internal revolution in his case. All manifestations of Elephanta (Moor's schoolroom) have been diminished in some way, much like Aurora's paintings are destroyed or forgotten. Memory is all that remains. These images closely relate to Salman Rushdie's description of a home in his collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*. The title itself illustrates a connection between an artist's creative impulse and a sense of home. This search for "homeness" is a common motif in literature, and is recapitulated in the creative act. Evidently, the search can be both the cause and the result of an artist's endeavor. It lies within the dialectical paradigm of point and counterpoint, feeding off of itself while simultaneously acting as progenitor – much like Moor's relationship with his mother.

Perhaps the act of creation is fundamentally an attempt at “righting” some feeling of wrongness. “There is a sense in which all art arises out of injury or absence, out of the artist’s sense that there is something missing in him or her, something awry or disturbed” (Wiman 218). It is the artistic equivalent of the notion that all jokes are found humorous because it is humanity’s way of dealing with pain. In response to physical injury or humiliation, such as slipping on a banana peel or getting a pie in the face, we are compelled to write a joke, then to laugh. Both reflect a need to return to an internal place of comfort, a psychic Elephanta.

Of course, the very act of putting brush to canvas silently communicates Aurora’s desire to seek that relief of acute discomfort (among other thematic and stylistic miscellanies). When speaking of her son, who was born with a malformed hand, Aurora explains that “even a masterpiece can have a little smudge” (*Moor’s* 147). Moor’s disfigurement – his intense physical presence at birth – is yet another well from which Aurora creatively draws. Heaney writes of this physical connection in “Personal Helicon,” a lyrical poem in *Death of a Naturalist*. Heaney perfectly illustrates an adult’s reliance on the “down and dirty” physicality of childhood for creative inspiration. An adult’s artifice springs from a child’s reality. Interestingly, this passage shows an adult reflecting on his childhood, much as Moor does in the novel, so the comparison is effective on multiple levels:

Now, to pry into roots, to finger slime,  
To stare big-eyed Narcissus, into some spring

Is beneath all adult dignity. I rhyme  
 To see myself, to set the darkness echoing.

(*Opened 14*)

The adult remembers the dark wells surrounding his residence as a child. In essence, to his shadow child, the wells are a place where he captures home. He would stare into his own reflection contained in the murky depths, captured as the mythical Narcissus in the water's grip, or listening to echoes of his childish voice calling back to him. He stares into his shimmering double, gawking wide-eyed from the water below. Heaney confesses that his adulthood will not allow him to practice this undignified youthful activity, so writing is his only recourse. By writing, Heaney emotionally attempts to see himself as he did as a child; the adult resorts to an adult activity to try to recapture the experience of the well's womb – "to set the darkness echoing" (*Opened 14*).

Aesthetic homeness is transformed from a place of the past into an act of imaginative construction. Heaney describes a reflection about a reflection, further separating himself from the home he seeks with this remembrance. Point and counterpoint coincide, and his poetic encapsulation of the womb-like well-home moves him simultaneously closer to (in spirit) and further away from (in act) homeness. This movement closely resembles Moor's simultaneous flight from Elephanta and his place of birth, and his journey to Elephanta and his ancestral homeland, which explains the surreal flight. "I was going to a place whence we had been cast out centuries ago. Might it not be my lost home, my resting place, my promised land?" (*Moor's 376*).

Salman Rushdie writes of a strikingly similar experience in his title essay in *Imaginary Homelands* when he describes the house of his birth in India.

An old photograph in a cheap frame hangs on a wall of the room where I work. [The photograph] reminds me that it is my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time. [That is] when I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself. (*Imaginary* 9)

Just as Heaney writes poetry in an attempt to recapture home, Rushdie states that it is the same need that was the origin of his novel *Midnight's Children* and the subject of *The Moor's Last Sigh* (*Imaginary* 9). The old photograph of Rushdie's house functions much like Moor's Elephanta and Heaney's well. It is a womb, the locale of birth into sentience. Rushdie further explains, perhaps more frankly than Heaney does in his poem, the past's lack of attainability. His present sense of foreignness underscores the separation he feels from his psychic home. Essentially, though, the two images of home are qualitatively the same – it is just that Heaney describes home as an auditory and visual reverberation, and to Rushdie it is a meteorological phenomenon – mere semantics divide them. Artists, though their search may be categorically undivided, are, however, disconnected from the rest of society. Even though all humanity may be in search of homeness, the fact that artists must write, or paint, or sculpt (placing one more border between the realm of the past, the realm of psychic home and themselves) creates a possibly more profound sense of foreignness among their

own neighbors. Moor crosses that distance on his arrival at Benengeli by realizing that he is, and always was, art itself. “I am like the Catholicised Cordoba mosque . . . . A piece of architecture with a Baroque cathedral stuck in the middle of it” (*Moor's* 388). Moor has become the seat of the creative impulse. He carries Elephanta with him because he was created by Elephanta, even when he cuts anchor and leaves India. Ironically, Moor feels disoriented and bereft of his home even though he carries it with him. He longs for the India that was destroyed. His home, the land and the house, exist in a state of duplicity. Moor looks back, then ahead to Benengeli; he is torn. Rushdie writes, “It may be that writers in my position . . . are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt” (*Imaginary* 10).

The archetypal mandala is evident in the novel, and is expressed more concisely in Heaney's poem. That is why, when Heaney's poetry is said to reflect a cosmos that

adheres around a local center, and its citizens are a  
close-knit circle of neighbors, rather than the great  
shadowy 'imagined communities of nations,' [we] realize,  
much like the artists who are driven to search, something  
is missing. (Breslin 337)

Heaney, as does any person who reveals the inner workings of his soul through poetry, flees from committedly affirming others' close scrutinizing and theorizing. Rushdie, on the other hand, embraces the thought of being the subject of critique

in classrooms and parlors around the world to an almost Joycean magnitude, even though he has not yet attained that status. So, even though Heaney's poetry is a distillation of the creative home, Rushdie's work invites open analysis. If the cosmos actually does consist of a circle of neighbors, one would only have to look next door to find home – not go through a lifetime of searching. Heaney's own poetic admission of separateness belies this neighborly assertion. In "The Forge," from his collection *Death of a Naturalist*, Heaney describes two perspectives: one is of the world "Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting," while the other details the world inside the forge, where "the anvil must be somewhere in the center" (*Opened* 20). The world outside consists of decay, because it is on the periphery of his search. The axles and iron hoops, both components of an old cart's wheels, call forth the image of an abandoned journey, since they are relics of an unattainable past. Likewise, these cart parts would only be of use in a physical journey, whereas Heaney's journey lies in the realm of the metaphysical. Therefore, he focuses on what lies within. At the center of this Hephaestian womb-like forge is an anvil where the blacksmith "expends himself in shape and music," reminiscent of Heaney's childhood well's reflection and echo (*Opened* 20).

Rushdie's Moor experiences the same eerie feeling of looking upon oneself as if gazing upon a sculpture in a museum. He meets a silver-haired man as he searches the streets for Miranda's compound. Like Moor, Gottfried Helsing has an exaggerated sensory organ. Moor's hand is huge and club-like, and Helsing's tongue is so enormous it is something "his mouth seem[s] unable

to contain. It was forever licking at his lips in a suspicious, satirical way” (*Moor’s* 390). The time Moor spends with Helsing is replete with objects that tease the senses and the sensory organs which sniff along behind them. Things that are utterly tangible, textured and complex, fill Moor’s ears and eyes as he sits briefly with Helsing: alligators and crocodiles bite at the nipples of tourists from the lapels of their polo shirts; jacket-stains and oysters share the same breath as scholarly achievement; black coffee acts as the mirror-well into which Helsing stares with “twinkling blue eyes” (*Moor’s* 390). Helsing explains to Moor that the beauty of these objects bombarding Moor’s senses is only a gilding. Again, Moor is torn between Helsing’s artistic existence (the calm and objective observance of life) and his own artistic existence (the tumultuous scramble between being the object of art and being the artist). By joining Helsing at the table, Moor separates himself from the tumult of his past and future; he has “the sensation of non-existence” (*Moor’s* 391). He observes the cosmos from afar, yet is troubled by his separation from it. Moor snaps back to his world when he explains to Helsing, “I see that you are a man given to the contemplative life. But I have made a long journey, and it is not yet complete; my present needs do not permit me the luxury of chewing the fat . . .” (*Moor’s* 391).

