

## Representation, Symbolism, Acoustic Clues and Proper Nouns as Mechanisms of Colonial Resistance in Ciaran Carson's poetry

التمثيل والرمزية والدلائل الصوتية وأسماء الأعلام كآليات للمقاومة الاستعمارية في شعر كيرين كارسون

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### المستخلص:

يعد شعر كيرين كارسون من الشعر الثوري المقاوم للاستبداد الاستعماري؛ إذ تكشف أشعاره الشعرية عن مقاومته للأعمال الاستعمارية الوحشية، كما تؤكد استراتيجياته الشعرية على تفرد في التعامل مع آلام أمته وطموحاتها في الخلاص من هذا الاستعمار. وفي هذا المقام، تتنوع أشكاله الشعرية لمقاومة الهيمنة الاستعمارية التي تضعف قوته وتدمره، أضف الى ذلك تعبيره عن آلام شعبه الأيرلندي المضطهد. وتوضح تكتيكاته الشعرية كيفية اسقاطه وتدميره الأساطير الاستعمارية القديمة التي شوهدت صورة أمته من خلال تصويره الصورة الحقيقية للقمع الاستعماري. ككاتب مقاوم، تكشف تقنياته الشعرية عن واجبه في إعادة وتأكيد ثقافته الوطنية، لذلك فإن تكتيكاته الشعرية تمنح كارسون الفرصة لبناء هوية جديدة تقاوم السلطة الاستعمارية، وتؤكد بذلك هويته الأيرلندية. وبالتالي، ستسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على مثل هذه الأشكال الشعرية التي من خلالها يكشف عن أزمة شعبه الرهيبة مثل التمثيل والرمزية والأدلة الصوتية وأسماء الأعلام. في هذا المقام، وفي ذلك تعزيز تعزز لما قاله إدوارد سعيد بأن دور كاتب المقاومة هو "استعادة الأرض وإعادة تسميتها وإعادة تسكنها" (الثقافة والاستعمار ٢٢٦).

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** المقاومة - التمثيل - الهوية الوطنية - الرمزية - الدلائل الصوتية - اسم علم.



## Abstract

Ciaran Carson's poetry is considered revolutionary and resistant to colonial tyranny. As his poetic verses reveal his resistance to atrocious brutalities, his poetical strategies assert his uniqueness in dealing with his nation's anguish and trauma. In this respect, his poetic forms vary to resist colonial hegemony subverting its power, in addition to voicing his agonized Irish people. His tactics of poetry demonstrate how he undermines the old colonial myths that disfigured his nation's image by depicting the actual image of colonial oppression. As a resisting writer, his poetic techniques unravel his duty of recovering and asserting his national culture. Therefore, his poetic tactics give Carson the opportunity to construct a new identity that resists the colonial authority, so proclaiming his Irishness. Thus, this paper will bring to light such poetical forms whereby he shows the terrible dilemma of his nation such as representation, symbolism, acoustic clues and proper nouns. In this respect, his poetic mechanisms reinforce what Said states that the role of resisting writers is to "reclaim, rename, reinhabit the land" (*Culture and Imperialism* ٢٢٦).

**Keywords:** resistance\_ representation\_ national identity\_ symbolism\_ acoustic clues\_ proper noun.

Ciaran Carson (١٩٤٨-٢٠١٩) was one of the most acclaimed voices that the North of Ireland produced in the last decades. He is regarded as one of the foremost Irish poets who attract both critical and public acclaim. Carson is widely seen as a challenging poet whose poetry is regarded as controversial. He was born in Belfast in Ireland. He graduated from Queens University in ١٩٧١. In ١٩٧٥, he was nominated by the Northern Ireland Arts



Council as the traditional arts officer. In ١٩٩٨, he was nominated as a Professor of English at Queen's University in Belfast. He was also the director of the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry from ٢٠٠٣ until ٢٠١٥.

He wrote poetry works such as *The New Estate* (١٩٦٧), *The Irish for No* (١٩٨٧), *Belfast Confetti* (١٩٨٩), *First Language* (١٩٩٤), *Opera Et Cetera* (١٩٩٦), *The Twelfth of Never* (١٩٩٨), *Breaking News* (٢٠٠٣), *For All We Know* (٢٠٠٨), and *On the Night Watch* (٢٠١٠) that demonstrate his concern with restoring his lost and deformed Irish culture by the colonial power. His poetic works are full of historical events; his poetry is like an archive that documents his homeland's history. The readers of his poetic collections, thus, can visualize the sectarian war and hear the different sounds from the battlefield. Hence, he was praised by many critics as the leading Irish poet of his generation. Fried acclaims him as "a poet of witness to the Northern Irish conflict. He's also compulsively playful, a colloquial, ultra-literary storyteller, who changes his formal game with almost every book . . . At his best, he's better than almost anyone".

