ISSN 1753-2396 (Print)
ISSN 2753-328X (Online)

Journal of
Irish and Scottish Studies

Articles

James Joyce's Labyrinths of Love and Desire in *Exiles*

Author: Saman Zoleikhaei

Volume 10, Issue 2
Pp: 19-48
2020
Published on: 1st Jan 2020

1495
ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

James Joyce's Labyrinths of Love and Desire in *Exiles*

Saman Zoleikhaei

> Love is impotent, though mutual, because it is not aware that it is but the desire to be One, which leads us to the impossibility of establishing the relationship between 'them-two' (*la relation d'eux*). The relationship between them-two what? – them-two sexes. (Jacques Lacan, *Encore* 6)

> [D]esire 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*). (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* 580)

Known as a novelist throughout the world, James Joyce (1882-1941) tried his hand at writing a play early in his literary career. Joyce's play, *Exiles*, was written in 1914 and published in 1918. Ezra Pound frankly adjudicated that *Exiles* is not a sophisticated play. He believed that 'the effect of Ibsen is everywhere apparent; the play's many excellences are those of a novelist and not of a dramatist'.[1] Pound's comments show that Joyce's venture into dramaturgy was an off-road, but necessary, journey in his writing career. However, Ruth Bauerle contends 'We have neglected *Exiles* because we have largely misunderstood what Joyce was doing in the play'.[2] *Exiles* deals with Richard Rowan who has returned to Ireland after years living in exile. The association and affinity between Joyce and Richard renders *Exiles*, according to Joseph Valente, 'a public translation of the hitherto private experience'.[3] The passage of time alongside Harold Pinter's production of the play in 1970 set the scene

---

[1] Ezra Pound in Forrest Read (ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essay on Joyce* (New York, 1967), 249-50.

[2] Ruth Bauerle, 'Dancing a Pas de Deux in *Exiles*'s Ménage a Quatre; or, How Many Triangles Can You Make Out of Four Characters If You Take Them Two at a Time?' in Morris Beja and David Norris (eds), *Joyce in Hibernian Metropolis* (Ohio, 1996), 150.

[3] Joseph Valente, 'Between/Beyond Men: Male Feminism and Homosociality in *Exiles*' in idem, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice: Negotiating Sexual and Colonial Difference* (Cambridge, 1995), 132.

for the return of *Exiles* to critical attention. David G. Wright gives credits to Joyce's debt to Pinter. He states 'Joyce has been distinctly (if posthumously) indebted to Pinter for proving that *Exiles*, for all its alleged problems, can be successfully staged'.[4] The first production of the play in Dublin was staged in 1973.

James Joyce and Jacques Lacan are literary and psychoanalytical counterparts. Lacan, 'the most important psychoanalyst since Sigmund Freud', admitted his close affinity to Joyce in several ways, first through his intricate and arcane writing and secondly through his last seminar, which was devoted to Joyce's writing.[5] Lacan considered Joyce 'as the writer of enigma par excellence'[6] and came to the conclusion that the real can be written through Joyce's writing. Jean-Michel Rabaté highlights the affinity between Lacan and Joyce, stating 'Joyce's name came to mean more than the simple reference to a person or an author. For Joyce allowed Lacan to retranslate Freud once more and perhaps for the last time'.[7] Moreover Rabaté sees Joyce as 'a living signature' and 'founder of discursivity' for authenticating and bolstering the theories of Lacan.[8]

In what follows, I offer a Lacanian reading of *Exiles* that illustrates the movement of love from the Imaginary order to that of the Symbolic. From being a narcissistic feeling directed toward the ideal ego, love becomes selfless in the realm of language. Language makes knowledge possessed by one party a point of attraction and love. Then, the distinctions between love and desire and their linguistic counterparts namely metaphor and metonymy are given. Next, *agalma* as the representative of *object petit a* and a mark of love is elaborated. It is *via agalma* that the lover is loved by the beloved. Phallus is then defined as the source of *object petit a* that triggers love. After drawing this Lacanian theoretical framework, I analyse Richard's personality who is taken to be worthy of love on account of knowledge, *agalma* and phallus. Richard and Beatrice share lots of common ground since both of them pay attention to intellectualism. In the second part of the analysis, Robert and Bertha's love is investigated. Their

---

[4] David G. Wright, 'Joyce's Debt to Pinter', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 14 (1988), 517.

[5] Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (New York, 2005), 1.

[6] Jacques Lacan, *Jacques Lacan's Seminar XXIII: Le Sinthome 1975-1976*, Luke Thurston (trans), Unpublished Translation, 111. http://www.lacanonline.com/index/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Seminar-XXIII-The-Sinthome-Jacques-Lacan-Thurston-translation.pdf [Accessed 6 June 2018].

[7] Jean-Michel Rabaté. 'Aspace of Dumbillsilly: When Joyce Translates Lacan', *Critical Quarterly*, 48 (2006), 30.

[8] Ibid., 32.

love is shown to be bounded by the rules of the Symbolic order which tends toward bodily desires.

Love and Deception: Love is to be Loved

Being one of the most difficult concepts in history, love has obsessed writers from diverse disciplines for centuries. In Seminar XX, Lacan contends that 'what I say of love is assuredly that one cannot speak about it'.[9] Saying something sensible and meaningful about love was an impossibility for Lacan. He adds 'the moment one starts speaking about love, one descends into imbecility'.[10] Yet despite this, love is impossible out of speech. Since the subject is subjected to the chain of signifiers and therein lies desire, the subject's love is intertwined with desire.

Lacan argues that 'Love is a phenomenon which takes place on the imaginary level, and which provokes a veritable subduction of the symbolic, a sort of annihilation, of perturbation of the function of ego-ideal'.[11] This imaginary phenomenon intimates a relationship between egos, the main feature of which is sameness or difference. If the egos share similar grounds, there we have love, otherwise difference leads to hate. In the Imaginary realm, the subject identifies with an image in the other that is tantamount to ideal ego. Ideal ego titillates the subject's desire with the promise of unity and wholeness. It is identification with the ego in the Imaginary order that forms the basis of love. Renata Salecl contends that 'What is at work in falling in love is the recognition of the narcissistic image that forms from the substance of the ideal ego. When we fall in love, we position the person who is the object of our love in the place of the ideal ego. We love this person because of the perfection we have striven to reach for our own ego'.[12] The subject is seeking an ideal image of him/herself in the other. To put it in another way, 'It's one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made real on the imaginary level'.[13] Upon entering the Symbolic order, the subject recognises that s/he is split; therefore, provoked by love, s/he embarks on

---

[9] Jacques Lacan, *Encore* in idem, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972–1973*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), Bruce Fink (trans.) (New York, 1998), 12.

[10] Ibid., 17.

[11] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), John Forrester (trans.) (New York, 1988), 142.

[12] Renata Salecl, *(Per)versions of Love and Hate* (London, 1998), 13.

[13] Lacan, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, 142.

searching for unity and wholeness of the ideal ego in the Imaginary order.

The subject is nothing more than the split subject of lack. The moment the subject enters the realm of the signifiers, s/he is split and tagged with lack. Loving the other is one of the possible ways to address this lack. It is an attempt to fill this lack *via* appealing to the *Other* for love and recognition. As Lacan argues, love is 'to give what one does not have'.[14] What one does not have refers to *object petit a* which is the cause of desire. Lacan adds 'one cannot love except by becoming a non-haver, even if one has'.[15] Not having is attached to having, having a constitutive lack which lies at the heart of the subject. Language thus plays a key role in the formation of love. Lacan bridged the distance between love and language by likening love to a signifier which undergoes an endless deferral. He argues that 'love aims at being, namely, at what slips away most in language'.[16] It is language that enables the subject to demand love from the *Other* in order to be able to address the inherent lack in themselves.