Yet Moor knows he is suspended between these dimensions: one of his past and the other of his psychic home. They are dichotomous only as the phoenix is from the flame. Both frontiers are at his feet, but he remains unable to exist wholly in either. The only action he has the power to take is that of observation through his imagination and artistic recovery. Heaney describes a



similar feeling of separateness in the first line of “The Forge” when he laments, “All I know is a door into the dark” (*Opened* 20). Again, a dialectical structure is revealed: the outside world as thesis (because it is of the past), the forge, or Elephanta as antithesis (because homeness is infinite), and his own searching suspension as an imperfect synthesis. In this way, Heaney and Moor must derive meaning from paradox, motivating them to continue their search for a psychic home. Moor reinforces this search by telling his life story, just as the blacksmith galvanizes the iron by hammering. Creating his own life in narrative form is how Moor attempts to “beat real iron out, to work the bellows” (*Opened* 20).

It may be that the cosmos is composed only of neighbors all on a similar quest for homeness. However, they are not the idyllic close-knit circle suggested by Heaney’s poetry – instead, it seems they fly around the cosmos’ core, occasionally converging, but primarily in their own solitary orbits, like the electrons and quarks circling the nucleus of an atom. The subatomic bond exists, but the satellites are unable to know with certainty that the nucleus is actually there. The atomic pull communicates the existence of a center, yet the core itself can never touch the orbits of the electrons. Moor finds the truth of this on his quest for his artistic core: the search for the last remaining paintings by his mother. Heaney himself, in the essay, “Mossbawn,” compares several poets’ sense of an artistic home (the nucleus), concluding, “none of these poets surrenders himself to the mythology of his place but instead each subdues the place to become an element in his own private mythology” (*Preoccupations* 148).

This personal mythology is what separates the writer from the rest of the cosmos. And, naturally, within each mythology is the archetypal heroic journey – the search for a sense of home. Rushdie explains how such a search fuels his creativity. Visiting Bombay years after he had moved to Great Britain, and

acting on impulse, I opened the directory and looked  
for my father's name. And amazingly, there it was;  
his name, our old address, the unchanged telephone  
number . . . . It was an eerie discovery. I felt as if I  
were being claimed, or informed that the facts of my  
far away life were illusions, and that this continuity  
was reality. (*Imaginary* 9)

Rushdie confronts his past by discovering a relic from it, and he is disturbed by the realization that the present is an illusion and the past is something to which he may never return. His only recourse is to turn to his imagination – to immanently reconstruct the fading fragments of memory through his writing. He attempts to bring the atom into his own space, reducing it to a satellite, while sublimating his desire into the written word. In Heaney's and Rushdie's case, the written artifact is a result of the home strived for inside imagination. It is based on the sensuous existence of the present, and is recalled as memory, then reconstructed artistically.

*Omphalos* is a term Heaney applies in several of his poems and essays to characterize a psychic home. It is the navel of the universe, the nucleus of the atom. Is this abstract radicum a common home to all these searchers? He uses

the term much like a place-name in his essay "Mossbawn," where a pump outside his childhood back door, echoing the very sound of omphalos when it was operated, drew all travelers to its comforting refreshment. He states that it now "is but a half dream to me, and I've heard about it often. Yet, by now, I have imagined it so long and so often that I may even be imagining it (*Preoccupations* 17). The community's ability to approach and touch the source of comfort is a symbol of Heaney's profound wish to escape this cosmological orbit and become part of his own his psychic home. Moor's struggle is symbolized by the most physical essence of artistic inspiration:

I am deep in blood. There is blood on my shaking  
hands, and on my clothes. Blood smudges these  
words as I set them down. O the vulgarity, the  
garish unambiguity of blood. (*Moor's* 430)

Moor clings to tangible objects. They drip from his hands like oil, to be transformed into the creative act. The overarching connection between the sensuousness and the act of artistic creation is further emphasized when Miranda guns down Aoi as she attempts to hide behind one of the paintings.

Vasco fired, once. A hole appeared in the  
canvas, over Aurora's heart; but it was Aoi's  
breast that had been pierced. She fell heavily  
against the easel, clutching at it; and for an  
instance – picture this – her blood pumped  
through the wound in my mother's chest. (*Moor's* 431)

Why does Moor grasp at tangible objects like Aurora's paintings and Elephanta? It could be that, instead of being a physical home, they function as collective bookmarks, opening to a page of communal history. To make them meaningful, individuals must insert them into their own mythology – their solitary search for an artistic home. "Imagination takes over where memory has fragmented" (*Preoccupations* 133).

The compulsion to write may indeed arise from an absence created by the passing of time – the missing parts of fragmented memory – and Moor's act of writing is essentially a search for his artistic home, the x-factor of the cosmos. Of course, total immersion in this "imaginary homeland" would be tantamount to stepping into the infinite, the timeless womb. It is a journey possible for mortal creatures only through death, as Moor ultimately discovers. A cosmos of solitary searchers fully achieving home only through death may seem a bit nihilistic. However, the act of writing, as well as the quest's residue clinging to the ink on a page, creates meaning of its own accord. Each word, sentence, painting, and poem begets a new omphalos, blazing a path through and spawning new dialectics of point and counterpoint. Each compulsion is the result of a previous action, which initiates yet another cycle. Searching for one's artistic home may be the result of some feeling of absence, but striving for the essence of home, even if it is never fully actualized or understood, is at least a step closer to home's essence. That is what makes it worthwhile. Much like a joke is created in an attempt to ease pain, artistic creation is valuable because, if only for an evanescent moment, the artist experiences comfort. It is a taste of his psychic

home. Heaney credits writing, in his 1995 “Nobel Lecture,” “both for being itself and for being a help, for making possible a fluid relationship between the mind, the mind’s center and its circumference” (*Opened* 417). Moor describes his search and ultimate acceptance, when he explains, “I left my story nailed to the landscape in my wake . . . . At the head of this tombstone are three eroded letters; my fingertip reads them for me. RIP. Very well: I will rest, and hope for peace” (*Moor’s* 433).

## CHAPTER IV

### DEDALUS' FLIGHT TO AN ARTISTIC HOMELAND IN JOYCE'S *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* eavesdrops on the most intimate thoughts and actions of its protagonist, Stephen Dedalus. As the title denotes, Stephen struggles to become a poet in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland. Joyce illustrates the development of Stephen's aesthetic from toddlerhood to the metaphorical search for his namesake as a young adult. Like Saleem Sinai and Moraes Zogoiby, a home within Stephen Dedalus' mind, built from his own physical experiences, is the source of his creative inspiration. Throughout the novel, we see Stephen embark on an archetypal hero's journey. As a child he receives the call, he comes to understand that he is different from his peers; he is ultra-sensitive to the world that envelops him and the society that has little care to understand him. To Stephen Dedalus, a psychic home means several things: some sort of balance between politics, family, history and religion; comfort within his own body; and expression through his burgeoning sense of art and beauty.

Even as a toddler, Stephen has a poet's capacity to observe the world around him. Each object and sound become ultra-visceral, with an almost surreal "being-ness" that requires serious consideration by the young child. The first lines of the novel are crowded with these images.

The moocow came down the road where Betty

Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.

*O, the wild rose blossoms*

*On the little green place. . .*

When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets  
cold. His mother put on an oilsheet. That had the  
queer smell. (*Portrait* 3)

Stephen's limited capacity for speech does not dim the basic nature of the world he observes. He has ingested these images, made them his own, so that the moocow is coupled with thoughts of his own urine. A child's song becomes the score for a bodily function. Stephen anchors the abstractness of song to the concreteness of something he understands immediately.

As a toddler, Stephen exists in a home that consists of his own body and his parents. He recognizes his father by the hair on his face and his mother by her smell (better than his father's). Uncle Charles and Dante move into the periphery of Stephen's home just a few paragraphs later, and we sense Stephen's world expanding. Already, Stephen distinguishes between opposite sensations. The road and the wild rose blossoms, the warm and cold of his own

urine, and even the differing scents of his parents become the first entries in Stephen's aesthetic ledger.

Stephen's dichotomous understanding of the world helps him hone his senses and categorize the antecedents to his sensual responses. "There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on those cocks" (*Portrait* 7). Here, Stephen makes the jump from physical sensations to the abstraction of words. He discovers that marks on the spigots actually represent what his body feels as he turns them. This foreshadows his poetic, as well as physical, transformation as a teenager in response to his temporarily discarded faith.