Carson chronicles his nation's resistance as well as its resistance against colonial annihilation and persecution. The predominant subject-matter of his poetic oeuvres is the question of resistance. Thus, his poetry deals with the themes of resistance such as hybridity, violence, ambivalence, dislocation, belongingness, decolonization, emancipation and national identity. Resistance does not always demand the usage of weapons to overthrow hegemonic power. It takes an act of real courage to speak up against the prevailing power and horrific crimes. From here, resisting people either militarily or intellectually challenge repression and domination. Intellectual resistance is more powerful than violent resistance;



armed resistance is political resistance, but intellectual resistance is cultural opposition. Thus, cultural resistance is the widespread use of literature or art as a tool for nonviolently challenging dominance and oppression within the framework of texts. Cultural resistance is utilized intentionally or unconsciously, efficiently or not, to oppose or change the dominant economic, social, or political system (Duncombe ٥). As a result, culture is a site whereby colonizers and colonized people resist one another. It can be regarded as a sphere where political resistance occurs. DeShazer argues that “cultural resistance works as a sort of stepping stone into political activity. Cultural resistance can also be thought of as political resistance. Some theorists argue that politics is essentially a cultural discourse, a shared set of symbols and meanings, that we all abide by” (٦).

Consequently, literature is a field whereby writers have the potential to write as a kind of resistance against oppressive domination. Literature not only amuses people, but it also represents social and political disputes and sorrows of nations. As a result, resistance literature is not a trendy topic, but it raises awareness of society's horrors against oppressed people. Literature is a vital form for those who are being oppressed by ruling elites to express their resistance. Thus, resistance literature refers to the broad usage of arts and literature to challenge and fight oppressive unjust systems and power holders through the context of non-violent action. It is, therefore, linked to all literary texts that depict indignation against abuses of power as resistance usually occurs in the spaces where domination and oppression are apparent. It is not restricted to a particular space. Resistance, thus, is an approachable form of aesthetic expression that articulates antagonism against particular social, political or other

relevant events in a community. It is understood as any attempt to oppose, alter or retain specific conditions. These conditions may include exploitation, persecution and control. Resistance literature challenges all overpowering structures in society; it can be interpreted as a political tactic against all dominant aspects of society. Therefore, this paper aims to tackle Carson's poetic strategies, such as representation, symbolism, acoustic clues and proper nouns as mechanisms of resistance.

Representation functions effectively in providing the innovative and great power of imagination that defines the characteristics of a particular struggle, thereby acting as a space of opposition against the colonial authority. By such literary technique, Carson presents characters and situations that demonstrate collective power, social and political transformation. Hence, Carson's poetics of resistance is associated with representation which takes almost different modes of writing such as the depiction of graffiti and spectrality, in addition to representing war weapons and modern technologies as a means of visualizing the political scene before the eyes of the readers. In this respect, the implication of these strategies within representation, which depicts specific events and displays situations based upon real experiences, is indicated as a mode of cultural resistance.

In this regard, in Carson's verses, the representation of graffiti and mottos is apparent as a political tactic whereby he seeks his nation's dignity and struggle for emancipation. In his poem "Schoolboys and Idlers of Pompeii", he demonstrates a graffiti written by exiled Irish people who lived in New York. Carson aims to point out that despite the exile of some Irish people in New York, they did not forget their homeland, thereby they

scrawl graffito “BELFAST” on the walls of New York. Their Irish crisis was engraved in their minds even if they were dislocated from their country “On an almost-blank wall . . . in the area called Alphabet City in New York, is this graffito in three-foot-high black letters, saying BELFAST [original emphasis], with the cross-stroke of the T extended into an arrow pointing east, to Belfast” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٢). This graffito was not known to Alphabet City’s residents whose city itself resembled at that time Belfast city “Alphabet City . . . resembles Belfast, its roads pocked and skid-marked, littered with broken glass and crushed beer-cans” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٢). Since the sectarian war in Belfast, its roads were barricaded and full of broken glass and confetti. Likely, Alphabet City was blocked and muddled with broken glass and wine bottles. Through graffito, Carson affirms his identity and belonging to his homeland where he was born “In New York, no one that I ask seems to know the meaning of this careful scrawl, whether it’s a gang, the code-word of a gang, a fashion, a club, or the name of the city where I was born” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٢).

