



Folklore to Flesh: Irish Mythic Echoes in Cecelia Ahern's *Freckles*

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Abstract

The life of Irishers serves as an epitome of unraveling mythical insights of their traditions in all possible means. Initially, two intriguing facts are stressed out: cosmic connection and human connection. Cecilia Ahern is an native Irish writer, encounters several mystical revelations regarding Ireland. Owing to the fact, Ahern showcases in her fiction Freckles detecting the truth of Irishers struggling to gain self identity and finding connection between themselves. Ahern's novel Freckles acts as a juncture in representing the harsh reality of the Irishers and seeking identity in the midst of marginalization. It serves as a powerful tool for subaltern voices, highlighting the importance of self acceptance, self love and resistance against dominant beauty norms. This study reveals the mythical perception of Irishers in accordance with human connection through the cosmic connection of the universe

Keywords: cosmic, mythical, struggle, identity

Cosmic evolution in the universe overlaps with the routine life of human beings. The Irish writer Cecelia Ahern claims her masterpiece *Freckles* as a lightning accomplishment and considers it as a reflection of the starry sky. The scars acts as a tool for Irishers as it initiates the cosmic connections unveiling mythical belief of the at Ireland. Ahern visualizes the cosmic apparels' comprehensive study through her revelation work *Freckles*. Douglas Hyde states that, "History is not just facts and dates, but the living story of our ancestors(4). The history of Ireland demonstrates the fact of Irishers and it expresses their entanglement with life in the

universe. The bewitching storyline in *Freckles* unites the bond between people and the massive celestial galaxies. The Irish Times glorifies Ahern's writing as, "touching, full of humor... life-affirming. Ahern writes with honesty and empathy"(Freckles). This masterpiece ignites the universal truths of human existence and exegesis the unseen forces that govern mankind into a sense of serenity. Ahern in her cosmic exploration work *Freckles* enumerates the power of cosmic forces and its influence towards mankind in craving an individual's destiny to shine like a brightest star.



The distinct truth regarding the Irishers reveals the obstacles and the complex life is shown light in the novel *Freckles*. Ahern limn her vision through the starry dramatis personae Allegra Bird, narrating the complexities of Irish skin and the tribulation. Allegra Bird is the protagonist of the novel, an adolescent star who lit up the souls of the Irishers through her magnanimity of scars. The novel begins with Allegra Bird's life in a boarding school and ends up in Allegra's work life. Allegra Bird embodies several emotional breakthroughs and her solace turns into serenity through her small dots all over her body known as freckles. Generally, teenage girls are prone to skin care and want to appear beautiful and charismatic among others. Allegra Bird torments herself with the scar on her body and initializes the fact that she inherits her bodily freckles through her dad, Pops. The protagonist Allegra bird vividly exegesis that,

"Pops' skin is as white as snow, so pale in some parts it's almost transparent like tracing paper, with blue lines and running beneath. Blue rivers of lead.

His hair is greying and thinner now but it was curly red and wild. He has freckles, reddish ones, so many on his face if they joined up he'd be a sunrise."(*Freckles* 7).

The above line confronts the severity of the disease and their vein appears to be, "blue rivers of lead" and there is a total change in their skin complexion. Ahern emphasizes the inner agony of each Irish woman through the character Allegra Bird who is suffering from freckles in her life from her birth. Ronald Bilius Weasley is a fictional character in the Harry Potter novel series and the novelist, J.K.Rowling mentions Ron as, "very tall and lanky with red hair and blue eyes. He has a pale, freckled complexion, a long nose and big hands and feet"(chapter 6). According to the portrayal of Ahern the person who is suffering from freckles appears pale in nature and it is true that J.K.Rowling in her work "Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone" contends her character Ronald is pale because he too has freckles. Thus the authors describe the horribleness of freckles through pawning their characters.

Ahern peculiarly expresses the correlation between her character and the celestial beings. Allegra bird is a teenage girl who enters into the

school at the age of twelve and it is said as, "twelve years old until I left at eighteen."(*Freckles* 7). Allegra bird is a young girl and she loves to connect each dot in her body like a puzzle thread-like line forming a starry night in her hand. She says as such, "When I was thirteen years old I connected the freckles on my arms together, like join-the-dots puzzle"(*Freckles* 3). Literally the character develops a simulacrum of starry night using freckles as an inevitable tool. Allegra Bird is studying in a boarding school and during night times she does not get a chance to watch the starry night to experience the starry night she begins to connect freckles in her hand. Here the protagonist Allegra Bird refines her soul and mind in accordance with the aroma of constellations.

