

Dialectic of Male Desire in James Joyce's *Exiles*

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate James Joyce's *Exiles* in light of Jacques Lacan's theory of desire. Richard Rowan and Robert Hand as the major male characters of the play are involved with intersubjective relationships, the motor force behind which is language and its constitutive lack. Facing lack in the Symbolic order on account of language, they take recourse to desire to find *objet petit a*. Being in a mutual relationship, *objet petit a* fuels desire which makes the subjects establish their identity in accordance with the Other's desire. What they seek and need is the Other's desire to give meaning to their otherwise fruitless quest in life. Richard and Robert seek diverse *objet petit a*'s, representative of their goals and ideals in life, to re-fill their lack. Being caught up in the same metonymical deferral of desire, they seek other surrogates throughout the play. This metonymical tendency to seek the Other's desire paves the ground for the reproduction of desire through fantasy.

Keywords: Desire, *Objet petit a*, Other, Lack, Fantasy

1. James Joyce and *Exiles*

Exiles, Joyce's only extant play, dramatizes the homecoming of Richard, his wife and son from Italy. Being written in 1914 and published in 1918, *Exiles* is a literary dramatization of Joyce's own return to Ireland, an Ireland that is "corrupted by imposture, embodied in the person of Robert Hand" (DeLanghe 83). The play deals with what would happen if Joyce has returned to Ireland forever. According to Jenkin, "The play seems to be a 'what if' scenario, an experiment, on paper, to see what life would have been like had the Joyces returned to Ireland to live after several years on the continent" (67).

The association and affinity between Joyce and Richard renders *Exiles*, according to Joseph Valente, "a public translation of the hitherto private experience" (132). Dramatic personae of *Exiles* correlate with real figures and personages in Joyce's life. Such structural relationships make the play a fertile ground for psychoanalytic examinations. Zack Bowen contends that Joyce "drained his festering psychic wounds into the characters and structure of his play" (581). Much of Joyce and his life can be found in *Exiles*. Richard's self-imposed exile early in his life alongside his conflicts of psyche corresponds to that of Joyce. Tanmay Chatterjee remarks that "Joyce is externalizing his own psychological hang-ups" (2).

Joyce desisted writing *Ulysses* in order to compose *Exiles*. He stopped in order to tackle the question of love and deal with the issues of giving and possessing in love. Vicki Mahaffey notes that "In order to understand Joyce's treatment of love in *Ulysses*, a reader must first come to terms with what Joyce learned in *Exiles*" (98). *Exiles* illuminates the blind spots of love and it is a prerequisite for understanding love in *Ulysses*. It is called "a side-step, necessary katharsis, clearance of mind" by Ezra Pound (*Pound/Joyce* 139). *Exiles*, "a necessary step" (*Pound/Joyce* 250), as a whole is a piece of epiphany which succored Joyce in enriching *Ulysses*. Being "*Ulysses* under psychoanalysis" (Seidel 74), *Exiles* is a close examination of how the characters sustain the meaning of their lives.

2. Jacques Lacan and the Theory of Desire

Lacan gave a new shade to the concept of desire by introducing two other distinctive correlatives namely need and demand. Every subject has biological needs for the quenching of which articulation through demand is required. Unlike other biological entities for which the instinctual blueprint leads them to survival, the infant, according to Lacan, is born too early and suffers from "biological crisis". Opposition between "the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" is the reason for man's "specific prematurity of birth" (*Écrits* 78). This phenomenon makes the child seek help from the Other via language. The child has "vague, unstructured presentation" (Van Haute 21) that will be structured and tamed by language. One is born, according to Bruce Fink, "into a preestablished place in its parents' linguistic universe" (*Lacanian Subject* 5). The subject is reliant and dependent on the system of signifiers, Otherness, without the existence of which s/he cannot exist as a subject.

The child wants satisfaction of his biological needs. For achieving the Other's grant, need must be mediated and articulated in demand which happens through language. Because of acquisition and internalization of language, Fink argues that "we see the transformation of need into *need addressed to another person*, a person who is not as helpless as oneself" (*Reading Écrits* 118). It opens up an intersubjective area for the satisfaction of need. Demand, linguistic variation of need, is addressed to the Other which is lacking itself. The infant learns to demand from a lacking Other and to get temporary and fake satisfaction of needs, and consequently enters the chain of signification. Moreover, this alienation of demand paves the way for the emergence of desire. Lacan argues:

Desire is what manifests itself in the interval demand excavates just shy of itself, insofar as the subject, articulating the signifying chain, bring to light his lack of being [*manque a etre*] with his call to receive the complement of this lack from the Other – assuming that the Other, the locus of speech, is also the locus of this lack. ("Direction of Treatment" 524)

One can argue that demand is closely knit with speech. It is speech that makes demand possible. Inevitably demand is addressed to an Other. Speech creates an intersubjective realm in which demand and desire come into being. For Lacan, "Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need, this margin being the one that demand – whose appeal can be unconditional only with respect to the Other – opens up in the guise of possible gap need may give rise to" (*Écrits* 689). In the 'subtraction' something remains and goes to the 'margin' which will frequent the subject henceforward. According to Ehsan Azari, "Desire may not be reducible to either need or demand, but resides in the fissure between the two" (*Lacan and Destiny of Literature* 15). This fissure refers to the margin in which desire comes into being. Lacan points to the mutual dependence of demand and desire and contends that demand "by being articulated in signifiers, leaves a metonymic remainder that runs under it, an element that is not indeterminate, which is condition both, absolute and unapprehensible, and element necessarily lacking, unsatisfied, impossible, misconstrued (*méconnu*), an element that is called desire" (*Four Fundamental* 154). Desire is considered to be part and parcel of demand which remains after the satisfaction of need.