The mechanism of using language enables the movement from Imaginary order to Symbolic order. In this transition from the Imaginary order to the Symbolic order, love undergoes a transition from love of the ideal ego to the love of the ego ideal. Situating ideal ego and ego ideal within his definition of love based on Imaginary and Symbolic orders, Lacan suggests that we 'learn to distinguish love as an imaginary passion from the active gift which it constitutes on the symbolic order. Love, the love of the person who desires to be loved, is essentially an attempt to capture the other in oneself, in oneself as object'.[17] Love, being filtered through language, turns into a demand for love. The subject never desists in demanding love from the Other since the Other as such is not capable of providing satisfaction proper. Lacan contends that '*I love you, but because inexplicably I love in you something more than you* – the object petit a – *I mutilate you*'.[18] It is this 'mutilation', this reduction of the Other to irreducible parts – tantamount to chain of signifiers – that

---

[14] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII: Transference 1960-1961*, Cormac Gallagher (Trans.), Unpublished Translation, 28. http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/THE-SEMINAR-OF-JACQUES-LACAN-VIII.pdf [accessed 6 June 2018]

[15] Ibid., 337.

[16] Lacan, *Encore*, 39.

[17] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), Alan Sheridan (trans.) (New York, 1977), 276.

[18] Ibid., 268.

sustains the lover's desire for demanding. 'Love demands love. It never stops demanding it. It demands it *encore. "Encore"* is the proper name of the gap in the Other from which the demand for love stems'.[19]

Another key point to remember is that love involves narcissistic imaginary relations since 'To love is, essentially, to wish to be loved'.[20] The conflict between loving and the wish to be loved gives rise to an illusion which lies at the core of love. It is believed that the lover loves in order to be loved. Salecl argues,

> In the relationship between the loving and the loved, two different logics are at work. First, the loving one perceives in the Other something that he or she does not have - the *object a*, which Lacan also names the *agalma*. The loving one therefore falls in love by presupposing that the loved one possesses this object, something that is in the loved one more than him- or herself. And the second logic concerns the loving subject's desire to become the object of love for the loved one.[21]

These two logics work together to make up the illusion of fusion and unity for the subject. Regarding Oneness, Lacan states 'We are but one … The idea of love begins with that'.[22] Unity is nothing more than the function of narcissism and illusion. Lacan adds 'The One everyone talks about all the time is, first of all, a kind of mirage of the One you believe yourself to be'.[23] The grips of love are there to fill the lack in the Other, or the One, which has been caused by separation from the Other, or Oneself. Love creates the illusion of reuniting with the Other, or the One, through fantasy. Lacan relates 'Love is impotent, though mutual, because it is not aware that it is but the desire to be One, which leads us to the impossibility of establishing the relationship between 'them-two' (*la relation d'eux*). The relationship between them-two what? – them-two sexes'.[24] There is no One for Lacan. He argues against the conception that love is directed toward becoming one with the beloved.

Love vs Desire: Metaphor vs Metonymy

Metonymic substitution goes back to 1916 when Ferdinand de Saussure

[19] Lacan, *Encore*, 4.
[20] Lacan, *Four Fundamental*, 253.
[21] Salecl, *Love and Hate*, 46.
[22] Lacan, *Encore*, 47.
[23] Ibid., 47.
[24] Ibid., 6.

identified a distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Sigmund Freud already had a similar dichotomy for mechanisms operating in the unconscious. In addition, Roman Jakobson had touched upon this aspect of language. He considered language to be governed by two poles namely: metaphor and metonymy. Lacan read Freudian displacement and condensation in light of the linguistic theories of Saussure and Jakobson. Lacan drew on these three and related the unconscious to the structure of language in his 'Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious'. In this work, Lacan viewed metonymy based on 'word-to-word' relation and metaphor as 'One word for another'.[25] Both metaphor and metonymy work by replacing one term for another. As Russell Grigg notes, 'Lacan uses "metonymy" in this sense of a case of substitution metaphor in which special relations hold and "metaphor" in the sense of substitution metaphors where these relations are absent'.[26] Metonymy is itself a kind of metaphor. The warp and woof of language consist of metaphor and metonymy for Lacan. The functioning of language wholly depends on these two axes. The paradigmatic axis is vertical, and has functions based on selection and substitution. It is similarity that makes metaphor possible. On the other hand, the horizontal axis, the syntagmatic axis, works according to laws of combination and contiguity.

Metonymy refers to the process of establishing connection and contiguity between two disparate elements. Metonymic displacement is like deferral from one signifier to another. Desire has a similar mechanism. In other words, desire emerges only in the movement from one signifier to another signifier and it is constantly deferred in achieving its object. It is subjected to endless processes of deferral because desire, according to Lacan, is always 'desire for something else'.[27] As soon as the subject attains illusionary *object petit a*, the mere substitute and cause of desire, s/he feels temporarily satisfied. The *object petit a* loses its desirability however and gives its place to another object. Lacan argues 'man's desire is a metonymy'.[28] After temporary satisfaction, the subject falls into the trap of experiencing desire again. According to Lacan, 'the brook of desire runs as if along a branch line of the signifying chain'.[29] The signifying chain opens up a gap which forms desire. Lacan adds 'the subject finds the

[25] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, Bruce Fink (ed.) (New York, 1981), 421, 422.

[26] Grigg, 'Lacan and Jakobson: Metaphor and Metonymy' in Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy* (Albany, 2008), 160.

[27] Lacan, *Écrits*, 431.

[28] Ibid., 439.

[29] Ibid., 520.

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'.[30] The desire is for the thing that we think the Other lacks. 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 object to object one after the other, hence the function of metonymy.

On the other hand, the structure of love and metaphor are identical since both are based on substitution. Lacan argues 'It is in so far as the function where it occurs of the *erastes*, of the loving one, who is the subject of lack, takes the place of, substitutes itself for the function of the *eromenos* who is the object, the beloved object, that there is produced the signification of love'.[31] According to Lacan 'love as signification … is a metaphor'.[32] The metaphorical aspect of love refers to substitution in which the lover, suffering from lack, acts as a surrogate for the beloved. The beloved in this formula is the object and the signifier of lack. Love comes into being out of an articulation of desire. Love is static and unchanging in its search for a partner whereas desire is seeking something else metonymically. Love is based in the wish to be loved and desire makes the subject desire to be the object of the Other's desire. Both love and desire follow an identical mechanism and are insatiable as such. Concerning the relationship between love and desire, Lacan comments,

> Because if desire at its root, in its essence is the desire of the Other, it is here properly speaking that there lies the mainspring of the birth of love, if love is what happens in this object towards whom we stretch out our hands by our own desire and who, at the moment that it breaks into flame, allows there to appear for an instant this response, this other hand, the one which stretches out towards you as his desire.[33]

In line with the relationship between love and desire, Renata Salecl comments 'the other becomes the object of love, the desired object, precisely because he or she is a split subject. What is at stake in love is thus not simply that the loving subject produces the fantasy of this mythical object and transposes it onto the loved one; what makes the loved one worthy of love is that he or she

[30] Ibid., 525.
[31] Lacan, *Transference*, 34.
[32] Ibid., 33.
[33] Ibid., 176.

is also a desiring subject'.[34] It is desire as such that makes love come into being. As a result, a subject without desire is unable to experience love fully in the Symbolic order. Ehsan Azari states 'Where desire reproduces itself as paradise lost in a metonymic structure, love creates an illusion of paradise found in a metaphoric structure'.[35] Desire has no object but reproduction of desire. Desire aims at reproduction of a state of pure desire through a metonymic process. On the other hand, love aims at cutting the metonymic process and fixating on an object.

