A Structuralist Analysis of *Exiles*

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*Exiles* is a recalcitrant text, "one of the more difficult of Joyce's works", as Tindall puts it. One of its basic themes is the problem of freedom and creativity. Farrell and Macleod, though differing on many issues, deal with at least one subject common to both Joyce and Ibsen: "the dilemma of freedom and responsibility, and the problem of the status of the artist." Of course, Joyce was also fictionalizing a series of incidents in his own life, as Ellman has shown. And one of the aspects which Joyce, Richard, and Stephen Dedalus share is the belief that "isolation is the first principle of artistic economy." Referring to *When We Dead Awaken*, Joyce suggested "the idea of creativity and freedom as being central" to Ibsen's work, as Farrell notes. Joyce's phrase would still hold true if applied to his own drama.

Discussing the play as a dramatic failure, Levin remarks that "in identifying himself with Richard, he (Joyce) cuts himself off his other characters"; the same solipsistic attitude is to be found in Richard's relationship to the other characters. Farrell accepts the esthetic analogy, proposing that Richard, the artist, molded his wife as an artistic creation, and then strives to liberate himself, insisting that she "be as free as he". Goldman insists that "the 'author' (Richard), is careful not to restrict the freedom of will of his 'creation' (Bertha)." Ellmann mentions the duality in Richard, for "as a searcher for freedom he cannot try to control another, as a necessary victim he cannot resist for himself." By comparing *Exiles* and *Candida*, Tindall says: "It resembles triangular *Candida*, to be
Both works are concerned with "freedom, choice, and loyalty," but to Tindall, *Exiles* is a "*Candida* gone morbid." Joyce's notes to *Exiles* suggest two Biblical parallels: that of Richard to the Prodigal Son, and of Bertha to Jesus. Tindall goes further still, and compares Richard to Jesus, Satan, and God, and Robert to Judas. Kenner sees Richard as an "ape of God" who sets the others in a garden of temptation. Another investigation of Biblical parallels is that of Cixous, who relates Robert to Adam, Bertha to Eve, and Richard to an artist-god and Satan.

By examining the recurrent ideas mentioned above (Richard as a searcher for freedom and as creator, the other characters as his creations), we will attempt to show why the protagonist is depicted as a negative god, obsessed with the prospect of total freedom, and to what extent the destruction of links with his creation (secondary characters) is a necessary condition for the acquisition of this goal. We will also see how, by eliminating those links, Richard provokes his own defeat.

In analysing *Exiles* we have chosen to use the critical tools provided by the structuralist method, which have never been applied to this play. Since all structuralist analysis supposes the presence of a constant system capable of generating diverse variations, we feel that this method is appropriate for use with *Exiles*. This play may be compared to portions of the *Bible*, thus constituting an adequate "corpus" (works chosen for use in the comparative analysis).

We have already pointed out some Biblical parallels in *Exiles*. As a result of these parallels, which will be further discussed later, it is possible to employ segments of the Bible as our "given" structure, and to consider *Exiles* as a transformation of that structure.

Besides the Biblical elements, we must notice the psychological evolution of the characters. As in the structural model
proposed by Greimas, whose method we will be employing, the subject-hero, tempted with a type of absolute, has to destroy a secondary character in order to obtain his goal, thus provoking his own fall. It is at the level of the distribution of roles and analyzing the game of acceptance and refusal among the characters that we will try to clarify the position of Richard as creator-god or destructive Satan, contrasting the basic roles of creator and creations, temptor and tempted, in both the Bible and Exiles.

The actantial system of A.J. Greimas is, among the various structuralist methods used in analysing constant structures in narrations, particularly suitable for use with Joyce's work. Greimas' method focuses on the roles played by the characters (or, as he prefers to call them, the actors), and it is therefore appropriate to use with a "corpus" in which unity is derived first from the repetition of basic roles (the creator/created ones, temptor/tempted ones), and second from the relationships of the characters, which follow a certain pattern, as suggested before.

