
A Comparative Study of the Depiction of Hell in Paradise Lost and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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Abstract:

The essay explores the portrayal of Hell in John Milton's "Paradise Lost" and James Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," examining similarities and differences in their depictions. Both authors present Hell as a realm of eternal torment for defying God, characterized by flames, darkness, and despair. Milton describes Hell as a bottomless perdition with adamant chains and penal fire, contrasted with Heaven's eternal light. Similarly, Joyce's Father, Arnall, delivers a sermon depicting Hell as a dark, foul-smelling prison filled with fire and smoke. The abstract highlights the moralizing tone of both portrayals, aiming to terrify listeners into repentance and confession. While Milton's description is poetic and majestic, Joyce's is direct and rough, emphasizing the vivid horror of Hell. Overall, both authors masterfully capture the terrifying essence of Hell, underscoring the consequences of divine disobedience.

Keywords: "Paradise Lost," Milton, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," James Joyce, Hell, Angels, Catholicism, Christian, Heaven, Darkness, Light, Eternal Justice, Eternity, Pandemonium

Paradise Lost

It is John Milton's epic poem written in blank verse. The poem tells the biblical story of Adam and Eve's temptation by Satan and the loss of Eden. The epic describes the Hell in great detail. The question of agency and punishment becomes central to the endeavor.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce's 1916 novel presents Stephen Dedalus and his growth and becoming an artist. Joyce explores Dedalus' spiritual and aesthetic awakening and their conflicting dichotomy. Father Arnall shows Dedalus the sinners' fate by describing Hell's horrors.

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Hell in Paradise Lost is a place for eternal torture, eternal punishment for defying God. It is a bottomless perdition; adamant chains and penal fire await those who sin. It is a fiery gulf. The pain and torment only multiply at the thought of the lost happiness. Heaven's eternal light is contrasted with the mournful gloom of Hell. This torture without end, as Milton puts it, is eternal justice. Hell is like a dungeon, like a prison with utter darkness. Peace does not dwell there. No rest is found. Flames give no light. Hell is likened to a great furnace with all the sides round. There is no refuge for the fallen angels. Hell is "overwhelmed with floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire." There are no "happy fields"; only horrors dwell. The place is like a volcano.

*"There stood a hill not far whose grisly top
Belched fire and rolling smoke; the rest of the entire
Shone with a glossy scurf.....
That in his womb was hidden metallic ore,
The work of sulfur..." (670-675)*

The land is dry, but the lake is packed with liquid fire; Milton compares it with Pelorus and Athena.

*"...Torn from Pelorus, or the shattered side Of thundering Aetna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails thence conceiving fire..." (232-234)*

Milton takes excellent pains in topographing the Hell, giving it space and a sense of space and familiarizing it. The hopelessness found in Hell is given a sense of odor; the place is riddled with sulfur fumes and a peculiar stench. Thus, the feeling of spiritual decay is given an elemental turn, materializing and grounding it. Though the size of the Hell is not given, it is not entirely formless. Sea and land are there. Precious metals are found and refined to construct Pandemonium.

*"...Ransacked the center.....
Rifled the bowels of their mother earth
For treasures better hid.
Soon, his crew Opened into the hill a spacious wound
And digged out ribs of gold..."(686-690)*

Father Arnall delivers a sermon about Hell in 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.' He describes it as an eternity of torment. It is an abode of demons and lost souls. Hell, according to him, is a strait, dark, and foul-smelling prison. It is filled with fire and smoke. The "straitness" of Hell is contrasted with that of earthly prisons. In Hell, there is no movement, unlike the earthly prisons where liberty of movement

is possible, whether within the cell's four walls or in the prison's gloomy yard. Prisoners in Hell are heaped together within the "four thousand miles thick walls." Devoid of any movement, the damned are bound and helpless. The darkness of the Hell is very much emphasized. The fire of Hell gives no light. The fire retains the intensity of its heat; it blazes eternally in the dark.

"It is a neverending storm of darkness, dark flamesof burning brimstone, amid which the bodies are heaped one upon another without even glimpse of the air."

Father Arnall also points out the awful stench. The brimstone burns and fills Hell with its intolerable stench. The air becomes foul and unbreathable.

Next comes the physical torment of Hell— the torment of fire. His sulfurous brimstone burns forever and with "unspeakable fury." the fire of Hell does not consume or destroy; rather, it "preserves that which it burns," making the pain and suffering eternally. A specific lake of fire is described. He is "boundless, shoreless, and bottomless." His fire makes the blood of the damned seeth and boils in the veins; brains boil in the skull, bowels become a "red-hot mass of burning pulp," and eyes flame-like molten balls.

"Every sense of the flesh is tortured... the eyes with darkness, the nose with noisome odors, the taste with the foul matter, leprous corruption, nameless suffocation filth, the touch with red-hot goads and spikes, with cruel tongues of flame."

Father Arnall further describes how the company of the damned increases the torment in Hell is described. he howls, and the screams only increase the torture. All sense of humanity is forgotten...they are helpless and hopeless: it is too late now for repentance."

Finally, Father Arnall says that the company of the devils is a torment in itself. These devils will affect the damned in two ways, by their presence and by their reproaches...They mock and jeer at the lost souls whom they dragged down to ruin." These demons are voices of conscience in Hell. Hey, taunt and keep reminding the damned of the sins they committed. Milton's and Joyce's hells differ from the same religious tradition. Other authors meticulously provide graphic details of the Hell.

Conclusion

Both Milton's description and Father Arnall's sermon are moralizing in tone. Joyce's Father Arnall is full of passion and rhetoric whose aim seems to terrify the listeners into repentance and confession; unlike Milton, he is not there to "justify the ways of God to men." The vividness of Hell does not find refuge in the poetic perfection as in Milton; horror is always rough and direct, never to be muffled by Milton's poetic genius. Other authors put the imagination of Hell into words beautifully and masterfully.

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