Give and Love What One Does Not Have: Transference of *Agalma* and Phallus

The term 'transference' was used by Freud to designate the displacement from one idea to another. Freud altered its meaning in order to signify the patient's relationship with the analyst. Transference was a mechanism which drove the psychoanalytic session forward for Freud. Drawing this concept from Freud and criticising the ego-psychologist for considering transference solely in relation to affect, Lacan gave a dialectical coloring to his definition of transference. In his 'Presentation on Transference' Lacan argues 'transference does not fall under any mysterious property of affectivity and, even when it reveals itself in an emotional [*emoi*] guise, this guise has a meaning only as a function of the dialectical moment at which it occurs'.[36] Transference is closely related to strong feelings, love and hate among others, but its essence lies in intersubjective relations. It is through relation, through 'asymmetry between subjects', that the subject comes into being.[37] Lacan contends 'I intersubjectivate you, you intersubjectivate me'.[38] The dialectic of give and take paves the way for the formation of human being as subject.

Lacan devoted *Seminar VIII* to reading Plato's *Symposium*, which deals with 'the problem of love'.[39] Socrates and Alcibiades's dialogues provide Lacan with the needed material for reading love as transference. Lacan took the relationship between these two as the relationship between analyst and analysand, and he identified its foundations in an act of transference. Transference is there to illuminate what the subject lacks and how to make up

[34] Salecl, *Love and Hate*, 46.

[35] Ehsan Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature: Desire, Jouissance, and the Sinthome in Shakespeare, Donne, Joyce and Ashbery* (London, 2008), 50.

[36] Lacan, *Écrits*, 184.

[37] Lacan, *Transference*, 2.

[38] Ibid., 8.

[39] Ibid., 30.

for the lack *via* love which is taken to be inadequate. According to Lacan, 'the moment of tipping over, the moment of reversal where from the conjunction of desire with its object *qua* inadequate, there must emerge the signification which is called love'.[40] The beloved is not enough for the lover who is desiring more and more. Desiring more and more is reversed, enacted in the repeated inadequacy of the object of desire, and gives rise to love.

Plato's *Symposium* also brought to light the connection between love and truth for Lacan. Lorenzo Chiesa argues that *Seminar VIII* is not primarily concerned with the nature of love but focuses on 'the question of love's relationship with the empirical experience of transference in psychoanalysis'.[41] Following Lacan and in the same line of thought, Bruce Fink argues 'Since Plato's time, it has been clear that oral transmission engenders love and that love and knowledge are not unrelated'.[42]

Love, being an illusion of unity and oneness, hinders the successful process of analysis which is named transference. Jacques-Alain Miller notes 'Love in psychoanalysis is transference. The very concept of love, its questions of expression in psychoanalysis, is directed by the concept and problematics of transference so that love seems to be only displacement – a case of mistaken identity. Always, I love someone because I'm in love with somebody else'.[43] The lover assumes that the other party has knowledge; hence, a mistaken identification. The lover admits the lack in him/herself and takes the Other as the possessor of what s/he demands. What the lover seeks is the truth about him/herself in the Other, knowledge of which brings about transference and illusion. Drawing from Lacan, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan states that 'love or transference is a signifier, a relationship to knowledge, to what one lacks in one's "self" knowledge and thus loves in the Other'.[44] It is the working of lack that sets the subject in pursuit of knowledge through love. Love is there to bridge the gap between knowledge and the Other. Lacan argues 'I love the person I assume to have knowledge'.[45] The discourse of love is closely knit with that of knowledge.

---

[40] Ibid., 29.

[41] Lorenzo Chiesa, 'Le Ressort de l'amour: Lacan's Theory of Love in his Reading of Plato's *Symposium*', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 11 (2006), 61.

[42] Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely* (Minneapolis, 2004), 68.

[43] Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Love's Labyrinths', http://www.lacan.com/frameVIII1.htm [accessed 6 June 2018].

[44] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: Or, What Is Love?', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88 (1989), 749.

[45] Lacan, *Encore*, 67.

Transference makes us believe that the analyst, or the beloved, possesses hidden treasure. It is through knowledge of this illusionary possession of *agalma*, the object cause of desire, that transference and, by extension, love occurs. In *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* and *Seminar VIII: Transference*, Lacan moved beyond exploration of psychoanalytical notions. He went through philosophical texts by Aristotle and Kant for the first of these seminars and by Plato for the second. Lacan viewed Plato's *Symposium* as a collection of analytic sessions between Alcibiades and Socrates about the structure of love, the significance of desire and the mechanism of transference. Socrates has some sort of priceless treasure to which Alcibiades is attracted.

Lacan availed of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades and formulated a transferential relationship between analyst and analysand to locate *agalma* as the originating source of love. Love arises out of locating an object of desire in the Other which is called *agalma*. It should be noted that Lacan took *agalma* from this relation and named it *object petit a*.

Lacan defines *object petit a* in terms of Plato's *agalma*. Being the cause of desire, *agalma* refers to something 'in you more than you'.[46] *Object petit a* is worthless in itself and it is the mechanism of desire that bestows value on it. Concerning *agalma*, Slavoj Žižek states that it is 'the secret treasure that guarantees the minimum of fantasmatic consistency of the subject's being, that is to say the object *a* (*objet petit a*), as the object of fantasy, that "something in me more than myself" on account of which I perceive myself as "worthy of the Other's desire"'.[47] *Agalma* makes intersubjective relationships possible and makes subjects love each other.

Agalma is the Lacanian *object petit a* which refers to what the lover assumes to lack and it is supposed to be located in the Other. *Agalma*, in the words of Salecl, 'emerges at the point where the Other is barred, where the Other is a split subject'.[48] The lover suffers from illusion and takes the beloved to possess the *agalma* which is considered to be something more than the beloved. Following Lacan, Fink states 'we love in our partner something that is beyond our partner and that love involves giving what we do not have'.[49] *Object petit a* is beyond the partner and it does not have any concrete manifestation. That is why as such it cannot be given to another subject.

---

[46] Lacan, *Four Fundamental*, 263.

[47] Slavoj Žižek, 'Seven Veils of Phantasy' in idem, *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Dany Nobus (ed.) (New York, 1999), 194.

[48] Salcel, *Love and Hate*, 47.

[49] Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, 18.

Lacan locates *agalma* as a precious object inside the subject. He states 'What is important, is what is inside. *Agalma* can indeed mean "ornament or adornment", but it is here above all "a precious object, a jewel, something which is inside"'.[50] The subject defines a relationship with this object in order to intersubjectivate him/herself. Lacan believes that 'if this object impassions you it is because within, hidden in it, there is the object of desire, *agalma* (the weight, the thing that makes it interesting to know where this famous object is, to know its function and to know where it operates just as much in inter- as in intrasubjective)'.[51]

From another perspective, love is about exchange of lack. Love depends on what the other lacks which gives an illusionary coloring to the exchange of *agalma*. Taking lack for granted is the precondition for the emergence of love. Lorenzo Chiesa contends 'by desiring *agalma*, or, in Lacanese, the *object petit a*, one actually desires the (lacking) object which causes desire to desire all other objects'.[52] What the lover loves in the beloved lies beyond what s//he is; in other words, the lover loves the lack in the beloved. The beloved must incite this love by pretending to give what s/he does not have. The beloved changes from a mere object to the subject of love. When Lacan tagged love as metaphor, he had this change of position in mind. The lover as a subject who suffers from lack, through a metaphorical substitution, changes into the loved object. To make it more Lacanian, the lover gives the place of narcissistic love to lack. Therefore, according to Lacan, in a love relationship proper 'there are a minimum of three'.[53] Chiesa adds 'a real love relationship is a *ménage a trois* between a couple of lacking subjects and *agalma/object petit a*'.[54] Both subjects in a love relationship come to this conclusion that what they want in the Other is not the subject him/herself, but an object in him/her more than him/herself.

