

Alameddine's Appropriation of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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Abstract This paper explores Lebanese Rabih Alameddine's novel *The Hakawati* (2008) as an appropriation of British James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), each of which is considered a *Künstlerroman* as its central character is a developing artist. The paper traces the lives of the two artists to be in the two novels: the developing poet, Stephen Dedalus, and the budding musician and hakawati, Osama Al-Kharrat. As it does so, it draws on the socio-political contexts in the two texts, which are religion, family, and the political conditions in the protagonists' countries, Lebanon and Ireland. The paper also tackles the spiritual and physical journeys of becomingness which the two characters go through as well as the hardships they encounter and reveals how Alameddine appropriates Joyce's journey and becomingness. The paper is divided into the following sections: childhood, obstacles, and becomingness. As it depicts the two characters' development, it draws on the resemblance between the two texts which are seemingly distant from each other. Moreover, it sheds light on their departure points and exposes how the journeys of both Stephen and Osama turn out to be ones of self-affirmation and self-actualization which are directed towards freedom of expression.

Key words appropriation; artist; becomingness; journey; *Künstlerroman*

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Introduction

And then the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.
——Anais Nin, Risk Poem.

Though painful and risky, flowers bloom and unlatch in order to be able to emerge and grow. They do so when the danger to remain unfolded becomes confining and more threatening. This also applies to artists who wish to emerge when threatened by their constraining buds, and hence, they flower and open in order to make it possible for them to grow. This paper studies Rabih Alameddine's *The Hakawati* (2008) as an appropriation of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). It traces the emergence and growth of the artist in the two novels. It compares between the two novels as they both depict the life of a would-be artist. It also approaches the obstacles which the two emerging artists face on their way to becomingness and shows how both of them overcome these obstacles. The focus of this study is on the socio-political context in the two texts. Comparing between two literary works which belong to different cultures and which were written in different times, the paper reveals how Alameddine appropriates Joyce's representation of the journey as well as the becomingness of the artist.

The protagonist in each one of the two novels grows up to become an artist despite the restraining social and political conditions. In Joyce's novel, Stephen Dedalus wishes to become a poet. He is raised in a strict religious family. He disregards his father's attempts to turn him into an Irish gentleman. He becomes a poet and flees from Ireland, where there is civil war. He ends up following the steps of his ancestor, the mythical Daedalus whose name he carries. Likewise, in Alameddine's novel, Osama Al-Kharrat wishes to become an artist, namely a musician. To satisfy the musician inside him, he neglects his father's continuous warnings and insists on leaving Lebanon, where there also happens to be civil war. He ends up becoming a hakawati, and it is important to take into account that hakawatis and musicians are placed on the same level in this novel. As both novels depict the journeys of becomingness which the two artists go through, they are considered *Künstlerromans*.

In "The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms," the term *Künstlerroman* refers to a novel that "describes the formation of a young artist" (Baldick 27).

The term is also used in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* to refer to “the artist’s novel” (Moretti 271). Moreover, in the “Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel* as *Künstlerroman*: The Politics of Art,” it is pointed out that a *Künstlerroman* is a *Bildungsroman* that is “concerned with detailing the growth and self-discovery of the artist and his resultant conflict with society” (Lorsch 384). A *Künstlerroman* is a journey which the artist goes through and in which he faces some societal challenges and conflicts, matures, and accordingly forms himself by transforming into a different person who is able to give a voice to the real artist he has got within and to create something new. The resultant grown up who comes out of the journey is more powerful than the one who entered it in the first place. Undoubtedly, they are not one and the same.

