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LIBERATING THE ZEITGEIST: Using Metaphor & Emotion To Unlock the Transcendancy of The Short Story

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Case Study: Liberating the Zeitgeist

LIBERATING THE ZEITGEIST

*Using Metaphor and Emotion
To Unlock the Transcendent Nature of The Short Story*

A Case Study

Vincent Hugh Bish, Jr.

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Short Story Masterpieces
English 322-01

Spring Semester
Professor: *Jocelyn Cullity*

May 2, 2011

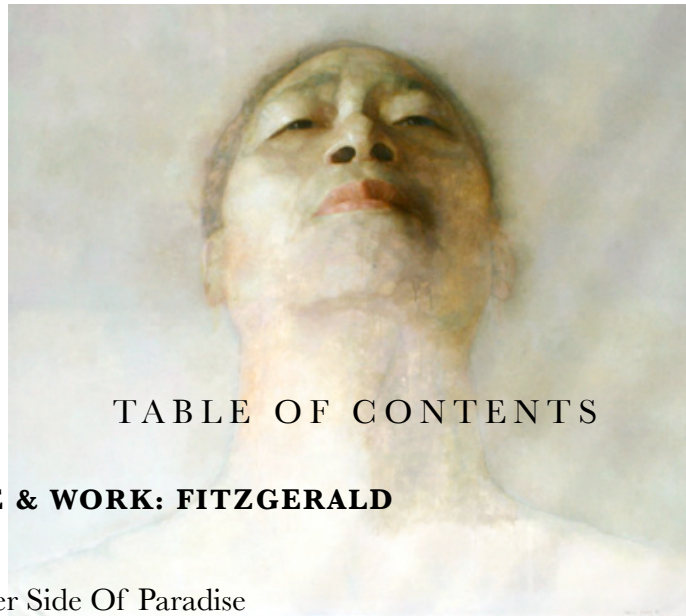


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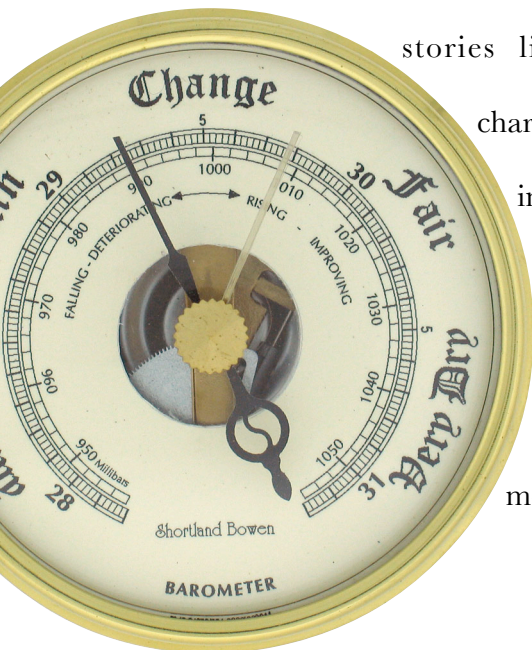
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INTRODUCTION

Barometers have often been likened to short stories—measuring momentary shifts in atmospheric pressure. Short Stories, like barometers are sensitive instruments, recording impressions about the stresses our world is under. What separates Short Stories though from their meteorological counterparts is that, what they measure is infinitely more elusive than the pressure air places on the Earth. What they measure are the prevailing spirits of a times—the Zeitgeist. These four authors, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Joyce, and Crane, have, in their respective texts, created stories that not only measure this spirit but capture it. From a writer's perspective, these authors imbedded the zeitgeist of their eras into the very alloy of their stories like coppersmiths—pounding every character, every description and mundane object into a vessel of meaning. However dissimilar in subject matter, “*Babylon Revisited*”, “*A Clean Well-Lighted Place*”, “*Araby*”, and “*The Open Boat*” are similar in that they have been fashions to speak to more than their immediate subject matter. It is because of



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this intentioned placement of meaning, symbolism and allegory that these stories are able to transcend their subject matter—because each functioning part of the story has been strategically tied to something greater than itself. Whether it be the object imbedded with pathos as in Crane’s “*The Open Boat*” or the character of “*Babylon Revisited*” made in to proxies for real life people in Fitzgerald’s work, or it be the use of patriotic tropes of Irish Womanhood in Joyce’s “*Araby*”—everything in these stories call on the very spirits that drive us as human beings. These spirits and the unlocking of them are what makes these stories resonate, not only within the times they were written, but in the rich fabric of literary history of which they are a part. These short stories find their roots in either a societal truth, a personal truth, or a metaphor and this case study seeks to explore how author’s employ the spirit of the time—the zeitgeist—as well as their own histories to give their stories greater import. More simply put, these writers have honed their ability to use what the know we already have lingering around in our head to what we all ready have in our heads to break their dependance on being culturally situated to speak the millions unborn who have yet to read their pages.

-Vincent Hugh Bish, Jr.

On The Other Side of Paradise

*How Babylon Revisited is
Emblematic of the Life & Times of
F. Scott Fitzgerald*

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EMBODYING THE SHIFT

There has been a shift in the atmosphere.