By employing Greimas' concept of the actant we will attempt to clarify the relationships of the characters in Exiles. The actant, the most important concept in Greimas's system, is a class or group of roles, defined by their sphere of action. The actants are classified into three opposing types, subject-object, sender-receiver, and helper-adversary. The relationships between them can be seen in the following diagram:

Diagram I

Sender → Object → Receiver

Helpers → ↑ Adversaries

Subject
As the diagram shows,

1) By definition, the subject (in *Exiles*, Richard) desires the object (freedom).
2) The characters and forces, internal or external, which assist the subject in his quest are called helpers, and the opposing characters and forces, adversaries.
3) All support which comes from a superior level, marvellous or supernatural, is called the sender, and works in the following way:

   Sender — Benefit (Object) ———> Receiver

4) The sender is the force which lures the subject with the object. Its function is to give the first order to the subject, so that he acts. The sender in *Exiles* is double, splitting into divine and demonic forms, or simply divinity and demon.

5) The receiver is, of course, the recipient of the benefit present in the object. The receiver may or may not be the same as the subject. Richard strives to obtain freedom for himself, and it seems that he is the only possible receiver of the object he is trying so hard to get hold of. However, he struggles to pose as if he were amalgamating freedom for Bertha, who would then be the receiver.

The articulation of the quest present in the narration is represented in Diagram II.

**Diagram II: The Actants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Sender</th>
<th>Object of Desire</th>
<th>Adversary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Divinity (S)</td>
<td>Creative freedom</td>
<td>Robert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demon (S)</td>
<td>Total liberty</td>
<td>Bertha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* S Sacred
* Ș Anti-sacred
The subject (Richard) wants the object ("freedom," in the broad sense). In order to acquire it Richard has to go through "tests", that is, he must overcome certain obstacles. The first test (qualifying) always starts with the order of the sender (divinity, demon) to the subject to accomplish the test. The order is accepted by the subject, who is said to have been tempted and then yielded to temptation.

In structural terms, the order, defined by the semic category "command" versus "acceptance", undergoes a negative transformation, to become "tempting" versus "succumbing". The subject, Richard, is thus tempted by sender (divinity, demon) with the object of his desire (freedom). A contract is thus established between the sender (divinity, demon) and Richard, who will go on his mission. The contract is discussed later on.

In each test, the subject meets an adversary, whom he may destroy in a "combat", thus acquiring the object. In this case the subject is destroyed, since the acquisition arose from temptation. If the adversary wins, the subject realizes that he was tempted and bears witness to the destruction of the object. Richard goes through both types of evolution, on different levels.

Depicting himself as a god, Richard feels in the end that he cannot release himself by creating his own freedom out of the subjection of his creations. Also, as Cixous remarks, "Richard is God only in his own mind," since he is unable to know what happened between Bertha and Robert, and, consequently, since he is not omniscient, he is not free to control the lives of his art-creations. His fate is to be maintained in a state of perpetual doubt.

Richard undergoes tests which oppose each other due to a semic investment enunciated by the category sacred (S) versus anti-sacred (S). The senders divinity (S) and demon (S) represent the polarities of that opposition, and, of course, oppose each other.

Richard is tempted by both senders, thus depicting the internal duality of his split personality, for this "God, divided
into father and son, is also divided into sadist... and masochist; he is both creator and destroyer.\textsuperscript{25}

Moreover, this double temptation serves another purpose: it stresses Richard's complexity, revealing the double imperfection of this god: while in Genesis the temptation derives only from the negative force, the Devil, in Exilei the creator tempts his creations, just as he himself is being lured by two opposing forces. The dynamics of human/non-human relationships serve here to stress the fact that Richard is a mock-god. In a way, he is the sender to Bertha and Robert.

Tindall reveals that Richard plays the role of Satan, though "he thinks himself God."\textsuperscript{26} He is even called a devil by Robert, Bertha, and Brigid, as Tindall verifies.\textsuperscript{27} Explaining the paradoxical nature of this god, Cixous declares: "the striking and embarrassing feature of this god is his insecurity: he has no confidence in anyone."\textsuperscript{28} The ambiguities of Richard's behavior pervade the play to such an extent that its outcome leaves a sense of insecurity and doubt not only in the characters, but also in the readers.