As stated earlier, this study compares between two novels, the first of which was written by British James Joyce and was first published in 1916, and the second of which was written by Rabih Alameddine and was first published in 2008. Thus, the framework of the study is the comparative literature theory. The term comparative literature is defined as “the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country” (Stallknecht 3). Additionally, the same term refers to “any study of literature transcending the limits of one national literature” (Wellek 290). Hence, the comparative literature is what makes it possible for researchers to study and compare between two seemingly distant novels across different nationalities and time boundaries by shedding light on their meeting and departure points. It is also worth referring to the term World Literature here as this study draws a line between two works, one of which is from the West and the other one is from the Middle East. The term world literature is “multitemporal as well as multicultural” (Damrosch 16) for it consists of more than one work which belong to different times and cultures. Heather O’Dea illustrates that according to David Damrosch, world literature is deeper than literature that comprises of “writing from around the world” (O’Dea 281). She explains that for him, “a piece of literature changes when it stops being a national work and becomes an international work” (O’Dea 281). A work gains this feature of internationality when it is compared to another work from a different nationality as world literature places cultures together in the same bowl by drawing on the similarities or differences between works from different parts of the world.

The study highlights the resemblance between the two culturally distant texts and reveals how Alameddine appropriates Joyce’s work. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders manifests that “adaptation and appropriation are inevitably involved in the performance of textual echo and allusion” (Sanders 4). She draws on the similarity between the creation of an appropriated text and “the

creation of collage by assembling found items to create a new aesthetic object” (Sanders 4). She indicates that appropriation is a feature of postmodern texts, as she refers to the postmodern culture as the “culture of borrowings and *bricolage*” (italics in original text, Sanders 34). She adds that appropriation does not always make clear relationships with named texts, for “the gesture towards the source text(s) can be wholly more shadowy” (Sanders 32). This, in a way, suggests that a text’s linkage to another text should not necessarily be direct in order to be considered an appropriation of it. The act of “borrowing” from another text may simply be spotted by reading the two texts from a particular perspective.

Discussion

What unite the two works in this study are their thematic concerns. In both novels, the protagonist moves from one stage to another until he becomes the artist he desires to become. Hence, to trace the protagonists’ development, the researchers have divided the study into the following major sections: childhood, obstacles, and becomingness.

Childhood

The childhood stage is illustrated as the starting phase that can be dealt with within the framework of Alameddine’s appropriation of Joyce’s novel. As children, both Stephen Dedalus and Osama Al-Kharat are raised in constraining environments, and they both have artistic seeds. Whenever they attempt to voice their talents and to speak up their minds, they are both suppressed and muted by specific conditions, represented namely by family, religion, and politics. They are indoctrinated, and their artistic natures are hindered from surfacing in their childhood.

In Joyce’s novel, the house in which Stephen is brought up is a religious one. As a child, he is portrayed as a believer in God. He prays before going to bed, for he “longed for the play and study and prayers to be over and to be in bed” (Joyce 11). Stephen never sleeps before saying his prayers, for he tells himself when being tired and yawning, “Night prayers and then bed” (Joyce 16). He prays “so that he might not go to hell when he died” (Joyce 11). At Christmas eve, and despite being the youngest among all the present people, Stephen is the one “to say the grace before the mea” (Joyce 32).

On the other hand, little Stephen’s artistic tendency shows in the fertile imagination he possesses. When he is sick at school, he imagines himself writing a letter to his mom asking her to come and take him home (Joyce 24). Afterwards, he imagines his funeral and envisions himself saying farewell to his mother

before being buried “in the old churchyard” (Joyce 25). He describes the funeral as “beautiful and sad” (Joyce 25). This indicates that Stephen is able to observe the world around him with the eyes of a sensitive poet. As a child, he is not only capable of imagining but also of deeply feeling what he imagines. He also shows high sensitivity towards colors as he states:

White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colours to think of. And the cards for first place and second place and third place were beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender. Lavender and cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of. (Joyce 10)

His wild imagination allows him to consider the possibility of finding a unique “green rose” (Joyce 10) one day in the world. Moreover, he is known for being good at writing as he gains a “reputation for essay writing” at school (Joyce 88).