The thirties were a decade where we, as a nation, were paying for our past excesses and stories like “*Babylon Revisited*” were able to capitalize on that feeling. Fitzgerald had the reader revisit, with Charlie, those places in his past to which we couldn’t return—reminding us, at the time, of those similar places in our own. Fitzgerald’s 1931 “*Babylon Revisited*” is a bulkhead smack in the middle of his works, bifurcating it into two completely different tenors. No longer would they be satisfied with the glitz and glamor that oozed out of 1925’s infamous, “*The Great Gatsby*”. America needed literature that reflected the sadness of the days that lie ahead as well as the great ones that lingered still in the rearview. “*Babylon Revisited*” was able to speak the spirit of that growing sadness. The burgeoning success of both Hemingway’s economic prose style and Steinbeck’s pared down subject matter was a call for change and Fitzgerald’s work went into a metamorphosis. The question remains though, where did “*Babylon Revisited*” come out of? Was it the times alone? Or could it be drawn from his own life? The purpose of this paper in the case study is to explore how, more than being emblematic of the thirties, “*Babylon Revisited*” is representative of Fitzgerald’s thirties. By using the aforementioned fictional short story and graphing it onto a series of autobiographical texts (F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “*Crack-Up*”, and Nancy Milford’s biography of Fitzgerald’s wife “*Zelda: A Biography*”) we can map the points of intersection between the two. Fitzgerald’s works, as well as the times in which they were written are ruled by the same Zeitgeist of despair and desperation, and are thematically hastened to a similar throne.

FICTION’S CATHARTIC FACADE

Fitzgerald Life Through His Works

Fitzgerald says that by the middle of the 1930's "*I saw that the novel [as]the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another*" (Fitzgerald, "*The Crack Up*"). And by 1935, Fitzgerald had a veritable thicket of issues to cut through: his talent had finally been subordinated by his battle with alcoholism, it was the year the love of his life entered a sanitarium never to return, and aggravated by these issues he slipped further and further into debt. In reality it would have been enough to elicit a great deal of '*thought and emotion*' in anyone. Though this period in his life was marked by struggle he wasn't facing them alone—there was a whole nation, having woken up from the twenties battered and now embittered, who could empathize. In his time of need, for money, and more important as means of expression he turned to Fiction for catharsis. "*The Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them*", ("*The Crack Up*", Fitzgerald, 1) says Fitzgerald, introducing the symbiotic relationship between broken spirit of a nation and the broken spirit of his own artistry. In 1936 he wrote these ideas down in candid fashion with the permission of Esquire Magazine in serialized autobiographical account. In "*The Crack Up*", Fitzgerald tells us how his life, like the spirit of the nation, had found themselves in a downward spiral. He pens himself and his like as casualties of an era that thought themselves above mortality. Dashed by the stock market crash of 1929 the landscape changed and those who were not quick to adapt almost perished. Though it is hard to imagine this kind of pervasive depression in today's resilient and highly insulated society, author/researcher Malcolm Gladwell puts this era into perspective for us but letting us know that at levels of society the feeling of depression could be felt.

"In response to the economic hardship of the Depression, families simply stopped having children ,and as a result," he writes, "the generation born during that decade was markedly smaller than both the generation that preceded it and the generation that immediately followed it." (Gladwell, 117).

In “*Babylon Revisited*” we hear oblique references to Marion and Lincoln’s financial difficulty in raising Honoria in those times, when Marion says to Charlie, “*While you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs.*” (Fitzgerald, “Babylon Revisited”, 256) The issues presented in “*Babylon Revisited*” were real, and ones that spoke to the general ache felt round the world at that time. There is a difference between fiction and fantasy, and Fitzgerald is able to create a world of fiction that speaks to the realities of everyday life—the custody battles, the arguing about finances, the want for things always slightly beyond your grasp. By 1930’s , Fitzgerald has strategically modified his style to let us know that his is both an author of escapism as well as one who, when the time is right, pull back the curtain to let us know that he too still is on this side of paradise.

Fitzgerald struggled his whole life to muscle himself into the leisure class. While he attended Princeton he felt himself ever the outsider, struggling to share their share of paradise. His first book (of a similar title) was as much aspirational as it was a confessional. Fitzgerald’s protagonist, Armory Blaine, in his 1920’s “This Side of Paradise” was a thinly veiled portrait of his trying undergraduate years. Armory, like Fitzgerald, attended his alma mater, was involved in the same literary societies that he was, but, unlike Fitzgerald—had more success in both than our author could could take credit for. Having his foot in both words, what Fitzgerald was able to do well was to know what type luxuries society could promise those fortunate enough to be of a certain class, and though he wasn’t himself born into it, he knew enough about them to pen them well and begin to speak for a whole generation—for both classes—those looking to escape into a world of luxury and for those already well with in its seat. It is only when then tide begun to quickly turn in 1931—the year in which “*Babylon Revisited*” was written did we see the american people turn on their ‘poet laureate’ of those years of economic prosperity. “*Babylon Revisited*” came after many calls for a change in style and subject matter, but the truth, it really wasn’t as much of a change as it was lifting of a layer of a facade off of his characters—fashioning them less and less out of the ether of his dreams, and more and more from the red clay of real life. This tension is seen in columnist O.O. McIntyre 1930 memorandum on the author, saying that,

“F. Scott Fitzgerald, is reputedly one of the most difficult authors from whom editors may wrangle a story these days. He is the literary symbol of an era—the era of the new generation—and editors continue to want stories of flask gin and courteous collegiate preceding ladies though windshields on midnight joy rides. The public has acquired the Fitzgerald taste, too. But Fitzgerald has taken an elderly and serious turn. Mellowed is the term. He wants to write mellowly, too. And if they won't let him he won't write at all.” (Curnutt, 25). At this point, everything was at a crossroads. 1930 was positioned right after the stock market crash, and yet, before the literary market had turned completely to realism. A few years previous, Hemingway had started his assault on the literary world with this second novel, *“The Sun Also Rises”*, subversive in subject matter, it pigeonholed the leisure world—of which Fitzgerald had become the spokesman—as a *lost* generation. Out of this time of transition for the country, came a work from Fitzgerald the like of which we had never seen from him. Out of this grey area came, 1931's *“Babylon Revisited”* a curious little story story, with a religious title, in which his characters seemed more allegorical rather than based in reality.