Lacan dialectized the relationship between need and demand the synthesis of which is desire. He argues that "desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction [of a need] nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the very phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*)" (*Écrits* 580). Need passes through the filters of demand and something is left out of the articulation of need in demand. Anika Lemaire believes that "In moving from lack to desire, the subject in effect accedes to language, and in moving from desire to demand he alienates himself in language, creates himself and fashions himself at will" (*Jacques Lacan* 161). Language has a transformative power in changing need into desire.

The dialectic of the subject with the Other leads to the rise of a remainder. Being lost forever, this remainder, *object petit a*, puts the subject on a Sisyphean search. The *object petit a* is that which remains from the constitution of the subject through language. It cannot be assimilated in the Symbolic order due to its Real aspects. Lander defines *object petit a* as follows: "It is neither a part-object nor a total object, neither an internal nor an external object. It is not the Real, although it opens a window into that register. It is the lost object, never found and always sought. It is the cause of desire" (*Subjective Experience* 57). *Object petit a* is there to cause the subject's desire. The object cause of desire, *object petit a*, is what the subject lacks. More importantly, it is what fills this lack, only in illusions, for the subject. According to Slavoj Žižek, "The object-cause is always missed; all we can do is encircle it" (*Looking Awry* 4). The subject, subjected to the laws of signification and the Symbolic order, never succeeds in finding and possessing the object cause of desire.

It is through the *object petit a* that the split subjects sustain the illusion of unity and wholeness. This illusion is bolstered by fantasy which is there to give a metonymical coloring to reproduction of desire. In theorizing fantasy, Lacan drew on Freud, for whom fantasy was an image or scene for representing unconscious desire. Lander states that "Each subject constructs his or her *fantasme* in his or her earliest childhood. It is an imaginary construction that will establish a subject and exclusive relationship between the subject and object (a)" (*Subjective Experience* 90). *Fantasme* is Lacan's variation of fantasy. Fantasy is the mediation for desire. According to Lacan, "fantasy is the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object" (*Écrits* 532). Fantasy enables the subject to find a space for desire through the illusion of finding the lack of/in the Other. Lemaire contends that "Phantasies are one of the modes of the hallucinatory satisfaction of desire" (165). Fantasy can be viewed as the detour for desire. Žižek points out that "Fantasy is usually conceived as a scenario that realizes the subject's desire" (*Looking Awry* 6). The word realization has nothing to do with fulfillment and satisfaction of desire. Rather, it connotes the reproduction of desire as such. It refers to the state of pure desirousness which is the goal of desire. Stated differently, it concerns reproduction of lack which is the building constituent of desire. Fantasy shows the subject's relationship with the object cause of desire which is *object petit a*. Fink argues that "Object *a* is the subject's complement, a phantasmatic partner that ever arouses the subject's desire" (*Lacanian Subject* 61). *Object petit a* is the object cause of desire and necessitates fantasy for staging desire. Fantasy paves the ground for maintaining desire. Žižek adds: "through fantasy, we learn how to desire" (*Looking Awry* 6). Desire is not seeking any specific object out there in the material world. According to Fink:

Desire, strictly speaking, has no object. In its essence, desire is a constant search for something else, and there is no specifiable object that is capable of satisfying it, in other words, extinguishing it. Desire is fundamentally caught up in the dialectical *movement* of one signifier to the next, and is

diametrically opposed to fixation. It does not seek satisfaction, but rather its own continuation and furtherance: more desire, greater desire! (*Lacanian Subject* 90)

Desire is not seeking any object since it is not there to be satisfied. Its primary goal is to go on desiring. Homer remarks that “the purpose of desire is to desire” (76). In line with bringing about a state of pure desirousness, Žižek argues that “desire’s *raison d’être* is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire” (“Seven Veils of Fantasy” 214). Desire has no object and its satisfaction lies in its reproduction through fantasy which is the response of the subject to the desire of the Other, to the incompleteness of the Other, or to the lack of the Other.

Other plays a key role in the subject’s life. According to Homer, “It is through the Other that the subject secures its position in the symbolic, social, order” (72). Bruce Fink views Other and Otherness in the following terms: “otherness runs the unlikely gamut from the unconscious (the Other as language) and the ego (the imaginary other [ideal ego] and the Other as desire [ego ideal]) to the Freudian superego (the Other as jouissance)” (*Lacanian Subject* xi). All these designations of ‘other’ have their impact on the subject in their own particular way.

The subject is what a signifier, the building block of the Other, represents to another signifier. The signifiers are there to define and regulate the intersubjective relationships. The subject becomes a subject of/in language (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 49). The subject is there on account of the representation of one signifier to another. It is the working of the signifiers that gives rise to desire and makes the subject dependent on intersubjective relations for recognition and development of his/her desire.