Last but not least, men and women are desired and loved for what they lack. The mechanism of love revolves around the fantasy and illusion that the subject possesses phallus. Moreover, it is giving what one does not have, the phallus that sets love into motion. Phallus is the signifier of desire of the Other. The subject wants to be the signifier, the phallus, of the Other's desire. 'The Other's desire', according to Fink, 'is hidden from us or presented to us

---

[50] Lacan, *Transference*, 116.
[51] Ibid., 124.
[52] Lorenzo Chiesa, 'Le Ressort', 69.
[53] Lacan, *Transference*, 115.
[54] Chiesa, 'Le Ressort', 71.

by a signifier, an intangible signifier: the phallus'.[55] What the Other wants and desires is veiled by this signifier. Phallus is a signifier among other signifiers, but it is privileged since it signifies lack, defines sexual difference and anchors the chain of signification. Lacan contends that 'The phallus as a signifier provides the ratio [*raison*] of desire'.[56] Apart from desire, this signifier structures the relationship between man and woman. According to Lacan 'These relations revolve around a being and a having'.[57] Each partner firstly wants to possess the phallus and secondly desires to be the phallus, the object cause of desire, for the Other.

The gap between the body and the signifier of lack which is the cause of desire is bridged through phallus. Lacan relates 'one cannot strike the phallus, because the phallus, even the real phallus, is a *ghost*'.[58] The phallus is not the genital organ. It designates a signifier, a master signifier which governs relations and establishes subject positions. In addition, the phallus is not an object; the phallus is there to order and regulate *jouissance* as phallic.

Simple to Love, Hard to be in Love

All the four major characters in James Joyce's *Exiles* are entangled with love. It is love as such that overshadows their relationship and makes them adopt different attitudes. It is through love that Richard and Beatrice on the one hand and Robert and Bertha on the other hand want to establish and give voice to their subjectivity. Richard and Beatrice do their best to experience ideal love; but, it fails on account of third parties like Bertha. Robert and Bertha tend toward physical love and achieve it to some extent. Similarly, their relationship fails since Bertha is not wholly and heartily with Robert and instead only cedes to his demands. Again, a third party, Richard, disrupts this affair. It is not only unintentional but unwanted since Richard has given Bertha freedom. It is Bertha's mindset about Richard that brings him into his affair with Robert.

Following Sheldon R. Brivic, I divide the characters into two groups.[59] Brivic categorised Richard and Beatrice as spiritual and mental characters and took Robert and Bertha to be physical characters. I follow the same division

[55] Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, 32.

[56] Lacan, *Écrits* 581.

[57] Ibid., 582.

[58] Jacques Lacan, Jacques-Alain Miller and James Hulbert, 'Desire and Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet', *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977), 50.

[59] Sheldon R. Brivic, 'Structure and Meaning in Joyce's *Exiles*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 6 (1968), 29–52.

since Richard and Beatrice show an ideal and intellectual love which is totally different from the physical, bodily love of Robert and Bertha. The images associated with Robert and Bertha are material and represent physical life. Richard is interested in Beatrice and tends toward a movement upward into the spirit. The other couple in the play indicate a movement downward into the matter and care for sensual and physical tendencies.

The opening moments of the play explore Richard and Beatrice's encounter. This intellectual pair are bookish and interested in reflection. Beatrice blushes when seeing Richard and is dubious about her affairs with both Richard and Robert, her ex-lover and cousin. This state of uncertainty relates to her lack of knowledge both about herself and the other characters. She is caught up between Imaginary order and Symbolic order. Her love has not matured from its early stage in the Imaginary order toward the realm of language; the transition has not been completed. Richard talks about painting and writing, which are about Beatrice. These artistic endeavors signify Richard's attempts to extricate love from the bonds of the Symbolic order. Richard assumes that the only person able to accompany him in moving beyond is Beatrice. But Beatrice, through her indifference to Richard's painting, shows us that she is still in the realm of signifiers. What she intends to do is merely see Richard. After enumerating diverse reasons for her coming, such as her interest in Richard and their letters to each other, Beatrice gives a subversive answer: 'Otherwise I could not see you'.[60] All the reasons are true to some extent, but they are secondary for Beatrice. She knows that Richard possesses the *agalma* and wants to situate herself nearer to him, either directly or indirectly. But Beatrice also knows that the status of *agalma* is illusionary and encourages the other characters to seek the object of desire in themselves. Moreover, 'seeing' pushes her more toward love in the Imaginary order she has in mind. Beatrice is in favor of that kind of love, hence her dismissal of worldly affairs and her devotion to religiosity. Their relationship is 'a kind of emblematic microcosm of the play's ethical structure'.[61] None of them talks about sensual and physical tendencies although Richard had moved to the extremes in sexual affairs in the past. What Richard has in mind in his relationship with Beatrice is a marriage of minds.

Beatrice believes that it is hard to know anybody but oneself. She does not know Richard in the real sense of the word despite having enjoyed a long relationship with him. The problem with their knowledge of each other relates

[60] James Joyce, *Exiles* (Mineola, 2002), 6.
[61] Valente, 'Between/Beyond Men', 135.

to their means of contact. They have been writing to each other for years. Writing is composed of signifiers and therefore, their knowledge of each other is filtered through language. They can never know each other owing to the slippery nature of language. Lacan argues that 'there are two ways to make the sexual relationship fail'.[62] One of them is epithalamion and the other one is a love letter. Richard and Beatrice have been exchanging letters for around nine years. What Richard is going to do is making the sexual relationship fail in his own particular way in order to able to move beyond. Richard has experienced a sexual relationship and knows that it provides him with phallic *jouissance*.

Richard and Beatrice are looking for Other *jouissance*, both in their own way. Beatrice has devoted her life to 'gloom, seriousness, righteousness' in Robert's words.[63] It is this devotion to religion and convents as 'somewhere' that may bring peace and traces of Other *jouissance* to Beatrice. This melancholic state of life is related to feminine *jouissance* which is based on total devotion to God and immersing oneself in asceticism. Beatrice detaches herself from the world to experience a kind of elevated happiness. Salecl argues that 'the enjoyment a woman finds in melancholic seclusion from the world is precisely a form of feminine *jouissance*'.[64] Such a sad and secluded love is not unrelated to love. Salecl adds 'immersion into sadness or even self-injury often happens when the woman loses love'.[65] She loves God and loving God equals loving oneself in Lacan. This separates Beatrice from the others and elevates her onto a different plane in Richard's eyes. Unlike Bertha who tends toward bodily contact and love in the Symbolic, Beatrice is in favor of intellect and ideal love. None of them has the potentiality to give Richard a mixture of these two kinds of love, hence Richard's dismissal of both of them and his departure toward the realm of writing at the end of the play.

Not only is Beatrice censured for paying attention to 'ideas and ideas', but Richard is criticised for planning 'an intellectual conversation' by Bertha.[66] Bertha testifies to the intellectual and platonic character of their love. Following Plato, Ragland-Sullivan states 'Love attends two Aphrodites or Venuses, Pausanias explains that the celestial one leads to love of the mind

---

[62] Lacan, *Encore*, 56–7.

[63] Joyce, *Exiles*, 13.

[64] Renata Salecl, Renata. 'Love Anxieties' in Suzanne Barnard and Bruce Fink (eds), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality* (New York, 2002), 95.

[65] Ibid., 96.

[66] Joyce, *Exiles*, 64, 45.

and philosophy, and the vulgar one stimulates love of the body (sexuality)'.[67] Richard's love affair with Beatrice lacks the 'vulgar' aspect, while his love for Bertha is devoid of any 'celestial' tinge. Bertha documents Richard's 'celestial' love and his avidness to engage in philosophy and intellectuality when she accuses him of giving freedom to her in order to justify freeing himself to be with Beatrice for their intellectual conversation.

