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Locating 'Country' and 'City' in Ireland: A Con(textual) Reading of *The Playboy of the Western World* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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Abstract

John Millington Synge and James Joyce portray 'country' and 'city' in Ireland at the cultural crossroads of literary modernism, through their respective works, *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Synge glorifies the Irish primitive life and depicts the countryside as a place where rural populace has an agrarian lifestyle. They live a simple life of subsistence through hard labour, mostly in integrated village communities, in close proximity to nature. On the other hand, Joyce explores the Irish metropolitan scene, which is a hub for culture, immigration, and commerce. He paints an urban man as a rational, intellectual being in the pursuit of art and knowledge. However, at the same time, he can be enticed into living a squalid life while also being witness to pollution and environmental degradation. While situating the literary works in their spatio-temporal contexts, the proposed study will not only highlight the defining features associated with 'country' and 'city' but will also foreground the differences in terms of socio-cultural existences. Attempts will also be made to critically analyse as well problematise how Synge and Joyce perceive 'county' and 'city' as perspective ways of life.

Keywords: City; Context; Country; Text.

Introduction

John Millington Synge and James Joyce are Anglo-Irish literary mavericks of modern Irish literature. Individually, their literatures are distinctive in terms of form, genre, subject, theme, locale, motif and approach. Their lit-

erary works portray ideas and outlook that are diverse and, at times, diametrically opposite. This diversity is discernible by their representation of the contradictory vignettes of Ireland at the cultural crossroads of literary modernism in the late nineteenth and the early decade of the twentieth century. James Joyce etches out glimpses of a progressive Ireland in an urban-centric layout in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) which has a fundamental polarity with bucolic Ireland portrayed in John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). These works can be perceived as literary counter to each other, highlighting the binary of 'city' and 'country'. Both 'city' and 'country' as places of habitation offer the contrasting sides of socio-cultural existences. Examining these facets of life and myriad hues of culture will constitute the core arguments of this research. Ramifications of modernity on the Irish 'city life' and its variance with the primitive 'country life' present a complete social panorama of Irish life. Without foregrounding the underlying issues like geographical contexts and their social milieus that are presented through the duality of 'city' and 'country', we can barely arrive at a holistic understanding of Ireland in these literary texts.

Ireland was a zone of contestation in its modernist literary representation. Gregory Castle, in his book *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, broadly speaks about the politics of representation that comes from the anthropological study of Ireland by Celtic Revivalists like W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge and cultural redemption pursued through 'primitivism' (1). He also points out the role of James Joyce in dismissing such Revivalist discourses (1). Nevertheless, in "Queering the Revivalist's Pitch: Joycean Engagements with Primitivism", John McCourt opines that in his early literary career while writing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce was not a believer of 'primitivism' (21). However, later on, "he too would return to and engage deeply with Ireland's early literature and myth and make them important elements in *Ulysses* and central in *Finnegans Wake*" (21). Although the setting of *Ulysses* is the Dublin of 1904, it is a modern rendition of classical literature based on Homer's *Odyssey*. Much like the geography of Ireland, the image of the Irish Peasants was also a contesting site of appropriation and re-appropriation. Edward Hirsh breaks down the image of Irish peasants in his essay "The Imaginary Irish Peasant". He accentuated how the English Colonizers grossly dehumanised the image of Irish peasants as ape-like and also laid emphasis on the way the Revivalists countered and subverted this sub-human image by idealising peasants as the representative of the Irish race (Hirsh 1119-20). The debate on representations and misrepresentations of Ireland has been effectively dealt with by many critics but it is also essentially important to read the

fundamental aspects of 'city' and 'country' present in its modern literary rendition. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dualism within Ireland's geography, it is imperative to depict these aspects on the Irish socio-cultural canvas and to evaluate them critically.

The Binary of Country and City in Ireland

Ireland did not consist of a homogenized community. The Eastern and Western coasts were almost two contradictory worlds within the geographical bound of Ireland. The East coast urban-centric city of Dublin was a place of political and literary awakening, witnessing growth in industrialisation. Western coast, on the other hand, was more of an agrarian, self-contained society whose main occupations were agriculture and fishing. Consequently, one can easily concur that the Eastern and Western coasts were poles apart in terms of tradition and culture. The polarisation between these two worlds i.e. 'city' and 'country' can be broadly understood through the lens of Raymond Williams' book, *The Country and the City*:

> On the actual settlements, which in the real history have been astonishingly varied, powerful feelings have gathered and have been generalised. On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation (1).