It is the mechanism of language and immersion of the subject in the Symbolic order that pave the ground for the emergence of desire. Fink argues that “Without language there would be no desire as we know it” (*Lacanian Subject* 49). Language and desire are mutually inclusive. Desire comes to the fore the moment it passes through the “defiles of the signifiers” (Lacan, *Écrits* 687). Such a mutuality of desire and language is attested to in Fink: “language being ridden with desire and desire being inconceivable without language, being made of the very stuff of language” (*Lacanian Subject* 50). It is language that gives rise to the subject and his/her desire. Lacan relates that “It is only once it is formulated, named in the presence of the other, that desire, whatever it is, is recognized in the full sense of the term. It is not a question of the satisfaction of desire, nor of I know not what primary love, but quite precisely, of the recognition of desire” (*Freud’s Papers on Technique* 183). It is in the realm of the Other, realm of the signifiers, that desire fully blooms.

In this line, Fink states that “the subject is caused by the Other’s desire” (*Lacanian Subject* 50). What the subject wants is recognition and love from the Other. In *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan states that “man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (235). Desire must be directed toward the desire of the Other. The first significant point regarding Lacan’s dictum is that the Other refers not only to other people but also to language and unconscious. With lower case o, the ‘other’ refers to other people and highlights intersubjective relations. Other with capital O refers to the Other of the Symbolic order, language and its ideals. The subject does his/her best to be wanted and recognized by the Other. This relationship is dialectical. Dependence on the Other for recognition gives a structural coloring to the subject’s desire. The structural and dialectical recognition of subject’s desire is evident in Lacan’s words: “the desire to have his desire recognized” (*Écrits* 285).

Last but not least, there is a close relationship between law and desire. Desire is restricted by law, the origin of which lies in the linguistic rule of metonymy. Alenka Zupancic argues that “The law appoints to desire its object, and desire finds its determination and autonomy as transgressive desire. The law fixes the object of desire and chains the desire to it, regardless of the subject’s ‘will’” (“The Perforated Sheet” 286). The law and language are there to define a position for the subject. The movement or deferral of signifiers not only gives rise to desire but also creates the subject. Fink contends that “Desire is subservient to the law” (*Clinical Introduction* 207). The relationship between desire and law is mutual and dialectical. It is subjected to the endless process of deferral because desire, according to Lacan, is always “desire for something else” (*Écrits* 431). As soon as the subject attains illusory *objet petit a*, the mere substitute and cause of desire, s/he feels temporarily satisfied. The *objet petit a* loses its desirability and gives its place to another object. Lacan argues: “man’s desire is a metonymy” (*Écrits* 439). After temporary satisfaction, the subject falls to the trap of desire again. According to Lacan, “the brook of desire runs as if along a branch line of the signifying chain” (*Écrits* 520). The signifying chain opens up a gap which forms desire. Lacan notes that “the subject find the constitutive structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him” (*Écrits* 525). The Other is fundamentally suffering from lack and such a lack leads to the failure of subject’s demands and desires. The lack makes the subject move, on the axis of desire, from one object to another; hence, the function of metonymy.

3. Male Desire in Exiles

Regarding Hamlet and his life, Lacan argues that ‘The dependence of his desire on the Other subject forms the permanent dimension of Hamlet’s drama’ (‘Desire in Hamlet’ 13). The same holds true for *Exiles* and its major characters. Desire is a mechanism that governs most of the relations in *Exiles*. In what follows, I presents a chain of *objet petit a*’s which not only set Richard and Robert’s desire into motion but also maintain it metonymically. Richard and Robert are seeking these *objet petit a*’s for the sake of saturating their desire for recognition by the Other.

3.1 Richard: Epitome of Desire

Richard Rowan, Joyce’s alter ego, has been living years in exile on account of not being recognized by his fellow countrymen. He is not recognized by the Symbolic order properly, the origin of which goes back to his relationship with

his mother. Not only he himself admits but also the other characters know and attest to his bad relationship. Talking with Beatrice, Richard says: "I am suffering at this moment! For your case, too. But suffering most of all for my own. [*With bitter force.*] And how I pray that I may be granted again my dead mother's hardness of heart! For some help, within me or without, I must find" (*Exiles* 8). This ironical remarks point to the disrupted relationship with his mother. The absence of Richard's mother is present throughout the play. Richard is threatened by the fantasy of his dead mother. Žižek's remarks about one's presence are illuminating. He contends that "the fantasy of a person who does not want to stay dead but returns again and again to pose a threat to the living" (*Looking Awry* 16). Richard is fixated with his mother's desire and does his best to separate himself from the demands of the (m)Other. He has problem drawing a border between his own desire and that of his mother. Richard's bad relationship with his mother as the "first concrete representative of Other" portends his ruptured relation with the Symbolic order. The building block of his relation with Other is not firm and stable. Richard adds: "I fought against her spirit while she lived to the bitter end. It fights against me still – in here" (*Exiles* 9). Using present tense for the spirit of his mother points to the extension of a mother's demand and presence to the Symbolic order. Richard is suffering from the pangs of that faulty relation and, very interestingly, sees the remedy there. He states that "The old mother. It is her spirit I need" (*Exiles* 10). Bertha, Richard's wife, highlights this relation and denounces her husband for being indifferent and cruel to his mother. She says: "Because you never loved your own mother. A mother is always a mother, no matter what. I never heard of any human being that did not love the mother that brought him into the world, except you" (*Exiles* 29). Even Brigid, the servant of Rowan family, gives credit to Richard's conflict with his mother. Richard has not shared anything with his mother. Brigid tells Bertha: "Do you know that he used to tell me about you and nothing to his mother, God rest her soul? Your letters and all" (*Exiles* 57). Bertha moves to the extremes in accusing Richard of his bad relationship with woman generally. She adds: "I think you have made her unhappy as you have made me and as you made your dead mother unhappy and killed her. Woman-killer! That is your name" (*Exiles* 66). Early in his life, Richard goes from one woman to another and experiences revelries since he is unable to extricate himself from the grips of his mother. This is in line with the metonymical deferral of his desire from one woman to another.