However, Stephen’s obvious artistic tendency is not watered the way it should. Having been brought up in a religious environment, he becomes known for his “quiet obedience” (Joyce 101). When his friend Heron gets annoyed because the teacher has sent a small boy to call Stephen and ask him to get dressed for the play he is taking part in, Stephen does not seem to be affected nor offended by this action. In his mind, he “hears the voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things, and urging him to be a good catholic above all” (Joyce 101). He also hears “the voice of his comrades urging him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school” (Joyce 101).

Yet, little Stephen seems to always obey these voices by which he is haunted without questioning them. His unquestioning-of-orders nature leads to his political passivity as a child. In Joyce’s novel, which is set during the Irish civil war, a period of growing nationalist feelings in Ireland, Stephen’s father imposes pressure on his son as he tries to dominate his thoughts and tendencies through telling him exactly the type of a person he wishes he would be. Little Stephen is advised by his father to become a good Irishman as he recalls his old days with his decent fellows:

But we were all gentlemen Stephen – at least I hope we were- and bloody good honest Irishmen too. That’s the kind of fellows I want you to associate with, fellows of the right kidney. (Joyce 111)

Similarly, the pressure imposed on little Osama in Alameddine’s novel is caused

by his family. Osama's mother tries to convince him of taking "piano lessons" (Alameddine 143) instead of oud lessons. She even tries to change the way he perceives oud through seeking Istez Camil's opinion in front of him and asking him, "Don't you think piano is better at his age?" (Alameddine 151). Moreover, when Osama's father knows about the stories which Osama used to hear from his grandfather, he calls his own father a "menace" (Alameddine 227) and a "loon" (Alameddine 227), which are two harsh words that mirror Osama's father's disapproval of his father's job and his son's choices. In other words, both Osama's father and mother try hard to impose restrictions on Osama and to control his actions and thoughts. However, the difference between little Stephen and little Osama is that the latter never obeys. He never changes his perception about oud, and he keeps telling the stories he was told by his grandfather until the end of the novel. Unlike Stephen, Osama's ever-questioning nature makes him a resistant child, not an obedient one. He persists to take oud lessons instead of piano lessons with Istez Camil as he tells his mother using the subject pronoun "I", "I don't like piano" (Alameddine 144) and "I want to play the oud" (Alameddine 148). Though young, he gives his will and his personal choices a priority over anyone else's choices or desires.

The childhood phase is the cornerstone of the formative years in the lives of both Stephen and Osama, and as it has been illustrated so far, both Stephen and Osama have pressures imposed on them as children, but the way each one of them deals with these pressures is different, for Stephen shows obedience whereas Osama shows resistance. On the other hand, what unites the two would-be artists in the two novels as children is the feeling of alienation and unbelongingness they experience in their countries.

At the Catholic Clongowes Wood College Stephen is sent to as a child, "all the boys seemed to him very strange" (Joyce 11). The only place he longed to be at as a child was "his mother's lap" (Joyce 11). Moreover, at a children's party he is invited to, he states that "the noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others" (Joyce 77). Likewise, Osama confesses to his sister, Lina, that his difference from other people in his homeland is not caused by his long stay in the States. It is something that has been there even before he left his country. He admits, using the past tense in a way to refer to his childhood, "I was different before I left here" (Joyce 29), and he adds when he compares himself to his cousin Hafez, "He was an insider, and I an outsider" (Joyce 33), which also manifests his difference from other people nearly at his age.

Little Stephen and Osama are done out their right to nurture their artistic natures as children. They both feel alienated from their surroundings. Stephen wishes to become a poet, and Osama wishes to become a musician. The task is not easy for any of them, for whenever they attempt to voice their talents, an obstacle emerges from nowhere as will be manifested in the following section.

Obstacles

The obstacles which Stephen and Osama face on their way to become artists are the socio-political contexts in the two novels, which are religion, family, and the political conditions in the protagonists' countries.