The binaries of 'nature' and 'culture', 'primitive' and 'progressive', 'ignorance' and 'knowledge', 'peace' and 'noise' usually define the segregation between 'country' and 'city'. These contrasting characteristics have invariably formed its association with 'country' and 'city'. They not only define these geographical locales but also hint at the socio-cultural divide that exists between 'country' and 'city'. The cultural constructs stemming from these contrasting ideas intertwined with 'country' and 'city' are visibly apparent and thus, generally accepted.

Interestingly, both J.M. Synge and James Joyce had forsaken their native land, Ireland to seek a refuge more congenial for their artistic vocation. Synge found his inspiration in the peasant life of Western Ireland i.e. "in the desolation of Connemara, West Kerry, and the Aran Islands [as] a mode of life free from the corrupting effects of European modernity"

(Castle 141- 42). Joyce permanently moved to Continental Europe where he lived in Paris, Trieste, and Zurich and kept writing on Ireland as a primary content and concern of his literary ventures. Both Synge and Joyce chose two contradictory paths in search of their artistic journey. Their asymmetric geographical inclination towards 'country life' and 'city life' resulted in an antithetical vantage point from where they could draw inspiration for literary deliberations.

J.M. Synge and the West of Ireland

In close liaison with nature, Western Ireland played a perfect foil to Synge's literary career. W. B. Yeats encouraged Synge to visit Aran Islands, a home for Gaelic culture and folklore. Aran Islands are located near the West coast of Ireland. Synge went to Aran Islands five times between 1898 and 1902, spending much time in studying their culture, language, customs and traditions. There are also accounts of his visit to different places situated along the West of Ireland like West Kerry and Mayo. In *In Wicklow and West Kerry* Synge expressed his love and longing to stay in the rural West of Ireland: "One wonders in these places why anybody is left in Dublin, or London, or Paris, when it would be better, one would think, to live in a tent or hut with this magnificent air, which is like wine in one's teeth" (73). Not only did Synge want to seek a blissful refuge in the rural West but also it was prerogative for him to get away from the city life.

The Playboy of the Western World was inspired by a real incident from Connaught in Western Ireland. W. B. Yeats gave an account of this incident during his visit to the Aran Islands:

> When I had landed from a fishing yawl on the middle of the island of Aran, a few months before my first meeting with Synge, a little group of islanders, who had gathered to watch a stranger's arrival, brought me to 'the oldest man upon the island'. He spoke but two sentences, speaking them very slowly: 'If any gentleman has done a crime we'll hide him. There was a gentleman that killed his father, and I had him in my house six months till he got away to America'. It was a play founded on that old man's story Synge brought back with him ("The Irish Dramatic Movement" 416).

English laws were seldom respected in the West and transgression of laws under any pretext had the tacit support of the people. In the beginning of the play, protagonist Christopher 'Christy' Mahon arrives at a small rural community of County Mayo situated along the West coast of Ire-

land, further to the north of Aran Islands. He has been on a run from law because of the supposed crime of patricide in County Kerry, which is also located in the West coast of Ireland. Initially he is treated with suspicion by locals who coax him into revealing the story of the crime that he thinks he has committed. Chattopadhyay asserts that in Ireland there existed a "gross disunity and even distrust among the people living in the separate parts of the same country" (101). He also notices a "cultural hiatus" in Ireland where "a person from one part of the country used to be considered kind of a 'foreigner'" by the other (101). Small village communities have homogenous population and are often defensive about their people and culture from any untoward outside influence. In contrast, the cities are mostly considered as 'melting pot' of different cultures, communities, religions and ethnicities. Social integration is a distinct part of a city life as individuals start to look beyond inherited identities. But a village is perceived as a close-knit community where outsiders are often looked upon with an apparent suspicion.

