



Barthes' Five Codes and the Theme of Escape in Joyce and Hemingway: A Comparative Study of Eveline and The Killers

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Abstract:

This paper conducts a comparative structural analysis of James Joyce's Eveline and Ernest Hemingway's The Killers through the lens of Roland Barthes' Five Narrative Codes Hermeneutic, Proairetic, Semantic, Symbolic, and Cultural. By decoding the stories' narrative mechanisms, the study reveals how both authors intricately construct the theme of escape not as an act of liberation but as a space of tension, paralysis, and existential ambiguity. Joyce's Eveline portrays escape as a psychological struggle bound by gender, memory, and cultural obligation, while Hemingway's The Killers renders escape futile against the backdrop of stoic fatalism and suppressed emotion. Both narratives resist closure, relying on withheld information, symbolic oppositions, and culturally embedded meanings to frame their protagonists' dilemmas. Barthes' framework allows us to interpret not only what the characters do or fail to do, but how the very form and structure of narrative reflects deeper ideological forces. This analysis contributes to a richer understanding of modernist fiction by revealing how narrative form encodes the inescapability of modern existence.

Keywords: Barthes' Five Codes, narrative structure, escape theme, modernist fiction, Joyce, Hemingway, Eveline, The Killers, existentialism, structuralism.

Introduction:

Background

Modernist literature is a whole riddled with the theme of escape, either literal or psychological, as a way in which authors create a narrative mechanism to critique social structures, explore the identity crisis and dramatize existential dilemmas. In James Joyce's *Eveline* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Killers*, escape is not the ambulatory representation of freedom, but is paralyzed, ambiguous moment. On the other hand, the two protagonists are offered the possibility to liberate themselves from their oppressive environments through choices, but their response delineates different dimensions of constraint and resignation. By looking at these narratives using a structuralist framework, Roland Barthes' *Five Narrative Codes*, we discover how the very structure of the story encodes and burdens the theme of escape in a form that goes beyond a plot point to becoming a philosophical problem.

First introduced by Roland Barthes in his seminal work *S/Z* (1974), narrative meaning comes about not from the succession of events, but from the interplay of five narrative codes, those of Hermeneutic (questions and mysteries), Proairetic (actions and expectations), Semantic (connotative meanings), Symbolic (binary oppositions) and Cultural (shared societal knowledge). These codes work as a network: they interlace a whole set of textual meanings and form the tissue of the reader's interpretive process (Barthes, 1974, Culler, 1981). Because this model applies to *Eveline* and to *The Killers*, a comparative structural critique is possible and not only assesses their thematic similarities, but reveals the considerable variations in stylistic and philosophical approach between Joyce's psychological realism and Hemingway's existential minimalism.

In James Joyce's *Eveline* (1914) from *Dubliners*, the paralysis of early 20th century Ireland, for women boxed in by patriarchal family patterns, religious moralism, colonial cultural weight (Walzl 1965, Norris 1992) is encapsulated. *Eveline* has been hit with a choice between the familiarity of a repressive home life and the terrifying uncertainty of an unknown life abroad. A sense of duty and fear slowly eats away at her desire to escape and in the end she becomes emotionally and physically stasis at the docks. Margot Norris (1992) and Florence Walzl (1965) conceptualize *Eveline*'s last minute refusal to board the ship as indicative of and the symptomatic locus of Irish social stagnation and the stifling efficacy of cultural moral tomes.

On the other hand, *The Killers* by Ernest Hemingway, initially published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1927 and selected later in *Men Without Women*, tells through a stark, dialogue driven narrative of fatalism and passive acceptance. The central story strand revolves around Ole Andreson, a former boxer, who has attempted to be assassinated and is told to leave town for his safety, but ignores that warning and stays. Hemingway's own minimalist style as, what one of his own literary friends coined, "the iceberg theory," in which deep emotions and psychological currents are hidden beneath the ordinary surface of the exchanges, was applausive to the modern individual (Baker, 1972; Gurko, 1955). Many critics, including Cleanth Brooks (1948) and Philip Young (1952), have seen *The Killers* as the modern parable of men losing their agency, of the inexorability of death in a world reduced to a machine.