Regarding the relationship between freedom and possession in love, Frank Budgen argues that 'the Joycean conception of sexual love (at any rate on the male side) is an irreconcilable conflict between a passion for absolute possession and a categorical imperative of absolute freedom'.[68] This pinpoints Richard and Robert's diverse approach to love. In Richard's love relationships, priority is given to freedom rather than possession. Robert relates the following to Richard, 'I love her and I will take her from you, however I can, because I love her'.[69] There is for Robert a kind of enjoyment in possession which correlates with the mechanism of love. Love is not related to possession for Richard and he repudiates Robert's dictum. Richard says, 'I am afraid that that longing to possess a woman is not love'.[70] Richard's definition of love no longer relates to possession of a body and to bodily contact. Love concerns giving on the one hand and wishing the beloved well on the other hand. Richard defines love for Robert as, '[*Hesitatingly.*] To wish her well'.[71]

Richard puts the emphasis on freedom on account of incertitude. He asks Robert rhetorically, '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?'[72] This lack of certainty about the brain and the body of the beloved is intensified in the subsequent encounter between Richard and Bertha. Bertha insists on sharing what happened between her and Robert. Richard contends that he is not able to know about the reality and truth of what happened despite the fact Bertha is going to tell him everything. According to Vicki Mahaffey, 'love depends upon an awareness of the final unknowability of the beloved'.[73] Richard must not and cannot achieve knowledge of Bertha since it is the prerequisite for his love. In line

---

[67] Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference', 733.

[68] Quoted in Valente, 'Between/Beyond Men', 133.

[69] Joyce, *Exiles*, 36.

[70] Ibid., 37.

[71] Ibid., 37.

[72] Ibid., 37.

[73] Vicki Mahaffey, 'Love, Race, and *Exiles*: The Bleak Side of *Ulysses*.' *Joyce Studies Annual* (2007), 106.

with his definition of love, Richard accentuates giving in such a relationship. He believes that it is through giving and freeing one's beloved that possession and love comes to realisation. Physical possession is a mere obstacle for him. As Richard states: 'But when you give it, you have given it. No robber can take it from you. [*He bends his head and presses his son's hand against his cheek.*] It is yours for ever when you have given it. It will be yours always. That is to give.'[74]

Lacan defines love as 'to give what one does not have'.[75] What one does not have refers to *object petit a* which is the cause of love. He adds 'one cannot love except by becoming a non-haver, even if one has'.[76] Not having is attached to having, having a constitutive lack which lies at the heart of the subject. Structurally the subject has nothing to give but his/her lack. It is his/her lack that is supposed to be exchanged. Richard knows that to give in love equals giving what one does not really have.

This mechanism means moving toward being the phallus for the Other. Richard is taken to 'be' and 'have' the phallus and it is on account of this that he is wanted and desired by all the characters in the play. Jeanne Wolff Bernstein argues 'what we are loved for is a trait, that we may or may not possess, that the other takes as an invitation into which to project his fantasy of fullness/oneness/completeness'.[77] Richard's penchant to write and to be mysterious make him seem to possess the *agalma*. The other three major characters take Richard to be a whole universe apart and different. First and foremost, Richard is the one who possesses the phallus for Bertha. Bertha calls him 'Dick' thirty times in the play. Using 'Dick' signifies the literal and concrete aspect of phallus. Richard is a variation of phallus. As phallus is in the Symbolic order to establish structure and meaning and without its presence signification fails, Richard plays the key and axial role in the play. It is in relation to Richard's life and work that the other characters define themselves. Bertha sees herself in urgent need of 'Dick', Richard, to tell her what to do. Since she views Richard as representative of the concrete aspect of phallus, her love is defined as Symbolic. Bertha demands Richard to lead her life in the Symbolic order. She says, 'Dick, my God, tell me what you wish me to do?'[78] Richard is Bertha's 'god' and the one who has the power to give sense and meaning to her life. Bertha is looking for the phallus which would secure her position in the Symbolic order

[74] Joyce, *Exiles*, 25.

[75] Lacan, *Transference*, 28.

[76] Ibid., 337.

[77] Jeanne Wolff Bernstein, 'Love, Desire, *Jouissance*: Two out of Three Ain't Bad', *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 16 (2006), 720.

[78] Joyce, *Exiles*, 46.

unaware of the fact that it does not exist. Richard mentions explicitly that he has given the phallus which he does not have from the very beginning. Bertha is not satisfied and thinks of seeking phallus in others. Late in the play she comes to the realization that Richard was right. She stops seeking phallus and does her best to be the phallus for Richard. Bertha admits that she has given up everything for Richard in her life: 'I gave up everything for him, religion, family, my own peace'.[79] Bertha thinks that she has given a lot in her love and life but has not received as much in return. She has not received the same love and generosity. Failing in her transferential relationship with Richard, Bertha complies with Robert's sensual and bodily demands and voices her anger to Richard. What she needs is knowledge, knowledge of Richard's world and life. Bertha ironically rejects Beatrice's words about her happiness with Richard since she has no knowledge: 'Happy! When I do not understand anything that he writes, when I cannot help him in any way, when I don't even understand half of what he says to me sometimes!'[80] The transferential relationship fails for Bertha and she comes to think of hatred several times in the play, which is a natural consequence of that failure according to Lacan. She thinks that Richard, Beatrice and Robert hate her. Bertha's problem with love is that she pays attention only to the physical aspects of love which is evidenced both in her habit of calling Richard 'Dick' and in her encounter with Robert. To put in in Lacanian terms, she is absorbed in love in the Symbolic order and has forgotten the Imaginary aspects of love.

The great failure in love happens for Richard. He cannot satisfy himself with Beatrice who represents the Imaginary aspects of love. Furthermore, he is unable to get along with Bertha who tends toward love in the Symbolic order. He wants both of them at the same time. Richard, Joyce's alter ego, dialectically synthetises Bertha and Beatrice, representatives of love in the Imaginary order and the Symbolic order, into a wound of doubt. Richard goes on the strand in the morning and relates, 'The isle is full of voices. Yours also. *Otherwise I could not see you*, it said. And her voice'.[81] 'Yours' refers to Beatrice and 'her voice' is that of Bertha. Richard only frees himself through the unification of these two kinds of love. Richard wants to 'be dishonored for ever in love and in lust'; in other words, he wants to be freed from Bertha and Beatrice.[82] Consequently, Richard wants 'To be for ever a shameful creature and to build

[79] Ibid., 64.
[80] Ibid., 62.
[81] Ibid., 63.
[82] Ibid., 42.

up my soul again out of the ruins of its shame'.[83] Richard's penchant for dishonor and shame is in line with his 'motive deeper still' which signifies the dialectical synthesis of his love for Bertha and Beatrice.

Not only his rescue but also his survival wholly depends on a self-imposed and intentional act of masochistic suffering. Lacan contends '*jouissance* which is real comprises masochism. Masochism is the major form of enjoyment given by the real'.[84] Richard's *jouissance* is related to masochism. He enjoys listening to the details of the encounter between his wife and Robert; in addition, he enjoys the hardness of his mother's heart. Richard's love is fulfilled when he masochistically entertains his doubt. Jean-Michel Rabaté believes that 'love is fulfilled by the immolation of sexual desire on the altar of doubt'.[85] It is through this subversion of desire in the marital relationship and love in the ex-marital affair that Richard extricates himself from the hierarchy of love and desire. Unfortunately, Bertha remains caught up there; hence she has a nostalgic penchant for the ideal moment of her love.