In *The Cutting of an Agate*, Yeats had rightly stated that Synge was fascinated with what was 'wild' in the people of Ireland (144). The course of action of *The Playboy of the Western World* takes place in Mayo which Synge describes as "a wild coast" (32; characters). He also describes Pegeen as "a wild-looking but fine girl" (33; act 1). The repeated stress on the word 'wild' is an attempt to distance, dissociate, and defamiliarise Mayo from the 'civilisation' or 'urbanisation' point of view. Hence, this prepares us for an unconventional ride to an outlandish world of endless possibilities. The audience watching the drama in Dublin and other cities is made aware of this fact right from the very beginning. The word 'wild' is indicative of a world that is not yet been domesticated or tamed by human greed for excess, a world that is in close harmony with nature. It alludes to a place that is untouched and unblemished by industrialisation, capitalism and human exploitation associated with urbanisation. The word 'wild' also evokes the uncertainty of unknown and the imperilments associated with a place that is less familiar or unfamiliar. In contrast, "city links to that of a settlement protected against wild nature . . . , a safe place" (Miles 9). Therefore, a city can be perceived as a protective sanctuary from the dangers of wilderness.

Irish Primitivism

During 1895-96, Synge was deeply affected by Pierre Loti's romantic portrayal of primitive Celtic customs which were preserved and protected by the community of peasants (Chattopadhyay 12). Like W. B. Yeats, Synge

was also a believer of 'Celtic Literary Revival'. The 'Celtic Literary Revival' was a nationalist project which sought to use 'primitivism' to create a cultural renewal of Ireland. It promoted the rural Irish West and their native culture as the subject of art, literature and music. According to McCourt 'primitivism' is best "described as the idealisation of the primitive, the privileging of an earlier, "simpler" and "better" time or way of life" (17). He also defines 'primitivism' as "idealisation of the "natural" or the rural at the expense of the modern civilisation's urban cultural and technological models" (17). Gilmartin believes that "[f]or Synge, the primitive means resisting a modernity that was becoming increasingly materialistic and decreasingly connected to its landscape" (74). After attaining independence from the colonial British rule, the Irish literary figures like Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory sought to create a new Irish national identity as a counterpoint to the British colonial consciousness. Edward Hirsh asserts that "[b]y idealising peasants—and by defining them as the essence of an ancient, dignified Irish culture—the Revivalists were specifically countering the English stereotype. The supernatural folklore and imaginative wealth of the Irish peasant were also posed against the modern industrial and commercial British spirit" (1120). Unlike the rural West coast of Ireland, Dublin was very much imbued with this industrial spirit akin to that of Britain.

Although Synge broadly adhered to 'primitivism', his artistic individualism crept in to add a bit of realism to *The Playboy*. Synge's representation of the West, particularly in *The Playboy*, can be understood in terms of palpable realism instead of absolute idealism. The violence, grotesque characterisations and caricatures are far from Yeats' idealized version of the West. Consequently, in the Abbey theatre of Dublin, the play was considered to be offensive and was highly criticized by the urban theatre goers and nationalists alike. Luke Gibbons in *Transformations in Irish Culture* employs violence that is often associated with primitivism as a counter narrative to law and discipline that are associated with modernity:

> Synge's preoccupation with lawlessness and violence is central to his overall conception of the western world, for in throwing off the shackles of discipline and constraint, he is undermining one of the main requirements of modernization as exemplified in nineteenth-century Ireland – the centralization of law, ideology and the state apparatus (33).

Also, as the play is categorised as a comedy, some aspects of realism presented on the stage can also be passed off as plain humour. Even if we rule

out the violence, the caricatures and grotesque characterisations are very much a part of comedy.

Irish Peasantry and the Potato Famine

The protagonist of *The Playboy of the Western World*, a farm boy, is a "son of a strong farmer" (Synge 39; act 1) who spent his life "digging spuds in the field[s]" (41) of pastoral Ireland. Christy speaks of his simplistic pastoral life with reference to everyday activities like "drinking, walking, eating, sleeping", like "a quiet, simple poor fellow" (44). Raising livestock is fundamental to the nourishment of rural pastoral life. We see such instances when Christy is offered "goat's milk . . . to colour . . . tea", "duck's eggs" (51; act 2), "pullet" (52) by Pegeen, and the village girls in Act 2. Unlike cities, the country is more dependent on livestock for their immediate nourishment. Village sports like "mule race" are rustic and give the feel of 'cowboy' masculinity (70; act 3). Such local sports can be perceived as a subversive attempt to preserve the indigenous culture against the advent of colonialism, modernism and multiculturalism.

