

A Comparative Analysis of Hell Presented by Dante Alighieri, John Milton and James Joyce

Parthiva Sinha

Masters Student, Subject- English Literature, Institution- Bankura Sammilani College,
Country- India, University – BKU

Citation: Parthiva Sinha (2022) A Comparative Analysis of Hell Presented by Dante Alighieri, John Milton and James Joyce, *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.10, No.4, pp.63-66

ABSTRACT: *The research is intended to critically analyze and interpret the description of Hell done by three famous writers of their time and era and the main theme of the research is to find and relate the comparison between all the forms of Hell presented and their effects on the readers. The three writers mentioned, Dante, Milton, and James Joyce portray sin and its repercussions which would be influencing the type of formulation obtained while being in Hell. The research would analyze it and help the readers understand the main motive and succession behind the depiction of Hell.*

KEYWORDS: comparative analysis, hell, Dante, Milton, Joyce

INTRODUCTION

In literary novels and writings, religion and its subparts have been taken and given a lot of importance in making and manufacturing the idea of the situation of the human soul after death. There are many novels, poems, and pics of writing that have been dealing with such topics and writers have penned down their perceptions and thoughts on them. The following essay would be a description of Hell by a few authors and novelists which would help in analyzing and understanding the concept of catholic Hell and allow more vision of the scope of fear that they had about it. These can also get in touch with their own thoughts on Hell and Heaven and by their writing, they would be able to describe and help readers know about the sin which is the base of the concept of Hell in the society and the time it was written. Their writings have been able to also portray the religious concept and the type of sin that when done can bring severe impact and procure guilt in the mind.

As stated by Belliotti, Hell is the place that can call up to utmost suffering, horror, and extreme terror with no amount of mercy. In various literary texts and even in the religious text, there is mention of hell with a horrifying explanation. In the selected texts which are Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, it has been explained and can be understood that the perception of Hell is almost the same for all. The resemblance also comes from the religious texts (Belliotti). As stated by Chebi, the main reason for including the concept of Hell is made to assure readers and the people to get deflected from the sin. Even the examples of sinners have been included which has portrayed a lot of lessons. The major effect and the result which the readers can see is in the writing of James Joyce where he assesses himself with the sins followed by the repercussions which would be made in that relation connecting to the religion (Chebi).

Through the research, the question arises on the choice of the author and the writer and their version and description of Hell. The essay would analyze the impact of Hell as presented by James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in comparison to the Hell represented by Dante in *Divine Comedy* and the concept of Hell by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. The research would allow having more perspective and the knowledge of the Catholic Hell associated with various other authors. It would help the reader understand the retrospective of the presentation of Hell by different authors which they have been narrating while being in the study and the poetry. The main reason for the research is to analyze the different forms of Hell which are represented in the earliest time when the writing was just born followed by the Middle Age of Milton and finally by the author James Joyce who exclaimed and connected actions with sufferings with the perception of Hell .

HELL ENVISIONED BY DANTE, MILTON AND JOYCE

The description by Dante of Hell is actually designed to make and warn against sin and encourage the readers to have faith in God. It was written in the Medieval Period and the portrayal of Hell is about meeting different sinners and the reason for their sin is demonstrated while Dante moves forward symbolizing aimlessness and the spiritual aspect of the people who are punished in the nine circles of Hell. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the demonstration of Hell is done by the nine circles, and in between there lies Satan who is a three-headed beast. Satan and his mouth are busy eating humans. The humans that are being eaten are Brutus, Cassius, and Judas as three of them have been sinners by doing fraud such as betrayal in friendship and going against the Lord (Farahmandian and Shao). Dante's Hell and its design in the poem is described in the form of circles denoting sins. As the poet enters each and every ring slowly the extremity of the sin and its punishment increases. This design is thematically important also because it is the warning against the sin and the hope that the poet has in which he wants to go to heaven. Uncontrolled passion, for instance, appears at the top of Hell, and malicious actions appear further down, which signals that deliberate violence is the more serious offense. The physical landscape of Hell is rounded by four rivers and by including Dante wants to get his reader familiar with the stress and horror of hell and help readers not to get into sin. Further, the description of Hell with the iron city, towers with tall heights, and sunless plains like an environment and atmosphere of terror which can make the readers think about the place fearfully (Babyak). Through this description, the poet expressed his points of theology. For him the Hell is the separation from God in Christianity belief and being in that situation is full of despair which is only happening by following and grasping the forbidden one. When sin is done, that separates the soul from the human and the divine justice and therefore it is difficult to have a connection with God. The poet reminds us of the victory of God which he believes God had over Hell as it has been seen to be collapsed. Therefore Dante intends to give the hope of power and goodness to the readers which can be obtained by the divine soul and his mercy. It is basically a guide for the people to make sure that they are morally good and make good attempts for themselves in society whereas the other two are the reflection of the state of mind of the writers and their own reflection of the deeds(Farahmandian and Shao).

