Joyce, *Ulysses* and Postcolonialism

Ehsan Emami Neyshaburi*

Abstract:

Postcolonialism speaks of those people, who have been militarily, politically, and perforce culturally subjected to another nation. This branch of criticism is worth practicing because it plays a very important role at least in the lives of the oppressed all over the world by providing them with pain relief; a pain that still continues to gnaw away at the souls of a large colonized population. Although at the mention of post colonialism most people think of African and Caribbean countries and of black people, this paper signifies that the first and oldest British colony had been Ireland; that exploitation does not make a distinction between black and white. This paper is going to find traces of anti colonialism or decolonization in Joyce's *Ulysses* and to show that how using the colonizer's language, the Irish novelist implicitly writes back to the empire and what extent Joyce's personality has been under the influence of post colonialism. The paper also reiterates that although Joyce regarded Irish Nationalism and Irish Literary Revival as useless and failing, he never surrendered to the language and culture imposed by the colonizer.

Keywords: Colonialism, Ireland, Joyce, Postcolonialism, *Ulysses*

Introduction

Colonialism began when some European powers thought of plundering other nations of their human and natural resources in the late fifteenth century. To discover and dominate the New World Spain, England, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands started to compete with one another. At last, it was England that emerged as the biggest imperial power and managed to capture and gain control of many countries in almost all the other continents and it became a famous saying that 'the sun never sets in the British Empire'. It was especially at the time of Elizabeth the great that England started using navigation technologies to gain the upper hand in this fierce competition. In 1580, Francis Drake had already travelled round the world as Magellan had managed to do it half of a century earlier. Just a few years later in 1583, Humphrey Gilbert accompanied by Walter Raleigh reached the Newfoundland (America) and a bit later Raleigh established some settlements in that land. It should be noticed too, that the explosive growth of the printing industry helped colonialism develop after Gutenburg because it caused

* PhD, University of Neyshabur, Iran, ehsanemamin@live.com

people to get familiar with literature and intricate maps that cartographers made of the New World. Colonialism came to an end in 1947 when India gained independence and the other colonies followed the same path. Eventually, neocolonialism came into existence which is a modern version of the very colonialism. Colonialism, in most cases associated with violence and disruption, was out of keeping with modern ways of life in the twentieth century and by the same token, colonial powers concocted novel methods of colonization. Tyson briefly refers to some of these modern methods such as establishing puppet regimes who support economic and political interests of a power or using covert military intervention by financing or giving military aid to the troops who prove to be loyal to that power (2006: 425). In other words "capitalism transforms its relationship to its colonies from an old-fashioned imperialist control to market penetration" (Rice, 1996: 319). After a colonial power economically dominates a culture, cultural imperialism comes into being (Tyson, 2006: 425). In this situation values, customs, and above all language of the imperial power replace those of the colonized culture and therefore, postcolonialism is sometimes said to be synonymous with cultural imperialism. Accordingly, because the colonizer and the colonized possessed two different sets of values, the colonized started resisting the colonizer and naturally, "decolonization historically went hand in hand with neocolonialism" (Rice, 1996: 298). After colonialism came postcolonialism. But there is a problem with the term postcolonialism because it "implies that colonialism is a thing of the past. In reality, it is not" (Tyson, 2006: 425).

At the mention of postcolonialism, people automatically think of British or French African and Caribbean colonies; of black people or people of different races. Regarding race, culture, and progress of these mainly white countries, few people think of Canada, Australia or New Zealand as postcolonial countries let alone the United States of America as the only superpower in the world. Basically, it is still debatable whether these should be considered postcolonial especially when many people in these countries may assert that for the time being there is no big difference between them and the mother country, England, because they are all Anglo-Saxon countries and share the same culture, race, and language. If this is so, the division of countries into First World, Second World, Third World, and Fourth World countries and subsuming Australia, Canada, and New Zealand under the category of Second World countries and England and America under the category of First World countries must be controversial, too. There are some big differences between the so called settler colonies, that is, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, on the one hand, and the other British colonies on the other. African and Caribbean colonies were overrun and