Just like Beatrice and Bertha who, each in their own particular way, take Richard to possess the *agalma*, Robert adopts a similar attitude. Unlike the female characters who believe that Richard is in possession of the phallus as *agalma*, Robert identifies a different object as representative of *agalma*, and hence his desire to 'rob' Richard. According to Lacan 'the agalma is something in terms of which one can in short capture divine attention'.[86] Robert thinks that Richard has experienced such a divine state of life. Robert contends that Richard is totally a different man and his presence is needed for the life of Ireland. Joyce wrote, 'ROBERT: You have fallen from a higher world, Richard, and you are filled with fierce indignation, when you find that life is cowardly and ignoble.'[87] Richard is a real man in every sense for Robert. He is the 'scholar' or 'literary personality' suitable for the chair of romance literature and must live in Ireland to help her people. What makes Richard more and more distinct for Robert is Bertha who is considered to be his 'work'. Robert does everything possible to possess Bertha, Richard's supposed *agalma*.

Delusions and Illusions of Love and Desire

Robert and Bertha believe that the other two, Richard and Beatrice, enjoy

[83] Ibid., 42.

[84] Lacan, *Le Sinthome*, 63.

[85] Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'The Modernity of *Exiles*' in Christen van Boheemen (ed.), *Joyce, Modernity, and its Mediation* (Amsterdam, 1989), 31.

[86] Lacan, *Transference*, 121.

[87] Joyce, *Exiles*, 23.

more. This is the dramatic force of the play. Robert and Bertha tend to their bodily desires and take the other two as possessing *agalma*. Robert believes that Richard is from a higher world and is the creator of Bertha as such. Bertha reflects on Beatrice in being what she herself is not.

Unlike desire which seeks something metonymically, love revolves around the same thing. Love is static and unchanging in its search for a partner; hence Robert has been loving Bertha for more than nine years. It is the image of Bertha that has kept Robert's desire alive all these years. Prior to being refused by Bertha, his desire is dormant and inactive. It is her departure that sets his desire into motion. Fink argues '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'.[88] His desire is provoked by Bertha's departure, a particular mode of refusal. 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.'[89]

This is the starting point of the blockage of Robert's desire and his seeking of substitutes for Bertha's absence. Her absence provides him with the necessary ground for projection of his desire. The memory of the departure of Richard and Bertha fulfills the function of fantasy for Robert. Robert defines his relation to an object which is physically missing and this sets the scene for the working of fantasy and love. 'For romantic love to emerge,' according to Salecl, 'the real person need not be present; what is necessary is the existence of the image'.[90] Bertha's departure incites Robert's fantasy and Robert likens her to a stone, a flower, the moon, a statue, a bird, and the kingdom of heaven among other images. This shows the working of his fantasy to reproduce his desire. It is Bertha's image as such that helps Robert to continue. Robert shares one of the most romantic images he had in Bertha's absence. Their words are illustrative:

> BERTHA: Why did you not forget me?
> ROBERT: [*Smiles bitterly.*] 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![91]

---

[88] Brice Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge MA, 1997), 50.

[89] Joyce, *Exiles*, 52.

[90] Salecl, *Love and Hate*, 13.

[91] Joyce, *Exiles*, 53.

This image of Bertha's departure has been influential all these years. Love is an illusionary getaway from desire. Therefore, love helps the subject to escape the traumas of desire since 'Desire for the always distant other is traumatic, since that distance can never be bridged'.[92] Robert and Bertha are seeking the refuge of love to defend themselves against the grip of desire.

Theo Dombrowski argues 'part of the point of the play seems to be that love, especially when sought as an ideal, creates an insoluble problem: love purports to be selfless but by its very nature involves affection that is self-directed and possessive'.[93] For Richard love involves selflessness and relates to freedom. On the other hand, Robert tends to give priority to self-direction and possession. The tendency to possess is in line with the desire for recognition. The subject needs and pursues 'confirmation of the other's attitude'.[94] Robert wants the recognition and attention of Bertha:

> 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.[95]

Bertha explicitly voices her love for Richard and complies with his demands one after the other. What Robert is seeking is possession of the object of other's desire. 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'.[96] Robert has been attracted to the object of Richard's love, Bertha. Robert's desire to possess Bertha is the major obstacle in his love. Robert tells Richard about his wish to possess Bertha several times

---

[92] Janine Utell, 'Beyond the Margins of Marriage in *Exiles* and *Giacomo Joyce*' in idem, *James Joyce and the Revolt of Love: Marriage, Adultery, Desire* (New York, 2010), 51.

[93] Theo Q. Dombrowski, '*Exiles*: The Problem of Love', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 15 (1978), 118.

[94] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge MA, 1992), 6.

[95] Joyce, *Exiles*, 55.

[96] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.) Russell Grigg (trans.) (New York, 1993), 39.

in the play and disarms Richard:

> ROBERT: [*Diffidently, but bravely*.] Do you think you have rights over her – over her heart?
> RICHARD: None.[97]

Robert contends that both man and woman must experience diverse relationships in order to find true love. He believes that Bertha's departure was not her decision. He asks Richard,

> ROBERT: [*Also leans forward, quietly*.] Richard, have you been quite fair to her? It was her own free choice, you will say. But was she really free to choose? She was a mere girl. She accepted all that you proposed.[98]

Robert accuses Richard of not giving enough liberty to Bertha. Apart from self-direction and the desire to be recognised by Bertha, Robert is endeavoring to possess her. At the end of Act Two when they are alone with each other and their passion is increasing, Robert metaphorizes Bertha:

> ROBERT. 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![99]

The metaphorical aspect of Robert's love signifies not only the possession but also the reduction of Bertha. 'Her lover' refers to Robert himself and Bertha is likened to earth. In Lacan, love is intertwined with metaphor. The tendency to metaphorize is clearly traceable in Robert. He likens his love and beloved to different natural objects throughout the play. Robert tells Bertha that her face is 'a wild flower blowing in a hedge'.[100] Robert moves further in his use of metaphor and observes, 'I think of you always – as something beautiful and distant – the moon or some deep music'.[101] Robert's focus on metaphor and likening Bertha to diverse objects is closely related to his form of love

---

[97] Joyce, *Exiles*, 37.
[98] Ibid., 20.
[99] Ibid., 54.
[100] Ibid., 15.
[101] Ibid., 14.

and his conception of beauty and creativity. Ragland-Sullivan argues that 'the function of metaphor – that which substitutes one thing for another – lies at the heart of the human ability to know, to love, to move, to copulate, to reproduce anything new and creative'.[102] Robert repeats his metaphors several times in the play and argues in favor of beauty. Bertha is 'beautiful' in his eyes and it is quite natural, according to Robert, to kiss that which is beautiful. He explicitly wants 'long long sweet kisses' from Bertha: 'Your eyes. Your lips. All your divine body'.[103] He gives the utmost priority to Bertha's body. It opens up a window to the Real for him. According to Ragland-Sullivan 'there is a truth of the body that speaks a language of the Real, a language of symptoms (*object a*) and love (ideals)'.[104] He is a winner in this regard since Bertha opens up a new pathway for him.

Robert is absorbed in desiring body parts of Bertha. Love on account of metonymical desire paves the ground for the illusion of unity for Robert. Ehsan Azari relates 'Desire is sublimated in a love that creates an illusion of unity'.[105] Robert is engaged in such a relationship with Bertha and moves toward illusion. What is problematic for him is his unending search for more. He does not feel satisfied. Such a zest for more opens up the possibility of an act of love between Robert and Bertha at the end of act two. He wants to consummate his relationship. Robert believes that 'Affection between man and woman must come to that'.[106] 'That' refers to 'bodily union' in the play. We are not given any clue whether any sexual act happened or not. This points to the impossibility of sexual relation in the Symbolic realm. Following Lacan, Chiesa states that love is 'a fictional, unifying palliative that compensates for the absence of the sexual relationship'.[107] Robert is unaware that a sexual relationship is foreclosed from the realm of the signifier.