The tone and technique of these two stories vary widely; but both employ the motif of escape as a device through which to view human inertia, social constraint and existential dread. However, in *Eveline* escape is longed for, but is never realized, as it is hindered by internalized

guilt and trauma. In *The Killers*, escape was an option desirably available but deliberately turned down in favour of stoic acceptance. By examining these narratives using Barthes' codes, we gain insight into a cosmic meaning of how each author encodes escape as an act or subject but as purely an absence, a postponed, an obscured or a denied phenomenon.

Consequently, this comparative study tries to answer to what extent Barthes' narrative theory enhances comprehension of the concept of escape in modernist fiction. What do the Five Codes do in the stories to prevent or forestall escape? In order to see what cultural knowledge or symbolic binaries are embedded in each protagonist's dilemmas, I broke each down and found one set of features that can define each character. I also noted what similarities and differences in their respective subcultures that led to their choices. This paper seeks to solve the narrative logic contained in these narratives of flight by closely reading and analyzing their structures which eventually unmask how acts of flight become meditations on immobility, futility and meaning in general.

Research Questions

1. What do Barthes' five codes work in Joyce's and Hemingway's short stories *Eveline* and *The Killers* to prevent escape?
2. To what extent does Barthes' Five codes enhance understanding the concept of escape in the modern fictions?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the Barthes' five codes in Joyce's and Hemingway's short stories *Eveline* and *The Killers*
2. To enhance the understanding the concept of escape in the modern fiction through the Barthes' Five codes

Significance of the study

This research is significant in the way that it utilizes Roland Barthes' structural theory of the narrative or more specifically his Five Codes to comparative criticism of James Joyce's *Eveline* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Killers*, two of the greatest masterpieces of world literature modernist masterpieces. With a reading of the levels of structure on which these novels succeed in escape as theme, the work gives us a better understanding of how modernist literature constructs existential crises on content and form. It implies the way in which escape becomes increasingly symbolic confrontation and less the achieved object in cultural, psychological, and yet ideological determinations too. By depicting the two heroes as incarcerated, not just in situation, but in modes of living, the research tries to map the terrain on which form and meaning converge in modernist prose. This tries to be at the service of a fuller theoretical understanding of practice in fiction, gender roles, and trends of modernist ideology.

Literature Review

Both *Eveline* by James Joyce and *The Killers* by Ernest Hemingway have been the foci of much scholarly interest, primarily because they both deal with psychological tension, existential themes and via narrative minimalism. Using Roland Barthes' Five Narrative Codes, a relatively novel interpretive approach which combines structuralist theory with modernist literary analysis, I present a comparative study of the two. Through addressing narrative

sequencing, gaps and cultural references these elements facilitate a discussion about escape, a responsive paralysis and resignation that are also major thematic concerns throughout each story.

Since Joyce's characters are held in psychological imprisonment so obvious to those analyzing the characters in *Eveline*, as critics of his work have long noted, so to speak, critics have readily applied the concept of Irish paralysis. As Hugh Kenner argues in *Dublin's Joyce* (1955), Joyce's urban characters are trapped in such a routine such a net of familial obligation, that escape is symbolic. This paralysis typifies the conflict *Eveline* struggles with: remaining in the same house, but one that is familiar as well as abusive or venturing out into something unknown. Kenner interprets her inaction as Ireland's postcolonial stasis, her immobility as a national as well as individual condition. Vincent Cheng (1995) is similarly concerned with the colonial context of Dublin, arguing that because *Eveline* is oppressed from the inside she is unable to act by means of Catholic guilt and patriarchal norms. In this way her paralysis is doubly coded psychologically and politically as a structural impossibility of transcending her environment.

On the other hand, *The Killers* has been received through the filters of existentialism and the absurd (the unreal, inscrutable and detached) with focus on the one hand and a cryptic narrative form on the other. Writing on Hemingway's aesthetics, Susan F. Beegel (1992) believes that *The Killers* is representative of a wider theme in Hemingway's work: the vain attempt to find meaning in a world without moral uprightness. Ole Andreson's stoic resignation to death, his unwillingness to run from it, is the appallingly fatalist embodiment of Hemingway's tragic fatalism. Lamb (2004) sees this view as in line with interpretations that the story's tension does not stem from the plot, but from the unsubdued emotional responses that gather beneath Hemingway's sparse prose. Interpretive gaps which force readers to complete silences with existential dread, align perfectly with Barthes' Hermeneutic and Symbolic codes and Lamb contends that this is what Hemingway deliberately chooses to leave in his minimal narrative.