THE WHORE OF BABYLON

The Love of His Life's Religious Preoccupation's

Though critics agree that the title *“Babylon Revisited”* is a biblical allusion, the word *“Babylon”* makes no textual appearance within the text. Yet this is first unearth the purpose of any metaphor in a text one logically first must look to the places in which it appears. Stripped of the luxury of looking within the text for the title's allegorical significance (and I posit purposefully) we are left to try to find similar the *themes* in the text, with the *themes* in the biblical passages about Babylon. It is in this way, by identifying the moments of correspondence between *“Babylon Revisited”* and the reference material in the Bible's Book of Revelations, that we can better pin-down why he chose the cite of Babylon for the title in his story.

Before we delve in to *how* the choice of title works in “*Babylon Revisited*”, it’s important that I assert that Fitzgerald’s choice of Babylon wasn’t arbitrary— If painting Paris as den of iniquity in Biblical terms was his sole purpose, Babylon actually would not be automatically at the top of the list. ‘*Sodom Revisited*’ or ‘*Gomorrah Unearthed*’ would equally served as apropos choices. But, what makes Babylon a more specific choice is because of the specific kind of moral depravity it speaks to—one born from a glamorous beginnings and ending in an indelible burden. Now, the moments of intersection between the too are free to be drawn—now acquitted of the suspicion that they are forced, or follow from a faulty premise.

The passage that deals with Babylon in the Bible is one of it’s most figurative. Theologians agree that although Babylon is spoken of as a *woman* or prostitute, it, in reality, speaks about a debauched city. “*The whore of babylon*” is “*dressed in purple, scarlet, ...glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls.*” (NIV, Rev. 17.4) In the shadow of the fading gleam of the pearl-wearing, rhinestone studded roaring-twenties, it would make sense that Fitzgerald could be using the metaphor of Babylon as the embodiment of an era gone by. Oddly, in this same passage, Babylon is described having a tattoo on her forehead—one that tells of her odious past, one that greets her visitors almost before she does—this face tattoo is referred to as the “*mark of the beast*”. Fitzgerald chose this metaphor because Charlie too is marked, tattooed if you will, by his past—his alcoholism. No matter how sweet Charlie is with his daughter Honoria, or no matter if Duncan Shaffer sees him as “*the perfect father*”, he cannot escape the episodes of his past branded on his chest by Honoria’s aunt Marion. Furthermore, in the source material for the metaphor the reason for the tattoo “*now is **not**, but will come up out of the Abyss [to incite its] destruction.*” (emphasis added, Rev. 17.4). Charlie lets us know that he too hasn’t, “had more than a drink a day for over a year” (“*Babylon Revisited*”, 256) yet, it has come up out of the abyss of his past to incite destruction in his life, to prevent him from getting custody back of his little girl.

Alright, so we know what parallels Fitzgerald was trying to draw but why was he trying to why do it with *religious* imagery—especially when most of the allusions in your work had been exclusively secular before? Maybe, aided by the addition of relevant facts, we may shed some light on Fitzgerald's decision making process as an author. Though F. Scott Fitzgerald was a Roman-Catholic prior to the 1930's his work had avoided any real substantive contact with the religious world. What we expect is the slick, opulent, hedonism typified by the themes embodied in titles like *The Beautiful and the Damned*, so when he switches gears on us from the territory of the hedonistic to the land of the holy we pause. Through this lens, 'the whore of Babylon' image seems a thornily odd one—all together incongruent with the themes that have defined his career previous....that is, before we look at the effect his wife Zelda may have had on his life.

Zelda Fitzgerald *was* religious. Though Mr. Fitzgerald was only culturally Catholic, Zelda, as relates to her friend Sarah Mayfield in a letter feels that, "[God is] my only strength...I have to pray to live" (Cline, 352). This revelation is surprising—that one half of the golden couple of the 'gin-filled-twenties' was in reality a devout Christian. Nancy Milford, in her 2003 biography about Zelda, underscores and advances this assertion by saying that, she sometimes "*believed that she was direct communication with God*" (Milford, 372) going on to say that over the course of her life she became "*intensely religious*" (372). Fitzgerald loved Zelda—from asking that his publishers rush the release of his first book to court Zelda with his success, to writing to her frequently even when she was infirmed later in their relationship, so, its hard to believe that Zelda as well as her religious side, didn't have an effect on him and ultimately his work. "*Don't underestimate the influence of Zelda Sayre on Fitzgerald's work,*" another author warns, "*[Zelda] was the basis of the characters Judy Jones in 'Winter Dreams' and Daisy Fay in 'The Great Gatsby'. Later, Zelda's mental illness would also influence his novel Tender Is the Night.*" (<http://www.enotes.com/authors/f-scott-fitzgerald>). Knowing Fitzgerald used Zelda as a template for many of his female characters strengthen the argument that the faint traces of religious symbolism in his works, and more specifically "Babylon Revisited", is the of result of such a highly religious figures so dear to his heart. Although "*Fitzgerald was not a religious man*", Jim

Maher adds, in his interestingly titled essay, *Camelot Meets Babylon*, he none the less, “*treats [religion in his work] with a mournful, almost guilty sensitivity.*” (Maher, 1). F. Scott Fitzgerald’s choice of religious imagery, then, is a possible nod to his wife—the foremost religious presence in his life.