Desire provokes the subject toward becoming One and it is through the mechanism of love that One is resulted out of two. Lacan is explicit in telling us that one plus one never equal two but remains two times one. Robert is wrong in thinking of union and fusion in love. Ruth Bauerle finds Bertha in Robert's full name, *i.e.* Robert Hand. Written with no space between his name and last name, Bertha is in Ro*bertha*nd.[108] This shows Robert's love and

[102] Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference', 732.
[103] Joyce, *Exiles*, 17.
[104] Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference', 730.
[105] Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature*, 127.
[106] Joyce, *Exiles*, 38.
[107] Chiesa, 'Le Ressort', 65.
[108] Ruth Bauerle, 'Dancing a Pas de Deux', 158.

tendency to be one with Bertha. Bertha must be there to give birth to Robert. The symbolism of their names credits their fleshly and physical tendencies to be One which never comes true.

His success in love depends on Robert's continuation of desire for body parts; but, he wants the whole body of Bertha which makes him think of love, and this ends in illusion. Lacan argues 'one can only enjoy a part of the Other's body, for the simple reason that one has never seen a body completely warp itself around the Other's body, to the point of surrounding and phagocytizing'.[109] Robert contends that their minds are 'warped' which points to the effect of Symbolic order on their minds. It is their mind that does not permit them to experience sexual relations and the Other's body in the realm of signifiers. To enjoy Bertha's body, Robert must transform her into phallus, the best representation of which is Bertha's body parts. It is through Bertha that Robert achieves, though illusorily and temporarily, the phallus as the guarantee of enjoyment.

Attaining the body of Bertha is impossible for Robert since the body is not completely integrated into the Symbolic order. Philippe Van Haute argues 'The body essentially escapes the symbolic system from which it obtains its meaning, and it always preserves a certain alienness that cannot be cancelled'.[110] Not being able to have the totality of the body, the subject identifies with a 'specific trait' in the Other. These specific traits refer to facial expression, certain gestures, and particular parts of the body. 'They are signifiers in which the power of the Other takes on a concrete form, or in which this power is represented in a concrete way'.[111] Robert is trying to regain the totality and fullness of life, experienced before and lost through entering the realm of language.

Apart from the illusion Robert encounters in his love for Bertha, he suffers from a traumatic experience at the beginning of Act Two. After appointing a time and place to be with Bertha, he is preparing both himself and the setting for her arrival. The soft play of piano and sprays of perfume connote a love encounter. Drastically everything changes when Richard arrives. Richard's presence signifies the eruption of non-symbolized Real for Robert. This intrusion of the Real makes trauma contingent for him. Such a traumatic experience is not digestible for Robert and makes him confess everything. Robert says, 'Yes. I must have been mad … I could break it off without

[109] Lacan, *Encore*, 23.

[110] Philippe Van Haute, *Against Adaptation* (New York, 2002), 90.

[111] Ibid., 95.

seeming a fool. A great relief!'[112] It cannot be a 'great relief' for Robert at all since he has been waiting for the wife of a person who is from a higher world in his eye. First, he scolds Richard mildly for not telling him and letting him 'save' himself. Then, he assumes both Richard and Bertha despise him.

Beauty is very important for Robert's love relationship and desire. There is a dialectical relationship between desire and beauty. It is the lures of beauty that saves him from the pangs of destructive truth, from the traumas of Real order, and which protect him from the death blows of desire. He has devoted himself to the aesthetics of beauty in order to shirk immolation and destruction. Lacan states:

> The true barrier that holds the subject back in front of the unspeakable field of radical desire that is the field of absolute destruction, of destruction beyond putrefaction, is properly speaking the aesthetic phenomenon where it is identified with the experience of beauty – beauty in all its shining radiance, beauty that has been called the splendor of truth. It is obviously because truth is not pretty to look at that beauty is, if no its splendor, then at least its envelope.[113]

Robert talks about diverse natural objects and their beauty. What saves him from destruction and opens up a halo of radiance is kissing beautiful objects. Robert tells Bertha about the power of beauty: 'Only the impulse towards youth and beauty does not die'.[114] It is beauty as such that cannot resist desire; furthermore, it opens up a path toward truth and love. Robert reiterates this point to Richard:

> ROBERT: For me it is quite natural to kiss a woman whom I like. Why not? She is beautiful for me.
> RICHARD: [*Toying with the lounge cushion.*] Do you kiss everything that is beautiful for you?
> ROBERT: Everything – if it can be kissed. [*He takes up a flat stone which lies on the table.*] This stone, for instance. It is so

[112] Joyce, *Exiles*, 34.
[113] Lacan, *Ethics*, 216–17.
[114] Joyce, *Exiles*, 54.

> 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.[115]

Robert is obsessed with Bertha's beauty which is concretised and signified through natural objects. There is a close affinity between love and beauty for Robert. Chiesa contends 'Those who love what is beautiful also desire that what is beautiful may belong to them forever'.[116] Love for beautiful object is intertwined with possession of that object for Robert. Love of beauty leads to generation and creativity both in terms of body and soul. Robert tends toward reproduction and immortality through bodily generation. This likeness is manifest in his attitude toward Archie – Richard and Bertha's son. Being the only child character in the play, Archie enables Robert to reveal key details about his desire. Robert fantasizes a sexual relationship with Bertha and takes himself to be Archie's father in the play. In another way, he identifies with Richard as the husband of Bertha and turns out to be a 'fairy godfather' telling a 'fairy story' to Archie. Such a cast of mind leads to evil and sinister thoughts. Lacan adds 'the beautiful is closer to evil than to the good'.[117] Following the interconnection between the beautiful and the evil, Robert thinks of possessing the beautiful object, in his case Bertha, by hook or by crook. He tells Richard 'You forgot that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence: and the kingdom of heaven is like a woman'.[118] It is permissible and possible to use force and violence to possess the realm of womanhood. According to Robert, longing to possess a woman is love and it is intertwined with lunacy. Robert relates, 'Those are moments of sheer madness when you feel an intense passion for a woman. We see nothing. We think of nothing. Only to possess her. Call it brutal, bestial, what you will.'[119] Such a view is rejected by Richard since he considers love to bloom in giving. Lacan argues 'Love … as an active gift, is always directed, beyond the imaginary captivation, towards the being of the loved subject'.[120] Robert expresses his love to Bertha several times in the play. He took himself to possess something like a gift which could provoke Bertha's love. Robert tells

[115] Ibid., 21.
[116] Chiesa, 'Le Ressort', 65.
[117] Lacan, *Ethics*, 217.
[118] Joyce, *Exiles*, 36.
[119] Ibid., 37.
[120] Lacan, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, 276.

Bertha, 'I would have offered you my gift. You know what it was now. The simple common gift that men offer to woman. Not the best perhaps. Best or worst – it would have been yours.'[121] The simple common gift refers to 'dick' as such and he believes that he too like Richard could be taken as the representative of phallus in Bertha's world. He believes that it is 'dick' that a woman wants in her life. Robert's love is dominated by the presence of the 'simple common gift' which refers to the realm of signification beyond the imaginary captivation. In the realm of signifier which is controlled by phallus, Robert's love is directed toward Bertha for years. Their love continues in the same way for years since they are caught up by the demands of the Symbolic order. Robert explicitly demands Bertha's love. He loves her and needs being loved. Lacan argues 'at the level of love, there is a reciprocity of *loving* and *being loved*'.[122] Robert believes that love is to be loved and wants Bertha to share her love with him.

