

## **A Study of Guilt as a Cross-Cultural and literary Medium**

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### **Abstract**

The short story, as a renewable and concise medium, has illuminated many writers to display their talents and to explore its multi-sectioned horizon on the spur of time. Throughout the ages many names sedately become legends and their writings are considered masterpieces. The purpose of this study is to show the development of the short story and how some writers of different cultural and historical background share the same feelings. The present study falls into two sections and a conclusion. First, the study deals with the short story and its development, secondly, the analysis of three different short stories of three different writers: *The Killers* by Ernest Hemingway (an American writer), *Eveline* by James Joyce (an Irish writer), and *ALKhanzeer* by Salah Zangana (an Iraqi writer) by means of how the three writers deal with “the feeling of Guilt” as a unificatory motif. This study also aims to show how this motif makes the characters of these stories each their self-discovery in such a way that each writer expresses the feeling of guilt and its effect in relation to his background presenting it in such a way that enables the reader to unveil something about the writer’s character himself. The aim of analyzing these stories is to show their affinity regardlessly of place, time and background.

## I. Introduction: The Short Story

Everywhere in this world, whenever the short story is discussed, a sort of bewitchedness crawl all over the body by hearing names of such a great impact. Since this is a worldwide view, then it should have a unification sense that everyone has the impulse to find out not being the only one and there are others who share being in the same state. But admittedly, what makes a short story modern and a tool to share others' thoughts? Is it so really? In looking backwards, people have been telling stories since ever; they were telling stories orally and many of them have not survived. Many think that the art of story-telling is as old as civilizations themselves that gives the short story an international trait. How to know is by looking up for its roots ; how they were like and known is from what have been come down from its heritage. The best known examples are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer as the tradition of story-telling was recited orally and in verse. (Abrams: 1999 p 302)

The features of the short story began to be clearer and clearer in the nineteenth century, but it still had the elements of fantasy and abnormality. The short stories of Washington Irving (1792-1834) and Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) were of romantic qualities, but in varying degrees. Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), had the mixture of the romantic features with horror and unexpectedness and in both these stories Irving goes to German legends for his ideas. Yet instead of presenting German stories in American dress, he adapts the legends to the American scene and comes up with characters who are unmistakably American. Scott's *Wandering Willie's Tales* (1824) was all about romances, but in such a way making the reader really touched.(Wikipedia:2010 )

The nineteenth century magazines were great help in the development of the short story. It began to be refined of the illusions and vagueness that characterized it during the time before the 1830s. The short story began to be more realistic in its subject-matter which was based on the real life of human beings.

The perfection of the short story was at the hands of its masters, in America Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), Mark Twain (1835-1910) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), in France Prosper Merimee (1803-187), Honoree de Balzac (1799-1850), Emile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), in Russia Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Pushkin (1799-1837), and Dostoevsky (1821-1881), E. T. A. Hoffman (1776-1822) and Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) in Germany.(Hyderick: 1948)

The subject-matters of the short story began to take other dimensions especially in America. Henry James (1843-1916) wrote *The Turn of The Screw* (1898) in which he directed the short story to detect 'the surprising variety of mental states''. That was the same situation with other

writers. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1936) wrote short stories characterized with "moral analysis" like his *The Merry Men* (1882). Rudyard Kipling (1850-18936) made such attributes to the short story. He journalized it, in addition of his handling of various subjects such as his *Plain Tales from The Hills* (1888). Kipling was responsible for the flowering of the short story in England in the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.( Canby and Dashiell:1935 pp 61-64)

The twentieth century witnessed new trends in literature. The social changes before and after World War I made the short story in danger of changing its taste. H. G. Wells (1866-1946) said that the social changes that characterized this era of the century were so marvelous making the short story re-adjust itself to cope with these changes. Sherwood Anderson (1866-1959) aimed to change the manner of story-telling as in his *Winseburg, Ohio* (1919) there was new overlapping of the American life with new type of story-telling of a common touch. (Ibid p79).