Then, he sheds light on another inscription written “on every brick of a gable wall” which is “*Remember ١٦٩٠. Remember ١٩١٦*” [original emphasis]. Like in “Queen Gambit”, Carson reminds his nation of the political brutal events of ١٦٩٠ when the Battle of Boyne occurred and when The Easter Rising happened in ١٩١٦. The walls of Belfast were embedded with its all days of conflict that must not be forgotten even if these inscriptions were erased and removed “at times it seems that every inch of Belfast has been written-on, erased, and written-on again: messages, curses, political imperatives” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٢). Carson’s representation of inscriptions and graffito on walls is considered an act of resistance



against colonial hegemony. Such an act of resistance is identified by Scott as “hidden transcripts” of language to show a sort of resistance “behind the official story” of dominant “public transcripts” and to indicate how the colonized people resist the colonial power even in internal spaces and how their opposition is mediated through cultural spaces (٤). Hidden transcripts are thus regarded as revolutionary tools used for political action, or they are themselves considered political action (Barnard ١١٤). Such engravings on walls represent “offstage” discourse that is written beyond direct scrutiny by powerholders (Scott ٤). Further, scrawling graffiti on the walls is a survival tendency of all revolutionists who seek to retain dignity in the middle of deterioration. Therefore, it is often like a contest acting fiercely to halt the hegemonic dominance of colonial authority. It is also a source of satisfaction to the suppressed people and a cause of repulsion towards the colonial dominators (Bernard ١١٧).

Afterwards, the poem focuses on the talk of the exiled Irish people who were displaced “since the emigrations of the Fifties and the early Sixties” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٣). Their speech was mainly about their past days in Ireland where they were displaced. They were “immersed in history, reconstructing a city on the other side of the world, detailing streets and shops and houses which for the most part only exist now in the memory. Or ghosts which exist only in the memory” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٣). Additionally, they returned to their days of school in Slate Street School remembering the names engraved on their desks, the “taste of milk” in winter, and the “aura of plasticine and chalk-dust” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٣). Their talk was not stopped recalling “the blitz, the avalanche, the troubles” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٤). Even if the wall of their school was demolished where their names



were carved, they asserted that “somewhere they survive” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٤).

Carson contends that as the graffiti named “BELFAST” in Alphabet City where their home city was mentioned, their names also would be mentioned and survived in another city of the world “*Graffito, says the dictionary, a mural scribbling or drawing, as by schoolboys and idlers at Pompeii, Rome, and other ancient cities* [original emphasis].” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٤). The representation of graffiti plays an active role in evoking their memories. They searched to affirm their national identity through the brutalities of the past as Bhabha points out that it is difficult to remember what was fragmented in the past to “make sense” of their nostalgia and exile that they feel in the present (*The Location of Culture* ٩٠). To piece together what was fragmented in the past memories is metaphorically seen as a patchwork of memories, which is evident in Carson’s poetic verses. Therefore, Goodby articulates that:

For the image of the past and identity in Carson . . . is the patchwork quilt, or

the endless, and endlessly self-revising, story. The nature of memory means

that the past is always being . . . constructed in the present; thus, in fact, is what

memory is, in Carson’s work, rather than the establishing of a pure source, or

origin. (٨٢)



Even more, in the poem, it is apparent how Carson reinforces Jacques Derrida's portrayal of "ghost", "revenant", or "specter" which is like a memory. Derrida believes that ghost figure as "a specter [that] is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back" (١١). Thus, Carson demonstrates that the past history of Ireland with its demolished streets and violence is like an apparition that haunted his memory. Thus, he maintains that they are "ghosts which exist only in the memory" (*Belfast Confetti* ٥٣). The ghost, thus, is an iconic figure that can be employed in resistance writings due to its political potentiality.

Carson deploys such an emblematic figure to explore his life and the life of his suppressed nation between the past and present. By his representation of spectrality in his poetics, he confirms what Harb sees that spectrality is so significant issue in documenting how the Irish civilians were subjected to brutal repression. Harb also proved that by haunting, the poet captures the violence committed by the colonial oppressors (١). Hence, Carson utilizes haunting and ghosts as a poetic strategy to unmask the colonial illegitimate domination over the land. In his poem "Peace", Carson's traumatic past haunted the present through the ghosts which represent the dead bodies of innocent Irish people. Through the ghosts, Carson criticizes the colonial atrocities that led to the death of innocent Irish civilians:

And all the unanswered questions of those dark days come back  
to haunt us, the disabled guns that still managed to kill,

the witnesses that became ghosts in the blink of an eye.