Christy and his father were potato farmers. Agriculture of potato was the predominant part of Irish agrarian culture as it was their staple food. Synge is being suggestive of it in the Act 2 of *The Playboy of the Western World* when one of the village girls, Susan, offered "a pat of butter" to Christy "for it'd be a poor thing to have . . . spuds dry" (Synge 52). Curwen asserts that "the most important object in the rural economics of Ireland is the crop of potatoes; for on this exclusively depends the existence of all lower orders not resident in towns" (107). The breakout of Irish Potato Famine in the 19th century resulted in the death of multitude and widespread migration took place from rural Ireland to cities like Dublin and London. Heavy dependence on single crop leads to the overexploitation of the land. 'Monocropping' involves growing a single crop on a land, over a long period of time whereas 'crop rotation' involves growing more than one crop periodically on the same patch of land. The absence of 'crop rotation' adversely decreases land productivity, thereby, deteriorating soil health and fertility. That is why 'monocropping' for a prolonged period of time is considered to be an unhealthy agricultural practice as it has long term adverse effect on the land. K.H. Connell criticizes this Irish cultivation practice: "No other western people, generation after generation, has starved or survived with the bounty of the potato: why did the Irish depend on it so long, and so nearly exclusively?" (110)

Synge studied Karl Marx's "*The Communist Manifesto*, William Morris' so-

cialist writings and attended lectures on socialism" (Chattopadhyay 12). Thus, it makes sense when the proletariat, agrarian class finds expression in his works. Through his love for the countryside and the rustic working-class people, Synge seems to hit out at the metropolitan 'capitalism'. Synge's utopian vision of Ireland bares affinity with the primitive and pastoral Ireland of the past. It is evident in Synge's portrayal of the minimalistic setting of the play which is critical of any kind of excess often associated with 'city life'. Synge seemed to be wary of the ill effects of modernist industrialisation on the Irish ecology and its agrestic population. Moreover, his interest in socialism and provincialism opens up a whole new dimension for eco-socialist studies. Synge kept the landlords and police off the stage to give a clear message of an egalitarian society where everyone can contribute as an equal (Murray 83). This exclusion can be treated as a purposeful marginalization of the figures of authority that are often perceived as threat to the peasant life.

James Joyce on Celtic Revivalism and the Irish Peasant Figure

James Joyce was against the romantic notion of 'primitivism' associated with Celtic Literary Revivalism. Paul F. State, in his book, *A Brief History of Ireland* stated that:

> Independence gave Irish writers the country for which so many among the Gaelic Literary Revival had yearned, but the idealistic, pastoral images so diligently promoted by William Butler Yeats and others failed to inspire many among the best artists in midcentury. They turned away from romanticism and toward realism, away from the tranquil countryside and toward the rough-and-tumble world of the cities. Many did not even live in the country. James Joyce stands as the towering exemplar of the hard-nosed realist (266).

Joyce felt that there was nothing much left in the Old Gaelic culture which was given away by their ancestors. The pagan Gaelic culture was long gone and taken over by cultural insurgence of colonialism and Catholicism. That is why Joyce thought of Celtic Revivalism as nothing more than a meaningless, delusive propaganda. According to Sheamus Deane, the Irish literary revival was fallacious and he relegated it to nothing but a 'peasant movement': "The literary revival too was bogus. Like the others, it was a 'peasant' movement; but like then it was also a repeat performance of, an attempt to make the present a rehearsal of the past" (Introduction xxxix). Repetition of history of the Irish race resonates as a nightmare for

Joyce. He endeavoured to unshackle the collective consciousness of his race which was caught up in the repetitive loop of its past. He wanted to detach himself from any kind of romanticism associated with Gaelic pastoral past. Being progressive and adaptive, Joyce wanted to focus on the future of his race – a future that was invariably undergoing a paradigm shift, beckoning a new world order marked by commercialisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, social integration, advancement and convenience of living.