Stephen's physical and intellectual growth at Clongowes boarding school is reflected in his language. Stephen is also emotionally precocious, exhibiting an awareness of others' motives, and discovering the intricacies of human nature through quiet observation of the school's populace. We see a child's diction develop into that of a sensitive young boy who is terribly homesick and unsure of his role among his peers. Stephen finds some comfort in the tangible quality of his schoolbooks and the words they contain.

And there were nice sentences in Doctor Cornwell's Spelling Book. They were like poetry but they were only sentences to learn spelling from.

*Wolsey died in Leicester Abbey*

*Where the abbots buried him.*

*Canker is a disease of plants,*



*Cancer is one of animals.*

It would be nice to lie on the hearthrug before  
the fire, leaning his hand upon his head, and think  
on those sentences. (*Portrait* 6)

Finding comfort in these sentences about death and disease seems ironic, but Stephen is aware that the very physicality of the words makes them poetic. They are alliterative, with strong “W” and “C” sounds, making the sound just as concrete as the meaning. Stephen experiences this concreteness as well when he writes these words. As he says, they are not merely for recitation. He practices his spelling with them, writing them over and over onto paper. In a sense he can be compared to an athlete running stairs before a marathon. With just the act of writing comes his inspiration and his creative force. He imagines how nice it would be to think on the sentences, to contemplate their attributes in a more abstract sense. In this way, he uses the word on the page to leap from the concrete to the abstract, moving the images on a page to images in his mind. There he can later access the words as memories, build on them, and create meaning from them, as all artists must.

During his sojourn at Clongowes boarding school, Stephen sees the paradox between the brotherhood and faith Catholicism espouses and the apparent cruelty with which many of its followers uphold it. A crucial element of his psychic home is his own faith. Aside from the few relationships Stephen develops with people such as Brother Michael, the simple order and justice of Catholicism in his childhood are confused by his experiences at school. Stephen

quickly becomes aware of the paradox inherent to the human condition. Stephen is on a path to humanness, but strives to coast above it as a psychic observer, just off of the ground.

Stephen's confusion regarding the contradictions between the teachings and the practice of Catholicism is foreshadowed much earlier in his life, when Dante becomes upset with his assertion that he would someday marry a young Protestant girl, Eileen. Of course, he did not recognize the reason for Dante's anger at the time. Later, though, in school he fantasizes about the girl's hands, and compares her to the Catholic image of the Virgin Mary. Eileen represents the Protestant antithesis to the Irish-Catholic way of life. It is ironic that the metaphors the Church uses to describe the mother of Christ are what Stephen uses to describe the dainty hands of a Protestant girl. In return, this comparison is the very thing that helps Stephen truly understand what his teachers meant when they called Mary a Tower of Ivory or House of Gold.

Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but protestants could not understand it and made fun of it. One day he had stood beside her looking into the fair grounds. A waiter was running up a trail of bunting on the flagstaff and a fox terrier was scampering to and fro on the sunny lawn. She had put her hand into his pocket where his hand was and he had felt how cool and thin and soft her hand was . . . . Her

fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun.

*Tower of Ivory. House of Gold. (Portrait 38)*

The celestial image of Mary is made real to Stephen only through a metaphorical connection to the hands of Eileen. This religious contemplation is couched in a very earthly experience. The sun shines down onto the fairgrounds where dogs are scampering and waiters are scurrying, and Stephen feels the thrill of Eileen's cool hand slipped into his pocket with his own. Again, we recall the childishly nonchalant assertion of devotion, coupled now with the heat of the summer sun and lurking pubescent desire.

Stephen's confusion had been present since his first experiences at Clongowes, though, where Stephen suffers at the hands of a bully who pushes him into a cesspool, where "the cold slime of the ditch covered his whole body" (*Portrait* 10). Yet Stephen finds comfort in the company of Brother Michael, who tends his illness caused by the vileness of the gutter. His stay in the infirmary begins with a fit of self-pity in which Stephen imagines how distraught everyone would be when they hear of his death. However, the tolling of the bells in the church compels him to turn his attention to a song.

He could hear the tolling. He said over to himself the  
song that Brigid had taught him.

*Dingdong! The castle bell!*

*Farewell, my mother!*

*Bury me in the old churchyard*

*Beside my eldest brother.*

*My coffin shall be black . . .*

How beautiful the words were when they said

*Bury me in the old churchyard!* A tremble passed

over his body. How sad and how beautiful! (*Portrait* 20)

Instead of falling into a deeper state of self-pity, Stephen finds beauty in the words themselves. The music of the bells and the song they recall are cathartic to Stephen. He is strengthened by the experience, and learns that true poetry is *searching* for a compromise between the bells and the sewer; using the sewer to discover the bells. Whether or not one actually finds the compromise is irrelevant.

Similarly, Stephen is made aware of the underlying conflict between his own faith, his family, and patriotism during his Christmas vacation. His father, Simon, and John Casey (a friend of the family), who are zealous patriots, heatedly argue with Dante about Parnell's adultery and death. Dante, who is devoutly Catholic, storms from the Christmas dinner table, leaving Casey in tears. Stephen is stunned to see his own father begin to weep as well.

Viciousness and negativity are coupled with faith and familiarity. Stephen uses these experiences as a springboard for his own artistic development. He sees the paradox and searches for meaning in it.

Stephen returns to Clongowes after Christmas vacation a wiser young man. His family's turmoil opens a new arena of thought for him. Parnell was an adulterer and a national hero. How could the forces of Irish patriotism and Catholic devotion conflict within one person? Parnell had obviously sinned, yet

Stephen's father and Casey still consider him a hero. Despite Parnell's heroism and leadership, Dante condemns him as scourge on the Catholic Church.

Stephen realizes that sin must be sensual, and begins to connect sin with his own hyper-awareness of the sensuous. It is only reasonable for Stephen to wonder if his own artistic fascination with the visceral world could be considered immoral to those around him.

At Clongowes, Stephen finds that a classmate, Corrigan, has chosen to be flogged rather than expelled for taking part what Stephen believes to be the theft of altar wine. Stephen wonders if God is actually within the altar wine when you drink it, then decides against it. The fact that Stephen contemplates such a thing suggests he finds it necessary to question the tenets of his faith and consciously disagree with its dogma. Regarding the theft:

He thought of it with great awe; a terrible and strange sin;

it thrilled him to think of it in the silence when the pens

scraped lightly. But to drink the altar wine out of the

press and be found out by the smell was a sin too;

but it was not terrible and strange. It only made you

feel a little sickish on account of the smell of the wine.

Because on the day when he made his first holy

communion in the chapel he had shut his eyes and

opened his mouth and put out his tongue a little:

and when the rector had stooped down to give

him the holy communion he had smelt a faint winy

smell off the rector's breath after the wine of mass.

The word was beautiful: wine. It made you think of dark purple that grew in Greece outside houses like white temples. (*Portrait* 41-2)

It is interesting how Stephen connects the winy smell of the rector's breath to the outright sin of being caught by the very same smell. Stephen realizes, however, that the wine itself could not be the sin. It can be a catalyst for sinful behavior or a vehicle for the Holy Spirit. The essence of the wine and the word that represents it, though, is beauty. The word *wine* is what allows Stephen's imagination to construct an ideal Greece: one with pristine white houses and dewy purple grapes, heavy on the vine. It recalls the image of an ivory tower to the reader, yet adds the image of grapes, intruding upon white with blood-colored juice. The wine is an antecedent to the word, the tempting liquor of Corrigan's sin, the blood of Christ, and the elixir for Stephen's imaginative expression.

The second portion of *Portrait* is set in Dublin, where Stephen spends his summer and eventually moves. Uncle Charles, Stephen's urban companion, is a man whose obsession with constant prayer strikes Stephen as mysterious. Uncle Charles partakes of tobacco, a very earthy substance of which he constantly reeks. Stephen often walks with his uncle, and joins his father and grandfather periodically to walk for miles. The constant walking obviously is meant to represent the journey of our hero, yet Stephen's walking is circular, with no certain destination. He searches in order to search, making an inward journey

toward artistic maturity, serving as a predecessor to Leopold Bloom's wanderings.