CONCLUSION

“*Babylon Revisited*” is as much of a barometer of the pressures of the 1920’s as it is of the pressures going on in the author’s on life. Though there are pressures common to both—alcoholism, and economic hardship, to name a few—Babylon is a far more sensitive apparatus. It captures for us the perceptible effect Zelda’s religion, his own absent daughter, and failed aspirations had on his psyche. With all the luck of a self-assured child Fitzgerald was able to capture the zeitgeist his own spirit and the zeitgeist of his own time in the same jar. Fitzgerald encapsulates the idea best of what took place during the pages of *Babylon Revisited* when he says, “*My [despair] I could not share it even with the person dearest to me but had to walk it away in quiet streets and lanes with only fragments of it to distill into little lines in books—and I think that my happiness, or talent for self-delusion or what you will, was an exception. It was not the natural thing but the unnatural—unnatural as the Boom; and my recent experience parallels the wave of despair that swept the nation when the Boom was over.*” (Fitzgerald, “*The Crack Up*”, 3). And he used the short story to do just that.

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‘*Clean*’...Okay but ‘*Well-Lighted*’?

Effect The Depression & Twentieth Century Medical Advancement Had on Light Imagery

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Short Story Masterpieces
English 322-01

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May 2, 2011

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Symbolic Use of Light from Antiquity to the Modern Era

From the days of antiquity, ‘light’ has existed in our collective literary consciousness as a symbol of great import. The image of ‘Light’, over the centuries, has found itself at the very center of the tomes that define us as a culture: from Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, (where it provided the metaphorical framework for man’s emergence from ignorance) to the Book of Acts, (where it created a visual juxtaposition to sin) and even the great Bard himself used light to dramatize the waning of Desdemona’s purity in *Othello*. Yet, it is in this image’s current incarnation—Hemingway’s 1933 short story, “*A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*”—that we see the use of light moving away from being purely symbolic and more being rooted in reality. Whereas in antiquity, light could only claim *metaphorical* powers, at the opening of the twentieth century, it had come to hold the very real power to clean, to disinfect, and to make new.

Although published in Scribner’s Magazine in 1933, Hemingway’s scientific usage of light imagery begins over three decades previous when Niels Finsen in 1903, changed the word by being the first to use electric *light* to inhibit the growth of bacteria. UGR or “Ultraviolet Germicidal Radiation” was a mind-blowing breakthrough because it in effect ended Tuberculosis’s grip on the civilized world. For centuries, Tuberculosis had been ever-present—it could be found from the ghettos of Warsaw, to the immune systems of some of the wealthy families in the US, to even being recorded as having been found in the mummified spines of Pharos (A. Broca, et al., 1380) and with one simple discover, this reality was no more. Light, and its power came to mean something new all over the world. As the technology reached maturity,

medical advancement made sure UGR vied for a greater and greater share in everyday societal life (finding its way, by the early thirties into operating rooms, science labs, etc.) and as a result its slowly begun to find a foothold in the western psyche as well.

As seen in Figure 1, though we didn't yet fully understand the science of it well, what we did know thoroughly was that desperate need for something to set us right again. The picture begs the question, what would drive nine grown men to sit around a light, unless they were in dire need. Whether it be in need of a cure or in



Fig. 1 Men with Tuberculosis sitting around UV light trying to get better. Source: Eisenstaedt, Alfred

need of hope, when sick men cling to light as there *only* hope times must be dark indeed. Somehow light meant more to us now than it ever had before, and somehow, Hemingway knew that too. *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* was barometer keying us into the fact that those who might have been hurting before things got bad, were certainly were hurting and in need now. Laying under that talismanic light, in Fig 1., I wonder if those men weren't as glad for the promise of companionship, and shared suffering as they were for the possibility of healing. Placing our analysis firmly within the context of a nation in need of hope, of companionship, and of the possibilities technology could bring to save them from the current societal ills that plagued them, we begin our textual analysis of the title of Hemingway's short story.

WHY 'WELL-LIGHTED' THOUGH?

Sure, nobody wants a *dirty* place to drink, so we can easily understand why the story is entitled a “A *Clean, Well-Lighted Place*” but the second half still seems problematic. Why is drinking in the light, especially to a blind man, better than than drinking in the dark? Or, when it Hemingway has one waiter go home and the other waiter stay and makes it a point to say, “*Turning of the **electric** light he continued the conversation with himself.*” (Hemingway, 374) what is the importance of electric light? “Turn off the light” is a simple phrase we might say many times in a day, so even when we hear a slight modification to that prepackaged set of words it trips over our ears. We, as the readers are looking for meaning. Hemingway, a man known for his economy with language, and blunt speech does not mince words—and it is for this reason I posit that in these moments that authorial choice he is making is to key us into the fact that electric light, even in the face of a blind man drinking is of the utmost importance.