Subsequent to structural approaches, Peter Brooks (1984) in *Reading for the Plot* provides an expanded discussion of how narrative suspense and deferred meaning contribute to the production of tension in texts those are low on action. *Eveline* and *The Killers* can be understood as simply stories with structural escape that is relentlessly interrupted and Brooks' argument that "narratives desire their end" instructs how both stories read as stories which begin to escape to an end that they do not reach. And in Joyce's story, arriving at a decision such a postponement, is performed in *Eveline*'s persistent mental rationalizations and delayed decisions. From Hemingway we learn, via the lack of psychological exposition: no internal monologue, no motivation explanation, that the story becomes a bony affair held together by suspense. This is where Barthes' Proairetic and Hermeneutic codes can be particularly evident, as both authors use actions and enigmas which never fully resolve in order to construct tension.

Gérard Genette's work on focalization adds another narrative level to the understanding of escape in both stories. According to Genette (1980), types of narrative present are differentiated and both Joyce and Hemingway use focalization in their characters' entrapment. There are rarely any external focalizations in *Eveline* and internal focalizations tend to rule, so that readers are in *Eveline*'s conflictive psyche and witness her torment. On the contrary, *The Killers* shows from the external focalization especially through Nick Adams through emotional distance and to show characters cannot intervene from predetermined outcome. In turning the

interplay of narrative viewpoint and structural codes on its head, the stories present the theme of escape as a disorienting, ultimately unreachable state.

In addition to criticism of culture, these texts have been probed in light of their symbolic constructions of gender, space and mortality. For example, Marian Eide (2002) examines Hemingway's gender roles in his fiction arguing that male stoicism is a cover up for emotional impotence. This scandalizes a gender expectation of courage that, by its futility, has lost all meaningfulness. On the other hand Eveline's role as a caregiver is in accordance with traditional female duties by asserting authentic failure in ability to establish an arena for autonomy as a result of tragic disparity in between self desire and a role that has been inherited. According to Eide, gendered cultural codes have a great deal to do with how the both characters interpret and set about escaping.

Tzvetan Todorov (1977) is useful in his contribution to a structuralist framework for understanding narrative logic and equilibrium in the field of structuralism. According to Todorov, stories proceed from a condition of equilibrium to disequilibrium to a new equilibrium, if not finally. In *Eveline*, as well as *The Killers*, this progressive development is arrested. In *Eveline*, the protagonist returns to her static world, not restoring the equilibrium, while in *The Killers* the world merely goes on, whilst not caring about the violent insertion in its midst. Always resisting the arc of transformation, the wish to pass away is fated to run counter to a decision not to be returned to order. Once more, the delay not resolution is where meaning is located, because this is as far as Barthes' Symbolic and Hermeneutic codes take us.

At last, but in applying Barthes' codes to modernist texts in a direct way (although this idea came much later in the twentieth century), scholars such as Michael Riffaterre (1978) have claimed that a structuralist analysis shows the bare bones structure / scaffolding of texts that would first appear as minimal in the sense of using a more restricted number of words. Both stories can be understood as compatible to Riffaterre's notion of the 'matrix,' a deep semantic structure that controls surface narrative, in which escape from prison is less a narrative goal than a matrix of absence, resistance and deferred action. This theoretical approach is in resonance with the Barthesian idea that texts are 'tissues of quotations' whose meaning is produced through interplay, rather than by a type of closure.

These are the starting points for the text of a multifaceted critical evaluation of *Eveline* and *The Killers* by means of Barthes' narrative codes. This review presents psychological, narratological and structuralist analyses of how both Joyce and Hemingway encode the idea of escape. Both authors attempt to construct a textual universe of escape, whether denied from or wanted, which Barthes' structural framework is able to recognize in such distinct language.