annexed to the British Empire mainly by taking military action but people from England and other European countries migrated to and settled in settler colonies. As Gina Wisker says, "Settlers, however … settle and stay, changing the overall rule and ways of life in the country in which they have settled, making it their own" (2007: 5). Therefore, it stands to reason that in settler colonies whose population is mostly white, as opposed to the other colonies, race does not play an important role. That is to say, the issues of race and 'otherness' which are always salient in postcolonial discussions about African and Caribbean postcolonial countries, are not usually taken into account when it comes to settler colonies as the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* also emphasize: "This is especially the case, though, in settler colonies where difference is only inscribed (apparently) in subtle changes of language and where the absence of an alternative pre-colonial metaphysic makes the assertion of 'Otherness' more difficult" (Ashcroft, 1994: 137). Wisker mentions another difference between settler colonies and the other group of colonies: "They differ from other colonized people because initially they were the colonizers, though latterly as they develop independently to settle, they were subject to colonial rule" (2007: 62). It is axiomatic that people in African and Caribbean postcolonial countries possess a pre-colonial culture that sometimes melts into, merges with or most of the time opposes the culture imposed by the colonizer but such a discussion about settler colonies is out of the question. So, in comparison with other British colonies "Settler colonies could at least have the temporary illusion of a filial relationship with that dominating culture, whilst the colonies of intervention and exploitation had traditional, pre-colonial cultures which continued to coexist with the new imperial forms" (Ashcroft, 1994: 26).

Ireland

Of course the situation of Ireland is different because as opposed to these settler colonies, this country possesses a pre-colonial culture and language that challenge those of the metropolitan and in this case it resembles African and Caribbean colonies. Just like settler colonies, people hardly think of Ireland as a colony because the population is white and the country comes within the scope of British Isles and the name 'British' shows that Ireland has historically been closely associated with Britain. As a result, Ireland is exceptional given its geographical contiguity (Whelan, 2003: 94) and also the country's long history with England (Said, 1993: 148). Accordingly, some believe that Ireland was once a colony (Pordzik,2001:332; Lloyd,1993: 125; Graham, 2001: 93; and Said, 1993: 220) and some others such as John Mitchel and Arthur Griffith argue that it should not be treated as a colony because this

categorization will lower this civilized European country to the level of non-white Asian or African colonial subjects (Cleary, 2003: 27). And still some others describe this exceptionality as "white postcoloniality" and "Semicolonial" (Orr, 2008: 8-9). However, "Ireland, after about 1530, is progressively redefined as a crucial and strategic springboard for colonialism … The island also becomes one of the epic battlegrounds in the struggle between Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe and is transformed from a 'kingdom' to a fully-fledged colony by Britain through these processes" (Barry, 2001: 158). As it happens in all colonies, a social revolution occurred in Ireland which replaced Irish social, economic and political structures of late sixteenth century with an English social system. Then, as opposed to many European countries, Ireland became a colonized country rather than a colonizing European country (Barry, 158). In fact, Ireland is Britain's first and oldest colony. 1000 years after the Romans had captured and modernized England, the Irish Kings were still fighting each other for the position of 'High King'. One of them (in 1169) made the egregious mistake of asking England's Henry II, the current Anglo Norman king, to interfere on his side. Henry was famous as militarily the most powerful King and the largest land owner in the whole of Europe. Simply, he decided to annex Ireland to his already huge Empire and parcelled out the Irish land between his barons. After the Reformation, Ireland that was ruled by a Protestant England rejected any form of Protestant Christianity and remained Catholic and this altercation caused many clashes to ensue between the two countries because from then on the English thought of the Irish as their potential enemies and the Pope's puppets who helped by Catholic France and Spain might conspire against England. Charles I had already infuriated the Irish because he had levied heavy taxes on Ireland and after he was beheaded in 1649, the Irish who had rebelled against England were brutally suppressed by Oliver Cromwell, Charles's successor. According to Ohlmeyer all these imperialist endeavours were upheld by the British as civilizing missions to a backward Ireland with Roman Catholic beliefs (2004: 32).