In both novels, the protagonist's father functions as his antagonist, for he opposes the development of his son, the artist, and hinders his growth in one way or another, which leads to both Stephen and Osama fighting, or resisting, the restraints imposed by their fathers on them. Stephen's father and masters at school contribute to placing religious and political pressures on him, for they want him to become a good catholic Irishman. To be considered a good catholic, Stephen is desired by the priest to remain a child. When Stephen makes his confessions, the priest addresses him as "my child" (Joyce 177). The use of the possessive determiner here is highly indicative, for the priest, who stands for religion, implicitly indicates that he wants Stephen to remain a child who does not own himself but is owned, instead, by him (i.e., by religion). The priest associates the child image with God's love. To show him his love for him, he calls him "a child, for God loved little children and suffered them to come to him" (Joyce 176). However, if Stephen remains a child, then how is he possibly going to be able to grow and to follow his dream?

Thus, Stephen's father's wish to turn him into a good catholic Irishman turns out to be the biggest obstacle on his way to becomingness. As Stephen feels guilty for having deviated from religion for some time, he asks God to forgive him for his sins, makes his confessions, and promises God not to be sinful again. However, when he is asked by the director of the school whether he has ever had "a vocation" (Joyce 194) and is invited "to join the order" (Joyce 194), Stephen comes to fully realize that his freedom is associated with his five senses to a great extent. Becoming a priest will deprive him of both his freedom as well as his five senses forever as he will be asked to "mortify his sense of sight" (Joyce 185), "his hearing" (Joyce 185), "his smell" (Joyce 185), "the taste" (Joyce 186), as well as the "touch" (Joyce 186). He recalls the "many years of order and obedience" (Joyce 199) which he spent at Clongowes. If he remains the obedient child and accepts the director's invitation, he will "end for ever, in time and in eternity, his freedom" (Joyce 199-

200). It is because of religion that he has come to be “weak of sight as he was shy of mind” (Joyce 206). To put it simply, Stephen comes to realize that a good catholic is not only a child of God, but also a weak and a senseless one. The obstacles transform the once-obedient Stephen into a questioning one as he figures out that sticking to the image which his father has chosen for him will make it impossible for him to become the artist he desires to become.

Likewise, Osama's father imposes restrictions on his son's tendencies and choices. Seeking a peaceful and quiet place to study and stay in, away from postwar Lebanon where there are bombings and fire shoots, Osama leaves to the States. However, he never seems to be at ease in the presence of his father. When interviewed by the dean at UCLA in the States, Osama asks the dean whether he can possibly “take music classes” (Alameddine 283) as he believes that music and math are related. His father instantly opposes and insists that Osama “has already studied enough music” (Alameddine 283). When Osama is asked by the dean to write an essay in a separate room, his father asks him not to mention the music-math theory in his essay. Nevertheless, the whole essay Osama writes when alone in the room is an elaboration of his “theory of combining math and music” (Alameddine 283). This incident reinforces that Osama has got a resisting spirit. He never surrenders to the obstacles his father places on his road.

Moreover, when Osama tells his father that he wants to buy a guitar, his father refuses and says, “no whining, and no guitar” (Alameddine 288). Nevertheless, upon the death of his uncle Jihad, Osama drives his father to the airport, makes sure he is in the jumbo jet in the air, and goes to the Guitar Center to buy a guitar using his American Express card, disregarding his father's refusal, and willingly neglecting the fact that his father will see the monthly report of his expenses. Again, he never allows his father's restrictions to stop him from chasing his dream. He seems to be in a continuous state of rebellion.

Osama witnesses “a falcon having a pigeon feast in Los Angeles” (Alameddine 449) in his father's first visit to him in the States, only two days after his father's arrival. The powerful falcon stands for Osama's father, and the pigeon stands for Osama, being caught, eaten, and prevented from flying and becoming what he wishes to become by his father. Perhaps this image is what urges Osama to resist his father's calls for him to return to his country having spent several years in the States; his dream to fly high is uncatchable, and by eating him, the falcon apparently clips the pigeon's wings. It is also interesting to find that a somehow similar image is used in Joyce's novel to depict how an obstacle can hinder a dream from coming true. On the relationship between Ireland and its people, Stephen comments

that “Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow” (Joyce 252). The image depicts Stephen’s disapproval of the political situation of postwar Ireland. If he remains in Ireland, he is going to end up being eaten, and his dream is going to be killed by his own country. In both cases, the image of the powerful controlling/eating bird/animal sheds light on the obstacle which is placed on the artist’s way and which prevents him from growing and emerging as an artist.