Research Methodology

Using Roland Barthes' five narrative codes as the theoretical framework, this research adopts a qualitative method, comparative approach and interpretative approach. The research is undertaken to examine how the structural elements in *Eveline* by James Joyce and *The Killers* by Ernest Hemingway create and complicate the theme of escape by narrative design, character construction and symbolic layering.

Theoretical Framework

Roland Barthes' (1974) structuralist theory of narrative as articulated in *S/Z* anchors this study in narrative theory; in this work, he outlines five codes that structure all narratives: the

Hermeneutic Code (HER) which governs enigmas and delayed answers; the Proairetic Code (ACT) which structures actions and expectations; the Semantic Code (SEM) which provides connotations and meanings at the level of signifiers; the Symbolic Code (SYM) which governs binary oppositions; and the Cultural Code (REF) which relies on shared knowledge, ideologies, intertextual references. I choose this framework because it enables its close and systematic examination of narrative form and meaning which is especially valuable for modernist texts: where surface simplicity often covers deep complexity.

Textual Selection and Justification

Analysis of the primary texts used focuses on *Eveline*, a short story included in Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) and *The Killers*, a short story from Hemingway's *Men Without Women* (1927). The stories were chosen for their thematic similarity in regard to escape and inertia and for the author's respective contribution to the modernist literary canon. Although Joyce and Hemingway employ radically different stylistic techniques (Joyce's interiority and more psychological realism, Hemingway's more minimalism and externalized action), both of their texts dramatize characters caught in exceptional existential and social dilemmas. Via this contrast, we can take advantage of a structurally fertile comparative analysis.

Analytical Procedure

The close reading and textual segmentation proceeded through many stages of analysis. The first step was to break each story apart into a discrete number of narrative units or passages which would clearly exemplify each of Barthes' five codes. For example, in *Eveline* moments of inner monologue, flashbacks and sensory detail were analyzed for the Semantic and Symbolic coding levels, whilst plot level delays and indecisions were represented with the Hermeneutic and Proairetic coding. The Hermeneutic and Cultural codes were used to interpret the external sequence of events in *The Killers*, particularly the dialogue between characters and omission of background story, whereas the Symbolic bins (life/death, light/dark, etc.) were decoded through the Symbolic code.

During the interpretive process, narrative units were cross referenced with Barthes' definitions and applied intertextual bibliographical and literary criticism insights to aid contextualization of the codes. The published media criticisms of the king were analyzed carefully in the search for each occurrence of a narrative delay, binary structure or cultural allusion and compared with each occurrence of these devices in the published media of the queen. The findings were synthesized, not in isolation, in tracing out how each author characterizes and represents the overarching theme of escape by each author's use of narrative structure.

Comparative Strategy

Parallel narrative moments within both texts were aligned and comparative analysis conducted through examining the narrative coding of each: for example, of *Eveline's* internal conflict at the dock and *Ole Anderson's* decision to wait out death. Structural similarities (as in use of Hermeneutic delays and Symbolic oppositions) and differences that pertain to focalization, narrative closure and cultural representation are highlighted by this study. It aimed to locate not only thematic parallels but also to see how such parallels are narratively folded, and how readers respond to them.

Using both textual evidence and structural theory, this comparative methodology facilitates a more nuanced approach to illuminating how various philosophical and social ideas are

engineered by Joyce and Hemingway through their manipulation of narrative form. In this context, it focuses on the way in which the narrative form of escape is itself constitutive of escape, not simply as a plot motif but as a coded narrative function that is understood by cultural, psychological and symbolic means.

Results

In this section, James Joyce's 'Eveline' and Ernest Hemingway's 'The Killers' are analysed structurally and comparatively using Roland Barthes' Five Narrative Codes. The results suggest how escape is encoded in both plot and through symbolic oppositions, delays in narrative resolution, connotative signifiers and culturally anchored expectations. In other words, each code matters for how it makes escape into something other than triumph; something fraught, ambiguous and often unfulfilled.

Hermeneutic Code (Enigma) – The Question of Will She or Won't She?

The key question in *Eveline* has to do with the question of whether or not the protagonist will leave her stifling home life. A steady question is sustained by a series of uncertainties that all but prevent closure of the narrative: 'she stood up, in a sudden impulse of terror.' Escape! "He has to get away!" (Joyce, *Dubliners*). But this desire is described in such clarity, yet the narrative is haunted by a string of obfuscating memories, hesitations and rationalizations that stymie her.