Trudging along the road or standing in some grimy wayside publichouse his elders spoke constantly of the subjects nearest their hearts, of Irish politics, of Munster and the legends of their own family, to all of which Stephen lent an avid ear. Words he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him. The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended. (*Portrait* 57)

Stephen's home and his journey coincide in Dublin – point and counterpoint converge. He vaguely senses a world that will expand beyond this sphere of family and school, and he longs to be transformed into a creature of this strange garden. The existence these crusty old Dubliners live is a goal for Stephen, in that he longs for adulthood and the basic freedom it brings – freedom that children, dependent on their parents, cannot enjoy. He sees that adulthood brings with it a deeper understanding of Irish politics, of family history, and of tradition, but the world for which he longs moves beyond this realm. The

freedoms of adulthood will launch Stephen into his most dramatic artistic search, where he discovers that the very freedoms he sought turn to wings of wax.

A disturbing experience with this new freedom occurs as Stephen is traveling by train to Cork, where his father plans to sell property at an auction. Again, a physical journey is prominent, especially when his father, Simon, takes him on a tour of Queen's College. During an uncomfortable day tolerating his father's clumsy attempts to act paternal, Stephen is led into an anatomy theater. As his father tries to capture wisps of nostalgia, Stephen notices a desktop carved with a disturbing message – a message fatefully meant for his eyes.

On the desk before him read the word *Foetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk. (*Portrait* 84)

More than the souls of students who stood in it, the theatre is crowded by the presence of this word. It is gored out of the wood, lending physicality to the object it represents. The knife scratching and penetrating the grains of wood to create the word *foetus* is suggestive of a passionate, perhaps brutal, sexual act. Stephen's mind is stricken with the sexuality of the word, but is also forced to consider the boy who carved the word, as well as the legions of snickering students sitting before his secret message throughout the years since its



insemination. Stephen realizes that the act of creation – of art, of words, of poetry – is simultaneously a baring of one's most private organs (in this case, his soul and mind) and an animalistic urge to impress oneself upon the world. He identifies with the fetus the word represents, and attempts to remember himself as a child, but the memories seem disconnected from him. He has become free, but only as "a ship adrift."

Stephen is haunted by the word as his unconscious mind attempts to comprehend the magnitude of the experience. Words are simultaneously a secret, intimate possession and a public conveyance of ideas:

But the word and the vision capered before his eyes as he walked back across the quadrangle and towards the college gate. It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words. He had soon given in to them and allowed them to sweep across and abase his intellect, wondering always where they came from, from what den of monstrous images . . . .

*(Portrait 84-5)*

As Stephen leaves the college, he believes that the images evoked by the carved word were contaminating his intellectual faculties. Because he gives in to the senses, he feels he has become less ideally human and more animalistic. We

see Stephen's fright turn into a sort of reluctant cynicism, he is disgusted with himself "for his own mad and filthy orgies" (*Portrait* 85). His childhood of simple sensuous pleasure and discovery fades, and Stephen is left with a mercenary attitude toward his own creative impulse.

Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and  
loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with  
it his soul capable of simple joys: and he was drifting  
amid life like the barren shell of the moon.

*Art thou pale for weariness*

*Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth*

*Wandering companionless . . . ?*

He repeated to himself the line of Shelley's fragment. Its  
alternation of sad human ineffectiveness with vast human  
cycles of activity chilled him: and he forgot his own human  
and ineffectual grieving. (*Portrait* 90)

If words can be manipulated to so deeply affect him, he can employ words to affect others – of course, for his own benefit. Words have a power beyond their creator, and Stephen finds he can put such knowledge to use; he submits work to an essay contest and wins a large sum of money. Even in his duplicitous existence, echoed by the fragment of Shelley's poem, Stephen is transforming himself into a true creator. He will spin these experiences into a shimmering cloth of poetry, with his dark thoughts used for shadow, and his revelations as the golden thread. His need to gild a life of poverty and physicality with a

semblance of elegance is shown by his spendthrift nature. It is ironic that in his avoidance of poverty's tangibility, he becomes distracted by all things material. Stephen purchases useless gifts for his family and indulgent gifts for himself, and he consequently crawls back into the very place of material physicality from whence he wished to escape. However, this time Stephen has replaced something meaningful and of value – his serious consideration and experience of the visceral environment – with junk of no meaning and little value.

When his money is spent, Stephen finds his family and himself in much the same position as before, but memory of his brief affluence reminds him of the heights to which humanity can rise, and the squalor to which humanity may sink. In his desolation he seeks comfort in the arms of a prostitute, but his action only results in a deeper self-loathing. He wallows in his own crapulence, resigning himself to the notion that creativity can be soured through physicality – he has forgotten the link between the tangible and the imaginative along with his forgotten innocence.

How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the waters had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole. (*Portrait* 92)

Stephen has fallen from his own sense of righteousness and is horrified by the additional realization that he has fallen in the eyes of his church and God. His soul is at risk, and his creativity is a pouring out of the soul. How can he synthesize the primitive with the ideal? He is subsisting, so how can he expect to create beauty? Claude Levi-Strauss theorizes that

people whom we usually consider subservient to the need of not starving, of continuing able just to subsist in very harsh material conditions, are perfectly capable of disinterested thinking; that is, they are moved by a need or desire to understand the world around them, its nature, and their society. On the other hand, to achieve that end, they proceed by intellectual means, exactly as a philosopher . . . can and would do. (Levi-Strauss 16)

Stephen's own sin has caused him to become detached from any feelings of guilt or hypocrisy, and he observes himself continuing to lose all control of his physical desires. At this point of his personal growth, despite his confusion about his spiritual culpability, Stephen begins to discover that there can be a compromise between the world of the senses and the world of intellect. He finds a metaphorical pattern between his own drifting emotions and the tide:

A cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul. At his first violent sin he had felt a wave of vitality pass out of him and had feared to find his body or soul maimed by the excess. Instead the vital wave had

carried him on its bosom out of himself and back  
 again when it receded: and no part of body or soul  
 had been maimed but a dark peace had been  
 established between them. (*Portrait* 97)

Because, as Levi-Strauss predicts, Stephen learns to psychically separate himself from the physical excess of his own actions, he is able to observe himself, as a child would looking into a well, and store this experience for future imaginative exercises. This, too, will become fodder for his creativity. Stephen's sins have loosed him from his former place of home – his youthful trust in humanity's inherent worth. He struggles to recapture home, but the child in him has died, much like Moor's image fades from the canvas in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

Amidst a fiery revival at Belvedere, stories of Hell's torments frighten Stephen into fully confessing his sins, and he experiences a metamorphosis. The world is awash with white light just as his soul is awash with God's grace.

White pudding and eggs and sausages and cups of tea.  
 How simple and beautiful was life after all! . . . The altar  
 was heaped with fragrant masses of white flowers: and  
 in the morning light the pale flames of the candles among  
 the white flowers were clear and silent as his own soul.

(*Portrait* 139)

He has re-entered the artificial home of religion. His own nonconformist nature, however, foreshadows the fact that he will not find comfort in the Church for long.

As an artist, he is compelled by his own soul to find a house befitting himself rather than the House of God. Juxtaposing the two images he gives of the state of his soul illustrates his second transformation.

The stars of heaven were falling upon the earth like figs  
cast by the figtree which the wind has shaken. The sun,  
the great luminary of the universe, had become a sackcloth  
of hair. The moon was bloodred. The firmament was a  
scroll rolled away. (*Portrait* 107)

In his search for an aesthetic home, he has found his world to be both angelic and devilish. The stars either twinkle brilliantly with Heaven's light or they fall as dying embers to the firmament. The sun rises to bathe the world in light, or it is as black as sackcloth. Stephen is discovering that home cannot be an existence only in the light or the dark. Rather, it is somewhere in the space between. He must create a unique home, blending the colors from both realms, just as Saleem Sinai blends unlikely ingredients to make his chutney. Stephen is making the leap from consumer to creator. Instead of passively accepting the paradigm the church or nation imposes upon existence, Stephen seeks to create his own cosmology. Originality, created from the stored shards of an artist's memory, is the ultimate act of creativity.

Still, as Stephen matures he finds himself continuing to turn to the simple physicality of his youth, where his environment was tangible. "His mind when wearied of its search for the essence of beauty amid the spectral words of Aristotle or Aquinas turned often for its pleasure to the dainty songs of the

Elizabethans" (*Portrait* 169). Poetry was song that he could taste on his tongue and hear floating about his head. He looks to the sensuous for inspiration, which awakens in him a new consciousness. On the beach Stephen has an artistic epiphany. He discovers his own rarity, his own originality:

. . . a new wild life was singing in his veins. Where was his boyhood now? Where was the soul that had hung back from her destiny, to brood alone upon the shame of her wounds and in her house of squalor and subterfuge to queen it in faded cerements and in wreaths that withered at the touch? Or where was he? He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of his life. (*Portrait* 164).