Joyce shatters the solemn stature of peasants so fervently established by Celtic Literary Revivalists. They celebrated the 'peasant figure' as a symbolic counter-narrative against industrialisation and metropolitanism. While Yeats believed "that the Celts living in the West had remained untouched by modernity, and retained visionary forms of knowledge lost to people of the cities, Joyce denied that any sort of 'pure' form of life existed, and ridiculed the possibility of its being found in the so-called peasants of the West" (McCourt 27). Joyce felt that it was a seemingly forceful symbolism and treated the symbolic 'peasant figure' with disdain. In his autobiography *Stephen Hero*, Joyce argues: "One would imagine the country was inhabited by cherubim. Damme if I see much difference in peasants: they all seem to me like one another as a peascod is like another peascod" (54). Cherubim are considered to be the angels of second order, having a distinct red face. It appears that Joyce attributed both these qualities of a cherub to a general Irish peasant – a lower class citizen or a citizen of second order with a sun-burnt, tanned face akin to that of a red-faced cherub. Edward Hirsh rightly follows that the gross representation of the peasant figure in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* demystifies the romantic imagery of Yeats and Synge with gross realism (1127). A realistic portrayal of peasant might appear to be an unflattering sight – an amalgam of harsh working conditions, monotony of intensive labour, often less profiteering, the sun-burnt face and a dirt-ridden body.

City as a Centre of Culture, Migration and Economy

Cities can be considered as epicentres of art, culture and knowledge. Cities are also home to academic centres of learning, pioneering the progress of human civilisation. In Dublin, much like Joyce, Stephen studied in Belvedere College and was enrolled in University College for higher studies. His education and experience in these esteemed urban institutions played a pivotal role in shaping his cultural outlook and stimulated the artist within him. Consequently, he wished to leave Ireland in the pursuit of art to live in cities of Continental Europe. Like Joyce, Stephen felt

it was necessary to sever all ties from distractions associated with Ireland – Irish Nationalism, Catholic Religiosity and the burden of family. Cities like New York, London, Berlin, Paris and Vienna ushered in the new era of literary awakening, where artists flocked in. Malcom Bradbury points out that there "has always been a close association between literatures and cities" as modern European cities have been sources of "essential literary institutions: publishers, patrons, libraries, museums, bookshops, theatres, magazines" (96). Moreover, cities have the market that serves as a means of cultural consumption. Without these necessary provisions, the literary intelligentsia might find it difficult to accomplish their artistic endeavours.

Modernism was evident in the growing urban population flocking in for employment, and better prospect of life. Stephen's family moved from pleasant suburban Blackrock to Dublin to cope with their financial troubles. Malcolm Bradbury asserts that the cities were "foci of migration from the countryside", thereby, becoming "places of population growth" (98). The increase in urban population led to the rise in consumerism. The expansion in the rate of productivity was not just a capitalist venture anymore and the rising demand had to be fulfilled with sufficient generation of supply. It required employment of unskilled labourers from countryside who were migrating to cities in the wake of Irish Potato Famine. However, the huge concentration of population made it impossible for Dublin to provide adequate employment. In Dublin, as O'Connell describes, "the workforce relied largely on unskilled casual jobs and suffered severely from unemployment, underemployment and inadequate wages" (5). The living standards of cities like Dublin were also abysmal with people residing in crowded living tenement apartments. Stephen's apprehension is accentuated though these lines: "The sudden flight from the comfort and revery of Blackrock, the passage through the gloomy foggy city, the thought of the bare cheerless house in which they were now to live made his heart heavy". Like other European cities, Dublin was also a "gloomy foggy city" suffering from the adverse effects of industrial pollution (Joyce, *Portrait* 157; ch. 2). Dublin suffered from unpleasant, unhygienic conditions and improper waste management.