Whom can we prosecute when no one is left fit to speak? (*For All We Know* ٤٣)

In the lines mentioned above, one can see that Harb's analysis of haunting is applicable here. Harb states that suppressed violence "comes back" in the figure of ghosts "to haunt the present". As a result, innocent voices are voiced, thereby threatening the conventional structure of space and time. Ghosts are, therefore, "signifiers" of colonial force and contraventions "mediated by" domination over history and space. The portrayal of ghosts becomes a site of examination of how dominant structures operate, in addition to "defining the contours of cultural resistance" (٢).

Carson's utilization of haunting is a poetic technique to enunciate his resistance against hegemonic domination. This literary technique defies the poetic closure of colonial narration. Challenging such closure means that the ghost figure represents the present, past and future together as taking place at the same time. Thus, spectrality deconstructs any conflict opposing between the present and past to express firm condemnation of the colonial brutalities declaring that although I am already a defunct figure, I will remain alive in my people's memories to awaken you from your dreadful brutalities. Hence, ghosts are considered practicable means for decrying severe losses and violent causalities (Harb ١٣). From here, Carson's ghosts are basic tools for defying the linear colonial narratives that constructed falsely the identity of repressed victims by stereotyping their images.

In the same vein, in Carson's poem "Hamlet" in *Belfast Confetti*, he deploys the figure of a ghost in belittling the demolition in Ireland. It is



evident that the title of the poem is taken from William Shakespeare's tragic play *Hamlet*. As Hamlet reveals the corrupt state of Denmark, Carson through his poem explores the decaying of Ireland under the rotten and violent colonial power. The poem tackles the comrade's narration of the story of shooting a sergeant "outside the National Bank" in the Irish Civil War in ١٩٢٢ (*Belfast Confetti* ١٠٥). Thus, he sees that the sergeant's story must be known to everyone since it is an actual story and must not be forgotten. In the poem, "tin-can" is like the ghost that evokes revenge in *Hamlet*. Carson examines that this tin-can "trundles" down Balaklava Street where his home was located when he was a child. He depicts that one cannot see this tin-can, but one can hear it spinning down the street:

..... *This tin can which was heard night,*

*trundling down*

*From the bank, down Balaklava Street. Which thousands heard, and*

*no one ever*

*Saw. Which was heard from years, any night that trouble might be*

*Round the corner . . . and when it skittered to a halt,*

*you knew*

That someone else had snuffed it: a name drifting like an

afterthought,

A scribbled wisp of smoke you try and grasp, as it becomes

diminuendo, then

Vanishes. For *fal*, is also *frontier, boundary*, as in the *undiscovered*

*country*



*From whose bourne no traveler returns* [original emphasis], the illegible,

thorny hedge of time itself [original emphasis]. (*Belfast Confetti* ١٠٥-٦)

The tin-can ghost calls for death; it reveals the death of the sergeant; it is like Shakespeare's ghost in *Hamlet* stimulates the Irish people for taking reprisal from the colonial thorn. The onomatopoeic sound of the can's clacking, here, functions as "Morse code", which is a code of dots or dashes used by operators to send messages by pulses of electricity ("Morse Code Translator"), and a warning alarm that warns the Irish inhabitants of a forthcoming onslaught (Obert ٣٦).

Then, Carson interweaves the tin-can ghost with the linguistic question of indicating the name of the place "Falls" where Carson lived. The word "Falls" is an English word that is taken from the Irish word "fal" which means "frontier", "hedge" and "boundary". Through these translations, he points out that there are different meanings of "tin-can" as well as "Falls". Moreover, the variant translations of "Falls" are firmly intertwined; they all indicate some kind of fencing. These translations or names are like hedges that are put around the truth and what must be seen in reality.

Consequently, he expresses his condemnation of the eruption and demolition of Falls quoting lines of *Hamlet* portraying the violence that occurred in his homeland:

This strange eruption to our state is seen in other versions of the

Falls:



*A no-go area, a ghetto, a demolition zone* [original emphasis]. For the ghost,

as it turns out\_ [sic]

All this according to your man, and I can well believe it\_ this

tin ghost,

Since the streets it haunted were demolished, was never heard

again.