It is against such a disrupted background that Richard's desire comes into being. Richard, as desired and sought for recognition, is desiring and seeking recognition from the other characters. Richard does his best to find suitable substitutes for his mother. Bertha, the first surrogate, does not meet Richard's demands despite the fact that she has been with him for years in exile. In Richard's own words, she is his "bride in exile" (*Exiles* 72). Richard mentions cheating Bertha several times while they were in Rome. Richard confesses betraying her, but at the same time, yielding her utmost freedom in her relationship with Robert. Robert asks Richard: "[B]etray her with another. Betray her, I mean, not in love. Carnally, I mean... Has that never happened?" and Richard replies, "It has" (*Exiles* 39). Despite betrayal, Richard remained attached and faithful to Bertha. According to Elizabeth Speight Jenkins, "His constant betrayal of his wife is related to his desire to be betrayed" (51). He betrays and frees her in order to, reversely, make her more dependent on and faithful to himself. He explicitly demands betrayal as follows: "in the very core of my ignoble heart I longed to be betrayed by you and by her – in the dark, in the night – secretly, meanly, craftily" (*Exiles* 42). It is *via* Robert, the mediator between them, that Bertha restores her position of being desirable for Richard. In addition, Richard gives her freedom in order to ignite his own desire toward her. Azari comments: "When one desires something, one tries to deprive oneself of that object" (*Lacan and Destiny of Literature* 44). Richard desires Bertha that is why he repeatedly refers to Bertha's freedom. He acts indifferently and does not give a final answer when asked by Bertha about meeting Robert:

BERTHA. Am I to go to this place?

RICHARD. Do you want to go?

BERTHA. I want to find out what he means. Am I to go?

RICHARD. Why do you ask me? Decide yourself.

BERTHA. Do you tell me to go?

RICHARD. No.

BERTHA. Do you forbid me to go?

RICHARD. No (*Exiles* 32).

Joyce leaves both the characters and the readers in indecision. It is through this indecision that Richard's desire is held alive. This state is closely knit with the mechanism of desire. Desire never achieves a stable point. Joyce continues their dialogue as follows:

BERTHA. Tell me not to go and I will not.

RICHARD. [*Without looking at her.*] Decide yourself.

BERTHA. Will you blame me then?

RICHARD. [*Excitedly.*] No, no! I will not blame you. You are free. I cannot blame you. (*Exiles* 32)

Richard knows that it is the mechanisms of the Symbolic order that set desire into motion. He is powerless in this respect at the time and can only play the role of an object of desire in the metonymical deferral of desire. On the contrary, Robert accuses Richard of deciding for Bertha. He thinks that Bertha's departure with Richard was not "her own free choice" (*Exiles* 20). But it is not so. Richard preaches freedom even to Robert himself in his decision to fight

for Bertha. Richard tells Robert: “Free yourself” (*Exiles* 43). He grants him enough freedom to be alone with his wife and “solve the question” (*Exiles* 43) between them. Richard’s insistence on freedom relates, in addition, to freeing oneself from diverse signifiers. Ultimately, it is only he himself who finds an outlet to the Symbolic order. Richard’s ideal of freedom reaches its pinnacle in his words to Bertha about Robert:

RICHARD. ... You may be his and mine. I will trust you, Bertha, and him too. I must. I cannot hate him since his arms have been around you. You have drawn us near together... Who am I that I should call myself master of your heart or of any woman’s? Bertha, love him, be his, give yourself to him if you desire – or if you can. (*Exiles* 46)

Richard, unlike Robert, knows that possession is meaningless. Bertha, like a signifier, freely floats in the chain of signification. However, it must be noted that she is bound to certain linguistic rules. Richard knows about these rules which assure him of Bertha’s loyalty. She may desire to be Robert’s, but it is not probable since she is bound to the laws of the Symbolic order.

Beatrice is another substitute for Richard’s mother. Beatrice and Richard were exchanging letters for more than nine years. Richard takes Beatrice as the inspiration of his writing and devotes his imaginary sketches to her. They share a mutual desire for each other. Richard is desired by Beatrice since Bertha is a mediator while Beatrice wants Bertha’s object of desire; hence, Lacan’s dictum that man’s desire is that of Other. Beatrice denounces Robert since in her eyes he is no more than “a pale reflection” (*Exiles* 7) of Richard. Beatrice is desired because Robert is a mediator for Richard.

Richard is desiring Robert’s childhood love, *i.e.* Beatrice. She is different from Bertha in that she opts for intellectual and spiritual life. Richard gives voice to his desire for Beatrice throughout the play. Richard says: “I was a third person I felt. Your names were always spoken together, Robert and Beatrice, as long as I can remember. It seemed to me, to everyone” (*Exiles* 7). Desire finds its outlet in pain and suffering for Richard in his relationship with Beatrice. Being a third party in Robert and Beatrice’s relationship, Richard suffers from the aftermaths of his desire. Beatrice has devoted her life to “gloom, seriousness, righteousness” (*Exiles* 13) and proves a pointless object of desire for Richard. She has admitted the mediatory and deceptive role of Other and argues that “It is hard to know anyone but oneself” (*Exiles* 6). She leaves Richard in doubt and passes him to another signifier, another object of desire, along the chain. It is this deferral that sustains Richard’s desire alive. In responding to Richard’s question about whether she loves him or not, Beatrice remarks: “I do not even know” (*Exiles* 7). Richard believes that her reticence and aloofness, alongside the existence of a third party, have made them separate. Getting oneself free from the demands of the Other is very difficult, both in the sense of language and the Symbolic order and in the sense of the other mediating people. Regarding Beatrice’s devotion to convent and religion Richard states:

RICHARD. [*Shakes his head.*] No, Miss Justice, not even there. You could not give yourself freely and wholly.