Short stories of high "integrity" revealing the "slice of life" of Chekhov and showing the "formlessness of life itself" that seek the "truthfulness" of expressions appeared on the literary scene. The later years of the twentieth century, after the World War II many writers elevated the short story. The invention of radio and television made the short story in danger of fading away as a written form. The adaptation into films had its pros and cons. On one hand, these adaptations gave the short story new definition and appreciation to its worth, on the other hand, they might divert the reader from reading the original text. These adaptations visualized the short story in order to make it more understandable as it is considered that films and the short story as being two expressions of the same art. Many short stories have been adapted into films such as Agatha Christi's detective short stories and Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. (Holman: 1960 p58)

The flowering of the Arabic short story started at the beginning of the twentieth century by the spread of journalism and translation of the foreign literature (مصطفى و عبد الرضا. 2000). It is "an adopted child" as it reaches its maturity recently (Cassimy and Frazier: 1971 pp38-105). The Iraqi short story has been influenced by Poe's formula and by which it developed gradually through three stages. The first one is the double-theme stage dated from the Iraqi revolution in 1921 to the World War II characterized by the innuendo of which Mahmood Ahmed Essayyid is considered the father of the Iraqi short story after the publication of his *For the Sake of Marriage* in (1921) which shows his influence on the later Iraqi short-story writers. The formula-approximate stage dated from World War II to the revolution of 1958 has witnessed the works of the grown-up writers who had an international scope such as Abdulla ALNadeem,

Abdul Malik Nouri and Faud El-Tekerli. They employ the techniques used in writing short stories such as the stream-of-consciousness which was invested in Abdul Malik Nouri's *Fatoma* which won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in an Arab contest sponsored by the well-known Lebanese journal *El-Adeeb* in 1948. The contemporary stage dated from the revolution of 1958 to the present have captured the attention of their intellectuals and held the active perception in developing the Iraqi short story. Its writers tend to leave the themes they were accustomed to portray and turn the wheel to invest new motifs to broaden and colour the short story giving it their special touches.(Wikipedia:2010 )

Many definitions for the short story are there, all depend on the length of it. The concern is with the "short story", it is a "brief" work of fictional narrative. It inclines to be more suggestive than any work of fiction because of its length. The shape of the short story determines its length, in other words, it ranges between the shape of ideas with the narrator's mind and the demand of the publishers for "marketing". A great distinction can be made between the short story the sketch and the tale in that ".....it has a definite formal development from looseness in construction; however it finds its Unity in many things other than the plot, although it often finds it there--in effect, in theme, in characters, in Tone, in Mood, even, in occasion, in Style" (Holman: 1960 p459). Poe provides a definition for the short story in his reviews of *Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales* in which he explains that it is "the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal". Here Poe gives the fundamentals that should be taken for granted in structuring the short story. His emphasis is on its unity and it must carry a single effect or impression, brevity and totality. He advises the writer of short story to pay attention to the first sentence as it carries the intended effect of the short story. From the point that a short story can be read on one setting, he considers the short story superior to the novel when he says "the ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length. As it cannot be read at one setting, it deprives itself of the immense force derivable from totality". In his essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe gives his statement that the emphasis should be on the reader by colouring the short story with energy, uniqueness and clarity and, above all, how to construct and manage the elements employed in it. By achieving this, the reader is beguiled till the end. The short story, from its very name, must be short and covers a single incident of a character in a limited period of time. But its success depends chiefly the writer's composition and wit; how he displays his ideas in a style which holds the attention of the reader since the moment the reader starts to read till he finishes. It must be "exemplary and representative, a world of brief compass", that it gives a sense of brevity and unity of impression. (Bandro: 1990 pp29)