Throughout the narration Richard is portrayed as the creator-artist, yet here "the creative act can only spring from an act of destruction."\textsuperscript{29} Actually this comes as a projection of the protagonist's dialectical nature. Likewise, since the account both parallels and reverses that of Genesis, Richard's "creation of his world" followed by the "fall of his creatures," emphasizes the view of Richard as a negative god. For while God created man in his image and He could rest because "it was good," Richard is disgusted at what he is able to accomplish. He is unable to perceive that the imperfections of his work are a mirror of his own flaws: an imperfect god can merely produce imperfect creations. Isn't Robert, his disciple, "a pale reflection"\textsuperscript{30} of himself? The reflection may be pale, but it is a reflection as well. Furthermore, the fall of Richard's creations, which he himself provokes, is, in one way, his own fall, and it happens because, by denying the other characters the right to
choose (a right he carefully keeps for himself), Richard isolates himself completely. Dialectically, it seems that he creates a new Richard in the process, for Robert leaves, becoming, in his own way, another exile.

We have already stated that Richard's object of desire is freedom. As could be expected from the alchemy of this divided character, freedom to Richard becomes a complex problem because although his motives are not pure, he searches for an ideal of purity. From this dichotomy it is clear that Richard's ideal freedom articulates in a binary opposition, which may be described as: freedom marked (by divinity) versus freedom non-marked. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divine freedom</th>
<th>Non-divine freedom</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marked</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This implies that "Divine freedom" is positive, creative, because it is "marked". "Demonic liberty" is negative, destructive, because it lacks those qualities related to the index "divinity"; it is thus the "non-marked" or zero-degree term of the opposition. 31

When tempted by divine freedom, Richard aims at the "freedom of the priestly artist". 32 At this level freedom is a tool to create art; it is also freedom to know, to believe, and to love. The temptation here is "divine", since Richard becomes the giver of life, the sun, the god who manipulates life into art. He creates and molds Robert, his disciple; Beatrice, his inspiration; and Bertha, the woman. All three are created in his image. Richard's jealousy, if any in this regard, is that of the artist toward his art, a creative jealousy. Since he is the sun, the other characters revolve around him, forming a sort of solar system. Bertha is called the moon by Robert. The significance of the image here, aside from Joyce's explanation in his notes,33 may be connected with the idea that the Moon could only be the second, never the first in any medieval hierarchy. Of course, the moon has its source of life and light in the sun; Bertha would not be able to survive without her sun.

Richard is obsessed with the prospect of breaking all the
bonds which tie him to the others. He makes it clear that he wants to liberate himself from Beatrice, Bertha, and Robert, incarnations respectively of inspiration, love, and friendship. Since he is no real god, he cannot help identifying himself with his creations. Richard's definition of identity stems from the awareness that he is the continuation and complement of his creations. This is stressed by the complementarity of Richard's and Robert's personalities ("an automystic and an automobile," in Joyce's notes\textsuperscript{34}), and that of Richard and Bertha. But he aims at being God, so he cannot accept this. His obsession with the removal of human links emanates from his struggle to find his real self. Richard wishes to regain his own identity, because his fusion with his creations makes him feel himself less divine; on the other hand, by trying to give light to his creations so that they can live, he notices that their relationship turns into over-identification with him, smothering their creator-god.

By defining his identity through the projections he casts on Robert, Bertha, and Beatrice, he can observe, as in a mirror, the reflections of his own identity on them. His image is gradually clarified, and the creator would rather destroy his mirror than accept what he sees, a mere imperfect man. Posing as a god, Richard feels superior to his creations, and refuses to identify with them, calling them imperfect. Determined to disentangle himself from those embryonic forms, mere distorted images of the deity, Richard feels free to impose his views on them and force them to follow his example, and set themselves free. However, an "artist cannot endow his creation with complete freedom, even if he so desires; there is something recalcitrant, something given about it which permits at best an ambivalence... in which the creation can attain in the creator's eyes at most a borderline possibility, between the condition of freedom and fixity."\textsuperscript{35}