The most emblematic use of the Hermeneutic Code occurs at the dock, when it comes time for the choice. The narrator speaks as the boat is about to depart and says, "she set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal." Here the code works to defer closure and readers are deprived of anything more explicit than an explanation of *Eveline's* inaction. Instead the enigmatic pause is left dangling in uncertainty, with no outside force to solve it or make sense of it and again raising nagging narrative tension as well as emotional frustrations. This deferral of answers as the essence of the Hermeneutic Code is Barthes' description and Joyce plays this poetic trick in order to effect poetics of *Eveline's* psychological paralysis.

The enigma then is external, not internal as in *The Killers*. Right from the opening scene onwards readers are faced with the mystery of whether we are going to kill the Swede. The second comes from a Hemingway short, where Nick Adams asks, among others, if you know of a big Swede named Ole Andreson (*Men Without Women*). They don't tell us why they were killed. Ole doesn't remind them either. When Nick finally warns him, Ole merely says, "There ain't anything to do now." He refuses to answer those basic narrative questions: Why is he targeted? So why won't he flee? Barthesian suspension keeps the story. The fatalism of the story is supported by the way that Hemingway manipulates the Hermeneutic Code: it simply does not matter; answers don't exist in a meaningless universe.

Proairetic Code (Action) – Preparations Without Resolution

The Proairetic Code is the sequencing of events which bring about narrative expectation. Joyce in *Eveline* files the story with small, everyday behaviors that mimic the outline of escape: *Eveline* packs; she reflects; she says her farewells to her next door neighbors; she arrives at the quay. These steps seem like progression. Yet in the final instant this course is aborted: "He held her hand and she gripped with both hands upon the iron railing." Instead, the sequence of actions results in immobilization. Structurally, this constitutes the illusion of escape a journey

that never departs in the form of proairetic buildup wherein the anti- action desensitizes the character to that which corrupts him.

The action sequence in *The Killers* is externalised and blunt. Two men tie up George and Sam and go into Henry's lunchroom to kill Ole Andreson. These physical acts appear to be stepping stones on the path to violence. Still there is no climax the killers depart, Ole neglects to react and the character remains stunned in hushed disbelief. Nick even promises at the end: "I'm going to get out of this town," but it's something said, hardly something done. The Proairetic structure in Hemingway's story has the effect of making it seem inevitable the actions are not ways of escaping, but they indicate futility.

Semantic Code (Connotation) – Language of Entrapment and Despair

For the language of the text is saturated with connotative words denoting decay, duty or fear. "So the very first paragraph: she sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue." The threat of passive observation is buried in the word 'invade'. Invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably, writes Joyce later. Phrases like "unspeakably" mean to suffer, but that one thing, like brute facts, is invariable it makes things better about the world when they are not terrible and "invariable" suggests that escape is not merely desirable, it's practically an existential necessity. Although, this semantic field is full of guilt: "She had to work hard, in the house and business just as well." Such a sense of sacrifice reinforces her inner struggle the cost of escape being betrayal of identity.

Setting and dialogue bring with it connotation in Hemingway's story. To describe the killers they use words such as "tight overcoats" and "derbies pulled low," terms that suggest anonymity and menace. The eerie normalcy of violence is also improved by understatement: "That's what we wanted to know" or "I guess he's out." While Ole's phrase "I'm through with all that running around" is short, it carries a steely sense of resignation, of dead-in-life. Hemingway's cold, clipped diction is sent to strip the sentiment from his writing, leaving it bare, emotionally.

Symbolic Code (Binary Oppositions) – Freedom vs. Stasis; Action vs. Passivity

Binary tensions between Barthes' Symbolic Code is what caused it to thrive. Eveline functions as an exposition to the symbolic opposition of home vs. journey, past vs. future and duty vs. desire laid out in the Joyce piece. I could hear her dead mother's voice, wreaking a deranged distress, "Derevaun Seraun! The inherited trauma of domestic roles is symbolized by "Derevaun Seraun!" (which means "The end of pleasure is pain"). Eveline's choice is set up as love for Frank or loyalty to her father. However, by going with neither, paralysis becomes her symbolic middle ground a non-choice that unmoors the binary.

