

D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce :
A Point of Meeting
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Joyce and Lawrence have always been looked at as being opposites. Some critical views have considered this opposition a phenomenon in the history of the novel. This is what Walter Allen, for example, concludes his famous how study The English Novel with :

Joyce and Lawrence: in the history of the English novel they stand in curious and uneasy juxtaposition. We know what Lawrence thought of Joyce's work : he did not like it; and it is not probable that Joyce liked his.

(Allen , 363)

The different between the two is clear in both their motif and style. Lawrence is known for his reconnaissance of the natural world of instincts. This unique experience comes into being through a language 'invented' for this purpose. (I for Evans, A Short History of England Literature, 278). It comes through 'a rare eye for every movement in nature ... for his spirit.' (Ibid) Such a cohesion between the author and his subject-matter has undoubtedly created an impression that 'Lawrence is personally present in almost every line he writes. (A. Niven, D. H. Lawrence, 4) Contrary to Lawrence's 'large loose form' of the nineteenth century conventional style (Schorer, 'Technique as a Discovery,' 72), Joyce employs 'styles which don't express directly his personal interest in the situation he has chosen to explore' (M. Boulton, The Novel, 167), but rather an exploratory technique associated with an intensive use of myth. To Joyce, the use of myth is not for 'the conventions, beliefs, and attitudes in it,' but rather it is 'a means of suggesting obliquely what lies beyond 'drawing attention' to itself as technique in order to urge the reader to look beyond it.' (S.L. Goldberg, The Classical Tember, 208) Unlike Lawrence, whose major attention is mainly drawn to new frontiers of culture and whose style substantiates his struggle for 'new means of expression' (Niven, 2), Joyce finds that :

... style, technique, dramatic image or symbol, do indeed "make life" in one sense, and one can understand Joyce's

reply when his brother tried to discuss Fascism with him: "Don't talk to me about politics, I'm only interested in style." (Goldberg, 306)

The conception that the two 'eternal opposites' have no points of meeting seems to be still unsolved. There are, though very few, fringe remarks in some literary studies trying to find common points between the two. Jeremy Hawthorn in Studying the Novel, for example, connects between Joyce's short story 'The Dead' and the death of Gerald in the snow in Lawrence's Women in Love and gets to a conclusion that both Joyce and Lawrence... incorporate a public symbol into a private or internal world of meaning of their respective fictional works... (Hawthorn, 63) Francis Fergusson in his article 'D.H. Lawrence is Sensibility' finds that both Lawrence and Joyce depend on their social background for theme and subject matter; Lawrence has 'his own history and the history of his family to write,' and Joyce elaborates a point-to-point correspondence between the spiritual movement of a little Dublin city-dweller and the mythical wandering of Ulysses.' (Fergusson, 72-4) Most of the critics interested in the subject find in this writer-milieu correlation a yielding study. Some of them -M.Boulton in The Novel, for instance (Boulton, 167)- driving at a better understanding of the two writers' works, call for a further biographical lore. A biographical inquiry as such is by all means useful, especially when it avoids bypassing the two writers' art of story-telling where other points of meeting between the two are also possible.

One of these points is the use of epiphany. This narrative device refers to 'a moment of revelation ... that quickens awareness and changes attitudes or events.' (J.T.Shipley, Dictionary of World Literary Terms, 103) Prior to Joyce's Stephen Hero (1916), the novel in which epiphany takes its known established form, the two writers like many others (Butler's The Way of All Flesh (1903) is one of these) have their attempts for epiphany. In their two short stories, J. Joyce's "The Dead" (1914) and D.H.Lawrence's "second Best" (1914), they come close to the known established form in the novel:

... usually sparked by a simple or commonplace occurrence (it is) a sudden spiritual manifest-ation" where the rite de passage leads through the usual three stages (separation, isolation, aggregation) to a renewed communion with society on a higher and more informed plane of living (Ibid.)

What is spectacular is that these two short stories, in the light of the established epiphany, are very near to each other. The central character of each is introduced to the reader as being detached from his milieu. His/her isolation comes to an end when the character, in consequence of the moment of revelation, is made to see better the reason of his/her crisis. He/she, therefore, is more prepared than before for the reunion with his/her milieu.