When Charles II died, James then a Catholic king, took power and the Irish had hope that this change would bring about a Catholic revival both in England and Ireland but unfortunately for Ireland William of Orange, the Dutch Protestant husband of James II's daughter, Mary ,in 1690 defeated James in Ireland to which James had fled and consequently, the Irish lost hope. In 1798 the Irish inspired by the French and American Revolutions and supported by a French militia tried to get rid of the British but it again proved to be an abortive attempt. At last, the English convinced the Irish MPs to dissolve the Parliament and under the Act of Union (Jan. 1, 1801), Ireland became a wholly integrated part of the UK and from then on the Irish Protestant ruling classes, had seats in the British Houses of Parliament at Westminster. Irish independence

owes much to Daniel O'Connell (1775-1875). He studied law in London and was called to the Irish bar. In 1797, he joined the revolutionary Society of United Irishmen but refused to take part in the Irish Rebellion of the following year. After the Act of Union dissolved the Irish Parliament, he insisted that the British Parliament abolish the anti-Catholic laws and represent the people of Ireland. He founded the Catholic Association, which attracted so many members that the government could no longer suppress it and this establishment led to Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and O'Connell took a seat at Westminster. This achievement encouraged O'Connell to try to repeal the Act of Union. With Queen Victoria as the Queen of Ireland, he sought for an independent Ireland to govern itself. But it was too radical for the British government to acquiesce. O'Connell was incarcerated and after release from prison his health failed and died. Because the Irish were Catholic and lived in poor economic condition, the British were so inattentive to them that they let a million Catholics starve to death in the four year Potato Famine of 1845-49 in Ireland. Seamus Heaney beautifully describes this famous famine and the British role in it in another story. *For The Commander Of The 'Eliza'* relates a real military event. 'Eliza' is the name of a British warship whose 'patrol off West Mayo' was 'Routine.' One day the crew discovers a 'rowboat' in which there are six starving Irish men who urgently demanded food:

We saw piled in the bottom of their craft Six grown men with gaping mouths and eyes Bursting the sockets like spring onions in drills. Six wrecks of bone and pallid, tautened skin.

There was 'shortage' in Ireland but not on 'Eliza': "We'd known about the shortage but on board/They always kept us right with flour and beef." Above all, they "had no mandate to relieve distress." So "I had to refuse food … And cleared off. Less incidents the better," the commander says, leaving the men to fend for themselves and die. At last the commander reports this event to the 'Inspector General', 'Sir James Dombrain' who apparently "urged free relief/for famine victims … And earned tart reprimand …" from the authorities:

Let natives prosper by their own exertions;Who could not swim might go ahead and sink (1966: 34).

In fact, as opposed to Bartlett's claim that before the Act of Union, Ireland was obviously a colonial possession being deprived of free trade within the British Empire (2004: 67), its relationship with the metropolitan, even after the Union, was not of course an equal one and England remained the dominant power (Kenny, 2004: 14) because Ireland had been "unevenly assimilated … [into] aspects of British culture" (Lenon, 2004: 168) and by the same token, the country had not managed to develop its agricultural system into an industrial one (Foster,

1989: 321).Catholic Ireland finally gained independence from the Protestant England but the Presbyterian Irish majority in the north voted to remain within the British Empire. Today the Catholic South, the Republic of Ireland, has joined the European Community but the Catholic minority in the north, still part of the UK, keeps up a steady pressure, sometimes violent, for a united Ireland.

Joyce

Postcolonial writing by definition is "writing which resists colonialism and its power politics, produced mainly after the colonial period" (Wisker, 2007: 7). This resistance is, of course, differently put up by different postcolonial writers. As an extremely maverick person, James Joyce in an unusual and singular manner fought against post colonialism on two fronts: England and the Roman Church. As a matter of fact, toward the end of 1902 Joyce decided that the intellectual atmosphere of Ireland ruled by the British army and the Roman Church was too stifling. So, he went to Paris, where he intended to study medicine. He returned to Dublin in April 1903 because of the fatal illness of his mother. On his return home Joyce met Nora Barnacle, a girl with whom he fell in love. Joyce was opposed to marriage (they finally married in 1931) and as they were unable to live openly together in Ireland, they left it and first settled in Trieste, moving to Zurich during World War I and to Paris in 1920. Notwithstanding, "exile did not mean escape but a widening of political consciousness; it did not mean indifference but preserving his intimacy with his country by intensifying his quarrel with her" (Manganiello, 1980: 41).Although many people thought of Joyce as a rootless, politically neutral, and thoroughly cosmopolitan writer with a callous disregard for the Revival, almost at the turn of the century they started to view him as anti colonial: "Joyce may oscillate between Ireland and Europe … but his modernist narration of Irish history in *Ulysses* is … equivalent to, if not consanguineous with, the project of the Revival" (Flannery, 2009: 78). Joyce resisted colonialism in his own special way.