Modernism was also characterized by a huge upsurge in economy. The seaport of Dublin has always been significant for the urban economy of Ireland. Sea route is the cheapest and most convenient means of transporting cargos. Busy ports and cities have an interdependent relationship as they have economic bearings on each other. A jostling 'city life' facilitates an economically vibrant port; port operations and activities give various employment opportunities to the urban population. Joyce describes the

Dublin seaport through Stephen's first visit to it:

> He passed unchallenged among the docks and along the quays wondering at the multitude of corks that lay bobbing on the surface of the water in a thick yellow scum, at the crowds of quay porters and the rumbling carts and the illdressed bearded policeman. The vastness and strangeness of the life suggested to him by the bales of merchandise stocked along the walls or swung aloft out of the holds of steamers wakened again in him the unrest which had sent him wandering in the evening.

The "multitude of corks" lying on the "thick yellow scum" on the surface of the water are suggestive of industrial and domestic waste (*Portrait* 158; ch. 2). Such evidence of water pollution grimly hints at the unpleasant side of urban life particularly seen in the busy port cities like Dublin.

City Life and Morality

The concluding section of Chapter 2 bears the testimony of moral degradation associated with an institution like brothel. Stephen visits the brothel district of Dublin to satiate his "wasting fire of lust" (Joyce, *Portrait* 184). He finds a "young woman dressed in a long pink gown", and finally seeks freedom by "surrendering himself to her, [his] body and mind" (185). He knowingly "wanted to sin with another of his kind . . . and to exult with her in sin (184)." Furthermore, the "maze of a narrow and dirty street" through which Stephen wandered around the brothel is symbolic of the narrowness in his thought process which invariably leads him to indulge in immorality (185). It is this "maze" which fetters his moral existence, denying him a psychological respite. Moral decay and ethical degeneration were the debasing aspects of the city life in Dublin as represented in the text. The textual representation can be situated in its historical context to further corroborate this view. To this end, Diarmaid Ferriter gives references of sexually transmitted disease like syphilis, in his book, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland,* which was present in urban centres like Dublin because of the prevalence of prostitution:

> A Royal Commission on VD [Venereal disease] which sat between 1913 and 1916 heard evidence from Dr Brian O'Brien, chief medical inspector to the Irish local government board. He believed that VD had declined in Ireland, and that syphilis was almost non-existent outside of urban areas because, in his words, 'there was very little immorality' in rural Ireland (60).

It can be inferred from this statement that unlike Dublin, the rural areas in Ireland were almost free from the debasing effects of a modern city life. The immoral side of urban life often encroaches upon the moral recesses of modern individuals like Stephen. It fails to respond to the spiritual faculty of a modern man who often tends to lose faith in the binaries of sin and atonement and is unafraid of any moral consequences or malady.

Even though the modern cities had their hazards, they served as a centre of intellectual stimuli for him. Even for Stephen, the feeling of being at the centre of all happenings contributed to a profound sense of integration and inclusiveness, making him feel much "freer than he had been in Blackrock" (Joyce, *Potrait* 157-58; ch 2). Joyce had never shied away from portraying the grim side of 'city life'; he had embraced its flaws and revelled in its glory. His "complex" relationship with the 'city life' finds expression in the words of Stephen – "Dublin was a new and complex sensation" – a new phenomenon which piqued his individual, artistic curiosity (157).

Conclusion

J. M. Synge and James Joyce are the flag bearers of their respective literary forms. Not only do they differ in terms of their preference of literary forms and approach but also in respect of their target audience. Synge has written his plays keeping the Abbey Theatre stage in mind whereas Joyce's novel is meant for his readers. Despite the variance in literary forms, both *The Playboy of the Western World* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* emerge as a vivid representation of the deep-rooted duality of country and city in Ireland. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* also depicts the rural West of Ireland through the setting of Aran Island; however, it does not directly deal with the Irish peasant figure which is often considered as the thematic staple in the debate of primitivism and progress. In *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge has presented a quintessential West coast of Ireland through Mayo and Kerry. Not only do we catch the glimpses of their simple agrarian life in a close community of village but also gain an insight into their ways of life through eating habits and indigenous sports. As opposed to the country life of West coast, Joyce sums up Dublin as an urban port city of rising industrialisation, economy, pollution and a centre of migration from countryside in pursuit of employment. It is a place of enlightenment and learning but it can also be seen to grapple with moral issue like prostitution. Both real and imagined spaces of 'country' and 'city' offer an immersive view of the socio-cultural contours as well as the economic, environmental and moral landscapes of Ireland.

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