Could it be the act of sterilization that light provides that it what returns the blind man’s drinking in to *acceptable* territory? When the older waiter implies that it is good that a man like this drink in a well-lit place, by electric light, we now see it as having something to do with the fact that light can keep it *pure*. Where there is light there are usually people, and it is as such that darkness itself is a metonym for aloneness. Drinking in the dark, then, as opposed to drinking in the light, even to a blind man, would be considered a *cleaner* endeavor because there might just be someone else there to stop you—to prevent the depression that brought one to the bottle from metastasizing and consuming you. When one waiter says to the other that “Last week [the blind man] tried to commit suicide” (Hemingway, 372) it lends credibility to the assertion that the blind

man's drinking is not as benign as an occasional drink can be, it is undertaken with the intent to harm. By drinking in the open, by allowing his private-sorrows to be curbed by his staying in public space, our depressed protagonist is kept safe. Likewise, the older waiter (who has expressed empathy for the old man) was kept safe by the light but now, in "*turning of the **electric** light he continued the conversation with himself.*", the lingering 'bacteria' that is kept at bay by the light, is allowed to fester; he begins the shallow descent into madness. Over taken by the growth of that loneliness, he too becomes a septic pool for dejection— "*thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada...*" (Hemingway, 374) as the barman calls him "*Otro loco más...*", in English, another lunatic (Hemingway, 375). So, it seems light fights disease here too, it's just in "*A Clean, Well Lighted Place*", it is mental disease, depression, and loneliness.

HEMINGWAY AND THE ZEITGEIST OF THE 1930's

By the 1930's the stock market had crashed and the excess of the 1920's were a fond memory. Nations all around the world were reeling and it was reflected in our literature. *Gatsby* was out and *Lennie* was in. Authors like Steinbeck turned fiction to face reality when the depression set in, trading the decadent salons, and idyllic pastorals for the pared down realism that gripped men and women on daily basis. Writing itself began to value different a different style and a young terse writer of prose just happen to be coming of age as we tossed aside flourish, and let the economic frugality of our pockets be reflected in the pages of the books we prized as well. "*A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*" came along at the right moment because also in the 1920's the norms of fiction were being challenged by a different type of way as well. The late 1920's saw a huge rise in the circulation of a type of precursor to science fiction. "Pulp fiction"— (Gunn, 87) (referring to the kind of paper on which they were printed) as it was called was the

result of the moderate success of writers like Robert Heinlein, Issac Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke whose stories featured science's rapidly changing face as central to the story had an effect, albeit small, on the literary community. It would make sense though that, removed from America at the time, as he was in Africa at the time he published "*A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*" (Desnoyers, 9) that his depression era themes would, if anything, be more thematic, transcendent interpretation of the prevailing western mood rather than rooted in the specificity of it. I think it is to this story's strength and not its weakness that the setting is secondary to its mood. It's how Hemingway is able to ride the zeitgeist of the thirties without having his feet touch the the ground, in literally *grounding* it in a setting, you run the risk, as Steinbeck, often did, of the work becoming as much about the place—the south or the expanding west—as it is about the struggles of the depression itself. Despair, enough to want to kill oneself, is how Hemingway opens the short story—he positions it in a vacuum of abstract isolation, without context so that we, again can see the feelings alone opening on the page without being a distracted by anything else.

CONCLUSION

Both 'Clean' and 'Well-Lighted' are placed in the title—and they are not arbitrary in there place there. Both those adjectives have a causal link and often follow hand in hand no matter what the reason. But the image he gives us about light being able to clean is so appropriate for the moment in which he wrote it—he wrote it at a time where sick men clung to metal lamps and hoped for miracles. Sometimes, the right metaphor given to the right person, at the right time, can be like food to the famished. As a nation, were were famished for a new conceptualization of our failing, flat paradigms and Hemingway in 1933, brought us just that.

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Elements of Craft: Joyce

The Irish Feminine

Patriotic Imagery & The Spirit of Mythology in “The Dubliners”

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February 16, 2011

“The collective unconscious—appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious.”

-CARL JUNG

(Sugg ,201)

INTRODUCTION

Myths are the real exponents of a nation—they are the very things that seem to amplify a nation’s size on the landscape of our minds. They are what transform a country from a plot of land into something worth protecting, something worth fighting for, something, maybe, worth dying for. Myths can take the rudimentary truth that we are a nation of immigrants and double it on itself—sending it out into the world until this core belief comes back inscribed it at the sea-washed sunset gates of our nation, at the feet of a 151 foot statue in New York Harbor, as “*Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.*” (Emma Lazarus, “New Colossus”). A gift to us by the French, commemorating our symbolic place in their own revolution—that myth became so powerful it rallied the spirits of another nation far older than our own. Myths, their accumulation and subsequent internalization, is an integral part of how nations gain legitimacy. The assimilation of these myths by those at home and in the international community is part of how a country can quickly form an identity. Carl Jung, the father of analytical psychology, asserts in the opening quote that, “myths are a projection of a nation”. If we take this as true, then maybe a struggling nation, one who, like us,

at a time was in need of a strong identity to rally around and to provide counter point to other stronger nations who threaten, can create their own. Maybe they can flip the paradigm and instead of “mythology being a projection of a collective contagiousness [that a nation is powerful]”, using mythology to create a powerful nation. It isn’t a new idea that myths (made up of archetypes as Jung holds) can serve such a purpose. In the 1910’s to rally the disparate sections of Germany into a centralized nation after the Napoleonic Wars, Wagner concerto’s—seething with countless well-known german folk themes—were played in the streets of Berlin as a way of planting the seeds of a pan-german sentiment (Kellerman, 15). Viewed through this perspective artists actually have an important roll to play in this form of myth-informed nation building. It is in the hands of artists—the storytellers, if you will—those ones of us entrusted to consolidate those ideas lingering in the air about who we are as a people, into song, plays, and literary works.