.....  
And with it, all but the memory of where I lived. I, too, heard

the ghost: (*Belfast Confetti* ١٠٧)

Carson implies that he heard the tin ghost after its fierce noise generated by its trundling the streets of Falls. Its rolling echoed the destroyed streets it haunted reflecting the violence and demolition of his home city. The tin-ghost stimulated Carson's childhood memories at the time of the rampage. Thus, he felt that he was ambivalent between the violent scene of the sectarian war in the past and the present of his life. Hence, he tries "to piece together the exploded fragments" (*Belfast Confetti* ١٠٨) that resulted from the colonial violence in the past. Spectrality helps him to reveal the reality of what happens. It also, as Harb claims, proves Carson's feeling of ambivalence between the past and the present; it stimulates "uncertainty". The ghost refuses to leave and be hidden in the past; it reminds the readers that it is alive in the present "bringing to it feeling of strangeness and unfamiliarity" (١٣). Thus, it is incorporated into Carson's Irish crisis to depict his nation's resistance to attain emancipation.



One cannot neglect that Carson is obsessed with representing for his readers the names of weapons used in the Troubles. He is interested in representing the vocabulary of “modern technology” registering the specific name and number of devices used in the colonial war. By using such a language, Carson represents an implied threat against colonial tyranny (Alexander, *Ciaran Carson* ١٠٠). His employment of machines, techno-materials, and weapons shows Carson’s creativity in capturing his country’s trauma to decry the colonial brutalities visually as they are occurring at the moment of their depiction. The readers can realize that they are involved indirectly in the represented scene. Thus, he undermines the conventional and colonial discourses that deform the image of the persecuted nation. In “Minus”, Carson endeavors to chronicle the offensive practices of colonial authority by depicting the noise of helicopters in the war. The attacks of helicopters resulted in holding the breath of the Irish nation:

no

helicopter

noise

this hour

gone by

the room

still

dark



I raise  
the blind

on  
a moon

so bright  
it hurts

and oh  
so cold

my breath  
sounds

like frost (*Breaking News* ٣٨)

The poem captures the horrific ambience where the Irish people lived during the Troubles. Although the noise of the helicopter's hovering stopped for an hour, Carson felt that his city was plunged into darkness. He could not see anything in the room except darkness. The terrible attacks of the helicopter terrified him in a way that he felt that his "breath sounds like frost". Thus, his voice died away. Such a representation visualizes the terrible scene as the readers watch the violent scene unfolding before them.



Consequently, he attempts to create a documentary archive of all tiny details at the time of the sectarian conflict. The readers can acknowledge not only the colonial tactics but also their armed weapons. In “Bloody Hand”, Carson castigates the bloody battles against the Irish victims visualizing how to shoot bullets with guns “My thumb is the hammer of a gun. The thumb goes up. The thumb goes down.” (*Belfast Confetti* ٥١). He visualizes a movable scene whereby the readers are involved indirectly in the scene as eyewitnesses of what took place in Ireland. It is demanded from the writer “incredible effort” to form imageries and language that changes “mere knowledge” into “vision” and draw the reader from the “familiar imagining” to the extraordinary dreadful atrocities of the persecuting power (Tal ٨١). From here, one can see that Carson’s language is like the lens of a camera zooming and visualizing the colonial brutalities.

Furthermore, he is engrossed in depicting technological machines and media in his poetics. In his collection *On the Night Watch*, it is evident how he deploys media in recording his country’s political terrible scene. In his poem “The Tv” Carson demonstrates how “Tv” documents the destruction of his country:

on the screen

the sound

already

gone

I thought



of what

I'd heard

& seen

the newsreel city

devasted

yet again

the siren moan (*On the Night Watch* ٧١)

Despite the shortness of the poems' lines, it renders the theme precisely, thereby making the scene visible to the readers. Carson decries how the sectarian war caused the devastation of the newsreel city. He captures how the moan of the siren alarms the Irish citizens about the demolition. Depiction of media technological words opens the door for Carson to criticize the horrible scene in Ireland, thereby indicating the hidden reality for the readers. Thus, Ong affirms that the usage of technological words in writing brings "critique into existence" (٧٩). Moreover, his employment of media allows him to carry for the readers the sound effects of violence to echo the horror and annihilation of Ireland.

In the same vein, his adoption of media is also heightened in "News" whereby he documents and criticizes the sectarian violence in Ireland. In the poem, he condemns the bombing of a car, so the city's alarms are "shrill" and its "lights" "flash" declaring about the dangerous explosions that occurred in the city. Because of this explosion, the dust is everywhere; it is "above/ the paper/ shop/ **The Belfast Telegraph**/ sign reads/ **fast rap**

[original emphasis]" (*Breaking News* ١٤). The Belfast Telegraph newspaper publishes the news of the car's explosion. One cannot hear the explosions, but one can see the scene of the explosion through the pictures and the details of the titles of the newspaper. Thus, the name of the newspaper is written in bold to captivate the attention of readers and assert the colonial repercussion, in addition to making it visible to us. Hence, throughout this poem, Carson "coaxe[s] the reader to make desperate sense of its message" (Wheatley ٥٠).