By giving up his attempts to have the company of humanity, Stephen has become more human. Stephen discovers that the home of his youth has developed into something more complex than merely the artifice of nationality or religion. He is an artist, set apart from the rest of the human race, undulating with the tides, and shining in all his beautiful lunacy as he embarks on new journeys that spin off from the one which has come to an end. His thoughts become poetry; his life becomes art. In his journal he writes, "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscious of my race . . . . Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (*Portrait* 244). Stephen addresses his namesake, and like the son Icarus, takes flight. The flight is risky

and fated not to succeed, but Stephen's essence demands that he must fly away from his old home of physicality toward a new and infinite home of imaginative and poetic creation, even with wings of wax.



## CHAPTER V

### SEARCHING FOR ART, SEARCHING FOR HOME IN JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, we return to the inner thoughts of Stephen Dedalus, who, in the course of the story, steps back from the limelight, only to rematerialize periodically in the narrative. Much like Moraes Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Stephen fades from the canvas, then reappears in different, often faded, forms. Most of *Ulysses* focuses on the traveler Leopold Bloom, who wanders through the streets of Dublin, paralleling the mythic adventures of Odysseus, but springing from tellurian activities of day-to-day life. His is a metaphorical quest for an aesthetic – perhaps less technically artistic, but more an aesthetic of the soul.

In his collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie recalls the words of Herbert Read, who wrote, "Art is never transfixed. Change is the condition of art remaining art" (*Imaginary* 418). When Stephen embarks on his journey at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he finds that he must continually mold his aesthetic so that it may reflect his memories in relation to his ever-changing experiences and environments. Joyce's *Ulysses* pulls up the line of Stephen's life, occasionally checks it for a catch, and then throws it

back to the rippling ocean. Between these occasional visitations, we wander the streets of Dublin with a soon-to-be acquaintance of Stephen's, Leopold Bloom.

As Rushdie writes,

art, too, is an event in history, subject to the historical process. But it is also about that process, and must constantly strive to find new forms to constantly mirror an endlessly renewed world. No aesthetic can be constant, except an aesthetic based on the idea of inconstancy, metamorphosis, or to borrow a term from politics, "perpetual revolution." (*Imaginary* 418)

Although the narrative of *Ulysses* follows a legendary path, Joyce creates a story of ultimate reality. The narrative takes place within a single day: June 16, 1904. The first chapter is devoted to Telemachus, Odysseus' son. Stephen loosely represents Telemachus as he focuses thought on his mother. Stephen recalls what was physical about her; his memories are of

her secrets: old featherfans, tasseled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer. A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. She heard old Royce sing in the pantomime of *Turko the Terrible* and laughed with others when he sang:

*I am the boy*

*That can enjoy*

*Invisibility.*

Phantasmal mirth, folded away; muskperfumed.

*And no more turn aside and brood.*

Folded away in the memory of nature with her toys.

Memories beset his brooding brain. Her glass of water  
from the kitchen tap when she had approached the  
sacrament. A cored apple, filled with brown sugar,  
roasting for her at the hob on a dark evening.

Her shapely fingernails reddened by the blood of  
squashed lice from the children's shirts. (*Ulysses* 9)

Stephen recalls the mementos his mother kept as physical memories for herself; he has inherited those dancecards and tassled featherfans. Stephen remembers his mother at work in her world of domesticity, preparing food and grooming her children. It is an intimate reminiscence we observe here, illustrating Stephen's need to attempt to return to a home of his childhood. The nostalgia seems almost forced, as if Stephen is deliberately dwelling on emotionally heavy memories in order to reap the reward of some cathartic poetic inspiration.

The memory positively drips with physicality, recalling sugar and apples along with fingernails, lice, and blood. It reflects the dichotomy of emotion Stephen attaches to his mother. On the one hand, she is the embodiment of satiation, sweetness, and comfort. On the other hand, she is associated with the blood that comes with raising children, both physically, as illustrated in the blood of birthing and in her nitpicking, and metaphorically, through the life force poured

into caring for offspring. Hearthside closeness and serenity are juxtaposed additionally with Mrs. Dedalus' mementos from her youth. The musky scent still clinging to a dancecard from some distant-past revelry silently accuses Stephen and his siblings of bleeding the vitality out of his mother. Her youth had been folded away with the mementos when she took on the mantle of motherhood. Stephen unconsciously acknowledges how each of the mother mementos in his thoughts encapsulates a feeling, an epiphany, a thought. It is an odd twist of narrative technique, incidentally, that Stephen seems to share in his mother's own youthful memories. In effect, he relates the artifice – the beads, the featherfan, the birdcage, the dancecard – to the abstraction. Stephen is aware that the artifice and the inspiration interface at some point. The space between the object and the memory is liquid, because, in this case, his mother's life created those objects, which in turn were used to recall past experiences. Paradoxically, the object is both the source and the result of artistic inspiration.

Stephen further explores the paradoxical nature of his existence in terms of nationality and religion. To Stephen, a true aesthetic is couched in the realities of family life, but must inevitably widen into concerns of church and state. His childhood experiences have told him that a person's perspective on the world is filtered through these lenses of family, church, and state. They form a dynamic squirming paradigm through which humanity, especially those with vision, must gaze. The lens is truly gelatinous, offering a crystalline, though perhaps a bit refracted and changing, image of existence. Stephen explains to Haines that he is "a servant of two masters . . . an English and an Italian . . . The imperial British

state . . . and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church" (*Ulysses* 17). It is obvious to Stephen that his existence is torn between church and country, but Haines seems not to be able to comprehend the immensity of Stephen's disclosure; instead, Haines decides "history is to blame" (*Ulysses* 17). Stephen drifts off to explore the symbolism used in the Catholic church, his brewing thoughts recapitulating the growth of Church dogma.

Stephen continues his protean development as he strolls along the beach, awaiting his appointed rendezvous with Mulligan. He ponders on the nature of artistic vision and elements that influence what the artist eventually sees and therefore produces:

Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more,  
 thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am  
 here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide,  
 that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust coloured  
 signs . . . Rhythm begins, you see. I hear. Acatalectic  
 tetrameter of iambs marching. (*Ulysses* 31)

The incredible alliterative rumble of Stephen's thoughts evokes the hiss of sea foam as it sinks into the sand. Stephen toys with this Aristotelian postulation that an eye does not have the ability to act upon or alter the essence of the image it sees. Conversely, the nose, ear, and mouth take part in whatever object they are sensing. In other words, these sensory organs affect whatever substance they sense directly, thereby changing it. In the changing, though, it achieves its total nature in regard to our perception. Stephen suggests that in seeing the

seaside images, he is compelled to transfer them into words. These words have sound; he reads them off of the seascape. These sounds, in the care of an artist, become poetry. Therefore, by viewing these objects, Stephen is able to take part in their very essence. The poetry becomes an invitation to participate in beachness, with all its tidal, primordial rhythms. Through his artistry, the strand becomes infinitely more real.

Stephen's meditations on reality and perception have been shaped by his awareness that he must serve more than one master. His art and, more fundamentally, his compulsion to create art are the result of this awareness. His poetry is the eye that reflects images from the world, and Stephen has the secret to tasting the essence of reality. It lies in the process of creating, in searching for the creative impulse.

The mundane deserves as much of a place on Stephen's aesthetic platter as the miraculous. Stephen's walk along the beach brings him to "a bloated carcass of a dog [lying] on bladderwrack. Before him the gunwale of a boat, sunk in the sand . . . . These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" (*Ulysses* 37).

Again, Stephen seeks those physical anchors to which he can tie wisps of creative potential. The bloated dog carcass is transformed into a symbol for the cycle of life. Between the skeletal boat and the decomposing dog, Stephen finds meaning. He is a man, the spiritual son of the mythical artificer, Dedalus. To mimic the gods, Dedalus creates thick, plodding wax wings. In Stephen's eyes, the skeleton of the boat imbedded in the sand is fated to share the canvas with

the soon-to-be skeleton of God's creation. The anagram is difficult to overlook, as the dog symbolizes God art, while simultaneously functioning as food for nature. Again, the dichotomy surfaces: God is manifested in the artistry and intellect, while nature is manifested in creative instinct and decay.