## II. Guilt: an Intuitive Instinct or an Outcome of Bad Action

It is an inaugurator subtle matter to think over things that have powers over composing human personality. Emotions and feelings have huge impact in considering tendencies and nurture. I. A. Richardson argues in his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) that some people can read these signs and how the body acts to reason out those of the known artists. For him, he considers feeling and its impulses as leading to analyse those signs implicitly or even explicitly. In lieu of relating their backgrounds, eras, tastes and circumstances of each one, Hemingway, Joyce and Zangana have revealed the common characteristics everyone share regardless the lineage, place and time. (Altenbernd: 1966 p30)

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) wrote *The Killers* in 1927 which deals with an experience in Nick Adams's life. It happens that Hemingway employs the same character in many of his short stories. In this story, Hemingway gives the transitional stage in Nick's life from "adolescence into manhood" during which Nick still feels the urgent impulse to take action. Hemingway shows here an important feature that is how the short story "reveal[s] the character throughout a series of actions or under stress.....its purpose is accomplished when the reader comes to know what the true nature of the character is" (Allen: 1981 p459). He was called a "hard-boiled" realist as he depicted human experiences with the veil removed; besides, he employed his experiences in life such as his trip to Africa depicted in his novel *Green Hills of Africa* (1937). He established himself as "the master of new, tough mood of writing and became a legend during his lifetime" (Canby and Dashiell: 1935 pp 61-64). Hemingway once said that his greatest problem in writing "was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced". (Ross: 1961 p34)

Hemingway fictionizes Nick as being naïve that he knows nothing until he is been through an outstanding ordeal which trespasses his over-rated issues duly. It is a hair-raising matter to find out new opaquely things having new dimensions. It is daring and risky to handle fully-rated estimation being pushed to cross a new arch to move forward or retreat. Nick is lacking any prior knowledge of the evil in this world; being innocent is that on such a risk tends to be initiative and holds responsibility to mend things. Otherwise guiltiness would gnash him utterly. Hemingway portrays in this story a cliché of a thriller context. The mission of the killers is made clear from the beginning. These killers are dressed in a way as if they are twins and "wear tight overcoats" and "they are the same but different faces". They eat their food with their gloves on in order not to leave any fingerprints. Their way of observing and looking in the mirror behind George is a kind of suspense. When they tie Nick and Sam, the cook, it indicates how they are accomplishing their mission. (Hemingway: 1952 p2)

The “Less is more” technique shows the craftsmanship of Hemingway in sustaining the suspense throughout the "banter" of the killer towards the boys Nick and George. And throughout the story, one may judge that the story is about the act of killing they intend to do to Anderson. Here the cleverness of Hemingway is to manipulate the reader and make him think more closely that the jest of the story is about Nick Adams. Hemingway believes in the unsaid, that is in his novel *Death in the Afternoon*, he describes this technique plausibly and applicably as “the dignity of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water” (Brooks and Warren: 1962 p116)

The fact that Anderson is presented without any background opens the horizon for many speculations and interpretations of this act of killing. Anderson is given in such a way is to spare him the long-winded details that to take effect in the future. In *The Withered Branch* (1959) p27 D. S. Savage criticizes Hemingway’s characters as “lacking or without religion, politics, culture or history, that is to say, without any distinctive human existence”. In another essay by Wydham Lewis entitled *Dumb Ox: A Study of Ernest Hemingway* (1934) p302, he meant to explore the characteristics of Hemingway’s hero as “dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton” as if he is “in the cattle outside the slaughter house chewing cud” doing nothing but waiting what to come. In a review of his collection of essays, Robert P. Weeks defends Hemingway’s hero as not being “a dumb ox chewing cud outside the slaughter house, but gallant man who is enduring his suffering with cold and empty universe”. Hemingway mimics Auden’s *Musee de Beaux Arts* in which there is an episode in a painting of Christ’s crucifixion about “a horse scratches his innocent behind a tree” while others engaged in the battle field (Wolman: 1972 p17). This affinity with Mrs. Bell whose words “an awfully nice man” is the only hint to Anderson’s past and being his only crime. She is a factor of the new discovery of evil which intensifies his agitation and culminating guilt. He feels as if he is responsible to save this man, but when he knows his frustration towards this matter when he tells him "tired of running. So long, thanks for coming around" causes Nick to be shocked because of that silhouette picture of the ephemeral dazzling past of Anderson (Daoud: 1997 p12).