Since Carson's language visualizes the political scene, his language is highly symbolic. During reading his poems, the reader will find that he/she seeks their symbolic meaning. Gillis states that Carson's poetics embedded in facets of "symbolism" (٢٥٨). His aesthetic symbolic work is comparable to W.B Yeats since his poetics implies what Yeats demonstrates that the poet of realities and pure concepts must explore in the twilights that glow from "symbol to symbol" to reveal obscurity and darkness of life events (Gillis ٢٥٨). In the same context, for Carson Belfast is a symbolic city of colonial violence.

Therefore, in "Punctuation", Carson symbolizes violence depicting how it is omnipresent and death is forthcoming. As a wanderer, he felt fear to slip between the "crackly" and "chalky" "invisible trajectories" that are "sketched" to him (*Belfast Confetti* ٦٤). He was scared of falling on this unpaved road, so he could be killed by the bullets "The shots, the echoes, are like/ whips, and when you flinch,/ You don't know where it's coming from. This bullet, is your name on it/ For the moment, everything is X, a blank not yet filled in" (*Belfast Confetti* ٦٤). The echoes of the shots were like whips. Suddenly, everything around him was a black shadow. He did



not know whether these bullets would be fired at him or not. Carson recalls a terrible scene that was full of terror and an escape from firing guns; he was near death. To stress the danger, he compares the bullets' shooting to many "dots" looming behind the hedge during his walk to his home "when another shadow steps out from behind the hedge, going dot, dot, dot, dot, dot . . . ." (*Belfast Confetti* ٦٤). Like "Hamlet", Carson's dots, here, allude to "Morse code", which must be deciphered, to convey to the readers the severeness of the Irish crisis which cannot be represented or described by words. He compares the strategy of colonial power and miscommunication with it to punctuation marks to condemn the violent practices that are committed by the colonial authority. Here punctuation mark becomes an identical violence on a semantic level (Broom ١٦٧).

Furthermore, he reflects the harsh experience of the Irish prisoners in The Maze Prison in the War of Troubles. Carson captures their predicament in his poem "H" from *Opera Et Cetera* through his symbolization of the letter "H" for the shape of the Maze Prison where the arrested victims could not move or escape since it has the shape of H letter. Due to its construction, the prison was likened to "hell-hole" (OBE ٢١). This prison was well-known in Northern Ireland as "Long Kesh" which is located far away from Belfast (*Opera Et Cetera* ١٨). By symbolizing the prison, Carson visualizes the prison where the repressed prisoners were isolated for no reason:

The Powers-that-Be decreed that from the\_ of \_ [sic]  
. . . , for reasons  
Of security, would be contracted to a different firm.  
They gave the prisoners no reasons.



The prisoners complained. We cannot reproduce his actual words here, since their spokesman is alleged To be a sub-commander of a movement deemed to be illegal.

(*Opera Et*

*Cetera* ١٨)

They were prisoned by the power of paramilitaries without giving a legitimate reason. They complained since their spokesman was purported to be a “sub-commander” in a movement that was considered “illegal”. They could not reproduce his words. Thus, “an actor spoke for him in almost-perfect lip-synch”:

His ‘Belfast’ accent wasn’t West enough. Is the *H* in H-Block *aitch* or *haitch*?

Does it matter? *What we have we hold? Our day will come?*

Give or take an inch? [original emphasis] (*Opera Et Cetera* ١٨)

Carson heightens the dilemma of the prisoners not only by symbolizing the construction of the prison but also by highlighting the different phonetic pronunciations of the letter “H” between the Protestants and Catholics. The Protestants pronounce the letter “H” “aitch” whereas the Catholics utter it “haitch”. He seeks to revive his lost Irish culture; he works on reviving his native language. By symbolizing the Maze Prison as “H-Block”, he incorporates the dilemma of the prisoners within the dilemma of losing his Irish native language and culture. The difference in pronouncing the letter “H” asserts Carson’s resistance against the oppressors’ culture and their all-repressed atrocities, thereby subverting their authority.