Stephen leaves us with particular Joycean flair: with a poem and a booger. Thoughts of ontological life cycles begin to commingle with personifications of nature's virility. Stephen accompanies this oceanside insemination with his own poetic swing.

Better get this job over quick. Listen: a fourworded  
 wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooos. Vehement  
 breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks.  
 In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in  
 barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases. It flows  
 purling, widely flowing, floating foampool, flower  
 unfurling. (*Ulysses* 41)

It is unclear whether the initial statement, very matter-of-fact, is intended to refer to Stephen's act of illicit urination, his poem, or the intercourse between the sea and the sand. Undoubtedly, the triple *entendre* serves to underscore the necessity of physicality as the home of creativity. It is the soil from which artistic creation must unfurl. Stephen leaves the beach and sinks into the mist as a silent ship, symbolizing the ship of state, the holy trinity (three cruciform masts), and the role of nature as provider (incoming tide). Stephen pauses to leave a memento of his own experience on the strand. His poetic and philosophical

insight now is encapsulated by “dry snot picked from his nostril,” and he invites others to observe his creative act: “let look who will” (*Ulysses* 42).

Leopold Bloom is the protagonist of the odyssey proper, and characterizes the dual nature of the novel. On the one hand, Bloom walks through an ultra-real Dublin. His fictional experiences exist in precise verisimilitude with the events, places, and people extant on June 16, 1904. On the other hand, Bloom walks the path of myth, his every step having been made before in Homer’s classic narrative. The fact that Bloom coexists with Dedalus, another dual inhabitant of myth and reality, intensifies this threshold orientation – perpetually moving between the two planes. “The situation finds us bound by our own existence, caught in the objective/subjective dilemma – unless that dilemma can be transcended” (Crowell 10).

Bloom’s mind wanders as he walks to the Turkish baths. Much like Dedalus, he is denied access to his home. Bloom knows his wife is expecting her lover and politely loses himself in the streets of Dublin to wait out the affair. In this way, Bloom’s journey, although it mirrors Odysseus’ journey physically, is an ironic twist on the journey psychologically. Underlying Bloom’s journey is this act of cuckoldry, whereas Odysseus’ journey is punctuated by acts of sexual domination.

Even Bloom’s attempts at clandestine sexuality are unconsummated. He is intrigued by implicit pornographic correspondence, yet quickly turns his thoughts to more comforting topics as

he walk[s] back along Dorset street, reading gravely.



Agendath Netaim: planters' company. To purchase waste sandy tracks for Turkish government and plant with eucalyptus trees. Excellent for shade, fuel and construction. Orangegroves and immense melonfields north of Jaffa.

(*Ulysses* 49)

Bloom is an Irish Jew married to a darling of Dublin's artsy circles, a singer and society insider. He, however, has always been an outsider, existing at the threshold of reality, much like Moor. He constantly fantasizes about the East and a life as a gentleman farmer. He anchors his artistic fantasy to the words in this advertisement. Each noun is laden with adjectival implications. We imagine vast sandy fields transformed with the creative effort of Bloom, the Wandering Jew come home. This is the home to which Bloom would most like to return, and it is evident in his ambivalence toward his Dublin residence.

Bloom's creative impulse arises from the mundane. Even a bath gives him opportunity to contemplate beauty in terms of his own progeny.

Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cool enamel,  
the gentle tepid stream. He foresaw his pale body  
reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled  
by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk  
and his limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed  
lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh:  
and saw dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating  
hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands,

a languid floating flower. (*Ulysses* 70)

Unlike Dedalus' strict dichotomous understanding of the cosmos, best illustrated in the earliest sensations of his childhood with the hot and cold tap, Bloom's sensory world is less defined. Instead of contrasting sensations of hot and cold, Bloom senses the water as tepid, the enamel as cool. Initially, it seems as if Bloom has a less distinct understanding of the world, which would make his experience somehow less real. However, Bloom is actually in tune with the subtleties of his senses, allowing him to contemplate what others would dismiss as mundane and unworthy of serious consideration. Stephen exists in a world of bright colors, jagged fetal edges, sexual extremes, and forced artistic discovery. Bloom exists in a pastel world of sexual trepidation, his lemonyellow languid flesh floating in a tepid, rippling primordial sea (Gifford 156).

Bloom is impotent, but he seems content. Unlike Odysseus, who is able to rescue his men from the island of the lotus eaters, Bloom succumbs. He eases into the bathwater, embracing the lazy comfort and allowing his mind to wander, though he never loses thought of home. Truly, this is a chapter on his identity; his father's name meant flower, his name was anglicized into Bloom, and even his pen name to Martha is Henry Flower. The lotus shares its essence with Bloom, the honeyed plant inducing passivity, if not forgetfulness.

He came nearer and heard a crunching of  
 guilded oats, the gently champing teeth. Their  
 full buck eyes regarded him as he went by,  
 amid the sweet oaten reek of horsepiss.

Their Eldorado. Poor jugginses! Damn all  
 they know or care about anything with their  
 long noses stuck in nosebags . . . Gelded too:  
 a stump of black gutterpercha wagging limp  
 between their haunches. (*Ulysses* 63)

Bloom thinks of the sexless horses as happier because they are not tormented by sexual thoughts – just like the eunuchs who sang in church choirs. He is simultaneously identifying with the horses on an unconscious level and distancing himself from their castration. In effect, it is an action of displaced self-pity. The horses can additionally represent how the Irish are emasculated by the British, which is one level where Bloom actually could claim fraternity with the culture within which he lives. In every other sense, however, Bloom is a man displaced.

His complacency is striking when we consider the fact that Bloom is utterly displaced in his life. Like Moraes Zagoiby, Bloom is an alien. Not only is he a Jew living in a Christian culture, his personal relationships lack the intimacy that would allow him to have a physical home. He is literally in search of home by means of his wandering, but his home is one of the mind. Images of flight appear in his concocted poem, but the object of flight is weighed down by hunger, flapping over a motionless sea. Bloom is weighed down by the oppressive tendencies of the British and Irish societies; he is torn by the desire to fit the ideals, often conflicting, of manhood in Dublin. Like Stephen, he must attend to multiple masters.

*The hungry famished gull*

*Flaps o'er the waters dull.*

That is how poets write, the similar sounds. But then  
Shakespeare has no rhymes: blank verse. The flow of  
language it is. The thoughts. Solemn.

*Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit*

*Doomed for a certain time to walk the earth. (Ulysses 125)*

This comical mimicry of poetic art displays Bloom's clumsy understanding of the artistic world. Much like a high school freshman, Bloom identifies poetry only with its most superficial and stereotypical attributes. It is as if his brain is attempting to fit itself inside these artificial poetic rules. He personifies the language of flowers, but twists his own understanding into "the language flows." In order to truly be an artist, he thinks, one must rhyme in clunky meaningless verse or solemnly spew forth lines of iambic pentameter. He does not consciously recognize his own natural ability, which arguably could be seen as much more acute than the artistic ability of Stephen Dedalus. Joyce's mock solemnity illustrates Bloom's struggle to become something other than an outsider. To the people of Dublin, Bloom's thoughts would never be considered artful, so he strives to mold them into a passable commonplace aesthetic.

Bloom's thoughts are often vulgar to the point of being pornographic, even to our 21<sup>st</sup>-century sensibilities. He serves as a foil to young Dedalus, offering the readers a sort of artistic measuring stick for observing aestheticism. While Dedalus has developed knowing he is meant to be a poet, Bloom's mental

artistry blossoms much like a shy violet at high school prom. In Bloom, “the mind converts brain action into experience” (Crowell 11). He happily sits on the metaphorical bleachers as the wallflower while the real artist, his wife Molly, blazes out to the floor. He is comfortable, it seems, as an underfunctioner in his relationships because his mental activity compensates for it. He is a manifestation of the “language of flowers.”