If any binary is starker, if any is colder, it's in *The Killers*: life vs. death, knowing vs. being clueless, engagement vs. apathy. What Ole Andreson is; is in a liminal space; alive but already mentally dead. Nick Adams is a foil, as he is at war with this existential contradiction. "With regard to Ole, Nick visits, where he witnesses an awful thing, a line that separates emotional innocence from hardened experience." The telling of a tale of futility in which choices mean no more, the symbolic contrast between action (killers) and inaction (Ole) turns the story into a tableau.

Cultural Code (Referential) – Gender, Duty, and Societal Expectations

Cultural coding is when the reader arrives with some sort of knowledge about the text. Eveline is particularly an Irish Catholic context invoked by Joyce. Typical Irish family hierarchy is evoked in the figure of the abusive father and dead mother with daughters often taking on caretaker roles. “Her promise to her mother, her fears of her father's violence, her hope for respectability” these elements derive their weight from cultural familiarity (especially among Irish readers). Joyce’s critique of these expectations is subtle: of course these expectations shape behavior and perhaps they imprison it as well.

Hemingway uses the America of the Prohibition era, small town midwestern life and masculine honor codes in *The Killers*. And in tossing aside the cultural expectation that a man like Ole would do one or the other, Ole shocks the young Nick and, by extension, the reader. The killers also emulated cultural archetypes of 1920s American gangster violence brutal, banal, systematic but senseless. Here, Hemingway relies on the fact that the reader should already know these codes to give his writing tension generated from violated expectations.

Findings

Escape is, in both stories, a thematic and structural paradox created by the operation of Barthes’ narrative codes. Eveline is the coming together of codes in the fact that escape is symbolically impossible within the structure of the encoded social psychological framework. In *The Killers*, meaning cannot be found in escape, though it is technically possible. The net effect is an undeniable comparative insight, that while the hero's are trapped in their worlds, they are also trapped in the narrative logic itself. Barthes' theory shows that the act of not escaping is not merely a choice by the character, but a textual decision encoded at every structural level.

Discussion

Upon this application, it was evident that the theme of escape in both stories is tightly woven by two layers of symbolic, cultural and narrative mechanisms. Although both texts make characters who stand at the edge of flight Eveline nursing a fantasy of escape from her home, Ole Andreson waiting passively for death their escape is escape not as a positive action but as a deferment, a resignation, an impossibility. Not only are the stories thematic allies, but they are structurally coded to push escape as a site of narrative tension and existential uncertainty.

One of the most striking findings is that both of these texts embody what Fredric Jameson (1981) describes as the “political unconscious” that is, a way in which texts encode the historical and ideological conditions of their production. Joyce locates the personal paralysis of the protagonist of Eveline within the larger story of Irish colonial subjugation and the oppression of Catholic morality. Her failure to escape is also, in terms of the larger symbolic sense, not a decision at all but a dramatization of collective cultural stasis. According to Jameson, “texts are socially symbolic acts,” and Eveline’s hesitation is a metaphor for a nation at a loss because of its colonial history and repressive social codes. Eveline’s internal monologue becomes the arena in which ideologies of obligation by gender, family and individual freely come into conflict, yet remain unresolved as the story concludes, much as early 20th century Ireland was politically ambiguous.

In *The Killers*, Hemingway’s inaction exhibits the disillusion of the interwar American conscience. Richard Slotkin (1992) reports that Hemingway's fiction is constituted by the discourse of the American frontier myth, one which celebrates action, courage and autonomy.

At its centre though, this myth falls apart in *The Killers*. A former prizefighter, a man once so famous for his physical prowess that he was known by the name of Ole Andreson, he has been reduced to this: a passive object for an execution. For Slotkin such characters are the regenerative products of the country's tendencies towards 'regeneration through violence,' proving the symbolic death of such characters means the overt exhaustion of American ideals. Hemingway replaces the glamour of rebellion or resistance and this lifeless life calls for no escape. The killers are so anonymous and as efficient in their mechanized violence as to entirely undercut the romance of heroism.