BEATRICE. [*Looking at him.*] I would try.

RICHARD. You would try, yes. You were drawn to him as you mind was drawn towards mine. You held back from him. From me, too, in a different way. You cannot give yourself freely and wholly. (*Exiles* 8).

To shed more light on this quotation, Richard accepts that there is always a third party and it is *via* that mediation that one desires. One desires what that third party desires. In addition, pointing to ‘mind’ highlights Richard’s ground of attraction to Beatrice. Even Robert, in his relationship with Bertha, points to desiring what the Other desires. He admits desiring the object of Richard’s desire. After talking about possession of Bertha, Robert remarks that “She is yours, your work. [*Suddenly.*] And that is why I, too, was drawn to her. You are so strong that you attract me even through her” (*Exiles* 37). Richard countermands Robert’s idea about possession. One cannot think of possessing an object of desire since it is illusionary. It only finds concrete manifestations, one of which is woman, and in this case Bertha. Therefore, Richard does not particularize all his demands on Bertha and refutes Robert’s obsession with her. Richard and Robert’s give and take is illustrative in this regard:

ROBERT. [*Warmly.*] But the passion which burns us night and day to possess her. You feel it as I do. And it is not what you said now.

RICHARD. Have you...? [*He stops for an instance.*] Have you the luminous certitude that yours is the brain in contact with which she must think and understand and that yours is the body in contact with which her body must feel? Have you this certitude in yourself?

ROBERT. Have you?

RICHARD. [*Moved.*] Once I had it, Robert: a certitude as luminous as that of my own existence – or an illusion as luminous. (*Exiles* 37)

Richard’s last words signify that once he held the same idea that Robert clings to at the moment. He finds that woman only acts as a substitute for setting his desire into motion.

Richard mentions another fantasmatic place which maintained his desire metonymically. Robert and Richard shared a hearth in which they had “wild nights long ago” (*Exiles* 21). Their hearth has been a kind of vacant screen onto which they have been able to project their desires at that time. That place is associated with their youthful revelries and

adventures. It is the stage on which they experienced their sexual transgressions. It is another element in the metonymical chain of their desire. Richard does not see himself caught up in the grips of that house and considers it as a mere substitute. He has other substitutes and the world beyond them in mind. His progressive movement in experiencing diverse object of desire is traceable in the following remarks:

RICHARD. It was not only a house of revelry; it was to be the hearth of a new life. [*Musing.*] And in that name all our sins were committed.

ROBERT. Sins! Drinking and blasphemy [*he points*] by me. And drinking and heresy, much worse [*he points again*] by you – are those the sins you mean?

RICHARD. And some others. (*Exiles* 21).

Richard has other signifiers in the chain of desire in mind when he mentions ‘some others.’ They continue their talk about woman as an object of desire. Richard separates himself from being stuck with women as object of desire since he does not find satisfaction with them. Neither their body nor their soul has power to saturate him. He even criticizes Robert for being extremely devoted to women. Richard says that “Like all men you have a foolish wandering heart” (*Exiles* 36). He denounces Robert’s advances to possess Bertha. Richard adds: “Do you mean by stealth or by violence? Steal you could not in my house because the doors were open; nor take by violence if there were no resistance” (*Exiles* 36). Richard does not show any resistance to Robert and Bertha’s relation though he is accused of jealousy several times in the play. Richard is really indifferent about women and he considers them merely as one of the possible chains in the metonymical deferral of his desire. As discussed earlier, he openly talks about betrayal and encourages Robert and Bertha’s appointment. Bertha, Beatrice and other women are there to make him think of other objects of desire. He extricates himself from them by thinking of writing as an elevated substitute. Richard is going through these objects of desire to set himself free from the bonds of the Symbolic order. The rules and laws of the Symbolic order are “light bonds” (*Exiles* 42) in Richard’s words. Bertha and Robert’s dialogue gives credit to this point. Joyce writes:

ROBERT. ... He has left us alone here at night, at this hour, because he longs to know it – he longs to be delivered.

BERTHA. From what?

ROBERT. [*Moves closer to her and presses her arm as he speaks.*] From every law, Bertha, from every bond. All his life he has sought to deliver himself. (*Exiles* 54)

Robert’s ‘law’ refers to the rules of the Symbolic order. Trying to move beyond the ‘law,’ Richard seeks other objects of desire, the last of which is his writing. It is writing that delivers Richard and offers him peace. Richard tells Beatrice that “Surely it exists for you somewhere” (*Exiles* 8). He has peace in mind as the referent of ‘it.’ Richard knows that peace is somewhere that can be found. Richard rejects convents, Beatrice’s suggestion, on account of the lack of complete devotion in that place. Peace is located beyond the Symbolic order for Richard, which manifests itself in his retroactive writing. Writing is another substitute, another element in maintaining desire metonymically, which comes to make up for Richard’s rupture with his mother and the Symbolic order.