Bloom and Stephen interact more frequently as the narrative progresses, which illuminates their overlapping aesthetics. Both men are artists in their own right. Stephen has found his artistic home and the font of his creativity in the search for the inventive spirit of his namesake, while Bloom finds his artistic home in an unlikely place: the arms of his wife. It is something for which he has always longed, and so he accepts her affection, even if it is superficial. For Molly (ironically the one viewed by Dublin society as the artist), it is the best she can offer. Bloom’s artistic fulfillment comes with his wife’s acceptance, an acceptance flowing from their shared memories. Her understanding of the natural world reveals the fundamental necessity of their relationship:

I love flowers I'd love to have the whole place swimming  
in roses God of heaven . . . that would do your heart  
good to see . . . flowers all sorts of shapes and smells  
and colours springing up even out of the ditches primroses  
and violets nature . . . (*Ulysses* 643)

Bloom’s artistry, as Molly intimates, springs forth from him as a necessary fact of nature. His alliance with the natural world feels primitive, almost reptilian in its

intuitive essentia. He is the ditch that calls forth the blossom; the marriage of vulgarity and beauty which is, at its core, the creative impulse.

## CHAPTER VI

### BRINGING THE CREATIVE IMPULSE TO LIFE: TEACHING RUSHDIE AND JOYCE IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

Mind, Brain, and Memory: somehow they define us as humans as nothing else does. They give us expression as sentient beings, letting us plan, predict, and remember our actions in ways that we believe no other animal can. They create consciousness of self and other entities within the physical universe. They shape not only our perceptions of reality but, in a quantum world, may even be reality itself. (Pardes)

Learning is a physical transformation of a human brain. When a person acquires a new experience or piece of knowledge, the brain is modified, and in turn modifies that person's behavior. The brain changes because each neuron reacts to external stimuli by producing electric impulses, causing cellular alterations.

*Plasticity* is the brain's physical change during the learning process, affecting future learning patterns as well as memory. "Active learning or . . . living in a rich environment that includes other individuals, colors, music, sounds, books, smells,

etc.” causes the greatest amount of plasticity in the brain. It logically follows, therefore, that the brain learns the most through physical, sensory-based experiences (Cardoso). Neurons communicate through junctions known as synapses. Each electrical impulse, or neurotransmitter, zaps from neuron to neuron, and the more frequent the impulse, the stronger the synapse. These strengthened junctions form protein dendrites, cementing the connection for future memory retrieval (Cardoso).

Neurologists generalize the right hemisphere of the brain as being associated with linear aptitude and rationality, whereas they view the left hemisphere as the prime locus of creative imagination, synthesis, and long-term memorization (Carneiro). Of course, the hemispheres of the brain are not mutually exclusive. Deep learning occurs when both the right and left hemisphere of the brain are stimulated, and when brainwaves are between the frequencies of seven to thirteen pulses per second. This is known as the *Alpha* state, when the brain is in a condition of physical and mental relaxation, but is hyper-aware of the surrounding environment. This wave frequency induces an increased production of betaendorphins, neoepinephrine, and dopamine, which are all linked to “feelings of enlarged mental clarity and formation of remembrances” (Carneiro). Neurologists in the study of electroencephalograms find that, during the Alpha state, both hemispheres of the brain are in use, which is an ideal state for analytic thought, synthetic thought, and creativity. Subjects submitting to these tests found they were better able to “create images, to make



associations, to deal with drawings, diagrams and emotions, as well as . . . good-humour and pleasure” (Carneiro).

In order to create an Alpha state, to stimulate both hemispheres of the brain and increase student receptivity and creativity, teachers must develop a classroom environment based upon *action ontology*.

Henry Stapp [a physicist speaking on the nature of mind and reality] stated that “basic realities are not things, but acts.” Discussing this in relation to quantum mechanics, he explained that when we perceive a triangle, we are experiencing the activity of adjacency relationships rather than actual structure. He argues for an ‘action ontology.’

(Crowell 9)

In other words, the brain seeks and thrives upon patterns, connections, and multiple perspectives, and a learner is truly driven to learn if abstract thought is secured to past learning experiences through metaphorical scaffolding.

We must come to understand our world in terms of processes, relationships and the ‘felt experience’ of actual events. Making a radical departure from traditional epistemology, Stapp sees the “mental world” as the real epistemology. There is a relationship between our experience and the actual events of the natural world.

(Crowell 9)

Of course, humanity is defined by its ability to express abstract thoughts and emotions, so the bulk of our wisdom is housed behind a door of cellular synapses. "The 'truth' of human existence is inescapably bound within processes and events" (Crowell 10). The brain learns best through physical experience, but the heart of knowledge lies in the realm of abstraction. It is the duty of educators to help students find the key. Metaphorical teaching and curriculum building can be the educational equivalent of synapses. They connect students to knowledge, self-discovery, and ultimately gives rise to the creative impulse. As students are influenced by literature, they, in turn affect the substance of humanity's sea of consciousness.

The world is in a process of "becoming," of being created and reformed during each moment in time. The post-Newtonian paradigm concentrates on understanding, ordering, and participating in the processes of nature rather than viewing static structures as objective facts, to be manipulated, exploited, or controlled. (Crowell 9)

Very few things truly reflect the essence of humanity. Artifacts such as money, or cars, or other such accouterments of civilization, can only mutely give us a partial image of what it is to be human. But works of literature that hinge the human experience and creative development to physicality create an aesthetic consciousness, the *omphalos*, or home, of humanity's wisdom and potential.

Literature reveals the fact that

consciousness is somehow connected to the

implicate order. In other words, 'objective' reality is an expression of implicate order. Consciousness, then, may be conceived of in terms of 'holomovement' which connects not only mind and brain but mind and matter as well. Just as the vast 'sea' of energy in space is present to our perception as a sense of emptiness or nothingness so the vast 'unconscious' background of explicit consciousness with all its implication is present in a similar way. (Bohm 210)

Literature is the consciousness (as well the unconsciousness) of all mankind. Works that connect the vast sea of energy to tangible matter have the ability to encapsulate and communicate our most secret thoughts – thoughts we often dare not consider publicly.

Physicality is combined with abstraction to create metaphorical anchors for students. Rather than avoid works that address what is most tangible in our lives (sex, food, defecation, birth, and death), educators must embrace their realness, albeit in the form of written narrative. Often, this is risky; these topics are discouraged in the classroom, most often by people with misplaced concern or fear. Yet it is because these works strike something within us (often causing discomfort) that we should use them. They give students the vicarious experience of the characters because the students share humanity with them. Despite the fact that they are only the ghostly ideas of human physical reality, the stories affect us "because we are all members of the same human family, at

bottom our secrets are the same. Literature shows us – makes us feel – this connection” (Davis 28).

According to Terry Davis in “Literature Tells Our Family Secrets,” the storytellers of our civilization: the writers, movie makers, poets, are the ones who take on the responsibility of attempting to answer the questions we have been asking since the genesis of humankind. The fundamental question we ask is, “What does it mean to be human?” (Davis 28)

Novels such as Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* attest to the immutability of humanity coupled with the finite nature of each person. In these cases, the reader is deeply moved by the subjects’ brief personal connection to life, because these stories strike at the very core of our agnostic fears about existence. How can this be used in the English classroom? Students need to be provided with literature that helps them “understand the complexity of being human and passing time on this earth” (Davis 31). Relevance is the key to using literature in the classroom, and there can be no greater concern for teens than searching for the answer to our reason for existence. Literature helps them realize this.

In order for students to gain a full love for literature, it must connect somehow to their lives. Their love evolves much like Molly Bloom’s. It becomes a course of nature, and they become the artists. Indeed, the students are all progeny of these works of literature if they are lucky enough to partake of it in

their adolescence. Rushdie and Joyce have the ability to speak to secondary students because of the visceral quality of their novels, and in turn, they give students a richer voice with which to narrate their own lives. These gems of literature “reveal our secrets. [They contain] the value of truth, the value of more information, the value out of which we can make ourselves better” (Davis 32).

In order to guide students through literature, introspection, analysis, and creation, educators must scaffold new, abstract ideas onto students’ previous knowledge and experience. “In the past three centuries great advances took place in the works of . . . novelists, who discovered in the process of creating fictional characters a means for examining inner space . . . ” (Freeman 11). In essence, metaphorical teaching is a mirror of the strange dance between physicality and intangibility in the works of Rushdie and Joyce. The fact that these novels so vividly build emotion and thought from a foundation of visceral experience is the very reason *Midnight’s Children*, *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses* are perfect handbooks to the human experience. As educators, we must understand it is our duty to offer such fare to those who seek to take part in the dance of humankind.

Integration includes the deliberate search for occasions in which ontological understanding informs and relates to technical knowing.