When he had returned to the restaurant communicating to the boys what happened, astonishingly, they seem as if they do not care, or even not to hear anything about the matter.

“I wonder what he did?” Nick said.

“Double-cross somebody. That’s what they kill them for.”

“I am going out of this town,” Nick said.

“Yes,” said George. “That’s a good thing to do.”

“I can’t stand think about him waiting in the room and knowing he’s going to get it. It’s too damned awful.”

“Well,” said George, “you better not think about it.”(Hemingway: 1961 p81)

“You better not think about it” sounds odd to him as if they know those matters and overcome them unlike him who knows them for the first time. Their attitude makes him think of the evil in this world and how he was unaware of, but now he knows and feels over-burdened and guilty for not being able to do anything to prevent it. His decision to leave shows its huge impact upon him. Open matters are easy to deal with unlike the esoteric ones those twitches Nick to do a last-ditch unlike the boys who doff these matters and move on. His departure is an indication that he cannot expostulate that but instead he gallantly leaves everything up to the hilt. This discovery of his shows how Hemingway as a realist has depicted this experience as if it is his own. (Al-Mutalibi and Abdul-Razzak: 1991 p1)

James Joyce (1882-1941) is like his contemporary writers who dealt with the struggle of the individual against the world and oneself. He describes his characters overtly “who found themselves in a trap, or a box...who plan to escape...but nothing happen at least nothing happens as planned”. His characters display a gallery of thwarted escapes. The dilemma or struggle is apparently a distinctive trait of literature at his time. *Dubliners* (1914) serves as a series of pretexts he has pursued in justifying his preference of exile over his home, in a disparately degrees he describes his Dublin as a "centre of paralysis". Everything is doomed to be frozen like Eveline who stood “frozen at the harbour” or been as zombies. *Eveline* is one of the earliest short stories Joyce had written. He wrote it in Paris after his elopement with Nora Barnacle and was published in a newspaper called *The Irish Homestead* in (1904). In the final edition of *Dubliners* it appeared as the fourth of fifteen stories. This story is meant to show one side of the moral history of Dublin, in which is the intention of Joyce to list in his *Dubliners* (Childs and Fowler: 2006 p 17). The story is a representation of Eveline's interior monologues or close to the Stream-of-Consciousness technique he reconceptualised in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1915).(Baldick:2001 p136) in this story, although the sequential reminiscence of her past “...she sat by the window...one time used to be a field...her father was not bad then” play a great role in reminding her of her inactivated life, she clanked to the cause fiercely hoping to overcome her burdened guilt. There is no physical description of this girl, Joyce overtly focuses on her hesitation as being “rebels but not revolutionary”. Like Thomas

Hardy's heroes, Joyce's implicitly show the no-free-will motif that pin them in his own conceptual ideals. (Hardy: 1974 p ix)

Eveline seems as if she is standing in the middle of a maze of conflicting forces of her mind. She is offered a new life in a new place yet she clings to her current life in which she is as if dead in life. She cannot throw the chains of conventions and codes which she is so attached to, nor can she venture this new trend in life. She lacks courage to move forward but instead she hinders back because of her hesitation and spiritual weakness. Her confusion of what is good or bad for her makes this sudden change in life unbearable. Her estrangement has absolutely conquered any attempt of doing so. (Dolch: 1969 p1)

There are many reasons that push her to escape. Her father and his treatment to her, her miserable job at the Stores, the burden to keep the house after her mother's death, they are all factors that intensify her willingness to escape. But there is a picture of one of her father's friends who managed to escape keeps reminding her all the time of her father's attitude towards his friend. His attitude is whenever he is asked about it, he is unwilling to talk about it any further. This indicates the influential impact of her father's opinion upon her the thing that intensifies her confusion and unbearable guilt. (Ibid)