In 'Telemachus', the first chapter of *Ulysses*, three characters are introduced to the reader: Stephen Dedalus (one of the main protagonists in the novel), Buck Mulligan (a medical student), and Haines (an English man from Oxford who studies Gaelic language in Dublin). They live on the stair head of the Martello tower rented by Stephen. Haines as an English man symbolizes English capitalism that has been imposed on Ireland. Joyce uses this character to ironically crystallize how the British have destroyed the Irish culture. In the morning of the day June 16, 1904 in which *Ulysses* is narrated, an old Irish milk woman brings milk to the Martello Tower for Stephen and his friends. Haines speaks Gaelic to her but she does not understand: "Is it French you are speaking, sir? The old

woman said to Haines" (1992: 16). When she is told that it is Irish, the milk woman is stupefied and asks whether Haines is from west. Buck Mulligan ironically notifies her: "he is English … and he thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland" (16). Joyce implies that even an old woman who belongs to previous generation does not know Gaelic language let alone the Irish youth such as Stephen. It was for the same reason that Joyce rejected

> the claims of an Irish cultural nationalism. The young Joyce found the latter especially the recovery of the Gaelic language, occultism, and folklore parochial and backward-looking … Joyce supplemented his studies with visits to the Capel Street Library in Dublin, whose new books introduced him to the brilliant Continental literature then published abroad. This reading provided an alternative to the imperialistic inflections of the English poetic tradition as Joyce would later represent it in *Ulysses* (Norris, 1998: 4).

Nationalism has always been the first step towards independence but unlike William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, and John Millington Synge, Joyce did not believe in Irish Nationalism and did not take part in Irish Literary Revival, too. As mentioned earlier, to extricate Ireland from the tyranny of the English culture, Joyce looked down on Irish culture as the vanquished and instead looked up to the Continent as the source of power and inspiration. It is mostly pertinent that Hainessuffers from a kind of hysterical nightmare in which he sees a black panther. This black panther symbolizes destruction as Buck Mulligan later in *Ulysses* thinks about Haines: "Ah! Destruction! The black panther" (Joyce, 1992:539)! In this way Joyce shows that the English capitalism has subverted the Irish language and culture. In addition, Stephen calls himself "a server of a servant" (12), which spells out his relationship to Ireland, a country that is itself a servant to two foreign tyrants: England and Rome. To England, the dominant culture, because Ireland is a British colony and to Rome because Ireland's main religion is Catholicism. Symbolizing Ireland, Molly too is a slave to her "so English" (905) lover and the lover calls her "my Irish beauty" (886).

There are extracts in *Ulysses* that clearly show how Catholicism and capitalism impinge on Stephen's character. Mulligan always tortures Stephen by reminding him of his poor mother whose request (when she was on her deathbed) that he pray for her like a Christian, was refused by Stephen. One day Stephen goes to Mulligan's house. Mulligan's mother asks him who is in his room and he cruelly answers: "*O, it's only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead*" (Joyce, 1992: 8). In 'Circe' Joyce reiterates symbolically the brutality of English capitalism imposed on Ireland. In the brothel district Stephen states "But in here it is I must kill the priest and the

king" (688). Private Carr thinks that Stephen is menacing King Edward VII and attacks on him. Actually, Stephen is repeating the adage that Ireland is the captive of the double tyrants of the Roman Catholic Church and Britain. More symbolism is also apparent in Carr's attack on Stephen. The blow represents English oppression of a nearly defenseless Ireland. Martello tower, too, reminds Stephen of his thralldom to the British Empire as Mulligan harks back to "Billy pitt" who "had them built … when the French were on the sea" (20) referring to the French who backed the Irish movements against the British.