Ahern visualizes the trauma of Allegra Bird plotting how Irishers due to their freckles overcome many entangles and humiliation in their life. Ahern keeps quiet regarding Allegra Bird's mother though she portrays Allegra's father's existence she did not describe regarding Allegra's mother. Allegra initializes because when the, "raging mob could not come to our house on horseback, with torches of fire, demanding he hand over the baby the mother didn't want. Look, she's his, she has his freckles, see."(*Freckles* 8). Traumatically, Allegra Bird experiences the outburst of her love towards her mother and her scar leave her to live a solitary life in the outskirts of Irish shore, that is, "Malahide, a suburban village outside Dublin city, beside the sea."(*Freckles* 10). The protagonist Allegra's longingness for motherly love is the core scenario and here the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud takes a foremost place. Sigmund Freud in his theory 'Psychodynamic' states that, "these theories focus on the psychological drives and the forces within individuals that explain human behavior and personality(6). A young girl longing for her love and care at last ends up tormenting herself in a bitter environment in her school life.

Ahern brings out the hardships of living in Oceanic temperate countries through her works protagonist Allegra Bird. The freckles act as a syndrome in which humans suffer and it causes several emotional damages within an individual. Moreover, the lives of people in Oceanic temperate countries tend to suffer



more than other countries and in this novel Freckles the protagonist Allegra Bird lives near the shore she discloses that,

“My base is Malahiide castle, a suburban village outside Dublin city, beside the sea. A pretty spot, an affluent area. My home is a studio flat above a gym in the back garden of a mansion on a leafy road bordering Malahide Castle and Gardens.”(Freckles 10).

Allegra Bird lives near the seashore and experiences the syndrome known as freckles or ephelides. Ephelides is a very distinctive pigmentation feature. Freckles is a common skin disease found in Oceanic temperate countries such as Asia and Europe. Ahern portrays Allegra Bird's origin as Dublin which is a part of European countries. Inducing the truth, Irishers encounter the symptoms of red hair and pale skin with spots all over their body. This condition is known as Melasma and this type of people have brown or blue gray patches or freckles like spots. Ahern initiates in her novel Freckles through the protagonist Allegra she confronts that, “but my arms saw more sunlight than the rest of my body, face not included, so it had a higher concentration of melanised cells”(Freckles 4). Ahern demonstrates several concepts of freckle which includes the seriousness of the freckle, the causes of this disease and how an Irisher overcomes the syndrome. Melasma occurs in the human body due to overproduction of the cells that determine the color of your skin. Melasma is also known as a “mask of pregnancy”. In a book it is titled as such “A face without freckles is a face without stars”(Markle). Similarly these countries face such trouble due to climatic conditions the Irish people can stay away from such situations by dodging UV rays so that skin diseases may cure automatically in the winter season.

The nature of Ireland is especially known for their uniqueness of climatic conditions and the beauty of cloud spreading hope all over the nation. The mythical fact of the starry skies in Ireland signifies a literal threat to the people. The famous poet Ralph Waldo Emerson signifies clouds as, “the sky is the daily bread of the eyes”(line 5). In this line Emerson portrays the sky as the feast to our eyes. Ireland's skies are almost misty all around the

year and Irishers are unable to experience the starry galaxy at night. Traditionally, the citizens of Ireland want to know the importance of their country and the mythical evolution of Irish folklore and so the ancestors draw maps of the galaxies on everyone's cheeks. Similarly, Allegra Bird, the Protagonist of the novel states her envision to see the galaxy is met with her freckles in her hands and legs she describes that, “Right-handed, my left arm would become a web of blue pen lines. After a while it developed into drawing constellations, mapping them out from freckle to freckle until the skin on my arm mirrored the night sky.”(Freckles 3). These lines trigger the inner thirst of Ahern to bring life to freckles by mapping the constellation in Allegra Bird's hand. Allegra also recreates an historical context in her boarding school amidst her fellow classmates. Ahern comprehensively portrays the ancestral mythical belief through her rich tapestry characters in her novel. In the history of Ireland 5th Century AD, is known as a dangerous era because a person with freckles is known as ‘witches’ also they need to confirm their identity with a witch professional. The professional witch would jab at the victim using a sharp tool all over her body and if the woman did not yell it is a sure sign of a witch. These actions show how the Irishers are prone to mythical belief using freckle syndrome as a pawn. Intentionally, the protagonist Allegra Bird states that, “They're patterns on the celestial sphere, animals, mythological people and creatures, gods and objects, I'd tell them, holding my arm out proud, never ashamed of my designs”(Freckles 5). The author successfully embarks on the historical context of Irish myth through her character Allegra Bird and she reminds the reader to notice the history of Ireland. Ahern intrudes the past happenings and mythical belief in her masterpieces ensuring charm in her own nationality.