It might be argued that Richard is aware of this fact. However, he insists on offering Bertha and Robert total freedom, though he knows that they will not be able to handle it. Robert tells his master: "you have driven me up to this point. She
(Bertha) and I have only obeyed your will." 36 And when Robert suggests that they fight together and freely "against the spectre of fidelity... and friendship," 37 Richard implies that he is not free by telling Robert: "Fight your part alone. I will not free you. Leave me to fight mine." 38 A paradox exists here: the Biblical God, a real and free one, does not bestow total freedom on his creations, and He so states. Richard, on the other hand, presents his "people" with something he is still searching for, pretending that he does not lack it and that he is not using constraint over the others. The real God insists on links with men; the demigod demands total freedom. The true God knows total freedom, and he knows that men cannot handle it. Moreover, God does not depend on his creations to be free. The demigod lacks freedom, assumes that he can be as free as God, and insists on breaking all bonds with his creations.

Yet, at this moment, if Richard is free, his is human freedom. When man is totally free, he is wholly responsible for his acts. Richard is now responsible for the people he molded; all the same, he rejects all human commitments, engaged as he is in his own freedom. Paradoxically, this will only be acquired through the cooperation of the human beings which he has brought to life.

Richard must destroy all the links which tie him to them, so that he is set free from the disciple who will betray him, from the security in his love relationship with Bertha, and from the admiration of Beatrice.

The dialectical movement from the divine artist to the demonic destructor may explain Richard's wish to be betrayed, since in a way he is betraying his creatures by forcing them to accept his gift of freedom. At this point Richard is refusing responsibility for his acts, and the weight of freedom becomes anguish to him. The freedom he is tempted by here is the demonic one, the total liberty to destroy, to doubt, to hurt, and to betray.

If the first Sender could be called divine, the second one is demonic. The double temptation Richard undergoes is made stronger by an error on his part: he confuses the possibility of a utopic, "divinely" free world with his sado-masochistic desire
to be unconstrained in order to hurt, destroy, doubt, and suffer betrayal. The problem at this level is one of satanic pride and guilt, since Richard cannot bear Bertha's innocence as compared to his own guilt. On the other hand, the problem might be existential, for as Jaspers notes, "freedom is always a failure, and its maintainance necessarily means the acceptance of guilt. To live and to struggle unceasingly in such failure and risk is to exist as a man." 39

As mentioned before, Richard undergoes tests which reflect the dualistic motion of his self. We have already discussed the dualism inherent in Richard's tortured personality. The tests he endures in pursuit of his object of desire will be called "sacred" when the Sender is Divinity and "Anti-sacred" when it is Demon. Diagram III illustrates the tests.

**Diagram III: The Tests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Established Contract</th>
<th>Combats</th>
<th>Contract Accomplished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Creation of a free world (S) ← Against: Robert, Beatrice (Helper:Bertha)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adversary destroyed; object (freedom) acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Destruction of constraints (S) ← Against: Beatrice, Bertha (Helper:Robert)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adversary — Helper Object (liberty) destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation and destruction (S, S) Against: Beatrice — Adversary destroyed Bertha — Adversary — Helper Robert — Adversary destroyed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Object (liberty) destroyed Object (freedom) acquired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the parallel of *Exile* to the creation story found in Genesis, we will notice that both narrations deal with the creation and the fall of man. Richard's creation of his world precedes the action of the play.

The first test is Sacred because Richard is tempted by the Divinity with his object of desire, which, as we know, is creative freedom. The implicit contract between Richard and Divinity consists in the creation of a perfectly innocent world, a form of utopic free universe; to populate it Richard must re-create the three human beings which surround him. In a certain way this implies the destruction of their old selves, yet it is a creative act. Richard is here a god. He creates his disciple, Robert, a pale image of himself, thus a man, made in the image of his god. He then creates the woman, since Bertha becomes one only after knowing Richard, and "her age is the completion of a lunar rhythm," an implication of her being a complete woman now. As will be seen shortly, Robert and Bertha will play the roles of Adam and Eve, reinforcing the assumption of their being the man and the woman of Richard's universe.