Frantz Fanon stresses that the imitation of Europe is not the way forward for the colonized nations of Africa and other parts of the globe but is the working out of new schemes on the basis of the unity of humankind: "For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work on new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man" (Habib, 2005: 744). It might be true for Joyce because Joyce never tried to imitate the language of the centre in his writings; instead, producing a new language and style he strived to rival it in a completely new way. By the same token, as Habib says he extricated himself from the ties of religion, race, and family to affiliate himself with broader visions of the world (746). Joyce viewed *Robinson Crusoe* as "the epitome of the English imperialist" and entering into dialogue with Defoe, he defeated him as some people such as Andrew Gibson and Virginia Woolf regard *Ulysses* as a counterattack proving its superiority over the English literary tradition (Innes, 2010: 59). Rejection and subversion are two responses to the dominance of the imperial language. Some people like Ngugiwa Thiong'o believe that in postcolonial countries the imperial language should never be used and instead they should use their own original language to annihilate the colonial rule and this is the only way for them to regain their true identity that colonialism has already destroyed. Some other people like Wole Soyinka believe that by using the imperial language in a novel way, they can manage to appropriate and adapt it to suit the demands and requirements of the society in which they live and in this way they can better subvert the political power of the standard language (Ashcroft, 1995: 283-284). Then, 'English' is the standard British English inherited from the Empire and 'English' is what the language has changed into in postcolonial countries (Ashcroft, 1994: 8). To replace 'English' with 'English' postcolonial people must go through two distinct processes: abrogation and appropriation. First, they must deny the privilege of 'English' and the dominance of the imperial power over the means of communication. Second, they must appropriate and reconstruct 'English' to their benefit in such a way that it gets across their ideas and meanings and also fulfils their society's demands and requirements and becomes different from the standard language (Ashcroft, 1994: 38-39). It seems that in *Ulysses*,

Joyce has already gone through these processes. Look at some examples of the 'English' that Joyce has used in *Ulysses*:

"Will? You? I. Want. You. To" (1992: 369).

"Luring. Ah, Alluring" (355*)*.

Of the following examples, the first shows the sound of the sea and also the sound of water smashing on the rocks. The second reflects the sound of Bloom's farting:

"seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooos … In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap …" (62)

"Pprrpffrrppfff" (376).

And in the following examples he coins the words *Sherlockholmesing* and *cowily*. These examples have been derived from the last chapter devoted to Molly. The noise of a train has woken her up; she is speaking to herself, is still drowsy and is stretching herself:

"taking   stock   of   the   individual   in   front   of   him andSherlockholmesing him up …" (735)

"a standing woman … pisses cowily" (578)

And in this one Joyce has put a few words next to each other producing no distance:

"For her birthday perhaps. June julyaugseptember eighth" (214).

Above all, as "Allusion can perform the same function of registering cultural distance in the post-colonial text" (Ashcroft, 1994: 57), Joyce's style is so highly allusive that the critic can hardly subsume him under the category of 'British'.Although, Joyce rejected Irish Nationalism and Irish Literary Revival, personally he was highly nationalist and his use of language shows especially to the metropolitan "that the site of the shared discourse-the literary text- is not the site of a shared mental experience" (Ashcroft, 1994: 59).

Many postcolonial texts 'rewrite' canonical stories to control the means of interpretation and communication. In other words, they 'write back' to the centre of empire to crystallize that the authoritative system in western civilization precludes 'Other' development and suppresses or annihilates forms of 'Otherness' (Ashcroft, 1995:97-8). A good example is Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* which rewrites *Jean Eyre* to revive 'the woman in the attic' form. This novel, in fact, shows how the English husband oppresses and drives her wife to the 'attic' and gets rid of her to possess her money and property. To borrow some words from Harold Bloom, like many other 'strong' postcolonial writers, James Joyce suffers a kind of 'anxiety of influence' which makes him rewrite in an 'Oedipal struggle' 'canonical dead ones' (Innes, 2010: 73-74). In a very different way, James Joyce not only rewrites but also parodies Homer's *Odyssey*, a central text in western civilization in which gods, like the colonizer oppress, exploit, destruct, annihilate, segregate, send to heaven