All these surrogates acted as *objet petit a*’s for Richard to sustain his desire. They were the fantasy, the screen onto which Richard’s desire was projected. The working mechanism of the object cause of desire is similar to that of language. Richard moves from one object of desire to another since he is doomed to be in the realm of signification. What remains is desire which is reproduced metonymically. It happens because the subject is caught up in the chain of signifiers. Lacan states: “what is found is sought, but sought in the paths of the signifier” (*Ethics* 118). The subject is doomed to make use of signifiers, the movement of which creates both the subject and his/her desire. As one signifier is referred and deferred to another signifier, Richard’s desire goes from one object to another. These objects of desire act as building block, the outcome of which is Richard’s retroactive and revolutionary writing.

3.2 Robert Hand: A Victim of Desire

Robert is a journalist living in Ireland. He is doing his best to encourage the return of Richard and Bertha on account of the latter since he has been desperately in love with her for more than nine years. In order to achieve his goals, he has persuaded the vice-chancellor to set aside an academic post for Richard. All in all, he is one step behind Richard in terms of desire, love and writing.

Robert is dramatically opposed to Richard. He is caught up in the grips of Bertha and gives priority to body parts in the reproduction of his desire. Unlike Richard who goes from one object to another metonymically, Robert finds himself caught up in Bertha’s body parts and moves from one body part to another. He reduces Bertha to body parts and sustains his desire along this metonymical chain. Richard’s endpoint is writing and creativity, while that of Robert is to be a godfather for Archie, Richard’s son. Stated differently, he ends in the illusion of recreation.

Robert is engaged in a relationship with Bertha, the impetus of which goes back to nine years ago. Robert desires what the other desires, the other both in the sense of the other human being and in the sense of the Symbolic order valorization. Lacan states: “What makes the human world a world covered with objects derives from the fact that the object of human interest is the object of the other’s desire” (*Psychoses* 39). Robert has been attracted to the object of Richard’s love, Bertha.

Prior to being refused by Bertha, his desire is dormant and inactive. Fink argues that “Refusal by a woman is not so much the ardently sought object of his desire as what *arouses* his desire, bringing it to life. It is the *cause* of his desire”

(*Clinical Introduction* 50). His desire is provoked by Bertha's departure, a different way of refusal. Departure and absence of Bertha set his desire into motion. Robert relates to Bertha: "And when you and he went away for your walk and I went along the street alone I felt it. And when he spoke to me about you and told me he was going away – then most of all" (*Exiles* 52). Robert receives the last blow when he looks at the passage of the boat. He remarks ironically after a bitter smile: "How happy I felt as I came back along the quays and saw in the distance the boat lit up, going down the black river, taking you away from me" (*Exiles* 53). This is the starting point of the blockage of Robert's desire to seek substitutes for Bertha's absence. Her absence provides him with the needed ground for projection of his desire. The memory of the departure of Richard and Bertha fulfills the function of fantasy for Robert. The fantasy accounts for Robert's relation to the incompleteness of the Other as the cause of desire. Robert defines his relation to an object which is physically missing and sets the scene for the working of fantasy. Robert does not know that the object of desire is lost. He takes Bertha as the sole possible and available object of desire and keeps himself busy with illusions. He succeeds in fantasizing but fails in finding other objects of desire along the chain. Robert likens Bertha, or woman in general, to natural objects, the shared field of which are roundness, motion and beauty. Robert tells Richard:

ROBERT. ... This stone, for instance. It is so cool, so polished, so delicate, like a woman's temple. It is silent, it suffers our passion; and it is beautiful. [*He places it against his lips.*] And so I kiss it because it is beautiful. And what is a woman? A work of nature, too, like a stone or a flower or a bird. A kiss is an act of homage. (*Exiles* 21-2)

Focusing on woman's temple highlights Robert's tendency to reduce woman to body parts which will be discussed further on. Instead of seeking another object of desire, Robert remains caught up with Bertha and fantasizes her. He concentrates on particularizing the "commonest" qualities among women to be able to reduce them as easily as possible. Likening Bertha as the working mechanism of fantasy is manifest in Robert's confession: "You passed. The avenue was dim with dusky light. I could see the dark green masses of the trees. And you passed beyond them. You were like the moon" (*Exiles* 14). Robert's likening Bertha to stone and moon shares an associative ground of meaning with the metonymical aspects of desire. Both the moon and the stone are circular; hence, the circularity and endless deferral of desire, not from one object to another in Robert's case, but from Bertha to Bertha.

Robert's pining and waiting for Bertha "every night" are in line with his fantasy. This fantasizing on Robert's part is closely knit with the desire of the Other. Robert's fantasy is contingent upon Bertha's desire. He is to find the answer to the whatness of Bertha's desire. Lacan points out that "The phantasy is the support of desire; it is not the object that is the support of desire. The subject sustains himself as desiring in relation to an ever more complex signifying ensemble" (*Four Fundamental* 185). Robert opts for the Symbolic order and selects particular natural objects for filling the absent place of Bertha in his life. According to Fink:

Insofar as a woman forms a relationship with a man, she is likely to be reduced to an object – object (a) – in his fantasy; and insofar as she is viewed from the perspective of masculine culture, she is likely to be reduced to nothing more than a collection of male fantasy objects dressed up in culturally stereotypical clothes" (*Lacanian Subject* 117)

Bertha's departure incites Robert's fantasy and Robert likens her to stone, flower, moon, statue, a bird, and the kingdom of heaven. This is the working of his fantasy to reproduce his desire which lastly proves useless and fruitless. Not being able to find neither satisfaction nor substitutes, Robert starts doing his best to make them return. He wants to return Bertha and divides her into body parts for maintaining his desire.