When their description of the Hell done by Milton is included in this, one can easily understand that Milton has been inspired by majorly Dante and his description which is assessed further in Joyce's description of Hell where he related the misdeeds and the problematic behavior done by the people around him and influenced him as well to make them for him as well. Milton in

this regard refers to and related to the concept of Inferno mentioned by Dante where it 'abandons all hope, ye who enter this place.' This means that it is a place where the darkness is entailed and there is no scope of light which is mentioned the same in the old testament. The narrative here is important because it portrays the lack of light even when there is fire and people and sinners are being burnt in it (Whalen). This light refers to the light of God and his mercy (Fontana). This region is as far away from God and the light of Heaven as twice the distance from the center of the Earth to the most distant pole of the universe. In geological terms, it is a place where volcanoes are active and it is made with ever-burning sulphur. The line "There stood a hill not far, whose grisly top belch'd fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire showed with glossy scurf; undoubted sign That in his womb was hid metallic ore which is very suggestive and Milton present abstract witty the concrete where he used the image of focus of attention on fire which is the dry land, burning lake, the gate through which the readers might see and have the visualization of the hell and the Satan making them relatable enough. The description can be attained as the place with confusion, contradiction which is brought out by the fact there is the fire which is without light and darkness is extreme which is unable to reveal itself and the inky thing perceived is the misery and sorrow. All the description is sorrowful and terrifying and the torment described is in contact with the bliss enjoyed in heaven. This means the one who is sinners have to go through this extreme condition which would make the sufferer the way they made others suffer while being alive on earth. Therefore it is the message which takes a prominent throw that people must not do sins and stay away from them to have mercy from Him even after death. The description had a significant psychological belonging with the description as mentioned by Joyce who has been experiencing the sins that he did and then facing it and going through that fear. The declaration of Satan in Milton's writing is 'The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n' which denotes that the mind is the only place where the hell and heaven can be made suggesting the outburst of the truth and that is optimally seen in the James Joyce's novel where his mind plays a vital part in making him realize his deeds that were unfair and not accepted in term of religion (Windsor).

The description of Hell in James Joyce's novel is also terrifying but the protagonist goes through a mere vision or tour of Hell. He experiences the Hell to an extreme close and the flame is not inscribed in the picture, but he feels it in his body as well when he said "His flesh shrank together as if it felt the approach of the ravenous tongues of flames." To this, he is not just imagining the brains boiling in the preachers, but he feels his brain being simmered and bubbled in the tongue of flames where he could feel and hear the cracking sound of the skull. The sermon and his conversation are much more closely related as compared to other students who generally chat casually. In his description of Hell, it is obvious that Stephen experiences the spiritual changes and longings in a much more way than that of the others and in an intense way that goes into affecting him even physically which he believes to be happening with him as he hears and imagines about the Hell (Jweid). While attempting the comparison, it was seen that only in Joyce's story it is seen that the protagonist goes through the invariable changes within his mind about the sins and the mistake he does and then finally realizes to overcome them so that he would save himself from the hell. His involvement in all types of malifacies, visiting brothels, and other form of misdeeds led to rise in his sensuous when he saw himself being nailed and could feel the fire of Hell even in his imagination can be one if the main reason getting out of those vices. This is indifferent as it was only portrayed in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man differentiating Divine Comedy and Milton's Paradise Lost (Jweid).

The experiences described by Stephen equated with the perception of the past and future. The Hell described by Stephen is the suffering that is to be explained in the future. It seems he lives through his death while experiencing the trauma of Hell. When he hears a sermon saying things about the grave he thinks of himself as having been nailed down under the earth in the wooden box like a corpse. It is similar to the experience which is often described as judgment day (Tseng). It is his religion and the scripture which force him to experience such a future and also take him back to his past where he encounters the facts as the memory of his infancy. Therefore through the sermon, Stephen goes both in past and future as the two extremes of his life. The novel and the writer suggest that the aim of writing such an autobiography and aims if the religion which he follows is the similar as both of them lead them to get in their present, past, and future picture attempting to see the three timelines together at one time (Whalen).

CONCLUSION

The research done on the Hell demonstration has been proven to be effective and correct and the research questions have been answered correctly and evidently. The references and the description of the hell as per the authors can be collaboratively used and inferred by the readers to understand the connection of the catholic belief and the assumption made by the author portrayed in the readers which would help them attain the belief of the sins and acknowledging the moral intended to be shown in the poems and the novels.

References

- Belliotti, Raymond Angelo. "Dante's Inferno: Moral Lessons from Hell." Google Books, Springer Nature, 2020, books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=bBHcDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=dante%27s+inferno+and+hell&ots=ZVfZAafU3S&sig=y20ig8FhxVLZsHZQpIjG4llKjs.
- Chebi, Ethan. ZINE CREATED by ZINE CREATED by ZINE CREATED BY. 2020, digital.sandiego.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=ital-347.
- English, B., and K. English. ANISHA JANGHU ANALYSIS of HELL in PARADISE LOST-BOOK I ANISHA JANGHU. 2020, <https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7219.24>.
- Farahmandian, Hamid, and Lu Shao. "Stephen's Neurotic Self-Estrangement: A Case Study of James Joyce's a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 52, no. 1, Feb. 2022, pp. 24–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472441211072609>.
- Fontana, Sara. "Hell in the Cave: Falling down to Find the Light." *Performance Research*, vol. 26, no. 1-2, Feb. 2021, pp. 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2021.1958642>.
- Jweid, Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu. "Autobiographical Peculiarities in James Joyce's a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." *Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 21, no. 3, Dec. 2020, pp. 5–9, <https://doi.org/10.3968/11988>.
- Tseng, Li. "'Being and Difference in a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'." *James Joyce Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, Dec. 2019, pp. 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.46258/jjj.2019.25-2.37>.
- Whalen, Patrick. A Hell of One's Own: Combat Trauma in Dante's Inferno. 2020, www.wlajournal.com/wlaarchive/31/WHALEN.pdf.
- Windsor, Timothy. "Paradise Lost: Milton's Last Poem." *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, Jan. 2022, pp. 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769x.2021.2025331>.