This essay in the case study will focus on the descriptive technique employed in creating ‘mythology’. The characters Mangan’s Sister and Gretta (from “Araby” and “The Dead” respectively, both from his book “*The Dubliners*”) are laden with mythological motifs. Through employing almost seraphic description of these characters as Irish woman in his works, I believe Joyce seeks to give the Irish people a nostalgic mythology about the purity of their Nation—to which they will eventually cling in redefining themselves against the British paradigm.

EVOKING TROPES THROUGH DESCRIPTION & DICTION

“Joyce’s work can be associated with a feminine tropology...Decorated with ribbons of rhetoric, the silken tassels of “two lips speaking together” the semiotic¹... is elaborated

¹ semiotics |sēmē’ātikṣ; semē-; semṭi-|

plural noun [treated as sing.]

the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation.

across these works. [They] take[...] ancient attributes of women in Western thought—such as her capriciousness, her fluidity, her maternal physicality or “earthiness”—and associates them with...symbol of the Irish.’

(Sheffield, *“Joyce’s Abandoned Female Costumes, Gratefully Received”*, Chapter 1).

In *The Dubliners* there is a similar moment across most of the short stories in the collection where time slows and Joyce describes women, placed on staircases, or positioned somewhere where the focalized narrator has to strain to see, as visions of light, virtue, and ultimately ‘Irishness’. Though the other women that can be discussed that would be too broad for the scope of this paper so I will use only the two included in Gioia’s short story text. Copied below, we will explore how the descriptions of Mangan’s Sister and Gretta, heavy with the tropes and stereotypes of womanhood help Joyce attain a mythic and almost aspirational status to these women.

Mangan’s Sister

“She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door...I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.”

(Joyce, “Araby”, 431)

Gretta

“There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of...Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness.”

(Joyce, “The Dead”, 456)

GRETta CONROY

With a tad more authorial direction in Gretta’s description in “The Dead”, Joyce indirectly lets us know what he’s trying to accomplish in the text. Gretta stands, “*as if she were a symbol of something*” (456). He positions us, through Gabriel’s eyes trying to listen to what his wife is

so intently watching at the top of the stair case—straining to hear that, “*distant music*” (456) and instead all we get are the blue notes of her felt hat, and bronze hair against the darkness. The distance of the music is placed in the text as a metaphor—we expect a description of the music after it is mentioned but instead we continue with the image of Gretta at the door, and our mind begins to create the subconscious association with Gretta and the music. We later come to find that the song is a “*plaintive*” (456) and, “...*in the old Irish tonality [made far by] distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminat[ing] the cadence of the air with words expressing grief...*” (456). Plaintive, grief, distance, all these words describe a vague nostalgia, for something almost beyond our reach. And so both the protagonist and the reader reach, aspiring grasp something possibly more real than the present. It is a nostalgia in its etymologic sense: from the Greek ***nostos*** + ***algos*** ‘return home’ + ‘pain.’ (Abate, et al, “*The New Oxford American Dictionary*”). It is here, in this moment, that we discover the heart of Joyce’s mythic composition. In unlocking the spirit of nostalgia in his description, by seeding in it words that we have already come to associate with longing. We long for what this woman longs for, what long for what she embodies, we long for her Irishness. Later on in the story Gretta comes to represent the provincial unblemished Irish woman—and in that characterization as well Joyce places an exponent on an exponent².

The description the character Gretta and Joyce’s use of hair to connote information about his mythic woman is also important to note in the discussion about Joyce’s diction. One may overlook hair as a detail, or dismiss it as a lyrical inclusion rather in her description rather than an authorial choice but I urge us to look again. For however innocuous a detail like hair color and/or texture is—in terms of information it is rich. In the preface to Galia Ofeck’s book, “*Representation of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*”, the Oxford University scholar reminds us

² “mythological motifs or primordial images... of all nations are [their] real exponents.” -Carl Jung

just how, “...theorized [and]fetishized in Victorian culture [hair was].” She lets us know how hair was, “domesticated by male novelists [yet] fashioned by women” (Ofeck, 1). And thus we are to regard it with a keen eye as a site of great import. Gretta’s hair could have been black and curly, or red and wavy, and with each choice would have come a different set of archetypes (as well as inferences about nationalities, ethnic background, character, etc.) and in the absence of light, in a stairwell where we barely see, from the bottom of the stairs it is a stretch to think that Gabriel, or the reader through the focalization of Gabriel, would have been able to see the color of her—but in spite of these difficulties with the text he chooses to place Gretta in our minds as a bronze blond. Blond has long been held in western literature, from Victorian bucolic paintings to John Everett Millais’s *Opellia*, to be the color of the pure maiden of the rural pastoral world. Joyce in playing ever so subtly on these faint archetypes creates a resonant mythic image that from all angles calls to us.