Gabriel Conroy, the central character of "The Dead", is in this light introduced to the reader. His detachment from society is made clear when he, attending his aunts' annual party, fails to deal with the receptionist, Lily, whom he has known since her childhood, by ignoring her as a grown-up and equal person. His isolation from his homeland, Ireland, is both physical and spiritual. Symbolically, his European golothes, a fashion worn over boots, physically isolate him from the Irish snow in which his wife Gretta 'd walk ... if she were let. ("The Dead," 178) Miss Ivors, an acquaintance whom he dances with in the party, reveals his spiritual estrangement when she attacks him for writing literary reviews under his initials, G.C., in The Daily Express, a pro-English journal politically against the Irish cause. In his talk with her, Gabriel unveils his preference of spending the summer holiday in the Continent to visiting the west of his own country, Aran Isles, and of keeping in touch with the foreign languages to the Irish language from which he turns away. His attention is wholly drawn to the superior Europe, whereas the West, from which Gretta has come, remains in nonobservance.

Later on, at the hotel, his waking comes when he learns from his wife about the song, "The Lass of Aughrim," that has attracted her attention in the party. She tells him about a young person, Michael Furey, who used to sing this song and who was so fond of her in her youth. According to her, Michael Furey whom she 'was great with' died for her. (Ibid., 217) Gretta, who 'wouldn't be let to see him' because of his illness, consumption, tells her husband about the rainy night in which he came to see her before her going up to Dublin:

"I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree."
(Ibid., 218)

Left alone awake, Gabriel, who has been stirred up by the story, begins to think highly of Michael Furey. This passion inspires him 'to set out on his journey westward.' (Ibid., 220)

The opening scene of "Second Best," like that of the previous story, also focuses on social detachment: Frances, 23 years old, is unable to show a

favorable reaction to her 14-year old sister, Anne. Disappointed, she is back again to her country life after years of unsuccessful love with Jimmy Barrass, a doctor of chemistry, in Liverpool. Her life in this city makes her indifferent to her people and country. The incident that brings about her manifestation is when she and her sister find a mole unaware of them because of his weak sight.

In an instant Anne put her foot upon it, not too heavily. Frances could see the struggling, swimming movement of the little pink hands of the brute, the twisting and twitching of its pointed nose, as it wrestled under the sole of the boot.
("Second Best," 151)

The view of the mole turning pitifully its sightless face towards her calls up her reciprocal suffering which is, too, a result of blindness; her blind love to the unfaithful Barrass. This incident opens her eyes to the fact that her indifference and isolation is because of her 'stubborn pride' (*Ibid.*, 154), and, by reason of that, she is now more prepared for the reunion with her land. She is after all back again to the people who really love her; back to her sister and the faithful farmer, Tom Smedley.

As it is initially indicated in the two briefs, there is a clear similitude between the two writers' employment of epiphany. The focus of this similitude in the beginnings of the two stories is on the central character's separation from his homeland. The reason for this separation is also the same, it's an underdeveloped homeland seen through the eyes of the native whose mind is preoccupied with a more developed foreign world. Though each of the two writers has his own distinctive approach, the two get to the same end: The native in the two stories is in aspiration to be back home, with his/her eyes open now, and for the first time, to its exalted phase.

In respect of the hero's separation from his homeland, it's noticed that the two writers spotlight the dark uninteresting native background of the hero. Lawrence presents the country background as it is looked at by the low-spirited Frances. Echoing her grievous mood, the whole country is dim, cheerless, and barren. It is a place full of thistles, brambles, husked gorse and stubble, where 'the blackish haze of heat' smothers all the darkish colours. (*Ibid.*, 150)

The common, with its sere, blonde-headed thistles, its heaps of silent bramble, its brown-husked gorse... with the woodland and the tiny village ... far off, only the tiny

whits squares of barley stubble showed distinct. (Ibid., 149/150)

The background that Joyce creates in "The Dead" is dark and cheerless too. In a comment on the subject, Richard Ellmann sheds light on that 'the west of Ireland is connected in Gabriel's mind with a dark and rather painful primitivism. ("The Backgrounds of 'The Dead', " 178) This dreary west, in Gabriel's eyes, is always there in any Irish scene:

The morning was still dark A dull yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending. It was slushy underfoot, and only streaks and patches of snow lay on the roof ... The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air, and across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky. ("The Dead", 210)

As to the reason behind the estrangement in the two examples, it is evident that the two are also of one origin. The character's estrangement is simply due to the influence of a foreign superior milieu on him/her. In Gabriel Conroy's case, it is Europe where he decides to spend the summer and 'to keep in touch with the languages.' (Ibid., 187) He refuses Miss Ivors' suggestion to go to the West, Aran Isles, because he is 'sick of his country. To him, 'the west is savagery' whereas 'to the east and south' lie people who drink wine and wear galoshes.' (Ellman, 178)

The influence of Liverpool where people speak 'nicely' is clear in Frances behaviour. The lights of this superior city make this country girl, after five years of absence from the countryside, see her village inferior. And when she is once exposed to the bright phase of her countryside, she finds herself a stranger. It is difficult to her to believe that all this surrounding beauty, with its riches, belongs to her homeland which wholly exists (exactly like Gabriel's stand towards his country) in the inattentive region of her mind.

Frances watched certain objects in her surroundings: they had a peculiar, unfriendly look about them: the weight of greenish elderberries on their purpling stalks; the twinkling of the yellowing crab-apples that clustered high up in the hedge, against the sky; the exhausted limp leaves of the primroses lying flat in the

hedgebottom: all looked strange to her.
("Second Best", 150)

Both of Gabriel and Frances are unaware of the greatness of their homeland which remains in the shade of a brighter one. It is the force of epiphany, illuminating the greatness of the world from which they have gone astray, that takes them back home. The change in their attitudes comes about as a result of the moment of revelation that makes it possible for them to see better.

By that means and immediately after the mole incident, Frances finds herself more able to set herself free from her blind love to Jimmy. Her eyes are now open to a new reality in which 'everything smelled green, succulent.' (Ibid., 154) And her country is ultimately greater and richer:

The next field was sweet and soft with a second crop of seeds; thin straggling clover whose little pink knobs rested prettily in the dark green. (Ibid.)

Her return to her country is associated with a return to Tom Smedley whose consolidation with his land is an example of faithfulness that she has missed in Liverpool. Leaving her 'stubborn pride' behind, Frances is at last shown as being eager in her 'secret, persistent hunt' to kill a mole in order to be a good farmer's wife.

Sparked by the story of Michael Furey, Gabriel's revelation takes him to the overlooked West with many great symbols. In Gabriel's eyes, the glow of the foreign world, represented by the warmth of his aunts' party with its lights, wine, and dancing, gradually grows dull, facing one of these immortal symbols: the statue of the Irish lebarator, Patrick Morkan. He gets to a realisation that all the people he knows, including himself, will 'soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse.' ("The Dead," 219) The native background, against the subsided glow of the foreign world, comes to light in the snow that crowns Morkan's statue. And when Gabriel feels that this snow, which is 'general all over Ireland,' unites him with the Irish soil, his soul swoons:

It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther west ward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey

lay buried ... His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (Ibid., 220)

Like Tom Smedley in "Second Best", it is Gretta who stands for the native soil here. She has been, like Tom, treated with indifference. Gabriel, affected by his mother's comment on her, 'country cute', selects his words to answer the comment about Gretta's origin:

"... It would be splendid for Gretta too if she'd come. She's from Connacht, isn't she?"
"Her people are," said Gabriel shortly. (Ibid., 186)

Gabriel's return to her is, the same as the case in the other story, a return to his homeland. Like Frances, he finds himself heart and soul eager to turn to Gretta and her ignored world.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself toward any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached the region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. (Ibid., 220)

Thus, though the two writers in these two stories are different from each other in respect of many points, like style and approach, they have a point of meeting in their epiphanies. This point, as it is explained in the foregoing, is clear in both the texture and purpose of these epiphanies. It is a point that could be added to the other critical efforts for a better understanding of the nature of similarity and difference between the two writers.