It includes activities that enrich a broad range of metaphorical sensibilities . . . . It means creating a culture and an education . . . where

mind, body, and spirit are not reified as separate qualities of being. (Crowell 14)

Vygotsky's notion of social reciprocity stresses a *dialogical* education where students and educators participate in the communication of shared experiences. Metaphorical learning using works of literature focused on metaphorical relationships is an ideal way to open the inner world to literature students in the secondary classroom.

Graham Low sets forth a no-nonsense framework for understanding the purpose of metaphorical thinking in the study of literature:

1. Metaphors make it possible to talk about highly abstract concepts such as aesthetic development, beauty, and creativity.
2. Metaphorical teaching disrobes underlying connections. It illuminates archetypal characteristics of primordialism, recurrence, and universality in literature.
3. Metaphorical teaching allows students and teachers to extend thought by providing new perspectives to a concept. It allows us to sense abstraction in multiple dimensions.
4. Metaphors allow students and educators to dramatize a concept, effectively experiencing a character's thought or feeling.
5. Metaphorical teaching allows students to prevaricate, to straddle the worlds of fact and truth, of concrete ephemerality and ethereal infinitude.

6. Metaphor can insulate subjects taboo or emotionally charged, like sex, death, or emptiness.
7. Metaphorical teaching can give students the skills to compress an argument.
8. Metaphorical thinking can give students insights into subjects that are not yet understood. (Pugh 78-9)

It is paradoxical that metaphor simultaneously reveals and insulates human experience, yet in paradox truth is often more profound at the meeting-place of point and counterpoint. Like the human brain, we human beings send out dendrite strands searching for an antithetical port. In the searching, learning becomes an ideal synthesis.

Metaphors allow us to manipulate the dichotomous nature of language. By signifying one object or notion, words automatically exclude all other objects or notions. With metaphorical teaching, furthermore, students can learn to extend meaning by testing the peripheries. It is in this way that students may think and write critically, dislodging commonplace understandings and unveiling new complexities of import.

Take the passage from *Midnight's Children* where Saleem Sinai reveals himself as

a swallower of lives; and to know [him], just the  
one of [him], you'll have to swallow the lot as well.

Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside  
[him] . . . [He] must commence the business of

remaking [his] life from the point at which it really began, some thirty-two years before anything as obvious, as present, as [his] clock-ridden, crime-stained birth. (*Midnight's* 4)

Saleem begins with a premise that the reader of his tale must swallow his life and all who have crossed his path on the street or in the netherworld haunt of the midnight's children. His thoughts are given form and life, and each develops its own sentience. Likewise, time is given character; past, present and future occur simultaneously on the face of a clock: Saleem's face. Students could experience the fervor of Saleem's tick-tocking, the rhythmical writing revealed by his breathless analogy. This extended metaphor is literally fleshed out by the experiences of Saleem. Students could explore the intricacies of the analogy by developing their own extended metaphors. As a result of this activity, students will uncover the discomfiting fact that metaphors, at some point, break down.

Possible student extended metaphors could include:

1. Writing as an itch. (An itch that must be scratched – perhaps arising from some disease or parasite, perhaps caused by an external irritation like the wind or sun or air . . .);
2. A thought as the minute hand of a clock (recursive, perennial, mechanical, artificial, a small part of a greater machination . . .);
3. Learning as a sexual act (Something that is primal, sweaty, productive, brutal, cyclical . . .).



Not only do students come to comprehend the functions of a literary device, they also learn to evaluate its usefulness.

Metaphors in *Ulysses* can also enable students to seek self-awareness. “Today the youth of our society are deluged with experiences” through expanding media influence and technology. “Images and ideas abound in a teenager’s day, many of which mix fantasy and reality in a startling way” (Pugh 45). Take a selection from *Ulysses* to illustrate this combination of fantasy and reality. As Bloom bathes, he lets his mind focus on his own physical presence, then allows his imagination to transform his mere physicality into magical potential. His pubis becomes the creative omphalos and he visualizes “floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands a languid floating flower” (*Ulysses* 70). It is the seed tucked into the petals of a flower, the radiating tendrils symbolizing all the generations to come: all the generations that began with Bloom’s germ. This eyebrow-raising passage shocks students to attention. If asked to ponder how Bloom sees himself, they will undoubtedly move beyond the clichéd characterizations students are apt to employ with less vivid literature. In turn, each student should be encouraged to question the essence of his or her own identity. Must they live the stereotype of a “skater,” a “headbanger,” a “geek,” or a “prep”? Or, can they begin to explore their own identities in terms of potential and truth, as in the case of Leopold Bloom?

The images we hold of ourselves become apparent  
through our self-metaphors. As we become aware  
of the connection between language and self-image,

we can begin to control the latter through manipulating the former. Students begin to understand the phenomenon first through observing the self-metaphors [used in literature] and then by examining their own self-metaphors. (Pugh 35)

An activity designed for self-discovery and self-identification through the study of literature could begin with a discussion of the passage above, then expand into the students' world. A teacher would begin by asking the students to respond to questions that relate their own self-perception to Bloom's identity.

Possible questions could include:

1. What animal best describes you? Why?
2. What color best describes you? Why?
3. What inanimate object best describes you? Why?
4. What plant best describes you? Why?
5. What food best describes you? Why?

Students may find, as they answer, how Bloom's self-identity shapes his experience, and his identity, at its core, is defined by language; he is a lion, he is a yellow retiring flower, and he is a rippling, translucent sea. The metaphors (often pedagogically termed *synectics*) allow students to slice through traditional perceptions and approach existence from a new perspective. In the words of Timothy N. Thompson, students learn to "wander the neutral zone" (Pugh 36, 97).

Metaphors are defined in terms of, and defined by, our natural experiences. Our brains function metaphorically down to their most chemical of impulses, and our creativity is driven by metaphorical scaffolding. It is with this in mind that both teachers and students can more clearly understand metaphors' ubiquity. That is, because our brain works in exactly the same fashion as the experience we describe through metaphor, it is logical (and natural) that we find the most meaning within a metaphorical relationship. Likewise, it is using the grounded thesis of metaphor that we can extend our imaginative tendrils – our creative dendrites – when existence demands understanding beyond the merely logical.

Emotional experiences . . . are as sound as logic, yet cannot be explained in the same way . . . . [With creativity] there is more license and a stronger reliance on intuition, knowing not accounted for by observable processes of cognition. The hunch, the flash of insight, and the cognitive leap are often ignored in schools, where conscious, rational, and problem-solving processes receive primary attention, sometimes at the cost of imaginative pursuits. Literature, however, reserves a valid place for imagination in language arts and English classrooms, and creative literature can be written as well as read by students.

(Pugh 94)

Consider a passage from *The Moor's Last Sigh*, for example. Rushdie weaves the real with the magical to create emotion. This magical realist tapestry runs counter to logic without defying it; instead, it integrates the rational into itself to express something, the surreal planes of the mind's experience, that objective commentary cannot. Moor's flight from India to Spain involves a dream-like conversation and sexual episode with a mysterious flight attendant. When Moor later desires to continue the conversation, he asks other flight attendants where the woman is, but they have no idea to whom he is referring. Moor is unsure if he is the butt of a practical joke or if he has had some mystical, meaningful, hallucinogenic experience (*Moor's* 376). The actual airplane flight is the physical foundation for Moor's emotional flight from a destructive past, yet there is a twist. The physical flight and the emotional flight, point and counterpoint, merge in the coitus between Moor and the ephemeral attendant: the sexual act of potential creation mirrors Moor's emotional need to create a new life from the ashes of the old.

In the classroom, then, we must "talk about metaphors that seem to have twists, that set people off in a new direction" (Pugh 95). By doing so, students can broach the question central to literature: How do people or characters extend their experiences through imagination? Why do we need to live those experiences by involving our minds in works such as those of Joyce and Rushdie? (Pugh 95).

Naturally, these are by nature philosophical questions, meant to spawn more questions, and in the process, reveal underlying truth. After all, as each

character's journey illuminates, it is the search itself that is the seat of the most primal and profound meaning. The creative search and the creative home are one because they meet and synthesize in the act of artistic creation. The ever-changing nature of creativity and of imaginative worlds is disrobed, and the creative impulse leaps from the page and into the actual experience of our youths. With practice, students will have the increasing ability to form their own world and identity through insightful use of language. "Metaphorical thinking, because it is original, leads students toward increasing control of their own expression, fostering the self-confidence that insists on self-determination" (Pugh 97).

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## VITA

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