Ahern exegeses the life of protagonist Allegra Bird in comparison to mussels in the sea shore. Allegra's entire school life is inside a shell of freckles and to her the outer world seems to be full of conflicts. She often uses these constellations to escape from her boredom and these makes her ease her pain and mental sickness. Allegra's love towards constellation seems more upheavals and she demonstrates as such,



"The Plough- the Big Dipper to some – was my favorite constellation to draw. It was the one I could immediately identify at night, and so when it was lights out in boarding school and silence descended upon the halls, I turned my reading light on low, clenched a blue gel pen, and traced the seven stars from freckle to freckle until my skin resembled a night map"(Freckles 4)

The protagonist sinks deeply under the aroma of constellations to quench her thirst to experience the starry sky. She claims a certain constellation as her favorite one that is 'The Plough- the Big Dipper' the illusionary world of Allegra is a mixture of cosmic connections. The Big Dipper means it is a major constellation of seven stars called Ursa Major and it is also known as The Great Bear. This Big Dipper is visible only on spring night when it is above the northern horizon. Few researchers claim that, "the sky that was mapped out in olden days into imaginary pictures was called a constellation. The names of many constellations are those of animals, for example, the bear, the lion, the dog etc"(Astronomy 487). The silence inside the school hall invokes Allegra to draw more constellations and replicate the image in brain in her hands and legs. Ahern engraves each chance to reminiscence the night map of skies and the buildings stating the unspoken truth of each student.

The human creature indeed ties a knot with the galaxy by means of stars as a symbol of connectivity presenting a positive aroma in the earthly life. Allegra Bird insists on the types of constellations that she commonly drew on her arms; they are Cassiopeia and Pegasus. The constellation seems to be the entire world to Allegra in determining her own serenity. According to Allegra she assumes few Constellation as tricky one that is, "Pegasus was a tricky one with a total of fourteen stars/freckles, but my arms saw more sunlight than the rest of my body, face not included, so it had a higher concentration of melanised cells, perfectly positioned for a fourteen-star constellation."(Freckles 4). Ahern constructs the inner soul of the Protagonist to the ticky star Pegasus. Ahern compares the characters' notion with their interest over constellations. An Irish Indian poet Nikita Gill in her poem "The Girl and the Goddess: Stories and Poems of Divine Wisdom" describes that women need to be strong enough to

praise their appearance however it may be. The poet gives courage to her readers that freckles may cover their face but each women need to love their body as such,

Tell them how they must love theirs...

...whether there is a little of them or a lot,

whether freckles cover their face or not,

whether their curves are plentiful or slim,

whether their hair is thick, curly, straight, long or short.

(lines 5,7-10)

These above lines convey a strong meaning that one should have the courage to face themselves when they overcome any obstacles in their life. The poet engages the readers to have judiciousness and need not have a dilemma in life. The Protagonist states the Pegasus as a tricky constellation with fourteen stars that shows her mind in an abrupt manner. Probably people who show interest in constellations tend to have a peace of mind. Ahern's poignant work nurtures the woman to be strong through her character Allegra although she is suffering from great shame she tries to make certain situations favorable for herself. Allegra tries to engulf with the present condition and engraves starry night in her body to divert her mind from absurdity. Consequently, the constellation holds several characterizations and it makes it much easier to know the inner notion of the protagonist.

Ahern writes this novel Freckles as an alarming juncture to the readers to have a vivid knowledge over the history of mythical Ireland. The masterpiece serves as a reflection over the human relationships with the universal entities. The provocation of Constellation prompts a certain universal auditing illusion. Ahern nurtures the spirit among humans in accordance with initiating new life through the means of freckle as a syndrome.

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