or hell for no good reason.*Ulysses*, just like *The Odyssey*, begins with the son's (Telemachus's-Stephen's) quest for a missing father and soon turns to the hero's (Odyssey's-Bloom's) quest to displace a rival for his wife's affections and resume his proper place in his home (Odyssey slays the suitors and Bloom wants his breakfast in bed, which leads to Molly's 'Yes' to him and symbolizes Boylan's defeat). By common consent, readers of *Ulysses* refer to each episode by a Homeric title. Thus the first episode is known as 'Telemachus', the second is 'Nestor', the third is 'Proteus', the fourth 'Calypso', and so on. As Grose reports, Joyce himself gave the Homeric titles to the chapters but in the final printing he removed them because he did not wish the parallel to be overemphasized and be a distracting influence on the reader (1975: 50).

Displacement is a major feature in postcolonialism. The colonized has lost their home and cannot come to terms with the new place and new culture, too. Therefore, postcolonial identity is a hybrid of native and colonial cultures because as Ashcroft asserts, monolithic perceptions are almost impossible in all postcolonial cultures (1994: 37). "Home is 'back there', but can no longer be home; this new place of residence and its community may not be desired as home or be willing to open itself up to the asylum-seeker" (Wilson, 2010: 133). As a matter of fact, identity in postcolonial societies is constructed by the difference between the colonized and the metropolitan (Ashcroft, 1994: 167). In actuality, home is "a place where you speak to a community and it speaks back to you" (Wilson, 2010: 133).Seemingly, Joyce feels at home neither in Ireland nor abroad. The Irish community does not react properly. He sent his works home to be published but the publishers refused. Joyce's letters to various publishers divulge the difficult labors it was necessary for him to undertake when he wanted to publish something. In a letter to a publisher (Mr. Cerf who eventually agreed to publish *Ulysses*) Joyce poignantly complains: "Publishers and printers alike seemed to agree among themselves … not to publish anything of mine as I wrote it" (Joyce, 1961: xiii). Once he wrote this poem to take revenge:

This lovely land that always sent Her writers and artists to banishmentAnd in spirit of Irish funBetrayed her own leaders, one by one (Joyce, 1971, 42).

And abroad it was only Ezra Pound, the eminent poet and Joyce's friend, who helped him publish his works. A critic has pointed it out in this way: "Pound understood the difficulty of financing modernistic writing whose formal traits-simple, direct language enriched by resonant international erudition and cultural allusion-made it difficult to market to a general public" (Norris, 1998: 10).

Conclusion

When it comes to settler colonies and countries like Ireland, the practice of postcolonialism becomes more complex and difficult because of the close affinities between the colonizer and the colonized in these countries. This complexity becomes apparent when on the one hand as a general consensus some believe that Ireland is not a postcolonial nation although some critics cite the poet W. B. Yeats as an anticolonial nationalist and on the other hand, some others reiterate that Ireland comes within the scope of postcolonial nations and its literature might be examined in terms of contemporary postcolonial criticism. As Ireland's deep affinities with British culture is obvious and she is part of the British Isles, postcolonialism can help widen the scope of analysis for the country's identity and culture and bring about a discourse between the colonizer and the colonized which leads to identity formation, an identity which of course is not British. Undoubtedly, the more the colonizer imposes or encroaches, the more the colonized resists or decolonizes. Although, it is impossible to completely reject postcolonial discourses, postcolonial writing aims at using the language and culture of the colonizer against him that Joyce beautifully performs this task. According to Glanville "migration provides a model for resisting essentialism and cultural nationalism, and hybridity and plurality can challenge monolithic cultures and religions" (Wilson, 2010: 130) and this is precisely the same thing that Joyce did in his life and depicted in his *Ulysses*. Postcolonialism has helped the oppressed nations regard themselves as separate from and independent of the colonizer and has offered a beacon of hope to these people.

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