Trying to decipher some of the connotations of the names may also provide us with some clues or raise more questions: first of all, there is a clear complementarity in the pair Ro-Bertha; they are two, but they also sound like one. They may be Richard's humanity. The dictionary tells us that both Robert and Bertha share the same "brightness". The implication may be ironic, because both depend on external light, revolving around the "sun". As to Richard's last name, Rowan, Tindall wonders whether its meaning "tree of life" might imply life or creative power. Still at this time Richard creates his inspiration, Beatrice; the "perfect happiness" of her name or the Dantean vision she might elicit are ironic. In his notes Joyce likens her mind to an "abandoned cold temple." In this sense she seems to be a symbol of the church Richard is creating.

In this first test a combat takes place between Richard and Robert, who plays the Adversary against Richard's decision of
leaving Ireland and taking Bertha with him. Since Robert needs his master and also Bertha, he fights to keep both near him, but he is eliminated. The couple is free to leave. Since Beatrice depends emotionally on Richard, she also acts as an Adversary in this combat. Bertha is a Helper to Richard; however, since Richard uses Bertha's love as a simple exterior support for his personal means, the Helper here plays the role of participant. In grammatical terms, it is the adjective which modifies the subject.

The second test is Anti-sacred, and it occurs when the play is in action. This test parallels the fall of man in Genesis. However, here the creator, Richard, is tempted by the Demon, and a contract is established which must lead to the destruction of all constraints. The obstacle to Richard's liberty is the relationship he developed with the other three characters. This test presents two combats.

The first combat is a confrontation between Richard and Beatrice in which she is shown her inability to love, to give herself "freely and wholly." In a way, Richard is successful in his attempt to make her detach herself from him, and admire him less: God reminds the church that she should not be confused with him. However, Beatrice is reminded of her complete loneliness.

Richard follows his plan of acquiring his own freedom, by imposing it on Bertha. His creation of Adam and Eve is a reversal of the Biblical one. Unlike God, Richard wants the man and the woman to eat of the tree of knowledge, transforming himself into his own temptation and tempting Adam and Eve. Though he mentions to Robert the "faith of the master in the disciple who will betray him," this master abandons his creations, and he is the one who betrays them. This is so because "as an 'ape of God' he has dominated everyone, forced them to a recognition of their isolation, and set them in the garden for their temptation."

First, during the second combat, Bertha plays the role of Helper and Adversary to Richard. Later on, she realizes...
is playing the role of the devil, and she becomes his Adversary. Robert feels that this is his opportunity to conquer Bertha, and he assumes the role of Helper to Richard. However, the creation of Richard's freedom serves merely to emphasize the "separated-ness" of Bertha and Robert. While revealing a need to be betrayed by Robert and Bertha, Richard must only be compensating for his own betrayal to them. He prepares the scene of sin as a ritual, creating Eden for Adam and Eve. On leaving, he says: "My part is ended here," meaning that he has played his part in the liturgy as an acolyte.

He is successful in this combat, for Bertha meets Robert, stays there, and knows the loneliness of her freedom, to serve Richard, or to prove his love to her.

In the third test Richard has a confrontation with each one of his creations. This test is both Sacred and Anti-sacred, because of the syncretism present in the subject. The contract here is a combination of creation and destruction. Depending on the perspective taken by the observer, Richard either wins or loses all the combats.

The Adversary of the first combat is Beatrice, whom Richard defeats, for she is reacting, freeing herself. To Richard the "isle is full of voices," echoing Prospero, who is also a "man of letters, betrayed and exiled." Now more than ever, Richard feels these three qualities with all their weight. And the demons that he stirred are swarming his universe. In this sense he is a loser.

In the second combat, Richard enjoys victory over Bertha. He shows her that she is free now, and she understands it, accepting her utter loneliness. But he is unable to know what happened between her and Robert, so he is also a loser.

The Adversary in the third combat is Robert, who is leaving, thus repeating Richard's exilic gesture of nine years ago. Richard wins, since his disciple is set free, as he wanted. He loses, also, because Robert is not following the path delineated by the master, and because Richard's doubt becomes unbearable on
a confrontation with Robert.