Alameddine’s appropriation of Joyce’s novel in this section shows in the fact that both Stephen and Osama oppose their fathers by refusing to follow the images they have drawn for them. The once-obedient Stephen and the ever-resisting Osama who were both alienated from others in their childhood are once again placed in the same boat in this stage due to the impediments they face when attempting to speak up and due to their reactions towards these impediments as will be illustrated in the following section.

Becomingness

When Stephen and Osama are to choose between surrendering to the obstacles on their way to becomingness and accordingly killing their dreams on one hand and taking the risk, resisting any forces, and finally blossoming like flowers on the other hand, they both choose the second option. They decide to detach themselves from their fathers and to associate themselves with their more appealing, dynamic, and “artistic” ancestors by giving way to their real selves, growing wings, and “becoming” real artists.

Stephen begins to question and to deviate step by step from any restraining forces he would be defined by, such as religion and his Irish identity, which are mainly the two criteria his father once wanted him to be defined by. At one time, Stephen is pandied by Father Dolan because he has broken his glasses and is found not writing his “theme” (Joyce 67). The incident of the broken glasses is highly indicative as it stands for Stephen’s way of perception of others which has been totally broken and which needs to be replaced by a new perception. He finds it “unfair and cruel” (Joyce 61) to be pandied and called a schemer in front of his colleagues. The unfairness of Father Dolan contributes to changing Stephen’s conception of religion as well as his view of priests as people who never abuse others. Accordingly, he starts wondering what Mr. Charles, who is his grand-uncle, “prayed for so seriously” (Joyce 73). At a later stage, Stephen considers the people who go to churches on Sundays hypocrites as he glances at them and then, unwillingly, “stoops to the evil of hypocrisy” (Joyce 127) with them. By changing his own spectacles through which he used to perceive religion and its people, he ends up

owning his own vision. Surprisingly enough, this incident turns out to be Stephen's eye-opener as it allows him to look at things differently.

Osama has two eye-openers. The first one is his grandfather, the *hakawati*, who reinforces the strong relationship between him and Osama as he draws on the connection between a storyteller and a musician. He introduces the word "bakhshi" (Alameddine 44) to him, which is an originally Chinese word that "means a player of the oud, singer, and storyteller" (Alameddine 44). He refers to their unity by saying, "I am a bakhshi, you are a bakhshi" (Alameddine 44). The word bakhshi is very important, for it unites Osama and his grandfather as his grandfather tells him that "the storytelling musicians of Khorasan in Iran think 'bakhshi' comes from 'bakhshande,' which means a bestower of gifts" (Alameddine 44), and these gifts are the songs and the stories they sing or tell. Hence, he wants him to believe in himself and to think highly of himself as one who is capable of giving gifts to people through his talent, and so he should not be a "reluctant performer" (Alameddine 43). He asks him to "sing a story" (Alameddine 44) for him using the oud, keeps reminding him that he is his "flesh and blood" (Alameddine 45), and calls him "my boy, my blood" (Alameddine 182) to reflect their inseparable bond. In one way or another, Osama seems to be haunted by his grandfather's voice, which has always told him bewitching stories that have been engraved in his mind. He never seems to escape him, as if his grandfather's soul has jumped into his body as he was once told by his grandfather about the Druze belief of a soul haunting another body after it dies (Alameddine 200). This makes Osama and his grandfather one and the same. He has, undoubtedly, taken the resisting soul from his grandfather, whose talent as a *hakawati* has also been rejected by Osama's father, and yet he never has quit. This indicates that Osama is willing to take the risk to become a musician, or a bakhshi, no matter what.