Dust and water are symbols in this story which are attached to Eveline very closely. Dust serves as a symbol of death and is associated with her current life. Water serves as a symbol of life in this new place she is about to go to. The dust works upon her as if it is a drug that paralyze her and making her unwilling to move any further. Apparently she is very attached to it and unknowing of this attachment till she is in the harbour to leave. Dust is one of the mysterious ties that holds her and it is very strong and much more than she can figure them out as if she has an addiction "in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She is tired". Joyce makes dust as a sign of stillness leading to her incompetence though "her time was running out, she continues to sit at the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne". In contrast of the fresh air of Buenos Aires, the occult tie between her and dust equities her lack of fortified will or given pretexts. (Ibid)

In this story also Music plays great role. The air is filled with melodies that hit at the nick of time giving the story a melancholic tone. The voice is talking through silently allowing her soul to know the subtle matter that intrigues her to such attachment. It appears in intervals. When Franc took her to *The Bohemian Girl*, on hearing it she felt "elated". On remembering that, a quavering enlivenment crept all over body and something hair-raising of the life ahead making her breathe throttledly. During her sitting at the window she hears an "organ-player. She knew the air. Strange it comes that night to remind her of her promise to her mother" at the death bed

and being free at last. At the harbour the sounds of the whistles where “the boat blew a long mournful whistle in the mist” confuse her. Mist leads her to think of the vague future ahead. She is alerted by “a bell clanged at her heart” and Franc “holds her hands” telling her to come”. Did she come? “no, no!”, she stood and her hands “clutched the iron in frenzy”. He kept calling her to come but she is like an “animal”. She acts sheepishly rejecting life in favour of her way of death-in-life. Her incongruity likes and dislikes are moulded away at the North Wall fearing life eastwardly. She is reminded of her attachment towards her city and family and as a warning not to go further on this trip. These symbols have appliquéed the story of the things that strongly detain her. One can sense throughout the story that Eveline cannot abandon her conventions and what she is accustomed to and simply march into new uprising ones. The agonizing guilt of leaving her father no matter what he does to her, her home and its responsibilities besides that she is not sure of this new life, are all pretexts given not only to justify her reluctance but to run off life itself. Her confidence in her Franc, her love, is not that one she can count on to venture to start fresh. Her weakness and inability are typical to Joyce's characters who are very attached to their home. The interwoven tie between the character and his home is the strongest obstacle to be broken; It is deeply rooted. In that sense sometimes it is apparently apprehended that Eveline’s thought silhouette Joyce’s; form a miniaturised insight to his world. Admittedly, Joyce is being impersonal and rather less hostile than it is appeared in the story to show his empathy and implicated judging Dublin for its paralysis not in a clear-cut words but actions.(London: 1915 pp 34,36,37,38)

*ALKhanzeer* [The Swine] is a short story included in his collection entitled *ALSamt wa ALSada* (The Silence and The Echo), published in 2002. Salah Zangana (1959- ) tries throughout this story to introduce a kind of protagonist having a forgiven nature although he is abused. Being the son of a nation which suffers from all kinds of injustice, it is apparent then the mingling of his experiences. (زنکنه: 2002 ص 58)

To be audacious is a good trait a writer may have, Zangana tries to reveal the piqued glass of the hidden truth concerning the prisoners who rot in prisons and have never been asked after. He also tries by those means to show the derogatory treatment and its psychological effects putting them under inspection. He shows that modern Iraqi short stories have new dimensions of multiple character-development. Revenge taken by letting things go leads to the unredeemable and unbearable guilt is Zangana’s emphasis in the story.(نجم. 1961).