MANGAN’S SISTER

In the vignette of Mangan’s Sister we have the implication of feminine motion as the unnamed narrator describes how, “*dress swung as she moved her body...the soft rope of her hair toss[ing]from side to side*” (Joyce, “Araby”, 431). In this action we see Joyce’s character performing her gender for the reader—the motion has no function in the action other than to be descriptive. It sets a gentle atmosphere of a soft feminine presence.

The proximity of the words “*figure*” (431) and “*half-opened*” (431)—though in reference to the door—creates an interesting resonance in our mind. Logically our mind knows that the adjective applies to the noun that follows it but, in having two pieces of a complementary thought together our mind silently joins them. Subconsciously Mangan’s Sister’s *figure* is *half-opened* to us. h

Readings of *Araby* as an adolescent boy's coming of age story could support that nuanced reading. We should remember that words do not exist in a vacuum, they share space and consonance with the words that surround them—as one pushes another pulls, creates space, and life in which a reader may sit for hours.

NATION BUILDING THROUGH ARCHETYPES

Distinguished Joyce essayist Dr. Tracey T. Schwarze of Christopher Newport University asserts that, “*Joyce in an attempt to throw off the mantle of British imperialism, devises a [kind of] nationalism*” (Schwarze, 243). In the previous section we explored *how* Joyce, using the Jungian template of creating myths through archetypes creates myth women in the readers mind. In this section we will briefly discuss why he did so.

In the *Dubliners* Joyce co-opts us into believing in these almost deified women, but in accepting that we believe in these characters, we tacitly acknowledge that we believe in the *place* in which these characters exist. Enter: Ireland. These descriptions hang on the gentle presupposition that only in a nation such as Ireland, or more specifically in a place like Dublin, could women like this exist. In these fifteen stories women and descriptions like this happen frequently and so, Ireland, by association, becomes a place where purity is ever-present—where, in the case of our two aspirational feminine figures—the ‘good’ girls go to convent school. (Mangan’s Sister not being able to go to the bazar because “*there would be a retreat that week in her convent.*” (“*Araby*”, 432) Gabriel’s wife about to go “*up to the convent*”³ (“*The Dead*”, 462) before her last summer in Galway)—“*Irishness*”, as Schwarze writes, “*is often equated with Catholicism and Catholicism with chastity; therefore Irish women, like good Catholics, are chaste.*” (248) Joyce creates

³ “convent” was a metonym in the early 1900’s for *convent school* or what we might liken now to a parochial school

characters, in this contextual reading, that are so pure as to have their virtue seem almost beyond reproach.

If myths are the exponents of a nation—the shadows that cast by nations to amplify their innate characteristics, then Ireland, by Joyce's fashioning, is one of purity, simplicity and faith. A place that harkens back to an older time, a time, although the audience has never experience, hopefully can try to remember.

The mythologized feminine in Joyce's works is a calling home—a lodestone on which Ireland and the tropes about her can gain strength. Joyce employs the use of highly metaphorical language, laced with tropes, and ornately decorated in the creation of these woman who function more like devices of patriotism more than characters. Loaded to the hilt perforative feminine imagery Joyce tries to capture the the spirit of nostalgia, and create in our hearts, Irish or not, a romantic patriotism for his former land. By doing so he makes a strong contribution to the creation of a national literature and identity of land in search of one to juxtapose against its newly divorced sister island. He fashioned all that has come to Irish once again into something worth protecting, something worth fighting for, and something, maybe, worth dying for.

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Critical Approach: Crane

Emotion in Waves

*An Exploration of
Pathetic Fallacy
& Memorable Settings*

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Short Story Masterpieces
English 322-01

Spring Semester
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May 2, 2011

PATHOS IN SETTING

Crane's Use of the Pathetic Fallacy and Personification

Can a wave have emotion?

Writers ascribe emotion to *characters*—the anxiety-ridden captain, or the despondent castaway—but in *The Open Boat*, the *setting* of the Atlantic is just as important as the characters. As an audience it isn't often we see a wave or the sky being given the power to emote. We have been conditioned by Western Literature only to expect context from, but in Stephen Crane's 1897 short story about a shipwrecked crew, the crew takes a back seat to the world around them. Because they are vested with the emotional faculties like those of characters the waves, the sky, or or a melancholy gust of wind snatch us up just as easily in their emotional world; it is because he lends them much in the way of humanity, that the waves can stir in us the kind of attention only reserved of humans. Crane can avoid the melodrama usually reserved for tails of forlorn castaways in this way. He doesn't excise it from the narrative but places them around the characters instead of using it to drive them. This paper will explore how Crane placed pathos within his settings and what effect it has on the reader when he employs this unique technique.

In *The Open Boat*, Crane's primary tool in heightening the emotional state of his characters is by making the his scenes mirror the character's feelings—much in the way a stage director might light the background of a scene in a specific color to heighten and mirror the emotional content of what's going on on stage (i.e. a red scene for one marked by anger, or one in blue tones for one marked by hopelessness). Crane uses a form of personification (the pathetic fallacy) to create a highly atmospheric setting in which the setting itself become a powerful character in the story. The pathetic fallacy is a term coined by famed literary critic of the