Osama's second eye opener is his uncle Jihad, who is Osama's "favorite storyteller" (Alameddine 90). Through the stories he narrates, he opens Osama's eyes to his abilities and potentials. He once tells Osama a story about the birth of "the best oud player in the world" (Alameddine 93). To enhance Osama's belief in his talent, he points out that Osama is "simply remembering how to play" (Alameddine 94), for he has been born with an undeniable talent. This empowers Osama and gives him strength to insist on playing the oud.

Both Osama's grandfather and his uncle help him give way to his talent, They boost his self-confidence and serve as the "torch" (Alameddine 73) which Fatima, the mythical slave figure in one of the stories narrated by Osama's grandfather, has needed most on her dark journey to freedom, for they have both seen and helped

him see and become the artist he has got within. They provide him with the strength he needs most to resist his father's dominance and to nurture his talent.

Like Osama, Stephen gains strength as he grows. As he insists on outgrowing his boyhood and refuses to be deprived of his senses by joining the order, he demands possessing and using his own senses. Instead of resisting the pleasures of life which are offered to him by his senses in the name of religion, he chooses to resist the restraining religion itself. He figures out that his growth goes in parallel with his deviation from religion, and this growth clearly shows in his art. He is accused by Mr. Tate of having "heresy" (Alameddine 95) in his essays, which he has put much effort in as he considers it to be "the chief labour of his week" (Alameddine 95). Additionally, the role he plays in the school's play is of high importance; when Stephen gets dressed for the play and puts on his wings, he not only transcends a stage in the life of the character he is playing on stage, but he also transcends the "boyhood" stage of his own life and matures.

In both the original and appropriated texts under discussion, both artists end up deciding to fight the restraining forces which deny the talents they possess and underestimate their right to freely express themselves on their way to becoming the writer/poet and the oud player. The difference is that Stephen has to fight these forces alone from the beginning. There is no one to help him except for his own self, his memories, and the situations he finds himself facing, whereas Osama is assisted by both his grandfather and his uncle Jihad.

Stephen ends up becoming neither catholic in belief nor Irish in principles. He highlights his becomingness in the end as he states, "I was someone else then" (Joyce 300) and "I was not myself as I am now, as I had to become" (Joyce 300). When asked by his friend Davin, who is an Irish nationalist, whether he was "Irish at all" (Joyce 250), he accuses his friend of being "a born sneerer" (Joyce 250). Stephen remarks that he is thought to be a "monster" (Joyce 251) and blames his country for this by stating that he is the product of "this race and this country and this life" (Joyce 251). In "Stephen Hero and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Transforming the Nightmare of History," it is remarked that Stephen's conversation with Davin reveals his determination "not to accede to Irish pressures to conform" (Riquelme 107). Moreover, Stephen admits his failure at founding a relationship with God at the end of the novel as he states, "I tried to love God, he said at length. It seems now I failed. It is very difficult" (Joyce 301). The reason behind his failure is the fact that religion disallows him of expressing as well as of being himself. The change in his religious views also shows when he quarrels with his mom in the end as he rejects her wish to make his "easter duty" (Joyce 298). He admits that he has become a

non-believer as he “had lost the faith” (Joyce 305). He illustrates, “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church” (Joyce 309). Stephen insists on becoming the free artist by manifesting determination to express himself as he states, “I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can” (Joyce 309). Freedom, in that context, is the freedom of expression, which needs free senses, not confined ones, and which he can't find in his homeland, post-war catholic Ireland. He ends up setting a good example of a person who is a complete opposite to the one his father has wanted him to become. He becomes the embodiment of what a non-Irish and non-catholic person is by deviating from both his religion and his Irish nationality, both of which he considers to be restraining.