The story relates what will happen in the future; an anticipatory image of futuristic happenings. It opens in a bus and there is the hero, the Man (the characters have not been given

names). After twenty-five years, this man sees his victimizer, an old Man. This victimizer he used to call him “khanzeer” (swine). The Man is enraged and his anger aroused and his old commitment to take his revenge from "ALKhanzeer" stating in his words twenty-five years ago "I will take my revenge out of you"<sup>(15)</sup>. This old Man seems as if not there busy with his stick to keep him straight. Seeing him in this way the Man began to think that old age and time help him take his revenge, as Zangana tries to show his benevolent soul. This old Man wants to get off the bus, and ironically the Man helps him get off the bus instead of fulfilling his revenge. The old Man thanks him telling him that he heard this voice before and it is familiar to him. Here coincidence takes effects to help the Man remind the old Man that he was one of his victims twenty-five years ago.(سرمك: 2010 ص59)

Forgetting everything related to his past and his tyranny while the Man still remembers the agony and wounded dignity, the old Man has remorsefully been awakened by the voice of this Man that guilt-trips him. The Man helps him get off the bus and goes on his way leaving the old Man on the pavement crying and begging him to “come back to kiss you and say.. I am sorry; it was a story, a short one!”. The Man, here, feels victorious as he notices how his guiltiness forces this tyrant persistently to be an old and unable Man doing nothing but recollecting the past regretfully. This old Man at his bygone days did not pay much attention to what he was doing that when he becomes weak and old, his scrupulosity tortures him in apprehending that vague and misleading vision he was in and how ironically it begins to be clearer than it used to be. One can detect how the Man obtains his revenge after the revelation that the old Man is mistaken. The Man finds conciliation and redemption in how guiltiness has burdened the old Man and preoccupied his day and night. It seems as if he is settled down but he bursts out placidly “I wish I saw you in a better situation to take my revenge out of you” and though everything has gone, he reminds him how “ you used to put your cigar on my skin, whip me or pull out my nails enjoying my pain. Those are now tattoos”. The awakening of the old Man makes him wonder what sort of man he was; a Man used to torture others by saying "it was not true, it was a story, a short one" as if he is not the same now, he is another, a newer version of himself though it is too late for those he had abused. The sublimated realization makes the Man transcend it now. (ص201059: زنگنه).

Karma has been the controlling factor in the story that is what Zangana is trying to communicate. Twenty-five years ago, the old Man was a victimizer and the Man was the victim. Well, things have changed now, the old Man is a victim of his wrong doings, and the Man’s behaviour highlights his aroused guilt because of his being one of his past atrocities which had camouflaged him to act right at that time. This living proof of these atrocities gathers

all things the old Man has ever done. To mend what he has done and do penance for his sins and mistakes, he has nothing other than being left in gnawing. Zangana's hero has this kind and pure spirit which although he was unjustly treated, he helps and forgives knowing that "time will take its course" and "we will meet again, Life is too short". Everything has action and reaction. He has got his moment of realization only by seeing the bigger picture, giving up everything related to the past and a resolution to move on "...leaving him sitting at the pavement [though he beseeched me to stay] and [ I ] kept walking determined to let it go once and for all...". (Ibid)

## CONCLUSION

Humans differ in their characters, tendencies, tastes, and personas, but there are certain features they share which on the surface seem different but actually they are not. They are all linked in such a way that really makes them humans. It is the instinct they are brought up on. *Joyce*, *Hemingway*, and *Zangana* are three different writers from three different cultures. Their employment of the theme of " guilt " in their stories *Eveline*, *The Killers*, and *ALKhanzeer* enables these characters reaching self-discovery or "the moment of realization". Each writer expresses this feeling and its effect in relation to his background presenting it in such a way that enables the reader to unveil something about the writer's character himself. These stories show the affinity between humans in different place and periods of time; no time and place boundaries can change the simple traits all humans share. Eveline's guilt of leaving her home leads her to sacrifice her freedom, Nick's leads him to discover new things he was not aware of and finally the Man's leads him to forgive leaving everything behind to move on. The gradual development of the short story through ages beginning to be more refined of the fantasy and abnormal elements by the work of its masters such as Maupassant, Chekhov, Poe, and Taymoor serves the need of the writer and the reader as well in getting the core of the matter as quickly as possible.

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