Robert intends to make Richard and Bertha return to Ireland. He is doing this for sake of Bertha who is to provide temporary and fake satisfaction for his demands. Robert has been really obsessed with Bertha when she was away with Richard in Rome. He veils his desires for Bertha's return and puts them in the allegiance of a disciple. Robert says,

ROBERT. [*Gravely.*] I fought for you all the time you were away. I fought to bring you back. I fought to keep your place for you here. I will fight for you still because I have faith in you, the faith of a disciple in his master. I cannot say more than that. It may seem strange to you. (*Exiles* 23)

The given fight occurs on account of Bertha. He is not thinking of the faith of a disciple in his master, but the power of a rival with Richard for Bertha. He is a rival because a disciple never mentions: "I have won over Richard" (*Exiles* 24). Using 'strange,' Robert had the issue of possession of Bertha in mind and relates it to "A battle of our souls" (*Exiles* 42) in his dialogue with Richard. He openly admits his motivation of wanting them to remain in Ireland. He tells Bertha:

ROBERT. [*Pleading.*] Do not go away. You must never go away now. Your life is here. I came for that too today – to speak to him – to urge him to accept this position. He must. And you must persuade him to. You have a great influence over him.

BERTHA. You want him to remain here.

ROBERT. Yes.

BERTHA. Why?

ROBERT. For your sake because you are unhappy so far away. For his sake too because he should think of his future. (*Exiles* 16)

Robert is urging them for his own sake. He projects his unhappiness when Bertha is away. He is audacious enough to voice the same liking in Richard's presence. Robert tells Richard: "Not only for your sake. Also for the sake of – your present partner in life" (*Exiles* 20). Robert is happy with having Bertha returned to Ireland. He meets them on the spot and exchanges a slip of paper which contains the expression of want and desire. After the meeting of that night, Robert finds his desire flared up again: "From the very night you landed on Kingstown pier. It all came back to me then" (*Exiles* 15). What Robert wants is satisfaction, for achievement of which he commences seeing Bertha in parts: "I was awake half the night. I could hear your voice. I could see your face in the dark. Your eyes... I want to speak to you" (*Exiles* 15). Henceforward, Robert does his best to experience the pleasure of Bertha's body parts one after the other. This reduction of Bertha to body parts is similar to the linguistic motor force behind desire – metonymy. Voice, face, and eyes of Bertha are *object petit a*'s which provide temporary satisfaction and pass his desire from one object to another. Robert's tendency to reduce is traceable in his last name. He is "Mr. Hand" who forms only a part of a whole.

Robert comes to meet Bertha with a bunch of red roses next day. Beatrice, his cousin and ex-beloved, is there for Archie's lesson. She leaves them alone together. Robert talks about Bertha as "the moon or some deep music" (*Exiles* 14) and advances by demanding Bertha grant him permission to call her by first name. Robert proposes kissing her hand. Bertha starts to give in to Robert's advances one after another only to prove the endlessness of desire. Robert seeks the followings:

ROBERT. [*Suddenly.*] Bertha, may I kiss your hand? (*Exiles* 16)

ROBERT. Those eyes must not go away. [*He takes her hands.*] May I kiss your eyes? (*Exiles* 17)

ROBERT. Little Bertha! One embrace? (*Exiles* 17)

ROBERT. Your voice! Give me a kiss, a kiss with your mouth. (*Exiles* 17)

ROBERT. Let me feel your lips touch mine. (*Exiles* 17)

As these quotations signify, Robert is demanding partial satisfaction. Desire for body parts by Robert exhibits the metonymy of desire. His desire cannot be extricated from the grips of partial satisfaction. He has fallen to the trap of metonymical deferral from one body part to another. These are signs of Robert's dialectic of lack and desire. The lack as the motor force of his desire finds its inscription in Bertha's body. Van Haute states that "desire is always and necessarily rooted in the body" (*Against Adaptation* 140). He cannot move beyond Bertha, the endpoint of which is her whole body. Robert states: "All your divine body" (*Exiles* 17).

Robert is like Hamlet in terms of desire. In his relationship with Other and others, he delays in his decisions. He is dubious and denies having an appointment with Bertha. At the opening of Act Two, he is busy with providing the most romantic scene possible for Bertha's arrival. Classical music and sprays of perfume are dispersed throughout the room. Finding Richard before the door, he is shocked and denies the arrangement of his appointment with Bertha. Robert is suffering from obsessional frequenting and evades reality. His indecision, his untold word, his confessions, and finally his denial of the appointment with Bertha all indicate his uncertainty toward the desire of the Other, the Symbolic order, and the particular other. He speaks and reacts compulsively and passionately to conceal his desire. Furthermore, he denounces all the laws and gives priority to impulse. In Robert's words, "no law made by man is sacred before the impulse of passion" (*Exiles* 54).