Further, his employment of italics is deliberately semantic usage to enhance his feeling of losing his native language. Italics are regarded as “typographic” cues that affirm Carson’s thematic aim of the poem in the readers’ minds; turning it into a visual scope (Bland ٩٧). One can understand that his italics words can stand alone enabling us as readers to visualize the Irish nation’s dilemma which was imprinted in Carson’s mind. The readers, thus, comprehend such italics as modes of cultural self-revelation. His crisis of the prisoners in H-Block and the loss of his native language are visually expressed by the semiotic structure of italics.

On the other hand, Carson is enthralled by symbolizing colors in his poems. The symbolism of colors plays a significant effect on how identity and power are depicted (O’Connor ٦٧). He stimulates certain colors that act as a unified power to heighten his thematic aim of the poetic verses. In this respect, in “Breaking”, Carson visualizes the “red” color which bears the vivid meaning of juxtaposing danger and violence. By symbolizing the “red” color, the reader can visualize the horrific scene witnessing it. Even more, the reader can hear its harsh voice:

red alert

car parked

in a red

zone

about to

disintegrate



it's

oh

so quiet

you can

almost

hear it rust (*Breaking News* ١٣)

Consequently, in “Yesterday” he symbolizes the “grey” color alluding to melancholy and anguish at the prediction of the death of an innocent Irish man due to the colonial war. Carson depicts the image by associating the “grey” color with “smoking” which deepens the conveyed meaning:

cloudy grey

swing doors into

the dayroom

to salute

the smoking man

who will

be dead

tomorrow (*On the Night Watch* ٥٦)

As he is interested in symbolism to visualize for readers vivid images of the political scene of Ireland, he is concerned with depicting how his



country forms a basic sphere of “olfactory politics” (Drobnick ٦٥). Carson connects his thematic aim of opposing colonial power with the odorous sphere of his country. By doing this, he motivates the sensation of Irish people not to forget their Irish origins and to resist colonial stereotyping. This is evident when the smell of potato stimulates the readers in his poem “Clearance” emotionally and imaginatively as they live in Ireland, so he realizes that “even from this distance,/ the potatoes smell of earth.” is wafted in the air (*The Irish for No* ٣٢). By the smell of potatoes, Carson may also allude to the Great Famine, thereby he registers his nation’s calamitous predicament. As well, in “The Irish for No”, he evokes his Irish people’s memory of “the garage smell of creosote” in an attempt to connect them strongly with their country (*The Irish for No* ٥٠). Carson’s capturing images that evoke the odorous sense is considered a latent technique of provoking the Irish nation to resist barbarism and uprootedness. Gillis opines that provoking readers by smells in Carson’s poems “creates a sensual influx of memory and artfully fused otherness: free-floating essences that make differing impressions according to nuances of time, place and character” (٢٧٤). Hence, he captures visual, odorous, and colorful pictures whereby his language performs a cinematic effect. Carson, by his semiotic language, attracts his readers’ attention to a complete cinematic screen that combines odorous, colorful, and visual elements. He successfully creates kinetic poetic verses whereby he represents actual pictures of the Irish political scene imprinted on his readers’ minds.

Drawing upon the cinematic effect, Carson also cannot neglect the sonic background of the political scene. He employs the acoustic technique as a latent weapon for resisting colonial brutalities. Like his contemporary



poets Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon, Carson makes use of “soundscape” as a policy of resistance against the colonial power. As he portrays his country’s landscape, he unfolds its “soundscape” to heighten his country’s dilemma making it audibly as well as topographically (Obert ١٠). The traumatic scene of Ireland cannot only be shown but can be heard. One can see that echoing the sounds of his country in his poetics can be considered, as Fanon had clarified before, a “collective catharsis” and a relief of the colonial suffering (١٤٥).

Furthermore, acoustic hints in his poetry produce dynamic echoes whereby they transgress the political borders that cannot be crossed by the colonized people, in addition to demystifying the colonizers’ racial and fake myths of “purity” on which these sectarian borders depend (Obert ٣). Thus, by acoustic clues, Carson decries the colonial visual destruction. When his eyes cannot believe what is seen, at least his ears sometimes satisfy him; what his eyes fail to see, his ears succeed to listen to. James Joyce’s literary works *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* had a great influence on Carson’s navigation of Belfast’s soundscape and music. He argues that “Joyce has always interested me, as much for his renderings of the music of the city . . . I’m sure it lies behind many of my own attempts to render the actuality of things . . . The multifarious sounds . . . of the city impressed themselves on me as a kind of instant onomatopoeia. Not so much about Belfast, as *of* Belfast [original emphasis]” (Obert ٣٥-٦). Thus, he depends on resonating different sounds from his city Belfast, thereby deconstructing and subverting the colonial authority.