The structure thus elaborated serves to interpret psychologically the two basic themes related to the search for the absolute in the play: the problems of sincerity and error. The contract between the Subject and the Sender is considered negative because it is a result of the Subject's temptation to acquire an Object which will be destructive to him. So Richard's freedom will lead to the destruction of the human links he previously enjoyed. If one follows this rationale a success on the structural level, that is, the acquisition of the object, seems to demonstrate a defeat of the Subject's will, since he succumbs to temptation. The object of a temptation is negative, and it necessarily leads the Subject to a fall. And as we pointed out before, Richard cannot bear the weight of the existential freedom without paying for it. He is totally responsible for his freedom and this turns into a burden. Perhaps he will even hate it afterwards.

As stressed throughout this paper, the structural symbolism of the play illustrates the interplay of the divine and the demonic in Richard, the god-artisan. His struggle against the temptation of the absolute may also be felt structurally in the presence of an adversary in each combat; the adversaries may be seen as an extension of the interior resistance of Richard to his desire, because, in one way, the creations are part of their artisan. Richard is the exile who is able to exile the others from him, and among themselves, in the same fashion as he is exiled from them. If they are really free, what is left to all of them is an attempt to doubt; in the Husserlian sense: "The attempt to doubt everything has its place in the realm of our perfect freedom." Moreover, these people are to suffer "the ultimate loneliness and doubt that must possess the soul, the inevitable exile of man."
NOTES

1James Joyce, Exiles, ed. Padraic Colum (New York: Viking, 1951). This edition contains Joyce's notes for the play. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition.


4Vivienne Koch Macleod, "The Influence of Ibsen on Joyce," PMLA, 60 (1945), 879-98.


6Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); see especially pp. 286-90, 326-28, and 366, where biographical background to the play is furnished.


8Farrell, p. 103.


10Farrell, p. 114.

12 Ellmann, p. 366.

13 Tindall, p. 108.

14 Tindall, p. 109.

15 Tindall, p. 112.


17 Tindall, p. 119.


20 Sometimes Greimas employs the term "hero", preferred by Propp, together with *subject*.

21 The actantial method is discussed by A. J. Greimas in *Sémantique structural. Recherche de méthode* (Paris: Larousse, 1963), pp. 172-91. The method is a combination of two models: a linguistic one, and a psychoanalytic one.

22 Myths, short stories, dramas are considered "dramatized narratives" or "narrations" by Greimas.
In Greimas, the *roles* are social, anonym. The *actor* is a figurative entity, susceptible of individualization (e.g., Richard), who may play one or more roles. The *actant* is constituted by bundles of functions (e.g. subject versus object). One actor may play more than one actant, e.g. Richard is the Subject and the Receiver.

Cixous, p. 547.

Cixous, p. 561.

Tindall, p. 120.

Tindall, p. 120. The references to Richard as a devil occur on pp. 51, 58, 90 in our edition of "Exiles."

Cixous, p. 543.

Cixous, p. 543.

"Exiles", p. 21.

These oppositions follow the model for paradigmatic oppositions proposed by Cantineau and Roland Barthes in *Communications*, 4 (1964), 123-26.

Farrell, p. 129. Farrell discusses here the significance of freedom in Ibsen and Joyce, pointing out that "Ibsen's freedom is the freedom of man; Joyce's is the freedom of the priestly artist."
"Robert likens her (Bertha) to the moon because of her dress. Her age 28 is the completion of a lunar rhythm". (Joyce's notes to the play.)

Though we are aware that the choice of the name "Robert" must have some relationship to Roberto Prezioso (see note 6), "Bertha" cannot be explained in biographical terms. Moreover, Joyce explores the words so attentively that one might use the dictionary whenever possible, even if it turns out that we only arrive at more questions.
32

46 Magalaner and Kain. p. 138. The quotation is a paraphrase of Hugh Kenner.

47 Exiles, p. 74.

48 Tindall, p. 120. The allusion refers to Caliban's utterance: "The isle is full of noises," contends Tindall.


50 Magalaner and Kain, p. 137.