Richard and Robert talk about the law of change and the law of death and their governing role in life. Richard draws law and desire as much close to each other as possible since law must be at the service of desire. But it is not so for Robert. He finds himself dead in the Symbolic order on account of the fact the first law which is change, change from one signifier to another metonymically, has accorded him what he wants. He is deluding himself in the sense that he cannot move beyond Bertha to other objects of desire. He achieves satisfaction and finds himself ended: "My life is finished – over" (*Exiles* 17). Death, not self-imposed death, is the logical end to desire. Zupancic states that "The law is that which gives life to desire, but in so doing, it also coerces the subject into taking the path of death" ("Perforated Sheet" 286). The subject must find diverse objects of desire otherwise law will push him/her toward death. Lacan argues that "The dialectical relationship between desire and the Law causes our desire to flare up only in relation to the Law, through which it becomes desire for death" (*Ethics* 84). Concerning the relevance of death and desire, Robert remarks: "A death! The supreme instant of life from which all coming life proceeds, the eternal law of nature herself" (*Exiles* 40). Robert thinks that being with Bertha is the starting point of his new life. That is why he considers her company as death.

After expressing his desires and wants to Bertha, after experiencing Bertha's body parts one after another, after meeting and having a private appointment with his lifelong object of desire, Robert decides to leave for abroad. He leaves the scene for Richard and Bertha at the end of the play since he is not able to fully recognize the meaning of both laws of nature.

The same process of seeking partial satisfaction extends to his appointment with Bertha at the end of Act Two, with the difference that Robert recognizes and realizes that desire is not quenchable. He again likens Bertha, this time as a whole, to earth. He remarks: "The rain falling. Summer rain on the earth. Night rain. The darkness and warmth and flood of passion. Tonight the earth is loved – loved and possessed. Her lover's arms around her. And she is silent. Speak, dearest" (*Exiles* 54). Robert's words have a second layer of meaning which refers to the mutual recognition and convergence of desire. Bertha is taken to be earth and raining implies the process of impregnation. He thinks that he has found lack and the object to fill that lack. He is ignorant of the fact that both, lack and the object to fill it, have a

linguistic and illusionary basis. Robert attains Bertha in the sense that she is merely the cause of his desire. In this regard, Lacan points out that “He is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire” (*Encore* 80). Robert seeks bodily satisfaction of his bodily demands. Robert and Bertha continue their dialogue as follows:

ROBERT. Are you happy? Tell me.

BERTHA. I am going now, Robert. It is very late. Be satisfied.

ROBERT. [*Caressing her hair.*] Not yet, not yet. Tell me, do you love me a little?

BERTHA. I like you, Robert. I think you are good. [*Half rising.*] Are you satisfied?

ROBERT. [*Detaining her, kisses her hair.*] Do not go, Bertha! There is time still. Do you love me too? I have waited a long time. Do you love us both – him and also me? Do you, Bertha? The truth! Tell me. Tell me with your eyes. Or speak! (*Exiles* 54-5)

His dialogue with Bertha represents the unquenchable aspect of desire. This second instance of likening Bertha to earth and wanting body parts point to Robert’s inability, unlike Richard, to move beyond Bertha. He is not able to free himself from the grips of the Other, from the grips of desire. According to Homer, “As subjects we are driven by insatiable desires” (90). Robert is the best manifestation of this aspect of desire in his encounter with Bertha. He wants more and more from Bertha. He gets satisfaction of his bodily pleasures, but not that of his desire and demand for love. Bertha does not respond to his request of love. She is merely the cause, one among many, of his desire. Bertha leaves the Second Act open ending.

It should be noted that Robert has come to the realization that one must seek recognition from diverse others. One must not restrict him/herself to one object of desire only since it ends in catastrophe. Maybe he is moving away, to the country, to find and refind that which can set his desire in its metonymical motion again. Prior to opting for “foreign parts,” he seeks the last resort of the fantasy to hold his desire for recognition from Bertha alive. Archie is Richard and Bertha’s child. Richard fantasizes having a sexual relationship with Bertha, the outcome of which is Archie. That is why, he considers himself as Archie’s father. Highlighting the dialectic of desire and demand, Robert could not fully achieve satisfaction and restricted himself to deferral from one body part to another. This focus on body part and metonymical deferral does not end in procreation; hence, Robert’s being a “fairy godfather” (*Exiles* 71). He is not his father proper according to the rules of the Symbolic order. This fairy ending signifies the working of Robert’s fantasy. Van Haute states that “the phantasy is the ultimate attempt of the subject to escape the essentially enigmatic and indeterminate character of desire” (*Against Adaptation* 132). Fantasy is the response of the subject to the desire of the Other, to the incompleteness of the Other, or to the lack of the Other. Robert turns to the fantasy of taking himself as the fairy father of Archie. He identifies with Richard as the husband of Bertha as his last option.

4. Conclusion

Richard and Robert sustain their desire through seeking diverse *object petit a*’s. It is through these partial and illusionary objects that desire is reproduced metonymically. Moreover, they take recourse to fantasy to lead their life in the Symbolic order. Joyce sets his male characters opposed to each other in order to firstly highlight their difference in terms of desire and secondly point to their ultimate goal through their fantasies in a Lacanian sense. Richard had different kinds of relationships with several women and, lastly, sidestepped all of them. Robert particularizes his desire to one woman, Bertha, and reduces her to body parts. Seeking one part after another signifies the metonymical reproduction of his desire. Richard opts for writing as the last surrogate in the chain of desire while Robert, after finding temporary satisfaction in Bertha’s body, goes to a foreign country. Robert is following Richard’s life and he is one step back all together.

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