Accordingly, in his poem “The Ay O’Haitch” which opposes and follows “Twelfth Day”, Carson denounces the sectarian conflict between the



English Protestants and Irish Catholics by resonating the sounds of Hibernians' "accordions" and "Lambeg drums" (*The Twelfth of Never* ٥٨). He deliberately writes the two poems following each other to demonstrate the colonial opposition between the two sectarians. As a Catholic poet, in this poem, Carson shows how the "accordions" of Hibernians echo melodious sounds whereas the Orangemen parade's "Lambeg drums" produce noisy sounds. Like his "H" poem, he illuminates the pronunciation of the letter "H" in "Haitch" opposing the pronunciation of the Protestants since they pronounce it "aitch". By this phonetic depiction, Carson subverts the colonial authority by making the sound of the Irish suppressed people voiced.

In the poem, he unravels how the parades of the "Ancient Order of Hibernians", which represents an Irish Catholic organization, oppose the parades of Orangemen on the twelfth. In Northern Ireland, parades are regarded as rival allegations to its residents. Carson takes the advantage of their marches' sounds in recording the extreme violence between the two rivals:

We blow a fife tune on our red accordions,  
And thrum the goatskins of our borrowed Lambeg drums,  
For we're the Noble Order of Hibernians.

We are pedestrians, we're not equestrians;  
We will outbreed the others; we have done our sums.

Will you, Sir, join our Union of Hibernians? (*The Twelfth of Never* ٥٨)

Since the poem is an alexandrine sonnet, it is composed in "iambic hexameter" which is a musical line of "six feet" ("Hexameter") that produces



harmonic sounds that chime together, and thus reverberating the sound of the Hibernians' parades (Obert ٤٧). The sounds of the words rhyme together creating harmony. Thus, the reader can find that there is a melody created by connecting the internal rhyme between "blow", "goatskins" and "noble" together. Additionally, the poem's "end-rhyme" between "pedestrians" and "equestrians", and between "drums" and "sums", in addition to the poem's "sprung rhyme" in "accordions", "drums", "Hibernians", "equestrians" and "sums" render Carson's thematic aim of the poem to the reader confirming the sectarian conflict between the Catholics and Protestants (Obert ٤٧). These rhyming connections carry a semiotic meaning of the parades' forcible opposition. Navigating the city's soundscape asserts its annihilation if one's eyes fail to examine it.

On the other hand, Carson shows his readers a great interest in representing proper nouns in his poetics. Proper nouns allude to particular names either human individuals or things or places. They are different from common nouns which do not allude to any specific character, thing, or a place. Proper nouns, which are semantic aspects, are ubiquitous in Carson's poetic volumes whereby he utilizes to proclaim his cultural identity and subvert the colonial authority. Being ambivalent and displaced, he endeavors to maintain the names of his homeland's cities. In *Breaking News*, he, thus, names poems with Irish places, such as "In St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin":

British Army  
regimental



colours

flown

in this

campaign

or that

now

hang

tattered by

the mouth

or shot (٢٩)

The proper noun serves Carson here to shed light on the importance of St. Patrick's Cathedral which is located in Dunlin to remind his nation of the Irish regiments who served in the British Army in the Waterloo battle in ١٨١٥. Most of the soldiers of the British army were Irish soldiers who defeated Napoleon in WWI ("Regimental Colours"). Carson depicts the place as one can imagine that he is inside the Cathedral where one can see the regimental colors hung on its wall that represents the regiments, who fought in Napoleonic wars. He cherishes his remarkable places which must be visited by the Irish people in order not to forget their historical



places. Thus, proper name of “St. Patrick Cathedral” can be taken as a cultural indicator whereby the Irish nation is identified with the history of the Irish regiments who were killed in the Napoleonic wars. Hence, Jarniewicz admits that Carson is fascinated with proper names which are considered semantic elements (٢١٨).

In conclusion, Carson takes on the responsibility of registering the historical and cultural heritage of his country through his new poetic techniques that function as resistance to colonial authority. He is fascinated with the tactic of representation of graffiti, spectrality, war weapons, and modern technologies to depict the real picture for his readers of the colonial crimes. Furthermore, his deployment of symbolism, proper nouns and sonic clues are technical strategies that reinforce him in his rebellion against colonial dictatorship. Thus, his poetical strategies function as a means of resistance, thereby asserting his Irishness. He is an idiosyncratic poet whose poetry reflects the Irish crisis not only by his interwoven themes of resistance but also by his poetic techniques in condemning and tackling the Irish dilemma.



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