nineteenth century, John Ruskin, to describe a type of personification in which *-pathos* (a pity, or sadness) or any other emotional tag is ascribed to an inanimate object in a way that is purely figurative. It's easy to conflate the pathetic fallacy with its more general predecessor personification but they are different and the difference is best illustrated through possibly literature's most widely looked to example of the pathetic fallacy—the red leaf passage' from Coleridge's Cristobal. There is a difference between the Coleridge's, '*the red leaf danced*' (Wain, 87.) and '*the red leaf nimbly fell to the floor*'. Whereas a leaf literally cannot dance, a leaf *can* fall nimbly. Though 'nimbly' usually is ascribed to a human doing something with skill, it only means: "*to be quick and light in movement; agile*" (*Concise Oxford American Dictionary*, 680.)—an inanimate object *can* fall in such a fashion. In seeing this difference, oftentimes one realizes that *most* of what we know to be personification is, in truth, pathetic fallacy and it is here we see ingenuity of Crane's in the short story *The Open Boat*. Crane, in his knowing of this distinction, could have, sought to rid it from his prose but instead he *heightens* it, to great dramatic import. Though literary critic Ruskin introduced the term to disparage the works in which it was found, for the duration it serves as a more of an objective distinction between what is accomplished respectively by personification and pathetic fallacy.

Using the device of pathetic fallacy to create emotional intimacy, we are given a story in which settings themselves can become characters. The experience Crane creates for us is an emotional world, in which wave, wind, boat, and Captain collectively share and transfer the emotional resonance of scenes. Crane structures his narrative in a highly intentioned way, drawing attention to these shared moments where crew and sea dialogue yet never speak.

SEVEN MOMENTS OF PERSONIFICATION:

Critical Approach: Crane

Crane has split a narrative that would easily be able to stand on its own into seven separate sections. Why?

Looking at each of the seven sections as individual segments, we see that each section of the story exists onto itself as a self-contained dramatic unit: including a beginning, middle and end—and, more importantly, each are marked by a single dramatic event. Section one is a moment of exposition for the most part but in section two that ‘singular dramatic event’ is *the appearance of the seagulls*; in section three, that event is *spotting the lighthouse*; in section four, its *the omnibus*; in section five, the main event is *the correspondent being content with rowing the boat at night*; in section six, its *the descending of both nighttime and doubt*; and in section seven, its *their break for the shore*. Each of these sections consists of its own complication, its own climax, and its own falling action. But what’s more interesting is the existence, within each of these sections, of a singular moment—right after the turning point or ‘climax’, yet before the falling action—where each text is punctuated by a description of nature in terms of human emotion. Section four’s moment happens on page 205,

“*The man waving a coat blended gradually into this gloom, and it swallowed in the same manner the omnibus and the group of people. **The spray, when it dashed uproariously over the side,** made the voyagers shrink and swear like men who were being branded.*” (Crane, 205. emphasis mine).

Or similarly, in section three, we see that moment of emotional exchange from plot to crew to nature again when Crane writes on page 201,

“*The distant light-house reared high. ‘The keeper ought to be able to make us out now, if he’s looking through a glass,’ said the captain. ‘He’ll notify the life-saving people.’ ‘None of those other boats could have got ashore to give word of the wreck,’ said the oiler, in a low voice. ‘Else the life-boat would be out hunting us.’*”

Critical Approach: Crane

*Slowly and beautifully the land loomed out of the sea. **The wind came again.***" (201, emphasis mine).

In these moments, Crane's deviation from his formula is minimal: we get a climax moment, a reversal in action (positive or negative), we see the crews reaction, and we see the settings reaction (be the action reversal positive or negative). Whether it be the wind coming from a stand still to picking up their boat again when their hope is renewed, or the waves crashing into the side of the boat, as if on cue, when their hopes are dashed crane has constructed moments, seven of them that are ignited by a turn of events and find their end in the immediate response of the sea. Each section has been designed around this structure to create a uniform mood, to underline the interconnectedness of every moment as a singular emotional idea or movement rather than just a series of parts.

CONCLUSION

In Crane's stories, water isn't just, cold, "*the coldness of the water [is] sad; it [is] tragic*" (Crane, 211). When the characters' fortunes turn, so does the weather...and at times, right in the next line. There is almost no distance or separation between the emotional coloring of his characters and that of his setting. By imbuing the inanimate objects on his set—the waves, the clouds, the winds—with human emotion, Crane creates an experience where we the reader are met, from every facet of his creation, with the author's intended sentiment—as if everything, in every moment could be characterized by one single emotion. Likening the technique of a how a stage director might light a scene entirely in a wash of blue light to impress upon us the hopelessness that envelopes everything, is a very apropos analogy. Crane has many of these authorial moments

where he uses the literary device of the pathetic fallacy or anthropomorphic metaphor to achieve this goal.

What makes this story, and ultimately Crane's writing, noteworthy is his deftness at creating an intimate relationship between his characters and the inanimate objects that surrounds them—one that I think goes even beyond the use of literary devices. Crane has a distinct way in which he conceptualizes character: he sees them not as sovereign, singular beings but as a part of a fluid and collective make up. Even his description of the Captain's relationship to his ship, for example, is in harmony with this thought, how even the Captain's "*speech was devoted to the business of the boat*" (Crane, 208) and that even when we think of his thoughts, "*the mind of the master of the vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her; wether he command her for a day or a decade.*" (Crane, 196) Everything in Crane's world finds its beginning in something else around it. The pages of Cranes's story are like the sinuous tissues of life, interconnected and responsive at so many levels that when something breaths, or feels emotion, we can feel the whole page sigh. Crane's writing shows us a very unique, albeit complex, understanding of how the roots of character and setting may be indiscernibly intertwined then we think.

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