These same ideological critiques are also reinforced by the narrative structures, the Hermeneutic and Proairetic Codes. In both stories the Hermeneutic Code takes place via lack of resolution, in the form of maintaining enigmas that are not answered. So what will Eveline pick? Why do you not want Ole to get out? But these are not mere narrative hooks and they reflect what Susan Sontag (1966) refers to as "the aesthetics of silence," in defining refusal as an expression. Silence in modernist texts, according to Sontag, is a reaction to a crisis of meaning in which language itself proves inadequate to communicate moral, existential clarity. In *Eveline*, it is clear where this is most evident, as Eveline's silence at the dock, 'she gave no sign of love or farewell or recognition' is not one of indifference but the wilting of desire into communicable form. In *The Killers* empty space envelops conversation and important details are left out or diverted. Therefore lack of escape is not only a thematic condition but a structural one as well, one which can be gathered only in lack, the reader having to infer meaning from absence.

Another important dimension was that of gender, in terms of the possibility of escape. Patriarchal structures being inscribed into literary content are not the least of it: they are also inscribed in literary form, as feminist critics like Toril Moi (1985) and Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1985) have led us to perceive. Gendered power dynamics are embedded by Joyce into the very architecture of the story in *Eveline*. Eveline isn't weak, she's a product of systemic conditioning; she was built around the needs and expectations of her father, the dead mother to whom she still religiously performs the required evening prayers and the savior, Frank. As DuPlessis observes, frequently women in male authored modernist narratives function as the vehicles of paralysis and sacrifice. What we have in *Eveline*'s stillness here is, then, not merely psychological but narratological; she is written not to act and her story does not venture outside domestic interiority and moral struggle. Even in plot, her escape is aborted, but it is aborted in form, too.

By contrast, Hemingway's fatalism, coded as male, is a different kind of structural entrapment. Judith Butler (1990) argues that male stoicism is a learned performance, a 'stylized repetition of acts' which create their own identity. Andreson's performance of masculinity is in not resisting death but being passively dead to it by doing what Hemingway casts as courage and Butler might call its ritualistic submission to gender norms. The masculine ideal in Hemingway's stripped down narrative is not defiance, but dignified extinction, a complicated vision of American individual agency.

Narrative expectations and subversion also subsequently articulated are strongly related to cultural context. According to Edward Said (1993) in his *Culture and Imperialism*, literature embodies and reproduces the ideologues of empire and nationalism. Next, *The Killers* lightly shows the decay of American exceptionalism while *Eveline* indirectly opposes the effects of

British colonialism and Irish, patriarchal nationalism. In this way, both texts are seen as formal critiques of the societies from which their critique originates. Instead and significantly, the refusal or bypassing of escape becomes a metaphor for modernity itself, a time full of disillusionment, fragmentation and moral ambivalence.

Perhaps the place where Barthes' framework most powerfully meets with his reading of these ideological phenomena is through *The Symbolic Code*. But these stories are structured through binary oppositions: home and away; action and inaction; life and death and they are both left unresolved. Indecision weighs down the binaries in *Eveline*. They are irrelevant in *The Killers* due to nihilism. Modernist texts are not closed because the world they reflect is one in which closure is no longer tenable; as Roland Barthes (1975) himself argues. A play of signifiers mirrors existential instability and narrative resolution is removed.

Finally, the Cultural Code relies on shared knowledge to produce meaning for these narratives and binds them to their readers. Both Joyce and Hemingway draw on cultural frames; Catholic morality in Ireland, Prohibition-era gangsterism in America, as both Joyce and Hemingway use cultural frames to lend broader significance to seemingly ordinary events; they have a culture which infiltrates the text in Barthes' sense of his term 'reference to a science or a body of knowledge.' In either story, the audience needs to apply cultural knowledge to comprehend the full significance of the characters' decisions (or lack of decisions).

Overall, the codes enumerated by Barthes elucidate that *Eveline* and *The Killers* are not merely stories about the attempts at escape but stories, rather, about the impossibility to escape in a historical and ideologically, gendered and formal world. Both Joyce and Hemingway encode escape into structural logic of their narratives, thereby turning what would appear to be simple options into profound comments on modern life. Through an analysis of non escape, it is not a failure of character but a testament to being and the coded constraints that surround it.

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