Robert occupies an amorous and authoritative position while the position of Bertha is colored with aimlessness. She does not know how to enjoy; that is why she is aimlessly seeking. Lacan argues 'since you don't know (*faute de savoir*) how to enjoy otherwise to be enjoyed (*etre joui*) or duped (*joue*)'.[123] Bertha contends that she has been duped by Richard. She accuses Richard of taking advantage of her naivety several times in her life. Bertha tells Richard 'Because I am simple you think you can do what you like with me'.[124] Similarly, she adds 'I am simply a tool for you. You have no respect for me'.[125] She calls Richard a 'deceiver' and argues that he allowed her to be with Robert on account of himself. Bertha talks to Richard menacingly:

> BERTHA. Why, then, did you leave me last night?
> RICHARD. [*Bitterly.*] In your hour of need.
> BERTHA. [*Threateningly.*] You urged me to it. Not because you love me. If you loved me or if you knew what love was you would not have left me. For your own sake you urged me to it.[126]

---

[121] Joyce, *Exiles*, 53.
[122] Lacan, *Four Fundamental*, 200.
[123] Lacan, *Encore*, 62.
[124] Joyce, *Exiles*, 29.
[125] Ibid., 45.
[126] Ibid., 66.

Bertha is not satisfied with Richard and opines that she has not received much in return for her love. In addition, she points to being humiliated. Richard has done all these in the name of freedom in love. He openly tells Bertha about betrayal which occurred repeatedly. According to Maurice Harmon, for Richard 'love is no longer unmixed with betrayal'.[127] Such a frankness and freedom in Richard's love is in line with knowing a person as s/he is. Bertha goes to the extremes in condemning Richard's attitude toward woman, saying '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.'[128]

Bertha has enough reasons to leave Richard, but she does not do so. Bertha has traces of obsessional neurotics too since she redoubles her partners, namely Richard and Robert. She does not know what she wants and keeps her dual relation with both of them up to the end of the play. Bertha participates in incest at a fantasmatic level. It is in fantasy that she is engaged in an incestuous relationship with Robert. She enjoys the intimacy of Richard and Robert and views herself as the one who brought them close to each other. Not being able to attach herself to one of them, she finds herself disrupted and forsaken. Her love takes the form of hatred for herself. Lacan states 'true love gives way to hatred'.[129] Bertha is aware of this nuance and questions Richard, Robert and Beatrice about hatred. She is testifying to the relationship of the egos at an imaginary level. The imaginary relations between the egos are either love or hate. Fink argues 'imaginary relationships are characterized by two salient features: love (identification) and hate (rivalry)'.[130] After revealing the details of her meeting with Robert, Bertha thinks that Robert hates her: 'He hates me. He is right to hate me'.[131] Toward the end of the play, Bertha asks Beatrice, 'You hate me. You think I am happy'.[132] Such a sense of hatred revolves around rivalry. Bertha considers Beatrice to be a rival for her in pursuit of Richard. In addition, she sees Richard as a person who impedes her relationship with Robert despite pronouncing upon freedom. At the end of the play, she comes to the realisation that such a feeling of hatred is groundless and baseless,

---

[127] Maurice Harmon, 'Richard Rowan, His Own Scapegoat', *James Joyce Quarterly,* 3 (1965), 34–40.

[128] Joyce, *Exiles*, 66.

[129] Lacan, *Encore*, 146.

[130] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and* Jouissance (New Haven, 1996), 85.

[131] Joyce, *Exiles*, 44.

[132] Ibid., 62.

hence developing a sense of friendship and love for Beatrice and Richard. She seeks friendship with Beatrice and eulogises her eyes and eyelashes. Furthermore, she seeks a re-enactment of her love with Richard at the end of Act Three: 'Forget me, Dick. Forget me and love me again as you did the first time. I want my lover. To meet him, to go to him, to give myself to him. You Dick. O, my strange wild lover, come back to me again.'[133] Bertha's remarks signify her change of attitude. She comes to view love in 'giving' as Richard does and encounters a delusional state. Lacan begins the fourth seminar of *Transference* as follows: 'A desire redoubled is love. But redoubled love becomes delusion'.[134] The first dictum describes Robert's relationship with Bertha while the latter refers to that of Richard. Robert had desire for Bertha nine years ago. Her return reignites Robert's desire and turns it into love. Bertha wants Richard desperately to love her again as he did for the first time. This appeal testifies to the delusional aspect of their relationship.

Intersubjective conflicts between the major characters of the play leave an empty hole in each subject. It is this hole – the empty space – that makes the characters react in their particular way. Love is one of the detours to shy away from the pangs of that hole in the subject. Bertha constructs the illusion of sheer love and devotion between lovers; Robert thinks of several simultaneous relations; Richard develops freedom in love relations; Beatrice tries to achieve what she wants in a roundabout and indirect manner. It is through such responses that their subjectivity is articulated in the play. Regarding the major characters' love in the play, Vicki Mahaffey remarks 'the four characters in *Exiles* have tried to love, but their efforts seem wasted'.[135] Their attempt in love has not been fruitless. Each of these characters is successful in his/her love in a particular way. Richard dialectically synthetizes Bertha and Beatrice; Robert has experienced his own bodily version of love; Bertha realises the significance of freedom in love and tends to reignite her love with Richard; Beatrice comes to understand love as an ideal.

To conclude, I want to draw from Lacan and Jean Wolff Bernstein, whose remarks best clarify Richard and Robert's love. Richard does not want to know about what happened and happens. Knowledge is filtered through language and is, by extension, not a reliable source of certainty. Such a cast of mind forms the basis of his conception of love. Lacan concludes his *Encore* as follows: 'to know what your partner will do is not a proof of

[133] Ibid., 73.

[134] Lacan, *Transference*, 44.

[135] Mahaffey, 'Love, Race, and *Exiles*', 100.

love'.[136] Explaining Richard's decision at the end of the play through Lacan's dictum points to the fact that Richard's love is located in a realm beyond language and Symbolic order.

Robert experienced bodily success and was unable to continue his relationship with Bertha. He opts for going to foreign country and continues his quest on another plane. Robert wants to travel, and Bertha is likened to earth. As Wolff Bernstein proposes 'most men – not all, of course – still opt for the position of the traveler whereas most women – not all, of course – still occupy the foreign/dark continent that is visited, entered, or often invaded'.[137] Robert leaves for a foreign country at the end of the play. Three verbs used by Wolff, namely 'visit', 'enter' and 'invade,' are applicable to Robert's attitude toward Bertha. Robert enters Bertha's personal life and the affair and, in some parts of the play, moves beyond some limitations. He is successful in his physical and sensual advances.

Against a backdrop of Lacanian love and desire, Richard renders love in terms of freedom and giving while Robert defines it in relation to bodily possession. Richard, James Joyce's alter ego, is considered to possess the *agalma* by the other characters in the play. Richard knows about the illusory nature of *agalma* and defines love in giving what one does not have. Unlike Richard, Robert thinks of possession in love and spends his time and exercises his power to possess the body and soul of Bertha. Robert considers the other characters to possess what he does not have and gives priority to selfishness and possession in love.

Bertha needs knowledge of her partner to maintain love whereas Beatrice relates love to other areas beside intersubjective relationships like religion and music. Bertha is unable to find relief and peace in Robert since he pays attention to the pleasures of body. Bertha has experienced the joys of intellectual life with Richard partially and needs this aspect in her love with Robert. Beatrice is caught up between love in the Imaginary order and the Symbolic order. She cannot opt for either Richard or Robert and suffers from indecision despite keeping herself busy with religion and monastery.

Although *Exiles* has been neglected in comparison with other works by Joyce, it presents, in the words of Joseph Voelker, 'an imaginative space in which issues of marriage and career, exile and return, friendship and betrayal, certitude and doubt would converge in exquisite anxiety'.[138] Joyce represented

---

[136] Lacan, *Encore*, 146.

[137] Wolff Bernstein, 'Love, Desire, *Jouissance*', 721.

[138] Joseph Voelker, 'The Beastly Incertitudes: Doubt, Difficulty, and Discomfiture in

his personal life and professional career in *Exiles* in an unexpectedly clear manner. Since *Exiles* illuminates thematic blind spots in Joyce's corpus, it can be considered as a prerequisite for understanding his arcane writings.

Shahid Beheshti University

James Joyce's *Exiles*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 14 (1988), 500.