Similarly, Osama becomes the exemplar of what his father does not want him to become. He disregards the road chosen for him by his father and ends up paving his own way instead. Seeking a peaceful and a quiet place to study and to stay in, away from post-war Lebanon where there are bombings and fire shoots, Osama leaves to the States. In the presence of his father, Osama is prevented from expressing himself the way he wants as illustrated in the previous section. He can do things pertaining to music only when his father is absent by any means, and the means seem to gradually develop until the father is completely absent. They start with moving to another room and end with the father's death. To explain this, Osama writes the essay he wants only when he is left in a room other than the one where his father is. He buys the guitar when his father leaves to another country, and he ultimately becomes the hakawati, or the bakhshi that he once aspired to be, at the deathbed of his father. This, once again, highlights Osama's ever-resisting soul which drives him to become the artist he wishes to become. Following the death of his mother, Osama is asked by his father to return to Lebanon. His father tells him, “Your place is here” (Alameddine 460) and cruelly threatens to disown him. Nevertheless, Osama insists on not going back to his country. He only goes back to Lebanon in the end to see his “dying” father. By his final homecoming in the end, he would possibly aim to prove to his father that he has finally fulfilled his dream.

It is also worth being noted that both Stephen and Osama follow the steps of their ancestors whom they both believe to be free artists. Stephen is once called by his friends as “Stephanos Dedalos” (Joyce 208). This incident makes him consider and think about the meaning of his name:

What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawk-like man flying sunward above the

sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth. (Joyce 209)

Stephen imagines a hawk-like man flying. This flying man is a symbol for the great artist who creates something out of daily experience. He hopes to become that artist “as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful” (Joyce 210). He believes in his mission to create beauty, and so he follows his own belief. By the end of the novel, Stephen welcomes his life “Away! Away!” (Joyce 316) and asks his “old father, old artificer” (Joyce 317) to stand him “now and ever in good stead” (Joyce 317). Only by doing this, Stephen becomes able to transcend the world and the universe as he once wished to do in the Geography class about elements (Joyce 14). Commenting on Stephen’s final fleeing to France, John Paul Riquelme reinforces that it is a “literal escape from the pressures to conform to Ireland” (Riquelme 107). Thus, to become an artist, Stephen has to leave his restraining country so that to run away from the pressures imposed on him.

Like Stephen Dedalus, Osama Al-Kharrat wishes to become an artist, mainly a *hakawati*, like his grandfather whose family name he carries. The word *kharrat* means a “fibster” (Alameddine 37), and it refers to one who makes up lies and tells false things. Moreover, the word *hakawati* is used to refer to one who entertains others by telling them “tales, myths, and fables” (Alameddine 36). Osama, like his grandfather, has fertile imagination. Other than being a talented oud player, in the story he tells his father in the end about how his grandfather came to be, he proves to be a gifted *hakawati* like his grandfather. He is able to create, for he comes out with a new character whose name is Shoushan and whom he was not told about by his grandfather. He becomes a creator, a *hakawati*, or as described by his grandfather, a *bakhshi*. He embraces his grandfather and unites with him when he retells and adds to the stories which he was told by him and which are engraved in his mind and soul, taking into account that “*hakawatis* and musicians” (Alameddine 81) are placed on the same level. He simply sings or plays a story in the end in his own way.

Conclusion

By appropriating Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Alameddine’s *The Hakawati* depicts the spiritual as well as the physical journey of the artist. Both Stephen and Osama embark on their own journeys of self-affirmation as artists. It is true that in their childhood, they differ from each other in the way they deal with

the pressures imposed on them; Stephen shows obedience whereas Osama shows resistance. However, later on, they both end up freeing themselves of the voices that underestimate their talents. They turn out to fight the restraints imposed on them by society. Moreover, the process of appropriation allows Alameddine to reflect on the effects of the civil war in Lebanon, which are similar to the effects of the civil war in Ireland. The related socio-political contexts in the two novels drive the two artists away from their postwar countries. The names they carry are significant, for they unveil their relationship with their ancestors. Their artistic nature helps them transcend the status quo and become the artists they have always wished to become. They both end up leaving their countries, where they have been hindered from becoming free artists. They seek a safe place beyond the universe to stay in as artists. Their journeys of development are directed towards freedom of expression.

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